

Books Reviewed—Fact and Fiction

After the maudlin, self-centred love-letters that have been hurled at the reading public,

A German
Woman's
Love Letters.

—letters with no reticence or dignity in their love avowals, egoistic, passionate, unbridled emotions pouring through superlative adjectives and eccentric, improper nouns—it is a delight to read these love-letters * of one civilized human being to another, letters written from mind to mind as well as from heart to heart. They are not penned by a savage or a servant or a nervous prostrate or a degenerate. Good taste is not offended by loss of self-control. The writer is a nomad whose home is the wide, wide world and who, knows and loves the maps of Asia and America as well as her own European map.

And yet these letters are love-letters, sent from a woman's bruised heart to the man she loves, who loves her, from whom she is separated by Fate. The last letter is the plaintive cry of a broken heart, and the reader closes the book with a sentiment "too deep for tears."

It is small wonder that the book has had an unusual success. In Germany, where it was published last year, it has been through sixty-four editions within fourteen months.

* "The Letters Which Never Reached Him." Dutton.

The brilliant author, although her name is not given, is, it is whispered, well known in Berlin, where she was called the Pocket-Venus of the Court. If the "guess" is correct, this charming woman has been recently met in New York. The English edition was printed in England in the early summer, and has later been published on this side of the water.

The author wrote the English version as well as the German, and, in spite of the occasional misuse of her prepositions, shows that she has achieved our language if she were not born to it.

One is reminded of those delicate winged creatures who alight by instinct where their antennæ can best touch and gather food. Food for thought this author gathers for us in her butterfly flights and busy-bee pauses, honey of Admettus. Her humor is benign, not malign, and her letters from New York are full of running wise and witty comments on us Americans and our ways. Take this extract: The scene is the dinner-table of a *nouveau riche*, at which was present "a second cousin who had only just been transplanted to the O'Doyle millions. When champagne was served he got quite excited and called out wildly: 'Drink, drink, gentle-

men, whilst it's fizzing!' " One of the letters, dated Tuxedo, has this discriminating criticism. (I quote at some length because of the value of the picture of the charming Park from the outsider's view-point.) "Tuxedo Park once more shows to me that the Americans thoroughly understand exclusiveness, but scarcely appreciate solitude. They require plenty of other people and acquaintances—of course only carefully chosen ones, who in every sense are socially desirable. *In this need of society and dread of being alone, they are not unlike children.* (The italics are mine.) But if Madame Cosmopolite is often French in precision, she becomes all German in sentiment, in resigned philosophy, in the delightful chapter in which she returns, a wanderer, a weary woman, to the home of her childhood. Garzin. now become a show-place for tourists.

M. M. MASON.