

Howard Stoddard Tells of Conditions In Germany

Dec. 28, 1920.
Meig lieber Bruder Elmer:

Christmas has come and gone but it has been much more pleasant than I expected, so, aside from not having the companionship of my family, I cannot complain. Here at the mission house we had a real American Christmas dinner given by Sister Ballif for the American missionaries. For this reason, we did not get any Meig's Kaffe and Strenzel Kuchen, but more Christmases are coming so it doesn't mean that we have lost an experience.

Your letter reached me in record time, as it was only eleven days on the way, whereas other mail has been about three weeks. Needless to say, it was certainly appreciated. We don't have the privilege of receiving mail from a father, so it's mighty fine to hear from one's older brothers and, as far as I'm concerned, don't think it is a waste of time to write, as the letters are worth a great deal on this side of the ocean.

Perhaps, you heard from mother that I finally secured a six-months' visa for the Schweiz and, after about six weeks of missionary work in Interlaken and Berne, I was called back to Basel and am now working in the office. Everything is very pleasant here as we have a new mission home and all of the comforts of a real house. However, I don't want to stay much longer, as getting out trial balances and making up reports never seemed like missionary work and I enjoy the work in the field far more. We should be through in a few days, though, and then it will be necessary to find a new place to hang my hat. Pres. Ballif has said nothing definite to me but my chances of going into Germany seem to be pretty good and, it may be possible, I can visit your old field in Chemnitz. No doubt, it will be interesting to you to know that the Chemnitz branch is the largest in the whole mission, having seven hundred saints and a new Lokal.

Elmer, I realize that every new missionary gets very enthusiastic and expects to convert the whole country in the first week, so you can deduct what you feel from what I write, but this is what I know from observation and stories told by others:
Suffering is intense.

The people of Austria and Germany have undergone, and are still undergoing, some of the most terrible conditions imaginable. It is true that the theaters, operas, wine houses and other places are full, but this is only about ten or fifteen per cent of the people who comprise the wealthier classes. The others are suffering for the bare necessities of life. The stories I have heard from Germans in Switzerland make one's blood run cold. Three million children in Austria, Eastern Germany and Poland are actually facing starvation, and they are dependent for their lives upon the generosity of others this winter. You have, perhaps, read the article in the Literary Digest telling of conditions here, and I know from having seen examples, that the stories are not colored but are actual realities to which the people in Europe have become hardened. One missionary, back from Vienna for the holidays, tells some of the most gruesome tales I have ever listened to. He says that, in that country, about 95 out of every hundred children have lung diseases due to undernourishment and are five and ten years behind in their physical development. All passenger trains have been stopped, due to the lack of fuel, and people can only travel on freight trains. A pound of meat costs more than the average worker earns in a day, and milk is only a memory. However, if one has money, he can live just as luxuriously as ever, and the good old American dollar is the best possession a person can have. At present, the exchange rate is seventeen French Francs, sixty-five German marks and six hundred and sixty Austria Kronen. One can live at the most expensive hotels for a dollar a day and, as an example, I sent a cablegram home from Paris for seventy cents in American money.

The old German cities that were once famous for their cleanliness are now dirty and unkempt as the people are far more concerned, at present, about getting enough to eat. The other day, a young German boy of about fifteen years of age came through and was at the mission house for the day. When we can find a home among the saints in Switzerland for the children, we are permitted to bring them in for six weeks, and he was one of these children. This is the story he told in a voice that seemed to rack all of his physical being and which sounded like a death rattle.

Sad Stories Told
Before the war my father and mother were well-to-do people and we lived all of the good things of life. There were seven children in the family, six boys and a girl. Today, only one boy and one girl are left. Two boys were killed in the early days of the war and the rest of the family has died of

diseases caused by having no nourishing food to eat. We have nothing now, and can live only if other people seem disposed to help us."

This is but one example, and when I realize that there are millions of others, it makes me appreciate how wonderfully the Lord has blessed us.

Here in the peaceful old Schweiz, conditions are different. This little nation prospered during the war and is richer now than ever before. A few places dependent upon tourist trade have suffered, but the country as a whole has been very prosperous. The reaction has started here also, though, and yesterday I saw three thousand unemployed parading the streets and singing Bolshevik songs. Maybe Switzerland's turn is coming, as it, alone, has remained unscathed.

All of this means that the people have been humbled and are in a condition to hear the gospel. In Deutschland they are responding and the wonderful record made last year by a handful of local missionaries makes one very optimistic for the future. Perfect freedom is given the elders and the governments encourage, instead of forbidding. Personally, I feel that if the German people are ever going to accept the gospel, they will do it now, and the next few years will see a wonderful Fortschritt in that country. In Austria they are responding in the same manner. The best feature, though, is to find that nearly all have remained truthful and are better members today than they ever were. Today, the Swiss and German mission is the largest of the world, and, with President Ballif organizing and getting things in motion once more, I am mighty glad to be here doing my bit also. If he had his way, the next two years would see a thousand elders in the field, but, until that time, we must push along the best we can.

Elmer, I have experienced the feeling that you spoke of many times, when things get dark and you begin to wonder if it is worth while, after all. As I read the letters from my friends at school and hear of all they are doing it makes me realize that I, also, could be there and enjoy their pleasures. This year in school I might be someone as I was ambitious to make good in student activities and had worked to that end. However, I am grateful to that end. The Lord has blessed me far more than I deserve, the hardest part—the language—is over with and never before has such a spirit of contentment and perfect satisfaction come to me. If I can keep up the good record made by you and Dave in this field, it will make me feel amply repaid. The Stoddard name is known only for good over a great deal of this mission and my brothers are everywhere known as having been "good workers." With this responsibility to maintain, I'll do my best and hope to be able, three years from now, to look back over my work with no regrets.

The lumber situation must be causing you quite some worry at present, but, perhaps, in the spring things will take a turn for the better. I often wonder, however, as I see how the Lord has punished these nations, if the United States does not, also, need something to bring the people back to their senses, and it may come in an unexpected way.

I hope Florence and the kiddies are enjoying the best of health and strength. Take care of yourself and I pray the Lord will bless and keep you all.

Next time, I will try a German letter and see if, between my schrecklich deutsch and your old language, we can come to an understanding. Until then,

Guten Nacht,
HOWARD STODDARD.

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This marvelous truth has an intensely practical application. It means that there is constantly accessible to man a power from God within him against which every force that seeks to curse and degrade his spiritual manhood is utterly incompetent and unavailing.

It matters not that men generally do not avail themselves of this power. It nevertheless exists and is resident in every man by virtue of his creation from God. Like electricity, this power has always existed; it simply awaits the day of recognition and of practical application to bless and glorify man into the radiant image of his omnipotence and perfect Maker.

WM. R. REECE.

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