

THE TIMES
LITERARY SUPPLEMENT,
THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 1921.

AN AUSTRIAN AT GERMAN
GREAT HEADQUARTERS.

IM DEUTSCHEN GROSSEN HAUPTQUARTIER,
VON JOSEF GRAF STÜRGGH, General der
Infanterie der Reserve. (Leipzig: Paul
Lisi. 26.40 M.)

General Graf Stürgkh, brother of the murdered Minister President, was Austro-Hungarian "Delegate" at German Great Headquarters for the first ten months of the war. His account of his sojourn there, written, he says, in 1915-1916, is rather disappointing. He has little new to tell, because the Germans did not confide in him; but he throws interesting sidelights on the relations of Germany with her "brilliant second," and on the principal personages at G.H.G. and O.H.L. Although the German Mission at Austrian Headquarters lived with the General Staff, Graf Stürgkh was not given a similar privilege. He messed with the Emperor's Military Cabinet and was kept at arm's length as regards operations. His main business was to make requests for help in men and material; and he truly describes himself as a "beggar." As his instructions said, he was "to secure that the German Supreme Command supported Austria-Hungary in the East soon and with respectable forces . . . and to use every means to combat any friction and misunderstanding that might arise." Both these tasks he found exceedingly difficult.

The author's introduction to his post was not a lucky omen: the Germans met him with a request for measures to be taken to assist the Goeben and the Breslau, then "blockaded in the harbour of Messina by British ships." He had to reply: "Our fleet is not yet operation-ready, and with a fraction of its force cannot, to assist them, risk undertaking an action which has no prospect of success." Henceforward, German requests were of another nature—would not Austria give up the South Tyrol to Italy and, later, Bukovina to Rumania, in order to purchase the neutrality of those states? The old Kaiser, Franz-Josef refused, however, to part with an inch of territory. The Austrian demands, made almost daily, were more humble: first, for 60,000 rifles to arm reservists; and then eventually, after Lemburg, for four Army Corps complete. Von Moltke was always unsympathetic as regards assistance. He considered the war in Galicia was Austria's affair, under-estimated the Russians, and told Stürgkh early in August: "You have quite a good army. You will beat the Russians." Neither Germany nor Austria seems to have noticed the great progress made by the Russian Army since the Japanese War. Even when confronted with the Austrian defeats of September, 1914, Moltke replied after a long silence:—

I would rather give you nothing at all. You see the situation I am in. I myself have been forced into the defensive, and must contend against superiority of force which has appeared entirely unexpectedly . . . Report that I will send you two Corps, more I cannot.

VON JOSEF GRAF STÜRGGH

Falkenhayn, on the other hand, realized at once that he could not afford to allow Austria to be beaten; he furnished ample assistance, but made it an excuse for trying to control the combined operations, to which Conrad would not submit. Stürgkh eventually resigned, as it was impossible to keep the peace between the two Chiefs of the General Staff.

The author himself evidently has no liking for Prussians—perhaps because he had been Military Attaché in Berlin—and his sketches of them are amusing reading. Conrad, the Austrian Chief of the Staff, seems to have shared his dislike, for he said to him:—"Well, what are our secret enemies, the Germans, doing? And what is that comedian, the Kaiser, about?" Here is his description of von Stein, von Moltke's Deputy:—

This gentleman combined in his person all the qualities and characteristics which make the Prussians so antipathetic to us South Germans, and I believe to most other nations. A blatant, openly-exhibited conviction of his own superiority; a certain contemptuous way of speaking, combined with that grating tone so unpleasant to the ear, known as the "Berlin Guard manner"; and the gift of making remarks which, to put it mildly, can hardly be described as tactful.

Lieutenant-Colonel Hentsch, the scapegoat of the Marne, seemed, we are told, to enjoy the particular confidence of the Kaiser and von Moltke. He was regarded as a specialist in the Western theatre, having studied it personally by travel. The admirals *et G.H.Q.* fare badly:—Tirpitz "had his best time behind him, and was living on the capital of his name"—a dull fellow, with an increasingly ceremonious manner of speaking, and the same subjects of conversation day after day. Admiral Müller was only of interest as an absolute teetotaller, anxious to make converts, in which he had no success.

Graf Stürgkh drops several hints about the very heavy losses incurred by the Germans in the first few weeks of the war, giving them as one of the reasons for the defeat at the Marne. He ascribes the gun ammunition shortage that occurred in the autumn to a misconception of the amount required arising out of the small quantities expended in the earlier fights, in which the infantry pressed on without artillery support, regardless of losses. There is very little about the Kaiser, except his futile rushes about the theatres of war, seeing little or nothing; but one story is significant: On the journey to the front he invited Stürgkh to luncheon in his saloon, and at table made a violent harangue against his enemies, enumerating all the steps he had taken personally to prevent war. One of the suite subsequently took the Austrian aside and said: "The Kaiser has not represented things quite as they really happened," and left him puzzling whether the All-Highest had intentionally given a false impression or had been merely carried away by his lively imagination.