

American Invasion of Germany



BERLIN SOUVENIR POSTAL CARD.

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BERLIN, March 4.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—In the capital of the German empire, in the heart of Friedrichstrasse, within a block of Unter den Linden and a few minutes' walk of the Thiergarten, I write of the American invasion. It is all around me. I find it in every street and every block. It sticks out like a pimple on one's nose and here in the busiest part of the city it assumes the size of a big red boil. Over there at the right is a shop with the American shield above the door. It bears the stars and stripes in red, white and blue, and below it are Dutch figures leaning over a ship rail, looking out at the sea. That is our own American line touting for its Red Star boats, and the German travel across the Atlantic.

Next door is a hat store. The most fashionable shapes are American, and the best are made by two well known New York firms. They are considered superior to any others, and \$5 American derbies are worn by the swells. There are American tailor shops in different parts of Berlin, and our styles now vie with those of Paris and London.

But look at those girls who are now coming up street. See the jaunty one at the right. She has a hat with a little American flag draped around it. I hear her talking as she goes by. Her features are German and her speech is that of the lower class Berlinese. She is aping the American to be in the fashion. That is so with many girls in Berlin. Since the kaiser has been courting President Roosevelt and Prince Henry has visited America, pictures of Mr. Roosevelt and the prince, painted on the American flag, and of Miss Alice Roosevelt, have been sold in the illustrated postal card stores, and the milliners have labeled their new bonnets and hats "echt Americanische."

Even American diamonds are sold here. I mean flash diamonds of the paste variety. There is a store just beyond the steamship office where crowds are always looking in at the windows. That store belongs to a man named Tait, who is better known in continental Europe than any other American jeweler. He sells nothing but diamonds, and that at a uniform price of a dollar and a half, no matter if the stone be as big as a buckeye or as small as a pea. He brings out the shine with a blaze of electric lights so great that you can warm your hands on the show windows, or rather you could were it not for the servant who stands on the street polishing them. This man has shops in most of the big cities, and he is one of the great advertisers. At the time Prince Henry was in Chicago he put a full-page advertisement in the leading newspaper of Berlin, of which the following is a translation.

"Eighty per cent of the American ladies who attended Prince Henry's reception last night wore Tait's diamonds."

Such advertising is new here, and in connection with the craze for American things it created somewhat of a sensation.

In the same connection was the advertisement of a well known American shoe, a full-page announcement stating that at the time Alice Roosevelt broke the bottle of champagne with which she named the kaiser's yacht she had on these shoes.

Speaking of the American shoe, one of the best shoe stores in Europe is right here on Friedrichstrasse. Come with me down the street to the corner of Leipzigerstrasse and take a look at it. It is a big building belonging to the Equitable Life insurance company of New York, and it sells nothing but American shoes. There are a dozen other places in the city where our shoes are sold, but none which does a business like this. It is crowded from morning till night and it is a poor day when its sales do not run up to 4,000 marks. It has been open but only two years, and has done a big business from the start. It sells only for cash, and its methods are altogether American, even to the negro bootblack imparted from New York, who shines your shoes while you wait. It has two makes of shoes, and sells them at a fixed price of \$4.50 a pair,

which is just \$1 more than the same shoe costs anywhere in the United States.

I dropped into this store the other day and had a chat with the proprietor. He is a young New Jerseyite of 25 years of age, enthusiastic as to the prospects for American trade. Here is his story as it came out in response to my questions:

"About three years or so ago my father and I sold out our shoe business in Newark, N. J., and looked around for a place to open another. My father had been in the habit of coming to Europe every summer on account of the rheumatism, and in looking about came to the conclusion that Europe might be a good place for an up-to-date shoe store. He now visited the chief cities and finally decided to open one in Vienna. He tried to rent a place there, but as soon as the people found what he was about to do they raised the rent, and 2,000 of the Viennese shoemakers held a meeting and threatened to wreck the store if it should be opened. He then came to Berlin and finally rented this place. He cabled me to send on a stock of shoes. I did so. We sold from \$400 to \$1,000 worth a day at the start, and have been doing better right along. We have since established shoe stores in Frankfurt-on-the-Main and in Hamburg. They are also doing well."

"What is the difference between the American and the German shoe?" I asked.

"There is no comparison," was the reply. "The German shoes lack shape, style and comfort; all of which the American shoe has. The Germans have learned the difference, and they are now trying to imitate our shoes. They come here and buy samples for models. They have imported our shoemaking machinery, but they have not succeeded as yet. They have some big factories, but none so large as ours. They ought to be able to manufacture more cheaply, but cannot, although their men receive only one-fourth as high wages as ours. They work more slowly and cannot get the work out of their machines."

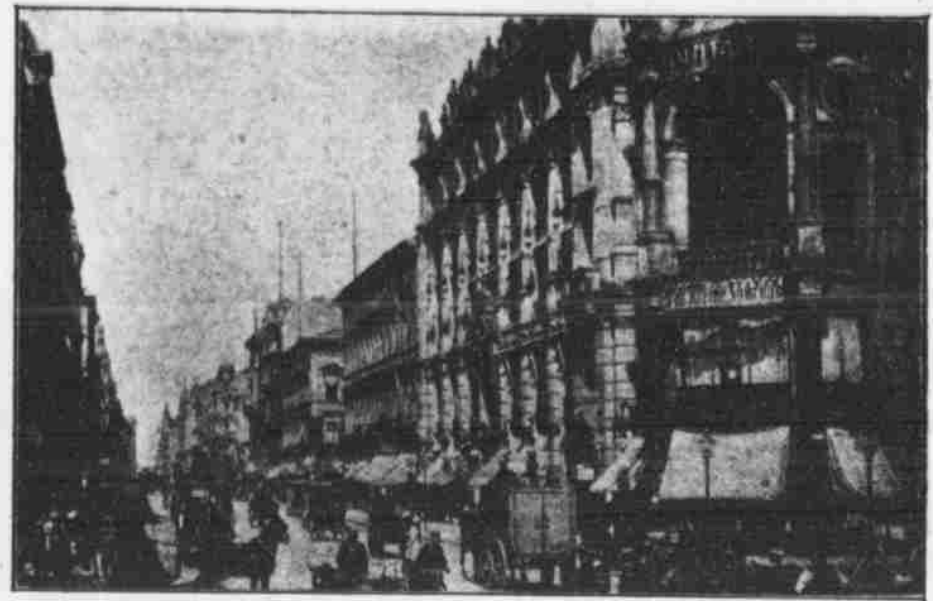
"Will the Germans pay high prices for American goods?" I asked.

"Yes, if the goods are worth it. The people know what they want, and they pay well for everything. I thought prices were low here before I came over. They are not. Men's clothing, if you take the fit and style into account, costs less in New York than in Berlin. I can have a suit made here for 12 marks, or \$30, but it will not have any better stuff, nor fit as well as a ready-made suit which I can get in New York for from \$12 to \$18. A suit made to order at \$25 in New York is better than any you can get here made to order for \$35. It is the same with women's clothing. As to prices the kinds of shoes we are selling for \$4.50 were formerly sold for \$5, \$6 and \$7 a pair. Then only the rich bought them. Now they are used by the middle classes as well."

"One word more about the American shoe. Consul General Mason of Berlin has done as much as any man in our consular service to introduce it. He began to urge its sale six years ago, and at last got our leading factories to send several drummers and finally to establish stores in some of the chief cities. He says that there are six or eight big German cities where shoe stores like this in Berlin could be profitably established. These are: Cologne, Breslau, Dresden, Leipzig, Munich, Stuttgart and Strasburg."

It is strange that we should be giving the Germans, one of the chief musical peoples, musical instruments. It is nevertheless true. The graphophone, gramophone and the phonograph are all sold in large quantities. The graphophone people have their cylinders put up in boxes, covered with a picture of the American flag; and when the empress of Germany bought a machine for the crown prince last year the records thus boxed were sent to the palace.

The manager of the German graphophone company, at my request, told me how that sale was made. Said he: "The advances came from the royal family and not from us. One day one of the empress' ladies in waiting came in one of the royal carriages to our office on Friederichstrasse and asked that some machines be sent to the



CORNER IN FREDERICHSTRASSE.

palace for examination on the morning following. We sent several, and with them one of our best looking German employes to show how they worked.

"This was done at the palace in the presence of the empress, the crown prince and others. The empress wanted one of the cheaper machines, but the crown prince insisted on the best and got it. The money for it was paid at once, and within a few weeks others were ordered, so that now a half dozen are owned by the royal family. I am told that his majesty, the kaiser, now and then uses them, and that his favorite tunes are our plantation melodies."

The Americans appreciate the advantage of location better than the Germans. They are rapidly getting hold of the best corners in Berlin for their different business enterprises. This is so with the shoe store above mentioned. It is on the corner of the two chief retail streets. The rent is high, but it pays. The building, which as I have said belongs to an American insurance company, is one of the best in Berlin. It has many Americans in it, including the United States consulate general and several American newspaper correspondents. The kodak is sold on a corner further up street, and an American cash register company has another corner with windows full of catchy advertisements of its machines. One of our chief typewriters has another prominent corner, where you can see pretty German girls clicking away on American machines at any business hour of the day, and the American-German Graphophone company has also a corner filled with these red, white and blue boxes containing its records.

One reason for choosing an expensive location is the advertisement. The Germans have their own laws as to such matters, and all billboard advertisements have to be submitted to the city architects before they can be put up. No one can put out a sign without such consent. Advertising is not done on the walls. Real estate boards are not put up in the vacant lots, and when a circus comes to town it has to be contented with little round towers which have been put up at the street corners for advertising purposes. When Buffalo Bill gave a show in Berlin he could find no place for his show hills, and when the Barnum circus came some years ago it solved the problem by buying up store windows and store fronts and putting the pictures inside the stores. This was not liked by the other German merchants, but it was a new thing, and at that time no law had been enacted against it.

One must be careful how his advertisements are worded. There is a law against stating anything which cannot be substantiated, and he who does so is liable to be sued for unfair competition. I have from Brainard H. Warner, jr., our consul at Leipzig, a translation of the law of unfair competition. It provides, in the first place, that any falsehood in an advertisement concerning the method of production, source of supply, or character of the wares subjects the person making it to a fine of \$357. Second, that spreading a false report concerning a competitor is punished with a similar fine, or imprisonment for one year. And third, any deception as to quality of goods, including false weight, is punished for every infringement with a fine of \$35. The same law prohibits a clerk from divulging a business secret while employed, and any competitor who takes advantage of such information is also liable to punishment. The fine in this case is 3,000 marks, or \$714.

Indeed, an American who comes to Germany to do business has many things to learn. There are new laws for everything, and he needs legal advice at every step. One American who is in trade here recently wanted to remodel his store and throw four or five rooms into one. He asked for competitive bids from several builders on the understanding that the lowest bidder was to have the job. He awarded it accordingly, and then one of the other bidders brought suit against him for the time and labor employed in making the plans he had submitted. The American fought the suit and lost it. He not only had to pay \$100 to the unsuccessful bidder, but also the costs

of the suit and the fees of the plaintiff's lawyer.

The man who loses a lawsuit in Germany must not only pay the costs, but also the fees of his opponent. The legal fees are fixed for each case, and they are very low. One can hire a good lawyer for one day for \$12.50, and the drawing up of papers costs little more than the charges for ordinary clerical hire in the United States.

Berlin has now a good electric car system. The cars are of the American pattern, many of them having been made in St. Louis. They are sent here in pieces, and are put together by the German mechanics. Each car seats twenty-eight passengers, and there are a certain number of standing places on the platforms. No smoking is allowed in the cars, but there is on the wall outside a little brass shelf with grooved holes into which cigars can be stuck by those who wish to go inside. Each groove has its number, and the thrifty German after coming out lights up his cigar and finishes his smoke. The American would throw away the cigar; the German smokes it to the end, although he does it in sections.

The ordinary street car fare is 10 pfennigs, or 2½ of our cents. In some cases an extra fare is charged where the course is long, but I have ridden several miles for 10 pfennigs. This seems to be the rate all over Germany and is just half that of our American rate. Indeed, I doubt if you will find a city where transportation is cheaper than here. Friedrichstrasse is too narrow for tram cars, and a large part of its transit is on omnibuses, which charge a cent and a quarter a trip. These buses run every minute. The footboards are very low, and one can jump on or off without stopping the omnibus. There are similar vehicles on Unter den Linden.

I like the cab system here. Not only in Berlin, but in most of the German cities there are cabs known as taximeters. Each cab has a sort of cyclometer arrangement on it, a clock-like affair, which is just behind the driver, and so that the man who rides in the cab can watch the lands go around, indicating how many miles he has traveled and how much the fare is. You pay 50 pfennigs, or 12½ cents for the first half mile, and 10 pfennigs for each additional quarter of a mile. There is another part of the machine which registers the fare for waiting, so that one can tell just exactly what he ought to pay at any point during the ride. Baggage may be taken on top of such cabs, and the charges are from 5 cents to 25 cents, according to the weight of the trunks, the former being the charge up to fifty-five pounds, and the latter that for a box weighing 220 pounds. Everything is paid for according to tariff, and there is no extortion like that of New York and some other American cities.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Pointed Paragraphs

Cupid is always shooting and continually making Mrs.

Some men would rather lose a friend than the heat of an argument.

Carelessness with parlor matches causes a few fires and many divorces.

It takes a dog and the boy who owns him to form a mutual admiration society.

There's quite a difference between keeping boarders and having boarders keep you.

Some men do not hesitate to break a promise, because it is so easy to make another.

There are occasional moments in every old bachelor's life when he is glad he never married.

The wise girl doesn't waste her time on the young man who wastes his time kissing her hand.

The country has turned out some great men—and there are a lot of others in office that should be turned out.

The truest and best friend a man can have is a wife who does her best to keep him in the straight and narrow path.—Chicago News.