

Albert Bernhardt Faust

April 20, 1870 — February 8, 1951

Albert Bernhardt Faust, Emeritus Professor of German, died on February 8, 1951, after more than 45 years of association with Cornell University. He was born on April 20, 1870 in Baltimore, Md., where he attended the German Zions School, and where he graduated from Johns Hopkins University in 1889. There, too, he received his Ph. D. degree with a dissertation on Charles Sealsfield. This was his earliest contribution to the study of German-American relations, a field in which he was later to attain a place of great distinction. After a few years' work at German Universities he became Instructor in German at his alma mater in 1894. Two years later he was appointed Associate Professor at Wesleyan University and, in 1903 Assistant Professor at the University of Wisconsin. He was called to Cornell University in 1904, where he remained until his retirement in 1938 as Assistant Professor and, later, Professor of German. Under his energetic leadership the Department became one of the prominent centers of Germanic studies in America. His life-long membership in several learned societies—the American Historical Association, the Modern Language Association of America, the German Goethe Society, the Steuben Society, the American Dialect Society—suggests the range of his interests: they were historical, literary, and philological.

It was as the author of *The German Element in the United States* that Albert Faust established his solid reputation as a cultural historian: when that work appeared in 1909 it was almost at once recognized as the first comprehensive survey of a subject which, until then, had been regarded as little more than a matter of local, though sometimes zealous, investigation. With extraordinary attention to detail and factual evidence, Faust produced a study which has proved both indispensable and suggestive to all subsequent workers in German and American history. It was awarded the Conrad Seipp Memorial Prize, and the Loubat Prize of the Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences. This major achievement was later followed by a *Guide to the Materials for American History in Swiss and Austrian Archives* (1916), and *A List of Swiss Emigrants to the American Colonies* (1920, 1925). What was characteristic of these, as well as of his shorter and occasional writings and addresses, was Faust's deep pride in the contribution which the culture of his German ancestors had made to the American civilization to which he himself belonged. He was never happier than when he recognized evidence of this fruitful interplay, and never more deeply distressed than when (as during the World Wars) he saw it disturbed.

Although his scholarly bent was on the whole historical, no more important literary discovery has been made by an American-Germanist than Faust's of Karl Postl-Sealsfield. *Charles Sealsfield. Der Dichter beider Hemisphaeren*

(1897) is an expanded version of his doctoral dissertation in which he established the critical data upon which now rests the fame of one of the major figures of Austrian literature. What led him to this curious bilingual writer of travel fiction is indicative of Faust's work as a whole: he had a remarkable instinct for the significant and productive point of cultural interdependence. Most of Faust's writing was, therefore, in kind and intention, close to that of his teachers F. J. Turner and M. D. Learned: he was ultimately concerned with the growth of the American tradition. Even in his edition of Heine's *Prose Works*, or of J. Q. Adams' translation of Wieland's *Oberon* (1940) he was less preoccupied with questions of literary criticism than with the larger purpose of illuminating the mainstream of intercultural traffic. This ideal guided him not least in his teaching; and if he was instrumental in editing and developing one of the most influential series of textbooks for the study of German in America, his success was due, not only to the warmth of his pleading and to the textual care which he devoted to each of these many volumes, but also to his untiring faith in the efficacy of a genuine understanding between the peoples of the United States and Germany. Faust's efforts toward the establishment of the Carl Schurz Foundation were his most enthusiastic attempt at giving concrete strength to the cultural 'bridge' in which he so firmly believed. In 1929 he spoke before the German Reichstag in memory of Carl Schurz; a few years later he served as Carnegie Professor at the University of Vienna. On both occasions, and elsewhere, he affirmed his allegiance to that uncompromising political idealism by which he knew his two countries could and should be bound together now, as they had been in the early years of the American republic. When the Austrian government decorated him with the Golden Cross of Honor, or, when, in 1937 the University of Goettingen bestowed an honorary degree upon him, it was to recognize this creative conviction, as much as to distinguish him for the special achievement of his scholarship.

His many graduate students will long be grateful for his kindly and unfailing counsel, and, no less, for the hospitality of 125 Kelvin Place which he and his wife were always ready to offer. In Albert Faust the University has lost a member who, by his personality, his writings, and his teaching, has contributed much to its lasting distinction.

Victor Lange, R. M. Ogden, O. D. Von Engeln