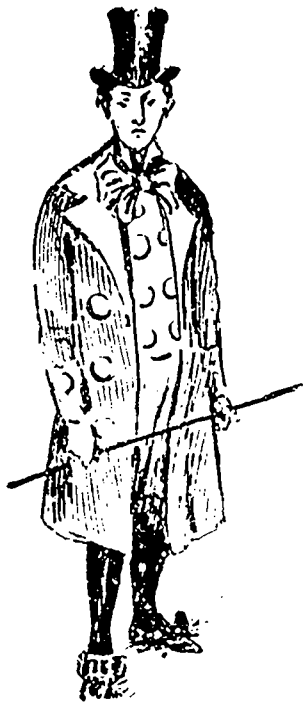




The Berlin Kirmes.

By F. F. and E. P.

"I REALLY believe there is a strain of German blood in me."

I made the remark to the artist, as we prepared sleepily for bed at the close of our first day in Berlin, and our first visit to the Kirmes.

"Not long ago you were searching for a trace of Scotch ancestry," she retorted.

"Precisely," I said. "Do you not notice the many similarities in character and speech in the two nationalities? The conservatism, the steadfastness, the hospitality, the thrift, and then those strong, guttural sounds, and unpronounceable words—there can't be much difference between German and Gaelic."

"There used to be something in our school histories about Picts and Scots, and Goths and Vandals, and they all devastated some place or other, and settled down somewhere or other, so probably you can make out the relationship if you want to," she answered drowsily, and then we fell asleep.

It is always a pleasant thing to be pleasantly surprised, and is equally agreeable to breathe a new atmosphere and become conscious of a new element in one's environment.

Something of this feeling wrought within us from the first hour of our stay in Berlin. We came instantly into touch with the tone of the bright, busy town; we understood it, we became a part of it; and as a result it gave us of its best, if indeed it has aught else to give.

Waterloo county is a thrifty and prosperous acreage throughout, and Berlin is its dominant. Whoso knows the town can predicate the county.

The artery of Berlin is the Lutheran church of St. Peter's, and the heart thereof is its pastor, Rev. E. Von Pirch—a man scholarly, thoughtful, broad-minded, progressive, yet possessing rare executive ability, and leading and guiding his people in all things. Some conception of his work and influence may be formed in the knowledge that his church contains nearly one thousand families, with a membership of over two thousand, and yet his parishioners assured us that he knows everyone of them individually, and is conversant with their welfare.

It is of the recent Berlin Kirmes we are to write this month; but Berlin, the Lutheran church and its

pastor, and the Kirmes, are so closely wrought one within the other, that to consider them apart were impossible.

There have been Kirmeses (we are not at all sure about that plural) in many Canadian towns—artificial fancy affairs, bazaars dressed in a new name, but there has never been a real Kirmes save in Berlin. One recognizes instantly that here is the Canadian home of the German church fete; that in no other place can it endure and flourish. For here is the language, the dress and custom, the temperament, the atmosphere. Here the ways of the Fatherland are native.

Each hour the possibilities of this Berlin Kirmes unfold further before us. It should be made a institution, a representative feature. Held biennially, there is no reason why it should not become to Berlin an exceedingly profitable fete, attracting strangers from all parts of Canada and the United States.

There are two hundred thousand Germans in the Dominion, there are twice as many in bordering states. Without considering the English, this is a large element to draw from. The field would be

Berlin's alone, since no other town could successfully compete.

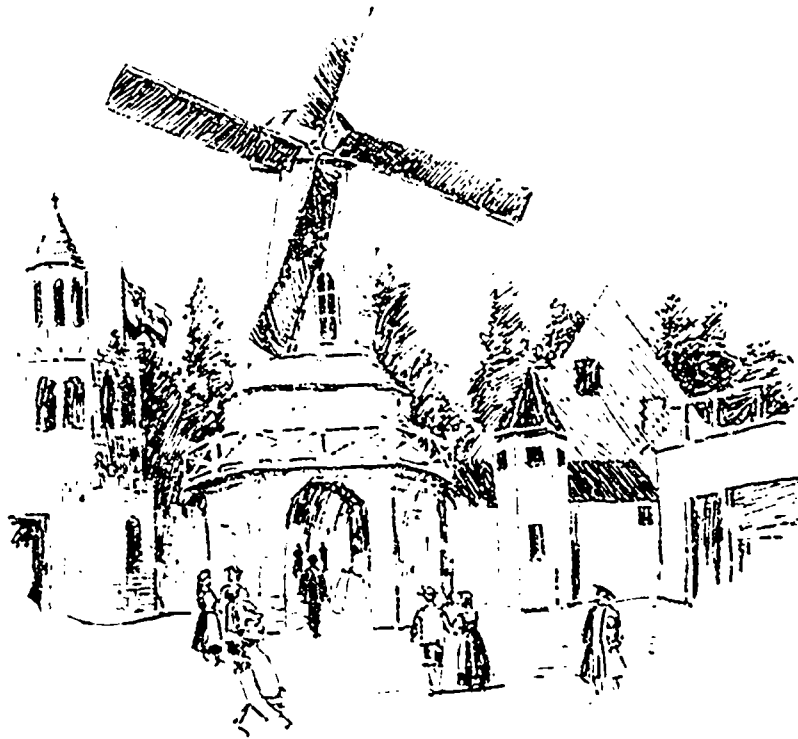
Under able management there is no reason why this Kirmes, either as a biennial or triennial fete, should not become to Berlin what the Industrial is to Toronto—a celebrated and profitable institution peculiar to itself.

The evening of our first visit showed that although only celebrating its second birthday, the Kirmes had outgrown its accommodation in the largest building to be secured—the skating rink.

At eight o'clock the place was packed with visitors, three thousand at least in number, while many were turning away since admission was impossible. The booths were taxed beyond their capacity, and the restaurateurs were helpless. Coffee Room, Crown Inn, The Mill, could not meet the demand made upon them.

We elbowed our warm, laughing way up the German street, and escaped up a little hidden stairway to a loophole of observation, and there we looked out on packed galleries and down upon a dense but good-natured throng, who laughed, jostled, pushed, yet somehow made way for the costumed processions that at intervals cleaved their picturesque lines through the darker gowned onlookers.

There was a warm odor of coffee and a faint one of sauerkraut, the windmill at the street head click-clacked merrily. Through the misty atmosphere the plentiful evergreens and quaint outlines of the old-fashioned booths showed a comfortable dimness, while the hum of voices accompanied the sweet



The Mill Inn.

