

I REMEMBER GERMANY

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LOOKING over some old papers in my desk the other day, I came upon a little pale slate-grey card which I knew was there, as I had noticed it from time to time. It was my matriculation card for the summer semester 19—in the Faculty of Theology in the University of Marburg, Hesse, Germany. It was somewhat faded by the passing of the years, but endowed with that strange power which inheres in symbols to evoke memories of old happy student days in the Germany which has so sorrowfully passed away. As some of those memories came back to me again, and others of a visit which I made later, I take some pleasure in setting them down, believing that they may be of some interest to those whose eye may meet them, if in these anxious days they have time and inclination.

For many years the German universities had attracted students from other lands. The fame of their teachers in many departments of learning had gone out far beyond their own country. At the time I speak of, Marburg had a group of distinguished men, especially in theology, and it was also a small town set in most pleasant country surroundings. For a stay in the summer, it had many attractions. Year after year there was to be found in this old town a small colony of students drawn from Great Britain, Canada, and the United States, students who had come to sit at the feet of the Masters who taught there, exercising the utmost freedom in their researches, and kindling and inspiring the mind. It is remarkable to notice the tributes which have been paid by former students, some of whom have themselves become teachers of theology, and by others too, to the personalities and vital teaching of the men who lectured there. One comes upon these tributes again and again, and the heart warms with no small pride to feel that one was *olim cis* in the university town on the Lahn.

It was not a long journey to Marburg in these days. "A quick run from Edinburgh across the border to the ancient city of York, with time enough between trains to stroll around and to see the famous Minster with its treasures, the glorious shrine of all the north country, then a few hours more through the eastern counties to Harwich, the overnight North Sea crossing to the Hook of Holland, brought us soon to Cologne.

Here another great cathedral rose in the heart of a large city, and close by was the noble storied Rhine. Then we travelled onwards past the university town of Giessen to ancient Marburg.

Through the good offices of a friend who was lecturer in English at the university, my companion and I boarded at a private home on the *Biegenstrasse*, with a widow and her son,— a daughter was in England—and there was also another student from Munich. This was the first time that we had been inside a German home, and the impression that remains with me is of a pleasant place and a kind attentiveness to the stranger. Our knowledge of German was very slight, yet on the theory that one must be bold to essay practice in speaking however haltingly and crudely, we soon summoned up courage to make some conversation when we met together at the midday and evening meals. Our delightful coffee and rolls we had by ourselves in the morning.

The freshness of the May morning called us out to explore the town and to find the university with all the keenness of youth, high spirits and curiosity in a place where everything was new and strange, and where there was an infinite variety of things to engage the attention. Let me first say something of the university and its teachers.

The central figure, at least to theological students, was Wilhelm Herrmann, disciple of Ritschl. His great book, *The Communion of the Christian with God*, has had a far reaching influence, and has called forth the gratitude of very many. I can still recall the lecture room, with the hum of students gathering and waiting for Herrmann's entrance, and soon the slight figure with the keen face coming and taking his place. I can still recall the decisive accents of his voice as he expounded the deep things of Christian life and experience. He spoke with the authority of conviction that comes from a deep inward faith and assurance, which those who listened to him could not fail to catch. It was this faith communicated as a vital thing which penetrated the barriers of a very imperfect knowledge of the language, and which made us feel the heart strangely warmed.

There was another famous scholar, Jülicher, best known for his work on the Parables, but whose keen searching mind travelled over the whole field of the New Testament. Of him my memory is not so clear as of Herrmann, but I can recall his broad form and dark features as he lectured, and I was impressed by the forcible wholehearted way in which both he and Herrmann spoke, or one might say, preached.

And the third teacher whose lectures I attended was Johannes Weiss, the son of a famous father, Bernard Weiss, well known to New Testament scholars. Weiss was years younger than the other two whom I have mentioned. That far off summer he was lecturing on the literary art of St. Paul, the balance and rhythm of his sentences and phrases. Naturally on such a subject there was little room for the fervour which marked Hermann and Jülicher, but rather the building up, through analysing passages from the Epistle, of the way in which they were composed, and reciting them in order to bring out their music and contrasted effects. Weiss was a very great scholar. He died only a few years ago, leaving a monumental work marked by great knowledge of the early Christian environment and by boldness of thought on Christian origins and development. These men and many others—I have mentioned only those in whom the nature of my studies made me especially interested—belonged to the Old Germany which we revere, which held the love of truth and prized the search for truth. These men were humanists. What would be their thoughts and feelings if they could revisit their old university? For all I know, Marburg may be one of the universities which has been closed during the present régime. They would find the fierce national spirit in control inoculated into the German people by a base, mechanical system which produces what goes by the name *Kultur*. My old teacher John Burnet, a great humanist who adorned Scotland for many years by his learning, has an illuminating essay on German *Kultur* which is well worth reading at the present time. He writes of the sense in which the Germans use *Kultur*: "We may express the difference by saying that to the German *Kultur* is in the first place something national, while to the Frenchman or the Englishman civilization is primarily something human." Again: "*Kultur* is really a spiritual mechanism, and is incompatible with an education which puts man above machinery." And he quotes the fine words of the great Greek scholar Wilamowitz, written in 1905 before he submitted to the slavery of a baser spirit, opposed to all true humanism. "*Imprimis autem viro bono et patriae et humanitatis amanti nihil sanctius est colendum communiōne illa bonarum artium, per quam quicumque inter omnes gentes vero investigando vitam impendimus—regibus populisque viam praecipimus quae sola ad mundi salutem et concordiam ducit.*" Burnet adds, "That is the voice of the other Germany." These Marburg teachers would have been forced to leave Germany for other lands, or they would have died, as not a few have died, because there was nothing left to live for.

But to return to Marburg itself: It is pleasant to recall wanderings about the old town along whose streets there passed, in Reformation times, Martin Luther, Zwingli and many another notable figure when they gathered to discuss momentous religious questions. There was the *camaraderie* of fellow students. Sometimes we made expeditions into the beautiful wooded countryside through which the river Lahn gently flowed. There were the country villages with the farm houses furnished with galleries, and there was the freshness and brightness of sunny May permeating everything:

*Wie herrlich leuchtet
Mir die Nature!
Wie glänzt die Sonne!
Wie lacht die Flur!*

*Es dringen Blüten
Aus jedem Zweig,
Und tausend Stimmen
Aus dem Gesträuch,*

*Und Freud' und Wonne
Aus jeder Brust,
O Erd', O Sonne!
O Glück, O Lust!*

My stay in Marburg that summer was shorter than I had hoped; yet it was full of interest, and each day breathed those hopes which are the portion of every youth. After many years it is good to look back and to give those unclouded happy days a second life through the touch of memory.

I have another memory of a bit of Germany; this, too, some years before the storm of 1914 broke. I went northwards this time by sea. It was the month of September. I have always loved the sea, and on this occasion I was able to share in some measure the life of the hardy seamen who man those steamers which, because of their wanderings hither and thither wherever a cargo is to be had, go by the name of tramp. The North Sea can be as rough and uncomfortable as any other, but when we rounded the Skaw lighthouse and the red-tiled houses and church of the northernmost point of Jutland, and when we passed Copenhagen with its houses shining in the morning sun, the waters of the Sound were smooth. Then we came in sight of the large island of Bornholm, from where it is a straight run of one hundred and fifty miles to the German coast. After much tossing among the Baltic waves, I remember, we steamed into Pillau. This

is merely a place on the map to most people. It is a small town that clusters round the quays, the gateway to Königsberg in East Prussia. Here is the *Frische Haf*, a large inland sea running in from the Baltic, on which one can sail as far as Dantzic in the west. We sailed up the canal through a low and flat country. After some time the canal led into the Pregel river, and so on to the quay at Königsberg.

It was the surface only of the life of Königsberg that I touched, but I recall the large and busy Prussian city, the Schloss, the Cathedral, the Tiergarten. I saw a good deal of the people as I went about at my leisure, observing them in the big stores and in the parks and gardens. They are a comfort loving people, with enjoying natures. The markets for fish and meat and country produce, to which boats and barges come laden from the inland plains, a veritable floating market street in some places, revealed another side of the people's life. Ranged along streets and squares were rows of women young and old sitting under huge umbrellas, while the Königsbergers come and do their marketing. Some words of William James come into my mind:

"Many years ago I had a similar feeling of awe and reverence on looking at the peasant-women, in from the country on their business at the market for the day . . . dried and brown and wrinkled, kerchiefed and short-petticoated with thick wool stockings on their bony shanks, stumping through the glittering thoroughfares, looking neither to the right nor the left, bent on duty, envying nothing, humble-hearted, remote;—and yet at bottom, when you came to think of it, bearing the whole fabric of the splendours and corruptions of that city on their laborious backs. For where would any of it have been without their unremitting, unrewarded labour in the fields?"

Today I think of the wide plains of Poland not far from Königsberg, cultivated with endless patience and perseverance by thousands of plain poor people, the common people whom William James admired wherever he saw them, ruthlessly invaded and crushed by mechanized armies. What inhumanity and cruelty lie in that word "mechanized" which comes to the lips so easily in our day!

I saw also something of places which lay remote and practically unknown in the Baltic, but which now have come out of obscurity into the light of the world's eye. The thousand isles of Aland, which have attracted the envy of Russia and Hango in the south of Finland! Hango I well recall. From woods and glades and gardens with villas half hidden I looked

across the sea, or walked round the bay. Bandstands and kiosks, vestiges of summer glory, appeared. There was charm about the place. The northern air had an invigorating tang; the sea murmured all around; and there was the open, illimitable view. It is a great sea, the Baltic. In the thirteenth century pirate ships scoured across it, and the Hanseatic League was formed to defend the merchant-men of Hamburg and Lubeck from pillage. When I sailed on it, commerce was supreme and inviolate, but an occasional flotilla of torpedo boats rushing along low down in the water spoke of armed force. Now the sea is sown with mines, and the shadow of war broods and floats sinister over all.

As I think of Marburg and then of Königsberg, I seem to see them as symbols which represent two ideals, two ways of life. They stand in sharp contrast. The former stands for the fine things, for what is human and creative, for all that gives significance to the life of man. The latter even, though it has the unfading glory of being the home of Kant, who laid all the emphasis on the good will, speaks rather of the spirit associated with Prussia; of the proud aggressive spirit of domination which has once more been kindled into a cruel and burning flame, a spirit which is destined to be destroyed by the forces which rally for freedom.

Thus I set down these slight memories of old days, of the other Germany. Robert Louis Stevenson, I recall, on the *Island Voyage*, as his canoe leaves the village behind, and the girls who ran along the river bank can run no longer, the last of them kissing her hand and crying "Come back again. . . . come back", moralises thus "There is no coming back, young ladies on the impetuous stream of life—There is a headlong, forthright tide that bears away man with all his fancies like straw, and runs fast in time and space. It is full of curves like this, your winding river of the Oise, and lingers and returns in pleasant pastorals, and yet rightly thought upon never returns at all."

I cannot go back across those years, and feel the first fine careless rapture; but the next best thing I can do, I can remember, and remembering can perpetuate some of their joy.