

Foreigners Are Queer

By WALTER R. BROOKS

THE manners and customs of outlanders have always been matter for criticism and ridicule. Hence "outlandish," first applied to things merely different, soon came to suggest something senseless and grotesque. The average traveler in foreign parts is quick to spot differences. But instead of looking for the reason behind them, he finds them queer and distasteful.

"Why can't they do things the way we do them at home?" he asks testily.

The differences, of course, are what make travel interesting, though the traveler seldom realizes it. "See America First" has never been a completely successful argument because the differences in America are not great enough. "It's different" is a far stronger appeal.

If the average traveler could be brought to realize this he would have a much better time. Instead of finding fault with the very things that delight him, he would accept them, make the most of them, even exaggerate them. Then he would begin to look for the reasons behind them, and so would come to some understanding of both national differences and the fundamental likenesses between men. Even those who travel simply to gather a supply of table talk for the coming winter would find their talk vastly improved by an understanding of the differences they chronicle.

One of these differences, it seems to me, has rather escaped attention. I refer to the effort made by German men to appear ferocious. After my first day in a German city I wondered: What ideal, what standard are these Germans trying to conform to? For obviously it was something quite different, quite foreign to American ideas. These men were not at all influenced by advertising of the

Arrow collar type. They were not trying to look alert, neat, business-like, well-dressed and a little hard-boiled. They were certainly not trying to look handsome or graceful. Their hair was close cropped or bristling; there was a wild individuality evident in the training of their whiskers. Their clothes were baggy; nothing matched anything else; and their figures were massive, bulging—in fact every man over thirty was twenty pounds too heavy for his height, and had that horizontal crease in the back of his neck caused by good living.

A stranger in America would find the clue to the similarities in the appearance of American men in the movies, in certain ideals of business life, and

above all in the advertising pages of the magazines. But in Germany none of these trails led anywhere. Yet through all these eccentricities and diversities

ran a thread of likeness; it was there though I could not put a name to it, and until it was named it was not thoroughly recognized.

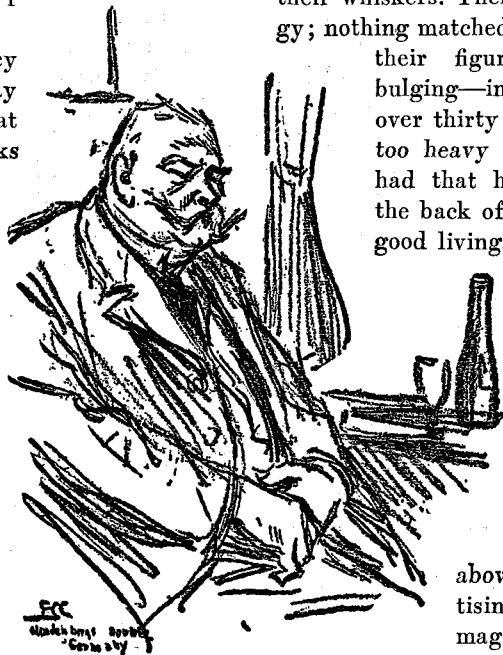
And then, walking into a restaurant, I stumbled over a German's foot. He looked up at me with a glare of concentrated hate and scorn—and then apologized with the utmost grace and kindness. Obviously, I thought as I sat down at my table, the glare was fictitious; he is really a pleasant and mellow person with a wife and children who adore him, and a little garden out back of his house where he sits in the evening and smokes his pipe and pulls his dachshund's ears. The glare is simply a mask. He wants to appear ferocious.

Then I looked about me. At the next table a man was eating ice cream with

such a look of malignant ferocity as you might see on the face of a cannibal devouring the liver of his enemy. Beyond, another was reading a newspaper which, did you judge by his expression, must print only death sentences. Further off, another man was ordering a waiter to bring him what I was certain from his harsh clipped words and scowling face must be a bucket of blood. All around me were still others, glaring, scowling, bending brows of hatred and defiance upon one another, twisting warlike moustachios into still more frightening shapes. Of course! They were all trying to look ferocious.

Once the clue was found it was easy enough to follow. Everywhere—but particularly among the older men—was this curious effort to give the impression that a kindly, sentimental, methodical father-of-a-family was really an enraged steam roller. The effort is in general rather successful. Retreating chins can be masked by piratical beards, kindly eyes shadowed by bristling eyebrows, snub noses made portentous by the addition on each side of the spike of a vertically trained moustache. It was remarkable what some of these men had managed to do with the very little that their Creator had endowed them with.

Other evidences, too, of an attempt to conform to an ideal of ferocity are not hard to find. The practically continuous performance of the German motorist on his horn is simply another attempt to frighten. A great deal of German courtesy is the courtesy of the duellist. The



Illustrations from "Towns and People of Modern Germany" by Robert Medill McBride (McBride)



walking stick resembles a weapon.

Just what is the idea of imposing this mask of ferocity on a kindly people—for the Germans are immensely kind and

(Please Turn to Page 356)

» Lord Birkenhead «

By REBECCA WEST

I REMEMBER over the lapse of nearly ten years, as definitely the most infuriating spectacle that I have ever seen in my life, the late Lord Birkenhead playing tennis. He slouched on to the court, though his body was superb and should have been carried proudly, one great oblong hand trailing a tennis racket as if he were uncertain whether he could bother not to drop it, the other tossing three balls in the air in a manner that would have been just excusable had he been the only man since the beginning of time who had been able to perform that feat.

On his large and handsome face he wore the pompous and meaningless expression which is affected by the statelier and less efficient sort of manicurist when she carries her dish of soap and water across the room, the eyebrows raised, the chin dropped but the mouth closed, the whole advertising a state of bored superiority over somebody who was not there on an issue which was purely imaginary. He bore himself with such swaggering vulgarity of movement that his white flannel trousers looked as loud as the loudest checks. The effect was appalling; and his body did not lie. That was the man, or part of the man.

Arrogance was his constant quality. He was amazed by any criticism directed against himself. A man who had close business relations with him, and who was obliged by an unlucky turn of affairs to repeat to him much justified comment of an adverse nature, told me that this painful duty never had any useful results because Lord Birkenhead was always so staggered at the mere idea that anybody had dared to accuse him that he never could progress to considering the substance of the accusation. He was willing to admit that he might have blundered and greatly inconvenienced other people thereby; but he was astounded that they should dare to mention it, because it seemed to him that they must have realized that they were his inferiors, and that though he might nod at times he nevertheless belonged to a superior order of being. When they judged him by the ordinary standards applied to

others it affected him like blasphemy.

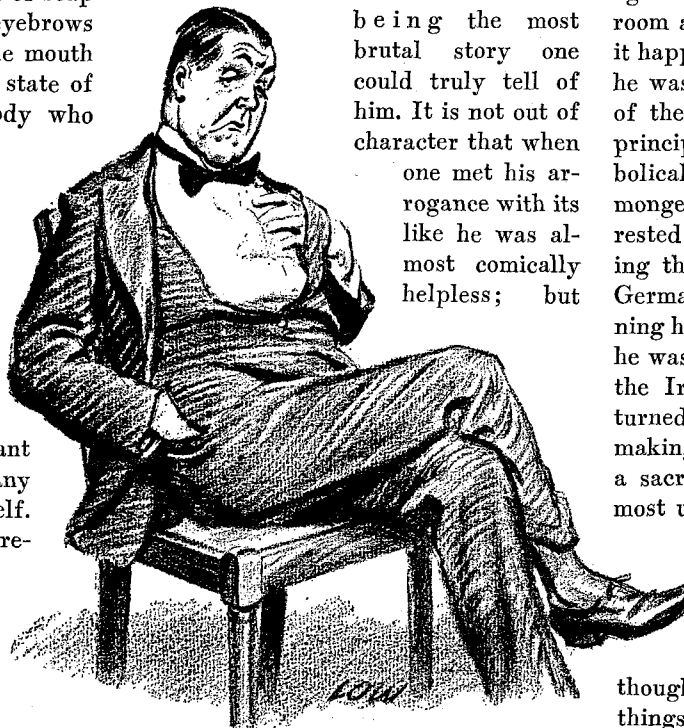
There, when he could, he punished them; and that terribly. One characteristic example of his punitive methods occurred when he lunched with a certain American hostess in London. Long before the meal was finished he drew out a cigar and began to smoke it. At a formal luncheon in London this is still an unpardonable crime. The incensed hostess waited for a lull in the conversation to demand with acid meekness,

"I hope you do not mind, Lord Birkenhead, if I go on eating while you smoke?"

The sledge-hammer fell:

"Certainly not, if you do it quietly."

This is far from being the most brutal story one could truly tell of him. It is not out of character that when one met his arrogance with its like he was almost comically helpless; but



LORD BIRKENHEAD

As pictured by Low. From "Lions and Lambs"
(Courtesy Harcourt, Brace, publishers)

few dared to seize the opportunity when it appeared.

THIS truculence, which can hardly have been paralleled since the days of the eighteenth century bullies, disfigured hardly any of his legal work. His mind, which was one of the most superb machines that any man has ever possessed, was genuinely interested in law; which was curious, for it was certainly not interested in order. Peace he would shatter in the course of a

gesture, just as often arguing at a dinner-table his denunciatory hands would send a wine glass spinning. He would not have crossed the road if some one had told him that by doing so he would give us peace in our time; he was accustomed to stare insolently, blowing over his protruded lower lip at those who owned themselves ambitious of ending war. But this was only because war and peace were abstract nouns and he had no use for abstractions.

When there actually came before him a decision that would result in real people whom he knew being hurt or being healed, he chose that they should be healed. But he had to know them first. They had to be brought into the room for him to see and hear; his imagination could not go forth from the room and show him their essence. Thus it happened that in 1913 and 1914 when he was in opposition and knew nothing of the Irish question save in terms of principle, he was one of the most diabolically active of the Ulster rebellion-mongers. On him and on Lord Carson rested most heavily the guilt of producing the state of civil war which made Germany think it propitious for beginning hostilities. But after the War, when he was in the Government and had seen the Irish problem from the inside, he turned his fine brain to the one end of making peace in Ireland. This meant a sacrifice of many of his dearest and most useful friends. It was also an admission of past but still recent folly more sweeping than most of us would want to make.

But it was a dominant trait of this curious man that although his integrity as regards little things was dubious it was impregnable regarding great issues. He would write articles that were thinly disguised advertising puffs, intolerably undignified for a Minister of the Crown. But not one of his enemies would have believed it if they had heard that Birkenhead had sold himself to do the work of democracy or labor or any of the things that seemed evil to him. That perhaps explains why, though it is true that he habitually swaggered like a "champeen," he also had looked about him sometimes as if after all he had enough to spare, as if he had in his deep heart, though nowhere else, an assured felicity.

Because Lord Birkenhead's law practice brought before him concrete prob-