

Sunday 10th March 1924.

The Church clock is just now striking 10 P.M. in Weimar, - the town of Goethe and Schiller, the representative centre of all that was and is best in Germany. And I am in Weimar!

Today I stood before the Goethe-Schiller Denkmal (Memorial) in Weimar! You can imagine how much this meant to me when I tell you that Weimar, because of its connection with these two great men, and especially with Goethe the greater of the two, has always been to me a sort of Mecca of the mind and memory. I remember well having to write an essay about the Memorial, years ago in the university; and Dr Schlapp himself cares too for this part of Germany, not only for the sake of these two great men, but also for the fact that he was born and brought up in this part, - Thuringia. So there are with me tonight many thoughts and many memories.

Last night I had three hours sleep. That was in Darmstadt where the conference of the Wirtschaftshilfe came to an end in the evening, and was celebrated later on that night with a kind of social, from which we got home about 1 A.M. My train for Weimar was at 5.30 A.M. so I had to be stirring an hour before that. And yet tonight I must write a word at once about the fact that I am in Weimar. On the way hither by the through train from Italy to Berlin, I saw at Eisenach the famous Hall of Song, The Wartburg, also in Thuringia, - the hall where the great tournament of song took place, (Their MOD) in the Middle Ages when Walther von der Vogelweide was the finest of the troubadours, and Tannhaeuser made his journey on foot to Rome to get for his sins absolution from the Pope. It was in the Wartburg that Tannhaeuser sang his famous love-song, which so shocked the bearded judges! The Pope refused to Tannhaeuser the absolution, and said that sooner than give absolution to such a sinner, he would see the staff which Tannhaeuser held in his hand burnt into ashes. The staff did not last long.

Well! I have been walking in the streets of Weimar and in the park which Goethe as chief minister of the Prince of Weimar had prepared and planted; I saw his Garden House and his town house, still in the condition and order in which he left them nearly 100 years ago. I feel now that I have a much closer connection with this wonderful man who in his day was like Shakespeare Carlyle and Darwin rolled into one.

But why did I come to Weimar? Well, there is a college of art and work there, - the Bauhaus it is called, and there are 120 students there who learn adequately to handle and master the materials with which they work: the handling of colours and the meaning of colour and form, (this especially is what one would call very MODERN); pottery, weaving, wood-work, architecture, etc. The whole idea of the Bauhaus is that it should serve the practical and most modern uses of life, there is nothing artificial about it. X

And Reinhold Schairer the chief secretary of the Wirtschaftshilfe was going to visit the Bauhaus Weimar on his way from the conference at Darmstadt to Dresden, so I said "I'm coming too. Just the chance I was looking for." So we left Darmstadt at 5.30 A.M. and reached Weimar at 1 in the afternoon. There we sought out Moholy-Nagy, a Hungarian artist and a friend of Schairer, who had found him in 1920 ill and nearly starving in Berlin and had helped him to get on to his feet again. I was at once at home with Moholy-Nagy, and his name did not seem quite so strange to me as it does to you, for I have seen many Hungarians and their names and know some of them. He belongs to the increasing number of people who pretend not at all, but are wholly and simply themselves. He had been expecting Schairer and was preparing some food, but on discovering that we had eaten in the train he contented himself with some jam bread and then shared with us some coffee. While we talked I discovered that Moholy knew several people whom I know, for instance Tolanyi, a very fine and able young Hungarian, whom we know in Vienna. In common, all these idealistic people at present in Central Europe are very poor. Then he discovered that Edwin Muir and his wife were mutual acquaintances, - Muir is a poet and critic, whose wife is Linnie Anderson whom I met about 8 years ago in St Andrews, a student when I was SCM secretary. What a small world, we all agreed.

Then Moholy took us to the Bauhaus and showed us what is being done there. While showing us some of his own pictures, which are efforts to express in form and in colour his own feelings and inner compulsion towards expression, he explained at the same time how he had developed as an artist, and how he found himself impelled to seek expression in this way. I can only say that to me the whole talk was most enlightening, and that I feel now that I know how to meet these strange new forms of painting, which consist merely in the arrangement of various figures and colours, - nothing of the usual picture or photographic element about them.

Schairer went on to Dresden at 7 o'clock, and I invited Moholy and a student to sup with me. We turned in at the Golden Eagle. Now it is Monday and I was up early. By 8.45 I was walking about in the historic town, thinking of the great promise of the past, and feeling that the present time seems to have missed the fulfilment.

Wednesday morning 6 A.M. - in the waiting room at Regensburg on the railway line Berlin-Vienna which passes round the western corner of Czecho-slovakia but avoids that country. I have travelled overnight from Dresden, leaving there at 8.30. I had to leave that first train at this station at 5 A.M. in order to wait for the Berlin-Vienna train, which passes through Regensburg at 7.05. I shall reach Vienna at 6.40 in the afternoon. Travelling in Germany now costs more than in Austria and about as much as in Britain, while food and hotels cost somewhat more than in Britain. This whole trip of mine, Vienna-Darmstadt-Weimar-Berlin-Dresden-Vienna, lasting for seven days, costs me about £60.-inclusive of everything.

I spent the whole of Monday in the Bauhaus Weimar, and saw all the art and work shops there. Especially was I interested in the weaving and in the very fine things which are there produced. I bought one piece and have it with me now, - there's a good deal of yellow in it, - warm colour. Carpets too are made in these work-shops, the designs and the colours all being produced by the students and the weavers themselves. Pottery, sculpture, woodwork, and bronze-work all find their place in the school and I was much interested in all that I saw. In the Bauhaus the idea is closely followed which in Britain is associated with the name of the late Clutton-Brock, - the idea of functional beauty, i.e. that a thing has beauty in proportion as it is well and truly made for its specific purpose, and that beauty is not at all an element which can be added to a product after it has been made for its purpose. The chairs for instance which are made in this school are simple and also give support rest and comfort, - but they are not at all adorned or decorated. I went on later to the lecture room where Moholy Nagy was giving some advice to a class. That do you thing he was dealing with - various samples of newly invented materials, a kind of vulcanite, and other such materials some of them resulting from wood subjected to certain kinds of treatment, - all this for the students because the artist must know about all possible kinds of material which he may be called upon to handle, so that he can use them and master them in the service of life and its uses.

At noon I ate with the students in their kitchen, some of the teachers eat there too. The whole dinner was, - a plate-full of a kind of heavy cabbage soup, four potatoes on a small plate, and a cup of butter-milk. This cost 30 pfennig, about 2s, and the students are so poor that some of them can afford this only about twice a week. For the rest they live on brown bread which they buy more cheaply in four pound loaves. There is a fine spirit of fellowship in the school, and between students and masters, (I mean masters of the craft or of the art, not masters of the students,).

Not material productions alone, with their element of the spiritual which thought gives are produced in this place, but many of those who work there find themselves seeking expression also in words. Hoffmann the senior student who was taking me round the place took me after dinner to his own small room and read me some of his own poems. I saw some of his paintings and drawings as well, but the poems impressed me most of all. ✕

The paintings and models were of the extreme simplicity and like other works in the Bauhaus were an effort to express something in a new way following the inner necessity of the creator however little in his present state he is able to explain the result. These works however impress the sympathetic beholder as real, as the outcome of something living, - and according to their form and colour are soothing, inspiring or exciting. One has heard of the extraordinary effects which certain people especially Russians have been able to produce by combinations of colour and of form. Well I remarked the same phenomenon here. Indeed after spending the whole day in the Bauhaus subjected to its influences and the ideas for which it stands, I found that I was very wakeful all night, especially my sub-conscious self, - not only wakeful but inwardly excited, an unusual state for me to be in.

✕ Later the same afternoon I met the head of the school, Walter Gropius, a personality. He is an architect and has already produced houses and factories all over Germany which embody the labour-saving, and purposeful ideas which I have already mentioned. To get as much sunshine as possible is another idea which he serves when he plans a house, and some of his methods of attaining this are not regarded as orthodox in the profession. I met also Kandinsky, a well known Russian artist who has written much about as well as worked much in colours. I must confess that the pictures by Kandinsky which I saw in his atelier were too far on for me, and too complicated for me to be able to register consciously the impression which they made upon me. So I am not able to say anything about them. But that they did make some impression I mean some educative and positive impression I have no doubt. ✕

Coming back in the train from Germany where I had seen many interesting experiences I read a book by the American CABELL called Figures of Earth, and found it a most interesting work. It is like an Allegory, and the hero begins as the strong and self-willed young man who sets out to follow his own purpose in order to make his mark in life and to achieve a fine figure, - as he says. He has some wonderful adventures in the Middle Ages, but the powerful influences of settled life lead him gradually into compromises and he is likely to finish up more weakly than he began. All the time this story is really quite modern and topical in what it is "getting at", and it left me a little puzzled and much interested.