

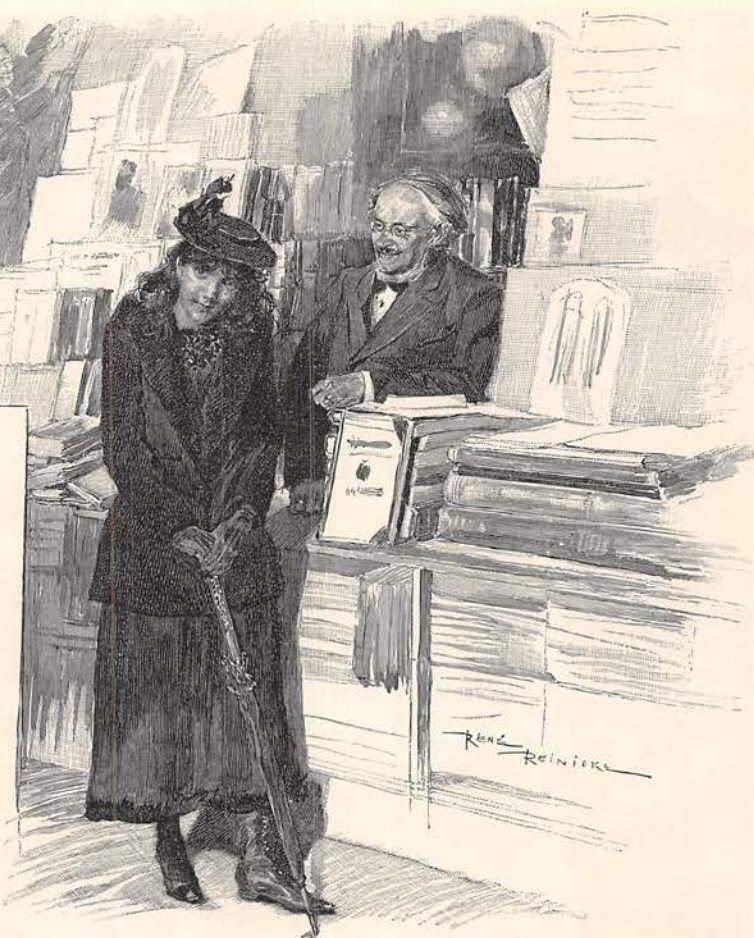
A GERMAN COMIC PAPER.
(FLIEGENDE BLÄTTER.¹)

THE best way to spoil a story is to say that it will be funny; the best way to ruin a joke is to say that you are going to tell one. Like Jack the Giant-Killer's bean-stalk, humor must spring up spontaneously, quickly, and with strong and rampant growth. Thus "Fliegende Blätter," the most successful of humorous papers, began its career, took its name, and sent forth its "flying leaves" from a plain, unpretentious building in Munich, without blare of trumpets or flare of pride.

And the great German world, which had seldom seen printed laughter before, enjoying the pictures and the humor, at once took the leaves to its heart, and week by week, from year to year, still welcomes them.

It is a strange thing that among a people famed for thoughtfulness in times of peace, and for fierceness in times of war, this paper of jokes, which does not pretend to deep thought, and from the pages of which all political reference is strictly banished, should have lasted unchanged for fifty years. Nations have fallen and risen, philosophies have been supplanted, and science

¹ The pictures in this article are taken from "Fliegende Blätter," by permission of the publishers, Braun & Schneider, Munich.



DRAWN BY R. REINICKE.

BOOKSELLER: "What would you like, miss?"
YOUNG GIRL: "I want all of the 'Sorrows of Werther.'"

has discovered new realms of thought, but still "Fliegende Blätter" has lived on, passed from father to children, quite unchanged, except that the leaves fly freer and farther, as trees grow and multiply, and as children outnumber their parents. The title is the same, the illustration which surrounds it is still unchanged, and shows the queer little people—the jester, poet, and fool, entertaining both peasant and lady—just as years ago. The eldest sons of the founders are now in charge, and many of the original artists illustrate new jokes on old subjects. Its old home is its present home, and the fundamental character of the journal is unaltered. "The thing which hath been, it is that which shall be, and that which is done, is that which

shall be done." So may it ever be with "Fliegende Blätter."

It was in 1844 that the first number of the journal was issued from the Maximilian-platz in Munich. "Punch" had been introduced to London three years before, but it is doubtful whether the English paper exerted any influence over the German periodical, or whether the founders of the latter had ever heard of "Mr. Punch." At all events, "Punch" "knew a rickety infancy and hours of peril," had suffered "neglect and starvation," and was resuscitated only at the last critical moment, as history tells—certainly not an encouraging example for "Fliegende Blätter." But "Punch," for all his jokes, began with, and still professes, a serious purpose. There is method in his madness, and he makes it his aim to play the rôle of the old court-jesters who, under cover of wit, could speak home-truths, and, while they capered and cavorted, could also criticize and condemn. "Fliegende Blätter" in its infancy had no such lofty purpose. Its first aim was to amuse, and if there was any other object it must have been artistic rather than moral. Moreover, there were no prior discoverers to teach it how the goose of humor might be made to lay eggs that stand on end with natural joyousness, and are golden in the eyes of a publisher.

The founders of the German periodical were Caspar Braun and Friedrich Schneider. Braun



DRAWN BY H. SCHLITGEN.

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE SPRING FASHIONS OF 1893.

was an artist. He was born at Aschaffenburg in 1807, studied painting in Munich, and afterward wood-engraving in Paris. When he was thirty-two years old he returned to Munich, and there started a wood-engraving establishment which soon acquired an enviable reputation. In 1843 he became associated with Friedrich Schneider of Leipsic, and from that time the fame of their work spread rapidly. In 1844 they started "Fliegende Blätter," and the paper was then bought by the public mainly for its illustrations. Braun, in those early days, did some of the best work that has ever been done for it, and his pictures were the more successful because they disclosed to Germany a new world of humor. No predecessor had shown the spirit that is in these drawings, and they not only became very popular, but



DRAWN BY E. HARBURGER.

PUBLISHER AND POET.



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DRAWN BY H. ALBRECHT.

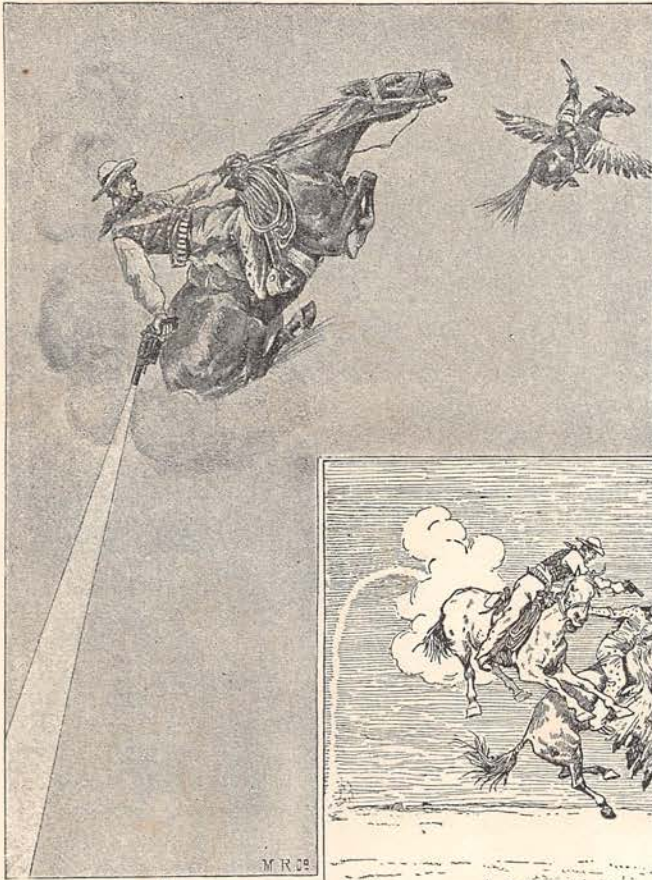
AN AMERICAN COW-BOY STORY,

have since served as models for innumerable later artists. At the same time, Schneider touched a popular note with his poems; and his verses, illustrated by Braun, gave to "Fliegende Blätter" that immediate success which has been denied to its many imitators in Germany, England, and America. And yet to-day these various humorous journals are reaping where "Fliegende Blätter" has sown; and having survived the vicissitudes of a fickle public taste, are growing and flourishing on an appetite for humor which they have only successfully cajoled, not created.

Though "Fliegende Blätter" has had on its staff few such artists as the first Caspar Braun, even among those who imitate him, yet Braun and Schneider were uniformly fortunate in the choice of their associates, and the present contributors seem to have slipped into the old shoes of their predecessors most naturally and easily. It is a curious thing that the eldest sons of the first editors should each have entered so readily, and have filled so capably, the place left vacant by his father. The editors are still Braun and Schneider,—Caspar Braun and Julius Schneider,—and they are assisted by Professor Ille, who, years ago, was a subaltern assistant to the first editors. Among the literary workers for the paper are some men who have won a large measure of success. One of the earlier of these was Franz Trautman, whose good-natured stories of the olden time first appeared in

"Fliegende Blätter." The brilliant Crassus was a regular contributor, and many of Emanuel von Geibel's poems were therein published for the first time.

But, in general, it may be said that "Fliegende Blätter" is remarkably independent of individuals. Its staff includes all Germany. Its humor is thus spontaneous, natural, and universal. Its contributors are found in every rank—men and women, rich and poor, young and old. None is too wise and none too lowly to send the joke of the day to this paper, and it is interesting to note that nearly all the Jewish humor comes from Semitic sources. It is as though "Fliegende Blätter" had a thousand reporters in every walk of life, always on the lookout for funny sights and bright sayings. The "Flying Leaves," as they speed, week after week, over all Germany, lead the people to look for the humor that is ever present in the life about them.



3



4

gathered nearly all the humor of modern Germany.

While the published product is thus excellent, one can easily imagine the vast amount of material from which it is culled. "Fliegende Blätter" travels as far as there are Germans, and thus from every quarter of the globe contributions are apt to come, until it is said that, in the course of years, almost every country of any importance has sent its quota to the editors in Maximilian-platz, Munich. No doubt strange stories could be

told of these contributions, of the curious drawings that come with some, and the often ridiculous notes that accompany others. As to the rejected poems, one does not care to imagine what they must be. As in all successful journals, skilful and laborious editing is required in sorting the material; and the sifting and revising of jokes, in lots of scores or hundreds, is a thankless task which makes the life of the man who "never smiled again" hilariously merry by comparison.

AS RETOLD BY FLIEGENDE BLÄTTER.

Sorrow is an old, familiar friend; Humor but a chance acquaintance, whom we fain would meet oftener; yet watch Sorrow from behind, and you may sometimes see a merry smile under her tragic mask. And so, wherever Sorrow stalks through all this vale of tears, a thousand watchers peep behind her mask, or seek for sudden gleams of merriment when the mask is cast aside. And all these gleams and all these smiles the writers catch, and forward to the paper, and artists paint them, or clever writers tell of them, and the "Flying Leaves" carry them forth through all Germany, and the world besides, until a rainbow of smiles breaks through the people's tears, and the whole earth seems bright and gay. By popular coöperation "Fliegende Blätter" has thus been made a concentration—a consensus, a school—of German humor, and the ninety-nine volumes now completed form a storehouse into which has been

It often happens that jokes are sent which have already been published in "Fliegende Blätter," or which, indeed, may even have originated in the office. The work of revision, therefore, requires constant and careful study of the files, though in spite of this many a "shop-worn" item must needs be found pictured as a novelty. An old German joke might be cited as a good commentary on all jokes: To a man twirling his thumbs, his companion remarks, "Do you always do that?" "No," is the answer, while the twirl is reversed; "sometimes I do this." And many a joke is similarly reversed, revised, or rejuvenated till the father thereof would hardly know his offspring.

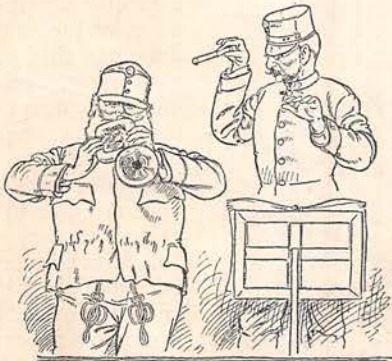
A curious circumstance that could be noticed only in such an office, but is there not infrequently remarked, is the traveling capacity of a joke. A joke may come first from Berlin; after a few days it is sent in from Dresden; in



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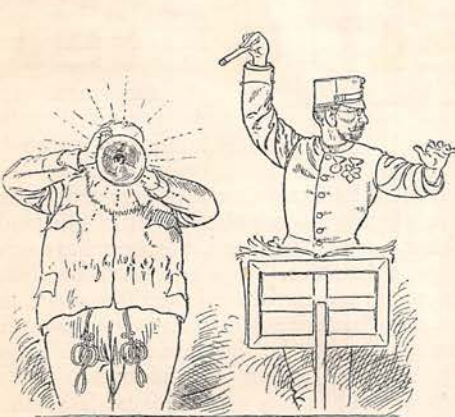
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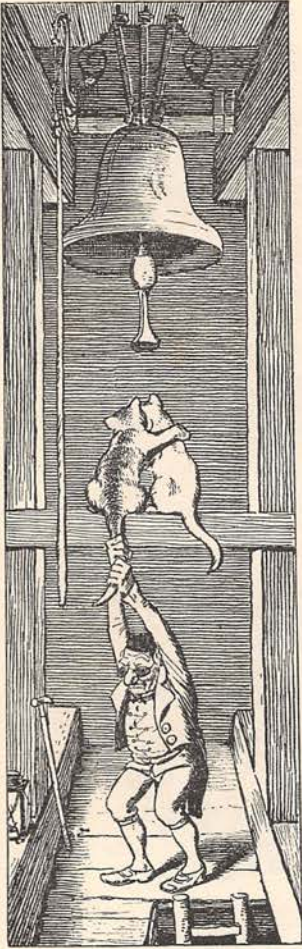
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DRAWN BY SCHLIEMANN.

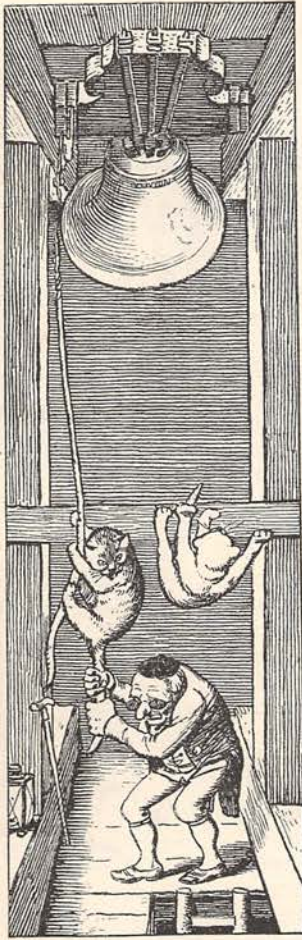
A CORNET SOLO.

the course of two or three weeks — a month, perhaps — it comes from some quiet village on the Rhine; and some have even been known to go around the world in an incredibly short period. After each batch of jokes has been carefully read by several men, and the old ones, the poor ones, and those ruled out because they treat of politics or religion, have been cast

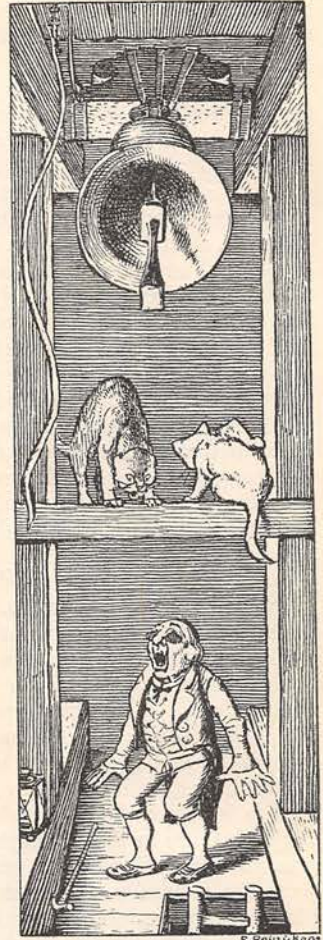
aside, the fairly good jokes that remain are sent to Julius Schneider to be finally passed upon. Some of these must be rewritten, some must be thrown away, some must be illustrated, and some may stand alone upon their merits; and this final judgment requires the discretion and the indefatigable industry which the editor of "Fliegende Blätter" so fully possesses.



DRAWN BY E. REINICKE.



THE NEAR-SIGHTED SACRISTAN.



E. REINICKE 92

In assigning each joke to the artist best fitted to illustrate it, Julius Schneider is assisted by his brother Hermann and by Caspar Braun. Though an artist of much merit, Hermann Schneider, as an illustrator, has done but little for "Fliegende Blätter." In judging the powers of his colleagues, however, he is almost without a rival, and his work in this line has gone far toward giving the paper the artistic position which it now holds, and which, to a paper of its kind, is worth so much.

As to the artists in whom this journal finds its greatest strength, any one who knows the paper can name half a dozen, out of the two hundred and seventy, more or less, who have drawn for it, whom he especially regards, and whose work is particularly associated with it. Yet, from the culling of an acre of roses, who would wish to be limited to the choice of half a dozen blooms? If one were only looking over the files of a year or two he would doubtless pick out six or eight names, and say, "Oberlander,

Harburger, Meggendorfer, Schlittgen, Ludwig Bechstein, Reinicke, and Wagner are the chief men whose work gives 'Fliegende Blätter' its artistic character."

Of these, the first four, together with Hengeler and some others, form the group known as "the Munich humorists." Of "the Munich humorists" Oberlander is easily first and best known, and the wealth of his humor is apparently limitless. The casual reader will doubtless say that he is the better half of the journal. He was born in Regensburg in 1845, but came to Munich as a child, and his devotion to art has been almost uninterrupted. "Like a second Hogarth, he lashes at the follies of the times, and, with the weapon of humor, strives against modern weakness and immorality. His pictures are not only humorous but full of earnest warning. His drawings are characterized by harmonious finish, even to the smallest detail; by complete symmetry of artistic expression, as well as by deep thought and a warm grasp of the

subject. These qualities have properly made him known as the first humorist of Germany."

Harburger's drawings are characterized by excellence of execution and kindness of spirit. His genius is versatile, for he succeeds equally well in the portrayal of aged inebriates, and the picturing of women of refinement. His drawing, however, is of so vigorous a style as to be often almost coarse and crude.

Meggendorfer has probably done his best work outside of "Fliegende Blätter," in juvenile books, as may be said of many another artist. His open, simple manner is especially well adapted to children, and seems, indeed, to please the public better than it pleases the critics. He is a valuable man to the paper, however, for he thinks up his own jokes, and the strange ideas which he depicts are of his own invention.

Schlittgen, ever since childhood, has supported himself by drawing. He is the youngest of the artists mentioned, his work having first appeared in the paper twelve years ago, when he was only twenty-three. He quickly won for himself a high place, and has suffered the annoyance and compliment of a horde of imitators. Schlittgen may be called the Du Maurier of "Fliegende Blätter." He endeavors in all his illustrations to give the effect of a painting, and his subjects are generally on about the same plane as the English artist's. Of late he has spent much time in Paris, and has been a less frequent and perhaps less satisfactory contributor than formerly.

Bechstein made a reputation with his series of "costume" pictures; and Wagner is known for the romantic nature of his subjects, and for the prettiness of his girls, who are sweet and refined, from the roses in their hair to their daintily slippered feet.

But in addition to its literary and artistic sides, the paper has commercial features, and some of these should prove of interest even to the most soulful artist or the most hardened reader of jokes. "Fliegende Blätter," so far as one can see, publishes no sworn statement of circulation, but its friends are not diffident in claiming the globe as its field, and the claim seems to be justified. At any rate, there appears to be no doubt as to Austria or Germany, for subscriptions are received not only at any bookstore, but at any post-office. The real income, however, of any paper comes from its advertisers, and in its advertising department "Flie-



II.



III.



DRAWN BY H. ALBRECHT.

THE NEW

gende Blätter" is believed to be unique. It issues, separately bound, an advertising supplement with every copy, refusing, under any circumstances, to insert an advertisement into the paper itself. To a foreigner these advertising pages are almost as entertaining as the more pretentious part of the journal. They are profusely illustrated, and include occasional draw-

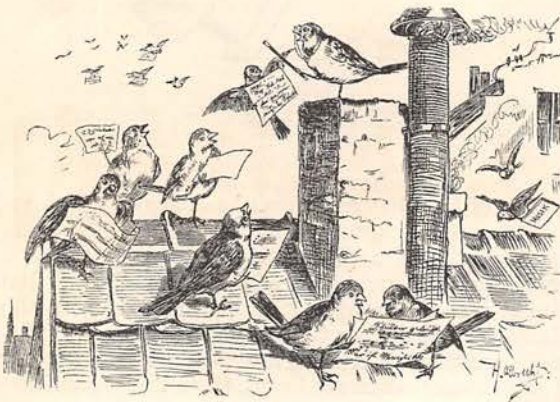
IV.



V.



VI.



OPERETTA.

ings of genuine merit, and always (by way of a banner) one illustrated joke in the upper left-hand corner of the first page of each supplement, of which there may be half a dozen with a single copy of the paper. The subjects advertised are amusing. They cover a wide field, though the beer-brewers, the jewelers, and the manufacturers of patent hair-restorers, combs, and

brushes, seem to be especially prominent. We English-speaking people may think we know something about advertising patent medicines, but given the subject of hair-restorers, and more particularly "bart-erzeugers," elixirs, and medicaments that will make beards and mustaches grow like a German officer's, therein must we yield to the advertisers in "Fliegende Blätter." Their claims are so embroidered with prose and poetry, their names so heralded with romantic epithets, and their success so artistically pictured in the suitor "before" and "after,"—beardless, be-
 rebt; and bearded, betrothed,—that surely no advertiser here may dare to compete with them in this particular line. German officers are noted for hirsute glory, particularly in mustaches. It may be that the secret thereof is to be found in some of these advertised preparations. As showing the frequency of illustrations, it may be said that out of seventy-three advertisements in one supplement forty-eight had cuts, and those that were not illustrated were usually very small, being hardly more than business cards of a few lines each. Evidently the German advertiser is as wide awake as the American, and believes that a picture of a diamond tiara or an elixir-sprinkled head will do more to awaken popular interest than half a column of glowing description. Another point that the business man would notice is the wide field whence "Fliegende Blätter" draws its advertisers. Choosing again a supplement at random, on half a page there are advertisements recommending wares in Dusseldorf, Munich, Berlin, Zurich, Mayence, Dresden, Cologne, Stuttgart, Hanover, and France, England, and America besides.

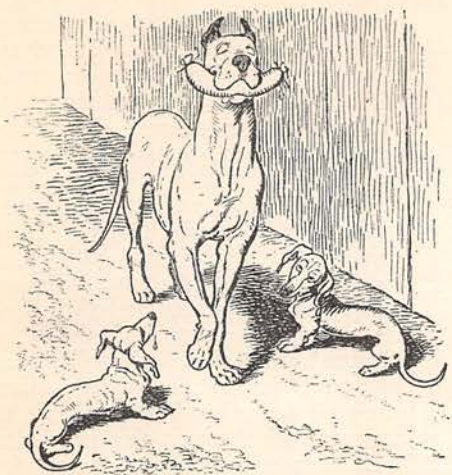
The story of "Fliegende Blätter" is almost told, for it is never safe to dwell too long on a joke, much less on a collection of jokes. A writer for "Punch" years ago solved for his readers a mathematical problem to show the good that his paper did. He thought that each copy gave to some reader five minutes of pleasure, and the formula can be re-

produced here as applying to "Fliegende Blätter."

$$5 \times 52 \times 50 \times y = x$$

The five represents the minutes of pleasure, the fifty-two the weeks of the year, the fifty the years of the life of "Fliegende Blätter," and y its circulation; and the result x must be, repre-

I.



III.



II.



IV.



DRAWN BY E. REINICKE.

THE OUTWITTED MASTIFF.

sented in time, what "a girdle of smiles around the earth" would be in miles.

There is no need to discuss the value of humor, or to compare the various ways in which laughter may be brought to the people — by the stage, by books, or by papers. Each way has its admirers, and "Fliegende Blätter" is deserving of notice because it is one of the best and first of its kind, and because it is only

of late that Americans have begun to ask regarding those "Flying Leaves" which, coming from a distant nation, and printed in a foreign language, yet find a welcome here. But the whole world is kin, and there are many who still remember Germany as the dear old "Vaterland," and many more besides who welcome humor wherever found, since trouble and sorrow so readily seek out their own victims.

*William D. Ellwanger.
Charles Mulford Robinson.*