

to die for each other! And all this ends—O God, how must it end? . . . Oh, my wedding-day! Why did they rejoice? Brides should wear mourning—the bells should toll for every wedding; every new family is built over this awful pit of despair, and only one in a thousand escapes!

For sixty years I have been studying the Bible. In it I have found light upon every problem of our complex life—social, ethical, spiritual. For in it I have found the unveiling of God in the experience of man. From it I have learned that we are all his offspring

made in his image. Into us all he has breathed the breath of his own life. He walks with us incognito; present with us, though unseen; speaking in us, though his voice is not recognized. Our repentances are his rebukes; our aspirations are his invitations; our hopes are his encouragement. Known or unknown by us, he is always our Great Companion, our best Friend. Like the prodigal of the story, one has only to come to himself in order to return to his Father.

The Knoll, Cornwall-on-Hudson.

A PLEBISCITE IN ALSACE-LORRAINE

BY SANFORD GRIFFITH

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ALTHOUGH any discussion of detail concerning claims of the people of Alsace-Lorraine would be distinctly premature, none the less questions relating to the general policy toward these border provinces have been raised on both sides of the Rhine. What is the attitude of the German people toward this Reichsland? What is the popular feeling in France toward the reintegration of these separated sisters into the *Mère Patrie*?

Since the declaration of war Alsace has been a closed book to the world. Travel except for urgent business is forbidden to those without and to those within. We know of the flight of many so-called Nationalists—French sympathizers—and of the arrest and internment of many more. The property of Alsations who failed to heed the summons to return within a given date has been sequestered. All towns within the war zone and many outside have been evacuated. Hundreds of Alsations have been transported to towns or camps in the interior of the Empire.

The civil police régime, oppressive in time of peace, has become almost intolerable as now accentuated by military control in time of war. An incautious word may be denounced, and in every case leads to a heavy sentence. More than once a German officer has told me, "We have to take the same precautions in Alsace as on the soil of the enemy."

But the word passed around to the German press is that "peace reigns in Alsace." Except for occasional comment in the

"Frankfurter Zeitung," there has been little in the German papers to suggest that there is any friction in Alsace, or that there exists any Alsatian question. When raised, the reply commonly is, "The Alsations have fulfilled their duty, like all other Germans." The Social Democrats, too, find this a convenient assumption. There is no Liebknecht nor Bebel, as in '71, to recognize any particular rights for an unhappy people. On several occasions since the war I have shown the tactlessness to bring up this question with members of the party. Their replies were generally rather embarrassed and ambiguous.

Among the foremost of the Radicals on the extreme left in the Reichstag is Dr. Lentsch. He condemns the French comrades who, with Sembat, "talk of a dismemberment of Germany, and who place themselves on record in support of a policy of *revanche*. All this is because Sembat proclaims a free return of Alsace-Lorraine to France and a consultation of the people." Then this hide-bound Radical Herr Lentsch out-Treitschkes Treitschke by declaring "such an illusion which presumes that an adjustment of such historic importance can be accomplished by the ballot in a capitalistic society such as ours should be thrown to its proper place—the junk heap." If such, pray, is the value of a vote, how does Dr. Lentsch justify himself for being in the Reichstag? He then speaks for his party. "The German Socialists will oppose with firm resolution any effort to tear Alsace-Lorraine from the Em-

pire. That there are those in these border provinces ready to throw themselves in the arms of the French is an illusion." It must be true—Dr. Lentsch affirms it!

Gothein, also a Radical in the Reichstag, unconsciously declared a principle which if applied inversely would work in direct contradiction with German policy. "We Germans can consider ourselves very well satisfied that French pacifists, in event of victory, would not let the Alsatians have a right to vote and dispose of their own existence. They must indeed have little hope in the result of such a vote. What concerns the French are not the rights of man but only their revenge and the increase in their power." Would Gothein turn this the other way and say that, unless Germany recognizes the rights of the Alsatians to express an opinion concerning their future, the Empire as much as confesses that there is no kindred feeling between them?

What have the Alsatians to expect from a victorious Germany? From the discourses of Government leaders, there is no indication of any intention to open the Alsatian question. Even in the most liberal circles, despite a certain inclination to talk of freedom of peoples, it seldom goes to the point of concrete application in so far as Alsace is concerned. During the last half-century the people of these border provinces have enjoyed few concessions from the Empire. From a victorious Germany they would have scant reason to expect more.

The attitude in France is that the return of Alsace-Lorraine to the *Mère Patrie* is the *sine qua non* of any peace. More than this is an idea which has become current that these provinces are an integral part of France, only cruelly separated for a time, but now to be taken back into the fold. "For us to consult the population of Alsace-Lorraine as to their wishes would be as superfluous as to consult the people in the invaded departments of the north of France whether or not they want to come back." This seems to be the official view, and is certainly that approved in most influential circles—the universities, commercial and industrial centers. More than this is the support given it by the so-called Alsatian Nationalists (the former Catholic Alsatian Center), represented in France by Preiss and the Abbé Wetterlé. I have talked with Wetterlé over this very question, and am convinced that his desire to see Germany punished and his hatred of all

pro-Germans in Alsace make him lose sight of some of the primary rights of his people. This idea of a reintegration and not annexation is as if these past forty-five years could be arbitrarily stricken off the calendar, and as if, for example, the three hundred thousand Germans who live there did not exist. Its simplicity is only in abstraction.

To deny the peoples of Alsace-Lorraine a voice in their future would be to disregard one of the fundamental principles of the French Republic—freedom for small peoples. Were a vote taken in Alsace, I am convinced that a majority of the people would choose to return to France. But this is another question, and one apart from the political principle involved. Freedom for the oppressed, a reawakening of the old Revolutionary tradition, is the inspiration of many French liberals in this war. The Socialists use the expression daily in their press. Jean Longuet, grandson of Marx and editor of "*L'Humanité*," declared vigorously:

"I am in accord with the recent Socialist convention in London for the consultation of those interested—that is to say, the people of Alsace-Lorraine. If the desire to be French did not exist, we would have absolutely no right to dispose of them against their will."

Looking at the plebiscite as a practical issue, its necessity is obvious. In 1871 Germany denied the people of Alsace a voice in their lot. Since then the sympathies of the world have been with this unhappy people. To-day, were the vote disregarded, there would be a repetition of history. Germany would say, "See the poor Alsatians tied to France against their will," and there would be sufficient opposition in these provinces to give color to the reproach. Grumbach, an Alsatian Socialist, makes an eloquent appeal, first to Germany, then to France. In the first, that heed be paid to the wishes of the people, he confesses that he has not great hopes; but in the second he says: "If they are republicans who respect the political liberty of the individual, they are under obligation to demand a consultation of the people of Alsace-Lorraine. Not with fear nor with unhappy hesitation will they do this, but frankly and with an enthusiasm inspired by the firm conviction of accomplishing an act of political wisdom, an act which will give to Alsace, to France, to Germany, and to all of Europe a rare example destined to be a stepping-stone to a higher democracy."

Paris, France.

TWO BOOKS OF VERSE

BY HAMILTON W. MABIE

THE "New Poetry Series" is largely experimental; its hospitality to adventurers in verse commends it to lovers of the art which more adequately than any other save music expresses the human spirit in the whole range of its experience and endeavor. The decline and disappearance of poetry as a literary form has been a standard article of faith in some literary creeds for two generations. Fifty years ago, when the scientific movement was in its early and enthusiastic stage, there were many predictions that literature itself had run its course and that henceforth men were to live by knowledge and dismiss the dreams of the imagination; that the age of reason had at last arrived and the fairy tales of the poets would henceforth go to the back shelves. The only novel future generations would tolerate would be the novel of fact. The drama, it was pointed out, had already had its day and become as extinct as the prehistoric monsters.

But the prophets of evil have suffered a disastrous eclipse. Literature survives in all its forms, and the works of the old masters, instead of going to the rubbish sales, are printed and reprinted in innumerable editions and distributed in every conceivable form; it is true that the novels of fact are read if they do not sacrifice reality to realism, but the later romanticists practice the old art and command the old success; the drama has had a new birth in the interest of writers and readers as well as of lovers of the theater, and the present generation of prophets has raised the cry that it will soon expel the novel; while the making of verse threatens to become a popular industry. The "New Poetry Series" is not a desperate device to attract attention; it is a recognition of a widespread interest as well as a growing activity. Published in a form which suggests the magazine, these well-made, low-priced books evidence a vital impulse, a popular demand, and a feeling that poetry is not the recreation of the highbrow, but of the man who must run as he reads.

Rawness and crudity, not so much of technique as of taste, stamp a good deal of this current verse; some of its practitioners are mistaking lawlessness for liberty, formless-

ness for originality, and the new freedom which they vociferously claim turns out to be a mere assertion of the mob spirit. Discordant cries and uncouth tones are as empty as the most mechanical mid-Victorian jingles and more offensive to the ear. But these "battle cries of freedom" do not drown the voices of a new springtime; there are fresh voices and tones of deep and vital sweetness in the air. The qualities which give this new poetic activity its charm and its significance are fresh feeling for the beauty in familiar things, intimate joy in nature and in human relations, sensitiveness to the image and the meaning of the symbol. "Mothers and Men"¹ is a first venture in verse, and its notes are struck in the title. Mr. Pulsifer has opened a vein of deeper love than young poets often find, in his celebration of the love that waits and serves at the threshold and blesses life with the serene devotion, unselfish in its selfishness, which is deeper than passion. In the eyes that are celebrated in these verses there is that which brings men to their knees and sends them on the voyages of honor and duty and service rather than on the adventures of passion. There is passion here, but it is the passion of one in whom stirs the sense of loyalty to the one woman who brings each to the gate of life, and makes him aware that love and pain are akin, because love is not fulfilled unless it is sacrificial. In this love the divine love is imaged:

"IN THE MANTLE OF GOD

"I pray to a God with a woman's face.

(My mother's face is wondrous fair!)

The wide world is an altar-place,

And love-in-life the only prayer.

I work for a God with a woman's hands.

(My mother's hands are cool and strong!)

I sing for a God who understands

The worker's work and the singer's song.

I live for a God with a woman's eyes.

(My mother's eyes have made me whole!)

The very walls of paradise

Are compassed in a single soul!"

In this celebration of woman, the creator, virgin in her purity and divine in her mother-

¹ Mothers and Men. By Harold Trowbridge Pulsifer. The New Poetry Series. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. 50c.