

DOCTOR RUMELY—SUPERMAN

Amazing Story of the Life of an American Who Placed German Institutions Above the Traditions of His Native Land

As Confidant of High Huns Was Aware of War Secrets in 1914 and Laid Plot for Propaganda—Sought to Turn Public Sentiment from Allies to Germany.

By Frank Parker Stockbridge, Late Managing Editor of the Evening Mail.
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The name of Rumely still stands over the big plants at La Porte, but the name is the only interest the Rumely family has left in the business that was founded by Meinrad Rumely in 1853. To-day it is the Advance-Rumely Company. Its president, Finley P. Mount, is also receiver of the assets of the defunct M. Rumely Company. Rapid as were the expansion and balloon-like growth of the M. Rumely Company under the management of Edward A. Rumely, its collapse was even more sudden and spectacular.

At the time the company's capital stock was increased the preferred and common issues were both listed on the New York Stock Exchange. Industrials were particularly popular just at that time, and the report to the Governors of the Stock Exchange of the company's condition and prospects was satisfactory as to the former and optimistic as to the latter.

The new common stock particularly was actively traded in from the beginning, with an opening quotation of 101. That was in November, 1911. The company's report for 1911 showed net earnings of more than eight per cent on the outstanding common stock for the year after taking care of the preferred, and a surplus of close to three-quarters of a million dollars. The private banking houses of William Salomon & Co and Hallgarten & Co., who underwrote the ten million dollar note issue of 1912, had every reason for confidence in these securities.

Business Steadily Expanded.
In the meantime the company's business expanded and expanded. To facilitate the handling of added lines of agricultural implements and to separate the distributing end from the manufacturing, there was formed during 1912 the Rumely Products Company, with Leo M. Rumely, a brother of Edward A. Rumely, as president. During the year also the M. Rumely Company acquired the Northwest Thresher Company.

Before the end of 1912, however, rumors began to circulate in financial circles that all was not well with the M. Rumely Company. Perhaps some one interested had seen those rows of red threshing machines and tractors along the railroad tracks at La Porte and wondered why they were not being moved. Perhaps—well, it is hardly important to run down ancient rumor, but whatever the cause, investors in Rumely stock began to get nervous and toward the end of the year a selling wave began that carried the common stock down fifty-eight points in less than five months.

On April 3, 1913, however, the company's annual report for 1912 was issued and the common stock jumped from 38 1/2 on the Stock Exchange to 44 1/2. The report showed net profits of the three allied companies for 1912 of \$1,824,500, or at the rate of better than ten per cent on the outstanding common stock. The gross sales for the year, of \$17,597,431, were more than forty per cent greater than in the previous year, while the company's figures showed a surplus of almost \$600,000. Still the reports that all was not well with the M. Rumely Company persisted and stockholders continued to sell. Certain of them went so far as to complain to the Governors of the Stock Exchange that the facts about the company had been misrepresented to them by the bankers who had floated the original issue.

The bankers had not been idle in the face of the unsatisfactory rumors, and on May 9, 1913, they were able to report that the board of directors of the M. Rumely Company had been completely reorganized, that Clarence S. Funk, previously general manager of the International Harvester Corporation, had been elected president; that John H. Guy had been elected vice president in charge of finances, and that all of the former executives of the company, including General Manager Edward A. Rumely and his uncle, A. J. Rumely, president, had tendered their resignations, which had been accepted.

Reorganization Does Not Save It.
The reorganization did not save the M. Rumely Company from bankruptcy, even though production was cut down and the selling force increased under the new management. On January 15, 1915, Finley P. Mount was appointed receiver and later, with the sanction of the Court, sold the remaining assets to the Advance-Rumely Company, of which he is president, and which is doing a large and profitable business. The receivership still continues. With Dr. Rumely out of the management and the Rumely interest in the company that bears the family name entirely wiped out, the affairs of the agricultural implement business have no further bearing on the present narrative. It is of interest, however, to inquire into the nature of the "mistakes" to which the bankers attributed the crash.

I have referred to Dr. Rumely as an enthusiast. He is all of that. When he becomes possessed of a new idea nothing will suit him but to see it put into execution at once. I have referred to the activity and scope of his mental processes. He fairly bubbles with new ideas. The kindest and at the same time the fairest explanation, I believe, of the demise of the M. Rumely Company is that Dr. Rumely choked it to death by trying to force too many new ideas down its throat at one time. They may all have been good ideas and if they had been administered in homeopathic doses perhaps the M. Rumely Company might have developed such an appetite for

his mannerisms and told him whether he was cut out for a cashier or auditor, a blacksmith, a moulder or an artisan.

"As a result, it is said, not all the applicants for jobs at the Rumely plant were found to measure up, cranially speaking, with the jobs they sought. They didn't get the jobs. There was more or less annoyance felt by old hands who wanted advancement.

"Salomon & Co., bankers, owned or controlled a large amount of the company's stock. Hallgarten & Co. and the Salomon house underwrote the \$10,000,000 issue of two-year notes. These notes sold to smaller banks, soon had to be met, and the New York Stock Exchange heads cast speculative eyes on the notes, it is said.

"Thereupon Dr. Rumely's efficiency and 'progressiveness' methods began to wane and reorganization plans proceeded forthwith."

New Ideas and Projects.

Once out of the M. Rumely Company, Dr. Rumely concentrated his attention and interests upon his Interlaken school.

He also began to write articles for various magazines on education, on manufacturing, on agriculture and other economic and social topics. His active brain was continually evolving new projects and ideas, some of which he put into effect in his school, others of which he attempted to promote. I was then living in Chicago and saw Dr. Rumely at more or less frequent intervals. Sometimes I would visit the school; at other times he would call me up when he was in Chicago and we would lunch or dine together. There was always something stimulating in this sort of intellectual intercourse. He would spread his latest new idea before me and in rapid fire sentences illuminate it with excursions into the realms of philosophy and art, science and fancy, history and romance, until the ordinary mind grew weary in trying to follow the myriad threads of thought. Often after a session of an hour or two with the doctor I have found myself a month later still trying to trace to its ultimate conclusion some line of thought suggested by some sparklingly brilliant idea carelessly dropped into the middle of a conversation on some entirely different topic.

Brushed Aside Obstacles.

It was always difficult to draw the line between sound logic and fallacious reasoning when listening to Dr. Rumely expounding whichever one of his pet ideas was uppermost in his mind at the moment. Difficulties and obstacles he brushed aside as of no moment. Projects and schemes that, emanating from a less brilliant intellect, would have seemed crude and half baked, under the spell of his almost hypnotic enthusiasm and confidence took on the semblance of reality. It was not until the next day, or the next week, after the magic had worn off, that the flaws in the reasoning became apparent.

I remember one of Dr. Rumely's plans in this period between the downfall of the Rumely Company and the beginning of the European war was to establish a great publishing house to provide improving literature for the working man at low cost. They do that sort of thing in Germany, he told me. Every village has its book shop, where the laborer can buy his copy of Bernhardi or Treitschke or "Also Sprach Zarathustra" for a pfennig or two. Books cost too much in America, he thought. He would get out little books to sell for a nickel, which the working classes would eagerly devour. Having had a good many years of experience in various phases of the printing and publishing business, I was able to qualify in his eyes as an expert; therefore my assurance that, whatever they might do in Germany, this project would not work in America, for more than one reason was sufficient to divert his attention from the scheme.

An Amazing Proposal.

Then in August, 1914, Germany tore up the scrap of paper on which she had guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium and started out to conquer the world. I do not need to recall to the memory of any thinking American the shock that this wanton act of a nation with which all the world had been at peace sent through the civilized portions of the earth. Many of us—most of us in fact—did not sense it at first as our quarrel or as anything that concerned the destinies of America. As for our German-American friends and neighbors, we did not blame them for sympathizing and openly expressing sympathy with the land of their birth. We were confident that whatever their sentimental attachment for the Fatherland, they were at heart Americans; they had merely failed to grasp the essential differences between what Germany was fighting for and what the Allies were fighting for. That any real American, however much he might admire the good qualities of the German people or the splendid achievements of Germans in art, literature and science, could accept the

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German view of ethics or the German scheme of society was incredible. That any American could possibly believe that the American people could by any means be made to accept the German point of view and see the great war through German eyes was unbelievable. That any American would be willing to undertake to pervert the minds of the American people until they saw the world, not as Americans but as Germans, was impossible. The man who would attempt it by so doing branded himself not an American but a German.

I feel that way now, I felt that way then, in August, 1914. You can perhaps judge of my amazement when, only a few weeks after Germany began the war, my friend, Dr. Rumely, came to me with the proposal to establish a nationwide propaganda to convince the American people that Germany was fighting a just and righteous war!

The European war had been raging for about six weeks when one afternoon—I cannot fix the date any more closely than that it was some time in September, 1914—the telephone in my Chicago office rang.

"Hello! Hello! This is Rumely speaking, from Laporte. There's a matter I want your advice on. I'm coming in to Chicago. Dine with me at the Union League Club at six-thirty."

This was the message over the telephone and I promised to meet him. Dr. Rumely ordered the dinner—it was more like a banquet. Had he been entertaining the German Ambassador he could not have given more care to the selection of the menu or the volume and quality of the food. He ordered a bottle of wine and would have bought cocktails and cordials, too, if I had cared for them. Out of courtesy to my host I ate rather more than was my wont.

Over the dinner table he talked rapidly, interestingly and cheerfully about commonplace topics, telling me of things that he was doing at the Interlaken School with an occasional excursion into the realms of philosophy and science. After he had dined he invited me to his room on an upper floor.

"What do you think of the war?" he demanded, abruptly, as we seated ourselves.

I had been doing a great deal of thinking about the war, and my answer was as abrupt as his inquiry.

"I think this country has got to get into it sooner or later, and the sooner the better," I replied.

My positiveness seemed to take him aback for a moment. "Why do you think that?" he demanded.

"Because it's our war, and we can't hold up our heads after it's over if we let England and France and Russia fight our battles for us. As it stands now, we get all the benefit and take none of the risk. We are a first class nation now; we will sink to the position of a second class Power if we do not take a hand in the destruction of Germany!"

Dr. Rumely drew a long breath. Then he leaned forward, pointed his forefinger at me, and with the most impressive emphasis exclaimed:—

"Germany is going to win this war!"

"Then God help America!" I ejaculated.

"If that is true, we shall have to begin preparing now to fight for all we have and are."

Dr. Rumely smiled indulgently, as though I were one of his pupils in need of instruction.

"I see you don't understand the war any better than most Americans do," he said soothingly.

"I understand that it is a war between two opposing civilizations that cannot both exist on one planet!" I retorted, with considerable heat. "It is not a war of governments—it is a war of gods. It is a war between the god of brass and iron that the Germans worship and the spiritual God who rules the hearts and the aspirations of free men. It must be settled here and now whether the materialistic conception of life or the spiritual shall triumph. That is why I say it is our war."

Dr. Rumely smiled, patronizingly. "Germany will win," he repeated, uttering the words slowly and with unction, as though the thought were pleasing to him. "Nothing can defeat her. She has been preparing for this war for forty years. Germany has been cramped and crowded in and kept from expanding by jealous enemies. Now Germany is greater than her enemies and she will expand and take her place as the great Power of Europe. Nothing can stop her."

He drew a mass of papers from his inside pocket. There were letters with German postage stamps upon them and other documents in the German language.

"I have many friends on the other side," he said. "Some of them are men in high

position." He mentioned several names and titles which were unfamiliar to me and which I do not remember. One of them, only, has stuck in my memory, because of later association, the name of Dr. von Schulze-Gaevernitz.

"I have the most important and confidential information here," he said, indicating the documents. "I am really surprised that you do not understand the German situation better than you do. Let me tell you why Germany will win—why it is of the highest importance for Germany to win."

"I shall be very glad to hear the German defence," I replied, smiling.

I cannot attempt writing solely from memory, to give a detailed verbatim report of Dr. Rumely's explanation of the German point of view. The substance of what he disclosed that night in the Union League Club, in Chicago, however, has remained indelibly in the recesses of my mind. Even after event, revelation after revelation, in the course of four years of war, has added its confirmation of the accuracy of the information he then and there laid before me. German objectives that were obscure or doubtful three years later he pointed out on that night of September, 1914. Events that have occurred within the last few weeks prove that as long ago as the night I am speaking of he was in the confidence of men who shared the innermost secrets of the German authorities.

It was only a few months ago that President Wilson first made clear to the world Germany's purpose to establish an empire of *Mittel Europa*. Dr. Rumely described this purpose in detail to me three years before. Indeed, he disclosed this purpose, of an empire stretching from the Belgian coast on the North Sea to the Persian Gulf, as the real and principal objective of the German government. He did not attribute the war to Russian mobilization, as was the fashion at that time among apologists for the Germans, but boldly and frankly declared that Germany had merely been waiting for the time to come when she could realize her dream of the "freedom of the seas" and "a free route to India."

"Germany will never give up Belgium," he declared.

"Then it was only a scrap of paper?" I interposed. The suggestion seemed to anger him.

"You are just another American idealist!" he exclaimed. "America must learn that the weak cannot obstruct the progress of the strong. When a nation achieves the greatness of Germany, it is her right to take what she requires. Belgium could have saved herself by merely letting the German army through. Now Belgium must take the consequences that always come to the weak when they get in the way of the strong."

Says Belgians Are Part German.

He went on in detail to explain that Belgium was part German, anyway—that one of the two races that make up the Belgian people had been proved by German scientists to be of Teutonic origin, and therefore part German. I have heard the same argument since from other German sources, though for the life of me I cannot remember, not can any one but a German, whether it be the Flemings or the Walloons that Germany claims as subjects of the Kaiser.

Then he told of the project for a German empire that would give German commerce a direct route overland to India. The people of India, he said, were ready to rise in revolt against their British rulers; the Irish were already in rebellion (the Ulster "rising" of 1914 was still fresh in everybody's mind). The British could do nothing—they were a decadent race, an ease loving people, addicted to debasing vices, without power of co-ordination or effective organization and without farseeing leaders. It was but a few weeks ago that an English libel suit disclosed the existence of the "Black Book" of the Prince of Wales, containing the names of 40,000 English men and women who the Germans charged, were degenerate of the lowest type. Doctor Rumely, not only on this occasion but several other times, long before there was any public disclosure of these charges, made exactly identical assertions to me, on one occasion even naming some of the men highest in the British government and army.

Displayed Hate for England.

Lissauer's "Hymn of Hate" had not yet been written; "Gott strafe England" had not yet become the German battle cry. But through all of Dr. Rumely's explanation of the German purpose in the war ran the thread of hatred of and contempt for England that has since become the dominant note in all German utterances. For France he had nothing but pity. Poor France! She had been standing still while Germany had forced ahead. That was her crime—she was not "progressive."

"There you go again," he explained, "talking of things you do not know anything about. Don't you know that the German people are the best governed people in the world? Don't you know that there is less misery and poverty in Berlin than there is in London; that the German poor are happier than the poor of New York?"

"I know you are not going to get Americans to like a civilization where the soldier is supreme, where women have to

Blind to American Ideals, He Blamed British for Attitude of This Country—Let Cat Out of Bag in an Interview with Mr. Stockbridge in Chicago.

"Germany wants the freedom of the seas," he declared.

"What is stopping her?" I asked.

"England," he explained. "England controls all the strategic straits and waterways of the world—Gibraltar, the English Channel, the Suez Canal, the Straits of Malacca." He named a dozen more. "It is not right that one nation should have the power to prevent the commerce of the world from moving where it pleases."

"Has England ever stopped any German ships from going where they pleased?" I asked.

Attack British Sea Power.

"No, but she could. She has a great navy, with coaling stations all over the world. No nation can keep such power without some day exercising it."

"Perfect German logic! If you own a gun you must kill somebody!"

When he declared German commerce was being stifled I asked him to explain how Germany had risen in twenty years from maritime insignificance to the position of second maritime Power of the world. He changed the subject, saying that I, being an American, could not understand those things. Germany, he said, must expand. Her birth rate was increasing, her population pressing upon her borders. She needed room in which to grow.

"Why has emigration from Germany practically ceased for twenty years if her people are so crowded at home?" I asked. That was another thing which, as an American, I could not be expected to understand.

"That is the whole trouble," Dr. Rumely went on. "You Americans do not understand Germany. The English have been filling this country with their propaganda for years and you think they are right in whatever they do. The result is that Americans are all taking the English side. Now, Germany is entitled to a fair hearing, is she not?"

I conceded that Germany was entitled to exactly as fair treatment as was Belgium or any other country.

Says British Censor News.

"My friends," he said, picking up the package of papers, "are sure that if the people of America really understood German war aims they would have more sympathy with Germany in this war. We are not getting correct news from the other side. The British censors are holding back everything favorable to Germany. The Associated Press is pro-English. Now, I can get the exclusive right to obtain the real news from Germany for distribution in this country. My friends think that would be a very valuable concession. What do you think about it?"

"What would you do with this news after you got it?" I asked.

"I would sell it to the American newspapers," he said. "It ought to be very valuable, for it would be authentic and official."

As gently and as solemnly as I could I told the Doctor a few rudimentary facts about the newspaper business. I tried to make him see that the war was already costing the newspapers far more than they could possibly get out of it, and was going to cost them still more; that instead of being eager to spend money for more news, even "German official" news, they were looking for places where they could cut off expenses.

"That is what I want advice about," he said. "You have had experience in such things. How would you go about it to influence public opinion in America in favor of Germany?"

The cat was out of the bag! "If you were to come to me with a proposition to do that," I replied, "I would stipulate certain conditions to begin with. First, you should deposit a reasonable sum—say a million dollars—to my credit in some good country where extradition treaties don't run, like Honduras. Then you should furnish me an armed guard and a complete set of disguises, so when the time came, as it assuredly would, when I had to make my getaway between two days, I would have a reasonable chance of making it. In other words, what you are asking can't be done, and the man who tries it on is going to find himself in trouble."

I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but events have proved that I was right. The Doctor wanted to know why I was so positive.

"Because the thing you want to make the American people believe in is something they cannot believe in and remain Americans," I said. "You want them to believe that a nation that tears up treaties and invades a country with which it has no quarrel is something to be admired. You want to make the people of free America sympathize with the masters of enslaved Germany."

"There you go again," he explained, "talking of things you do not know anything about. Don't you know that the German people are the best governed people in the world? Don't you know that there is less misery and poverty in Berlin than there is in London; that the German poor are happier than the poor of New York?"

"I know you are not going to get Americans to like a civilization where the soldier is supreme, where women have to

step into the gutter to let officers pass, where such things as the Zabrern affair can happen," I answered him.

"You have never been in Germany, or you would not say such things," he remonstrated. "It is that sort of ignorance about Germany that makes Americans sympathize with Germany's enemies."

"It is ignorance of America that makes you think you can change their point of view," I retorted. "You do not know that the state socialism which you hold to be the best government in the world is the exact opposite of the individualism on which America has been founded. Your German government wraps up happiness in packages and parcels it out to the populace; here we guarantee to the individual not happiness but life and liberty for the pursuit of happiness. You are looking in exactly the opposite direction from America. You can't make America turn around."

The Doctor seemed more amused at my vehemence than angered at my denunciation of the German ideals. He came back to the subject of propaganda.

"There are certain things in the German plan and point of view that ought to be broadly circulated in this country," he said. "Isn't there some way to get the newspapers to print them?"

"Not if they see you first, there isn't," I replied. "As a matter of fact, I'm not worrying any about the effect your propaganda would have on the American people, for I think the sort of things you are talking would just make them laugh. But if you must get something circulated why not try the Congressional Record? I wouldn't even offer that suggestion if I thought there was the slightest chance that any one in America would take your efforts seriously, but such as it is you are welcome to it."

Would Use Congressional Record.

I had to explain to the Doctor that if he could get a German member of Congress to read into the Congressional Record whatever German "explanations" he had to offer it could then be circulated free of postage. The idea of making the United States government spread German propaganda free of charge appealed to him. He thanked me for the suggestion and I said good night.

As I stepped out into the street I looked at my watch. It was after two o'clock in the morning. As I walked eastward toward the Illinois Central station I heard, somewhere off in the fastnesses of the "Loop," a chorus of male voices singing "Deutschland, Deutschland ueber Alles." I began to wonder whether I had not been perhaps a little too sure that nobody would take German propaganda seriously. Here were these fellows, now, celebrating the fall of Liege, perhaps—American born, likely. More than once, though I haven't a drop of German blood in my veins and only a high school smattering of the language, I had joined German friends at a kommers or a turnfest in singing "Deutschland ueber Alles" and thought nothing of it. It was a harmless bit of sentiment, besides, it went to a tune familiar from childhood as that of one of our most stirring hymns. But was it all sentiment? I began to wonder.

A man whom I knew as American born, of American parents, had just revealed himself to me as a German. Might there not be millions like him? It was inconceivable to me—yet I did not get to sleep easily.

Friends Scoff at Hun Atrocities.

The next day I went to an old and very wise friend. I told him in detail of my conversation of the evening before. "Curious, isn't it, that a man like Rumely should get such an obsession," he said. But he didn't think he could do any harm. He felt, as I did, that there could be no possible compromise between the American and German ideals, and that the American people must instinctively see that and remain unmoved, whatever Germany might attempt in the way of propaganda.

I had uneasy thoughts whenever I turned the subject over in my mind. Finally I wrote some letters to men whom I knew to be just as genuinely American as I was, men who could have no possible sympathy with the German viewpoint. I suggested that an organization be formed to combat German propaganda in whatever form it might show its head—and a little of the creature was beginning to be visible above the camouflage. My friends—some of them hold high office—could not see the need or the danger. They felt, as I had felt, that Germany could offer nothing to the American people that would not be recognized instantly as having "Made in Germany" stamped on it.

"Have you got the German spy hysteria, too?" one friend wrote me. So little did we reckon the possibilities of German propaganda in those far-off days of 1914! But I was not convinced, and it was not long before I was to learn a great deal more about German propaganda and its methods.

In the next instalment Mr. Stockbridge will tell how the project of buying the New York Evening Mail in the interest of Germany was developed by Dr. Rumely, also interesting details of what happened at breakfast with the Kaiser's American publicity agent and the paymaster of the German Embassy.

"I understand that it is a war between two opposing civilization. It is not a war of government—it is a war of gods. It is a war between the god of brass and iron that the Germans worship and the spiritual God who rules the hearts and the aspirations of free men. It must be settled here and now whether the materialistic conception of life or the spiritual shall triumph."