

*Publishers' Teas, Paracelsus,
Picture Books*

THERE is unfortunately no room for doubt that the majority of German publishing houses are suffering from a kind of permanent crisis, which originally took its rise from the fact that since the beginning of the year and the much blessed and cursed stabilization of the mark, it is no longer possible for a publisher to reimburse the costs of a whole edition by selling a couple of dozen copies of a book to some admirer abroad. Publishers who had begun to rely to a large extent on foreign sales fell into an uncomfortable situation and only the inveterate German habit of buying books has saved their necks. The German public, however, especially the public of really literary tastes, is uncommonly short of money; and the enterprising publishers have schemed for a way to entice it out of its owners' pockets by means more subtle than a tempting display or even books with pages left open in a bookseller's window.

Something of the same appeal of psychology as is attempted with the open book lies behind the new idea of the "publishers' teas", of which Berlin has already experienced a round half dozen. Most of them have been instituted by small and as yet little known firms, exploiting young authors who have still to find an audience. But there have been a few good firms represented, such as Kiepenheuer of

Potsdam, who sent some of his famous authors to the front; the radical Malik Verlag; and the Sturm with its galaxy of young Futurists and Expressionists headed by the fiery eyed Herwarth Walden. The program of all these "publishers' teas" is the same — first a little talk by the head of the firm on the aims and ideals of his publishing, and then a series of young poets, dramatists, or essayists delivering extracts from their own works. Some of the more famous authors have allowed themselves to be represented by a professional reader or reciter.

The idea is no doubt a good one; it brings the author, reader, and publisher into closer union, and possibly the extracts heard have stimulated the sale of books; but this material end will probably be better achieved when the programs have become shorter and also the individual extracts.

Jakob Böhme, the shoemaker-mystic, a famous name familiar to Americans interested in philosophy, was born in Görlitz. Although his tercentenary is not quite due, the town decided to celebrate the festival at once. Philosophical societies, representatives of the town which claims Böhme as its most distinguished son, the shoemakers' guild, and other dignitaries laid wreaths upon the grave restored two years ago by two American admirers. Speakers traced the line of theological-philosophical thought from Saint Augustine by way of Böhme to Nietzsche, Stefan George, and Gerhart Hauptmann — a curious medley of authors. Another speaker said that Böhme was the link between "Ekkehard" and Goethe. Germans are never happy unless they can fit an author into some niche where his past and future development as a theory or a line of thought can be tabulated and catalogued. An interesting collection of Böhme relics,

manuscripts, pictures, and early editions had been arranged for the festival.

Professor Ottokar Fischer of the University of Prague has translated Goethe's lyrics into Czech and also a drama by Heinrich von Kleist, which will shortly be staged.

A scandal was expected to attend the first night of Shaw's "Arms and the Man" in Berlin. Bulgarian students had breathed dark threats. The manager wittily pointed out that Serbians and Austrians came in for their share of ridicule in this very play, and that in other plays of the wicked author English, French, and Ancient Romans fared no better. The students allowed their sense of humor to be aroused and the première passed off without the expected sensation.

The town of Hamburg, whose theatre was formerly self supporting, is this year to allow a grant of half a million marks. Leipzig has three state theatres, of which the opera and the theatre of serious drama were supported by the profits from the third, an operetta theatre. This arrangement is no longer possible in these lean times, and Leipzig's theatres are to cost the city 300,000 marks this year. Cologne means to dedicate 600,000 marks for the support of its two theatres. With figures like these to conjure with, it is no wonder that the theatre managers often dare to produce experiments, literary dramas, and other more artistic than profitable productions.

Annie Francé Harrar, the wife of the renowned natural historian R. H. Francé, whose work we recently discussed, has written an extraordinary book "Die Tragödie des Paracelsus" (The Tragedy of Paracelsus), published by Walter Seifert, Stuttgart-Heilbronn, to which she has given the subtitle "A Thousand Years of German Suffering". It is a book full of enthu-

siasm, conviction, prejudice — in a word, personality. It is a study of Paracelsus which begins with a picture of the primitive German in his primæval woods. This primitive German is for Frau Francé the only true German. She deplores the advent of "civilization" which destroyed the native old kinship of man and nature — turned the holy places into haunted spots, the wise women into witches and the old gods into devils. Frau Francé makes a fine fight for her husband's pantheistic philosophy of the return to communion with nature, away from the stifling atmosphere of metaphysics. Paracelsus is for her the misunderstood, persecuted, untimely born protagonist of these ideas — another phase of the German Faust-ideal. The root of the evil, according to her, lies and has always lain in the eagerness of the German to take on any new and foreign thought in preference to his own. Frau Francé sums up her axiom well: "It is dangerous for a people to assimilate ideas which do not arise from its own soul." Singular old prints illustrate this noteworthy book.

Emil Ludwig, famous as a Goethe expert, has written a little book of travel "Am Mittelmeer" (On the Mediterranean), published by Ernst Rowohlt, Berlin. It is astonishing to rediscover the literary expert and critic as an Impressionist essayist with an exquisite, just pleasingly precious, style, and a Sterne-like gift for the romantic, the sentimental, and the picturesque as he encounters them on his tour through Sicily, Troy and Athens and Alexandria and many another old and glamorous town. A book that wakes the red gods in the reader. Dr. Ludwig, returning to his familiar track, is to deliver a series of lectures on Goethe this winter at the Lessing Hoch Schule.

Fred Antoine Angermayer, a playwright of parts but as yet crotchety and unsure, writes of Georg Kaiser as a pioneer of the new theatre who by his revolutionary treatment of dialogue has accomplished the first definite step forward in theatrical history since Shakespeare — setting up speech above action, and making more perfect and definite the great abyss between theatre and film. Like all enthusiasts, he exaggerates; but there is truth in the point of view. Kaiser is undoubtedly the cornerstone of a new dramatic generation.

Alluring with all the magic of the forbidden is Hans Barth's Italian travel book "Osteria" (Verlag Julius Hoffmann, Stuttgart). It is a super guide-book, a guide, full of quips as befits the subject, to all the Italian inns from the Lake of Garda to Capri. The author has divided his Bacchan-tian reminiscences in every town into "wine" and "beer" restaurants, and it is astonishing how many beer restaurants, a large proportion bearing German names, are to be found in the land of the grape.

Hermann Löns, called the "Heide Dichter" because he wrote so much and so well of the heather country, has been dead ten years, and a new complete edition of his works is about to appear. Löns was very prolific — three new books, edited by Dr. Wilhelm Deimann, are about to appear, filled with sketches found among Löns's papers. A memorial made of great unhewn stones has been erected in the moorland loneliness where Löns found so much of his inspiration.

Picture books, full of beautiful photographs, text by experts, published by the Bavarian state and to be had at special rates by the authorities of the towns honored! Is this love of home or clever advertising? Perhaps

something of both. But the principal point of interest is the extreme beauty and fascination of these art books, which are published by Benno Filser, Augsburg. "Ancient Art in Bavaria" is the name of the series. Perhaps the number called "Die Unterfrankische Stadt" is the most fascinating, with its pictures like dreams of sunny old marketplaces, massive city gates, and wonderful valley towns, all massed tiled roofs and towers. There are volumes devoted to villages, to castles, ruined and otherwise, to "Cloisters of the Palatinate" — irresistible for the wanderer.

The Holbein Verlag in Munich has

brought out another kind of beautiful picture book — reproductions of ancient manuscripts, in black letter, with naive contemporary woodcuts in color — "Patient Griselda", "Æsop's Fables", Boccaccio's incredibly naive "book of famous women". Treasurable books, a pleasure to the eye and to the mind. Such ancient tales gain enormously from presentation in a contemporary setting — the reader experiences a faint flavor of the thrill which the reading of such legends in an original manuscript of the time can bring to the fortunate possessor of them.

ETHEL TALBOT SCHEFFAUER