

WHAT IS AMERICA? By Edward Allsworth Ross. 159 pages. Century.

What Is America? is the question that the census answers decennially, in many large and bulky volumes. Professor Ross has realized the unpopularity of these complete and authoritative statistics, and he has conceived the happy notion of engrossing a part of them and presenting them as a sociological analysis of the American nation. Where Professor Ross follows the census humbly, as in his demographic maps and tables, his little hand-book is not without interest for those unacquainted with the original sources; but it cannot be said that the comments that bind these charts together add very much to the illumination. In default of critical analysis Professor Ross offers opinions which have the defect of platitude without the merit of truth. "The federal government is erected upon the people, not upon the states." Is that a realistic analysis of the underlying community to the state? Professor Ross alleges that the monthly magazines which are published in New York or Boston "so far as local bias goes, might as well be edited on Pike's Peak." Does that touch off the preponderant influence the financial capital of America has had upon foreign and domestic policy by means of the periodical press? Again, in surveying the countryside the author observes that "typical of America is the independent farmer living on his own farm." How does this jibe with the statement four pages later that farm tenancy has increased from 25.6 per cent of all the farmers in 1880 to 37 per cent in 1910? Professor Ross openly set out to "vindicate and commend" the virtuous democracy alluded to in the Virginia Bill of Rights of 1776. It is hardly an act of piety to the dead to answer the question "What is America?" by glibly retailing what America is—not.

BISMARCK, By C. Grant Robertson. 539 pages. Holt.

No subject would make an easier polemic at this time than a life of Bismarck. But Mr. Robertson has the good taste to refrain from dusting his picture with patronizing excuses or pious recriminations, nor does he cheapen it by pointing the moral of Bismarck's career straight at the present day. The picture is first and foremost a portrait of the politician. But, as the politician rounds into form, we notice a sketch of the man taking shape behind the politician, and as the man gains in solidity, we see emerging an outline of the whole system which the man created. What was Bismarck's chief work? It was the replacement of sentimental politics by Realpolitik. In fine, it was the feat of lifting an old structure from crumbling foundations and setting it on more modern and much stronger ones. For Bismarck abolished the old absolutism grounded on dynastic whims

and replaced it with an absolutism grounded on the scientific exploitation of the people. He set the Prussian ruling class in an imposing edifice of which the reinforced concrete was the systematic coordination of industrial, commercial, and political power. Of that host of diplomats, politicians, and semi-divine-right princelings and potentates who played the mock-heroic game of the Balance of Power, Bismarck was the Hercules. No individual overcame him. The two reverses he met with were administered by great systems. The first reverse, inflicted by the Roman Church, was a check rather than a defeat. But the second, inflicted by the Imperial system he had created, was a knock-out. Mr. Robertson's work, based on insight and sympathy, provides ample data for a judgment on Bismarck's value to Germany and to the world. It is a judgment no more to be ignored by a German than by an Englishman or an American.