

A SHELF OF RECENT BOOKS

HARDEN SURVEYS THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

By Charles Seymour

HERE, as one might expect, is a volcanic mass composed of scalding invective, encyclopædic information, historical half truths, political misinterpretation, and rattling good sense. As usual, Herr Harden thinks little of his reader; he pours forth his dynamic phrases, the power of which is still preserved in the translation,

apparently regardless of sequence and anxious merely to rid himself of their unspoken burden. Obscure allusions invade every page. Misspellings of proper names cannot but vex the student. The roughnesses of Harden's style and the frequency of awkward expressions which are so noticeable in his shorter articles have not been softened in this essay, which is of greater length and higher importance than most of his writings. But no matter how difficult, especially in its earlier portions, this



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MAXIMILIAN HARDEN

*Drawn from life for THE BOOKMAN by Ivan
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volume manifests with supreme force the virtues of Harden as political writer. If the historical allusions and illustrations are frequently obscure, they are always apt; if the subject matter at times is so diversified as to appear irrelevant, at the end it is knit into a solid thesis. The chief characteristics, of course, are courage and honesty; whether or not the reader agrees with Harden's conclusions, his admiration is compelled by the great journalist's scorn for all forms of cant, his willingness to look unpleasant facts in the face, and his determination to make the best of them. He hates futility and he despises whining.

Nothing illustrates his courage and his honesty better than the opening chapters of the translated edition, in which he begins by studying the policy of French statesmen after the defeat of 1871 and the attitude of the French nation toward them. Thiers made no attempt to evade the terms of the cruel treaty imposed upon France and no effort to shift the responsibility. Well would it have been for Germany, if she had after 1918 adopted the same attitude, avers Herr Harden. For by yielding to German demands, Thiers made possible the recuperation of France. "What political common sense suggests as the fit attitude for a vanquished people, oppressed by a treaty which they feel to be unjust, harsh, cruel, — is to be learned from the events of 1871."

There follows a development of his thesis that by imitating the French method Germany might have avoided the miseries of the past two years and might even now be on the high road to recovery. At any rate, evasion is profitless and complaint of treaty violation futile. Perform what is necessary and for emotion substitute common sense.

Bid the trumpeters of hatred, the courtiers of each national delusion be silent. Duty commands the statesman to find his way to the desire, the point of view of his opponent. . . . If the Frenchman did, as you have heard, from the wilderness of his worries let himself be misled into a detestably brutal attempt, still it will be no man's shame, but to every man's honor, to climb higher up the ladder of common sense than other men have.

It is by the lack of such common sense, Harden insists, that Germany has come to her present estate, and he sets forth to prove it by many vituperative pages in which he spares neither military nor political leaders of recent years. He shows that the army chiefs knew that the war was lost with the first battle of the Marne, but that instead of making peace before Russia, Germany's chief great market, collapsed and before the English pacifists, Grey and Asquith, left office, Ludendorff led the nation to utter defeat. "Painful as the surrender of Alsace-Lorraine might be, the Empire survives it." "But not the dynasty", cries Wilhelm: 'and if the Hohenzollerns must fall, let the Germany they erected fall with them.'" He shows also the futility and the pathos of the Franco-German duel after the war, which he regards as needless if only the political leaders will utilize reason in place of passion.

For France and Germany are natural economic allies, he believes, and it is upon their friendship that the political Europe of the future will be built. This is his final thesis.

One test of statecraft is to bring the reckoning for the Necessary within the total of the Possible; and the second to recognize today the necessity of the morrow and be in readiness for it. . . . Imperative alone is it to work in association with France; indispensable, because without that, neither of the two nations can fully utilize its industrial resources, because one alone cannot venture into competition with existing or future industrial empires; and further, because only that partnership

would prove the cell in which, out of which, the (at first economically) United States of Europe would develop.

It is an interesting prospect. The position of England, however, is not quite clear, and Harden's vagueness in this respect results, perhaps, from the capital fault of his essay. This rests upon a misinterpretation of British policy in the past and an ascription to British diplomats of a cleverness and subtlety which would certainly have surprised them. His failure to understand British history does not in any way detract from the soundness of the advice he gives his own countrymen.

Germany, France and England. By Maximilian Harden. Brentano's.