

## Deutschland

*A Harvest of German Verse, selected and translated by Margerete Münsterberg. New York: D. Appleton & Co. \$1.25.*

WHILE I was looking over Miss Münsterberg's little volume of translations from the German lyrists, Johanna was tidying my room. She is a little blonde servant-girl from Saxony, in no wise distinguished from other girls of her station. Miss Münsterberg had translated the last line of Goethe's ballad "The King of Thule" by "Ne'er more a drop he drank," and eager to learn whether the original, too, excited in the mind of the reader a doubt as to whether it was into the arms of Death or of the W. C. T. U. that the aged monarch sank, I asked Johanna whether she remembered the poem. She knew "Der König in Thule," and, blanket in hand, quoted the last stanza. I showed her some other lines that puzzled me. Her face lit with pleasure as she recognized the poems in their English dress. And she told me that she had a German book that contained most of the poems in "A Harvest of German Verse." In a few moments she returned, rubbing a book with her apron. It was a well-thumbed volume called "Auswahl Deutscher Gedichte," and contained the classic lyrics of the German tongue. Johanna went on making the bed.

That this little servant-girl knew and loved the lyric poetry of her land, does not distinguish her from other German girls of her sort and education. Nor does that prove the average girl of the German people the spiritual superior of the Irish girl or the French girl. To only one thing it testifies, and that is the quality that distinguishes German lyric poetry from the lyric poetry of other lands. German song is an absolutely democratic art. One has to go far to find again an art that is so thoroughly of the whole people and for the whole people, for the Duchess of Brunswick, for Frau Krupp von Bohlen, for Johanna. In the German lyric, whether it be the work of one of the unknown poets of the folk-songs, or of a Goethe, the entire people, of all ranks and classes, finds itself. In contradistinction to that of England and France, it is the possession of not merely the privileged classes. In the hands of its greatest masters, a Goethe, a Mörike, in its fullest flowering, it remains simple and popular, and in it, every German finds himself expressed, and through it every German expresses himself. When Otto Julius Bierbaum, one of the recent poets, announced that he wrote for every midinette, every apprentice, he was only attesting his allegiance to the traditions of a great democratic art. And so, it is something more than an anthology that Miss Münsterberg brings to the English-reading public. The songs that she has translated are not only songs. One can affirm, in Whitman's words, that "who touches them, touches a people." Into those lyrics have gone all that was deepest and sweetest and best in the national life. In them is the real Deutschland.

One can easily guess what drew Miss Münsterberg at just this time to the accomplishment of this work. It is but natural and lovely that there should have come upon her, in a community strongly French in its sympathies, the desire to perform an act of faith on behalf of her fatherland. Presenting the English-reading public for the first time with an anthology of the verse produced in Germany since the twelfth century was the surest way of gaining understanding for what is lovable in her country. But for the sake of Germany as well as that of our public, one

wishes that the work had been done at a period when patriotism would have taken the form of greater critical acumen. It is not because of her selections that one quarrels with Miss Münsterberg, although the omission of poems by Hölderlin and Hebbel, and, among the moderns, Otto Ernst, Wedekind, Mombert, Dauthendey and the ebullient Marie-Madeleine is to be regretted. It is rather more because her translations too often are like those found between the staves of foreign songs published for the American market. Too often she deprives the poem of its characteristic phrase, as in her version of the famous "Under the Linden Tree" of Walter von der Vogelweide, where, in omitting an equivalent for the exclamation "Hehre Fraue" the reader is robbed of the marvellous little picture of minnesinger and chateleine afforded by it. When she permits the line "Than with despondency his soul to bane," to stand in the sonnet of a virtuoso like Platen, she shows an actual disregard for the art of the poem she is interpreting. There are times, happily, as in the translation of Luther's Christmas Hymn, or of Lenau's delicate night-piece, when her efforts are better rewarded. It was perhaps Miss Münsterberg's ambition that prevented success with the body of the work. The difficulties of verse-translation have always been underestimated. The wisest translators have been those who, if they could not recreate the original in their own tongue, have contented themselves with a careful prose equivalent. Miss Münsterberg added to the difficulties of her task in attempting to remain as close as possible to the "form," the metre, the verse-structure, the actual word-values of the original. The wonder is that she was successful so often. That she should have further diminished the value of her work by not more carefully guarding against little slips, against often undignified and inadequate renderings, is regrettable.

Still, it is no little thing to have given the English-reading public a book that with all its imperfections affords much insight into what is loveliest in German character and story. The national temper, as Professor Francke in his brief preface points out, is distinctly lyrical. The restraint and sense of form necessary to other literary expressions are not distinctly German qualities—the lyrical passages, we know, are what is most magnificent in "Faust." But into its songs, naïvely, sincerely, unrestrainedly, the race poured its being. And so, within the unassuming covers of Miss Münsterberg's book, there is something of what, during the course of eight centuries, touched and kindled the German heart. Here is the knightly love of the Middle Ages, the grim and sorrowful Protestantism of the Reformation. Here is the humor and the sentiment in which, during those long years after the religious wars, the folk expressed itself. Here, too, are glimpses of the broad and sturdy Germany, crowned by the sovereign genius of Goethe, of the years of national reawakening; glimpses of the simple and whole-hearted Germany of the bad old romantic days of which it is now so ashamed.

The Germany of recent years is represented largely through omission. True, there are contemporary poets. But, like Rilke, driven into themselves, or like von Hoffmannsthal, in his verses, at least, bowed in contemplation of the spectacle of their own souls, or like Stefan George, existing in cold and æsthetic preoccupation, they no longer touch the national life. Dehmel alone still represents Germany and Berlin—most pathetically and veraciously when at the outbreak of the war he cried "Hour of steel, thou art a blessing," and volunteered for the army. We find ourselves a little sorrowfully turning back to the "bad" old romantic Germany. How lovely it was, that land of

enamoured lotus-flowers, of distressed maidens and moonlight aplenty; that land of professors and idealists, of wholehearted men and women; that Germany of Schumann, of the great poets and the great dreamers. For many of us, the memory that Miss Münsterberg has recalled will bring only recurrent sorrow over a country, once loved, that has reacted so perversely from a noble past but fifty years old. To others, the vision may bring faith once more. The singers who sang for Germany cannot have given themselves in vain. The people that bore them cannot long remain fixed in the error that greatness and beauty and life mean war. That old vanished Germany, so fresh, so good, so lovely, cannot have gone forever!

PAUL L. ROSENFELD.

## The Persiflage of Politics

*The New Europe*, by Arnold Toynbee. New York: E. P. Dutton. \$1.00 net.

MR. TOYNBEE is well known as one of the most brilliant of that younger group of Oxford historians who, under the leadership of Mr. Zimmern, are rewriting for us the history of Greece and Rome so that it may be intelligible to the age in which we live. A keen student of geography, his "Nationality and the War" is probably among the very few volumes thus far produced in the conflict to which a really serious importance can be attached.

But the danger of war books is their fecundity. They tend to beget children as an attempt at mere justification of existence, and it is to this class of doubtful legitimacy that Mr. Toynbee's new volume belongs. Originally a series of papers written for the London *Nation*, it was admirable as a hasty summary of its subject. But as a book it is a thin and meagre production. It contains nothing at all novel, and it is not sufficiently argumentative to be really arresting. It can hardly be considered illuminating to write now that the English state stands for coöperation, and the German state for power. The definition of a nation as a group of men bound together by their will to coöperate probably raises as many issues as it solves. The assertion that nationality is as important as economics and that the mental outlook of Mr. Norman Angell is incomplete has grown a little tiresome with constant reiteration. The distinction between "natural frontiers" and "economic rights of way," while helpful, only begins to suggest the myriad questions it ought to answer. The book, in fact, simply skims a large number of surfaces without in any way suggesting their nature or extent. One cannot but think that, granted our previous knowledge of what Mr. Toynbee can accomplish, the publication of this work is peculiarly unfortunate.

Far more important than the volume proper is the introductory review of it by Lord Cromer. We have rarely been afforded so valuable an insight into the mind of a great pro-consul. When he begins to pick out the qualities in Mr. Toynbee's volume of which he approves, we begin to see exactly what appeals to the sternly imperialist temper. He begins with an expression of thankfulness that Mr. Toynbee "does not inveigh against the obstructiveness of officials . . . or the wickedness of imperialists who are at times credited with entertaining chauvinistic intentions and opinions of which they are generally quite guiltless." In other words—*experto crede* and give the freest hand possible for the exportation of capital. Mr. Shaw—divine amateur as he is—must not discuss the Denshawai incident, particularly in a book about Ireland; and we are not to approve of the attitude of journalists like Mr. Brailsford to the prob-

lems of Moroccan finance. Because Mr. Toynbee admits that only a few peoples are capable of self-government Lord Cromer attributes to him a belief in the tutelage of imperialism. He is glad that, "save to a limited extent," Mr. Toynbee is not guilty of the divorce of practice from theory—as though anyone who reads Kant can help finally going into Parliament.

But the most illuminating section of Lord Cromer's essay is the note of contempt for the way in which the philosophy of Hegel has bitten deep into the soul of Germany. He does not seem to be aware that Mr. L. T. Hobhouse in a very brilliant book has indicted the imperialism for which Lord Cromer stands on precisely these Hegelian charges; or that Mr. Cecil Rhodes's worship of an all-red Africa is in reality traceable to exactly similar beliefs. Some of us would even dare to wonder if Lord Cromer's own Egyptian administration was quite free from a profound confidence in the essential supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon mind. But these are questions which only the expert can solve. What it is worth while protesting against is the childish and easy philosophy which is satisfied with attributing the war to Nietzsche or Treitschke or Hegel or Bernhardi. We have reason to go deeper than this monotonous superficiality.

Mr. Toynbee has something really valuable to say about nationality if he will only take time and space to say it adequately. If he will give us the benefit of his able speculations into Greek history and the result, after the war, of his thought on that new cockpit of Europe which the Bagdad railway has made so painfully accessible, he will write a book worthy of the great tradition he has inherited.

H. J. L.

## War Everlasting

*The Things Men Fight For, with some application to present conditions in Europe*, by H. H. Powers, Ph.D. New York: The Macmillan Co. \$1.50.

LET the pacifist beware of reading this book or at least pocket his optimism while reading. It is a shattering, disintegrating book, at once objective and depressing. All the hopes with which the nations entered the war it treats as illusions. The war is not waged for justice, humanity, the rights of small nations or the repression of militarism. The war is not an accident or a mistake or a crime, but a necessary consequence of a necessary cause, a thing inevitable, because with men as they are and boundaries and seas and mountains where they are, it was inevitable that men should will this war. It is not even a war that will end war but the precursor of more devastating conflicts to come. Whoever wins or loses, the war-breeding conditions will remain. They will even be magnified. After the treaty of peace is ratified, Austria and Italy will still be in deadly feud over the control of the Adriatic, and Germany and England over the control of the North Sea, while Russia and Japan, although bound by alliances, will strain every nerve for the inevitable war to decide the fate of Korea and Manchuria. Austria will remain a war center, since it will be either what it is today, an unstable combination of mutually hostile races, or something worse, a Balkan anarchy on a larger scale. Whichever nation gets Constantinople will leave either Austria or Russia frustrated and planning for the next war. Germany must continue to arm or die. In a few years or decades she will be unable to oppose both East and West. A little later she will be weaker than Russia alone. Then an offensive alliance against Russia of all the western