

EXPERIENCE OF AMERICAN GIRL

(Continued from page 3.)

was a substitute for a substitute, having been exhausted.

It was pitiful to observe the efforts of the people to continue the characteristic and hitherto highly comfortable life of the city under such conditions as these. For instance, the cafes along the boulevards all remained open. If you know Berlin you understand what an important part in the daily life of the common people these cafes used to play. On a sunny day what a delightful and inexpensive thing it was to stroll along in the cheerful crowd and finally take a seat overlooking the sidewalk and have coffee and the delicious little cakes which were sold in all these clean and attractive resorts. At the time I am writing of people still would go of habit to the cafes, but they were a different people and the cafes were mournful enough in their appearance. Only imitation coffee could be had without milk and no cakes at all were sold. People brought their own cakes such as they could get. They were made usually of war flour unsweetened.

Start for Switzerland—and Food

Fraulein Bungelaar and I, after exhaustively discussing our project with those of our friends who could advise us, made written application for permission to make a trip to Switzerland and stating that it was necessary as a means to restore our health. After a wait of two weeks the necessary permission was granted us and we started on our journey, already excited at the thought of getting real appetizing food. The prospect of it so stirred me that at Muenchen I asked a waiter in a restaurant if I couldn't have an egg. He was so astonished for a moment that he didn't speak. Then he replied that he would be arrested if he served me with an egg.

There were some difficulties and delays about our passports crossing the border. We had to wait four or five days in Berne while inquiries were made, and we had to have new photographs attached to our passports. We spent a fortnight moving from one Swiss pension to another and enjoying almost forgotten diet to such an extent that I fear people thought us most greedy. We saw many Germans going through the same enjoyable experience.

Laxity at the Border

I had a feeling of depression and also one of secret guilt when we prepared to return to Germany. Naturally I was depressed at the thought of going back to the uninviting and unhealthy diet of Berlin.

Conditions may be worse now than when I left Berlin a few months ago. That they were bad enough then a brief summary of them will show: Taking first the one principal luxury of the common people—beer is all of one kind—"einheit bier" they call it. It contains practically no alcohol and is a pitiful substitute for the famous beers of Germany. As to the regulations regarding its sale, I can only cite those of one "Stammlich" near my house, where men of the neighborhood were in the habit of sitting each night at their customary tables. There the beer which I have described was sold only after 7.30 p. m. and the place was closed every Tuesday night.

The few cab horses in Berlin are so weak from want of food that they are

mere skeletons. Often a cabman will look at his horse and decline your custom. "My horse cannot take you that far," he will say. There was a time when the people themselves would fall on the street from weakness. I did not see so much of that before I left. I suppose it is reasonable to believe that the people are becoming injured or are keeping their exertions within the possibilities of their depleted strength.

Many shoes have wooden soles now. It is against the law to put leather soles on old shoes. Shoes must be bought, as everything else, on certificate of necessity. I was unable to find shoes to fit me. Also, I was unable to have repairs made to any of my old shoes. One is permitted to own only two pairs of shoes. That rule is universal. If one pair of these require new soles one can get only soles made of grass dipped in some tar preparation.

Nearly all shoes have bits of leather tacked on the soles something in the

manner of the protruding nails in a workman's heavy boots. There are stands in the market places and streets for the attachment of these leather bits. It is uncomfortable walking after one's shoes have this treatment, but it saves the precious soles from wearing out.

A doctor's prescription, in addition to all the other permits, is necessary before a lady may buy a summer mantle. She is supposed to own one outer wrap only, unless she is an invalid. I say supposed; it is the law which supposes it, and violation of the law would mean arrest and punishment. Material for light outer dresses and for undergarments is composed almost entirely of paper. It looks much like our "white goods" when purchased, but it is a very different thing to use. A lady of my acquaintance desired to make fittingly ready for the return of her husband on furlough. Therefore, she recklessly lavished some treasured soap in washing her underclothing and the curtains

of her boudoir, with the result that there was positively nothing left of either but the embroidery when she had finished. The paper material has absolutely no substance or durability.

Handkerchiefs Scarce

By law one is permitted to buy only three handkerchiefs and two pairs of stockings every six months. Darning cotton which used to cost 5 cents a roll, is now 50 cents a roll and almost impossible to obtain. Dressmakers can't work for lack of thread. Prescriptions can't be filled for lack of medicines. Letters to America can only be sent through the Friedensbureau, and I never knew of any one getting a reply to a foreign letter so sent.

Side streets were lighted only by twenty-five candle power lamps and by only enough of those to make the dimmest illumination. Dentists are not permitted to use gold in filling teeth. Men have had to surrender even their watch chains and women their little ornaments to the Government using iron where possible in substi-

tute articles.

The young women in charge of the bureaus where one obtains permits to purchase necessary articles are extremely rude. I have often heard one of them, after looking at a lady's frock, say "You do not need a new one. The one you have on is quite good enough. You cannot have a permit to buy another." If the applicant wishes a permit to buy a new floor cloth the bureau woman will say, "How many rooms have you?"

This, briefly is the Berlin which I left. I did not depart until my endurance was exhausted. It seemed to me that the Germans would never give in nor would the Allies. I realized that it meant serious illness or death for me to remain, even should conditions grow no worse. I was depressed and sorrowful for the suffering people around me. A homesickness so utter that it was a constant pain at last seized me. The horror of war—even though I saw no war—pressed upon me as a dreadful weight. I determined

to get out of Germany. How I did so my next story will tell.

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