

of neutrals. Non-signatory states may adhere to it by notifying their intention in writing to the French Government. A contracting state may denounce it in the same manner.

FASHIONS IN HOLIDAY BOOKS.

This is the bookmaker's hour. Now, if ever, he expects the public to give him heed. After months of preparation his shop is thrown open. And in many ways, no doubt, well it may be. Outdoing Mohammed, he has made the mountain, and the whole world besides, come to him. Through him East and West, North Pole and Southern Seas, are any reader's for the asking. So are the painters, authors, prophets, martyrs. The completeness of the output is, indeed, a little appalling. There is scarcely a branch of knowledge which is not presented comprehensively, in attractive form and manner. What though at Christmas the oracles are dumb, the publishers are not.

We may mention at the outset some of the features which are more particularly associated with the season. Especially agreeable is the thought which has been given to children's books. The best of the fairy-tales, tales of heroes like Odysseus, Roland, and Samson, and a quantity of other historical matter told pleasantly but without gush, besides photographs of the masterpieces of painting and sculpture, place the elements of culture where a child will not avoid them, and make a valuable foundation for later thought and reading. Under such tutelage, who shall say that the child, become man, will not win back the pleasurable art of allusion, or that he will not cultivate the habit, of historical perspective in forming judgments of present needs? A word likewise for the illustrations, both for juveniles and adults—at least, for those illustrations which stand out from the many that are garish and tawdry. Artistic skill in this line has been progressing steadily; so have the processes of mechanical reproduction, and between the two some beautiful creations have resulted. Books of travel, in particular, have come off well, with their lovely bits of the old world; and, in a few instances, we have observed simple photographures of city scenes almost as artistic as etchings. As to the so-called "handsome editions" with which Christmas is loaded, opinions will differ wide-

ly. To us they are, for the most part, overdone, and contrast unfavorably with those true rulings and simple pages of other days. Here, much more than in the less elaborate editions, the designs and color-schemes are of the impressionistic, unstable sort.

In general, the publishers have shown rare ingenuity in trying to meet a great variety of tastes. Part of their zeal, however, seems to us questionable, if not pernicious. "Reading," under ideal conditions, "maketh a full man," but to-day it becomes a weariness to the flesh, even for him who reads but the titles. Publisher vies with publisher. Not only are the old favorites re-issued, but new favorites are created on the spur of the moment. The publishers, no doubt, will tell you that they are carried along by a force stronger than themselves. Like the etiquette which prevents disarmament, for which each nation shouts in turn, suspicion of the other fellow keeps the publisher from his avowed wish to limit himself to a few books each year. Meanwhile, to stand the bombardment, the reading public may well pray for *aes triplex*. True, he who runs may read, and still the running reader is no match to-day for the active publisher.

The latter, in point of fact, recognizes this, and agrees to do your reading for you by furnishing a predigested variety. There never was a time when books of reference were so plentiful. There are even summaries of fiction, the best hundred pages of Plato, of Herbert Spencer. Keeping pace, too, with the specialist, publishers now get out hosts of "series" in which knowledge, cut perpendicularly, athwart, or to order, is easily accessible. If it is true that "he is wise who knows the way to the book-shelves," then wisdom will soon be omniscience. And in this respect—putting conveniently upon record the doings of man, his every thought and feeling, however trivial—the publishers of the present time have wrought heroically. Yet there comes the distressing feeling that this policy is partly mistaken. Does the reader read more the more his reading is done for him? That may be an Irish question, but it fairly presents the situation. The chances are, we believe, that the modern way is weakening to the public's mental fabric. When men had to go distances to borrow books and had to make their

own summaries, they remembered what they read, if only in self-defence. The tendency nowadays is to get knowledge literally at hand, and to get it permanently any farther is thought unnecessary. In the hour of need, we append the words of Francis Bacon on these very matters:

Read not, to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider.

RECENT GERMAN POETRY.

Compiling and editing poetical anthologies is a task to which German men of letters devote themselves with enthusiastic industry. Even the younger generation has given us a number of lyrical collections of merit, and has roused interest in the poetry of other countries. Karl Henckell, one of the leaders of those militant secessionists who made their debut in the "Moderne Dichter-Charaktere" twenty-five years ago, gave us a loose-leaf collection of the world's lyrics some years later, and now his name appears on the cover of a book called "Weltlyrik" (München: Die Lese), which contains some of the choicest specimens of lyric verse written outside of Germany and which, with the exception of one of Shakespeare's sonnets, is limited to the last century. The beautiful little volume bears the subtitle "Ein Lebenskreis in Nachdichtungen," defining the scope and character of the work. There are selections from Shakespeare, Rossetti, Swinburne, Poe, Whitman, Holger Drachmann, Pushkin, Mjereshkowski, Maria Konopnicka, Ada Negri, and others, among them fifteen Frenchmen, beginning with de Musset and ending with the singer of Bruges, the mysterious George Rodenbach. The keynote of the work is struck in the editor's prologue, a hymn to life, and for epilogue he has appropriately chosen the hymn to the sun from "Chantecler."

The translations are really "Nachdichtungen," namely, poetical reproductions, and as such have great merit. Among the best are the lines on love from Whitman's "Mystic Trumpeter," Poe's "Eldorado," Emilio Praga's "Night Prayer," Asnyk's "Futile Plaint," and Maupassant's poem on the wild geese. Almost all of Henckell's versions of Verlaine are distinguished by a rare spontaneity, but in rendering Sully Prudhomme's "Broken Vase," he has been less successful. As a whole, the book is a remarkable achievement. It reflects sometimes the more sordid phases of human existence, but the only selection which might have been omitted is that from Aristide Bruant, though as a translation, it is a veritable *tour de force*.

When Ernst Freiherr von Wolzogen, who is now lecturing in America on the

German drama and the past thirty years of German letters, abandoned the enterprise to which he had devoted a number of years, the *Überbrettli*, he little dreamed that the idea of transplanting upon German soil the gripping pathos and audacious humor of the French *chansons du cabaret* would survive longer in books than on the stage. Maximilian Bern, the compiler and editor of poetical anthologies for the Reclam edition, collected specimens of German poetry approaching that *genre* in spirit and form, and called his book "Die zehnte Muse" (imported by G. E. Stechert & Co.). A second and enlarged edition of that work has just appeared, showing that there is a demand for *Überbrettli* poetry wherever German is sung and recited. The book differs from most poetical anthologies in the absence of the hackneyed sentimental and sweetly inane. Among the groups into which it is divided, satire covers the largest space, next comes erotic poetry, and next forty pages of poems more or less directly implying criticism of the present social order. There are also fables, parables, tramp tunes, and romances of reality, and the lines of demarcation are remarkably well observed. The selections cover three centuries of German poetry and revive the memory of long forgotten poets, introducing to the readers a number of obscure singers whose work deserves recognition. For purposes of recitation, this book is likely to be without a peer in the German book market.

Carl Hauptmann has published an enlarged edition of the quaint volume of prose and verse entitled "Aus meinem Tagebuch" (München: Georg D. W. Callway), which illustrates the elusive originality of the author. It is a book to be taken up at quiet moments, if one is to sense its spiritual unity. Hauptmann's interests embrace the universe. He has sympathy with the exalted aspirations and pity for the criminal cravings of mankind. He looks upon the turmoil of the workaday world with eyes that seek to fathom its meaning. He listens to Bach and Beethoven and illumines what was vague or obscure. There are lyrics in the book insinuatingly tuneful; there are philosophical reflections, simply worded, but full of suggestions; there are passing glances at men of letters—Schiller, Turgenev, Zola, Liliencron, surprising for their insight; there are interpretations of artists, Böcklin, Meunier, Segantini. The book is appropriately dedicated to Anna Teichmüller, a woman composer of Germany, who has made a number of his lyrics into songs, with rare ability.

Among the poets that now and then spring from the plain people of Germany, Johanna Ambrosius has perhaps risen to undue prominence, while Christian Wagner has been comparatively neglected. For this son of the same Suavian soil that brought forth the

much-beloved Schiller is a personality of greater artistic distinction and spiritual import than that facile poetess of the obvious and the commonplace. Christian Wagner does not avoid the homely topics of everyday life; he does not seek his subjects in remote realms of thought; yet his songs strike a new note. For he has the gift of extracting the essence of poetry from the life about him and of coining images and moulding phrases of individual beauty. The ten volumes that contain his work are the fascinating record of a spiritual and artistic development. With the exception of a few readers of *Poet-Lore* who may have seen translations of his poems by Miss Thomas, Christian Wagner is unknown to American students of German poetry. Yet there are few poets of contemporary Germany capable of making a wider appeal than the peasant-poet of Warmbrunn.

The slim volume which has lately come from the pen of this septuagenarian is entitled "Späte Garben" (München: Georg Müller); and its contents and quality are typical of his work. A series of charming flower-songs introduce the collection. From his intimate knowledge of the flora of his home, Wagner weaves fanciful myths about the daphne, the nettle, the water-iris, the evening-primrose, and even about the quitch grass growing among the wheat. He sings of planting, hoeing, and digging potatoes, of the simple beliefs and customs of his people. He does not echo the well-worn rhymes of an unlimited procession of poetical ancestors, but writes from direct and personal impression. There are a score of poems reminiscent of an Italian journey which he was able to make through the generosity of a literary society.

Otto Sattler is a German-American of whose poetical gifts the little volume entitled "Stille und Sturm" (Lemcke & Buechner) gives fair promise. He treats a variety of motives and skilfully adapts his manner to the matter before him. He sings of the joy of life and love and of the Wanderlust which has taken him, like so many of his people, around the world; he writes of the daily drudgery in factory and workshop, among the whirr and the roar of machinery. He pictures the sordidness of poverty and strikes notes of stirring fervor in uttering his faith in a better future for all mankind. Of the longer poems in prose the one called "New York" commands attention. Among the specimens of a Whitmanesque style that have appeared in Germany within the last two decades, this poem compares well with those of Johannes Schlaf and Alfons Paquet. The meaning which the image of the city holds for the author and the hopeful inference which he draws from it are expressed with a strength and a dignity that reconcile us for some pages of a rather trite sentimentalism.

The posthumous volume of "Poetische Auslese," by Hugo Andriessen (Beaver, Pa.), awakens memories of a time when a wave of radicalism swept over the German element of the United States and found organs to lend it voice in Karl Heinzen's *Pionier*, published in Boston; the *Arme Teufel*, edited by Robert Reitzel of Detroit, and the *Freidenker*, which alone has survived and is still sent out from Milwaukee. For in those weeklies could always be found poems by the latest author, voicing the gospel of free thought, taking up the cause of some political movement and spreading the message of evolution and a monistic philosophy. This book contains many specimens of that didacticism, but the editors of the volume have wisely included poems unburdened by any message and a number of clever translations from Swinburne, Adelaide Proctor, Longfellow, Charles Wolfe, William Bedford, Lyall, and Villon.

Another little book by a German-American, Dr. W. L. Rosenberg, is pompously entitled "An der Weltenwende" (Cleveland: Windsor Publishing Co.). He significantly uses as dedication a translation of "The Under-Dog," by "Barker," presumably Elsa Barker. The poems evoke dramatic scenes of a Ghetto pogrom, of miners' strikes, and of sweatshop slavery. Some hark back to the abolitionist movement, and one brings the book singularly up to date; it is the poem entitled "Roosevelt," of which every stanza begins with the line "Nimm dich in Acht"—Take care. But the feature that relieves the monotony of the *Tendenz* note struck too insistently and incessantly is the translations from William Morris, John Hay, and Victor Hugo.

A. VON ENDE.

Correspondence.

THE SHAPE OF THE SHAKESPEAREAN STAGE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: Students of the Elizabethan drama owe a considerable debt to V. E. Albright's monograph on "The Shakespearean Stage" (Columbia University Studies in English, 1909). It will hardly be thought derogatory of his admirable work to mention a detail in which his sketches of the "typical Shakespearean stage" seem likely to convey misapprehension.

Mr. Albright's plates represent a stage not square, but converging to a relatively sharp point in front. The only authority for this conception is found in a rough sketch of a stage of some kind, printed on the title page of "The Tragedy of Messallina," in 1640. It is by no means clear that this can be relied upon as a faithful picture of conditions in the public theatres of that day. It is certainly vague and not improbably fanciful. Moreover, it bears a very strong resemblance to the stage portrayed on the title-page of the Latin play