

us to flee the distractions of the crowd and think. He avers that you can have a jolly good time in that way.

Knut Hamsun's "Segelfoss Town" is merely a continuation of what Hamsun has been doing for precisely forty years: showing that so called progress may mean retrogression. He has written here a jointless epic in which the talk goes on forever in order to prove that such a creation of civilization as, say, canned beans may give people more leisure than they had when the beans had to be hand picked but it is not making people any wiser or happier. If possible, Hamsun contends, these labor saving contraptions are teaching the run of mankind those lessons of idleness which, having been learned, result in ignorance and decadence.

The soundness of his view may be judged from an idea expressed in this, his latest novel to be imported. He is discussing the upper classes in Norway, the mental aristocrats. He says: "They wear glasses, a sign that as learning poured into their brains, it sucked out the sight of their eyes — they cannot see." The theory does not work well in Hamsun's own case; and if it does he must have been born with wisdom in his very pap. For he has been addicted to glasses ever since he was a street car conductor in Chicago. Then it was that mist would settle on them, in the winter time, and make it hard for him to see the street numbers.

In Hamsun in general there is something of Rousseau, much of Dr. Decroly, more of many of our educators who lead, and still more of the contemporary student. The latter, like the characters of "Segelfoss Town", believe in "progress". They are as eager to get hold of thought saving devices as Hamsun's Per Bua was to stock up his Segelfoss store with readymade aprons

and bottled chowchow. If you think the student of today is to be blamed for this state of affairs, withhold your censure. Blame rather his elders who have talked him into talking *about* things.

But who knows? Possibly there is more than one Spinoza tucked away even now in the faculties of philosophy of our greater institutions. If so, by all means let us hear these rather than the one who, after having been hounded all over Europe by other "philosophers" merely because they chanced to disagree with him, died an obscure and welcome death at The Hague in 1677.

ALLEN W. PORTERFIELD

The Decroly Class: A Contribution to Elementary Education. By Amélie Ham-aïde. With a Preface by Ed. Claparède. Translated from the French by Jean Lee Hunt. E. P. Dutton and Company.

The Life of Solitude. By Francis Petrarch. Translated with introduction and notes by Jacob Zeitlin. University of Illinois Press.

Segelfoss Town. By Knut Hamsun. Translated from the Norwegian by J. S. Scott. Alfred A. Knopf.

Notes from France

LÉON BRUNSCHWIG, one of the leading philosophers of France, is best known for his perfect edition of the complete works of Pascal. He now devotes a book of 200 pages to the latter — "Le Génie de Pascal" (Hachette) — and no one is better qualified to do this task.

A foreign student of French thought will never pay too much attention to Pascal and to the controversies which he has provoked, and still provokes. Pascal lived through the great crystallization of French culture which took place toward the middle of the seventeenth century. He contributed to that crystallization as a scientist, as a debater, and as a religious thinker.

He fought the Jesuits in his time and they fought him back; even today such a master as Paul Valéry attacks his authority and discusses his genius. Indeed, with his unfinished, many-sided work, Pascal breeds discussion and dissent, but of the loftiest kind and among the best minds of his time and of ours.

In his admirable "*Méthode des Classiques Français*", Paul Desjardins, after a study on Corneille and one on Poussin, explained "*Les Règles de l'Honnête Discussion selon Pascal*". It was, needless to say, written about "*Les Provinciales*". Léon Brunschwig reviews not only this aspect of the hero but also Pascal's genius as a mathematician and a physicist, and, finally, "*Pascal's Religious Experience*", in the light of modern philosophy. As for the last thirty pages, on "*Pascal's Solitude*", they carry us very far into the "secret" of such a mind; and I am tempted to say, although Asia is not mentioned, that they reveal more about Eastern philosophy (so highly religious and based on solitary experience) than many big books devoted to that subject. But this would take us too far.

Let us quickly pass to another extreme. "*L'Honorable Partie de Campagne*" by Thomas Rancat (*Nouvelle Revue Française*) is not a book of philosophy and does not pretend to be more than a very clever, very humorous description of up to date Japan. Yet it is not devoid of a certain wisdom and of certain hidden conclusions. "East is East and West is West" seems the most obvious of them. A series of aspects of the same insignificant adventure, told by different people, that's all. A European takes a young Japanese girl to the country, not without selfish designs. The politeness of his Japanese hosts prevents him from ever being left alone with her. This is the story;

but the picture of actual details, and the psychology of the Easterner, are so keenly, abundantly, and humorously brought before our eyes that the book has been one of the great literary delights I have experienced this year. I wonder how little expurgation it would need to go into English.

The same publisher gives us "*Marlborough s'en va-t-en Guerre*", a new play on an old popular song, but a play with a most irreverent tendency. Here the legendary captain is shown to be a coward, a profiteer, a brute, and still worse. He is killed by a bullet in his back as he tries to gallop away from the battlefield. The story is brought back by his page, who is his rival in love. This noble soul (the page, I mean) feels it impossible to tell the nasty truth now that his enemy is dead. So Marlborough becomes a hero. And Marcel Achard, the successful author, inclines to believe that this is the way history often is written. A friend of mine said: "This play ought to be appreciated by ex-service men." I don't know exactly what he meant.

Non-literary shelf. Payot, the publisher, is about to give translations from English into French of three very important works dealing with international affairs. They are Bowman's "*The New World*", Lothrop Stoddard's "*The Rising Tide of Color*", and Wells's "*Outline of History*". Besides, Payot republishes a remarkable study by Dr. Legendre, called "*Tour d'Horizon Mondial*", mostly a survey of Asiatic affairs (the author having resided for many years in western China and traveled all through the Orient). There are considerations about Japan, Russia, Germany, and the British Empire which are well worth reading and meditating.

Joseph Conrad, who knew more about French modern writers than do

many French critics, was extremely appreciated and admired in France. The "Nouvelle Revue Française" did for him what it had done for Charles-Louis Philippe and for Marcel Proust, devoting an entire number to articles written about him, correspondence and posthumous works of his. André Gide and G. Jean-Aubry, who translated Conrad, and Chevrillon, Larbaud, Jaloux, Ramon Fernandez, J. Kessel, were among the principal contributors to this number, which also contained articles by John Galsworthy, Cunninghame Graham, Estaunié, Saugère, and others.

PIERRE DE LANUX

What's Doing in Germany

FRITZ VON UNRUH, scion of an old aristocratic family, son and grandson of soldiers, and now for many years leader in the forefront of militant pacifism, has written an important new book in the service of the great cause of mankind. "Flügel der Nike, Buch einer Reise", published by the Frankfurter Sozietätsdruckerei, might in other hands have been only one of the many travel books. In his hands it has become a spiritual document of high significance. He has sublimated and individualized his material; memories, impressions, discussions, results of visits to and talks in Paris and London. Out of the chaos of the present he sees the dream of the future dimly arising. "We must be the engineers of peace!" cries von Unruh; and in another mood: "Let us always try to be someone's elder brother." Winged victory, winged peace — of the few men whose active ardency really brings the ideal nearer to realization, von Unruh takes a place of honor.

Professor Lujo Brentano, famous far

beyond the borders of his native land as a prophet of democratic ideals of social justice, has just celebrated his eightieth birthday. All the camps of acrid German public thought have joined to honor the venerable leader, whose energy is unabated despite his age.

Emil Lucka, a novelist far above the average, and author of "Frontiers of the Soul", a noteworthy attempt to found a modernized psychology, has now written a most thought provoking book intended in a fashion to serve as a counterblast to the pessimism of Oswald Spengler. It is entitled "Urgut der Menschheit" (Man's Early Beliefs), published by the Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart, and is an attempt to follow the origin and course of mankind's belief in the myth through the rationalistic period of the present, when the feeling of communion with the spiritual forces of nature is practically extinct, to a future which he predicts when this "primæval inheritance of man" as he calls it will attain a new renaissance. It is this confidence which sets him in a position of sharp opposition to the ideas of Spengler. The question is one for posterity to decide.

German towns frequently contain several well preserved specimens of the old square towers, furnished with walls of immense thickness, which formed part of the wall encircling every mediæval city, or served purposes of storage. Many of these old erections are today stronger than a modern house — and far more picturesque. In such a tower, left standing in the up to date city of Frankfurt-am-Main, Fritz von Unruh is to live. He has a particularly romantic tower, with five turrets, dating from the fifteenth century.

Elisabeth von Heyking has died of a stroke. This bare fact leaves nobody