

# Germany Today—Stuttgart and Berlin

By F. A. VOIGT

GERMANY was never homogeneous and the march of time was always slower in some parts than in others. Generalization is therefore difficult, but one generalization at least is sure and easy—Germany is diseased. The disease began before the war, it became acute during the war, and now it is malignant. It is not spread uniformly over the whole body, but the heart and the brain are desperately affected.

Let us take two towns by way of example—Stuttgart, small, remote and provincial, and Berlin, the capital.

The simple-minded, good and sentimental German admired by Mme. de Staël and by Henri Beyle was not altogether fiction. A stranger visiting Stuttgart is sure to be charmed if he be at all responsive to other than business or material appeals. The streets are clean and handsome. Many of the houses are old-fashioned and picturesque. The castle is medieval and romantic. There is refinement in the way the shop windows are arranged. Good music can be heard every evening. Plays, chosen from the dramatic masterpieces of all nations, are found in the weekly repertoire—Shakespeare and Shaw are staged more frequently than in London. Living is good and comparatively cheap. The people are amiable to an extent that is sometimes almost comic. They speak a homely dialect full of rich cadences—one has the impression (wrong, of course) that a person with a voice so warm and musical could not harm a fly. The war and the ruin of the German Empire have left Stuttgart not profoundly changed. Perhaps local officials are a little more corrupt than they were; probably there are more families who find it hard to earn their daily bread, and certainly there is more discontent than there was before the war, but the casual observer coming from abroad would not see any obvious signs of suffering or demoralization in the faces of the people who walk the streets. Stuttgart is one of those few German towns that will not suffer overmuch whatever happens.

But is Stuttgart typical of Germany? It was, perhaps, typical of Germany a century ago. It was far less typical of the Hohenzollern era. Today it still stands for something that is permanently German, but it does not in any way exemplify the change that has come over Germany; it is not typical of the new Germany born of war and revolution.

In Berlin the empire and the downfall are manifested. In Berlin all the glory of the militarist imperialism was concentrated. The parks and squares are adorned with heroic statuary, with squat granite colossi representing generals and imperialist statesmen. The conspicuous "Brandenburg Gate" is a huge and clumsy triumphal arch that destroys an attractive vista of green and peaceful trees. It is crowned with a chariot drawn by four war horses with distended nostrils and with feet that paw the empty air. The "Siegestaule," a tall, thick, fluted column, bears a gilt figure of Winged Victory with heavy flying skirts that top the houses and affront the sky. The "Victory Avenue" runs between two regular rows of white marble groups that represent the imperial ancestry of the Hohenzollerns—men of "blood and iron"—and look like the tops of wedding cakes. In the quarters occupied by the imperial palaces the sky line is crowded with fighting warriors, charging horses, and flapping eagles. Wherever one looks war and victory obtrude—an obtrusiveness particularly discordant amid the omnipresence of war and defeat.

A nation has to be deeply afflicted before the symptoms of disease are plainly visible to an outsider who is still immune. In Berlin the symptoms are apparent

to all, for no one is deceived by the gayety, the dancing, and the feasting that go on day and night.

Before the war Berlin was scrupulously clean—now it is shabby. Before the war refined people, perfect in their dress and manners, could be seen in streets, shops and restaurants—not a majority, but present in arresting numbers, nevertheless. Now there are none at all. The Berlin crowd is predominantly vulgar; it is one of wealthy people unused to wealth and culture. It is physically ugly, tawdry and tasteless in its dress, and loose in its morals. It fills every restaurant with noisy, quarrelsome talk and bad table manners. It squanders plentiful money on plentiful food and listens to bad music (mostly imported ragtime or cheap musical comedy).

The wardens of all that was best in the pre-war culture of Germany (beneath the insolent imperial façade there was a deep culture in pre-war Germany) remain at home in their suburban flats, impoverished, nauseated, and resentful. One continually meets enlightened and refined Berliners who simply refuse to visit the city. They will continue to live retired in their suburbs and they will die there, and the rare flowers of German culture will perish with them, for their sons will have too hard a struggle for bare existence to acquire anything like culture.

The suburban children of Berlin—among the handsomest in the world—look just as they did before the war except that there seem to be many pale, transparent complexions and big, dark eyes. In the poorer quarters one still occasionally sees the small, thin body and huge head of the child that has not had one satisfying meal for the last three or four years.

Surfeit and shortage are next door neighbors, but juster distribution is immensely difficult, for public honesty has so far deteriorated that every measure of control is evaded by an immense army of profiteers and illicit dealers.

Before the war Germany was one of the world's very few uncorrupt countries. Now it is one of the many corrupt. Theft is so common that there are printed warnings in every hotel against placing boots outside the doors overnight. Nothing is safe from thieves. Murder and violence are so frequent that no crime, however sensational, creates the slightest sensation.

Is it all bad and has no good come of war and defeat? Let us consider the new German art, the completest manifestation of the new Germany.

Living German artists are numerous, but it is difficult to see in their pictures—when they are typical—any beauty or inspiration. Tradition has been destroyed. The past is gone and cannot be recreated in prose or verse or color. And yet it is unreplaced by anything save a negation.

The German Revolution was made without enthusiasm and German art is without enthusiasm. As in German life there is in German art a violent, tortured, and often insincere, attempt to discover new forms, and new forms will doubtless be found eventually. That is one of the hopeful signs in present-day Germany.

Another hopeful sign—there is unsparring self-criticism and self-condemnation. It is the wish of many, if not most intelligent and enterprising Germans whose future is not fixed, to leave Germany. Some would go to America—dreamed of as the distant paradise of limitless wealth and freedom. Others would go to

England—land of political enlightenment and ordered social progress. Others would go to Russia. German nationalism is a fake although it is so loud and obtrusive. The German people are more than tolerant toward foreigners, at least toward Englishmen and Americans. An Englishman or an American in Germany today is not, in spite of war and blockade, treated with contempt, hatred, or aloofness but rather with hospitality, kindness, and distinction. German nationalists who cultivate hatred for England and America are in a minority and their nationalism serves party ends, is part of their political program.

The ruthless, acrid self-condemnation and self-humiliation of the enlightened German are sometimes tragic to witness. But there is no escape for Germans. They must remain imprisoned within their own frontiers and there work out their salvation.

What is their salvation going to be? No one can tell with certainty. All are agreed that the immediate future is gloomy. But there is hope for the distant future. Every German brain that can think at all is thinking hard and furiously. There was never so much "kopferbrechen," so much hard thinking, puzzling, questioning. In that, too, there is much hope.

Germany went into violent revolution without being ready for revolution, without a revolutionary idea. Those who carried out the revolution were unrevolutionary in spirit. It must always be a calamity when the revolution of the spirit and the revolution of violence do not go hand in hand. The German Revolution of violence is over, or nearly over. The spiritual revolution has only just begun.

The Germans are obsessed with party politics but are unpolitical. The parties are guided even more by hatred for each other than by their programs. They are guided by dogmas more than by ideas. Least of all are they guided by economic realities. On the political Right there is a wilfully obstinate, sentimental attachment to dead splendors but nothing that will satisfy the desperately urgent needs of the day. On the Left there is no authentic scheme, but only an importunate repetition of phrases that may correspond with Russian realities but do not correspond with German realities. Two months ago the wicked and incredibly stupid enterprise of Kapp and Lüttwitz was defeated with heavy loss of life. It has discredited the extreme Right forever. A year ago the Munich Soviet Republic was destroyed, also with heavy loss of life. The Munich Soviet Republic, planned by well-meaning idealists, was a thing of fantastic madness and is still remembered as a kind of nightmare in Bavaria. It has discredited the extreme Left forever, and today Bavaria is the most formidable stronghold of German conservatism.

Germany is not, like the victorious nations, moving slowly from Right to Left. It is rather the other way about. Salvation can come neither from the Right nor from the Left, for neither has a single creative idea. Nor can it come from the middle which stands for constitutional parliamentarianism of which the Reichstag is the *reductio ad absurdum*.

All old forms are losing prestige and Germany is turning away from party politics and parliament. What will emerge to take their place is uncertain. It will probably be some embodiment of the Soviet idea; that is to say, representation based on occupations and callings, not the Soviets of the Communists and not an imitation of the Russian model, but something different, something distinctively German. It will be Germany's contribution to world politics and more than a vindication of her right to live on equal terms with other nations.

## A Pioneer Tree Planter



Statue of J. Sterling Morton erected in his memory in Morton Park, Nebraska City.



Model of first old settlers' cabin in Morton Park, Nebraska City.

THE memory of J. Sterling Morton, pioneer Nebraskan, who was the first Secretary of Agriculture in the United States and the founder of Arbor Day, will always be revered by those who love trees and the beauty of nature. Much of the beauty of the prairie plains is due to his progressive ideas in pioneer times. Not only did he preach more trees, but by a practical demonstration on his farm near Nebraska City he proved what can be done in tree planting. Arbor Lodge, the early home of this pioneer of the plains who came to Nebraska in

1855, is one of the show places of the state today. Its grounds were laid out and the trees planted by his own hands. They are now a lasting monument to his memory and scarcely a visitor to Nebraska City fails to inspect this beauty spot. Before Mr. Morton died, in 1902, he gave to his home town a beautiful park and therein the citizens of Nebraska City have erected a statue of him and have otherwise adorned the grounds in keeping with the spirit of the man whose gift it is.