

# WITH THE BRITISH ARMY IN GERMANY

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND BISHOP FRODSHAM

It would be impossible to find an invading army who bear themselves more modestly than do the British in their area of occupation in Germany. It would be difficult to imagine an invaded people who appear more satisfied to lie quietly under the conqueror's heel. A Prussian officer, living in the neighborhood of Bonn, said with some scorn that he was convinced by recent events that the Rhinelanders understood the English far better than they could ever understand the Prussians. They certainly understand the superficial placability of the English soldier. When our advance guards marched across the Belgian frontier they shouted fiercely to every German who appeared in his doorway to go in, and he obeyed. If they had been met even by sulky opposition the British invaders might have borne themselves as truculently in the streets as they did in the trenches. The German, however, bowed his head as a bulrush, and lo! the dreaded army of occupation became like an organized crowd of tourists. Guards and Highlanders, Canadians and New Zealanders, officers and men from almost every regiment in the British Isles, jostled one another in the streets of Cologne 'for to admire an' for to see.' The shopkeepers rose to the situation, and in consequence they are reaping a rich harvest. Consequential civil servants in German uniforms, policemen and such like, salute the passing British officers with due form and solemnity, while the burghers and their wives go about their lawful occasions

until nine at night, when they are forced to retire to their homes, as though there were no British army in their midst. This, on the surface, is Germany under the conqueror's heel. Is it the real Germany?

The first impression received in the area of occupation is that the Germans, on the whole, are glad to be protected by the British from the foes of their own household. The German soldiers, in their hurried retreat, did not give much ground for pride in their discipline, or for confidence in their intentions. They stole everything they could lay their hands on and sold it for anything they could get. The thrifty farmers about Aachen and Düren bought government motor wagons for 80 marks, and government horses for 50 marks. For a time they were satisfied with their bargains, but slow-footed Nemesis is overtaking them. They are now being made to hand over to the military authorities as British property their camouflaged wagons and steeds. The German army scared the well-to-do. One evening in February I heard a stout citizen in the streets of Düren tirading against some 'pig-dogs,' whom, on inquiry, I found to be certain soldiers belonging to the place. They had threatened to return to that city of millionaires as industrial reformers and had said they would commence with the works of the angry speaker. Knowledge of German methods does not conduce to a blind belief in the bogey of Bolshevism. Bolshevism may be the enemy or the weapon of the enemy. *Quien sabe?* But in

either case Düsseldorf is a centre, or a base, for revolutionary propaganda. On the day I left an emissary from there was caught working among British troops in the streets of Cologne. This also has a modifying effect upon the chauvinistic leanings of the burghers of the fair city of the Rhineland.

It is ridiculous to talk of the Rhinelanders as displaying 'indescribable dejection,' or of their being 'utterly broken by defeat.' They are nothing of the sort. They are not repentant for the past, although they regret the failure. They are not dissatisfied with the present, except as a temporary annoyance. And they are not pessimistic about the future. Let any man who imagines otherwise converse freely with Germans, and he will soon be converted. Not much can be gathered from chance conversation in public places. The Germans are learning that it is unsafe to rely upon the lingual ignorance, even, of the British soldier. One truculent young German, who was annoyed by the presence of some soldiers (who travel free on the Cologne trams) commented to a friend disparagingly upon their personal appearance. A New Zealander who was standing by him on the tram platform understood him, and showed his resentment by ejecting from the car the critic, who fell upon his head and was taken to the hospital to ruminate upon his indiscretion. The judgment of the A.P.M. who told me of the occurrence was similar to the celebrated verdict recorded by a Welsh jury on the death of Mrs. Winifred Price: 'We find, *save her right!*' None the less the gloomy eyes of the people in the trams, eyes which are steady enough in their way, display neither consciousness of defeat nor true friendliness. Moreover, on the other hand, the crowds at the opera every night, and in the cafés by day, show no

widespread deep dejection at their country's downfall. The Germans are biding their time.

Cologne, and its satellitic towns, are traditionally hostile to the British. They were so before the rest of Germany dreamed of either jealousy or hatred. Their hostility dates back to 1806, when the light of the Holy Roman Empire, which once threw its splendor over mediæval Europe, flickered out in the Rhineland. Napoleon, with audacious mendacity, blamed England for all the evils that had fallen upon the see city of the Archbishop Elector, while at the same time he arrogated to himself the position of Protector of a new Rhenish Confederation. Napoleon took from South Germany 147,000 men to fight against the Allies, and he tried to strangle British trade with Europe by stopping for it the passage of the Rhine. He blew aside the magnificent nothingness of imperial court life, and he laid the foundations of competitive trade. These things bulk big with an impressionable and sentimental people. They also explain why Cologne was inimical to us long before Heinrich von Treitschke started his false crusade of force and hate, a crusade inspired, curiously enough, according to his own showing, by a mystical devotion to the Rhine. An English newspaper correspondent, unfortunate enough to be imprisoned at Ruhleben, recalled in the *Morning Post* of March 3 the scene in the square opposite Cologne Cathedral on the day that the newsboys rushed out with special editions announcing that England had declared war. The square, he said, was packed with a wild, seething multitude, intoxicated with the madness of the moment, and with hopes of universal plunder. To-day, in the same square, the news-women cry out 'Eenglish papeers,' and the people are quiet as lambs.

Cologne, however, is not all the Rhineland, and it is hard to believe that the country folk are quite false in their offers of friendship and help. It would be difficult to persuade the British soldiers that such is the case. There are some grim-faced men, who have been in the war from the beginning, who despise the Bosch for his 'tameness,' and who frankly regret that they cannot do unto him in Germany what he did to others in France and Belgium—saving such things as the English never do. The majority in the army of occupation, however, have no deep-rooted animosity against the Germans. The soldier quickly forgets, or he has no desire to remember. An ever-increasing number of men never saw the German atrocities upon the civilian population in Belgium, nor the wanton destruction of French hearths and homes. They are certain to predominate in the new army of occupation. And such being so, the whole situation will be modified still further. Even now, the prevailing attitude of the soldiers, particularly in the country districts, reacts upon the people, and confirms them in their friendliness. Regulations against fraternizing with the enemy are strict. It must be assumed that they are obeyed, at least in the streets and public places. But regulations or no regulations, it is difficult for an English officer to be brusque or rude, for instance, to the people upon whom he is billeted, who go out of their way to forestall his wishes and do him service. With the men, the difficulty is still more accentuated. For one thing, the officers have sitting-rooms to which they can retire, while the men have none. On cold nights they are invited into the kitchens, the only places where there are fires, and the people share with them any simple luxuries they may have. In one large village

near Bonn the people provided a Christmas tree apiece for the soldiers there, and decorated the branches with bright paper flowers and tiny gifts. After his fashion the British soldier is a tender-hearted, homely person. He likes children, and he shows his gratitude for any kindness by little acts of practical service—by shoveling away the snow from the pavement, by cutting wood and drawing water, and even by washing the floor or by drying up crockery. The same characteristics which endeared him to the French cottagers are now reconciling the German peasants and artisans to the army of occupation. Germans as a whole are a docile people. The same characteristics which once made them pliable in the hands of their own government now tell in favor of the British.

As every soldier knows, women are the perplexing quantities in warfare. Roughly speaking, they may be divided into two classes—the hopelessly irreconcilable, and the still more hopelessly fraternizing. If the army of occupation had been Amazons, the whole situation might be changed. Last November a little fierce Frenchwoman at Le Cateau, with clenched fists and flashing eyes, besought a very self-conscious and unhappy group of Australian officers, including myself, to do in detail to the German women all that the Germans had done in France. She was not satisfied with her audience. In the end it was difficult to know whether she was more enraged with the German *cochons* or with the British *imbéciles*. Similarly, there are some German women who would cheerfully barbecue the British. They once proved the quality of their hate by their treatment of the British prisoners, who were dragged for their amusement from the cattle trucks which did for ambulance wagons upon

the broad, white railway platform at Cologne. But since such luxuries have been denied them in days so much out of joint as these, the irreconcilable women of Germany relieve their feelings by acting as rudely as they dare to the soldiers billeted upon them. Curiously enough, although the soldier may swear with fervor and endeavor with more or less success to circumvent their curmudgeonly schemes, they bear no resentment against the women. On the contrary, they feel a certain respect, based upon the firm belief that English and Scottish women, if the circumstances were reversed, would be still more irreconcilable. 'My old woman would have given them bloody Germans socks if they'd coomed into her back kitchen,' remarked one of the K.O.Y.L.I. to a younger comrade, who was seeking sympathy for his ejection from that citadel of women's rights. So far as the authorities are concerned; they are not disturbed with the irreconcilables. It is the friendly woman who gives them trouble, and particularly those of a notorious class, who are a curse to friend and foe. There is grave reason for fearing that this class are being used deliberately by the Germans, as Bolshevik agitators may be used, for damaging the efficiency of the British Army.

The great majority of the girls of Germany do not appeal to British ideals of beauty, but wise men and women do not omit to allow for the influence of propinquity, for love laughs alike at locksmiths and army regulations. A puzzling case has presented itself in a well-known division with a high fighting record. A certain commander who makes a point of reading the German newspapers saw to his horror a notice to the effect that Fräulein E. Schmidt was betrothed to Private John Brown of his own regi-

ment. The horrified officer at once carpeted Private John Brown, a cautious Scot, who replied that he was 'no' fixed in his mind that he was going to be married on the lassie.' He acknowledged, however, that he had given her a ring, and that he was considering whether he would change his billet to her parents' house! The editor of the paper was next baled before the military authority. He stated that the girl's mother had sent him the advertisement, and that he did not know such things were forbidden. Frau Schmidt was then summoned. She averred that it was not proper for a young girl to walk out with a young man until the neighbors had been thus informed of her swain's honest intentions, and she had acted according to custom. The army regulations only provide for the love affairs of ladies who cannot be called proper, and the commanding officer, being a just man, felt that he could not class Fräulein Schmidt as one of these without further evidence, so he called for the Burgomaster. There the matter stood when I left Germany, but Private John Brown was tucked away safely in prison. This seclusion was necessary for his own protection from certain 'toughs' of his regiment, who persisted in regarding their private honor as having been attained by the paragraph in the newspaper. The Gordian knot will probably be severed by the sword of demobilization, but the situation raised is likely to be repeated when peace has been declared, and when regulations against fraternization have been thereby relaxed.

Although British rule is light and just, the Germans are made to feel that it is there. Throughout the occupied area there are many regulations with regard to their conduct. These affect mainly the granting of permits to travel from one district to

another, the supply of billets and of methods of transport, the provision of furniture and equipment, and many similar matters. Under British administration a great deal of responsibility is laid upon the Burgomaster. This is a relief to the military authorities, but it also gives stability to German government. When the Burgomaster's authority breaks down, or where there have been breaches of the regulations, the cases are tried by a military court and fines of varying amounts are inflicted. There are, however, a good many cases of food smuggling and of thefts, the perpetrators of which cannot be discovered. The Germans steal freely from friend and foe, but on the whole they appear to prefer stealing from their friends. For reasons of safety there is little pilfering in the men's billets, and conversely there is practically no looting. In exceptional cases where there had been robbery under arms, the punishments inflicted upon the British by the military courts have been very heavy. One amusing case of theft in which the punishment fitted the crime came under my notice. A sapper complained to his C.O. that a parcel he had received that morning from home had been opened, and some cakes and a bottle of sugar-coated cascara pills had been removed. The owner of the billet, a stout baker, was promptly interrogated officially. He denied with tears all knowledge of the theft. His wife, also with tears, affirmed her innocence. The five children howled out their ignorance of all matters connected with the parcel. Then it was remembered that a neighbor's son had been in the house and a tow-headed small boy was produced. Did he know anything about the matter? Yes, the boy acknowledged the cakes big and little by him eaten had been. Did he know anything about the medicine? No, he had seen

no medicine, but a bottle of confectioneries undoubtedly he had seen and also eaten. Had he eaten all? Yes, he had all consumed — and he was not feeling well!

It is not easy to assess accurately the food difficulties in the Rhineland. In Cologne there is plenty in the shops, but marked at a price which must be prohibitive to the poorer classes. The British are forbidden to buy food which may be used by the Germans, but it was stated that a good lunch consisting of soup, meat, vegetables, bread, and beer could be obtained in Cologne restaurants for four marks. This in comparison with the prices charged in Paris and Brussels is cheap beyond words, but the quantities supplied are likely to be much smaller in Germany. Some articles of food undoubtedly are very difficult to obtain. For instance, I saw a ration of margarine intended to serve for two days a family of three. It might have been consumed at a single meal by a British workingman — if he had condescended to eat margarine. The shortage of milk also is great, and the lack of it has affected the health of the children, although the British have never attempted to regulate the supply as the Belgians have done outside Düsseldorf. There infants under one year can receive daily half a litre (seven-eighths of a pint). Where there are cases of critical illness milk is supplied to adults upon the orders of a medical man, but the quantity allowed for this purpose is deducted from the infants' supply! The doctors in the Düsseldorf district assert that infant mortality in consequence of this milk order is very large. There does not appear, however, to be an abnormal infant mortality in the Rhine towns under British administration. Small children abound, and although some of them are pale and anæmic, so far as I



could observe they were neither lacking in health nor spirits. When there was snow on the ground they bombarded passing motor cars without respect either of brigadiers or bishops. One bishop at least can testify to the accuracy and strength of their fire.

The distribution of food in Germany has been notoriously unequal. The rich could always procure more than their share, either in the shops or by illicit visits into the country. The same conditions prevail to-day. Gemünd, for instance, is a notable potato-growing district, and every day early this year the train from Cologne in the morning brought a procession of visitors, with empty baskets, who at night returned with full baskets. One night in February the return train was searched just before it left Gemünd station, and the Burgomaster confiscated some hundred-weights of potatoes! Far more difficult to catch are the professional food smugglers, who through their knowledge of the locality are able to avoid the military patrols in the darkness, and so to drive a lucrative trade. In brief, the food shortage in the occupied area is probably no greater to-day than it was in England a year ago, but the method of distribution is much less efficient. This will account for cases of emaciation which undoubtedly can be seen here and there. If the British supplement the food supply they should also control the distribution. Otherwise the rich and unscrupulous will continue to get more than their share, and the poor and weak less than they need.

It is confidently believed that there is scattered all over the Rhineland an army of waiters with their bags packed ready to return to England when peace is declared! These must remember the days when they stood by the fleshpots of Piccadilly and did eat bread to the full. On one occasion a Burgomaster

allotted me a billet with the wife and daughter of a German who traded in London, but who is now in an internment camp. The two women had been deported to Germany against their own desire. 'Will you never let us return to London?' pleaded the woman, as though her fate rested in my hands. 'We were so happy in London. We are not at home here.' 'They say I speak German with an English accent,' added the daughter, with mingled pride and resentment. If I found it distasteful to damp the hopes of these German women who regarded London as home, I had no such repugnance in doing the same to the director of a big commercial concern, who informed me that eighty per cent of his pre-war trade was with the British Empire. 'We did not know that we would be at war with England,' he remarked apologetically. To which I replied somewhat brutally, 'You mean you did not know that England would defend France and that Germany would be beaten.' The fact remains, however, that a large number of Germans are reckoning confidently on the reopening of pre-war connections with England, and this mistake has a political value.

It is impossible at the moment of writing to foretell what will come out of the political melting-pot in Paris. One day last February, I had the opportunity of discussing, with a captain of German industry, the probability of reconstructing another Rhenish Confederation. For various reasons, among which trade and security of government bulked largely, this Rhenish manufacturer favored the formation of what he called 'a buffer State between Prussia and France.' He pointed out that, *mutatis mutandis*, the position to-day reproduced the conditions which prevailed at the Congress of Vienna. Now, Prussia

must be written for France, and the League of Nations for the Holy Alliance. The true policy to-day, he opined, was not simply to reverse engines for protection against Prussian aggression, and to give to France the Rhineland which for a similar reason was in 1815 added to Prussia. Wisdom, he thought, lay in creating a Rhenish Republic to be protected, 'under a mandate from the League of Nations, by England!'

The industries of the Rhineland interested me deeply, partly because of their bearing upon England, and partly because I had seen how the French factories had been ruthlessly ruined on their behalf. I tried at Düren to find some French machinery which I had heard had been installed in a big paper mill there. I was not successful in my search, but I came away convinced that everything that could be done to get to work quickly, in competing for world markets, was being done. There was, of course, a shortage of raw products, but all was ready for a push, and four fifths of the hands were working full time already, doing something. At Leverkusen are the huge aniline dye and photographic material works which, during the war, were transformed into manufactories for poison gas and high explosives. The hands employed at Leverkusen before the war numbered 12,000. During the war these were increased to 14,000. Now there are 8,000 working on an average five hours a day each. Leverkusen is marking time. At Siegburg some palatial munition works are occupied by British troops; but in other large works in the town, explosives for commercial purposes are being made, and German shells, purchased from the British military authorities, are being melted down, it is said, for the manufacture of agricultural instruments. At Siegburg I noticed a phe-

nomenal number of discharged soldiers. They trooped from their work in what appeared to be their thousands, and they gloomed at me as I stood watching them. There and elsewhere, I noticed that the women war workers had given place to the returning soldiers. There were said to be in Cologne demobilized soldiers who refused to work, but the only strike I heard of while I was in the Rhineland was in the Rolled Iron Works at Volberg. The strike only lasted four hours. The impression left was that both masters and men were prepared to work, with all their might, so soon as the blockade was removed. If this be so, the industrial competition of Germany will be a serious thing, not only for poor France but also for this country. It may be more dangerous than the big guns of Essen — unless we also are prepared to work.

The state of Germany to-day may well puzzle the wisest in our midst. From what I have seen, I do not believe that the people are repentant for the wrongs they have done to France and Belgium. Neither do they show much consciousness of defeat. They believe exactly the contrary; and, what is more, they have sound reasons for such belief. So far as England is concerned, if we fail in the competitive race the failure is upon our own head; but for France it is otherwise. With factories emptied of machinery, or razed to the ground; with coal pits so mauled that they cannot be worked for five years; with ruined towns and villages; with agricultural land pitted by shell holes, and sodden with decaying human corpses; with a people quivering under the cruelest injuries ever done by one nation to another — what chance have the French of competing with Germany, even for their own trade? Belgium and France are still prostrate on the ground, although the heel of a

brutal and remorseless invader has been removed. In some strange fashion it is like awaking from a bad dream, to go into Germany from the war zone. To retrace one's steps and to pass, within a few miles, from the white, well-ordered towns of Aachen and Herluthal to the squalid actualities of Pepinster — to proceed, in a crescendo of desolation, to Liège, to Huy, to Namur, to Mons, to Arras, and to those never-to-be-forgotten plains of France, is horrible. The transition fills one afresh with fiery indignation. Is it right, is it just, that Germany should

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not now be made to feel the true horrors of war—war as waged by Germans? Compared with the injuries they have done to others, the Germans are suffering nothing, and because they are suffering nothing they are neither sorry for the past nor desirous to amend in the future. It may be impossible in practice to alter this state of affairs, but it will be unutterably base and unjust if Germany is allowed to profit by the injuries it has wantonly and deliberately done to the French industries by getting away with the goods.

## NIGHT ON THE CONVOY

BY SIEGFRIED SASSOON

Out in the blustering darkness, on the deck  
A gleam of stars looks down. Long blurs of black,  
The lean Destroyers, level with our track,  
Plunging and stealing, watch the perilous way  
Through backward-racing seas and caverns of chill spray.

One sentry by the davits in the gloom  
Stands mute; the boat heaves onward through the night.  
Shrouded is every chink of cabined light;  
And sluiced by floundering waves that hiss and boom  
And crash like guns, the troopship shudders—doom!

Now something at my feet stirs with a sigh;  
And, slowly growing used to groping dark,  
I know that the hurricane deck, down all its length,  
Is heaped and spread with lads in sprawling strength—  
Blanketed soldiers sleeping. In the stark  
Danger of life at war, they lie so still,  
All prostrate and defenseless, head by head—  
And I remember Arras, and that hill  
Where dumb with pain I stumbled among the dead.

We are going home. The troopship in a thrill  
Of fiery-chambered anguish throbs and rolls.  
We are going home—victims—three thousand souls.

The Reveille