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*English*

# THE COMMEMORATIVE MEDAL IN THE SERVICE OF GERMANY

BY

G. F. HILL, M.A.,

Keeper of the Department of Coins  
and Medals, British Museum

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON  
FOURTH AVENUE AND 30TH STREET, NEW YORK  
BOMBAY, CALCUTTA, AND MADRAS

1917

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THE COMMEMORATIVE MEDAL  
IN THE SERVICE OF GERMANY







Fig. 1. THE NEW TRIPLE ALLIANCE. By Professor PAUL STURM.

On the obverse are the heads of the German Emperor, the Sultan of Turkey, and the late Emperor of Austria, with the words: "Soli Deo Gloria" (To God alone the Glory). Below is a group of officers consulting a war map. On the reverse are three soldiers, one with a rifle and the other two with a range-finder; above their heads a scroll with the words: "Brothers in Arms." The inscription round the edge runs: "England wishes to starve us out, Russia to plunder and rob us, France to lay our land waste with fire, and Italy to avenge the ruin of Belgium."



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## THE COMMEMORATIVE MEDAL IN THE SERVICE OF GERMANY

ONE of the most curious of the campaigns which have been conducted by Germany with the twofold object of influencing the minds of neutrals and of maintaining enthusiasm for the war within her own borders is to be seen in the issue, in innumerable variety, of commemorative medals, a selected number of which are illustrated in these pages. There have been few periods since the sixteenth century during which the efficacy of the medal as a vehicle for political manifesto has not been recognised by some Government or other. But never has this instrument been employed with so much zest, or with so frank an appeal to the lower passions to which war must always give rein, as it has in Germany during the present conflict. Whether the issue of these medals, which appear as the product of artists working on their own account or for private firms, has been actually organised, as some have supposed, by the German Government or not is a matter of indifference. They express the popular feeling in the same way, and are doubtless under the same sort of control, as the German Press.

The medals which have up to the present found their way to neutral countries comprise at least 580 different varieties, and are of many classes. There

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are the usual patriotic pieces, which appeal to national sentiment, such as the different portraits of the German Emperor accompanied by quotations from his speech in the Reichstag on August 4, 1914 : "For me there are no longer any parties—all are Germans ; in self-defence, with a pure conscience and clean hands, we draw the sword." To the same category belong the pieces which lay stress on the union between Germany and her Allies. A certain Professor Paul Sturm is responsible for two or three such productions, on which the portraits of the German Emperor, the late Emperor Franz Josef, and the Sultan of Turkey appear together. The motto assigns the "Glory to God alone," and discreetly leaves to the beholder the distribution of the shame between the three persons represented. The reverse of one of these pieces (see Frontispiece) shows soldiers of the three Allies as brothers in arms, while a long inscription complains that "England wishes to starve us out, Russia to plunder and rob us, France to lay our land waste with fire, and Italy to avenge the ruin of Belgium." Italy should feel duly impressed by the noble indignation of the German professor at her criminal failure to sympathise with the most striking exemplification of Germany's superior culture.

The victories, real or imaginary, which have been gained by the armies or navies of the Central Powers have naturally been commemorated. By April, 1916, over one hundred of the so-called "Victory-Pennies" had been struck in silver for sale for a trifling sum.



Fig. 2. A ZEPPELIN RAID ON LONDON. By F. EUE.

On the obverse is a portrait of Count Zeppelin.

On the reverse an imaginative representation of an air raid on London, on the 17-18th August, 1915, showing the Tower Bridge with two Zeppelins hovering behind it, shells bursting in the air beside them, and searchlights mingling with the flames of explosion below.





Fig. 3. THE GERMAN CROWN PRINCE By K. GÖTZ.

On the obverse is the portrait of "William, Crown Prince of the German Empire."

On the reverse is "young Siegfried" attacking a chimera-like monster with four heads: a Bear for Russia, a Unicorn for England, a Lion for Belgium, and a Cock for France.



They are small pieces, about the size of a threepenny-bit, with a loop for hanging on a watch-chain, and have on one side a uniform design, a Victory, with the inscription: "God hath blessed our brave Armies," or "the Allied Armies." On the other side is an inscription recording the exploits. Among these may be noted the "Zeppelin Attacks on the London Docks, night of 31 May to June 1, 9-10 and 12-13 Aug., 7-8 and 8-9 Sept., 1915"; the "Bombardment of Scarborough and Hartlepool by German Ships, 16 Dec., 1914" (Fig. 4); the "Attempts of the French to break through between Verdun, Ailly, Apremont, and Flirey repulsed, 5-8 Apr., 1915"; and the "Victories in Violent Battles at Ypres and Nieuport, Oct.-Dec., 1914." The production of these pendants has doubtless gone on, and the German "victories" at Arras, on the Somme, and at Messines, as well as the repulse of the "attempts of the French to break through at Verdun" in August, 1917, have, we trust, been duly commemorated.

German sentiment turns naturally to hero-worship, and the medals have fallen into line with this tendency. Innumerable are the portraits, not only of the leaders of royal birth, the Crown Prince, Prince Eitel Friedrich, the King of Bavaria, Crown Prince Rupprecht, Prince Leopold, the King of Saxony, the Grand Duke of Baden, Duke Albrecht of Württemberg; not only of the well-known leaders of less exalted origin, Field-Marshal von Falkenhayn, Field-Marshal von der Goltz, Field-Marshal von Hindenburg, General

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von Kluck, Field-Marshal von Mackensen, or—in the other elements—of Vice-Admiral von Spee and Grand-Admiral von Tirpitz and Count Zeppelin; but we have portraits of heroes of more modest rank, such as von Mücke (whose escape in a sailing vessel from Keeling Island to Hodeida must be almost forgotten



Fig. 4. A GERMAN "VICTORY-PENNY" (*enlarged*).

On the obverse is the figure of Victory flying forward with a flaming sword and a laurel wreath, and the inscription: "God hath blessed the Allied Armies."

On the reverse the inscription: "Bombardment of Scarborough and Hartlepool by German Ships, 16th December, 1914."

by now); of von Müller, the Captain of the *Emden*; and of Weddigen, who torpedoed the three cruisers. In civil life, the Chancellor, von Bethmann-Hollweg; the Secretary to the Treasury, Dr. Helfferich; and even the Prussian Minister of Agriculture, Freiherr von Schorlemer-Lieser, are included in the gallery along with the professor who invented the 42-centimetre gun. The portraits are a singular

collection, particularly striking by reason of what appears to be the official expression of frightfulness which characterises most of the military leaders. But not all of them have succeeded in the assumption of the desired degree of ferocity ; General von Kluck's expression, especially on the medal on which the German Eagle is seen gazing at the distant fortifications of Paris, is wistful, almost to the verge of tears ; Count Zeppelin (Fig. 2) looks merely stolid ; while Admiral von Tirpitz (Figs. 5, 6) is nothing if not genial.

The medals of the protagonist of the submarine campaign are curiously interesting in their revelation of German idealism in its latest form. Many of them bear the motto : "Gott strafe England," and the date of the initiation of the campaign, 18th February, 1915. The submarines are shown at their work of establishing the "Freedom of the Seas" ; but the medallists have done their best, presumably in keeping with the cheerful countenance of the Admiral, to lighten the situation with humour of expression or motto. The German Neptune (Fig. 5), who shakes his fist and shouts his curses at the British ships as they sink in the offing, betrays by his attitude nothing but impotent and childish rage ; the conch through which, on another medal (Fig. 6), he blows defiance at the shores of England, is so modelled as to suggest a paper bag, which will eventually be burst with due effect ; and Professor Sturm, with masterly ineptitude, has chosen the words : "Our orders are to sink the ship and save the crew," as a motto for a strange



Fig. 5. GRAND-ADMIRAL VON TIRPITZ. By K. GÖTZ.

On the obverse is a portrait of Grand-Admiral von Tirpitz.

On the reverse, Neptune seated on the top of a submarine between the periscopes, shaking his fist at a sinking merchant ship; another submarine and another merchant ship are visible under the words: "God punish England, 18th February, 1915."

scene in which a boat containing the crew of a sinking ship is coming alongside a submarine, on the forepart of which are two gigantic rats, larger in scale than any human being.

A critic is always able to detect unconscious humour in the works of an artist with whose intellectual and



Fig. 6. GRAND-ADMIRAL VON TIRPITZ.

By A. LÖWENTAL.

On the obverse is a portrait of Grand-Admiral von Tirpitz.

On the reverse, Neptune rising from the sea and blowing a conch, in the background is the English coast, with the words: "God punish England," and the date: "18th February, 1915."

moral attitude he is out of sympathy. It is therefore with no intention of condemnation, but merely in order to indicate the difference in outlook between the Germans and the rest of the world, that we call attention to such *bêtises* as those of the authors of the von Tirpitz medals. Equally precious instances of what appears to a non-German to be failure to see the real point of a statement, whether in terms of



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art or in words, can be culled in large numbers from other medals. The portrait of the Crown Prince on a large medal by Götz (Fig. 3) is said to be a good likeness ; but, if that is so, the caricaturist's occupation is surely gone. The Italian medallists of the Renaissance, whom some of the German school have studied with considerable care, were ruthless in their exposure of the vicious qualities of some of their sitters ; but they never failed to render at the same time that touch of distinction, of nobility, which is characteristic of the gentlemen of the Italian Renaissance. But we must doubtless make allowance for the difference of race. This medal of the Crown Prince has on its reverse a figure of the young hero Siegfried attacking with his broadsword the four-headed dragon which symbolises the Triple Entente united with Belgium. Nothing but a failure of the authorities to see the significance of the contrast between the relentless portrait on the obverse and the Wagnerian hero on the reverse can account for the omission to prosecute the artist for *lèse-majesté* ; the more so as the dragon, in spite of the hero's theatrical efforts, is still intact in all her features.

Theatrical, again, is the reproduction of the statue of Bismarck standing in a ship decorated with eagles' heads (Fig. 9). The artist has conveyed, with complete success, the suggestion that the hero has taken refuge in an arm-chair from the rising tide, which is about to overwhelm him, in spite of his protests, which are recorded on the other side of this group of medals :



Fig. 7. THE ALLIED POWERS. By K. GÖTZ.

On the obverse is a chimera-like monster representing the "Alliance of Crafty Spite of 1915." Of the various heads the Cock stands for France, the Lions for Belgium and England, the Bear for Russia, the Ape for Japan. Below is Italy as a naked child, drawing what profit it can from the situation.

On the reverse is a representation of the Last Judgment: God in the clouds holding a sickle, and the world below in flames. A quotation from Heinrich von Kleist runs: "Smite him dead! The Day of Judgment will not ask your reasons!"



Fig. 8. THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF THE ENTENTE. By K. GÖTZ.

On the obverse are the heads of M. Delcassé, Sir Edward Grey, M. Iswolsky, and Signor Salandra. Sir Edward Grey is embracing M. Delcassé and holding a medallion of King Edward VII. Below is the inscription: "The Cabal of Incendiaries." On the reverse is an allegorical representation of the "Quadruple Alliance's Campaign of Lies": A figure of Rumour blowing a trumpet is riding in a chariot inscribed "Triumphal Train to Berlin, Vienna, Constantinople," the wheels of which are being broken on the spiked helmets of the German Army. Rumour is scattering broad-sheets with the words: "Revolution in Berlin!" "Germany at the Point of Starvation!" "The Cathedral of Rheims in Ruins!" and "The End of the Barbarians."



“Gott strafe England”; “False England, beware”; and “Ceterum censeo Britanniam esse delendam.”

The fact that the threat to Paris never became effective is one which the medallists of the Entente might well have commemorated. But their enemies have saved them the trouble. Löwental's design (Fig. 10) for the reverse of the small medal of General von Kluck represents a naked Fury, brandishing a torch, and riding “To Paris—1914.” On a larger medal of the same hero, the German Eagle, perched on a gun, looks hungrily at the fortifications of its coveted prey, and it is hardly fancy that detects an expression of disappointment on the face of the baffled general. The difficulty which has been experienced in neutral countries in obtaining specimens of this medal suggests that these criticisms may have suggested themselves even to the German authorities.

But even lack of humour begins to pall, and we may pass to what must be our last category. The use of the medal for satiric purposes has evidently appealed strongly to the German public. It is on the unimpeachable authority of a German specialist publication that we must place under this head the notorious *Lusitania* medal (Fig. 11). This is the work of Karl Götz, of Munich, whose initials appear on it. In the issue for September, 1916, of the *Blätter für Münzfreunde*, the organ of the Dresden Numismatic Club and the Bavarian Numismatic Society, there is a quotation from an English newspaper about this medal and the strange light which it throws on the

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mind of the German people. For the benefit of its readers, the German periodical adds: "The piece referred to is one of the satirical medals cast by Karl Götz at Munich, flagellating the levity of mind of the Cunard Line."\* A curious point remains to be noted in this connexion. The attack on the *Lusitania*,



Fig. 9. A BISMARCK MEDAL.

On the obverse is the figure of Bismarck in armour, standing in a ship among waves and drawing his sword.

On the reverse the inscription: "Ceterum censeo Britanniam esse delendam" (For the rest, I hold that Britain must be destroyed).

according to the medal, was made on May 5, 1915. As a matter of fact, the actual date was two days later. Sinister deductions have been drawn from this

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\* "Gemeint ist eine der gegossenen Spottmünzen von Karl Götz in München, die den Leichtsinn der Cunard-Line geißelt" (p. 136).

Eberbach's medal on the same subject, which appeared later, and has attained less notoriety, is inscribed: "Heimtücke und gewarnter Leichtsinn an Bord der *Lusitania*" (p. 155 of the same periodical).

discrepancy. But it must be doubted whether the German naval authorities would have confided their intentions to Herr Götz in Munich, although it is quite possible that he may have begun his design at the time when the impudent German warning to intending passengers was published in the American Press. In



Fig. 10. "TO PARIS—1914."

By OERTEL and LÖWENTAL.

On the obverse is a portrait of General von Kluck. Signed by Oertel, Berlin.

On the reverse is a naked Fury, riding on horseback and brandishing a flaming torch; below, in the distance, a town in flames; with the inscription: "To Paris—1914." Signed by A. Löwental.

any case, the discrepancy is a good instance of the way in which medallic evidence for historical events needs to be verified.

If the satire of the *Lusitania* medal requires to be expounded to the ordinary mind, there are other pieces in which the satirical intent of the medallist will be quite clear, even to the most unsympathetic

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enemy. Such are the medals satirising the "Crafty Spite" of the Entente (Fig. 7); the "Campaign of Lies" conducted by the "Cabal of Incendiaries," our Foreign Ministers (Fig. 8); the Landing of the Indians at Marseilles (Fig. 14); the Wooing of the



Fig. 11. THE SINKING OF THE *LUSITANIA*.

By K. GÖTZ.

On the obverse the *Lusitania*, loaded with munitions and aeroplanes, and furnished with a ram like a battleship, sinking in the Atlantic. Above are the words: "No Contraband!" and below: "The liner *Lusitania* sunk by a German submarine, 5th May, 1915."

On the reverse, Death at the office of the Cunard Line selling tickets to a crowd of passengers, one of them is holding a newspaper with the words: "Submarine Danger!" but they refuse to listen to the warning of a German in a top hat. Above are the words: "Business first."

Balkan Kings (Fig. 15); Italy's Withdrawal from the Trip'e Alliance (Fig. 16); and America's manufacture of munitions for the Entente (Fig. 17).

Such also is the curious series of pieces cast in iron by Eberbach, a sort of *danse macabre*, in which a skeleton plays the leading rôle. It is not clear whether

the medal in this series (Fig. 12) which satirises "England's Greeting to the Neutral *Tubantia*," and represents Death discharging, on England's behalf, a torpedo at the unfortunate Dutch vessel, was issued before or after it was definitely proved that the torpedo in question was a German one. Nor does it



Fig. 12. THE TORPEDOING OF THE *TUBANTIA*.

By EBERBACH.

On the obverse is Death as a skeleton crouching in the water, holding in one hand a torpedo and in the other a floating mine, threatening a ship sailing on the surface, with the words: "England's Greeting to the neutral *Tubantia*."

On the reverse, in an hexagonal field, is the inscription: "The best of men cannot live in peace if it does not suit his wicked neighbour."\*

much matter if, as a high German authority has said, it is to be the Germans who will write the history of this war.

A word should perhaps be said of the designers who are chiefly responsible for this extraordinary

\* The inscription appears to be a variant of the following, from Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*, Act IV., Scene 3 :—

"Es kann der Frömmste nicht im Frieden bleiben,  
Wenn es dem bösen Nachbar nicht gefällt."



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farrago. Of Professor Sturm we have already spoken. Artistically, perhaps, he attains the distinction of producing the worst composed and the most clumsily modelled of all the medals we have seen, as they are among the most ambitious.

Karl Götz is a more competent craftsman, as is shown by his modelling in the medals of the Crown Prince, or by his design for the reverse of the medal of Mackensen. He has two styles. One of them, exemplified in the pieces just mentioned, is intended to appeal to those who are familiar with the works of the Renaissance. His medal of Admiral von Tirpitz, whether consciously or not, is artistically a lineal descendant of Joachim Deschler's medal of Hieronymus Paumgartner, a Nuremberg churchwarden of the sixteenth century—which is itself one of the richest instances of unconscious humour in the whole world of art. Götz's other style is exemplified in the *Lusitania* medal; it corresponds to the satirical print, and makes no attempt at composition, but simply crowds into the space available all the details that it is thought will amuse the populace.

Eberbach's work is of the same character as these satirical pieces by Götz, and appeals to nothing but the taste for the gruesome. But a repetition of the hackneyed skeleton *motif*, unless treated with the imagination of a Félicien Rops, must be without effect on a public that has in recent years supped full with horrors more real by far.



Fig. 13. THE THREE COUNTS VON SPEE. By K. GÖTZ.

On the obverse are the heads of Count Maximilian von Spee and his two sons, Heinrich and Otto. Below is a rhyming doggerel:

*The father, Admiral on the "Scharnhorst":  
Under his command a squadron small in number;*

On the reverse is an Eagle flying over the sea near the Falkland Islands, holding a branch of laurel, some leaves of which have fallen into the waves, with the date: "8th December, 1914."

*The elder son on the "Gndesau," a lieutenant  
Otto held the same post on the "Nürnberg."*

*Near the Falkland Islands, in the deep ocean,  
Lie German heroes, lie the three Counts Spee.*

THE COUNTS VON SPEE.



Fig. 14. THE LANDING OF THE INDIANS AT MARSEILLES.

By K. GÖTZ.

On the obverse is a British soldier in a kilt twisting the tail of an elephant on which an Indian is seated, and driving it forward with the words: "All right, pass on to the battle-field."

On the reverse is a triumphal arch erected by the French Republic, and an Indian carrying a poster running underneath it. The inscriptions (in French) run: "Long live the English! We are safe! Tremendous attraction—the Indians at Marseilles!" (It will be noted that, in the twelve French words of these inscriptions, there are five mistakes.)



Fig. 15. THE WOOING OF THE BALKAN KINGS.

By K. GÖTZ.

On the obverse are a British soldier (in kilt and puttees only), the Emperor of Russia with a knout under his arm, President Poincaré and the King of Italy joining in the "procession to the Balkans."

On the reverse are the heads of the three Balkan Kings: Ferdinand of Rumania, Constantine of Greece, and Ferdinand of Bulgaria, behind a grating. On the grating hang emblems of the four Powers of the Alliance: an apple for Italy, a heart for the French Republic, a dolphin vomiting money for England, and a clenched fist for Russia, with the words: "Help, Balkans! Fight for us!"



A. Löwental's reverse for the medal of General von Kluck shows him to be skilful if academic in composition ; but his figures are over-modelled.

Lastly, it must not be denied that occasionally, even if the intention is not well carried out, the German medallists have hit upon a meritorious idea. The death of Count von Spee and his two sons in the battle of the Falkland Islands impressed Germany as deeply as the death of Craddock at Coronel affected British feeling. Götz's conception of the German Eagle flying over a waste of waters to lay a laurel branch upon their ocean grave (Fig. 13) is one with which every citizen of a sea-going nation will sympathise. It is all the more unfortunate that so touching an idea has been carried out with so imperfect a rendering both of the bird and of the seascape, and with so little dignity in the decorative elements of the design.

We may close our study of this development of German propaganda with a reference to a peculiar phase of it which is described in the pages of the *Berliner Münzblätter*, the organ of the united numismatic societies of Germany and Austria (September, 1916).

The writer, Dr. Heilbronn, who is or was on active service, describes certain little medals, made in iron as propaganda for the raising of money through the driving of nails into wooden statues. Whatever opinions may be held, says the gallant doctor, of the permanent artistic value of the statues

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(the nobility of their object, he hastens to add, is above all criticism), he is enthusiastic as to the beauty of the medals, which have been too much neglected, and he urges that collectors should interest themselves in preserving them. We are unable to judge of Dr. Heilbronn's taste, though we may make a shrewd



Fig. 16. ITALY'S WITHDRAWAL FROM THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE. By K. GÖTZ.

On the obverse is an Italian attacking the Austrian Double-headed Eagle from the back as it is engaged in driving off the Russian Bear from Galicia, with the words: "Italy's Policy of the Free Hand, 1915."

On the reverse is an Italian soldier, with a paper inscribed "Tripolis," his wrists held by an Austrian soldier, while a German soldier prods him with his bayonet, with the inscription: "Parasite of the Triple Alliance—Defiler of the Loyal Alliance."

guess at its quality; but his effusion has had the interesting result of evoking a protest in the following issue of the same periodical from another numismatist.

A misunderstanding of the meaning of an old Viennese trade-sign has, says this writer, originated a

regular mania throughout Germany for driving in nails. Protests on the part of the Berlin Academy of Arts and various professors have entirely failed to discourage the practice, which from the æsthetic standpoint cannot be too heartily condemned, and which argues a deplorable lack of sensibility in the public who indulge



Fig. 17. AMERICAN NEUTRALITY.

By K. GÖTZ.

On the obverse is the head of President Wilson, wearing a laurel wreath, the fillets embroidered with eagles. Below are the words (in English): "Liberty, Neutrality, Humanity."

On the reverse is Uncle Sam sitting beside a gun and a pile of cannonballs, offering a ship with one hand and claspng a bag of 1,000,000 dollars in the other, with the words (in German): "America's Neutral Trade."

in it, especially when the originals of these figures, like Hindenburg, are still alive. "Our enemies are not so very wrong if they describe these horrible manifestations of patriotic enthusiasm as barbarous, and compare them with practices known in connexion with negro art." After the war, these productions,

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especially the "frightful Hindenburg-Colossus," ought to disappear from public view, or be preserved in some museum as evidence of a strange lack of good taste. And now, he adds, "the memory of this craze is to be perpetuated in medals. We have in the last two years unfortunately suffered from so much that is mediocre in the sphere of the modern war-medal that it was really quite unnecessary that anything more of that kind should be laid upon us. That a real artist should ever devote himself to producing such a medal is out of the question, and no collector of taste will entertain the idea of filling his cabinets with these commercial products."

It is pleasant to be able to endorse this writer's protest. But it is to be hoped, nevertheless, that some museums devoted to the ethnology of primitive races will preserve specimens of these "nailing-medals."

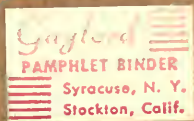


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