With the German armies in the West

Hedin Sven Anders
WITH THE GERMAN ARMIES IN THE WEST
BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THROUGH ASIA
CENTRAL ASIA AND TIBET TOWARDS
THE HOLY CITY OF LHASSA
TRANS-HIMALAYA
WITH THE GERMAN ARMIES IN THE WEST
BY SVEN HEDIN
AUTHORISED TRANSLATION FROM THE SWEDISH
BY H. G. DE WALTERSTORFF
WITH 119 ILLUSTRATIONS AND 4 MAPS

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LONG before my book dealing with my personal recollections from the war theatres of France and Belgium had been translated into English, it was made the subject of a criticism in the “Daily Telegraph” of February 15th.

The author, Mr. William Archer, complained that I have not once introduced into my narrative any harsh and condemnatory utterances regarding Germany’s conduct of the war. The fact is that I have had no occasion for such utterances. My self-imposed task was, as I have repeatedly made clear, merely to describe what I saw with my own eyes and as much as possible to refrain from citing the experience of others. During the two months that I spent on the German western front, I did not see a single instance of cruelty to prisoners or wounded, let alone ill-treatment of the civil population and its goods and chattels. The Germans maintained the same incorruptibly severe and just discipline that existed, according to the testimony of history, in the Swedish armies which Gustavus Adolphus and Charles XII. led to victory during the epic period of my own country.

But even in peace time not a day passes but that crime is committed even in the most civilised countries. How, then, can one expect that it shall disappear in a war? I therefore by no means deny that there have been isolated instances of offences and cruelty in an army of several million men. But I have not seen them and need not therefore embark upon the subject. I have a shrewd suspicion that criminal statistics
generally will testify in favour of the Germanic peoples—as compared, for instance, with the Slavs and the Latins.

Mr. William Archer has something to say about my "outspoken contempt for England." Here he is mistaken. I have no feeling of hatred towards England and have never entertained any feelings of ill-will towards its great and admirable people. It is only the part which England has played and plays in this world-wide crisis that I abhor and deplore. The earth is large enough to hold both England and Germany, and England would have gained more by keeping neutral in this war. The hatred of England which pervades Germany is new—it began on the 4th August, 1914. Prior to that date it did not exist. Whether England's policy has gained the sympathy and approval of the neutral countries is not for me to judge. One can respect and admire a nation for its splendid qualities and for its colossal contribution to the advancement of the world, and yet not admire its policy at a given juncture. This is the nature of the feelings I now entertain for England, and I deeply regret that her guiding statesmen were not able to avert a situation which must inevitably bring misfortune upon their country. Did the English people itself desire this war? That question will be answered in the early future.

Mr. William Archer is surprised that I do not speak about the Battle of the Marne. Here I will remind him once more of what I say in the introduction to the book, to wit, that it was not my intention to write the history of the war. I have simply described the happenings at which I myself was present.

In conclusion Mr. William Archer says: "It would be curious to know whether Dr. Hedin now feels so confident of Germany's triumph as he did in the golden prime..." As to that, after the events which have occurred since "the golden prime," especially on the eastern front, my faith in Germany's victory is more unshakeable than ever.

1 The more literal translation would be "excellent and admirable," or "capital and admirable"; the term is difficult to render to a nicety.—Translator.
It is very kind of Mr. William Archer to say that German culture is not in danger. I really think that he is right. The Germans have shown that they are men, capable of defending their culture against I might almost say the whole world, and I pity those who thought that by their united forces they would be able to reduce Germany to a second or third rate power.

SVEN HEDIN

STOCKHOLM
25th February, 1915
For the hospitality, the confidence and the comrade-
ship which have been shown to me in the German
armies at the Western Front, I tender my most heartfelt
thanks.

SVEN HEDIN

STOCKHOLM
27th January, 1915