

*German Political Books and Other
Romances*

GERMANY'S exciting inner political turbulencies, the inextricable confusion of over a score of parties, the "eternal Janus-nature of the German spirit", as one writer puts it, is reflected in a number of interesting new arrivals in the book market, destined to wake the German to a sense of his political childishness and folly.

Foremost one might mention a thoughtful, illuminating, and inspiring book by Oscar A. H. Schmitz, published by Georg Müller, Munich, entitled "Brevier für Unpolitische". A few titles from various divisions of his book show its scope — "The Meaning of Democracy", "The Meaning of Aristocracy", "The Nature of Power", "Spiritual Bolshevism", "The Europe of the Future". As Oscar Schmitz is really a man of constructive as well as analytic mind — see his rejection of German partiality for purely specialistic education on the ground that it

unfits a man for the larger concept of practical life — his book is invaluable to Germans and exceedingly interesting for all other people who follow the intellectualism of the day on its stony way through chaos.

Heinrich Mann, the more radical of the two Mann brothers, unfortunately silent for some years as a novelist, has published a little volume of political speeches made on various occasions last year, under the general title "Diktatur der Vernunft" (Verlag der Schmiede, Berlin). "Reason", in Heinrich Mann's eyes, is always prone to stand, if not absolutely in the radical camp, at any rate with her ear in that direction; nevertheless, the book is full of wholesome truths and the frequent fireworks of expression to which this eminent stylist has accustomed us. A particularly good appraisal of ideal democracy is his speech in honor of the new constitution of Germany, known as the Constitution of Weimar.

A political book of deep interest, though only a translation, is Henri Guilbeaux's "Lenin", translated into German by Rudolf Leonhard. Guilbeaux, exiled and condemned to death on account of his political views, wrote the book in Berlin. It is a faithful and affectionate study, based on long personal acquaintance with the mysterious Russian leader. It is also published by Die Schmiede, Berlin, and rather horridly bound in white with the one word Lenin traced uncertainly in worried red across it, as though by a bloodstained dying finger!

It is interesting to note that Lloyd George's book "Is It Really Peace?" has just been published by Paul List, Leipzig, translated with an introduction by the former foreign minister, Dr. Simons.

Wilhelm Schäfer, equally well known as a stylist and an essayist of deep

spiritual content, and the author of that remarkable achievement, the "thirteen books of the German Soul", has just issued through Georg Müller, Munich, a book of "five letters to my people", entitled "Der Deutsche Gott". Particularly good is the clear exposition (at last!) of the real origin, meaning, and contrast between Classicism and Romanticism in Germany. The author's pellucid style and the beautiful printing of the book make its reading a great æsthetic pleasure.

The firm of Diederichs, Jena, specializes in folk legend. It is now publishing a series of legends collected by experts on each region from the actual peasants. The two first volumes "Schlesische Sagen" and "Böhmerwald Sagen" form an enormously rich mine for the lover and student of folk myths. The Silesian series, collected in a faithful labor of years by Will-Erich Peukert, goes back to legends of hoary ages before recorded history, stories of the old gods and demons worshiped in the woods long before Tacitus wrote of the German cults. Yet it also contains legends circulating in Silesia in 1917 and firmly believed by primitive villagers — of a vision of St. Hedwig which prevented the Russian soldiery from advancing into Silesia, and of peasant girls who foretold the fall of the Empire. A wonderful circle of peasant belief.

The Bohemian forest series, edited by Dr. Gustav Jungbauer, are still more wildly romantic and often gruesome, as befits the wild landscape in which they arose. Amusing for those who enjoy an intimate study of bygone customs and the old fashioned thoroughness of broad description is Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl's "Vom Deutschen Land und Volke", published in honor of the hundredth birthday of its author by Eugen Diederichs. Riehl, who died in

1897, is considered to be the most comprehensive and inspiring of the German *kultur-historiker*.

A strange young genius hides his unbeautiful private patronymic under the mysterious pen name of Klabund. His work appears in the press and in the magazines at all corners — here a delicate essay, there an exquisite fragment of verse. A book of stories appeared by him, a novel, attracting wide attention. But this young author loves the *tour de force*. His next achievement was a "History of German Literature in an Hour", a slim booklet which really can be read in about sixty minutes, and which yet gives an astonishingly comprehensive summary of this vast territory. The characterization, in a few succinct phrases, of the more modern authors in particular, is full of wit and wisdom. The next thing heard of the universal Klabund was a volume of lyric translations from the Chinese! Now he storms the book world with three books at once — a flowery, almond scented Chinese short story, "Der Letzte Kaiser", decorated with delicately naïve illustrations in the text by Erich Büttner and published by Fritz Heyder, Berlin; a whirling Napoleonic romance, "Moreau", published by Erich Reiss, Berlin; and his masterpiece to date, "Piotr", also published by Reiss. This remarkable historical romance of Peter the Great, a wide, sweeping, whirlwind picture of Peter's Russia, a thing of vivid single lines, illuminating an episode, a character, or a spiritual landscape in a single brilliant phrase, must have cost Klabund a tremendous mass of preparatory work. But it has all been swallowed, digested, compressed. We have only the perfect extract, no sign of pedantry or display of research, no tiresome historic verisimilitude, sup-

ported with dates and footnotes — a bright, barbarous tapestry, sewn with the most glowing colors is unrolled before us. The characters are as vital and hot blooded as though they lived in a naturalistic novel instead of being recreated from the pale chimeras of history. It is a book which cries for translation. Klabund himself has been spending the winter in Davos, and his many admirers hope that the life giving air will restore a body enfeebled by too much spirit.

Walter Hasenclever, who has never surpassed, nor quite again equaled his remarkable Freudian complex drama "Father and Son", has decided to put aside creative work altogether for three years and devote himself to the translation of Swedenborg's "Heaven and Hell" from the original Latin. He claims by this return to the original to have discovered new and much more profound meanings in Swedenborg's mysticism. The vow of creative asceticism is the rarest for an author to take, and it will be entertaining to see whether Hasenclever persists in his resolve, and what will be the literary result of the three years' abstinence.

Another interesting figure is that of Adolf von Hatzfeld, a subtle stylist whose books are published by Paul Steegemann, Hanover. "Die Lemminge" is a full length novel, "Franziskus", the stronger and more recent, a shorter work. Von Hatzfeld, still a young man, shot himself in his early twenties and became blind. In spite of this tragedy, perhaps partly because of it, his books are full of glowing nature description and he delights in pictorial images. The extraordinary strength of "Franziskus" lies in its autobiographical revelations of the feelings of the blind. It is a trifle hysterical in style, but possibly not more than is in keeping with the subject.

Another modern, stylistic short story writer, who has just published (Ernst Rowohlt, Berlin) a little volume under the engaging title "Concerning the Errors of Lovers", is Franz Hessel, but he will become more worthy of attention when he succeeds in detaching himself from his passion for an unreal sounding and Murgeresque artist's Paris.

Georg Kaiser has scored another popular success with his latest drama "Kolportage". He mocks at himself for choosing this impudently crass film plot of wicked counts, changeling children, noble young Kansas cowboys, and the fishwife mother of the young count turning up like a bolt from the blue on his twenty first birthday. Out of this impossible material Kaiser has made a splendidly witty satirical comedy, pitting the narrow, reactionary aristocrats against youth and democ-

racy — which naturally wins the day.

Otto Grautoff has discovered a new Otto Braun. Neither so young nor so intellectual as that prodigy, Bernhard von der Marwitz was yet remarkable enough. The letters from the battlefield written by this fiery young soul to his painter-comrade, Götz von Seckendorff, make at once fascinating and pathetic reading. For both of these enthusiastic natures, so full of youth and brilliant promise, fell victims to the war. Otto Grautoff has edited the letters with love and understanding. The book is published by the Sibyllen Verlag, Dresden.

The greatest sensation of the moment is the Ford book. All Germany is reading it and talking of it, and a literature, pro and anti Ford, is growing up about it, whereby the pros are at present largely in the majority.

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