

riette Roland-Holst is looked upon as the eminent poet in the Netherlands today. But her poems, while perfect in form and filled with vivid imagery and imagination, might be called practically Socialistic tracts. She is an ardent Socialist and feminist, the leader of the Dutch Marxian party. She sings:

Ik heb in droom gezien een dag van  
bliejheid,  
De vrouwen ademen de lucht der vrijheid.

(I have seen in a dream a day of joy  
When woman shall breathe the air of freedom.)

But her song is not only for woman, it is for all humanity. She goes back to the dawn of life and marks the slow evolution of man; his first rude mastery of agriculture, his taming of the animals, and the manner in which he learns to sail upon the waters with the help of wind and tide. Finally, universal freedom, the last and most glorious flower of civilization, is attained.

But it is our tendency to grow weary of a single mood. Its sustained sublimity seems so far removed from all human and personal emotion. Henriette Roland-Holst writes of suffering and struggle, but they are viewed from afar with something of the aloofness of the chorus of a Greek tragedy. Yet she is never tragic; she stands as an exponent of universal and undying optimism.

But optimism, as we have seen, is not a general characteristic of Dutch writers; they often sound the depths of suffering and despair. However, it is humanity's way to seek eternally after something better than it has known, like Van Eeden's *Kleine Johannes*. Perhaps this tendency accounts for the wide popularity of Henriette Roland-Holst. Like Hope

who was caught in the bottom of Pandora's chest, she represents a human need to offset the gloom which her contemporaries see and which adherence to truth forces us to acknowledge has all too often a basis in reality.

AGNES SYMMERS

### *Notes from France*

I SAID last month that we would turn to the novelists. The first one I have in mind is not French, but Swiss. He edits the "Revue de Genève", perhaps the best international periodical of the continent, and his name is Robert de Traz. Three years ago, a first novel of his, "La Puritaine et l'Amour", showed him a trained psychologist and a careful writer. His latest book, "Fiançailles" (Betrothal), shows more. Robert de Traz has now his place among our leading novelists. That part of Switzerland where French is spoken, and which includes Geneva and Neuchâtel, has been particularly rich in prose writers. Without going back to Topffer and the delightful adventures of Monsieur Vieuxbois, modern French literature owes to Switzerland such novelists as Edouard Rod, Ramuz, de Traz. This is perhaps comparable to the part played in French letters by modern Belgian poets: Rodenbach, Van Lerberghe, Maeterlinck, and Verhaeren.

Also outside the limits of France proper is the place where the brothers Marius and Ary Leblond were born. They are countrymen of Joseph Bédier, of Parny, and of Leconte de Lisle, and come from the Ile de la Réunion—the old Ile Bourbon, near Madagascar. Their new novel, "L'Ophélia, Histoire d'un Naufrage", has its setting in the stormy channels of the Indian Ocean,

the madreporic islands haunted by strange races of birds; and it tells of the stormy passions of three men thrown into the roaring stream of adventure! More books will be born under the sign of Joseph Conrad.

The present year has seen two novels by Jean Schlumberger, "Un Homme Heureux" and "Le Camarade Infidèle", which is just out. This last book illustrates a problem which must have been frequent in the years following the war. A man and a woman are brought together by their common worship for a dead hero, and that worship is also the obstacle to their acceptance of a new passion. Slowly, they evolve from the proud refusal to follow their inclination to a more sincere and probably more courageous attitude. The story tells how it is sometimes easier to be heroic, unyielding, and negative than to accept the changing duties, the rising responsibilities of an ever renascent life. Jean Schlumberger was better qualified than anyone for this delicate analysis. Readers of his "Inquiète Paternité" do not forget the exceedingly tactful art of this novel, where the essence and the very reality of paternal feeling was discussed with a frankness and clarity rich in sentimental revelations. The Vieux-Colombier has played "La Mort de Sparte" by Schlumberger, a dramatic essay inspired by Plutarch, written before the last war and full of almost prophetic scenes. What was more comparable to the vanity of German invasion than this nightly entrance of the Macedonian king into the abandoned streets of Sparta, and his disgust and discouragement in having captured only a few dozen miserable houses, while the spirit of the conquered city had escaped and remained ready for everlasting resistance?

Another noble piece of work, of those that never will meet popularity but are the stone and mortar of which a great literature is built, is "La Conquête de la Joie" by Raymond Schwab. Not a novel; rather a series of well connected prose poems, not unlike the best lyrical prose of André Suarès. A kind of "Song to Myself" in which the thirsts and the joys play a sometimes tragic, sometimes triumphant fugue. There is an episodic portrait of King Louis XIII, a hitherto unknown and impenetrable figure for historians and analysts, which is as original as it is surprisingly powerful.

Our old friend Duhamel brings out a charming book of which his two little children are the heroes. It is called "Les Plaisirs et les Jeux". France seems to be rich, at present, in books concerning children. I don't mean books written for children. Most grown up people ignore the difference. Editors, especially, and publishers seem utterly incapable of seeing it. Again and again I have seen such books as "Caillou et Tili" by Pierre Mille, "Mon Petit Trott" by Lichtenberger, and even "Le Petit Pierre" classed as "juvenilia". It is so convenient to have classes! The trouble is that these are very bad "juvenilia", although they are excellent books on children. But this is too subtle for grown ups. . . . Only wait till we compile a "grownupiana" of all the nonsense formulated by the old on the subject of the young! Duhamel would be specially qualified for the job, as he has already created the character of Barnabé, the man-who-does-not-understand-children. We all have a revenge to take against Barnabé and his kind. I hope Duhamel will drag him on the stage some day.

Max Jacob exerts a growing influence. Jacques Porel, in "Feuilles Libres", Paul Morand, in the "Nouvelle Revue Française"—two representative "young" writers—greet him as a master. His curious little "Cabinet Noir" is just a series of letters written by people belonging to the provincial little bourgeoisie. The prodigious accurateness of the style—I was going to say: of the *pastiches*—is something uncanny. The "commentaries" following the letters and tending to rehabilitate that little bourgeoisie long despised by artists, are of a humorist, a Christian, and a great writer all in one.

PIERRE DE LANUX

#### German Book Tidings

**R**ICHARD DEHMEL, the German Tennyson, one of the most important figures in German lyric poetry of the last generation, died last year. Of late years he had devoted himself to drama, for which he had, like Browning, only a poet's half talent. His letters have now been published in a thick volume by S. Fischer. They are in many ways far more fascinating than his poetic work—wonderful letters, containing all the flower of a deep and rich personality. Dehmel was one of those men who give themselves liberally in their correspondence, revealing processes of mind, emotion, flashes of wit, and impulses of thought enough for an essay. Poets do this more readily than prose writers, partly because of a natural expansiveness, partly because the prosaist is always haunted, even if subconsciously, by the thought that he is squandering good copy. Dehmel, moreover, was acquainted with most of the important literary figures of

his time. There are letters in the book to Arno Holz, Hugo von Hoffmannsthal, Gerhart Hauptmann, Johannes Schlaf, Detlev von Liliencron, Thomas Mann, Hans Thoma, Max Klinger, and many others. A fine feast of occasional reading.

Germany is fixedly faithful to her classics. A reviewer in a literary monthly sits down and makes a wholesale meal of the "Goethe-Schriften" that have drifted into the office in the course of a couple of months. There are forty-nine of these new publications, ranging from new lives of this master, accounts of his various travels, his marriage, his other affections, truly German treatises such as "Goethe's Theory of Knowledge in its Modern Significance"—to new editions with important introductions and the Year Books of the various Goethe Societies. It is really doubtful if either America or England could make such a showing of Shakespeariana even if given a year to collect.

Wiesbaden has christened an art exhibition "Romantic Painting in Wiesbaden", and the opening was accompanied by lectures and celebrations intended to illuminate the romantic idea in authorship, music, and *Weltanschauung*, in its relation to "romantic painting". Two well known literary men, Wilhelm Schäfer and Herbert Eulenberg, lectured upon the romantic idea, endeavoring to define, coordinate, and relate it. Schäfer, a man of deep learning, followed the idea of the romantic in art back to the days of the Greeks and Romans and up to the days of Goethe. The young, still unpaganized Goethe who seems to us, with his "Sufferings of Werther" and "Elective Affinities", the very concept of sentimental romanticism, once uttered the words: "The classic is healthy, the romantic unhealthy."