

But in reality there were very few of them left indeed. Apart from his food, which is still sufficient, the German to-day is having to suffer very severely. There is no leather to mend his shoes; he is given a tiny pastille of soap every two months; in the whole of Germany there is neither a comb nor a toothbrush. There are no underclothes nor outer clothes. There are no socks, no gloves, no boots. The tobacco ration is two cigarettes a day.

As has been said the "black market" has extended extraordinarily. In any army unit they will exchange petrol for coffee or cigarettes, and from the army too may be had, under the same terms, butter, meat, and condensed milk. Coffee has become a sort of second coinage. Cigarettes have come to form a sort of Bourse, according as supply and demand alternates, but are maintained round about two marks each. For five or six kilos. of coffee one can get a permit to drive a motor car, along with the necessary coupon for petrol.

Between penury and "black market" the German's lot is a hapless one. He looks fairly clean, without dust on his clothes, but his coat has a tape sewn all round it to hide where it is worn away. The holes in his shoes are filled with an artificial paste, because as long as pine trees continue there will exist chemical solutions drawn from them. He works eight hours in a factory, sometimes twelve, and goes off to brush hard at his clothes trying to keep them clean. So he goes on day after day. A woman said to me once, "life without stockings is no life." In that phrase is the whole of the melancholy of rationed Germany.

#### *The Bombardments.*

Despite all this there remained the home, the wonderful German home, where every servant maid had more advantages than the average daughter of a Spanish family. The home was the place of refuge, and when the soldiers were returning from the front they sang endlessly about their homes. From the home Berliners used to go out on Sundays to the lakes, where they used to eat some sausage seasoned with fresh air. In the evenings they returned to the home after a long day's work in office or factory, dreaming of the delights of a comfortable bed. The home was something indispensable, but suddenly one day the heavens opened out, full of enemy aeroplanes.

The terrible thing about the air attacks is that they were delivered against Berlin from morning till night. On the 22nd November hell descended on to the city. In that hour and a quarter's attack a stretch of Berlin was destroyed equivalent to the whole of Madrid. Thousands of houses were burned, and thousands of buildings crashed to the ground. It was a sight recalling the works of Dante. Flames crossed the streets in parallel lines, and the sparks set fire to all the houses nearby. Add to this the uproar of the anti-aircraft, of the aeroplanes above, of the bombs as they exploded. A woman wandered alone through the streets, careless of the fire, chanting as though she were quite mad, "Berlin is dead, Berlin is dead."

The first wave of aircraft crossed Berlin from east to west. The incendiary bombs set fire to the most prominent section of the city. Houses collapsed, the mouths of shelters were obstructed with debris, and everything was on fire. The Kaiserallee, which is three times as long as the Castellana, burnt from end to end, not excepting a single house. Beneath the beams which kept falling like monstrous embers, leaping between flames, flying from the phosphorus which was spreading over the roadway, ran the people with damp handkerchiefs pressed to their faces, and like ghosts did what they could to stem the catastrophe which had come upon them.

For the first time in German history organisation broke down. There were not sufficient hosepipes. Human chains were formed to pass water in buckets, but they kept breaking up as individual needs asserted themselves, and everybody started running like a madman from the burning spot in his house to the bathroom for water, and back from the bathroom to the burning spot. The men of the fire brigade did not bother to come into the streets. Amidst falling walls and wrecked furniture shadowy individuals could be seen seated, resigned and fatalistic.

During this bombardment, as was the case with the other three which followed, people showed extraordinary courage, entering buildings which were in danger of falling, and climbing stairs already alight to save their overcoats or other clothes, or bed linen. It was a desperate conflict to try and keep the things that they could not possibly do without. Near the Luisestrasse, close to the Charity Hospital, a house took fire. On the first floor there were two children, and on the second floor a cupboard with clothes in it. A group of people went up to the second floor and rescued the cupboard, while the children, crying and screaming,