

Germany

THE cry engraved on the flaming red banners under which the German Republic was born on November 9, 1918—"Peace, Freedom, Bread!"—was a cry that resounded with terrible vehemence from the heart of Germany's young writers. The cessation of war let loose a multitude of mental and spiritual energies, intensified in Germany's case by the well-known spiritualizing effects of defeat. In spite of the catastrophic prices of paper and printing, new magazines, new books, new pamphlets flooded from the presses, new dramas and such as the managers had not dared to produce,

enjoyed the benefits of the abolition of the censorship. In time the first flood tide began to ebb and the current to flow more soberly. Since the organizing talent in Germany had concentrated itself principally in the circles which the war had discredited and thrown from power, the dreamers and idealists upon whom the Republic rested, naturally fell largely a prey to profiteers of every kind.

In serious literature, the most prominent note is revolt in every form and against every form. This is most conspicuous in Germany's vital and admirable drama. There is the very popular theme of the insurrection of the children of this generation, the sons of sword and flame, against the fathers of the last generation, whose comfortable, prosperous, blatantly purse-proud view of life paved the way for the horror—so say the sons. Walter Hasenclever, who is now bringing out a fine little literary magazine called "Menschen" (Mankind), may be regarded as one of the pioneers of this group. His drama "Der Sohn" (The Son) is the tragedy of a youth who, driven to desperation by parental sternness, is saved from parricide only by his father's timely apoplectic stroke. One may say that parricide has replaced adultery as the favorite among the seven deadly sins for dramatic treatment. Korngold's "Verführung" (Seduction) and Reinhard Sorge's "Bettler" (The Beggar) embody similar ideas, also the simple, strong drama "Predigt in Littauen" (A Sermon in Lithuania) by Rolf Lauckner. In "Dies Irae" by Anton Wildgans, a writer of deeply poetic dramas and beautiful lyrics of the Richard Dehmel school, the son is battered to pieces between the conflicting projects of his father and his mother for his future. This author has been

influenced here by Ibsen and the tragic married-life pictures of Strindberg.

The pacifistic writers, those whose revolt is against force in any form, constitute another large body among the younger men. Reinhard Goering has practically given up writing to become a futuristic painter of the most extreme school. He is a great loss to literature, but perhaps only temporarily. His powerful play, "Die Seeschlacht" (The Fight at Sea), really a dramatic poem, has for its only scene the turret of a battleship before and during a battle. The little group of sailors who are the only characters, scarcely change their positions during the whole play.

René Schickele, a native of Elsass, wrote a little masterpiece of a drama revealing the torn and divided soul of his native country, "Hans im Schnakenloch" (Hans in the Wasps' Nest), which was produced during the war—a fine act of intellectual tolerance on the part of the old régime. Since the Revolution Schickele has written a number of books in his fiery, nervous style—stories such as "Die Mädchen", "Meine Freundin Lo", and essays, "Schreie auf dem Boulevard". The strain of French blood in him gives movement and color to his use of German.

Hasenclever's wartime dramatic poem—it was called "The Saviour" and showed the prophet-poet struggling against the blind forces of power and statecraft—was produced soon after the Revolution in a little theatre without scenery. The other half of the evening was filled with a savagely brilliant little satire on revolutionary profiteers and opportunist republicans. At this time Hasenclever was known as the "political poet". But this satire was significant of his new trend. He had discovered that politics and poetry

are inimical and will not blend. In his new work he is devoting himself once more to the purely creative.

As a necessary balance-wheel to the wild republican poets stands the figure of Walter von Molo, cool, proud, dignified, a Prussian to the core, although Austrian by birth; he concentrates his really great talents on the glories of the past. A romance founded on the life of Schiller was followed by one on the life of Queen Louise, whom the Germans love for her diplomatic or rather feminine victory over Napoleon. A really fine piece of work, psychological to a degree, staccato, filled with the stress of the period, is his "Fridericus Rex", an historical romance of Frederick the Great.

Another of the youngest and most sensational geniuses is Kasimir Ed-

schmid, whom everybody reads and few can understand. His romance "Die Achaten Kugeln" (The Agate Balls), with a heroine named Daisy and a certain torrential Americanism as the Germans picture Americanism—all hurry and splendor—, was the sensation of the last book season. He has just published "Die Fürstin" (The Princess), a volume of strange, exotic short stories. The style, though rich and crowded, is not so difficult and expressionistic as in his earlier book. This is the closing passage of "The Adventurous Night".

This was the white, adventurous night, full of Appearances that strode as between magical mild icebergs, which we, still more ghostly, beat underfoot with the cavalry drums until at last, sweet morning, silvery-red, recoiled from our bent brows and set us free.

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