

"My Three Years in a German Prison"

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CHAPTER XXIX.

During the year 1916 and 1917, and for the first part of 1918, Germany possessed one god and one idol. The god was Emperor William, and the idol was Hindenburg. It will be remembered that at the outbreak of the war Hindenburg was a retired general leading a peaceful life at Hanover. Thence the Emperor recalled him from retirement; and relative obscurity and gave him the command of the German forces operating in Eastern Prussia. At that time the Russians occupied part of the Baltic Provinces. The Emperor, in examining these made by the different German generals, discovered that Hindenburg, a quarter of a century previously, had treated in his thesis the subject of an invasion of Eastern Prussia. He then sent for Hindenburg and committed to him the task of illustrating the eastern territory from the occupation of the Russians.

We all know that Hindenburg accomplished this task victoriously and acquired for himself, particularly as the result of the famous battle of Tannenberg, a fame which surpassed that of any other Prussian general. Pressure was then brought to bear on the Emperor by his entourage with the object of placing Hindenburg at the head of the general staff, and, as a matter of fact, by a movement of the hand, Emperor William dismissed Von Falkenhayn, who was at that time chief of the general staff, and replaced by Hindenburg.

The victory of Tannenberg was followed by several others, including that of Rumania, and then it was that the population of Berlin, no longer able to restrain their enthusiasm for Hindenburg, decided to erect in his honor a colossal monument on one of the public squares. The testimony of popular admiration took the shape of a wooden statue, forty-one feet in height, built at the end of Victory avenue, at the foot of the immense column known as the Victory Column, erected after the war of 1871 to commemorate the victory of the Germans over the French.

Opportunity was given to me on several occasions in the course of the outings I was allowed to make during the last year of my captivity, to observe with what veneration the people surrounded this mishapen, in-artistic monument standing in the centre of the Tiergarten. Twice every week, as I have previously explained, I was privileged to take a walk around the garden, under the escort of a non-commissioned officer, and on no occasion did I neglect to walk towards this statue. A large number of people, particularly old men and women, accompanied by young children, crowded at the foot of the column near this immense wooden image. They would look at it, examine it with the air of people admiring its proportions and artistic qualities. But what was more curious and interesting was the means adopted to collect charity funds through this Trojan horse. A scaffolding surrounding the statue furnished means for all to climb to the level of the head and contemplate from this close view the severe features of the great general.

At the foot of the scaffolding there was installed a species of ticket-office where one could purchase nails at a cost of one mark each (twenty-five cents). The purchaser of a nail was handed a hammer and accorded the privilege of driving a nail into the statue. The children particularly showed a great love for this sport. They could be seen crowding noisily round the ticket-office awaiting their turn, grasping in their little hands the silver coin with which to buy the nail. The ceremony of driving in the nail assumed a special character of patriotism. Hence it was quite a sight to see with what pride a child would return from performing the operation amidst the plaudits of the old men and the mothers, in this way large sums of money were levied and it is pertinent to say that Hindenburg was literally riddled with nails. One could choose the particular spot wherein to drive the nail—the feet, legs, body, arms, or head. I remember that copper-headed nails were driven into the head, copper nails being so scarce at that period as it became afterwards.

The art reviews of Berlin never dwelt at any length on the artistic qualities of the monument. As a matter of fact, it was an ugly object. One day, however, a violent controversy was started in the newspapers between two sculptors as to which of the two was the originator of this genial idea. "What an ambition!" it is no exaggeration to state that the popularity which Hindenburg enjoyed in Germany at this epoch was greater even than the veneration with which the Emperor himself was surrounded. Indeed, several non-commissioned officers often told me confidentially that Hindenburg's popularity was very much greater than that enjoyed by the Emperor. The ascendancy Hindenburg acquired over the imagination of the people never, in fact, ceased to disturb the mind of the Emperor. For this reason, at each new victory achieved under Hindenburg, Wilhelm would hasten eagerly to the battlefield and from the point where the victory was won he would flash a telegram to the Empress with the studied object of impressing on the minds of his subjects that he was really the strategic genius responsible for the success achieved. So much was this true that whenever a military operation developed itself in favor of Germany, either in Galicia or in Rumania, we knew how to predict, "a day or two ahead, a sensational despatch about the Kaiser to the Empress would be published in the newspapers. Rarely were we mistaken.

Among the prisoners of British nationality at the Stadtvogel was one who, on several occasions, was suspected of exaggerated sympathies for the cause of Germany. He had become very unpopular, and many British prisoners refused to speak to him or have anything to do with him whatever. One day Mr. Williamson, to whom I have referred in a preceding chapter, was called into the office to receive a package of provisions which had just arrived from England. After his package had been examined, another parcel was offered to him with the request to carry it to the Englishman—the one I have referred to as being under suspicion—whose cell was situated on the same floor as that occupied by Williamson. The latter, who spoke a little German, formally refused to take charge of the package, saying to the non-commissioned officer, and in the presence of others: "I will not take the package, for I do not wish to have anything to do with this bloody German." Williamson then left the office, taking with him only his own package.

The incident caused some commotion, as the non-commissioned officers reported the unsympathetic remark made by one prisoner towards another. On the following day all the prisoners of British nationality were requested to go down to a cell on the ground floor, and there the officer in charge of the prison addressed to us a very severe reprimand regarding the incident. I recall one remark in particular. It was to the effect that "he did not venture to hope that we would openly renounce our sympathies towards Great Britain, but he would not tolerate for an instant any unkindly, disrespectful remark against Germany." He cited the case in particular of Mr. Williamson and that of Mr. Keith who, he said, was born in Germany, who had profited from Germany's hospitality, who had received an education in the Public schools of the empire and who, nevertheless, every time an occasion offered itself, manifested his antipathy towards the country of his adoption. The officer finally menaced us with the remark that whoever was guilty in the future of disrespectful remarks would be severely punished.

This attitude of Officer Block created further prejudice amongst the British prisoners, and two of them, whose names I will not mention, organized a huge joke at his expense. Through a very clever stratagem, one of the pass-keys was juggled from one of the non-commissioned officers. This key would open every one of the doors inside the prison, but it would not open the outer door. With the aid of this key the two prisoners in question, conceived the idea of unmercifully teasing the officer.

With much difficulty we managed to smuggle into the jail a copy of the London Daily Telegraph twice a week, in spite of an interdiction of all English and French newspapers. Needless to say, the Telegraph was circulated amongst all the British prisoners, and after each and every one of us had read it, the operation was crowned as a great joke against officer Block himself.

By the aid of the aforesaid key, then, the door of the office would be opened during the breakfast hour while the officer was away, or during the closing hours of the day after he had left the jail, and the forbidden Daily Telegraph placed on his desk.

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occupied was triangular in shape. At seven o'clock in the evening a non-commissioned officer started to close the doors. He would first close the doors on one side of the triangle, and after that on the second side. It was at this moment that one of the prisoners, occupying a cell on the third side, still open, would come surreptitiously with the famous key, open the door of one of the locked cells, and at the same time give the key to the occupant of the cell. He would then return hastily to his own cell. This was done, of course, very quickly and without being seen by the non-commissioned officer, who continued closing and locking the cells on the third side of the triangle, and then, under the impression that every prisoner was locked up, he would leave the jail.

In the course of the evening, or a little later, the British prisoner having a copy of the Daily Telegraph would, with the aid of the key, enter the office at the end of the corridor and succeed in putting the newspaper on the desk of the officer. He would remain unopened all night. On the following morning the non-commissioned officer would start to unlock the doors, invariably retracing his steps he had taken the previous evening. The same prisoner, coming out from his cell in the morning, would hurry across the side of the triangle still closed and would be handed the key from the one who had performed the over-night operation; would turn the key in the lock, and return to his own cell. When the non-commissioned officer reached the last side of the triangle he would find all the doors locked.

This stratagem was repeated for about ten days and amongst all the prisoners in the Stadtvogel more than I can describe. The officer took every means imaginable to catch the culprit, but, happily, he never succeeded. Finally, when he decided to place a sentry at the door of his office throughout the night, the owner of the key was forced to abandon his practical joke.

(To be continued.)

Sir Robert Borden has had a conference with Sir George Riddell, who is head of the British press section in Paris, about the proposed Imperial press conference in Canada next September.

A decree has been issued by the Central Russian Soviet of Moscow, calling to the colors all men between the ages of 29 and 45 years.

WAR PUZZLES
VON MACKENSEN
VON MACKENSEN SENT AN ULTIMATUM To Rumanian Government demanding that peace negotiations be begun within four days, one year ago today, February 6, 1918. Find a Rumanian.
YESTERDAY'S ANSWER Upper right corner down to smoke.

FAMOUS LEADERS UNKNOWN ADVISER

BY WILLIAM T. ELLIS.

"The International Sunday School Lesson for Feb. 9th, is 'Jethro's Counsel.'"—Exodus 18:1-27.

Colonel House is a modern Jethro; or father-in-law Jethro is an ancient Colonel House, as you please. Both are known only as wise counsellors of great leaders fronting an emergency. Jethro has his place among the immortals because he helped shape history's first democracy. He was only a shepherd from the desert wastes of the Sinai peninsula. But he was wise in the fundamentals of life; and he was courageous in speaking frankly to the friend who was also his son-in-law. That is how he came to make his impression upon the plastic nation which, pioneered the democratic form of government. He helped transform a vagrant horde of newly-free slaves into that great Theocracy which has been the source of all democracies since.

Friend Jethro comes opportunely on the scene to-day, for all the civilization is engrossed in the huge task of reorganization. We have defeated Pharaoh, crossed the Red Sea, and are now busy, with quite Israelish mutterings and complaints and criticism, in finding ourselves for the new life of world society which lies ahead of us. There is considerable analogy between the condition of the Jews just out of Egypt and that of the world to-day, freed from autocracy and its attendant perils, and keen for the establishment of a fairer, freer form of human organization. What is done now needs to be well done, for what is plastic to-day will be solidified to-morrow. This is the hour for shaping destiny.

Democracy in the Making. That was a great period for a then undreamed of world when the Hebrew refugees from Egypt were being consolidated into a nation. They were safely across the Red Sea, Pharaoh and his hosts had been engulfed. Victory had been achieved over new-found local enemies. Moses had come to be accepted—and criticized—as leader, law-giver and priest. Things were taking shape for the future.

One day there came upon the scene the wife and two sons and father-in-law of Moses. That was a glad reunion for the lonely man who had sacrificed home ties for the sake of the new life. Freedom gave thought to the price that must be paid for public service; their long absence from dear ones, their deprivation of home joys, their overtaxing engrossment in the cause to which they have dedicated themselves. At the special moment to be spent with their leader, that he missed the quiet delights of family life, which he had known when a meditative shepherd amid the hills of Sinai?

Wise old Jethro, a ripe sheikh, with a depth of understanding which books cannot give, was perceived, as he watched the weary throngs waiting to take counsel with Moses, that his son-in-law had not organized his task well. He was attempting to do too much alone, to the hurt of both himself and the people. This desert philosopher knew that it is better to set ten men at work than to do ten men's work. The hour was one for co-operation in the common tasks by distributing them wisely among all the efficient. Jethro was for the democratic method; Moses, all unconsciously, was setting out in the autocratic way.

The Strong Man's Weakness. Every man who has confidence in himself is likely to fall into the Moses blunder. We see it all about us. Recently I was in the office of the head of a national business organization. His position and authority are such that I expected him to be secluded in high state in an inner office. Instead, even the office boys, and every casual caller, could distract him, and two stenographers and an assistant sat writing beside his overworked desk while he answered telephone calls about questions large and small. The man is doing work that belongs to his clerks. He is not big enough to let go. Nobody can be greatly efficient whose mind and time and desk are so cluttered up as his. As I came home on the train that day, the incident was recalled by the words of a friend, now himself a successful business man, who said, "When I was first given an executive position my employer said to me, 'If you allow yourself to get too busy to have time for thinking things over, you are not the man for this place.'"

That same Jethro-type of message had come to me two days before, from a famous publicist, who declared, concerning a national religious organization with which he was connected, "Frankly, I don't know what is going to happen. We are headed for the rocks. Blank—naming of the executive head of the organization—'simply cannot or will not distribute responsibility. He tries to do everything himself, and, inevitably, things do not get done, big things, essential things, the prime work for which we stand responsible. He is a good man and a great man, but he is headed toward a colossal failure unless he learns to share his tasks with others, trusting them as fully as they trust him.'"

So we see Moses has plenty of modern company in his big blunder of falling to consult and co-operate with others, and of trying to do everything himself. There is many

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an advance step when he heeded the sagacious counsel of Jethro.

The Best for the Highest. Every city dweller knows preachers who are busy and noisy as flycatchers; who seem always within sight and sound; who have all the bustle and go of the commercial traveller; whose ambition is to "get there," who adopt every latest notion, card indexes and follow-up methods and dictating machines and telephones and window signs and publicity departments; and who, nevertheless, are not worth hearing four Sundays in succession. They have no time for great books, or for quiet hours of devotion, or any one-souled to God. Meditation is an unknown or a lost art to them. They are "too busy" to succeed in their first office. For the world is in no such sore straits for lack of efficient executives and energetic managers and salesmen, as it is for prophets, who will interpret the Godward side of men and the manward side of God.

Incisively, Jethro penetrated to the core of Moses' cumbered situation when he counselled, "Be thou for the people to Godward." Instead of settling petty disagreements and answering trivial questions, take up your real work, the high and holy office of priest and prophet. Then, as now, the people needed most leaders who were specialists on the Godward side. Power-plants are more important than mere machinery. God's chosen should be strong at the source of things. Whatever keeps us from intimacy with the Divine, and from the exercise of our most sacred possibilities, is wrong for us; however good it may be in itself.

Weighing my words, I do not hesitate to declare, as I look around upon the new era calling for organization and team work and public spirit, that the one need of our time, surpassing all others, is the need for men who shall be, in Jethro's quaint phrase, "for the people to Godward." The call that sounds above every other call is for spiritual interpreters and intercessors; for men and women who will help our queuing generation to find God; and who can tenderly reveal the will of God to all the heart-hungry of earth.

"Oh Lord, I pray That for this day I may not swerve By foot or hand From Thy command, Not to be served, but to serve.

"This too, I pray, That for this day I may not swerve From pride prevent My good intent Not to be pleased, but to please.

"And, if I may, I'd have this day Strength from above To set my heart In heavenly art Not to be loved, but to love."

Wanted a Home. The Toronto Telegram in its Police Court report on Tuesday, has the following: "I'm but a stranger here." "Kingston is my home." Thus warbled William Kyle, when charged with vagrancy. The police had found Willie endeavoring to get blanket warmth out of Toronto sidewalks.

While the town crier is clanging his bell around Kingston, Kyle will go on singing his song.

To Estimate Belgium's Damage. Brussels, Feb. 6.—An American commission charged with the duty of estimating the war damage in Belgium is expected to arrive here shortly.




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