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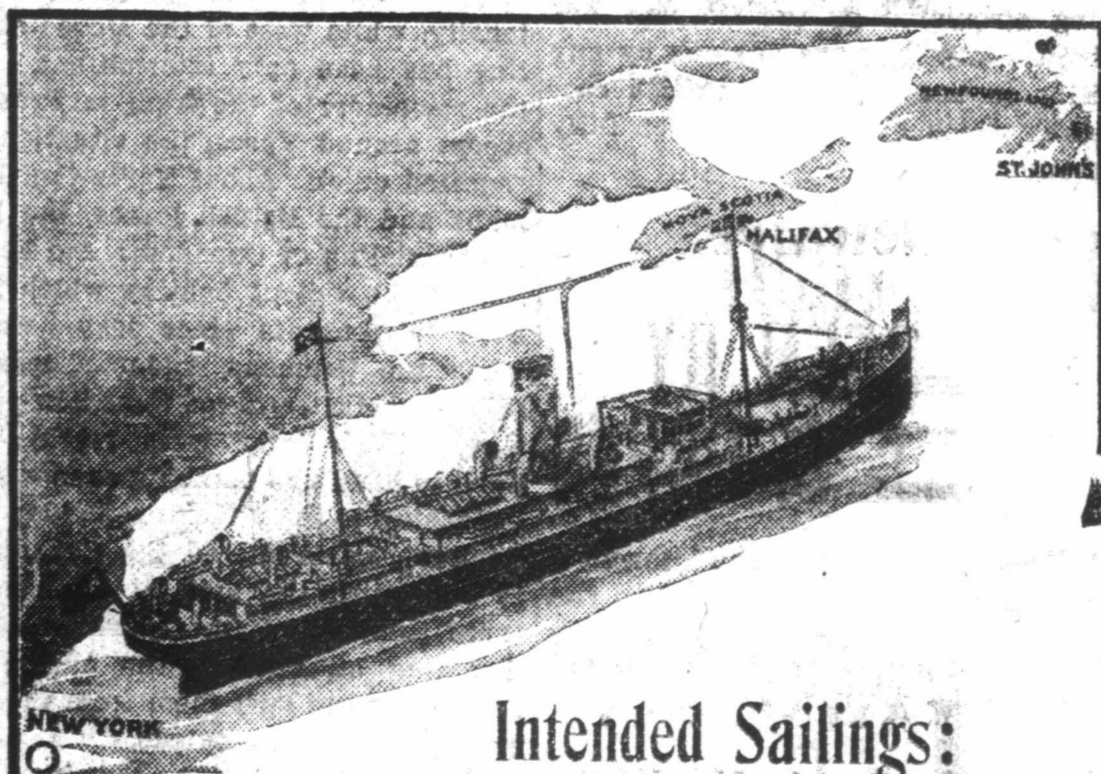
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## A British Governess Who Has Spent the Past Five Years in Vienna Tells of How the Austrians View the War.

**Austrian People Admire the British but Think Central Powers Will Win Out—Life in Vienna is as Gay as Ever—Austrians Are Courteous and Not so Boorish as the Germans.**

By MISS NETTA WAILES.  
Miss Netta Wailes, who for five years was a governess in Vienna, gives here an account of her extraordinary experiences in the Austrian capital. Here she shows how the truth is gradually gaining acceptance owing to the disclosures of wounded soldiers.

When I left Vienna five weeks ago the people were only just beginning to realize that Austria had been badly duped by the Kaiser's gang. This change of opinion must be largely attributed to the disclosures of wounded soldiers who had returned from the front.

Up to the day of leaving Vienna I was, however, still ignorant of the real state of affairs. True, occasional letters had been smuggled through from Britain, but their contents didn't reveal a hundredth part of what I learnt in ten minutes from a British Tommy who befriended me in Paris.

The Austrians are heartily sick of the domineering methods of the Germans, but they think the Prussian Army is invincible and must win in the end. It is that firm conviction which makes them put up with so much humiliation.

When I recall how those boastful German officers stalked through the streets of Vienna, demanding salutes from every Austrian, under pain of heavy penalties, I cannot help feeling sorry for Austria's fate in the future.

The Austrians liked the Britishers, and do so yet. What they dislike and what they are very bitter about is Britain's entry into the war for no rightful cause, so they say, because they do not know the truth.

At the house I was engaged at amongst the guests who came one day was an Austrian naval officer. He told me that he had been in an engagement in the Adriatic, and his ship the Heligoland, had been hit seven times by a British vessel.

When he told me the name of the British ship my heart leapt for joy, for my fiancé was on board. That was the first time I had had news of him. These Austrian officers really are courteous, and not a bit like the boorish Germans.

Seeing that I was keenly interested, this officer told me that in the engagement two Austrian torpedo boats were sunk and his own ship had to put into Pola for repairs. In the fight a shell exploded near him, but he was not injured. He brought home a piece of that shell, and said he was going to have it framed as a souvenir of the occasion, seeing whose vessel it came from.

I was wild with delight to think that my young man was actively engaged in fighting for his country, and anxious to have news of his whereabouts. One of my friends got permission to return home. I commissioned her to let me have news if my fiancé would be getting leave.

**A Letter Which Caused Trouble.**  
After hearing about that naval fight I received news from home. How happy I was to get that letter. Unfortunately, the children I was teaching saw that letter, and in their child innocence told someone. The result was my master received an official intimation from the Government on the matter.

There was some sort of inquiry. My conduct and credentials were good, but in the end my master was informed that as a Government official it was inadvisable for him to have a Britisher in his house, and I had to go.

I think it will illustrate the kindly feeling still retained for the Britishers by the Austrians when I tell you that I soon obtained another berth.

All this time I had been teaching the children English. My new mistress told me not to speak English in the streets nor before others in the house, but she still desired her children to retain their acquaintance with the language.

Nearly all the well-to-do people speak English and French, and still speak these languages, privately at least. British dress and customs they are very fond of.

While in my new home I again met Austrian officers. They all think they will win. One said the war would be over this summer, another that the Central Alliance simply couldn't lose because they had the best military position on all fronts, and were absolutely impregnable, entrenched everywhere. They had their captures and successes, off by heart. Whether they knew of any defeats I don't know.

Certainly the public were not allowed to hear of any, nor of any

casualties. A full year elapsed before any of the family heard of the death of a son, husband or father on the field. No casualty lists have been published.

If I ventured to suggest that the Allies could not always lose, or else they would have been finished long ago, I was told that the only truthful report was the German one.

Several wounded soldiers with whom I spoke put a different complexion on affairs. It was after Serbia had been robbed of her cereals and the influx of grain had begun to show signs of coming to an end. Some of these wounded soldiers said it was terrible at the front, and they were sick of the war. That food is getting scarce was, I think, proved by what one man said. He told me that latterly he was without food once for several days, and on getting rations for a week he was so hungry that he finished the lot in half that time.

The rations boxes are daily inspected by officers. This man, in order to deceive his officer, had been filling his box with stones. One officer felt the weight of his ration box, and, becoming suspicious, ordered the soldier to open it. The subterfuge was then discovered, and because he had eaten more than the regulation allowance the soldier was ordered to be hung up on a tree for a certain length of time. Others said that on many days they had to exist on a cup of coffee.

**Most Food For Soldiers on Italian Front.**  
These men had come from the east and west fronts. Those who returned from the Italian front had quite a different story to tell. In short, they had plenty of food, and even wine and cigars. Naturally, when soldiers got their marching orders they wanted to go to the Italian front.

But there are few soldiers left to send anywhere. The men of 55 years have been called out. When they went to the barracks some spoke of their ailments, and the only answer they got was, "Oh, you will do for cannon fodder."

The result is the streets are denuded of able-bodied men, and nothing but old men and very youthful boys can be seen in the male line in civilian attire. There are lots of soldiers in Vienna, many home on leave, and wounded men. The ladies lavish attentions on the wounded men. If all the bad cases are sent away from the cities, then Heaven help them, for many of those I saw in Vienna were human wrecks.

For a year no soldiers were reported as killed. Nobody who had received no news was told that their menfolk were missing. When that bubble was pricked mourning began to make its appearance in the streets.

At the outset Germany imposed her methodical methods on Austria. Every householder received a long list which referred to various articles of diet. This list had to be filled in disclosing the quantity of flour, sugar, soap, candles, etc. in the house, and a fine was imposed if it was discovered that there had been any concealment in filling up the form. Towards the end of 1915 prices went up amazingly. White flour was not to be had. We had to use maize. Meat was 4s 2d per lb., butter and lard 4s. These were the maximum prices fixed by the Government.

Many Jews made fortunes out of food. They were all popped in at the Bourse once. Something happened, and the market ceased considerably. It is not so much speculation that is responsible for enhanced prices now as scarcity of the various commodities, but don't jump to the conclusion that the Austrians are starving yet.

**Stupendous Prices For Everything.**  
Boots have doubled in price and leather for mending purposes is most difficult and costly to obtain. I paid 35s for a pair of boots that was not worth half the price. Metals have disappeared. They now have 2d nickel pieces, small copper coins, and two and five kronen pieces in silver. The rest of the money is in paper.

The "round-up" for metal has robbed all house of their brass utensils. It didn't matter how costly or valuable the articles were the authorities took them, from common saucepans to works of art. Compensation was paid but often was quite inadequate and in paper money. The boy scouts had the task of collecting these articles.

Bread and milk tickets are old friends, and meat is forbidden to be eaten twice a week. The poor people form up in long queues for milk often all night.

The rich people can afford the fancy prices, but the poor must suffer. The

soldier's wife only gets £2 10s per month. Our servants told me that the cost of food meant misery, if not starvation, for many of the people.

In spite of these hardships life in Vienna is as gay as usual, if you don't look at the underworld. The women do much as they used to do, sitting in the coffee-houses, restaurants, and cafes all day long, and going to the skating rink and theatres or other places of amusement in the evening. The ladies seem to be as lighthearted as usual. They wear the most expensive jewelry and furs, and the fashions are becoming more extravagant than ever.

The entertainment houses are so crowded that it is impossible to get a seat without booking. Many a time I tried and failed.

This sense of luxury, so apparent that you can literally grasp it, is, I think, lulling the Viennese to sleep. Germany will win, everyone says, and whilst they are waiting for that victory of victories which is to end the war that keeps going on and on, they have given themselves up to an orgy of pleasure. The crash will come, and then the Viennese will see things that they are now trying to shut their eyes to.

### The British Soldier's Joke.

The German catch phrase, "Gott strafe England," is used in Austria. The reply is "Er strafe es" ("He punishes it").

A lady who returned from a concentration camp for prisoners in Germany told me, however, that the phrase "Gott strafe England" was posted up on a notice board.

In the night a British soldier clambered up, and the astonished guard next morning read above the international greeting, "Ha ha! Because you can't."

In some of the cinema houses I visited they always had caricatures of the Allies on the screen. The favourite one represented Britain as a Scottish soldier with a bottle of whisky under his arm, and the rest of the Allies as mannequins, clinging to his legs. In the streets they sell penny toys for children. One was called the "Bad Seven," and represented the Allies, suggesting that there were seven enemies to two. That was a German importation, and was not too popular. The pork shops call our class of meat "Schweinefleisch," skitting at the French President's name.

But this kind of thing is not nearly so wholeheartedly entered into in Austria as I understand it is in Germany.

At last I got word from Britain about my fiancé. I understood that I was to return home and be married. It turned out that my fiancé was not home on leave, but the misunderstanding in the information brought me home.

When I applied to the American Consul for my passports my employer urged me to stay. She was still convinced that Britain was famine-stricken and terror-stricken. You will be far safer here, she said, and will not starve. I thanked her for her kindness, but insisted on going home. In seven days my passport arrived. When I was known I was going many Austrians told me I would never reach Britain. They laughed at our navy, and said any boat that dared to sail would be torpedoed.

### Safe Again in the Homeland

I was determined to risk being torpedoed and I left. At the frontier at Feldkirch I was stopped and kept a prisoner for four days. There were some British nurses returning from Serbia on the train. They condescended with me when I told them I had been stopped.

An officer, seeing me speaking to the nurses, ordered me to another part of the station. The nurses departed, and I had to stay in the town. After four days the little stock of money that I was allowed to bring away was fast dwindling. I went to the station, and told the officer my ticket was only available for six days, and I couldn't afford another one. He said I could go that day. I did. At Buch I was examined again.

You can imagine my feelings at this delay. I thought my fiancé was on leave, and every day's delay was unbearable to me. Arrived in Switzerland, matters went more smoothly.

In Paris I was lost, not speaking French, but I saw a British soldier from Leicester at the station, and was so delighted at seeing a compatriot again that I went up to him and shook his hand heartily. He was very kind, and showed me to an hotel that suited my purse.

At Havre it was not so nice. I was

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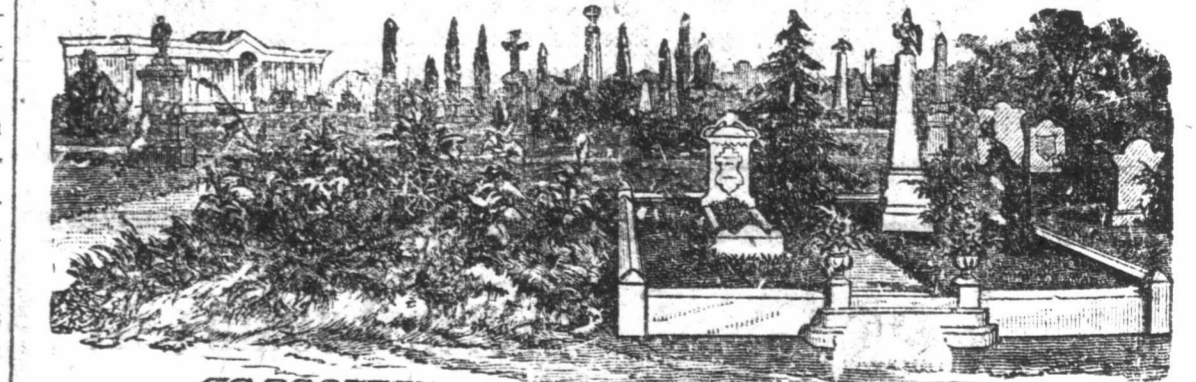
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