

## An American-German

*A German-American's Confession of Faith, by Kuno Francke. New York: B. W. Huebsch. 50 cents net.*

WHEN a German-American refuses to identify himself with Teutonic partisanship in this country, it might be supposed that he harbors doubt as to the justice of Germany's cause. Such is not the position of Professor Kuno Francke, curator of the Harvard Germanic Museum. In the European struggle the sympathies of Professor Francke are "wholly and fervently" on the German side. But with all his desire for German victory, with all his recognition that American policy "practically turns out to the advantage of England and to the detriment of Germany," Professor Francke maintains the conviction that his duties as an American citizen preclude his working for German interests on this side.

If one comes to Professor Francke's "confession of faith" in the hope of a new view as to Germany in Europe, a considerable disappointment is in store. In this department of his confession the author is uncritically loyal. If the German military and bureaucratic class is overbearing, it is only the seamy side of "sterling rectitude and splendid efficiency." If there are traces of megalomania in Wagner and Emperor William, "there is no genius without a certain megalomania; and the true genius makes this very self-over-estimation an incentive for ceaseless self-discipline and self-denying devotion to work, and thereby rises to his own true self." Modern German development is inspiring to Professor Francke. With joy and gratitude he has beheld his country "striding ahead of the rest of the world." "A new idealism, a substantial enthusiasm for good government, for social justice, for beauty and joy, for fullness and richness of individual character, have accompanied it"; and he proclaims that "it is certainly not an accident that neither Syndicalism, so rampant both in France and England, nor Anarchism, the terror of Russian autocracy, has gained any foothold on German soil."

Holding these views, it is easy to see how Germany appears to him to have been the victim of a conspiracy, to have been throttled and isolated and checked and hemmed, how England appears to have been jealous and domineering, and eventually a criminal against a civilization which had outstripped her own.

But if these views leave one sceptical—and it is hard not to be sceptical of a writer who presents only the attractive side of a character so complicated as the Kaiser—the integrity of Kuno Francke's Americanism is all the more profound. Believing as he does that the popular feeling here is ignorant, wrong and shortsighted, it required great stability in him to think as an American at all. But that stability he possesses in a peculiar degree. It is as an American he views the harmfulness of a violent anti-English propaganda, and as an American he resists "nationalist animosities and sectarian strife" in our midst. He is willing to counsel the prohibition of the shipment of arms, but only as an American who wishes to retaliate on English encroachments on our trade, not as a German who wishes to cripple the Allies. If this makes him a "traitor" to Germany, he is willing to be a traitor. To him the real treachery is to forget what American citizenship demands.

One of the chapters in this little volume is devoted to the possibly ironic subject of the United States as peacemaker. In that chapter Professor Francke sees Germany and the United States agreed as to the freedom of the sea. Where he would stand in the controversy that has since arisen it

is hard to guess, but there is a poignancy in his poem after the Lusitania which permits one to suspect that "Germania Martyr" would not be his last word.

One would be pusillanimous to receive this "confession of faith" in a critical spirit. Whether one agrees or disagrees as to the righteousness of Germany in the war, the virtue of Professor Francke's sense of obligation remains. A terrible choice is forced upon him. He might easily sophisticate it. He might easily abide by those inclinations of whose depth he gives such signs. He loves Germany. He believes in her. He aspires for her. In the face of this, and in the face of what seems to him popular stupidity and inadequacy, he is ready to see Germany injured rather than prejudice his duty to the country he adopted. It is a fine thing to possess such a faith.

## Studies in Tone Poetry

*Nature in Music, by Lawrence Gilman, New York: John Lane Company. \$1.25 net.*

MUSIC is perhaps the hardest thing in the world to write about. Words and tones do not lie kindly together. Music is so untranslatable a language that words, whether they are merged with the music, as in the song or opera, or whether they come as criticism and interpretation, always seem to be subjugated to the musical will and dragged in curious denuded fashion behind it. The singer follows a sound intuition when he distorts the vowels of his words in the interests of beautiful tone, thus implying that the words can be no more than the vaguest suggestions of a mood, and that the mood can only be caught through the sensuous totality of the poem.

It is equally precarious to use words as interpretation of music. For of all the arts this most closely fuses emotion and intellect, is the faithfullest transcript of life, the perfect pattern of the beautiful sensuous flux of things. Even the most poetical word is a slight arrest of this flux, cuts ever so slightly feeling from idea. No critic can ever do more than play desirously around music, like one who tries to streak his fingers with the sunset. The utmost he can do is to catch the same flaming mood that the music pours.

Mr. Gilman is one of the few writers on music who shows himself conscious of these limitations. Others write vivaciously or learnedly about musicians and musical works, but rarely about music. Perhaps only he and Daniel Gregory Mason are really readable in this country. Behind Mr. Mason's words looms a firm framework of harmony and form. His is sound and fleshy criticism, although at times his critical X-ray lets the anatomy divert us from the radiant charm of the spirit. Mr. Gilman is vaguer, but he gains in being vague. He has a rather rich body of poetic and philosophic allusion which he uses suggestively. He is not subjective, however, but seeks to relate his music to those other intuitions of the spirit with which music has more secret affinity than with any other experiences that can be put into words.

In his discussion of the musical nature-painting of the moderns I confess he seems to me to fuddle a little. When he says that MacDowell in his little tone-poems "exerts not only that inarticulate eloquence which belongs peculiarly to music, but also the concrete, precise and definite eloquence of the poet and the pictorial function of the painter," he of course poses the most fascinating problem of musical art. Mr. Gilman seems to stand sponsor for the conventional idea that the programmatic piece is "dependent for its full realization upon an element external

to itself." But is not the dependence on the other side? Is it not the poetry and the nature which is parasitic? Does Mr. Gilman really think that anything essentially musical would be lost if MacDowell's pieces were published without titles and verses, or anything musical gained if the Brahms Intermezzi had them? Are not most of the Strauss symphonic poems heart-stirring and significant music without any synopsis at all? And is not the growing sense among music-lovers that Wagner means more in the concert than on the opera-stage the clinching proof of the falsity of the theory that such divine music needs word-poetry for "full realization?"

This is not to deny the charm of the poetry and title that accompanies most modern music. But it is never more than accompaniment. The poetry is an added exotic instrument to the orchestra, a certain suffused and colorful light playing on the entire musical scene. The "program" of program music is never really anything more than metaphor, and that only a metaphor of mood, not of movement or detail. The best modern music is so richly the very stuff of life itself, that the other arts can act only as illustration, and this only with a certain feebleness. It is impossible to believe that any true creative musician composes his work of "artistic symbols, which will express and fulfill the concept which the title or superscription of the piece has evoked." This is the crucial test of genius—whether the music itself dominates. In any creative musical art worthy of the name, the "symbol" is entirely the "title or superscription"; the symbol is not the music. What has really happened in modern music is that "extraordinary debauch" which the English critic D. S. MacColl eloquently describes, "in which the man who has never seen a battle, loved a woman, or worshipped a god, may not only ideally, but through the response of his nerves and pulses to immediate rhythmical attack, enjoy the ghosts of struggle, rapture and exaltation with a volume and intricacy, an anguish, a triumph, an irresponsibility, unheard of. An amplified pattern of action and emotion is given; each may fit to it what images he will."

This seems to me almost thrillingly exact. The title or verses of the program music are no more than the image which the composer has willed to fit to it. That this fitting has become so much the custom is not due to any new effort of creative musical art to mirror nature, as Mr. Gilman seems to think, but rather to the more poetical orientation of the modern musician, and to an intuitive response to the demands of an intensely curious but unmusical generation.

In spite of the fact that Mr. Gilman does not seem to have justified his position on program-music, his other essays show much sympathy and discernment. In his treatment of Strauss, Debussy, Grieg, Loeffler and MacDowell he often talks as if he believed in the stern primacy of the musical idea and mood. Particularly is this true of the essay on Loeffler, a really notable piece of interpretation. Mr. Gilman's repudiation of Grieg's "nationalism," and his emphasis on Debussy's clairvoyant imagination, really surrender his whole programmatic case. He could talk as he does only if he felt in his heart the fecundity and untranslatability of pure music.

That one feels a sense of frustration at not finding in the book the essays on Schoenberg and Wagner as a Lover which are promised on the cover is perhaps the best tribute to Mr. Gilman's writing. And if it is true that words applied to music can scarcely be other than an impertinence, Mr. Gilman makes them seem less an impertinence than almost any other American critic.

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### History in Slang

*The Rise of the Dutch Kingdom, by Hendrik Willem Van Loon. New York: Doubleday, Page and Company. \$2.50 net.*

THAT Mr. Van Loon learned to write history in a style which recalls a George Ade fable suggests unexpected versatility in the Dutch character. Much of Mr. Van Loon's historical writing could scarcely have been produced except after a deep acquaintance with Broadway. There is a racy account of how the Dutch popular minority that "tried to make a noise like Jacobins" got snuffed out by "Coup d'Etat No. 1." "Messieurs," their enemies sent word to Paris, "compared with your own glorious revolutionists of sainted memory, even the most extreme Dutch Jacobins are like innocent lambs. The little plan which they have originated resembles more a Sunday school frolic than a real and genuine revolutionary coup." "All right," Paris reported back, "go ahead and try." And yet you've got to hand it to Mr. Van Loon. His musical-comedy account of the dull little republic is amusing. You get exactly the vivid and humorous impression that you would were you to see the characters step out of the quaint woodcuts with which the book is illustrated. You are present at innumerable scenes, as a sophisticated twentieth-century visitor who has just stepped off the train. This method of writing history has been practised by undergraduates in their history exams, but has scarcely affected professional historians. The book makes one recommend the method. But the method can scarcely be practised unless preparations are made for living abroad after publication.