

Amerikanisches Armenwesen. By E. MÜNSTERBERG. Leipzig, Duncker and Humblot, 1906.—120 pp.

The relief methods of the United States have received little of that salutary attention from foreigners which has been generously bestowed on our political institutions and on such social or physiological phenomena as the shrill voices of our women. For this reason, if for no other, Dr. Münsterberg's study is welcome. And we are peculiarly fortunate in that the study has been made by a writer who brings to his undertaking a wide knowledge of European systems, a scholar's minute acquaintance with the American literature on the subject (which he plaintively finds "*reich, fast überreich*"), practical experience as president of the department of public charities of Berlin, and a friendliness and sympathy which result in praise wherever the slightest excuse for praise can be found. Dr. Münsterberg's kindly determination to see the good in our methods and take home to Germany lessons from them, together with the dulling influence on the critical faculty unavoidably exerted, as he himself naïvely points out, by the "unparalleled hospitality" extended to him by officials of institutions and societies, have perhaps robbed us of searching comments which would have been wholesome.

There are some inaccuracies of judgment, traceable to the action of the "guest-friend" scruple; and there are some incorrect assumptions, as when the impression is given that the New York tenement-house department owes its origin to the settlements. There is occasionally, also, a tendency to quote as authoritative men who are well-known in other kinds of work, but have no special claim to be heard on these subjects. One is tempted, too, to wish that Dr. Münsterberg had not had before him for reference "more than two hundred volumes of treatises and reports"; for then the pages of figures (which, as he carefully points out, are of comparatively little significance as they stand) and the masses of illustrative detail¹ would not have left so little room for the personal impressions which, coming from a man of this type, are so extremely valuable.

It is extraordinarily interesting to see how our methods strike him. The very subjects which he selects (since he is not proposing a "*systematische Darstellung*") are significant. They are to some extent

¹ The American version, which is now running in *Charities and the Commons*, under the title "Impressions of American Charity," omits much of this detail, in order to avoid obscuring of the features of Dr. Münsterberg's book which American readers cannot afford to miss.

those with which he is especially familiar, the administration of relief by public authorities and the care of children. But the greater part of the book is devoted to those problems which are peculiarly American or to those movements which have had in America a development not found in Germany: immigration, state supervision of charities, the tendency toward coöperation among private charitable enterprises, juvenile courts, and the settlements. He is particularly impressed with the "unassuming self-denial of those who devote their lives to the service of the poor" in settlements. The professional character which salaries and training give to social work, "without the slightest unfavorable effect upon the spirit with which it is done"; the preponderance of women, to whose "almost painful accuracy" he bears willing testimony; the extensive use of the typewriter and the telephone, and the application of business methods to record-keeping and office management—these are some of the general features of which he speaks with warm commendation. The intricate inter-relations of public and private charity keep him in a state of perpetual wonderment, from the first page to the last. And the "black shadow" of political machinations in the sphere of public charity grieves and surprises him to a degree that compels us to a fresh realization of its import. "I could not bring myself to believe," he writes of Homer Folks, "that when a man like that was once secured as commissioner of public charities he could possibly be dispensed with again as a result of a change in political parties. And this very victim expresses himself as full of trust in the future!"

Our sincere gratitude is due to Dr. Münsterberg for his interest in the methods we have developed of caring for our poor, for the patience with which he has studied the chaotic mass of institutions and theories which these methods involve and represent, and perhaps most of all for supplying them with a background of European experience.

LILIAN BRANDT.

NEW YORK CITY.

Socialism: A Summary and Interpretation of Socialist Principles.

By JOHN SPARGO. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1906.—xviii, 257 pp.

This admirable exposition of socialistic principles reproduces accurately both the strong and the weak elements in socialistic thought. The strong elements—the lives and characters of the leading exponents of socialism from Robert Owen to Friedrich Engels, the contribution of Marx to the philosophy of history, and the socialistic ideal—take up