

## VIII

### PRICE COLLIER'S "GERMANY AND THE GERMANS"\*

"My sole task," says the author, "is to clear the German situation, and not by any means to set up my own or my countrymen's standards for their adoption. I much prefer Americans to either Germans or Englishmen, but I go to Germany to discover how German is

\*Germany and the Germans. From An American Point of View. By Price Collier. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Germany and to England to see how English is England. I am seeking, too, for the lessons we may learn from their successes. To sneer at superficial differences is to lose all profit from intercourse with other peoples." This is the keynote of the book; and consequently its admiration is warm and its censure temperate, and it is informing throughout. His comments are set in a quite remarkable perspective; and his plentiful statistics range not only through Germany and its history, but through the entire modern world. Alert for comparisons and generalisations, yet observing of daily detail, aggressive, yet preaching charity and mutual understanding, with heavy-fisted digressions on peace-prattle and fatty degeneration, yet with lyric interludes on Lincoln as well as the Kaiser, this book offers both variety and substance.

To make the German one in speech and ideals as well as in nation has been a colossal task, begins Mr. Collier, and it is not yet completed. He is still tribal rather than national, even though patriotism is with him not only a sentiment but a doctrine. The history of German unity is the biography of Bismarck. And the autocratic Prussia which made it possible still prevents the comparison of England or America with Germany. To neither country can Germany serve as a model either in its successes or failures, for it has no such thing as democratic or representative government. The Empire is governed by one man, who proclaims his independence to the people, and his responsibility to God alone. This may be a good or a bad thing. Certainly in matters of economical and comfortable government they are a century ahead of us, but they have obtained it under strict centralised control served by a trained horde of officials and backed by a standing army of over seven hundred thousand as a powerful police. All talk of what the German people will or will not do is vapid—the German Kaiser will do as he pleases. He is the master-key of every question, institution, or problem. The mass of the people are not disturbed by his repeated assertions

of Divine Right. The very quality in their ruler we take for granted they must dislike is the quality that at the bottom of their hearts they adore and repose upon. For the Germans have been vouchsafed, they did not demand, such prerogatives and political privileges as they possess. It is a quality of the German character that they have been led and driven and welded by a series of powerful individuals. No Magna Charta, no Declaration of Independence is to be found in their history; and no vigorous demand from the people themselves.

Voltaire said that Germany ruled the clouds. Still it is more what they think than what they do and see that gives them pleasure. Besides their gregariousness, their chief national characteristics are their melancholic and subjective way of looking at life and their passion for music. The lack of chins is almost a national peculiarity and likewise no backs to their heads; this may be the reason they excel in the more nebulous arts. The German imagines he has done something when he has had an idea, just as the Frenchman imagines he has done something when he has made an epigram. Strange as it may seem in view of his wonderful commercial progress, he is at heart not a business man. With small curiosity about the political and social tides elsewhere, he has organised neither society nor politics at home. Berlin is not a capital by social or political evolution but by force of circumstances. Since the German has been trained in a severe school to look for knowledge not for news, he makes small demands upon his newspaper. And reflecting the people, the press is all anti-English, anti-French, anti-American. It is boorish and unscrupulous often, but it has none of our sensational qualities. Every gentleman in Germany must have been ashamed of the German press after the sinking of the *Titanic*; but with all their bad manners and bad morals, their journalists have trained minds indifferent to small social gossip.

A central government is responsible

for most of Germany's successes. It is ruled socially and politically by a small group of fifty thousand men—eight thousand in frock coats and the rest in military uniform. Professor, pastor, teacher, are all muzzled by the state. The Prussian policeman is the greatest official busybody in the world. Just as the American and Englishman are brought up on emergencies, so the German is brought up on rules. The more he is uniformed, decorated, ticketed, and drilled the more contented he is. This has its good and its bad side. Mr. Collier's last visit to Germany completely convinced him of the wisdom of compulsory service, for the stern discipline of the army lashes the German Ulysses to the mast at that part of his voyage when he is passing the sirens. Thanks to a centralised government, also, there is no politics in public service. The streets of Berlin are cleaned for the benefit of the people and not for the pockets of a political aristocracy. In our country when a man can do nothing else he becomes a public servant; in Germany he becomes one only after ample proofs of fitness and a severe examination. The German is bewildered that our men of wealth and leisure do not devote themselves to the service of the state and city. On the other hand, it is evident that the orderliness of Berlin is enforced rather than voluntary, and the people are so steeped in regulations that they have no individual self-control and conformity reaches down to the very roots of their being. There is no adventurousness and people lose their youth quickly. An office-stool followed by a pension contents all too many men in Germany; and it is getting to be a very tired-looking nation. There are more rest-cures, rheumatism, heart, liver, kidney, anæmic cures than in all Anglo-Saxondom combined. Besides, whether it is Louis XIV who says "l'état c'est moi" or a state which claims that its functions are to meddle with the business of every man, matters little.

Almost as much as the enforced cleanliness and orderliness, the newness and crudeness of the people strike the Ameri-

can. A sort of bucolic naïveté possesses Berlin. There is no give and take or love of fair play, and manners are not so much intentionally insulting as untitled. Men in public are everywhere equipped with small brushes and small combs and small mirrors, and are in the childhood days of personal hygiene. In no other country is the animal man so naïvely vain, self-conscious, so untrained in the ways of the polite world, so serenely oblivious of the simple courtesy of the strong to the weak. Women are not taken seriously in Germany except as mothers and servants. One sees everywhere an attitude of condescension toward women among the polite, and of carelessness bordering on contempt among the rude. But it is largely the habit of deference on the part of the women which makes their men insupportable. Finally, it must be said that among the great powers no people are so comfortably and so cheaply clothed and fed or have anything like so many opportunities for rational or æsthetic enjoyment. Germany has the most intelligent, hardest-working, most fiercely economical, and the most rationally and easily contented population in the world.

*Graham Berry.*