

# THROUGH GERMANY ON FOOT

## PART II.—COBLENZ UNDER THE STARS AND STRIPES

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THE "Residence City" of Coblenz, headquarters of the American Army of Occupation, is one of the finest on the Rhine. The British at Cologne have more imposing quarters; the French at Mayence—and particularly at Wiesbaden—have more artistic advantages. A few of our warriors, still too young to distinguish real enjoyment from the flesh-pots incident to metropolitan bustle, have been heard to grumble, "Huh! they gave us third choice, all right!" But the consensus of opinion is contentment. The sudden change from the mud burrows of the Argonne, or from the war-worn villages of the Vosges, made it particularly natural that some should draw invidious comparisons between our war-battered ally and the apparently unscathed enemy.

Wealth has long been inclined to gravitate toward the triangle of land at the junction of the Rhine and the Moselle. The owners—or recent owners—of mines in Lorraine make their home here. The mother of the late unlamented Kaiser was fond of the place and saw to it that no factory chimneys came to sully the scene with their smoke or the streets and her tender heart-strings with the wan and sooty serfs of industrial progress. Those who see the boggy of "propaganda" in every corner hint that the Germans preferred that the occupied territory be the Rhineland, "because this garden spot would make a better impression on their enemies, particularly the Americans, so susceptible to creature comforts, than the interior of Germany."

It is hard to believe, however, that those splendid, if sometimes top-heavy, residences stretching for miles along the Rhine were built, twenty to thirty years ago in many cases, with any conscious purpose of impressing the prospective enemies of the Fatherland.

The longed-for creature comforts of his new billeting area have made the American soldier feel strangely at home. Here his office, in contrast to the rude stone *casernes* with their tiny tin stoves that gave off smoke rather than heat, is warm, cozy, often well carpeted. The *Regierungsgebäude*—it means nothing more terrible than "government building"—which the rulers of the province yielded to our army staff, need not have blushed to find itself in Washington society. Our billets recall the frigid, medieval ones of war-torn France with unfair comparison. We were able to dispossess the Germans of their best, whereas the French, generous as they were, could only allot us what was left from their own requirements; yet there is still a margin in favor of the Rhineland for material comfort.

Coblenz is swamped under its flood of Americans. Its streets are rivers of hurrying khaki; there are places where the endless trains of olive-drab automobiles and trucks make crossing not merely perilous, but well-nigh impossible. Scarcely a family has escaped the piercing eye of the billeting officer; its clubs, its hotels, its recreation halls, its very schools and churches, are wholly or in part given over to the boyish con-

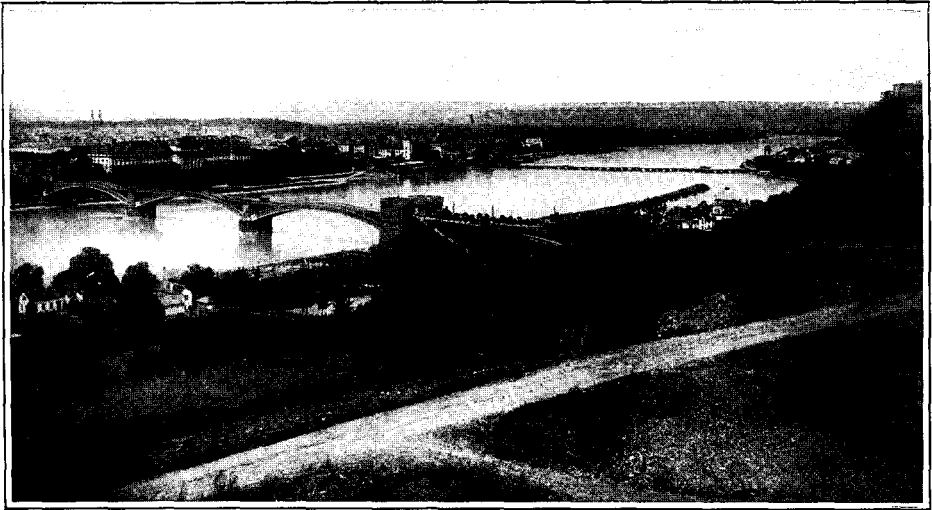
querors from overseas. It is awakened by the insistent notes of the American reveille; it is reminded of bedtime by that most impressive of cradle songs, the American taps, the solemn, reposeful notes of which float out across the Rhine like an invitation to wilful humanity to lay away its disputes and differences as it has its labors of the day.

Dovetailed, as it were, into the life of its late adversaries on the field of battle, there is still a wide difference of opinion in the A. E. F. as to their character. The French have no such doubts. Yet while they admit no argument as to the criminality of the Boche, they confess themselves unable to understand his psychology. *Ils sont sincèrement faux* is perhaps the most succinct summing up of the French verdict, and one that has the true ring. "It took the world a long time to realize that the German has a national point of view, a way of thinking quite at variance with the rest of the world"—our known Western world, at least; I fancy we should find the Japanese not unsimilar if we could read deep down into his heart. But the puzzling part of the German's "mentality" is that up to a certain point he is quite like the rest of us. As the alienist's patient appears perfectly normal until one chances upon his weak spot, so the German looks and acts at close range like any normal human being. It is only when one stumbles into the realm of national ethics that the German is found widely separated from the bulk of mankind. Once one has grasped this difficult fact and is able to look at it from various sides, it is comparatively easy to comprehend the German's peculiar notions of recent events.

"The German," asserts a European editorial writer, "feels that his army was not beaten; that, on the contrary, it had all the military prestige of the war. Then he knew that there was increasing scarcity of food at home and, feeling that the Allies were in mortal dread of new drives by the German army and would be only too glad to compromise,

he proposed an armistice. Germany expected the world to supply her gladly with all her needs as a mark of good faith, and, to encourage the timorous Allies, she offered to let them advance to the Rhine. Now the Germans affect to wonder why Germany is not completely supplied by the perfidious Allies, and why the garrisons, having been allowed to see the beautiful Rhine scenery, do not withdraw. Not only the ignorant classes, but those supposedly educated take that attitude. They consider, apparently, that the armistice was an agreement for mutual benefit, and any idea that the war was anything but a draw, with the prestige all on the German side, has not yet penetrated to the German mind."

With the above—it was written in January—and the outward show of friendliness for the American Army of Occupation as a text, I examined scores of Germans of all classes and from all sections of the country, whom our sergeants picked out of the throngs that passed through our hands for various reasons and pushed one by one into my cozy little office overlooking the Rhine. Their attitude, their answers were always the same, parrot-like in their sameness. Before a week had passed I could have set down the replies, almost in their exact words, the instant the man to be interviewed appeared in the doorway, to click his heels resoundingly while holding his arms stiffly at his sides. As becomes a long-disciplined people, the German is certainly no individualist. One can be as sure just what he is going to do and how he is going to do it as one can that duplicates of the shoes one has always worn are going to fit. Yet what did they really think, away down under their generations of discipline? This procession of men with their close-clipped heads and their China-blue eyes that looked at me as innocently as a Nürnberg doll, who talked so glibly with apparent friendliness and perfect frankness, surely had *some* thoughts of their own hidden away in the depths of their



#### COBLENZ AND THE RHINE

The large building in the left center is the palace and the stronghold at the extreme right is the Fortress Ehrenbreitstein

souls. Yet one seldom, if ever, caught a glimpse of them. Possibly there were none there; the iron discipline of a half-century may have killed the hidden roots as well as destroyed the plant itself. In contrast to the sturdily independent American, sharply individualistic still in spite of his year or two of army training, these heel-clicking automatons were exasperating in their garrulous taciturnity.

"What most characterizes the German," said Moser, more than a century ago, "is obedience, respect for force." What probably struck the plain American doughboy even more than mere obedience was the attitude of passive docility, of their immediate compliance with all our requirements. They could have been so mean, so disobedient in petty little ways without openly disobeying. Instead, they seemed to go out of their road to make our task of occupation easy. Their racial discipline not merely did not break down; it permeated every nook and corner. The very children never gave a gesture, a whisper of wilfulness; the family warning found them as docile as a lifetime of training

had left the adults. Any traveler who has noted the abhorrence with which the German looks upon the simplest infraction of the most insignificant order—the mere entering by a *Verbotener-Eingang*—which the American would break, and pay his fine and go his way with a smile of amusement on his face, will not find it difficult to visualize the red rage with which the soldiers of the Kaiser looked upon any lack of seriousness toward the stern and sacred commands of their armies of occupation.

No one guessed aright as to Germany's action in case of defeat. Talk of starvation though we will, they did not fight to a standstill, as our South did, for example. They gave proof of a strong faith in the old adage beginning, "He who fights and runs away . . ." They quit when the tide turned, not at the last crag of refuge, and one cannot but feel less respect for them accordingly. But whatever remnant of estimation may have been left after their sudden abandonment of the field might be enhanced by an occasional lapse from their docility, a proof now and then that they are human, after all; instead, we get

something that verges very closely upon cringing, as a personal enemy one had just trounced might bow his thanks and offer to light his victor's cigar. It is virtually impossible to believe that any one could be rendered so docile by mere orders from above. It is impossible to believe they have no hatred in their hearts for the nation that finally turned the balance of war against them. It must be habit, habit formed by those with superimposed rulers, as contrasted with those who have their word, or at least fancy they do, in their own government.

That they should take the fortunes of war philosophically is comprehensible. The most chauvinistic of them must now and then have had an inkling that those who live by the sword might possibly some day catch the flash of it over their own heads. Or it may be that they have grown so used to military rule that ours does not bother them. Except to a few ex-officers, politicians, and the like, who must realize most keenly that some one else is holding the bag, what real difference is there in being ruled by a just and not ungentle enemy from across the sea and an iron-stern hierarchy in distant Berlin? Besides, has not Germany long contended that the stronger peoples have absolute rights over the weaker? Why, then, should they contest the argument when they suddenly discover, to their astonishment, that their claims to the position of Superman were poorly based? The weak have not rights; it is the German himself who has said so. Their outward attitude, at least, has a suggestion of almost Arabic fatalism. It is no such anomaly as it may seem that the German and the Turk should have joined forces; they have considerable in common—"Allah, Il Allah, Thy will be done!"

There is very slight difference between an errand of *liaison* to a bureau of the German staff-officers left in Coblenz and similar commissions to the French or the Italians before the armistice—an atmosphere only a trifle more strained,

which is natural in view of the fact that I came to order rather than to consult. In most cases the hand of welcome was proffered as quickly, and usually as quickly accepted, from force of habit. Some contend that the women have a smoldering resentment against us, are still loyal to the Kaiser and the old order of things, see in us the murderers of their sons and husbands, the jailers of their prisoners of war who rumor has whispered will never return. On a few rare occasions I have felt this breath of frigidity in the attitude of some *grande dame* of the haughtier classes. But whether it be a definite policy of conciliation to win the friendliness of the Americans, as a naughty boy strives to make up for his naughtiness at sight of the whip being taken down from its hook, or a mere "mothering instinct," the vast majority of our hostesses, even though war widows, go out of their way to make our stay with them pleasant. Clothes are mended, buttons sewed on unasked. Waiters serve us with good grace and with slight attention to whether tips are given or not. Though Coblenz has something of the callousness of large cities as compared with the homely village manners of Trier, the American had seldom to struggle for his half of the sidewalk. The observation balloon that rode the sky above Ehrenbreitstein—such a one as we had so often seen destroyed in a flash and a puff of red smoke in the heat of battle—its immense Stars and Stripes waving over a hundred miles of country, was frequently pointed out with interest, seldom with any show of animosity. The mass of Americans on the Rhine came with the impression that they would be forced to go heavily armed day and night. Except for the established patrols and sentries, the man or officer who "totes" a weapon anywhere in the occupied area could scarcely arouse the ridicule of his comrades more if he appeared in sword and armor. There was, to be sure, a rare case of an American soldier being done to death by hoodlums or in some drunken brawl,

but for that matter so there was in every army.

The last thing the Germans showed toward us was enmity. Nothing pointed to a smoldering resentment behind their masks, as, for example, with the Mexicans. In France, anything recalling the days when the enemy lived in equality in the land was effaced or destroyed. Not so in Germany, though there were occasional signs of individual rage or wanton playfulness. Placards in French on railway cars and the like had survived the entire war unscathed. The municipal theater was as apt to give a French or Italian opera as a German one. The Paris papers were as prominently displayed in the news-stands as those from Berlin, even in cities beyond the occupied area. Hauptmann appeared no more often in the *repertoire* than Shakespeare — though, come to think of it, did not some Boche savant prove the latter a German? There was a constant stream of people,

principally young men, through our offices inquiring how they could most easily emigrate to America. Incidentally we were besieged by scores of "Americans" who spoke not a word of English, who had been "caught here by the war"—more than four years ago—and had often killed the time by serving in the German army, but who now demanded all the privileges which their "citizenship," genuine or alleged, was supposed to confer upon them. A German major wrote a long letter of application for admission into the American army, inclosing several pages of recommendations and a detailed account of

his four years' experience against the Allies, with the same bland complacency with which a pedagogue whose school had been abolished might apply for a position in another. He even enlarged upon the superior knowledge and training which he could bring the American staff, though he did not mention whether he expected to learn as well as to teach.



A MARKET SCENE IN COBLENZ

There was nowhere a sign of resentment even against "German-Americans"—as the Boche was accustomed to call them until he discovered the virtual non-existence of that anomaly—for having entered the war against the old Fatherland. The government of their adopted country had ordered them to do certain things, and no one understands better than the German that government orders are issued to be obeyed.

Now and then one stumbled upon the sophistry that seems so established a trait in the German make-up. No corporation lawyer could have been more



clever in finding loopholes in the proclamations issued by the Army of Occupation than those adherents of the "scrap of paper" fallacy who set out to do so. My host, a pompous judge, sent up word from time to time for permission to spend an evening out with me over a bottle of the well-aged Rhine wine with which his cellar seemed still to be liberally stocked. On one occasion the conversation turned to several holes in the ceiling of my sumptuous parlor. They were the result, he explained, of an air raid during the last August of the war. A bomb had carried away the elaborate window-shutters, portions of the granite steps beneath, and liberally pockmarked the stone façade of the house opposite.

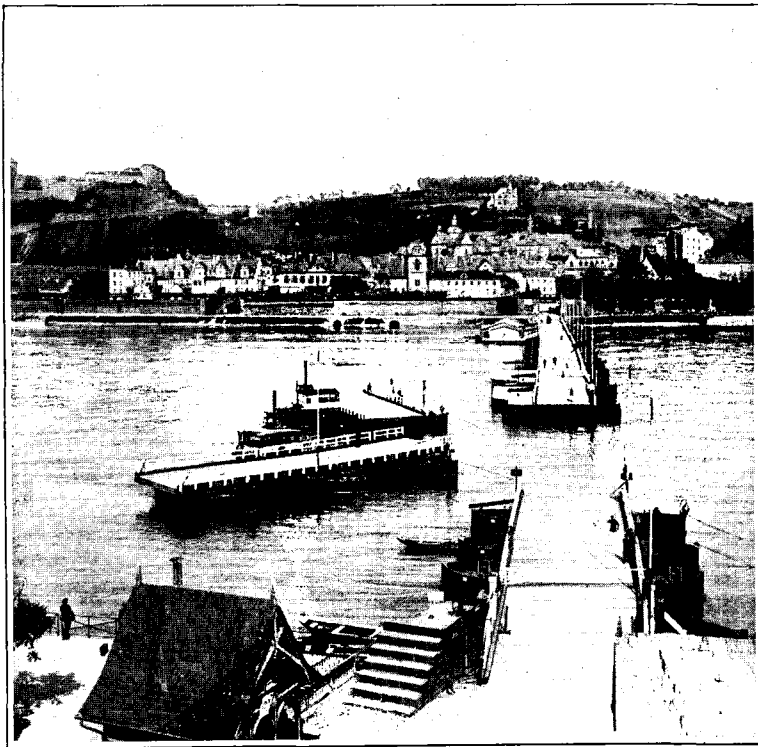
"It was horrible," he growled. "We all had to go down into the cellar, and my poor little grandson cried from fright—that is no way to make war,

against the innocent non-combatants and women and children!"

I did not trouble to ask him if he had expressed the same sentiments among his fellow club-members in, say, May, 1915, for his sophistry was too well trained to be caught in so simple a trap.

How quickly war shakes down!

Until we grew so accustomed to it that the impression faded away, it was a constant surprise to note how all the business of life went on unconcerned under the occupation. *Ordnung* still reigned. The postman still delivered his letters punctually and placidly. Transportation of all kinds kept almost its peace-time efficiency. Paper ends and cigarette butts might litter a corner here and there, but that was merely evidence that some careless doughboy was not carrying them to a municipal wastebasket in the disciplined German fashion. For if the Boches themselves had



THE BRIDGE OF BOATS OPENING TO ALLOW STEAMERS TO PASS

thrown off restraint "over in Germany"—a thing hard to believe and still harder to visualize—there was little evidence of a similar tendency along the Rhine.

Whatever the docility, the conciliatory attitude of our forced hosts, however, I have yet to hear that one of them has expressed repentance for the horrors they loosed upon the world. If they are sorry, it is not in the sense we commonly give to that word. The war they seem to have taken as the natural, the unavoidable thing, just a part of life, as the gambler takes gambling, with no other regret than that it is his bad luck to lose. Like the gambler, they may be sorry they made certain moves in the game; they may be sorry they entered the game at all, as the gambler would be who knew in the end that his adversary had more money on his hip than he had given him credit for in the beginning. But it is not a regret for being a gambler. Did not Nietzsche say that to regret, to repent, is a sign of weakness? Unless there is something under his mask that never shows a hint of its existence on the surface, the German is still a firm disciple of Nietzschean philosophy.

In one sense he is a "good loser" in that he begins without waste of time or vain regrets to hedge, to make up for his folly—or his bad luck—to bend all his efforts toward quick recuperation. But in the other sense, that in which the term is used in clean sport, he is a decidedly bad loser. For he has none of the generosity toward the victors, none of the "forget it" attitude which characterizes the sportsman of higher instincts.

There is much debate among American officers as to just what surge of feeling passes through the veins of a German of high rank forced to salute his conquerors. With rare exceptions, every man in uniform renders the required homage with great care. The higher and more impressively decorated the officer the more punctilious he was in his pains never to pass even an American lieu-

tenant without stiffening into the best military rigid form, as he might have done before the Kaiser in days gone by. Now and then one carefully averted his eyes or turned to gaze into a shop-window in time to avoid what could scarcely have been anything but a humiliation. But, for the most part, they seemed almost to go out of their way to salute, some almost brazenly, more with a half-friendly little bow. I shall long remember the invariable click of heels and the smart hand-to-cap of the old general with a great white beard who passed me each morning on the route to our respective offices. The punctiliousness was particularly striking when compared with the testimony of all demobilized soldiers passing through our hands that the salute had virtually been abolished by popular agreement among the once sternly disciplined troops "over in Germany." That there was feeling under these brazen exteriors, however, is proved by the fact that most of the officers in the occupied area slipped quietly into civilian clothes, for no other apparent reason than to escape the humiliation. Then on March 1st came a new order from our headquarters commanding all members of the German army in occupied territory never to appear in public out of uniform, to carry always papers showing their presence in the area to be officially authorized, and to report to an American authority every Monday morning. The streets of Coblenz blossomed out that day with more kinds of German uniforms than some members of the A. E. F. had ever seen outside of a prisoner-of-war inclosure.

It was easy to understand why Germans in uniform saluted; they were commanded to do so. But why should every male, from childhood up, in many districts of our territory raise his hat to us with a subservient "*n Tag*"? Why the same words with a hint of courtesy from the women? In one district the British required men to uncover when they met an officer, but our rules did not exact any such homage. Was it

fear, respect, habit, design? It could scarcely be sarcasm; the German peasantry barely knows the meaning of that. Why should a section foreman, whose only suggestion of uniform was a battered old railway cap, go out of his way to render us military homage? Personally I am inclined to think that, were conditions reversed, I'd climb a tree or crawl into a culvert; but we came to wonder if they did not consider the salute a privilege. Only the well-dressed in the cities showed an attitude that seemed in keeping with the situation, from our point of view. They frequently avoided looking at us, pretended not to see us, took us much as the Chinese take their "invisible" property-man at the theater. In a tramway, in a train, now and then, it was amusing to watch a haughty, weather-browned man one knew had been at least a captain, who still displayed boldly his kaiserly mustache, his army leggings and breeches,

who looked as out of place in his civilian coat and soft hat as a cowboy with a cane, as he half openly grated his teeth at the "undisciplined" Americans who dared do as they pleased without so much as asking his leave. But the doughboys were supremely oblivious to him. Their freedom of movement recalled by contrast the time—was it fifteen or only ten years ago?—when I ventured to open a hermetically sealed window in a compartment in which a testy old German was taking snuff, and found at once that it was *streng verboten* under I do not remember what dire punishment. These proud beings had lost caste somewhat even with their own people. An ex-corporal returned to his place as station guard went out of his way to inform me that American officers were all right; so were German soldiers, but German officers were too proud. One must stand with the middle finger of each hand on the seams of the trousers



THIS TROPHY OF WAR, SURRENDERED BY THE GERMANS TO THE AMERICANS, IS NOW CARRYING MAIL BETWEEN PARIS AND COBLENZ FOR THE ARMY OF OCCUPATION



as long as they chose to talk to one—he demonstrated it most vividly as he spoke.

Speaking of German officers, when the first inkling leaked out of Paris that Germany might be required by the terms of the Treaty of Peace to reduce her army to a hundred thousand men there was a suggestion of panic among our German acquaintances. It was not that they were eager to serve their three years as conscripts, as their fathers had done. There was parrot-like agreement that no government would ever again be able to force the manhood of the land to that sacrifice. Nor was it any great fear that so small an army would be inadequate to the requirements of “democratized” Germany. But the question was, “What on earth can we do with

all our officers, if you only allow us forty-five hundred?” Prohibition, I believe, raised the same grave problem with regard to our bartenders. But as I visualized our own army reduced to the same stern necessity, the panic was comprehensible. However, the predicament is one the Germans can scarcely expect the Allies to solve for them.

“War,” said Voltaire, “is the business of Germany.” One realized the plain fact in that assertion more and more as new details of the thorough militarization of land, population, and industry came to light under our occupancy. Fortifications, labyrinths of tunnels, such massive stores of everything that could by any possibility ever be of use in the complicated business of war, every man up through middle age who



MILITARY POLICE A. E. F. REGULATING TRAFFIC  
IN THE TOWN OF COCHEM

had two legs to stand on marked with his service in some form in Mars's workshop; there was some new hint of the militarism at every turn. None the less, striking was the aggressive propaganda in favor of war and the loyalty to the war lords in every corner. Not merely were there monuments, inscriptions, martial mottoes to din the military inclination into the simple *Volk* wherever the eye turned, wherever the footsteps led. In the most miserable little *Gasthaus* rooms, with its bare floors and not half enough cover on the beds to make a winter night comfortable, huge framed pictures of martial nature stared down upon the shivering guest. Here hung a life-size portrait of Hindenburg; there a war scene of Blücher crossing the Rhine; beyond, an *Opfergaben des Volkes*, in

which a long line of simple laboring-people come with great deference to present their most cherished possession—a bent old peasant, a silver heirloom; a girl, her hair—on the altar of their rulers' martial ambition. It is doubtful whether the Germans themselves have any conception of how widely this harvest of tares had overspread their national life. It may come to them years hence, when grim necessity has forced the digging up of the pernicious roots.

But the old order shows signs of change already. On a large government building over in Trier in the lettering *Königlicher Hauptzollamt* the first word has been obliterated. In a little town down the Rhine the dingy

*Hotel Deutscher Kaiser,  
Diners 1mk 50 und höher  
Logis von 2 mk an.*

has the word *Kaiser* painted over. Though it is still visible through the whitewash, as if ready to come back at a new turn of events. Even the *kaiserlich* mustache, of world-wide fame, has largely disappeared, at least in the American sector. In fact, the over-modest lip decoration made famous by our most popular movie star seems to be the present vogue. More camouflage? More "*Kameras*"? A gentle compliment to the Americans? Or merely the natural change of style, the passing that in time befalls all things, human or *kaiserlich*?

The adaptability of the German as a merchant has long since been proved by his commercial success abroad. It quickly became evident to the Army of Occupation that he was not going to let his feelings interfere with business. As the demand for German uniforms, equipment, insignia, faded away behind the retreating armies of the Kaiser, commerce quickly adapted itself to the new conditions. Women who had earned their livelihood or their pin-money for four years by embroidering shoulder-straps and knitting sword-knots for the soldiers in field gray instantly turned

their needles to making the ornaments for which the inquiries of the newcomers in khaki showed a demand. Shop-windows blossomed out overnight in a chaos of colors and shapes of divisional insignia, of service stripes—ugly, over-gaudy things for the most part, thanks both to the German's rather crude taste and the absence of gold braid—with khaki cloth and the coveted shoulder-pins from brass bars to silver stars, with everything that could appeal to the American doughboy as a souvenir of his stay on the Rhine to the girl at home—and this last covers a multitude of sins of taste. Iron crosses of both classes dangled before his eager eyes behind the plate-glass fronts. The sale of these "highest prizes of German manhood" to their enemies as mere pocket-pieces raised a guttural howl of protest in the local papers, but they could still always be had, if more or less *sub rosa*. Spiked helmets—he must be an uninventive or an absurdly truthful member of the new Watch on the Rhine who cannot show visible evidence to the amazed folks at home of having captured at least a half-dozen Boche officers and despoiled them of their headgear. We secured those helmets from a storehouse just across the Moselle; we loaded down the A. E. F. mails with them until it is strange there were any ships left with space for soldiers homeward bound—the Army of Occupation had heard there were soldiers homeward bound, though it took the statement with a considerable pinch of salt. A sergeant marched into his captain's billet in an outlying town with a telescoped bundle of six spiked helmets and laid them down with a snappy, "Nine marks each, sir." "Can you get me a half-dozen or so, too?" asked a visiting lieutenant. "Don't know, sir," replied the sergeant. "He made these out of some remnants he had left on hand in the factory, but he is not sure he can get any more material."

If we had not waked up to our peril in time and the Germans had taken New York, would our seamstresses have made

German flags and our merchants prominently displayed them in their windows, tagged with the price? Possibly. We of the A. E. F. have learned something of the divorce of patriotism and business since those days when the money-grabbers descended upon us with their little booths at the training-camps at home. At any rate, the merchants of Coblenz are quite as ready to take an order for a Stars and Stripes six feet by four as for the red, white, and black. "Shoe-shine parlors" sprang up in every block and were so quickly filled with khaki-clad warriors intent on obeying the placard to "Look Like a Soldier" that the proprietors had perforce to encourage their own timid people by adding the notice "Germans also admitted." Barber shops developed hair carpets from sheer inability to find the time to sweep out, and at that the natives were hard put to it to get rid of their own stubble. When the abhorred order against photography by members of the A. E. F. was suddenly and unexpectedly lifted, lock, stock, and barrel, the camera-shops resembled the entrance to a ball-park on the day of the deciding game between the two rival big leagues. There is nothing timid or squeamish about German commerce. Shops were quite ready to display post-cards showing French ruins with chesty German officers strutting in the foreground, once they found that these appealed to the indefatigable and all-embracing American souvenir-hunter. Down in Cologne a German printing-shop worked overtime to get out an official history of the American Third Division. In the cafés men who were shooting at us three months before sat placidly sawing off our own popular airs and struggled to perpetrate in all its native horror that inexcusable hubbub known as the "American jazz." The sign "American spoken here" met the eye at frequent intervals. Whether the wording was from ignorance, sarcasm, or hatred of the English has not been recorded. There was not much call for the statement,

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even when it was true, for it was astounding what a high percentage of the Army of Occupation spoke enough German to "get by." The French never tired of showing their surprise when a "Yank" addressed them in their own tongue; the Germans took it as a matter of course, though they usually had the ill manners of insisting on speaking "English" whatever the fluency of the customer, a barbaric form of impoliteness which the French are usually too instinctively tactful to commit.

I wonder if the American at home understands just what military occupation means. Some of our Southerners of the older generation may, but I doubt whether the average man or woman can visualize it. Occupation means a horde of armed strangers permeating every nook and corner of your town, of your house, of your life.

The Americans came in without fuss and feathers, without any of those bombastic formalities with which the imagination imbues an occupation. One day the streets were full of soldiers, a bit slow and heavy in their movements and thinking processes, dressed in bedraggled dull gray, and the next with more soldiers, of quick perception and buoyant step, dressed in khaki. But the newcomers were just plain fighters, still dressed in what the shambles of the Argonne had left them of clothing. They settled down to a shave and a bath and the comforts that were to be had with the unassuming adaptability that marks the American. The German, seeing no signs of many of those unpleasant things which had always attended *their* occupation of a conquered land, probably smiled a bit sneeringly to themselves and whispered that the Americans were strangely ignorant of military privileges. But they soon learned that the occupiers knew what they were about, or at least learned with vertiginous rapidity. The German conception of occupation, the rough treatment, the tear-it-apart - and - take - what - you - want - for yourself style of von Kluck's pets was

not the American manner. The dough-boy might hate a German man behind a machine-gun as effectively as any one, but his hatred did not extend to the man's women and children. With the latter particularly he quickly showed that *camaraderie* for which the French had found him notable, and the plump little square-headed boys and the over-blond little girls flocked about him so densely that a new order had to be issued requiring parents to keep their children away from American barracks.

But the Germans were not long in finding that American occupation lacked nothing in the essentials. A burgo-master who admitted that he might be able to accommodate four hundred men in his town, if given time, was informed that there would be six thousand troops there in an hour, who must be lodged before nightfall. Every factory, every industry of a size worth considering, that produced anything of use to the Army of Occupation, was taken over. We paid well for everything of the sort—or rather the Germans did in the end, under the ninth article of the armistice—but we took it. We commandeered the public drinking-halls and transformed them into an enlisted men's barracks. We shooed the rich man out of his sumptuous club and turned it over to our officers. We handed over to the Y. M. C. A. the big pompous *Festhalle* and a half-dozen as important buildings, and “jazz” and rag-time and burnt-cork jokes took the place of *Lieder* and *Männerchor*. The Germans could not travel, write letters, telephone, telegraph, publish newspapers without American permission or acquiescence. Meetings were no longer family affairs; a German-speaking American sergeant in plain clothes sat in on all of them. We marched whole societies off to jail because they were so careless as to gather about café tables without the written permission required for such transactions. In the matter of cafés, we touched the German in his tenderest point, and at the same time showed our sympathy

with the prohibition movement at home by forbidding the sale or consumption of all joy-producing beverages except beer and light wines—and the American conception of what a heavy wine is does not quite jibe with the German's—and permitted even those to be served only from eleven to two and five to seven—though later we took pity on the poor Boche and extended the latter period three hours deeper into the evening.

Many a German will long remember the date of Washington's Birthday. Scores of them came to the *Verkehrsbureau* early that day, planning a hurried trip, only to be met by a sign informing them that the bureau was closed until Monday morning—for the 22d came on a Saturday in 1919. Every railway-station gate, even the crude little ferries across the Rhine and the Moselle and their affluents, were in many cases subject to the orders of pass-gathering American sergeants. Our national soft-heartedness inclined us toward leniency in this matter of passes. But when one of our sergeants came back from visiting his family in Belgium, with news that a boy cousin had been shot the year before over the grave he had been forced to dig with his own hands, for no other crime than returning home without a properly stamped pass, things tightened in the area of those who heard the story. Incidentally he brought back convincing proof that it had been safer in Belgium under the German occupation to cut the hair of one's attractive daughters and dress them in male attire.

From the day of our entrance no German in uniform was permitted in our area unless on official business sanctioned by our authorities. But the term “uniform” was liberally interpreted; a discharged soldier, unable to invest in a new wardrobe, attained civilian status by exchanging his ugly, round, red-banded *Mütze* for a hat or cap. Small boys were not rated soldiers simply because they wore cut-down uniforms. Discharged soldiers domiciled “over in Germany” were still sent home in their

uniforms; those who lived in the occupied area were furnished a complete civilian outfit made of the same gray cloth from the army storehouses.

Occasional incidents transcended a bit the spirit of our lenient occupation. We took liberties, for example, even with the German's time; on March 12th all clocks of official standing were turned ahead to correspond to the "summer hour" of France and the A. E. F., and that automatically forced private clocks to be advanced also. My host declined for a day or two to conform, but he had only to miss one train to be cured of his obstinacy.

We ordered the Stars and Stripes to be flown from every German building we occupied; and there were colonels who made a special trip to Paris to get a flag that would catch every German eye for fifty kilometers round about. The Germans trembled with fear, and the dismay of seeing one of their oldest, most cherished bad customs going by the board, when a divisional order commanded them to leave their windows open at night, to avoid the "flu." Over in Mayen a band of citizens, in some wild lark or a surge of democracy,

dragged a stone statue of the Kaiser from its pedestal and rolled it out to the edge of town. There an American sergeant in charge of a stone quarry ordered it broken up for road material. The Germans put in a claim for several thousand marks to replace this "work of art." The officer who "surveyed" the case genially awarded the Germans the value of the stone at current prices.

In the main, for all the occupation, civilian life proceeded quite normally. Trains ran on time; cinemas and music-halls perpetrated their customary piffle on crowded and uproarious houses; bare-kneed football games occupied the leisure time of German youths; newspapers appeared as usual, subject only to the warning to steer clear of a few specified subjects; cafés were crowded at the popular hours in spite of the restrictions on consumption and the tendency of the orchestra to degenerate into rag-time. Would military occupation be anything like this in, say, Delaware? We often caught ourselves asking the question, audibly or inwardly, and striving to visualize our own land under a reversal of conditions. But the imagination never carried us very far in that direction;



DOUGHBOYS PLAYING FOOTBALL AT COBLENZ



particularly those of us who had left it in the early days of the war were unable to picture our native land under a military régime. In the British and French areas civilians were required to remain indoors after an early hour of the evening—the opera at Cologne began at five—but Pershing had vetoed any suggestion of a curfew law in our area.

Even though we rightly appropriated their best to our own purposes, the Germans will be hard put to allege any such wanton treatment of their property, their castles, and their government buildings as their own hordes so often committed in France and Belgium. Our officers and men, with rare exceptions, gave the habitations that had become temporarily theirs by right of conquest a care that they would scarcely have bestowed on their own property. The ballroom floor of Coblenz's most princely club was solicitously covered with canvas to protect it from officers' hobnails. Castle Stolzenfels, a favorite place of doughboy pilgrimage a bit farther up the Rhine, was supplied with felt slippers for heavily shod visitors. The Baedekers of the future will no doubt call the tourists' attention to the fact that such a Schloss, that this governor's palace and that colonel's impressive residence, were once occupied by American soldiers, but there will be small chance to add, as they have insinuated against the French in 1689 into the description of half the monuments along the Rhine, the charge "destroyed by the Americans in 1919."

It may be a surprise to the people at home to know that German highways are poorly made. Whatever we may have charged against the Hun, it was never a lack of thoroughness. But, contrary to the French, who start their road foundations "down in China," the Germans are a bit superficial in this matter, with the result that our heavy trucks began to pound their highways into a condition resembling those of France in the war zone. Moreover, the width is not adequate for present-day needs; a

camion forced a bit too far to one side at a passage was apt to sink to the hubs in the roadside path. The Americans took upon themselves the repair and widening of the roads, at German expense in the end, of course; that was particularly where the shoe pinched. It broke the thrifty German's heart to see these extravagant warriors from overseas, to whom two years of financial *carte blanche* had made money seem unlimited, squandering their wealth, or that of their children, without so much as an "if you please." The labor was German under the supervision of American sergeants, and the recruiting of it absurdly simple—to the Americans. An order to the burgomaster informing him succinctly, "You will furnish four hundred men at such a place to-morrow morning at seven for road labor—wages eight marks a day," covered our side of the transaction. Where and how the burgomaster found the laborers was of no interest to us. Once enrolled to labor for the American army, a man was virtually enlisted for the duration of the armistice—save for suitable reasons or lack of work. Strikes, so epidemic of late "over in Germany," were not permitted here. A keen young lieutenant of engineers was in charge of road repairs and sawmills in a certain divisional area. One morning his sergeant at one of the sawmills called him on the Signal Corps telephone that links all the Army of Occupation together, with the information that the night force had struck.

"Struck?" cried the lieutenant, aghast at the audacity. "I'll be out at once!"

Arrived at the town in question, he dropped in on the A. P. M. to request that a squad of M. P.s follow him without delay, and hurried on to the mill, fingering his .44.

"Order that night force to fall in here at once!" he commanded, indicating an imaginary line along which the offending company could be dressed.

"Yes, sir," saluted the sergeant, and disappeared into the building.

The lieutenant waited, nursing his

rage. A small boy, blue with cold, edged forward to see what was going on. Two others, a bit older, thin and spindle-shanked, their throats and chins muffled in soiled and ragged scarfs, their gray faces testifying to long malnutrition, idled into view with that yellow-dog curiosity of hookworm victims. But the night force gave no evidence of existence. At length the sergeant reappeared.

"Well," snapped the lieutenant, "what about it? Where is that night shift?"

"All present, sir," replied the sergeant, pointing at the three shivering urchins. "Last night at midnight I ordered them to start a new pile of lumber, and the next I see of them they was crouching around the boiler—it *was* a cold night, and when I ordered them back to work they said they hadn't had anything to eat for two days but some war bread. You know there's been some hold-up in the pay-vouchers . . ."

A small banquet at the neighboring *Gasthof* ended that particular strike without the intervention of armed force, though there were occasionally others that called for the shadow of it.

In taking over industries of this sort the Americans adopted the practice of demanding to see the receipted bills signed by the German military authorities, then required the same prices. Orders were issued to supply no civilian trade without written permission from the Americans. After the first inevitable punishments for not taking the soft-spoken new-comers at their word, the proprietors applied the rule with a literalness that was typically German. A humble old woman knocked timidly at the lieutenant's office door one day, and, upon being admitted, handed the clerk a long, impressive legal paper. When it had been deciphered it proved to be a laboriously penned request for permission to buy lumber at the neighboring sawmill. In it Frau Schmidt, there present, certified that she had taken over a vacant shop for the purpose of opening

a shoe-store, that said occupation was legal and of use to the community, that there was a hole in the floor of said shop which it was to the advantage of the health and safety of the community to have mended, wherefore she respectfully prayed the Herr Lieutenant in charge of the sawmills of the region to authorize her to buy three boards four inches wide and three feet long. In witness of the truth of the above assertions of Frau Schmidt, respectable and duly authorized member of the community, the burgomaster had this day signed his name and caused his seal to be affixed.

The lieutenant solemnly approved the petition and passed it on through military channels to the sergeant at the sawmill. Any tendency of *das Volk* to take our occupancy with fitting seriousness was too valuable to be jeopardized by typical American informality.

A few days later came another episode to disprove any rumors that the American heel was being applied with undue harshness. The village undertaker came in to state that a man living on the edge of town was expected to die, and that he had no lumber with which to make him a coffin. The tender-hearted lieutenant, who had seen many comrades done to death in tricky ambushes on the western front, issued orders at once that the undertaker be permitted to purchase materials for a half-dozen caskets, and, as the petitioner bowed low his guttural thanks, assured him: "You are entirely welcome. Whenever you need any more material for a similar purpose do not hesitate to call on me. I hope you will come early and often."

The Boche gazed at the speaker with that glass-eyed expressionlessness peculiar to his race, bowed his thanks again, and departed. Whether or not he "got the idea" is not certain. My latest letter from the lieutenant contains the postscript, "I also had the satisfaction of granting another request for lumber for six coffins."

# THE ADVENTURE OF LIFE IN NEW YORK

BY PHILIP GIBBS

*No British writer who has visited America in recent years has been received with such enthusiasm as Philip Gibbs. A journalist of unusual distinction, a novelist, an essayist, and an historian, he has made for himself a unique position. He is the most graphic and brilliant of war-correspondents, but he writes not less vividly of countries at peace. He is first of all an observer.*

*The following article is introductory to a series that by special arrangement is to appear exclusively in Harper's Magazine, recording Mr. Gibbs's impressions of America as he has seen it during the past few months. These articles will be illustrated by George Wright.*

I HAD the luck to go to New York for the first time when the ordinary life of that City of Adventure—always so vital and dynamic in activity—was intensified by the emotion of historic days. The war was over, and the warriors were coming home with the triumph of victory as the reward of courage; but peace was still delayed and there had not yet crept over the spirits of the people the staleness and disillusionment that always follow the ending of war, when men say: "What was the use of it, after all? Where are gratitude and justice? Who pays me for the loss of my leg?" . . . The emotion of New York life was visible in its streets. The city itself, monstrous, yet dreamlike and mystical as one sees it first rising to fantastic shapes through the haze of dawn above the waters of the Hudson, seemed to be excited by its own historical significance. There was a vibration about it as sunlight splashed its gold upon the topmost stories of the sky-scrapers and sparkled in the thousand windows of the Woolworth tower and flung black bars of shadow across the lower blocks. Banners were flying everywhere in the streets that go straight and long between those perpendicular cliffs of masonry, and the wind that comes blowing up the two rivers ruffled them. They were banners of rejoicing, but reminders also of the

service and sacrifice of each house from which they were hanging, with golden stars of death above the heads of the living crowds surging there below them. In those decorations of New York I saw the imagination of a people conscious of their own power, and with a dramatic instinct able to impress the multitudes with the glory and splendor of their achievement.

It was the same sense of drama that is revealed commercially in the genius of advertisement which startled me when I first walked down Broadway, dazzled by moving pictures of light, by flashing signs that shouted to me from high heaven to buy chewing-gum and to go on chewing; and squirming, wriggling, revolving snakes of changing color that burned letters of fire into my brain, so that even now, in remembrance, my eyes are scorched with the imprint of a monstrous kitten unrolling an endless reel of cotton. The "Welcome Home" of American troops was an advertisement of American manhood, idealized by emotion; and it was designed, surely, by an artist whose imagination had been touched by the audacity of the master-builders of New York who climb to the sky with their houses. I think it was inspired also by the vision of the moving-picture kings who resurrect the gorgeous life of Baby-