

German Books and Translations

THE improvement, the so called "stabilization" of the German exchange, enabling publishers here to buy foreign books for German rights, is resulting in the publication of a number of translations of interest to Americans. For example, the firm of Brockhaus in Leipzig, whose fine new compact Cyclopædia in four volumes has just been completed, has issued Stefansson's "The Friendly Arctic" under the title "Länder der Zukunft", with delightful blue end papers decorated with little symbols of Eskimo life. Brockhaus also publishes a book by Sven Hedin, "Verwehte Spuren", an account of the life of a famous traveler of the seventeenth century, Bengt Bengtsson Oxenstierna, a Swede who ranged up and down Germany, over the Brenner Pass to Venice and through the Orient, keeping a most alluring diary to illuminate his long vanished tracks. For those who know his route today, the pastime of com-

parison is full of the thrill of rediscovery.

The second and third volumes of Ray Stannard Baker's "Memoirs and Documents of Woodrow Wilson" have just been published by Paul List, Leipzig. Rütten and Loening, of Frankfurt-on-Main, issue in an inspired translation by Emerich Reeck a volume of Lord Dunsany's beautifully wild legends under the title "Die Seele am Galgen". Which naturally leads up to another very different gallops. The house of Gustav Kiepenheuer, Potsdam, publish the strangest of all the translations—the "Diaries of the Sansons", the Parisian executioner's family, newly revised from a contemporary translation. These diaries cover a period from 1685 to 1847 and furnish a cultural document of peculiar historical significance; but its success is of course mainly due to a certain perversion of taste in the present day reading public. A similar appeal is made by the extremely fascinating volume of Professor Houben, "Verbotene Literatur" (Ernst Rowohlt, Berlin). The names of most well known German authors, from Heinrich Heine to Hermann Sudermann, occur in this comprehensive biographical anthology of the battle with the censor in Germany; and yet there is so much material that a second volume is already in preparation, containing as many famous names as the first. Most of these quarrels, which sometimes ended in a triumph for the author, took place on political grounds.

Sinclair Lewis's "Babbitt", to return to translations, is just about to appear, also John Dos Passos's "Streets of Night".

Hanns Fischer, whose epoch making book "The Riddle of the Depths" was reviewed here recently, has published the eagerly awaited "Welt-Wenden",

the history of the great floods of the world, explained and illuminated in the light of his amazing theory of the "Ice of the Universe". The age old flood stories, the account of the Biblical Flood, the Indian legends and picture stories, the epic legend of the destruction of Atlantis, the cradle of all modern civilization, the mystery of Easter Island—one by one the old stories glow into life and fit themselves, as bits of truth colored and shaped by the myth, into the mosaic of Fischer's planetary theory.

Voigtländer of Leipzig publishes this book of destiny, as well as Dr. Fischer's affectionate biography of a great German naturalist: "R. H. Francé, The Book of a Life". Francé is the founder of the theory of the unity of all life and the interdependence of plant, animal, and man—biotechnics. He is a pioneer in new paths of natural history. In Hanns Fischer he has found a biographer-disciple to whom the man and the theories are almost equally admirable.

An interesting examination of war psychology and war hysteria from the German point of view is "Der Massenwahn, seine Wirkung und seine Beherrschung" (Mass Suggestion, Its Effects and Their Control) by Kurt Baschwitz, published by Oskar Beck, Munich.

A book for educationalists in the widest sense is Georg Förster's "Geschichte und Persönlichkeit" (History and Personality), published by the Sibyllen Verlag, Dresden. It makes a determined stand against all modern attempts to reduce the human spirit to a detail in a whole, a cog in a wheel, an obedient unit in an ordered community. Förster is all for the free development of the essential personality in every man; he berates the family, the school, the university, the

office, for their various and combined attempts to extinguish the individual and produce the norm. He sets up the conflicting types of the "historic" and the "anti-historic man", and demands that everyone strive to develop his essential "I" to its fullest and freest form, without wasting vital energy on the useless and pernicious effort to cramp the spirit into a ready-made cage. A free, full, and fine book for teachers, students, parents, and all who protest against the tyranny of the norm.

The well known essayist, Frank Thiess, has written an argumentative, provocative, and very vital book entitled "Das Gesicht des Jahrhunderts" (The Face of the Century). In the form of a number of open letters to prominent men of the day, each a leader in his own particular branch of life, Frank Thiess takes up his own highly individualized attitude toward all modern culture. On the film he addresses Paul Wegener, on architecture Hans Poelzig, on education Gustav Wyneken, etc. The two finest and most profound essays are perhaps those on journalism (to Theodor Wolff, editor of the Berlin "Tageblatt") and on learning (addressed to Rector Gustav Röhde of Berlin University). In the latter he unfolds a brilliant polemic against the specialization of learning, carried today to such limits that research for research's sake has practically superseded all real creative attempt to become wise (in contradistinction to the common attempt to acquire learning). Journalism, that monster without a soul, delivered over to the preservation of "interests", Thiess calls "the Church of our age", and compares the brilliant editors of the great journals to the mass molding preachers of the Middle Ages. But he complains that whereas the preach-

ers at any rate had above them an image of God which they banalized, the journalistic giant and molder of the mob has nothing above him but the "interest" which is one today and another tomorrow. This is going it aggressively, the stimulating character of these onesided discussions is infectious. An anthology of the replies, if they could be induced, would also make interesting reading. The book is published by J. Engelhorn, Stuttgart.

A queer, disorderly novel, leaping untidily from past to present, from one person to another, making strange confusion of thought and reality, yet lit with the spark of greatness, is "Der Bürger" (The Citizen) by the prominent pacifist, Leonhard Frank, famous for his "Der Mensch ist Gut". The publisher is the Malik Verlag, Berlin. The book has, of course, since Frank is the author, strong moments where social injustice, pity for the proletariat, come to the fore, or where the cowardice and hesitancy of the citizen soul, cushioned in the comfort of inherited ideas, are vigorously cudgelled. The end, however, is peaceful. A remarkable book.

A. de Nora, whose clever and witty short stories and stylistic romances gave only here and there a hint of the poet, has written a verse cycle, handsomely bound in black and gold, which discloses him as a poet of real talent. The book, called "Madonnas" and published by L. Staackmann, Leipzig, is a series of studies of motherhood in many phases and many situations. It contains very strong dramatic work, and is full of a profound, passionate poignancy which shows that this usually *mondain* writer is capable of exalted emotion and wide, warm human feeling.

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