

GERMANY

By "Scott"

We fared well in Germany, exclusive of the Bill of Fare. After "parley vooring" French for so long it was a little difficult to talk to the Boche without mixing our languages. The Germans worshipped us, except for the English we spoke, and they utterly despised our French. However, we learned to speak German a good deal easier than we did French. In fact, most of us never learned to speak the "silent language" ("Silent" because three-fourths of the letters in so many words are silent). For example, "oeufs"—eggs—is pronounced "o", as nearly as we can say it; and "lait"—milk—is "lay"; etc., etc. But German, as most people know, is a great deal like English. Not only is there a similarity in the language, but the people are much more like Americans in customs and habits than the French. Many of the French never learned to speak a word of English (they left it to the Americans to learn French), but we had hardly been in Germany a week before we saw a rush among the Germans for English-teaching text-books.

One reason the Boche wanted to fraternize was so they could learn first-hand the language of their heroes; for such the American soldiers were to many of them. Many of us received a much warmer reception in Germany than we did in the other countries we visited. Don't mistake me for a German sympathizer; I am not, though I would know now it was not the common people of Germany who started the war, or were they ever in favor of it. Hundreds of them were just as pleased with the way the war ended as though Germany had won instead of the Allies. And they gave the Americans the credit for ending the war.

Our "Watch on the Rhine" was mostly waiting and watching—waiting for orders that would take us home while watching for opportunities to see Europe. About 20 per cent of the men in the A. E. F. were given permission to visit a leave area (I wasn't so fortunate). A leave area, by the way, is a beautiful land of promise completely surrounded by M. P.'s. And the main attraction in the leave areas seemed to be the cafes. And you know a captain is known by the company he keeps and not the company he allows to go to leave areas. 'Nuf sed.

Speaking of fraternizing and billets, a certain lieutenant in one of the divisions in the Army of Occupation became very much worried over the attentions of a young woman who lived in the house where he was billeted. As the fraulein was especially attractive and quite good-looking, the lieutenant in question had no personal objections to her fascination for his Sam Browne belt or gold bar, but strange to say, he really believed the order prohibiting fraternizing was to be obeyed. Consequently, he sought the advice of his regimental commander. Entering the colonel's office, he found the major who commanded his battalion also there. Immediately the lieutenant told of his noble attempts to escape the vampire. He told of how she shined his shoes, brought him his breakfast while he was still in

bed, pressed his clothes, and of many other ways in which she tried to gain his affection. Upon asking their advice, the colonel and major both promptly told him to get another billet at once. The next morning the colonel called up the billeting officer, "I want to change my billet," said the colonel. "One of my lieutenants moved out of his billet yesterday and I would like to move in there," "Sorry, sir," replied the billeting officer, "but a major moved into that billet early this morning."

To kill the monotony we usually attended a Y. M. C. A. show or movie or a German movie or opera several times a week. I recall one "Y" show put on at the Festhalle in Coblenz by members of the 308th Field Signal Battalion. It was called "What Makes a Wild Cat Wild", and there were some real artists in the cast. Another good "Y" show was "Toot Sweet", featuring the song hit, "Duck for the Dugout, Douglas." Of course, many of the movies we had seen a year or two before in the States, but they were very welcome. They have a custom in the German movie houses that might work well over here. Every time a seat is vacated, the fraulein ushers call out, "Bitte rechts anschliessen," meaning, "Please move to the right," so that by the time you have seen the entire show you are sitting on the aisle and don't have to walk over laps, and brand new shines to get there.

For real enjoyment there is nothing better than to listen to a German rendition of some great opera. But you must understand their customs when you go. The first time an American soldier, or a group of them, would attend an opera, they would nearly cause a riot. If something is extra good you don't applaud any more than you would in a church over here, until the end of the act. Then you can have all the curtain calls you want. They are a little more liberal, however, in farces and comedies. Whistling is always regarded as a sign of disapproval. Before these customs were well known, a troupe played "Mignon" in one of the smaller towns of the Rheinland before a house full of American soldiers who stamped and whistled with flattering violence after the playing of the overture. The orchestra lead-

er almost wept. "Mein Gott," he said, "if they think the overture is as bad as that, what will they think of the rest of the music?" It was some time before the authorities could quiet the apprehensions of the company waiting in the wings for the grand opening chorus.

Going through my diary, I find that I saw, at the Stadttheater in Coblenz between January 4th and February 22nd, the following plays and operas: "Carmen", "Charley's Aunt", "Die Fledermaus", "Faust", "Orpheus in der Unterwelt", "Tannhauser", "Fra Diavolo", "Cavalleria Rusticana" and "Der Bajazzo".

The greater part of our spare time in Germany, however, was usefully employed in writing home. The exact number of hours thus engaged depended to a certain extent on how many letters we had to answer. And when there were no more letters to answer we knew for the second or third time, without result, we simply couldn't resist the temptation to write a little poetry. Kipling was out-Kipling a good many times (?) For example, when I heard of a fellow at the remount station being kicked by a mule, the following "inspiration" was the result:

A mule there was and she made me swear
(Though to think of it now I sigh!)
Just a bone of a nag, such a rare old mare
(We thought her a lady who wouldn't dare
But what she did it wasn't fair
(Even to you and I!).

O the beers we tasted and the beers we waste,
And the scars on our head and hand
Were caused by the lady whose power we know
(Though how it occurred we never did know)
And never will understand.

HAROLD S. THOMAS.

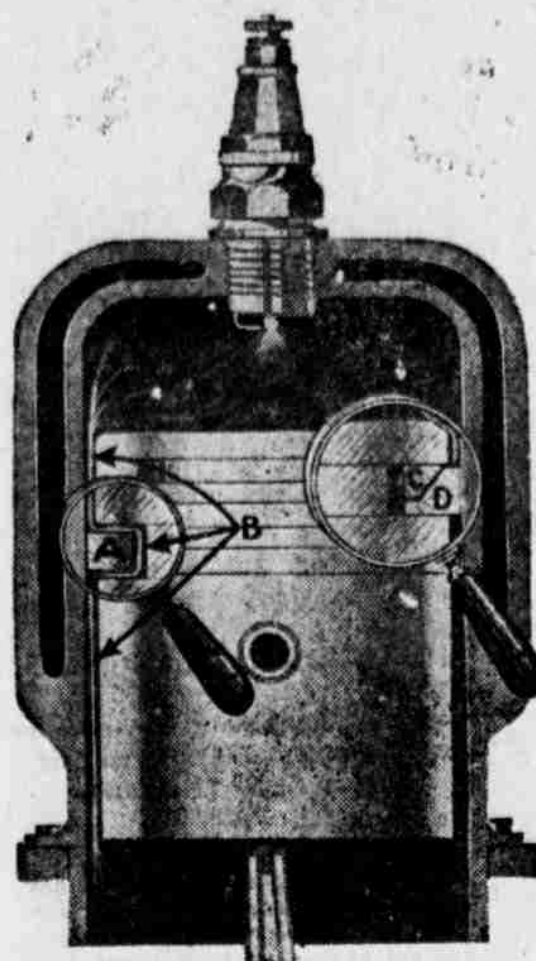
Women Live Longer Than Men.

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3 1/4	1.50	1.50	1.60
3 3/8	1.50	1.50	1.60
3 1/2	1.50	1.50	1.60
3 3/4	1.65	1.65	1.75	\$1.75
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