



Phot. Martin Höhlig, Berlin

In his latest work, Otto Arpke approaches more and more closely to the style of the French fashion illustrators. The material determines the style. It is a new kind of art-work, born only in our age, that allows the form of the product to be determined by the character of the object represented. Everywhere we find conscious parallels between the most various individualities engaged in the same branch of art. The material determines the style just as certainly as the artist himself. Nevertheless there is plenty of room for the manifestation of individuality. In spite of the apparently collective character of the work, the development of the whole is carried forward from one hand to another. One banner-bearer stands on the other's shoulders. We naturally except the large arm yof "also rans" who hover like crows on the highroads of art and live on the cast away crumbs. Arpke has a feeling for line which is both born and made. This accounts for the effectiveness of his compositions. He only uses color to accentuate the composition. It is interesting to trace Arpke's development. When I first met him, thirteen years ago, in Vilna, it was in war-time. He was an officier and I encountered him in his primitive surroundings. Although it was winter and very cold, he had pulled his stove to pieces and built it up again in brick with his own hands in accordance with his idea of beauty. The drawings which Arpke showed me at our first meeting were strongly influenced by Paul Scheurich. During the war and in spite of the war a new art movement established itself in Germany, especially in Berlin. Expressionism surprised everyone whose development had been retarded for five years by reason of the war. But, as must be the case with all creative natures, the enforced pause had bottled up strong spiritual forces which must necessarily seek an outlet. In one of the first great competitions which were instituted three months later for the best poster, Arpke was a threefold prizewinner. In the blatant period which followed upon Revolution and Inflation, the language of advertisement must also necessarily be particularly loud. Street advertising and the poster were to the fore at this period. Arpke developed a strongly individual poster style, especially well documented in his posters for the art printing