

GERMANY TO-DAY

A SCOTTISH SURGEON

The following description of a holiday spent last year in Germany is taken from a private letter received by Colonel John Stewart of Halifax, who with the consent of his correspondent has kindly permitted its publication. The writer is a Scottish surgeon of great eminence, who knew Germany well in other days and who wished to compare the state of things in that country at present with his recollections of many years ago. He and Colonel Stewart had formerly visited German hospitals together and had many friends there in common, to whom allusion is made in the letter. As the interest of these references is purely personal, the names are represented by initials. But there seemed to be enough of quite general interest to justify its reproduction in these pages, as the record of an observer well-informed, candid, and reflective. The thanks of *The Dalhousie Review* are due to both the writer and Colonel Stewart for the use they have allowed of private correspondence.

THE EDITOR

YOU will like to know my personal experiences during my holiday spent in revisiting Germany. You will see they were gathered mainly in towns and amongst old friends. I had no opportunity of conversing with the working classes. In regard to the war, I do not think that there is a clear recognition, or perhaps a genuine knowledge, of the extent of the military policy pursued in Belgium or at sea. Only once was I told, "We did much that was wrong, but amongst millions of soldiers there are many evil doers, even amongst your own. We must forget and forgive".

I met many ex-officers. They bore no malice, but on being introduced at once shook hands quite naturally in a manner I was not prepared for. The general feeling seemed to be one of thanksgiving that their army was practically unconquered and had staved off invasion, and that now they must make the best of it and devote everything to reconstruction.

After getting the passport arrangements settled, and writing to _____ in Hannover and _____ in Frankfurt, so as to be sure of rooms, I left Harwich by the S. S. Archangel for Rotterdam, the 12th May. Thence on to Hannover where H— and his daughter met me at the station; thence to Berlin 19th May. Frau and her son found rooms for me, and there I lingered a week; thence to Frankfurt for fourteen days, back to Hannover, and home.

I have been greatly impressed by all I have seen and heard. Everyone was polite. There was no friction. There were no difficulties. The friends who were always waiting at the station were more cordial than ever and I had the most perfect welcome. I had made up my mind to go to hotels or rooms, for I knew the

economic pinch and found that this was wise. It was delightful to talk over old times, to compare war trials and experiences, and to receive first-hand information. I avoided reference to the causes of the war and its seamy side. My friends were very frank, and one and all lamented the "journalistic" attitude that did so much to create and emphasize bad feeling. Although I was told that there is great bitterness as to the Treaty terms with Great Britain, there were no manifestations. The waiters may have been a little less courteous, but I soon concluded this was part of the new democratic state of affairs. Even waiters who knew English were quite eager to talk about their war service. All were at one in regard to the severity of our blockade. The Fleet did it. They were reduced to great straits and lived on turnips, turnips alone for months. This is what brought submission. They were actually starved out, and to hear how _____, _____, _____, and _____, required public rations and were dieted on turnips, which no one in Germany will eat during peace times, was really pitiful. Then, they had no coal. All their metal was confiscated and they spent much time in bed with all the clothing over them for warmth, and only one room was occupied so as to save fuel during the day. Add to this daily nocturnal flights of flying machines dropping bombs and shaking nerves, and the great loss of life; the whole fabric of state was dislocated. Discontent, Social Democracy and instability of the civic government did the rest.

But now there is a great reaction. You would not recognize at first sight that there had been troublous times. Everything seems prosperous. There is an air of progress, and the atmosphere of work is abroad. Houses are clean, freshly painted, tramways all renewed, trig and perfect. Trains few, but comfortable, punctual to the minute. Everyone clean, no rags, not a dirty face even amongst the poor, not a drunk man to be seen. No soldiers, a few officers at times, a solitary sentinel at some of the deserted looking terraces, and a fine force of military police, young, capable stalwarts, mounted at centres of great traffic, stations, etc., and purpose-like trustworthy men. The fear of Bolshevism remains. Its possibilities are now unlikely. I think the people will have none of it. Still, the question of government remains, and the limits of taxation are unknown, and to what extent the screw may yet be employed remains uncertain. Class warfare, "peaceful" pressure by the "Have-nots" is yet dreaded; but if Germany should soon have trading chances, industry will revive and she will advance with a bound. There is a true economy. Bread is still rationed. You get it at breakfast—small brodchen—and you see no more that day. In

hotels, if you desire bread thereafter, you pay for it specially, and in private houses I soon found that even black bread was produced because of the guest; so also no sugar, save for the guest. Only water on the tables. No condiments, only salt. You had to ask for mustard. But, to him who has money all things come in restaurants and hotels.

Now the exchange I cannot fathom. The mark has become to us a penny. Consequently I got 240 marks for £1. So living is cheap there and good. I had good rooms in Hannover and Berlin for 20 marks a night, 40c. Dinner and beer cost 18 marks—32c.—or 48c. with bread. Everyone travels Third Class, but the crowded Third Class in roasting hot weather was too trying for me and I took Second, travelling with the elderly, the aged, and the wealthy, and found it quite moderate.

Owing to the favourable rate of exchange I was able to ask my friends to dine with me, and we had really merry parties. As they had little chance since the war of such luxury, we had soup, meat and an ice and a bottle of good Mosel or Rhine wine at an excellent restaurant at a very small cost; and the holiday not only suited my purse but let me give them pleasure in a style that is quite impossible for us at home. Although my sense of lassitude and lack of energy had not gone, generally I felt so perfectly well that the years seemed to have rolled back and I enjoyed the glorious woods, the war maps and pictures galleries, and the charms of Nature with something like the old relish and appreciation.

I visited no hospitals. To my shame, I did not call on my medical friends. I was not in tune for that at the beginning, and I felt I ought to follow advice and abjure all hospital work.

But every night I was with friends. I was taken to the theatre at Frankfurt and saw a Schiller tragedy and I took Mrs—and her son twice to the theatre at Berlin and saw *Mid-summer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*. The theatres were crowded. The restaurants are in full swing, and the wealthy and the profiteers go to extremes as with us in London and elsewhere; but the real backbone of the nation is in earnest, and resolved to do well. I was told that in the north the Hohenzollerns will not be accepted. In the south with Bavaria, Wurtemberg and Baden the hope for a return to monarchy is strong; but throughout there is a strong desire that the unity of the Empire may be preserved and a firm government established. Commerce rules the day.

Never more will Munich sink under the terror of the anarchist. Mr. H—the artist of Munich told me the horrors the anarchists perpetrated in Munich were unprecedented. They seem to have been

put down finally and quickly in a very summary fashion. All the hospital staffs had already been condemned to death and the patients in the paying wards had been shot. H— is very optimistic: "Never" he says "had Munich such a fine crowd of student artists as it now has, frugal, hard-working, enthusiastic and full of ideas". I did not meet such optimism in north Germany. Over all the hatred of the French is manifest, and it is not improved by the fact that in the occupied areas they have black troops, negroes from Senegal, etc. I traversed the fringe of the occupied French area near Frankfurt, but saw none of them. E—took me on a walking tour in the Taunus one Sunday. Oh! the delight of the forest! We ended up at his large country house occupied by the gardener as caretaker, and had tea. All my meals were open-air. Then we returned to supper to his town house, with his wife and family. They had been to church.

Like most of his class now, E—takes no exercise, and sticks to business. Taxation presses hard, and he says all his work now goes to the State; while the demand for more wages and shorter hours, and the influence of the Trade Union make the German merchant feel that he is no longer master in his own house.

It is curious, considering all such difficulties, to receive the impression that Germany is recovering rapidly. It is now the fashion for all young men to marry at about 21 and the girls at 18. It is regarded as a duty. Those who cannot, for example students, are at least 'verlobt' (betrothed), and as the married cannot afford and cannot find houses, they dwell in their parents' homes. Everyone has more or less a friend or a relation quartered with him. Many, formerly affluent, have lodgers. W—has a widowed brother and two children living with him, and his most delightful wife—well, her busy fingers are never at rest, from morning till night patching, darning, housekeeping and planning. Her sunny smile, her infectious contentment, her well ordered children and her optimistic husband created the healthy atmosphere where I spent most of my time.

W—'s farewell banquet where he had made a "Bowl" for us, after supper and when we sat in the garden till midnight, I shall not forget. "We need no theatre" said his wife. "We have violin, cello, piano, and really lack for nothing, and should be thankful the war is over." B—took me out to spend the day with old Mr. and Mrs. Z—and P—. The trees planted ten years ago are now large. Trees here grow much faster than in our northern clime. Conifers some 120 kinds. Such birches, oaks, rock gardens and wild Nature just kept in order, are better than any up to date garden. The shady nooks, the outlooks, the wealth of bird life, the burn running

through the grounds, its basins with white, yellow and red water lilies, reeds and botanical treasures, form a little paradise where the two octogenarians sit side by side, hand in hand, enjoying the sun, and out of the world, but constantly visited by and having resident with them their children and grand-children, living in peace as in the past, and yet enjoying the present and seeing their future generations.

I was often asked my nationality when talking with fellow passengers, and carefully answered "From Scotland". The result was always satisfactory. "Did I serve?" and so on. I met two or three commercial travellers who had been all over Europe. They were confident that Germany was making way far beyond any other country, and were of opinion that France had suffered most and would not recover soon. They were pessimistic in regard to the future of Poland, Russia and Roumania. Hungary they were more confident of, and also of Bohemia; but of the Balkans generally they spoke with despair, so much unrest and ignorance.

And here, our strike goes on. Ireland in misery, and not in our day I fear will there be contentment, good government, or stability, but it should come eventually.* One thing struck me. All the commercial men I met, and another, a friend whom I encountered and dined with in London, who has recently been round the world, were convinced that were only Labour movements characterized by common sense and a desire for the common weal in the Old Country at the present moment, we should control the world and have a reign of prosperity and influence such as no nation has ever yet had or could have; and we are throwing all our opportunities away.

*Written some months ago. (EDITOR)