

AN amazing book in every sense is "Der Vorstoss zu Nahen Sternen" (Pushing up to the Nearer Planets) by Herman Oberth (Verlag R. Oldenbourg, Munich). A tremendous scientific project is here unfolded, based upon four laws:

1. Present mechanical developments permit of machines being built which can rise higher than the outer reaches of the earth's atmosphere.

2. A slight further development will permit such machines to attain velocities which—once they are immersed in ethereal space—will keep them from falling back upon the earth, and permit them to overcome gravity.

3. Such machines can be constructed in a way that will allow human beings (probably without injury to health) to travel upward in them.

4. Under certain conditions the construction of such machines would become profitable. The development of these conditions may be expected in the course of the next decade.

All this Oberth proceeds to prove by cold blooded algebraic engineering and chemical formulæ, and by clear cut engineering plans and designs. The book is intriguing and opens tremendous vistas, outdoing Verne and Wells, and adhering entirely to the scientific possibilities. Oberth proves that the earth will be able in turn to hoist new satellites into space which will circle about it like new moons—picture, for example, a huge mirror, composed of an iron network filled with glass—this artificial sun acting as a radiator and reflector of heat upon the polar regions, etc! All in cold blood—and all backed up by designs and formulæ. New worlds for old—new lamps for old! The book has not by any means been universally scoffed at.

A number of interesting new biographies have appeared, foremost an autobiography, that of the sixty year old Hermann Bahr, known outside Germany principally as the author of that successful comedy "Das Konzert". Bahr, who has written many an April play of smiles and tears, recently furnished the explanation of the mystic vein in his later work by becoming a Roman Catholic. In his reminiscences he dwells with particular pleasure upon the sunny days of his childhood, his happy school days, his first literary enthusiasms. These are followed by other charming pictures, memories of youthful ardors in Vienna, Berlin, Paris—and a pleasant if not very deeply psychological or exhaustive life story hurries to its end. The "Autobiography" is published by S. Fischer, Berlin.

Two musical biographies appealing to entirely different publics appear at once. The faithful adorers of Mozart may read "Mozart, His Life, His Personality, His Work" by Arthur Schurig (Insel Verlag, Leipzig), with twenty-two illustrations and three facsimiles. The name of Schurig, well known as a brilliant translator from the French, is a guarantee that the work is written with understanding and feeling. It is general in its appeal; not only the Mozart specialist or the technically musical, but all who have a soul for music will enjoy the book.

Opposite in subject as could well be is the biography of Erich Wolfgang Korngold, by Rudolf St. Hoffmann (Stephanson Verlag, Vienna). Korn-gold is only twenty-five, and yet he has amid storms of passionate denial and approbation finally achieved a position so secure in modern music that the time is ripe for just such a thoughtful study of the young man

and his work. Hoffman claims for his hero that his fame is founded not upon the modernism which has aroused so much dissension, but upon his essential and vital gift of music making.

Two biographies of Goethe are being well spoken of. One by Georg Witkowski, slurring lightly over the well known historical facts of Goethe's life, aims at being a spiritual biography tracing Goethe's line of development, in a sense a scientific biography, treating of Goethe as a natural phenomenon rather than as a living author. Karl Heinemann's "Goethe" is a book of hero worship after Carlyle's heart, excellently done. The same author publishes a delightful piece of hero worship along a side track—"Goethe's Mother", in which this very human and lovable woman is portrayed with reverent hand as the blessed mother of Germany's most honored national poet. All three books are published by Alfred Kröner, Leipzig.

A peculiarly fascinating volume on a branch of psychology is "Psychologie der frühen Kindheit" by William Stern (Verlag Quelle und Meyer, Leipzig). The author's wife kept exact diaries of the mental and moral development of her children, and her husband has given the results a scientific form. A truly remarkable book, and indispensable to all students of child nature.

It is natural enough that a people in the present situation of the Germans should be prone to turn to history for consolation; but one wishes that they would not invariably turn to the same period and to the same man; it would seem that the only period which they find of sufficient importance to treat historically is the age

of Frederick the Great. The reader, with astonishment and a sigh, discovers that a book with the misleading title "Geschlagen, Deutsche Tragödie in Sieben Stationen" (Defeated, German Tragedy in Seven Stations) (Seifert, Stuttgart), is not an epic play of the recent war, but one more Frederick the Great drama, with General Winterfeldt and Prince Wilhelm and Prince Heinrich and the army before Kolin, all according to pattern. But the book is worthy of attention, for its author is Hans Franck, whose "Godiva", played at the National Theatre in Berlin last year, attracted much notice. Then there are most interesting historical sidelights, such as the little revelations of Prince Heinrich's weaknesses made by the gruff old Winterfeldt. (It is doubtful, though, whether they would have been made to a common soldier, as Franck has it.) The psychological study of Prince Wilhelm, evidently the problem which initially engaged Franck, is well worked out, and the drama would doubtless be effective enough in practice, were the stage not saturated with the Frederick motive.

Ferdinand von Rayski, an artist of gentle birth, spent his days in pleasant travel from one nobleman's castle to another, painting family portraits, more because the sitters preferred an artist belonging to their own circle than because his great talent was recognized. Otto Grautoff, the distinguished critic, has now published a comprehensive study of the works of von Rayski, and assigns him a high place among the painters of his time. The book, splendidly written and richly illustrated, is published by the Grotesche Buchhandlung, Berlin.

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