

## Young Germany

By HENRIETTA B. VON KLENZE

THREE books have appeared within the last few months which serve—together—to flash a searchlight over certain significant reactions of the youngest generation to come to maturity since the war and—perhaps even more the “peace”—set German life to a new tune.

Hans Johst, already well known for his dramas, among which his fairly recent “Tomas Paine” is of especial interest in America, has painted in gray colors—but not without a melancholy charm—a dying generation. In “So Gehen Sie Hin” (München: Albert Lange, 1930) whose subtitle “Ein Roman vom Sterbenden Adel” might be translated “Tale of a Dying Aristocracy,” a group of noblemen and their families—some German, some exiles from Russia—who have found a last refuge on the shores of the beautiful Starnberg See in the neighborhood of Munich seem literally to fade away like the last remnants of snow in the April sun.

It is hardly correctly named a “novel” since the trickling plot does not serve to focus the characters. Rather is it a series of sketches, tenuous as the lives of the actors themselves who seem like players left behind after the curtain has gone down and the audience has gone home by some oversight. These people have all had their day. The men have served and some with bravery in the war. The women have been leaders of society; their ease of manners, their unconscious elegance clings as close as ever during a picnic in the woods when the princess builds the fire and the duke cooks the mushrooms while they discuss their waning fortunes with humor and a lightness of touch that yet fails to conceal their desperate plight. “What training have we had that would enable us to make our living in this modern world, even if we were perfectly willing to ‘do anything?’” asks one of the group. And a careful stocktaking reveals of marketable assets hardly enough to equip a chauffeur. So they drift as long as maybe, selling their last belongings, dismissing servants. The princess finally goes back to her American home where by letters she can maintain intact her really tender relations with her aging husband—relations that easily survived an occasional infidelity, but which she dare not put to the test of living a life together in dinginess. The Russian nobleman uses his last nest egg—a sudden windfall in the shape of an entirely forgotten investment made in the old prosperous days—to go on a little trip to Paris with the young duchess. Meanwhile the executioners take possession of his villa—what would have been the use to stave them off with the sum that paid for the Paris trip? And after the trip and its disillusionment he turns chauffeur. The duchess becomes the really tragic figure. Her little spree has shown her the futility of a mere change of venue. Now for the first time in her life the seriousness of life becomes apparent. Her not very prepossessing husband appeals as after all a sterling character and a refuge. But it is too late. To save his face she has foresworn herself on her return. Both know it, but according to their code it is not talked out. Instead she is “accidentally” drowned while skating and the two widowers (the duke and the prince) go to Italy to vegetate till the end. Only two—characteristically the two youngest—of the group promise to find their way in a world where work becomes the *noblesse oblige* of a new generation but where their old ideals of fidelity to a definitely conceived code of honor—whether its premises receive universal approbation or not—will still give them a basis on which to build a new life.

There is a loveliness not altogether unlike that of the “Cherry Orchard” in this autumnal scene. And the charm of their manners, the delicate courtesy of their intercourse, the grace and humor of their conversation, the exquisite taste of their surroundings make one wonder regretfully whether the modern world is not losing something very precious in the “Fading Aristocracy.”

At the very opposite end of the scale stands Arnold Bronnen's “Rossbach. Der Spielmann des Neuen Reiches” (Berlin: Ernst Rowohlt, 1930). If Johst's tale was played on muted strings this is a song set to martial music. Rossbach, a very much alive person whose story is told partly in the form of an interview, partly as a modern epic, was an officer in the war and a freelance on threatened border districts where, as on the Polish frontier, active fighting between bands was going on long after peace was signed. He was a rebel against constituted authority long before the war, being ejected out of his military school

for insubordination and taking up his military career again upon his private initiative. He belonged to the generation of young officers who came to their majority about 1910 and who felt stirring in them the rebellious spirit which marked the civilian youth of that day and which must have been particularly trying to the military authorities. To them “initiative” became the watchword instead of “theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do and die.” This spirit is admirably depicted by the dramatist Fritz von Unruh—himself a member of this generation—in his dramas: “Die Offiziere” (1912) and “Prinz von Preussen” (1914).

After the collapse of Germany, the Revolution, the Treaty that tore away large sections of Germans from the mother land and condemned Germany to remain virtually unarmed in the midst of enemies armed to the teeth, such men as Rossbach found it hard to believe that these conditions were to be permanent and irremediable. Hence he became for five years a freelance, ready to take part in any *Putsch*—whether Kapp, Hitler, Ludendorff or whatever—that promised to bring relief to insupportable conditions. Finally in 1923 he became convinced that the time for such uprising was definitely over. In Munich, after the defeat of the last *Putsch*, it came to him that a consolidated government had emerged from the chaos. And when Hindenburg became president, he definitely gave up his defiance—but not his hopes of a rejuvenated and invigorated homeland.

Now comes a most characteristically German note into the activities of this undefeated youth. He disbands his military followers and forms—a *Spielschar*, i.e., a wan-

dering band of musicians, singers. What country but Germany would at so desperate a time see in music the hope for a regeneration of its youth? It is a rejuvenation with modifications of the German *Wandervogel* movement with a goodly injection of Boy Scout ideas. The style of the narrative is terse, vital, dynamic, and suggests Spring to the other's Autumn.

This same spirit of youthful hope and dare forms the substance of the third book to be discussed here: Frank Matzke's “So Sind Wir” (Leipzig: Reclam, 1930). Its subtitle “Jugend Bekennt” could be rendered “Youth's Program.” It is both a program and an exposition of the young generation's beliefs and disbeliefs. The outstanding impression on the reader is one of gallant courage, the courage that comes up smiling in desperate situations. An old verse serves as a motto for one chapter: “I live and know not how long; I die and know not when; I go and know not whither; I wonder I can be so gay.” Not gaiety but cheeriness is the prevalent tone of this confession. “We are of the generation that saw the war from the rear only, that ran about playgrounds when the big killing was going on,” but that came into its adolescence in a world in chaos, a world bereft of its old faiths, its old values. A world that had to be reconstructed from the very bottom. Oswald Spengler's “Untergang des Abendlandes” became their cosmos and they neither had the faith in the orthodox God of their forebears (in the most literal sense we can say “we have lost our God”) nor can they accept the nineteenth century's substitute “Progress.” For the impressions of their childhood and youth make them doubt whether any progress in any real sense can be claimed for the world they found. Often the far past seems to them to show a more advanced humanity than their own day or that of their imme-

diat predecessors. But since they must live in this world—whether it be the best or the worst of all possible worlds they have no means of determining—they mean to live gallantly and unafraid but also, as far as possible, unfooled. So they refuse all calls upon their sentiment or all claims to penetrate their inward reserve. And this demand for reserve and objectivity is related to the new moral code evolved by themselves after the debacle of the old order. “We do not believe in license—not because we are afraid of punishment now or hereafter, but because we have an instinct for decency and cleanliness. But we will not accept your tenets on your mere say so. We will examine for ourselves whether chastity is an absolute value or not. But we know already that decency is a reward unto itself.”

One very grateful element in the “Confession” is the author's realization that these values are as relative as were those of the past. “We are but a wave in the stream that is without beginning and without end. But this one wave—our wave—is at the moment in the ascendant. For a moment it rests and all about it are only valleys. This moment is our own. . . . Before we ourselves have disappeared, our time will have passed. Another wave will sweep ours away. We are no more the beginning of a new world epoch than were our predecessors. We simply are alive now.”

Professor H. J. C. Grierson, who selects the books to be awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prizes, has been Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature in Edinburgh University since 1915. This year the fiction prize went to Miss E. H. Young's “Miss Mole,” and that for biography to Major Francis Yeats-Brown's “Bengal Lancer.”

## A NEW BOOK

by A. E. (George Russell) of whom  
THE SATURDAY REVIEW said:

“What a grand Irishman he is  
—an economist who believes in  
fairies, a farmer who writes poetry,  
an editor whose politics are the re-  
sult and not the hope of his life.”

## A. E. (GEORGE RUSSELL)

This Irish poet, philosopher, essayist, artist, and agricultural economist is now delighting American audiences on a lecture tour of this country, and American readers with his new volume of poetry, *Vale and Other Poems*, which has just been published. “It seems to be,” says the *New York World-Telegram*, “a distillation of the essential quality of all his poetic work.”

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY 60 Fifth Avenue NEW YORK



### Books By A. E.

VALE AND OTHER POEMS . . . . .	\$1.50
COLLECTED POEMS . . . . .	\$3.75
THE CANDLE OF VISION . . . . .	\$2.00
THE INTERPRETERS . . . . .	\$1.75
VOICES OF THE STONES . . . . .	\$1.25
THE NATIONAL BEING . . . . .	\$1.75



## The New Books

## Fiction

(Continued from page 715)

where the author's natural lyric bent is exercised to the full. It is clear that Mrs. Young has both the desire and the vision necessary to write a first-rate novel. Her failure in this initial effort is evidently due not so much to a lack of talent or material as to an overanxious desire to be psychologically correct, which robs her narrative of naturalness. Its occasionally memorable phrases give clear promise of better things to come.

**DAMNED LITTLE FOOL.** By COSMO HAMILTON. Brewer, Warren & Putnam, 1931. \$2.

Subtitled "A Tragic Comedy," this urbane, engaging story poses a rare, but credible, marital difficulty for its central situation and works out the problem to a logical, inevitable, unforced conclusion. Ronny, chivalrous Englishman of thirty-three, a confirmed one-woman man, married to Rosita, a spoiled, undeveloped virago twelve years his junior, though still deeply in love with her, submits to the ordeal of providing grounds for divorce in order that the feckless girl may have full freedom to pursue the happiness her callow nature craves. With his secretary—the same young, handsome, devoted woman who had voluntarily served as an innocent correspondent in the collusive divorce—Ronny seeks peace and forgetfulness in his villa at Mentone. But his ex-wife, unaware of his impending visit there, is already installed in the house, while a prospective second husband and numerous well-meaning busybodies of their acquaintance are also gathered, expectantly, in the vicinity. Of course, the outcome of the story, from first to last, is never in doubt, but much bright and beguiling dialogue, a number of first-rate studies in feminine portraiture, and a skilfully sustained atmosphere of consistent aliveness, render the book the most competent and thoroughly readable novel the author has published in the past half-dozen years.

**JAVA GIRL.** By BARON W. THOE SWARTZENBERG and MARY BENNETT HARRISON. Brentano's, 1931. \$2.

The note of saccharine bathos and sentimentality which pervades this novel, whose venerable theme is that of miscegenation in

the tropics, excludes the book from serious consideration either as a work of fiction or as a thesis designed to point the evils inevitable to temporary unions between white men and the women of an alien race. The scene is Java, whither, from Holland to his elder brother's prosperous plantation in the interior, comes dandified young René, who soon acquires a voluptuous Javanese girl for his mistress. It is the troubled progress of their illicit love affair which fills the bulk of the story. No attempt is made to deal intelligibly or artistically with the formidable problems underlying the book's tawdry and shallow surface.

**THE LITTLE TOWN.** By HEINRICH MANN. Translated from the German by WINIFRED RAY. Houghton Mifflin, 1931. \$2.50.

Heinrich Mann's book is a long narrative of amorous intrigues, quarrels, and conflicts supposed to arise when a group of opera singers visits a small Italian town. The story somewhat closely resembles a movie, being told chiefly in visual images—gestures, motions, movements of groups—and in conversations. We follow the inner experience of one of the characters, Nello Gennari, who is in love. A sickly affair, it is exaggerated and distorted into the likeness of a feverish dream.

**EROS INVINCIBLE.** By RICARDA HUCH. Macaulay, 1931. \$2.

A novel on the old-fashioned scale, going slowly and thoroughly about its business of making us familiar with the lives of its characters is rarely found nowadays. Ricarda Huch's "Eros Invincible"—it had a less flamboyant title originally in German—is such a novel. Not that it is particularly engrossing in plot or style, since Frau Huch belongs to the romantic school, believing in quantity rather than quality of words. But the general effect is pleasing, the case of the heroine sufficiently understandable to awaken sympathy, and the background of the story colorful enough to lead us on from page to page (there are over three hundred of them) until at the end, in contentment, we feel that we have read something more considerable than the average novel of the day.

The reasons for this are not difficult to find. In the first place, Mr. William A. Drake has provided a good translation, and in the second, the author has stuck firmly to the outlines of her narrative and not at-

tempted to introduce distracting secondary personages or episodes into the story. The Hanseatic family of Ursleu is outwardly somewhat similar to Thomas Mann's Buddenbrooks clan, but as personalities they are more interesting, more individual and erratic. The author's leanings toward romanticism are clearly shown in her heroine, the musically gifted Galeide. Her long love affair with her cousin Ezard, who is prevented for many years from marrying her by the family situation and his previous marriage, comes to an end abruptly just as its fulfillment is made possible by the death of his wife. Once more the romantic strain in Frau Huch's nature leads her to bestow her heroine, for a short time before the final tragedy, on a kind of shepherd, a youth from the Swiss mountains, possessed of great physical beauty and a sort of hypnotic power over the far more intelligent Galeide. The whole is admirably told, in a manner perhaps a trifle outmoded and cumbrous, but also convincing and complete.

Ricarda Huch's talent has many other sides, as readers of "The Deruga Trail" will attest, but in this novel, one of her most popular and successful, it is seen at its best. Like many of her contemporaries in Germany, she is perhaps more gifted as an organizer and analyst than as an inspired chronicler of human emotions, but at least her qualities are solid and lasting, like those of the nation from which she springs.

## International

**CALIBAN IN AFRICA.** By LEONARD BARNES. Lippincott, 1931. \$3.

As a political tract, this work may have its place in South African politics. But it is difficult to understand just why it should be reissued in this country. It deals with issues and problems which are of less than tertiary concern to Americans, and it deals with them in a way which is calculated to throw more light on their bitterness than on their solutions.

The text certainly does not realize the author's claim to impartiality. It is "the Dutchman" who is the object of his incessant fusillade. "In essentials, he still belongs to the first half of the seventeenth century. He adapts himself to change far less readily than the Japanese, the Indian, or even the Turk under Mustapha Kemal's guiding hand. For sheer obscurantist conservatism the Afghan alone can hold a candle to him. History, for the Dutchman, consists of his treks, and the various encounters with his two arch-adversaries, the Briton and the native—no more."

The Afrikaner—and there is no doubt in the reader's mind that the Afrikaner is a "Dutchman"—is at various times "a typical monomaniac," "atrabillious," "mastered by his craze for mastery," "Calibanesque," "as anti-social as the jackal," and a "public menace as a trustee for any subject peoples."

Such is the tone of a volume which, while it demonstrates an unusual skill in the use of language, a skill amounting to real literary quality, is nevertheless essentially a piece of bitterly partisan political diatribe.

**POLITICAL HANDBOOK OF THE WORLD: 1931.** Edited by WALTER MALLORY. New Haven: Yale University Press for the Council on Foreign Relations, 1931. \$2.50.

This, the fourth annual volume of the series of Political Handbooks, maintains the high standard set by its predecessors in giving in compact form the essential facts of governments, parties, and the press in all countries of the world. In addition, the present volume contains a section on the League of Nations.

The one striking lack in the present organization of the Handbook is the omission of the names and party affiliations of the Cabinets. This information would be extremely useful to those working in the field of international affairs and even if changes occur with some frequency in a few countries, it would help in estimating the character of such changes.

## Religion

**BELIEF UNBOUND: A Promethean Religion for the Modern World.** By WILLIAM PEPPERELL MONTAGUE. Yale University Press, 1930. \$1.50.

These Terry lectures are, to put it mildly, disappointing. In them Dr. Montague, who is a professor of philosophy at Columbia University, attempts to make a new religion, fitted to what he thinks are the demands of "the modern spirit." This is rather a worse performance than such things usually are.

Dr. Montague is handicapped by an inadequate knowledge of theology. He is one of those intent on abandoning the religions of the past without bothering to discover what those religions have been. He begins

by saying that every religion is a mixture of physics and ethics, thus reducing religion to a mere system of thought, which of course no religion on earth ever has been or is. Toward the end of his volume he somewhat hesitantly admits to his new faith mystical intuitions, but he arbitrarily limits these to such intuitions as happen to support his own energistic pantheism. If mysticism backs him up it is reputable—if not, it is bad, even false. If this be the sort of thing which is demanded by the modern temper, all that any honest man can say is, so much the worse for the modern temper. It is also plain that the author continuously confuses Calvinism with Christianity, a very common mistake in "modern" circles. Dr. Montague might well contemplate St. Francis, read St. Theresa, and look into the life and teaching of an ordinary Catholic parish, or of a contemporary Protestant one, for that matter. He would be quite astonished. He might then discover that Christians of the great tradition believe no more than he does in a bogie God who hates His world and denies the validity of the life force.

It is not unusual to find philosophers on Morningside ignorant about religion. It is a bit more surprising to perceive that Dr. Montague is also mistaken about the significance of the Promethean myth. He thinks that Prometheus was a hero who defied the gods in a strife toward a larger and more loving life. As a matter of fact, Prometheus was one of the gods who revealed that divine compassion has its place on Olympus. Prometheus is not a rebel. Dr. Montague has read his Byron more carefully than his Æschylus.

## Books Briefly Described

**THE DRUM BOOK.** By SATIS N. COLMAN. New York: John Day Co. 1931.

A book prepared for children's schools but containing a most interesting survey of the use of the drum throughout the world. The last chapters are practical exercises in the use of the drum.

**MASTER MINDS OF MODERN SCIENCE.** By T. C. BRIDGES and H. H. TILTMAN. New York: Dial Press, 1931. \$3.

Brief studies of the biography and achievement of a group of modern scientists in fields as diverse as botany, television, physics, radioactivity, and engineering.

**THE GRAND NATIONAL 1839-1930.** By DAVID H. MUNROE. New York: Huntington Press, 1931.

An elaborately illustrated record with statistics of the famous sporting classic, The Grand National Steeplechase, with special articles on both horses and jockeys. One excellent print in color is the frontispiece.

**PICTURES AND PEOPLE: A Transatlantic Crisscross Between Roger Hinks in London and Naomi Royde-Smith, in New York, Boston and Philadelphia During 1930.** New York: Harper, 1931. \$5.

Letters vivaciously written, especially Miss Royde-Smith's, which deal with her expedition through the United States in search of good pictures and reports from her correspondent as to what was going on at home. The point of view is original, the observation is fresh, and there is not only a good deal of shrewd comment on the American scene but much surprising information as to little known collections of pictures in the United States. The book is elaborately illustrated by pictures of paintings and of scenes and is as interesting as it is original.

**BONERS: Being a Collection of Schoolboy Wisdom.** Compiled by DR. SEUSE. New York: Viking Press, 1931. \$1.


This is the last and one of the best contributions to that fount of ancient humor, the schoolboy mind as it works in the examination period. We should like to review it more extensively but to begin to quote would be to go on for a column. Furthermore, any one with experience knows that these adolescent misadventures are probably genuine. Some of them are wise, as for instance, "A Metaphor is a suppressed smile," or "A Prodigal is the son of a priest."


**STORY OF NEAR EAST RELIEF, 1915-1930.** By JAMES L. BARTON. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931. \$3.50.


Described as a narrative in American philanthropy, this is a complete story of the extraordinary effort by which 130,000 orphan children were taken care of and one of the most calamitous situations in modern times made less disastrous than would otherwise have been the case. This is an authoritative statement and should go into American libraries.

(Continued on page 723)

## The Best Seller of 1931






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