

LIFE, LETTERS, AND THE ARTS

SCHOLARSHIP AND THE FALLING MARK

In all countries where the exchange balance is extremely unfavorable, science and scholarship, which even in wealthy America often have a sufficiently bad time of it, are seriously hampered.

The *Vossische Zeitung* of Berlin has undertaken a survey of the situation in the capital of the Reich. 'One reads of relief measures and foreign assistance on behalf of science, and reaches the facile conclusion that its condition has been much improved,' says the editor. 'Answers to the question that we have put to the directors of the chief institutions of learning and research in Berlin indicate clearly in what a doubtful position science really finds itself. If assistance in greater proportions than hitherto is not provided, the danger increases that many a famous course of study will within a few years die out in Germany for lack of young blood.'

Among the institutions at which inquiry was made are the Botanical Gardens, the Egyptian Seminar of the University of Berlin, the Institute for Cancer Research, the Seminar for Christian Archæology, and learned bodies dealing with such varied subjects as geology, German history, German maps, dentistry, Jewish archæology, and English literature.

At the same time, a careful survey of the actual reports of the heads of these institutions indicates that the characteristic enthusiasm, *Gründlichkeit*, and voluminous theses of the German are by no means in danger of disappearing from the face of the earth.

In the English Seminar at the University of Berlin — over which the

celebrated philologist, Alois Brandl, presides — the total number of students is still about three hundred, as compared with from three hundred and sixty to three hundred and eighty in ordinary times. None of the institutions appears to see any immediate prospect of suspending its work entirely, although they are all inevitably handicapped by the adverse exchange, which makes it extremely difficult to keep in touch with the progress of investigation outside of Germany.

Perhaps the most seriously handicapped of all is the Institute for Cancer Research. As an example of its difficulties, Professor Dr. Ferdinand Blumenthal, the Director, gives some prices of the animals necessary for investigation. A mouse costs a thousand marks, a rat three thousand. Experiments on rabbits are almost impossible, not only on account of the cost of the animals, but also because of the extreme expense of feeding them.

The Reichsamt für Landesaufnahme (National Survey) has been compelled to confine its work to maps of most immediate value, and its chief, Lieutenant-General D. Weidner, expresses the fear that the long break in its work during the war, followed by the present difficulties, will lead to the decay of its triangulation system. Its staff has been greatly reduced, but it is assisted by many German topographers who give their services without any pay whatever. The Kaiser Wilhelm Institut für Physik has no buildings or equipment to keep up and concerns itself solely with the administration of a fund for the support of scientific investigation in theoretical and experimental physics. Before the war, the

Institut enjoyed a yearly income of 75,000 marks. In the past year it had 300,000, which, however, represented only 1000 gold marks. Help from abroad, however, will enable it to dispose of 22,000,000 marks, or 4400 gold marks, in the coming year.

While the German scientists are in difficulty, it is worth noting that the invaluable English *Zoological Record* has troubles of its own. There is only one other bibliographical guide to zoological literature in the world, the German *Archiv für Naturgeschichte*, which is nine years behind and of very little use to an investigator who wishes to be strictly up-to-date. It is therefore of peculiar importance to zoological research that the *Record* should be kept up. The cost of preparation and printing is £1900 a year, and the sum received from sales and subscriptions is about £800. The Council of the London Zoological Society is recommending that the Society shall not undertake any further volumes without substantial assistance. The British Museum is supporting the appeal for assistance; Lord Rothschild, whose services to entomology have been very great, is also supporting it, and efforts are to be made to secure contributions from scientific societies and other bodies.

✦

THE MORAL OF STAGE MACHINERY

MR. EDWARD SHANKS, assistant editor of the London *Mercury*, a poet and also a dramatic critic, who was questioning the value of the most recent advances in stage lighting a few weeks ago, again relieves his soul on the subject of stage machinery in the London *Outlook*. Mr. Shanks's standing as a critic, as well as his unusual ability to see two sides of a question, makes his views worth heeding:—

'After all, it has never been possible

to despise the cinematograph as a birth of the fertile mind of man, though it has always been possible to doubt whether man could ever adequately express his feelings by this means. Mechanical toys are vastly entertaining: it is absurd to pretend they are not. There are moments when any one of us would rather spend his half-crown to see an automatic chess-player than more money to see a first-rate performance of *Macbeth*. We run, and rightly, to see such novelties as gliding-machines or to hear such novelties as wireless concerts. We should not be Europeans if we did not; and on the whole there is something in being a European.

'But we must be careful in distinguishing between the pleasure given us by mechanical toys and the pleasure given us by great drama. We must be careful, because if we are not we run the risk, on the one hand, of improving great drama out of existence, on the other hand, of being unduly superior to the pleasure capable of being derived from mechanical toys. The mechanical toy as applied to the stage is a comparatively recent innovation. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch argues that an immense advance must have been made in stage-machinery during Elizabethan times, and points to the demands made by *The Tempest* as a proof.

'However that may be, this particular element in stagecraft stood still between the storm that Prospero raised and the present century. Then, principally in Germany, the superfluous energy of the inventive engineer was poured into the theatre. At first it was used for no more far-reaching purpose than to perfect what had already been imperfectly attempted. There were revolving stages and sliding stages, evolved for the purpose of eliminating long waits while scenery was changed. Nobody would find

fault with this sort of improvement, though, as Mr. Macgowan has recently pointed out, it generally seemed to lead to longer waits between scenes and to the employment of a vastly greater number of stage-hands. However, the principle and aim were good.

'But the appetite grew with what it was fed on. What better place was there for the exhibition of mechanical ingenuities than the theatre? And now the producer with a taste for machinery threatens us with an altogether unprecedented revolution in the technique of the drama. I am apprehensive lest these new effects, just by reason of their immediate effectiveness, should overwhelm what I must consider to be, after all, the greatest part of the drama, the part best capable of expressing and affecting the mind of man — that is to say, the word written by the poet and spoken by the actor. In order to avoid this, we must be prepared to think of a new sort of theatrical entertainment in which the author expresses himself deliberately through mechanical effects. But this will need the evolution of a new technique; and meanwhile the technique of the film is not yet evolved.'



DESTROYING THE EVIDENCE

PARIS was agog a few weeks ago over the announcement by M. Arthur Mayer, editor of *Le Gaulois*, that no matter what it cost he intended to purchase and burn an autograph letter of Gustave Flaubert in the collection of Robert de Montesquiou. The letter was included in a first edition of *Salammbô*. It contained three or four sentences of extremely erotic character which M. Mayer considers damaging to Flaubert's memory. Twenty years ago M. Mayer purchased and burned on similar grounds a letter written by Alfred de Vigny to Marie Dorval.

All is not smooth sailing, however, for the puritanic Parisian newspaper-owner. Several eminent critics, with M. Paul Souday at their head, have raised an outcry over the proposed destruction. M. Souday complains that the document in question contains Flaubert's views of the theatre, which ought not to be lost merely to protect the morals of the Parisians. He declares that if he were sufficiently wealthy he would outbid M. Mayer, but of this there is no prospect.

The whole controversy is rather amusing in American eyes in view of the proneness of Europeans to accuse everyone on this side of the Atlantic of 'hypocrisy,' especially where affairs of this kind are concerned. Destroying evidence in this fashion is at best a dubious and certainly anything but an honest way of bolstering up the reputations of Flaubert and de Vigny — which rest on literary grounds anyhow. It is painful to think of the clamor that the Parisian press would raise were an American millionaire to indulge in such a display of the power of the purse as M. Mayer's.



TAXING TITLES

THE English Labor Party is advocating legislation providing a tax on all persons who have titles. The tax is to be graduated according to the dignity attaching to the title. It has not yet been said whether this arrangement will extend to the head of the State himself.

The most amusing comment that has so far been made is, as usual, by 'Lucio' in the *Manchester Guardian*: —

I call it a positive scandal
 That titles should not be assessed;
 All owners of names with a handle
 Should promptly be brought to the test.
 Whatever the form of coercion
 The peerage should pay for prestige,
 Assessed on this latter-day version
 Of noblesse oblige.

Each duke would be honored (and rightly)
 By a very stiff price on his head;
 No earl should be let off too lightly,
 And barons, of course, would be bled;
 The knight and the baronet bloated
 Would pay as assessors thought fit,
 And even esquires might be noted
 And touched for a bit.

Oh, think what a lot of new money
 Would fall to the Chancellor's store;
 I call it remarkably funny
 The plan ain't been thought of before;
 Enough, I should hope, would be made to
 Let some of us flourish tax-free
 And permit of a small grant in aid to
 Plain misters like me.

✱

WHY THE DEAD SEA IS SALT

IN a lecture before the Royal Geographical Society, Mr. Wilfred Irwin discussed the chemical composition of the River Jordan, which is responsible for the extreme saltiness of the Dead Sea. Analysis of samples taken from different parts of the river shows that even near its source the water is highly impregnated with various salts, chiefly common table-salt and chloride of magnesia. As the water passes through the Sea of Galilee there is a slight increase in its salt content, but the calcium sulphate and the silica which it also contains decrease.

In the immense evaporating pan of the Dead Sea the salt — that is, the sodium chloride — is crystallized, whereas the magnesium chloride remains in solution.

✱

NAMING A BARBER

Le Masque de Fer, who usually has something peppery to say on the first page of *Figaro*, contributes a flippant little note on the banishment of a French word from the German barber-shops as a result of the Ruhr excursion. Apparently the objectionable noun had survived the horrors of four years' war, but the Ruhr was too much.

'*Friseurs!* That was what the German barbers have always called themselves. In all the shops where they practised their art the German capillary artists invariably styled themselves *friseurs*. But they cannot do it any more. This French word sets the hair of the patriots to bristling over there, and those who continue to make use of foreign words will be compelled to pay a tax that is absolutely prohibitive. If German barbers want to dodge this tax, they must adopt the charming title of *Hauptverschönerungskünstler*.

'Ouf!'

✱

TSARITSA TAMARA

TAMARA, ancient Queen of Gruzia (Georgia), is the heroine of Knut Hamsun's latest drama, which was for the first time presented at Berlin and is described in the Russian daily, *Dni*. Hamsun's favorite characters and emotions find their expression again in this piece. We have the same superindividualism, the same proud attitude of the heroine, who is outwardly unconquered and unconquerable, and in her heart is passionately waiting for a conqueror to appear. The two parties to the duel in this case are Tamara and her husband, Prince Georgi, whom she does not appreciate as long as he does not show himself as her lord and commander. He brings her a war prisoner — a Mongolian Khan to whose Oriental charm she almost succumbs while trying to convert him to Christianity; but her servants murder the prisoner in time to avoid a grievous moral conflict. Then Prince Georgi understands his wife. He betrays her to an enemy tribe, places himself at the head of a hostile army, and presents himself under the turrets of her castle as a conqueror. She appears to be very much satisfied with this dénouement.

BOOKS ABROAD

Gambetta, by Paul Matter. Paris: Payot, 1923.

[*L'Europe Nouvelle*]

THIS little book is certain to make Gambetta known and loved. In one hundred and fifty pages M. Matter has reconstructed the great political drama that he dominated. The years of his youth and his early days in Paris are recounted with that good grace and liveliness that surrounded the young Gambetta himself. From the time of Baudin's trial, the battle begins. The accusation that Gambetta then launched against the Empire remains one of the most courageous acts of republican faith. It is also the beginning of his political life and of the trips that he made all over France like a 'drummer of democracy,' as one of his enemies remarked.

Then comes the war. Nothing could be more stirring than that last sitting on July 6, 1870, when Gambetta tried to stop the machine that was already in motion.

'Gambetta,' says M. Matter, 'could not preserve the integrity of the nation's soul. He could not compel victory. But he did teach. Through him we learned how a people can rise again from the worst disasters if it does not despair of itself and its future. The national defense of 1870 was the cradle of the national victory of 1918.'

Still longer pages are devoted to Gambetta's part in setting up the Third Republic. During its worst years he showed himself a dauntless fighter in spite of sickness and in spite of personal troubles. In 1881 he succeeded at length in forming his first ministry, but that lasted only three months.

M. Matter is to be thanked for having thus recalled the figure of the great Tribune.

Louis Napoleon, and the Recovery of France, by F. A. Simpson. London: Longmans, 1923. 21s. net.

[*Bookman*]

THE second volume of Mr. Simpson's life of Louis Napoleon begins with the Prince-President's struggles with the Constituent Assembly and ends with the negotiations that terminated the Crimean War. To attempt in the course of a thousand words to go over the whole ground which the Cambridge historian covers would be manifestly absurd. I shall start, therefore, by giving a summary of the new information about the period, derived by Mr. Simpson mainly from his examination of the dispatches of our ambas-

sadors, which he has consulted at the Records Office.

First, then, it is to be noted that as early as 1849 Louis showed his desire for peace in two remarkable proposals made to Palmerston, the first for a reduction of French and British naval armaments, the second for the calling of a European congress to discuss all questions which might provoke a war. (Palmerston 'turned down' both of these proposals.) Secondly, the various utterances of Louis on the subject seem to prove beyond a doubt that he was eager and enthusiastic in his desire to bring about the liberation of Italy, and that he only restored Pope Pio Nono to Rome in order to prevent this inevitable restoration from being effected by a reactionary Austria.

Thirdly, we learn that Palmerston, who lost office owing to his hasty welcome of the coup d'état, might probably have retained it if he had only read those prolix dispatches from Normanby in which the British Ambassador, presumably an Orleanist, had often predicted such an event and applauded it in advance. Fourthly, Mr. Simpson tells us — stowing the news away in his 'bibliography' — that Kinglake broke his promise to reveal the authorities for the indictment of Napoleon III, which he made in his *Invasion of the Crimea*, by consigning the bulk of his papers to the fire before his death. Which information he supplements by informing us, 'on the authority of a very near relative of the historian,' that Kinglake was 'an unsuccessful rival for the favor of Louis Napoleon's most famous English mistress, the so-called Miss Howard.'

To get at the main political ideas of a ruler who bore so striking a resemblance to the conspirators and melancholy heroes of the French romantic drama of the thirties and the forties, will always prove a sufficiently difficult task. The President who founded the first entente with Great Britain became the Emperor whose military preparations forced us to raise an army of volunteers. The would-be liberator of Italy had the hardihood to occupy Rome for twenty years and to annex territory so obviously Italian as Nice and Savoy. The apostle of 'self-determination' would have handed the Balkan States over to Austria and would have created a Poland to which neither Germany nor Austria need have surrendered the provinces they had stolen.

The consistent opponent of Austria expected that the Hapsburgs whom he had humiliated and defeated would come to his assistance in his own hour of need. The nationalist who spoke