

EXPERIENCES IN GERMANY.

After a calm crossing, and an uneventful journey up the Rhine, we reached the frontier town of Emmerich late on Friday afternoon (July 31st). Mobilisation orders were posted on all the public buildings, and there was a good deal of excitement amongst the inhabitants, though nowhere was there apparent any discontent at having to leave everything, and go to fight. As the Rhine bridges were already being guarded, no traffic was allowed after dark, and our journey was not resumed till sunrise next morning. It was a glorious day, and time passed quickly in watching the ever-varying scene on the great river, and in looking at the quaint villages and busy towns of the flat country through which we were passing. By 6 o'clock we arrived at Cologne, and, of course, our first thought was the Dom, a cathedral which is most satisfying in its marvellous beauty. Our only regret was that we were too late to go up the tower.

Here, there was more excitement, as word had just come that Russia had declared war on Germany. During the evening huge, but quite orderly, crowds thronged the streets, and the bands played patriotic airs, "Die Wacht am Rhein" and "Deutschland über alles" being sung over and over again. It was all very thrilling and exciting.

Early on the Sunday afternoon we reached Coblenz, and were told that we would be wise to remain on the boat, as that morning twelve Russian spies had been shot, and the feeling against foreigners was very strong. Three of our number, in charge of the steward, set out to make enquiries at the Consulate. Our friends were not well away, when a bell rang, and off we went. We were now greatly concerned for their safety, and it required a very violent thunder storm to draw our attention from them to the beauties of the scenery. Here the Rhine winds through hilly country, and the lightning, the heavy rain, the gleams of sunshine, and a perfect rainbow made a most impressive sight. The storm cleared suddenly before we reached the Drachenfels and the Lorelei rocks, and was followed by a beautiful calm evening.

At Caub, a little village where we moored for the night, a gorgeous and very irate official, who was being eagerly watched by the whole population, stepped on board. First he and the captain had such a fierce argument that we thought it would end in a fight, then the official addressed the passengers on deck, shook his fist at us, and told us that we should be arrested and put in a fortress if we dared set foot in Germany! Next he went down to the saloon, where he spoke to the others in much the same fashion, first rushing to see if we had a spy concealed behind the curtains! A passport appeased him somewhat, and he and the crowd left us for the night.

We were advised to remain quietly on the boat until it reached Mannheim. Police-boats hailed us at every bridge, and the soldiers on one of these boats came on board and examined the whole ship most thoroughly, before allowing us to go on to Mannheim.

It was about 6 o'clock when we got to Mannheim, and at once the steward escorted us to the consulate. As my only chance of going to Frankfort was to go at once before the moving of troops began, I left the others filling up forms for passports, little thinking that ten days after I should meet them all in Cologne. I had a rather tedious journey to Frankfurt, which was reached shortly after 10 o'clock. The station seemed a perfect pandemonium. It was teeming with soldiers, and everybody's luggage seemed to be there except, of course, mine, and I was forced to go without it. To add to that disappointment, I arrived at the pension where I was to meet my friend only to find that she had gone on to Weimar!

I made up my mind that I would get a passport and follow her as soon as I could get a train. That was not to be; for on the Wednesday, though we could get no authentic news, it was pretty certain that England had declared war, and that the sooner English people could get back to their own country the better it would be for them.

We succeeded in leaving Frankfurt on the Thursday late in the afternoon along with the Vice-Consul and as many of the English in Frankfurt as could possibly come. No heavy luggage was allowed, so we all had to abandon what we could not carry. It was hot, we were fifteen in a carriage for eight, and there was the luggage besides. We were all so thankful to have got into a train at all that we had quite a merry journey to Niederlahnstein, where the train suddenly stopped, and everybody was ordered out. The officials collected the English into one group, and escorted them to a little waiting-room. It now seemed that we had to wait in this not over-clean place—we called it the Black Hole of Calcutta—for ten and a half hours. The scene was most ludicrous. The expressions of people trying to sleep sitting bolt upright on chairs are truly comical, and I don't know when I have seen anything funnier. It is indescribable. In the morning we were graciously permitted to walk up and down the platform, but every time a troop train came in we went back to our hole, and waited behind drawn curtains.

At 10.20 (Friday) we started for Cologne. At Kulk, a little place near Cologne, we were again turned out of the train, our passports were examined, and after considerable delay we found ourselves marching along the road towards Cologne. After waiting in the rain for quite a long time we were escorted up a rather dark winding staircase into a turret of the bridge. Here some of the soldiers loaded their guns and stood at attention, while others examined our hand-bags and pockets, etc. As nothing suspicious was found we were allowed to cross the bridge two and two, escorted by a file of soldiers on each side, with jeering crowds looking on, and taken to the Criminal Police Office. Here we were told that we might not leave Cologne till the end of the war, and that if we attempted to do so we would immediately be put in a fortress. We were also told not to communicate with anyone out of Cologne, not to speak English on the streets, and not to go out

more than two together, or to live more than two or three in one house. As for luggage, they neither knew nor cared anything about that. Fortunately, we were lucky enough to find it dumped on the pavement just outside the station. In order to get off on the next boat we reported ourselves at the police office on Sunday forenoon, so that the permits might be prepared as quickly as possible. We had a very anxious time till the start on Tuesday at sunrise, for the permits were only available for the first opportunity, and if any member of the party acted so as to arouse suspicion the whole party was to be detained. At last we were all safely on board.

It was a glorious morning, and we were all prepared to enjoy the sail as much as possible under the circumstances. But at every little place we were stopped, and there was generally a good half-hour's argument before we were allowed to go on. About half-an-hour after we left Dusseldorf we were hailed by soldiers, and told to return. When we got back, we were told that we ought not to have gone without having had the engine-room examined, as we might have been carrying bombs. Their examination resulted in the verdict that the walls were dusty. Our next adventure was late in the afternoon when we went under the wrong arch of a bridge, and the police official threatened to shoot the captain on the spot for not stopping at once when he called to him. At Wesel the men were separated from the women, and all men between 18 and 45 were detained as prisoners of war. It was a heart-rending scene. We stopped for the night at the frontier, sleeping as best we could on the floor, on tables, or on chairs, and were very glad to leave Germany behind us next morning.

The journey to Rotterdam was uneventful, and in the afternoon it seemed heavenly to be able to walk about freely, and talk as much as one liked. The crossing next day was delightful, and we reached Folkestone without having been blown up by a mine or captured by a German cruise..

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