

Letter by Professor PERCY SCHRAMM  
Göttingen, August, 1938

I have known Professor K. for about a dozen years and have read probably about all that he has written.

His family expected him to go into business, but an inner compulsion turned him to scholarship and - as it turned out - by this step he found the way of life most appropriate to him. His first study was concerned with the Near East, which he learned to know during the war; from this field he was deflected later, but has through this knowledge still an advantage over 95% of all historians. For his richer development his acquaintance with Stefan George became decisive. The latter opened his eyes to great personalities and stimulated him to think through the great problems of history in original ways. In addition K. worked himself into the techniques of historical research and its different methodologies so deeply that his knowledge of these fields alone would assure him academic position. Herein he was aided by association with scholars such as P. Kehr, K. Hampe, F. Baethgen and others.

Thus equipped, he undertook a biography of Emperor Frederick II. Under preparation for many years, this appeared in 1927 as a volume of about 600 pages. This book attracted attention such as no post-war historical scientific treatise has won. Thousands of copies were sold; an English translation appeared; one planned for Italy was suspended for economic reasons. In the critical discussion of this volume K. participated by a successful defense of the entire nature of his method. In 1931 he published a supplementary volume of 300 pages demonstrating the range of the preparatory studies involved in his prior volume. This second volume is a mine of information for all students of the medieval empire. At the same time it demonstrates that K. has penetrated deeply into the history of adjoining countries, especially those of the West.

The biography of Frederick II brought K. an honorary professorship at Frankfurt, shortly raised to an ordinary professorship - an unusual event since K. had not previously gone through the procedure of habilitation. This was a recognition which, to the best of my knowledge, was approved by all colleagues, as fully deserved. In the time of pure academic activity, K. was able to engage his pedagogic qualities, which distinguish him as strongly as his scholarly qualities do. He looked after his students with great attention, worked out courses and seminars, and took active part in the life of the university. It was especially painful for him to abandon these activities which were unusually successful and belong so properly to his nature that without them he lacks the true expenditure of his personality.

In the course of the last years K. was able to work for a time at Oxford, where New College offered him "guest friendship". As man and scholar - as I knew from many a conversation I had there - he is kept in best remembrance. This time was very productive for him. An essay on Petrus de Vineia in England, one-time Chancellor of Frederick II, was published by the Austrian Institute. N. Holtzman in the *Historische Zeitschrift* characterized it justly as "very

penetrating." It will probably stimulate further English investigations. Of a manuscript, still unpublished, on the acclamations offered to the sovereigns I have made use in the *Archiv für Urkundenforschung* 1938. K. has completed a series of studies which he plans to issue under the title "English Studies." It is in the interest of science that these be issued at the earliest possible date (K. needs subvention to do so). I am convinced that the methods in which K. has pioneered and his original approaches will be received with interest in the English-speaking world, because these lead beyond existing viewpoints. It has been very advantageous for K. that, by his English sojourn, he was able to exchange ideas with Englishmen and also that he had occasion to give lectures to students. As the Dean of New College, the former British Secretary of Education, has related, these left an excellent impression.

In 1933 I spent six months at Princeton and thereby gained some insight into American university life. I am convinced that Professor K., aided by his knowledge of English and of English university life, will fit himself rapidly into the circle of an English or American university. With "inner passion" he will take up the teaching duties associated with such a post. On the basis of his far-reaching knowledge, of his interests which go far beyond the frame of history, of his exact methods, and of his original viewpoints he should exert a strong stimulus to students.

In closing I must emphasize that discussions with K., running through long years of mutual acquaintance, have provided me with an intellectual exchange that I prize and that at the same time I am thereby compelled to promise: K. will fit into every new circle of thoughtful people and will enrich it, because he is an upright, well-formed personality, to whom his many friends here will say farewell with real regret.