THE THIRD DAY

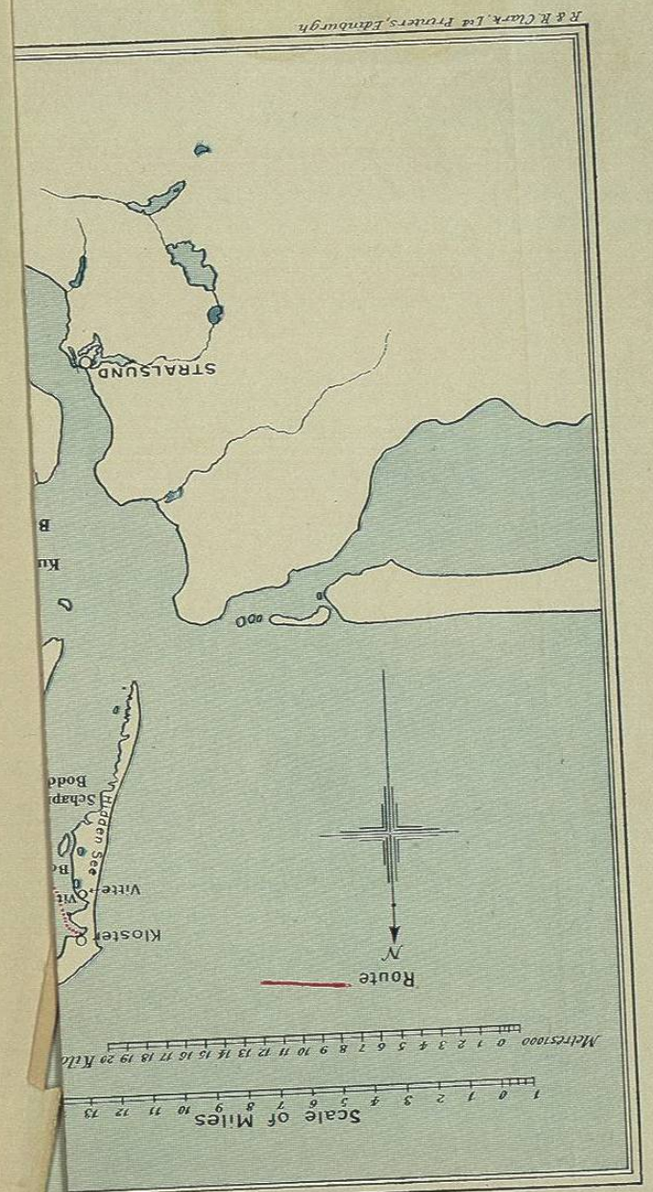
FROM LAUTERBACH TO GÖHREN

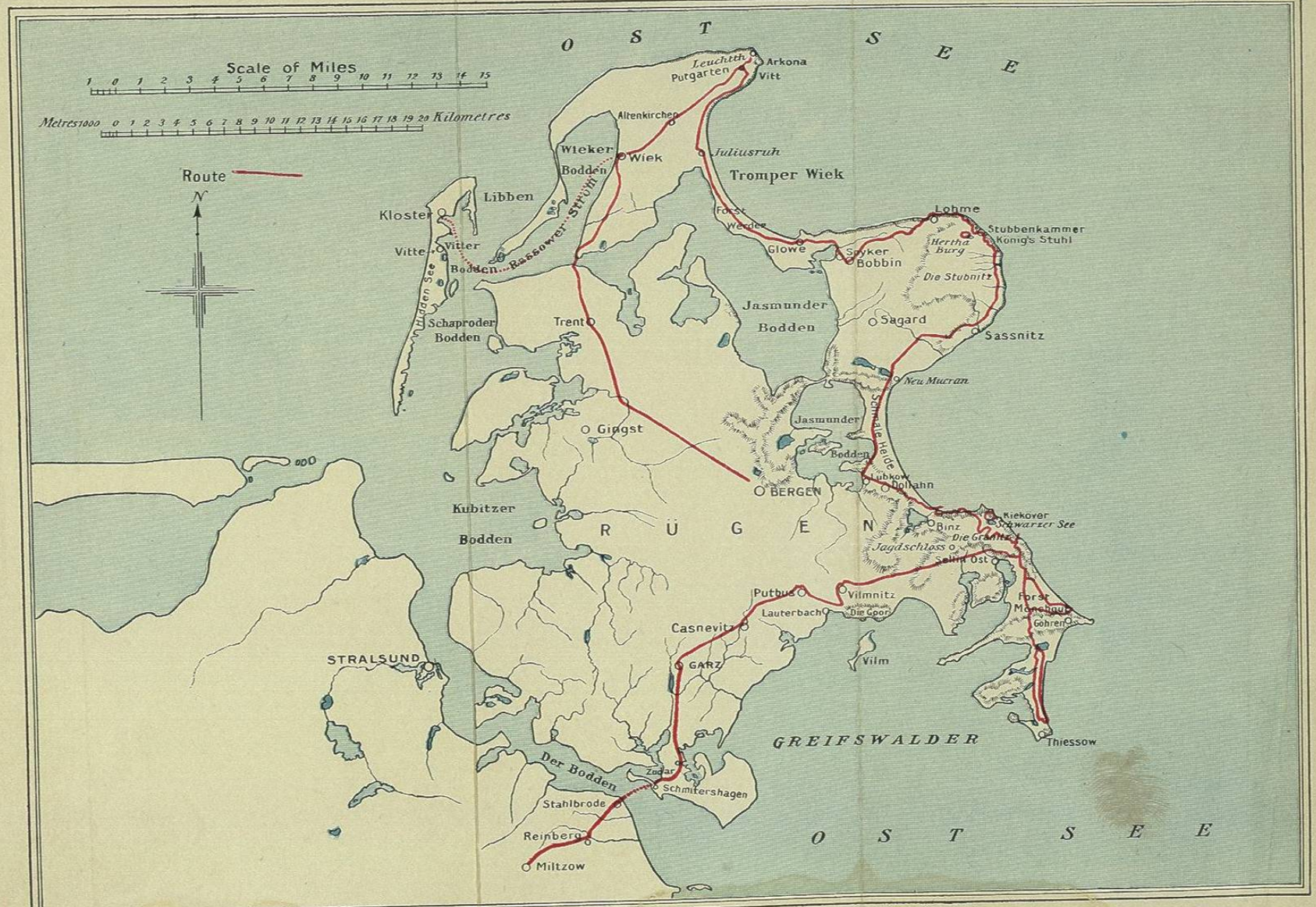
THE official on the steamer at the Lauterbach jetty had offered to take me to Baabe when I said I wanted to go to Vilm, and I had naturally refused the offer. Afterwards, on looking at the map, I found that Baabe is a place I would have to pass anyhow, if I carried out my plan of driving right round Rügen. The guide-book is enthusiastic about Baabe, and says — after explaining its rather odd name as meaning *Die Einsame*, the Lonely One — that it has a pine forest, a pure sea air with ozone in it, a climate both mild and salubrious, and that it works wonders on people who have anything the matter with their chests. Then it says that to lie at Baabe embedded in soft dry sand, allowing one's glance to rove about the broad sea with its foam-crested waves, and the rest of one to rejoice in the strong air, is an enviable thing to do. Then it bursts into poetry that goes on for a page about the feelings of him who is embedded, written by one who has been it. And then comes the practical information that

you can live at Baabe *en pension* for four marks a day, and that dinner costs one mark twenty *pfennings*. Never was there a more irrepressibly poetic guide-book. What tourist wants to be told first how he will feel when he has embedded himself in sand? Pleasures of a subtle nature have no attraction for him who has not dined. Before everything, the arriving tourist wants to know where he will get the best dinner and what it will cost; and not until that has been settled will there be, if ever, raptures. The guide-book's raptures about Baabe rang hollow. The relief chest-sufferers would find there if they could be induced to go, and the poem of the embedded one, would not, I felt, have been put in if there had been anything really solid to praise. Still, a place in a forest near the sea called *Die Einsame* was to me, at least, attractive; and I said good-bye to the Lauterbach I knew and loved, and started, full of hope, for the Baabe I was all ready to love.

It was a merry day of bright sun and busy breeze. Everything was moving and glancing and fluttering. I felt cheerful to hilarity when we were fairly out in the fields that lie between the Greek temple and the village of Vilmnitz — privately hilarious, of course, for I could not be openly so in the sober presence of Gertrud. I have observed that sweet smells, and clear light, and the piping of birds, all the things that make life lovely have no effect whatever on Gertruds. They apparently neither smell, nor see, nor hear them.

They are not merely unable to appreciate them, they actually do not know that they are there. This complete unconsciousness of the presence of beauty is always a wonder to me. No change of weather changes my Gertrud's settled solemnity. She wears the same face among the roses of June that she does in the nipping winds of March. The heart of May, with which every beast keeps holiday, never occupies her respectable interior. She is not more solemn on a blank February afternoon, when the world outside in its cold wrapping of mist shudders through the sodden hours, than she is on such a day of living radiance as this third one of our journey. The industrious breeze lifted up the stray hairs from her forehead and gave it little pats and kisses that seemed audaciously familiar applied to a brow of such decorum; the restless poplar leaves whispered all the secrets of life in her unhearing ears; the cottage gardens of Vilmnitz, ablaze that day with the white flame of lilies, poured their stream of scent into the road, and the wind caught it up and flung it across her sober nostrils, and she could not breathe without drawing in the divineness of it, yet her face wore exactly the same expression that it does when we are passing pigs. Are the Gertruds of this world, then, unable to distinguish between pigs and lilies? Do they, as they toss on its troublesome waves, smell perpetual pigs? The question interested me for at least three miles; and so much did I want to talk it over that I nearly began talking it over with Gertrud herself,





R. & R. Clark, Ltd. Printers, Edinburgh.

They are not merely unable to appreciate them, they actually do not know that they are there. This complete unconsciousness of the presence of beauty is always a wonder to me. No change of weather changes my Gertrud's settled solemnity. She wears the same face among the roses of June that she does in the nipping winds of March. The heart of May, with which every beast keeps holiday, never occupies her respectable interior. She is not more solemn on a blank February afternoon, when the world outside in its cold wrapping of mist shudders through the sodden hours, than she is on such a day of living radiance as this third one of our journey. The industrious breeze lifted up the stray hairs from her forehead and gave it little pats and kisses that seemed audaciously familiar applied to a brow of such decorum; the restless poplar leaves whispered all the secrets of life in her unhearing ears; the cottage gardens of Vilmnitz, ablaze that day with the white flame of lilies, poured their stream of scent into the road, and the wind caught it up and flung it across her sober nostrils, and she could not breathe without drawing in the divineness of it, yet her face wore exactly the same expression that it does when we are passing pigs. Are the Gertruds of this world, then, unable to distinguish between pigs and lilies? Do they, as they toss on its troublesome waves, smell perpetual pigs? The question interested me for at least three miles; and so much did I want to talk it over that I nearly began talking it over with Gertrud herself,

but was restrained by the dread of offending her; for to drive round Rügen side by side with an offended Gertrud would be more than my fortitude could endure.

Vilmnitz is a pretty little village, and the guide-book praises both its inns; but then the guide-book praises every place it mentions. I would not, myself, make use of Vilmnitz except as a village to be driven through on the way to somewhere else. For this purpose it is quite satisfactory though its roads might be less sandy, for it is a flowery place with picturesque, prosperous-looking cottages, and high up on a mound the oldest church in the island. This church dates from the twelfth century, and I would have liked to go into it; but it was locked and the parson had the key, and it was the hour in the afternoon when parsons sleep, and wisdom dictates that while they are doing it they shall be left alone. So we drove through Vilmnitz in all the dignity that asks no favours and wants nothing from anybody.

The road is ugly from there to a place called Stresow, but I do not mind an ugly road if the sun will only shine, and the ugly ones are useful for making one see the beauty of the pretty ones. There are many Hun graves, big mounds with trees growing on them, and I suppose Huns inside them, round Stresow, and a monument reminding the passer-by of a battle fought there between the Prussians under the old Dessauer and the Swedes. We won. It was my duty as a good German

to swell with patriotic pride on beholding this memorial, and I did so. As a nation, the least thing sets us swelling with this particular sort of pride. We acquire the habit in our childhood when we imitate our parents, and on any fine Sunday afternoon you may see whole families standing round the victory column and the statues in the *Sieges Allee* in Berlin engaged in doing it. The old Dessauer is not very sharply outlined in a mind that easily forgets, and I am afraid to say how little I know of him except that he was old and a Dessauer; yet I felt extremely proud of him, and proud of Germany, and proud of myself as I saw the place where we fought under him and won. 'Oh blood and iron!' I cried, 'Glorious and potent mixture! Do you see that monument, Gertrud? It marks the spot where we Prussians won a mighty battle, led by the old, the heroic Dessauer.' And though Gertrud, I am positive, is even more vague about him than I am, at the mention of a Prussian victory her face immediately and mechanically took on the familiar expression of him who is secretly swelling.

Beyond Stresow the road was hilly and charming, with woods drawing sometimes to the edge of it and shading us, and sometimes drawing back to the other side of meadows; and there were the first fields of yellow lupins in flower, and I had the delight to which I look forward each year as July approaches of smelling that peculiarly exquisite scent. And so we came to the region of Baabe, passing first round the outskirts of Sellin, a

place of villas built in the woods on the east coast of Rügen with the sea on one side and a big lake called the Selliner See on the other; and driving round the north end of this lake we got on to the dullest bit of road we had yet had, running beside a railway line and roughly paved with stones, pine-woods on our left shutting out the sea, and on our right across a marshy flat the lake, and bare and dreary hills.

These, then, were the woods of Baabe. Down the straight road, unpleasing even in the distance, I could see new houses standing aimlessly about, lodging-houses out of sight and sound of the sea waiting for chest-sufferers, the lodging-houses of the Lonely One. 'I will not stay at Baabe,' I called energetically to August, who had been told we were to stop there that night, 'go on to the next place.'

The next place is Göhren, and the guide-book's praise of it is hysterical. Filled with distrust of the guide-book I could only hope it would be possible to sleep in it, for the shadows had grown very long and there is nowhere to stop at beyond Göhren except Thiessow, the farthest southern point on the island. Accordingly we drove past the two Baabe hotels, little wooden houses built on the roadside facing the line, with the station immediately opposite their windows. A train was nearly due, and intending passengers were sitting in front of the hotels drinking beer while they waited, and various conveyances had stopped there on their way to Göhren or Sellin, and the Lonely