



Robert Reitzel

## ROBERT REITZEL (1849-1898) LUTHERAN MINISTER, FREETHINKER, AND LIBERAL FIREBRAND

Robert Reitzel's name surfaces only occasionally in scholarly works even within the relatively narrow confines of German-American studies. Yet in the late nineteenth century he was well known to many in German-America and beyond. Robert was born 27 January 1849 in Weitenau near Schopfheim in Baden as the only child of Reinhard and Katharina Uehlin Reitzel.<sup>1</sup> Although Reitzel's childhood years hardly augured any achievements of substantial significance for the young man, it might be noted here that Reitzel's credentials as a freethinker and potential revolutionary were impeccable from the point of view of his family heritage. He was named after Robert Blum, hero of the Baden revolution, and his uncle, Georg Uehlin, earned a reputation for himself during the Baden revolution as well. Reitzel writes:

In the gorgeous countryside of Alemania my uncle George Uehlin was born to the family of the tanning master of the city of Schopfheim. One can't be certain whether it was the influence of the air of nearby free Switzerland or something inherited from that notorious thief [Blum], who nonetheless managed to become mayor of Schopfheim, but no matter what the reason George turned into a fine revolutionary.<sup>2</sup>

Young Reitzel passed his first ten years in Weitenau until he was sent to school in Mannheim, where he subsequently began a rather hapless series of attempts at preparing himself for the university. In the course of time he attended the *Gymnasien* in Mannheim, Karlsruhe, and Constance successively, but was graduated from none of them. Robert started his university preparation at the *Gymnasium* in Mannheim. He then moved to Karlsruhe, where he was expelled in the spring of 1869 for failing to obey the rules of the institution concerning proper decorum. He seems to have attempted to complete his pre-university training by enrolling at Constance the following fall as a member of the graduating class, but for reasons which remain unclear he never continued beyond the winter semester.<sup>3</sup>

Reitzel's university years are equally cloudy. Mrs. Doris Severance notes that her mother, Reitzel's daughter Pauline, had duelling swords which she believed to have been her father's during his university days. Moreover, Reitzel himself frequently related adventures which took place among a lively student population in Heidelberg. However, because Reitzel left the lyceums at Karlsruhe and Constance without an *Abitur* he could not have pursued his education further at the university level. Rudolf Rieder's work on Reitzel clarifies the matter considerably.<sup>4</sup> On the authority of Dr. Leo Müller in Karlsruhe, a childhood friend of Reitzel, Rieder states that Reitzel never studied in Heidelberg although he was anxiously awaited as an *Alemanenfuchs* by many of his friends who were already at the university. Present archival material, which is more detailed than in Rieder's day, confirms this assumption. As Rieder notes, Reitzel's role in the perpetuation of this one myth at least was at most a passive one, for nowhere does Reitzel say that he studied in Heidelberg; he simply fails to correct a false assumption.<sup>5</sup> It is, in any case, clear that Robert Reitzel did not continue his studies at the lyceum in Constance. Indeed, on 4 February 1870, Reinhard Reitzel made application to the proper authorities for a visa which would permit his son to emigrate to the United States. In March 1870 Robert Reitzel was issued a passport and by the late spring he was on his way to America and his first home there, in Baltimore.

Within a year of his arrival in Maryland Reitzel took and successfully passed the examination administered by the local Lutheran synod for admission to the clergy. He wrote his parents.<sup>6</sup>

Dear Parents!

I left the wine shop at the beginning of the new year in order to once again devote myself to the study of theology. Now I'm staying with Pastor Pister and will leave for Washington yet this week. I gave a sample sermon there yesterday which was greeted with enthusiasm. In fact, I am now the pastor of the First Reformed Con-

gregation of Washington D.C., elected unanimously from among three candidates. My fellow candidates were both older and more experienced ministers, and consequently it was no simple matter for me to carry the day. My salary will be the equivalent of about 1600 gulden initially. In addition there are the fees for funeral services and the tuition money for tutoring. I believe that I have outstripped all my schoolmates in Germany and you won't believe what a fine picture of preacher I will present in the pulpit.

In the matter of Reitzel's years as a preacher there is again a certain degree of uncertainty as to the exact sequence of events. Reitzel himself mentions three stages: the period between April 1871 and March 1872, when his congregation at the corner of 6th and N Streets in Washington, D. C. was fully affiliated with the synod; the period between March 1872 and October 1873, when essentially the same congregation established itself independently, severing its ties to the synod; and finally, in late 1873, Reitzel's complete break from the church, which was occasioned primarily by his increasingly liberal views, but most likely hastened by a number of negative comments from parishioners who were concerned about the pastor's apparent disinterest in orthodox practices.

The three phases Reitzel distinguishes mark a relatively quick transformation from Lutheran minister to liberal firebrand. In April 1871 Reitzel was offered his first position as pastor of a Lutheran congregation in Washington, D.C., but slightly less than eleven months later he was asked to resign. Reitzel's popularity with the majority of his parishioners was undeniable, but his unconventional dress and increasingly unorthodox views had caused considerable consternation among the more conventional individuals in the congregation as well as within the hierarchy of the synod itself. The Reverend Mr. Reitzel was finally removed from his post by order of a synodical commission; however, his appeal among his pastorate carried the day, for as he departed a large majority of the church's members followed him. Reitzel and his companions ultimately established themselves as an independent Protestant denomination in a building only a few

blocks from the Lutheran church they had left. Here Reitzel was free to preach in street clothes if he desired and question the infallibility of revealed religion when he wanted. Yet even this arrangement soon proved inadequate. Although the rather bohemian pastor continued to be generally admired and respected by those to whom he preached, inevitably Reitzel seems to have become embroiled in situations which certainly did not enhance his standing, especially among those already disinclined to accept his increasingly liberal views. Apparently Reitzel himself gradually began to realize the distance which separated his own opinions from the beliefs and dogma of established religion. On 20 October 1873 he delivered a farewell sermon to his Washington congregation and within a month he was the acknowledged leader and speaker for an active group of Washington-area free religionists.

In 1874 the Association of Independent Congregations held a convention in Sauk City, Iowa. Robert Reitzel attended as a representative for the Washington affiliate and while there he met and became friends with Eduard Schroeter, the organization's founder. Schroeter was quite impressed by the young man and urged him to offer his services as a lecturer on the speaking tour being arranged by the association. Reitzel agreed, and for ten years thereafter he travelled almost full time, expounding the principles of free thought before assemblages of liberal-minded Germans around the country. By the time Reitzel moved his wife and family permanently to Detroit in early 1882, he had in fact thoroughly established his reputation as a captivating and effective speaker, whose sharp wit, keen mind, and sincere dedication to his ideals seemed to strike a sympathetic chord in the hearts of his listeners.

A number of individuals remark upon Reitzel's talents as a speaker, among them Martin Drescher and Emma Goldmann. However, the comments of Fernande Richter, who wrote under the pseudonym Edna Fern, as related to Paul Werckshagen,<sup>7</sup> seem best to indicate the effect Reitzel might have had initially on a

group which was not necessarily predisposed to being enthusiastic. Mrs. Richter had read Reitzel's travel letters in his weekly journal, the *Arme Teufel*, while he was in Europe, and upon hearing that he was to speak in her hometown of St. Louis, she was quite anxious to see the man whose writing had so impressed her. Her reactions she reports as follows:

The disappointment! There on the small podium stood a small, rather rotund man with disheveled hair and a leathery face. He fumbled around in his pockets and finally found a scrunched-up manuscript. He held the paper directly in front of his near-sighted eyes and began to read in a voice which was so hoarse you could hardly understand him. After a few minutes, however, he looked up from the paper, cleared his voice and spoke freely: words so full of conviction, of beauty, and of power, that your heart sang. The audience outdid itself in its applause. Disappointment in the man Reitzel turned later into admiration as a small group sat together over wine in a cozy little bar. There his humor bubbled forth. The words fly back and forth full of enthusiasm but also full of great sadness.<sup>8</sup>

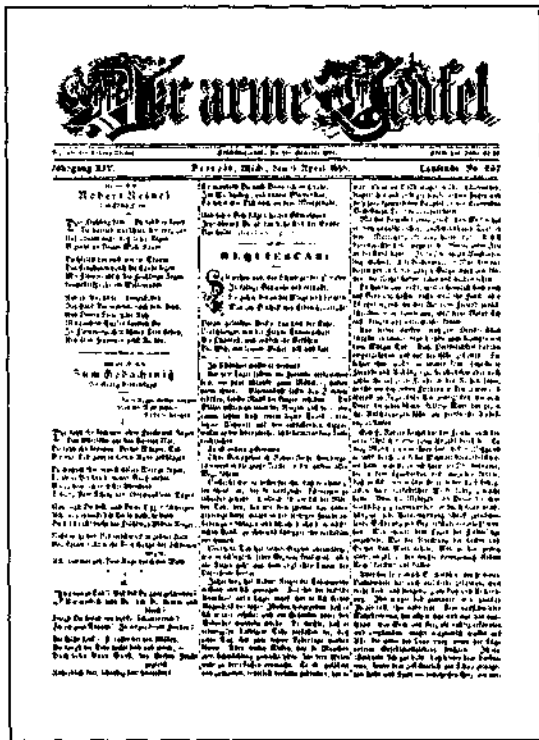
Many of Reitzel admirers echoed Richter's ultimate sentiments. Even the move to Detroit itself was motivated in great part by friends in Detroit who pleaded that Reitzel consent to a series of weekly lectures in the local *Turnhalle*. During the first years of his Detroit journal, *Der arme Teufel*, Reitzel continued to speak weekly in the *Turnhalle*. Moreover, he reprinted a number of his speeches from the period before the advent of the paper in a column entitled *Aus meinen Vorträgen*. That these lectures were successful and ultimately popular seems obvious from the fact that a group of Detroit friends belonging to the number which had initially invited Reitzel to Detroit also advanced him the money required to begin publication of his periodical. Thus Robert Reitzel was no stranger in many quarters of Detroit by the time he decided to make his home there, and during his more than fifteen years of residence, he was eventually to become quite a well known personality, whose characteristic appearance was nearly as familiar to the local German-American citizenry as his general notoriety was to the German-American populace at large.

From December 1884 until illness confined him to bed, Reitzel could be seen each week as he sat in the storefront where his paper was printed and occupied himself energetically with his writing. He had a habit of thrusting out both lips slightly and sniffing the air occasionally as he worked, thus adding a singularly curious idiosyncrasy to an already distinctive mien. Customarily, he would settle in his shirt sleeves at an old desk situated amidst the paraphernalia of his occupation— bundles of old papers and stacks of complimentary issues from friendly competitors. Here he would sit by the hour, puffing on his long pipe with the huge, round bowl and writing rapidly. He seemed always to be wearing a clean white shirt but was otherwise inclined to be negligent in his dress. A casual viewer would likely remember him from his large head with its luxuriant growth of curly, black hair, aptly accented with a long, bushy mustache. In most other respects he struck one as normal enough. He was a man of medium build, inclined to be stout, a description that might well fit any number of men his age in the primarily German community immediately surrounding his home and office. Yet even as he took up his position as editor of *Der arme Teufel*, Robert Reitzel did not conform to a predictable mold.

Even in its infancy the new journal was likely to offer in each issue something to pique the interest of many readers and irritate the sensibilities of still others. The *Arme Teufel* was very much the personal vehicle of Robert Reitzel and his renown was practically the stuff of legend. Many knew or had heard of him; others spoke of him frequently if only to curse him. He acknowledged no party affiliation and welcomed any and all points of view; but his own opinions—at least as they appeared in print—were often bizarre, and the brutal frankness of his acerbic wit frequently caused his comments to be perceived as even more severe than originally intended. His reputation as a maverick spread quickly and by the first anniversary of his modest-sized weekly with the odd name, his credentials as a dissenter were unassailable.

In 1893 a brief illness revealed the first signs of a tubercular infection which was ultimately

to kill Reitzel. From 1893 until his death five years later Reitzel was to be afflicted with severe pain and periodic complete paralysis of the lower limbs. Moreover, he ultimately passed his last three years as a complete invalid, never leaving his sickroom. Even the medical guidance and counsel of Dr. Carl Beck, Professor of Surgery at the New York School of Medicine, could do little more than alleviate the suffering to a small degree. Despite his disability, however, Reitzel continued to oversee the publication of his paper as well as to contribute the majority of the material printed each week. The tenth anniversary issue of *Der arme Teufel*, which appeared in November of 1893, gives little indication of its editor's affliction or of any abatement in his customary pugnaciousness. His activities, in fact, continued with no appreciable diminution Reitzel's well-known reserves of strength until the day of his death, 31 March 1898.



Arme Teufel

Reitzel's tenacity, his perseverance in the pursuit of his editorial duties despite adversity, is perhaps admirable; certainly it is remark-

able. What seems even more remarkable is that the death of such a celebrated radical thinker as Robert Reitzel should have occasioned markedly positive, unabashedly laudatory press coverage in the pages of a large number of conservative German-American journals. It would seem likely that an individual who had identified himself so completely with liberal, and even radical, doctrines would not be highly esteemed in a society such as that of the Germans in America. Yet the *Detroit Abendpost*, an acknowledged spokesman for the solidly conservative values of most German-Americans, praised Robert Reitzel as doubtless one of the greatest, if not the greatest German writer in America.<sup>9</sup> Similar commentary appeared elsewhere as well, not only in most of the Detroit papers, but in a substantial number of journals throughout the country. Yet none of the many highly favorable critical assessments of Reitzel's career, particularly his talents as a journalist, seems to have been motivated primarily by a misplaced sense of respect for the dead.

No doubt there was some polarization of attitudes toward Reitzel. Reitzel devotees occasionally bordered on the fanatic in their impassioned enthusiasm. One gentleman in St. Louis who found himself lacking a specific number of the *Arme Teufel* which was already out of print borrowed the issue from a friend and transcribed it in its entirety in order that his own set might be complete.<sup>10</sup> There were others, however, who were categorically opposed to Robert Reitzel and everything he undertook. These people were appalled by his outlandish tactics, dismayed by his extreme stance on many issues, and generally disgusted by his irreverent attitude towards many of the things they held dear. Yet on the whole Reitzel seems to have had a pervasive influence on a much broader spectrum of individual opinion in the German-American community than the rather meager subscription figures for his controversial weekly would indicate. The material which supports such an assumption is relatively intangible, being most often the cumulative impression of a great deal of reading in a wide range of German-American publications and

seldom anything in the manner of hard fact. Yet one finds words of praise for the infamous editor not only from the traditionalist *Abendpost* in Detroit, but also from numerous persons of widely divergent backgrounds, from the professional revolutionary Johann Most in Boston to Dr. Carl Beck, a respected surgeon in New York City.

The relative high regard which an extremist firebrand like Robert Reitzel enjoyed among a very conventionally-minded populace is perhaps not as enigmatic as it initially appears, for closer inspection shows that there was not, in fact, an irreconcilable disparity between the more moderate views of the majority of the German-American public and the liberal tendencies of a decidedly smaller segment of the population. Undeniably, a very vocal and highly visible radical or lunatic fringe did exist. Indeed the actions of a few short-sighted, potential world reformers at the Chicago Haymarket bombing and subsequent riot in 1886 did much to politicize and finally discredit the activities of progressive thinkers of all persuasions, but the predominant majority of those German-Americans who called themselves free-thinkers or even socialists rarely espoused principles more radical than the three-part motto of the French Revolution: liberty; equality; and brotherhood.

Organizations, such as the North American Turner Union, which were founded directly after the abortive revolutions of 1848 by expatriates who were anxious to realize the aims of those European uprisings on American soil did profess ideals which might be considered vaguely socialistic even today. They oppose, for example, the extreme concentration of wealth, and political power in the hands of a few, the exploitation of labor by capital, and they defend the rights of the individual. Of course, there were other ideas considered progressive or even radical at the time which are all but self-understood today. Among the demands for change championed by the North American Turner Union were: an eight-hour day; governmental inspection of factories; child-labor laws; no more sales of public lands to individuals or corporations, except under very special condi-

tions for improvement of the land; and mandatory and free public education.<sup>11</sup>

Some organizations, however, did call for changes which might be considered suspiciously socialistic even today. 'The Platform of the Radicals,'<sup>12</sup> which was drawn up at a meeting of radical thinkers in Philadelphia in 1876, included many of the demands made by the North American Gymnastic Union, but it incorporated as well calls for the elimination of all indirect taxes, the dismantling of all monopolies, and the introduction of progressive income and inheritance taxes with no taxes on income at or below a level necessary for adequate support of a family. Yet even in the first flush of enthusiasm prior to 1860 the goals of many groups which styled themselves socialistic, communistic, or atheistic frequently revealed nothing more dangerous or radical than a deep belief and trust in man and nature and the characteristic freedom inherent in both.

Socialism seems in any case to have meant different things to different people. In practice, the various groups frequently stood for whatever ideas were thought to be progressive at a given time, and there was confusion in the minds of *many* as to the principles for which each faction stood. Indeed, the ideals espoused by one organization usually overlapped with those defended by yet another, resulting in a confusing array of goals and aims, the majority of which were shared by all. The confusion was exacerbated by the constant attempts of the leaders of many factions to vie for the support of the members of other factions. Wilhelm Weitling, whose own brand of *Handwerkerkommunismus* never held much appeal for men like Karl Heinzen who were more aristocratically and theoretically inclined, gives a most incisive and memorable description of the situation as it existed in 1850:

Everyone wants to publish a newsletter, everyone wants to be the head of an organization, everyone wants to found an immigrant aid society, everyone wants singlehandedly to be the spokesperson for a current popular enthusiasm. This person mixes decentralization with socialism, that one atheism with rationalism, the next person is a socialistic gymnast,

the one after that is working for marked advances. The first person wants to introduce the spirit into club meetings, the next person mankind, the third the people, the fourth the workers, this person the singers, yet another the tailors, the gymnasts, the refugees, etc. And hundreds of others want the same thing but with a slight variation.<sup>13</sup>

From about 1860 on much of the ardor which had been born of the dream of actualizing freedom from oppression in Europe was channelled into more directly American concerns, such as homesteading and naturalization. The majority of immigrants tended to emphasize these and other specifically American concerns even more during the period following the Civil War, and socialistic rhetoric receded into the background. Many of the members of organizations which called themselves liberal were small businessmen, more concerned about making productive business contacts than refashioning the political system. At one point Reitzel himself warns: "Naturally anyone who comes to us to find a forum for his personal vanity, anyone who comes to us to find material advantage for his business, anyone who comes to us just to socialize, will depart very quickly."<sup>14</sup> Although expressed negatively, as that which is undesirable, the sentiment makes it obvious that there were at least sufficient numbers drawn to free religion for precisely such reasons that Reitzel found it necessary to mention the problem. One's suspicions are confirmed upon reading Heinrich Hoehn's remarks in *Der Nordamerikanische Turnerbund und seine Stellung zur Arbeiter-Bewegung* about those members who are "products of our capitalistic system" (1). He explains: "I mean those people, who join a dozen clubs or small groups in the hopes of gaining customers or some other advantage for their little businesses" (1).<sup>15</sup>

Other sources, too, reveal the problem in maintaining truly socialistic principles which resulted from the increasingly large proportion of members who were businessmen and professionals and whose ardor for socialistic and communistic ideals had cooled considerably. The groups would meet, usually on a weekly basis, to listen to a lecturer whose pur-

pose it was to educate the assembly spiritually and intellectually with an edifying talk on the latest scientific discoveries, taxing the rich, the moral character of a life patterned after nature rather than religion, or perhaps the beauty of literature and the arts. The primary concern of any speaker's audience was, however, more likely to be the liquid and solid refreshments which were scheduled to conclude the evening's festivities rather than the speech itself. Many of the buildings in which such meetings took place were mortgaged to brewery owners who extracted the privilege of maintaining a public house on the premises.

The frequent complaints of the more serious adherents of liberal philosophies lead one to conclude that for many the appeal of an evening at the *Turnverein* or Free Thought Society was more of a social than of a scholarly nature. The scattered comments of various speakers, reviewers, and historians dealing with freethought and other liberally-oriented groups indicate that the membership was not always made up of persons whose primary interest was the serious pursuit of the ideas professed at such meetings. In fact, the lack of seriousness on the part of some supporters is frequently cited as the reason for the limited success of such groups.<sup>16</sup>

Thus even organizations which bore the word socialistic in their name, as well as many other German-American groups dubbed liberal by the public at large, probably served a much more broadly cultural function than has usually been assumed. Hermann Schlüter discusses the confusion within the Gymnastic Union concerning the meaning or significance of the word *sozialistisch*, which appeared in early versions of the group's name:<sup>17</sup>

The socialism of the American Gymnastic Movement was more a name than a representation of truly socialistic principles. The group was never a proletarian organization and the socialism which was expressed among its members was a mix of bourgeois radicalism and vague socialistic leanings, which had their origin more in sympathetic feelings than in actual understanding or philosophical conviction.<sup>18</sup>

It was very difficult to maintain support over an extended period for controversial theories

which heralded the freedom of the individual in a country where the matter was already largely an accomplished fact. Freethought organizations faced chronic difficulties in attempting to maintain the interest of their members in the professed ideals of the organizations. With the passage of time most German-American organizations that had debated the burning intellectual issues of contemporary Europe altered their predominantly political stance and shifted their attention to cultural concerns.

Robert Reitzel, too, although he never really lost interest in the social and political issues of the day, became increasingly concerned with cultural, and specifically literary, matters. His appeal and the appeal of *Der arme Teufel* certainly extended far beyond the circle of wild-eyed radicals with whom he is usually associated. He was able not only to introduce the notorious Emma Goldman to the latest in European literature but also to induce a busy surgeon like Carl Beck to take time from his practice to read an article on economics. The key to Reitzel's ability to attract readers from all walks of life and from both ends of the political spectrum seems to have been the charm of his unique personality. During his days as a traveling speaker he was well-known for his striking appearance, spirited delivery, and rhetorical eloquence. Emma Goldman also gives testimony to the effectiveness of Reitzel's oratory. In her autobiography, *Living My Life*,<sup>19</sup> Goldman first points out Reitzel's great gift for comical recital (I, 215) and then pays tribute to him in recalling an evening spent in his home:

It was particularly on my last visit to him that I came fully to appreciate his true greatness, the heights to which he could rise. A thinker and a poet, he was not content merely to fashion beautiful words; he wanted them to be living realities, to help in awakening the masses to the possibilities of an earth freed from the shackles the privileged few had forged. His dream was of things radiant, of love and freedom, of life and joy. He had lived and fought for that dream with all the passion of his soul (I, 222).

In his journal he molded out of these characteristics a distinctive style. His admirers were titillated by the outlandishness of his phrase-

ology, captivated by the quality and persuasiveness of his written German, and finally won over by the sincerity of his unshakable faith in what he believed. Johannes Gaulke speaks of Reitzel's written style with positive descriptions such as the "daringness of his formulations" and the "power of his language,"<sup>20</sup> but Herbert Eulenberg pays Reitzel perhaps the highest compliment in saying that Reitzel's writing as he knows it is conceived "in a impeccable, beautifully flowing German which could serve as a model for many newspaper people who remained in the homeland of our mother tongue."<sup>21</sup>

In effect, the readership of *Der arme Teufel* constituted a family with Reitzel as its spiritual and intellectual counselor. Reitzel's ability to establish an almost personal relationship with his reader is constantly cited by those who read his journal as well as those who later read about it. Johannes Gaulke is even charmed by the originality of the advertisement section of *Der arme Teufel*. In all, it would seem that many persons who read and admired Robert Reitzel were attracted to the *Arme Teufel* in part at least because of the degree to which Reitzel was able to bind his readers together as a large family or an intimate circle of friends—even over great distances. This feeling was probably enhanced by Reitzel's agents, who traveled through the United States collecting subscription money and winning new friends for the *Arme Teufel*, as well as by Reitzel's occasional visits and lectures outside of Detroit. The measure of cohesiveness which such a union of individuals provided was probably more than anything else responsible for the breadth of Reitzel's appeal, for like the church against whose dictates and dogmas he struggled and the middle-class lay organizations he generally supported, Robert Reitzel too became a sort of German-American cultural phenomenon, providing a sense of identity and a source of companionship amidst the rather unsettling struggle every immigrant endured in his attempt to preserve a semblance of the life he had left behind as he established himself in his adopted homeland.

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<sup>1</sup>The presentation which follows in the text attempts the best possible coherent chronology of Reitzel's life in view of presently available documentation. It has always been difficult to construct an accurate picture of the events because of the scarcity of supportive evidence.

<sup>2</sup>Im wunderschönen Alemannenland ... wurde mein Onkel Georg Uehlin als der Sohn eines ehrsamten Gerbermeisters der Stadt Schopfheim geboren. Ob nun die Luft der nahen freien Schweiz dazu mehr beigetragen haben mag oder die sagenhafte Abstammung von jenem Räu-bergenossen, der es nachmalen in allen Ehren bis zum Stadthalter von Schopfheim brachte, kurz, dieser Georg entwickelte sich zu einem echten und gerechten Revolutionär (AT, 15.8.1885).

Translations of this and all other German quotations in the text are my own. The German originals will be included in the notes for those who wish to read them.

<sup>3</sup>The Badisches Generallandesarchiv has in its possession (Auswanderungsakte unter der Signatur 375/Zug. 1932 Nr. 11 Heft 330) documents which record Robert Reitzel's presence as a student at the Lyzeum in Karlsruhe during the years 1866-1869. In a visa application dated 4 February 1870 Robert is listed as an *Obersextaner*, the equivalent at the time for today's *Oberprimaner* or member of the graduating class. However, because he left the lyceums at Karlsruhe and Constance without an *Abitur* he could not have pursued his education further at the university level.

<sup>4</sup>Rieder, R[udolf] T[heodor], *Ein Bild Robert Reitzels und des Armen Teufel aus seinem Verhältnis zur Litteratur*, diss. University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1918.

<sup>5</sup>...nirgends im A.T. wird ausgesagt, daß Reitzel in Heidelberg studiert hatte, er unterliess nur die Berichtigung einer irrigen Annahme (Rev. of *Robert Reitzel* by Adolf Zucker, *Monatshefte* 18 (September 1917), 218).

<sup>6</sup>Liebe Eltern! Das Weineta-bliss<sup>ement</sup> verließ ich mit Beginn des neuen Jahres, um mich dem Studium der Theologie wieder zu widmen. Jetzt bin ich bei Herrn Pastor Pister und werde diese Woche noch nach Washington abgehen. Hielt gestern daselbst Probepredigt, welche mit Begeisterung aufgenommen wurde, und bin jetzt von drei Kandidaten der einstimmig erwählte Pfarrer der ersten reformierten Gemeinde in Washington D.C. Meine Mitbewerber waren schon bejahrte und erfahrene Pfarrer, und wo wurde mir der Sieg gar nicht leicht gemacht. Mein Gehalt wird sich von Anfang auf ca. 1600 Gulden belaufen, und dazu kommen die Leichengebühren etc. und das Schulgeld. Ich denke, ich habe meine Studiengenossen in Deutschland alle überflügelt. Ihr solltet einmal sehen, welch würdiges Predigerbild ich auf der Kanzel gebe.

<sup>7</sup>"Robert Reitzel, seine Persönlichkeit und seine Weltanschauung," Master's Thesis University of Illinois, 1908, 20-21.

<sup>8</sup>Die Enttäuschung! Auf dem kleinen Podium stand ein nicht sehr großer, ziemlich dicker Mann mit wirrem Haar und einem verschwiemelten Gesicht. Er fummelte in seinen Taschen herum, bis er ein zerknittertes Manuskript hervorgezogen hatte, hielt es dicht vor seine kurzsichtigen

Augen und begann zu lesen mit einer Stimme, so heiser, daß man kaum ein Wort verstehen konnte. Das dauerte so ein Weilchen, dann ließ er das Papier sinken, seine Stimme klarte sich, und er sprach frei: Worte voll Überzeugung, voll Schönheit, voll Kraft, daß einem das Herz aufging. Die Zuhörer tobten in ihrem Beifall. Die Enttäuschung über den Menschen Reitzel ging nachher in Bewunderung über, als eine kleine Gesellschaft in einem gemütlichen Kneipzimmer beim Wein zusammen saß. Da sprühte sein Humor, da flogen Worte hin und her voll Begeisterung, aber auch voll großer Traurigkeit. So habe ich Reitzel zum ersten male [sic] gesehen.

<sup>9</sup>*Detroit Abend-Post*, 1 April 1898, as quoted in *Detroit Free Press*, 2 April 1898 (no further information available; extant copy in Burton Scrapbooks of Burton Historical Collection, the Detroit Public Library, and no other copies are known to still exist).

<sup>10</sup>Edna Fern, "Robert Reitzel, ein deutsch-amerikanischer Heine," *Der deutsche Vorkämpfer*, 2, No. 5 (May 1908), 25-26, mentions that her own, virtually complete file of *Der arme Teufel* was lacking issues of the first volume, but that a certain Ferdinand Welb had such copies because he had obtained originals years before in Detroit and copied them off by hand.

<sup>11</sup>G. A. Hoehn, *Der Nordamerikanische Turnerbund und seine Stellung zur Arbeiter-Bewegung* (St. Louis, Missouri: 1892), 4.

<sup>12</sup>discussed by C[arl] F[riedrich] Huch in "Die Konventionen der Freigesinnten im Jahre 1876," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Pioneer-Vereins von Philadelphia*, 23 (1911), 9 ff.

<sup>13</sup>Jeder will ein Blättchen herausgeben, jeder will einen Verein leiten, jeder eine Kasse gründen, jeder allein auf seine Faust für irgend eine Phrase Volkslehrer sein. Da mischt der Eine Decentralisation mit Socialismus, der Andere Atheismus mit Vernunft, der Dritte turnt socialistisch, der Vierte wirkt für den entschiedenen Fortschritt. Der Eine will den Geist, der Andere die Menschheit, der Dritte die Völker, der Vierte die Arbeiter, der die Sänger, ein Anderer die Schneider, die Turner, die Flüchtlinge u.s.w. in Vereine bringen. Und hunderte Andere wollen dies Alles auch, aber mit einer kleinen Veränderung (*Republik der Arbeiter*, 1850, 180 ff., as quoted by Friedrich Kamman, *Socialism in German-American Literature* (Philadelphia: Americana Germanica Press, 1917), 20).

<sup>14</sup>In his keynote address at the Philadelphia convention of free congregations Reitzel says: "Natürlich, wer zu uns kommt, um einen Tummelplatz seiner persönlichen Eitelkeit zu finden, wer zu uns kommt, um materielle Vortheile für sein Geschäft dabei zu finden, wer zu uns kommt um des gesellschaftlichen Vergnügens willen, der wird auch bald wieder gehen." [*Geschichtliche Mittheilungen über die deutschen Freien Gemeinden von Nordamerika* (Philadelphia: Im Jahre 102 der nordamerikanischen Republik [1877]), 97].

<sup>15</sup>Ich meine jene Leute, welche sich nur einem Dutzend Vereinen oder Vereinchen anschließen in der Hoffnung, sich dabei Kunden zu erwerben resp. einen Vortheil für ihr Geschäftchen zu erringen.

<sup>16</sup>That similar arrangements were common in other German-American cultural endeavors seems confirmed by the fact that Karl Knortz finds it necessary to include in his very accurate summary of the decline of the *Turnvereine* toward the end of the last century ("Das Deutschtum in den Vereinigten Staaten," in *Sammlung gemeinverständlicher wissenschaftlicher Vorträge*, ed. Rudolf Virchow, NS 12, Hfte. 281/2, 58) the complaint that: ...dazu kam noch der Uebelstand, daß die meisten Vereine in ihren Hallen permanente Wirthschaften eingerichtet hatten, und da dieselben ihre Haupteinnahmequelle bildeten, dem Betriebe derselben häufig ihre Hauptthätigkeit widmeten. Dies führte dazu, daß bald reiche Bierbauer die auf Aktien erbauten Hallen in ihren Besitz brachten und dann natürlich die Turnvereine nach ihrer Pfeife tanzen ließen.

<sup>17</sup>*Die Anfänge der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung in Amerika* (Stuttgart: J. H. N. Dietz Nachfolger, 1907), 214.

<sup>18</sup>Der Sozialismus des amerikanischen Turnerbundes war mehr ein Name, als eine Vertretung wirklich sozialistischer Prinzipien. Eine proletarische Organisation ist diese Vereinigung nie gewesen, und was in ihr als Sozialismus zum Ausdruck kam, war ein Gemisch von bürgerlichem Radikalismus und unklarem sozialistischem Streben, das mehr im Gefühl, als in Einsicht und Erkenntnis seinen Ursprung hatte.

<sup>19</sup>2nd ed. (1933; rpt. New York: Dover, 1970)

<sup>20</sup>Johannes Gaulke, *Das litterarische Echo*, 4, No. 4 (November 1901), 231. "Kühnheit der Sentenzen" und "Kraft der Sprache"

<sup>21</sup>"R. R., Der arme Teufel (Ein Vergessener)," *Neue Freie Presse*, Morgenblatt, 16 December 1923, p. 2, col. 3: "in einem tadellosen, herrlich hinfließenden Deutsch, das vielen Zeitungsmännern, die zeitlebens im Mutterland unserer Sprache geblieben sind, ein strahlendes Vorbild sein