

# THE NEW STATESMAN

## A Weekly Review of Politics and Literature

Vol. XII. No. 303.]

SATURDAY, JANUARY 25, 1919

[REGISTERED AT THE G.P.O.] SIXPENCE  
AS A NEWSPAPER.

### CONTENTS

	PAGE		PAGE
COMMENTS . . . . .	337	SWEET BODEMENTS. By Edward Shanks . . . . .	349
THE REVOLT OF LABOUR . . . . .	339	FLAME AND SNOW. By Laurence Binyon . . . . .	351
THE URGENCY OF A NEW ARMY SCHEME . . . . .	341	GERMAN LITERARY CHRONICLE : 1914-1918. By A. W. G. Randall . . . . .	351
THE IRISH TROUBLE: A WAY OUT . . . . .	342	BOOKS IN GENERAL. By Solomon Eagle . . . . .	358
IN GERMANY TO-DAY—II. . . . .	343	REVIEWS :	
THE PIVOT OF RECONSTRUCTION . . . . .	345	Victory . . . . .	354
THIEVES . . . . .	346	How to Win the Peace . . . . .	355
OBSERVATIONS . . . . .	347	Tidal Lands . . . . .	355
CORRESPONDENCE: From the Rt. Hon. F. D. Acland, the Bishop of Stepney and others, S. Gotto, Arnold Bennett, G. Ravenscroft . . . . .	348	Weltpolitik . . . . .	356
		THE CITY. By Emil Davies . . . . .	358

*All MSS. and letters relating thereto should be addressed to the Editor, at to Great Queen Street, Kingsway, London, W.C. 2.*

PRINCE'S ISLAND, in the Sea of Marmora, is perhaps a picturesque, but certainly a remote, spot. What, in theory, was the reason for its selection as a place where the delegates of all Russian Governments should meet and compose, or at least elucidate, their differences, we do not know: in practice it has the advantage that from there the Bolsheviks will not find it so easy as they would have found it from Paris to address astute appeals to the democracies of the world. That anything will come of the Russian assembly—even presuming that the Bolsheviks as well as the others attend it—we do not presume to hope. Those who are entitled to attend include representatives of the Kolchak Government in Siberia, of General Denikin, of M. Tschaikovsky at Archangel, of the Lithuanians, the Letts and the Esthonians, and of the Bolsheviks, who control territories containing about half the total population of Russia in Europe and Asia. We have contended that the Bolsheviks might—that, at least, it were worth while to discover whether they would—make a concordat with us whereunder they would purchase non-interference and the resumption of commercial relations at the price of honouring Russia's bills and abstaining from armed aggression; but we are not so rash as to hope that any agreement between them and their bitterest Russian enemies will be possible. If they attend the Marmora Conference they will do it merely for the sake of the possibilities of delay and propaganda that it may offer. We suppose that the scheme was a compromise resulting from one party wishing to negotiate with the Bolsheviks and another protesting that they were unfit to speak to. The upshot is that the Peace Conference has shirked the Russian problem, and there is too much reason to fear that its attitude towards the Polish and German problems is marked by an equal lack of decision.

Assuming that it is genuine (a question about which no evidence is before us), the remarkable letter from the ex-Kaiser to the late Emperor Francis Joseph, published by the French committee of inquiry into the responsibility for war crimes, hangs an obviously heavy millstone round its author's neck. It had, indeed, been already established that the bulk of the atrocities committed in Belgium and France during 1914 were the result not of indiscipline but of policy—that they were done purposely, in order to terrorise. We knew that many subsequent German war crimes had also been purposive—*spurlos versenk*, for instance. We knew, too, that under the Prussian Army and State system such courses required, and must have had, the Kaiser's sanction; and we knew, lastly, that this principle of committing atrocities in order to break down the enemy's moral was a part of the Prussian war-theory, which its exponents were at no pains either to disguise or to apologise for. Nevertheless, the personal autographed enunciation of the theory by William II. in a letter written to his principal Ally at the time when the events took place is a very material piece of evidence. What may strike some people almost more is the gloating, visualising way in which the letter refers to the intended horrors. There is a strain of criminal degeneracy about it, which matches, if it does not excuse, the strain in which some people are anticipating the writer's execution.

\* \* \*

A majority of States has now voted in favour of the federal prohibition amendment. America will therefore go dry (as a war measure) this year and permanently next year. All sorts of causes have contributed to this remarkable decision: there have been curious bargains between the supporters and opponents of prohibition and women's suffrage; there has been a growing belief that even moderate drinking impairs efficiency; in some States politicians have sought to buy the women's vote by supporting prohibition, and a large number of voters have voted against drink not

Mr. W. H. Hudson's lovely *Crystal Age*, an age in which mankind dwells in a few widely separated patriarchal households, beautiful and long-lived, simple, infinitely wise, and in constant communion with the earth. But this is so far out of relation with anything that could reasonably be prophesied that it is rather, perhaps, a fairy-tale than a book about the future—one step further from reality than Morris's real "earthly paradise." It is like *News from Nowhere*, a story from which one rises with the gloom of daily life momentarily deepened.

What one might call the "middle future" is, of course, the happy hunting-ground of the crank, who imagines the most marvellous and the most diverting mechanical improvements. In one book, the memory of which I cherish, though not, alas, the memory of its title or its author, the hero is a great scientist, who, having produced a human being by chemical processes, announces his intention of thus largely increasing the output, and is astonished (the author sympathetically astonished and hurt with him) when his reactionary fellow-citizens look on the project with disfavour. But all, mad or sane, are, curiously, almost unanimous in the opinion that applied science will continue in the future at its present rate of progress. This is not questioned by Mr. Wells (save in one instance) or Mr. Rousseau or Monsignor Benson in his two pictures of an Atheist and a Catholic future. (You pay your six shillings and have the opportunity of finding each alternative equally uninviting.) Certain items of "progress"—for example, moving pavements, gramophone newspapers, and legalised and organised suicide (sometimes called euthanasia)—frequently occur, and development on such lines, for good or evil, appears to be the common anticipation. Yet, I suppose, the reverse is at least possible. It is sketched in Mr. Wells's *War in the Air*, where the ravages of battle leave the whole world keeping pigs, without its heritage of science; but the description is not carried far enough. Much the same state is reached in Jack London's *The Scarlet Plague*, but here the population is reduced to, I think, one in thirty millions, and this should perhaps be classed as an "end of the race book" rather than as a vision of the middle future. Richard Jefferies did it more elaborately in *After London* by means of an obscure astronomical disaster which considerably altered the configuration of the earth; but, save for a few good passages in which he described wild nature resuming its supremacy over the garden-like English countryside, and an extraordinarily vivid picture of London deserted and become a pestilential swamp, he plunged the world so deep into a new Dark Age that he might just as well have been writing about the original Dark Ages. His characters were feudal barons, who fought one another with bows and arrows, catapults and battering-rams; and except that they smoked cigars, grown in Devonshire, it is hard to see how they differ from their prototypes. What I should like to see is a book showing our present civilisation sinking gradually into decay, not hurried there by some single cataclysm, but rather falling nation by nation to the state of the less satisfactory South American Republics and below it, from causes as much or as little explicable as those that withdrew genius from Athens, undermined the Roman Empire, and stopped the spirit of Gothic in mediæval Europe. I can conceive several chains of events which might lead—plausibly enough at least for a novel—to such a result; for example, a balance between capital and labour, each determined to subdue the other, and neither quite strong enough to manage it. It is arguable that our science is too permanently secured in books ever to be quite lost, though, as Mr. Belloc has pointed out, there must have been a great wealth of Roman technical literature which has utterly disappeared. But this possibility is not strong enough to stand in the way of writing such a novel; and, if some ingenious author would give six months or so of his time to it, I should have a notable piece to add to my collection. It is, in fact, one of the books which I should dearly like to see someone else write—but which I am damned if I write myself.

EDWARD SHANKS.

## FLAME AND SNOW

The bare branches rose against the grey sky.  
Under them, newly fallen, snow shone to the eye.

Up the hill-slope, over the brow it shone,  
Spreading an immaterial beauty to tread upon.

In the elbow of black boughs it clung, nested white,  
And smooth below it slept in the solitude of its light.

It was deep to the knee in the hollow; there in a stump  
of wood  
I struck my bill-hook, warm to the fingers' blood, and  
stood,

Pausing, and breathed and listened: all the air  
around  
Was filled with busy strokes and ringing of clean  
sound,

And now and again a crack and a slow rending, to tell  
When a tree heavily tottered and swift with a crash  
fell.

I smelt the woody smell of smoke from the fire, now  
Beginning to spurt from frayed bracken and torn  
bough

In the lee of a drift, fed from our long morning toil  
And sending smart to the eyes the smoke in a blue coil.

I lopped the twigs from a fresh-cut pole and tossed it  
aside  
To the stakes heaped beyond me, and made a plunging  
stride,

And gathered twines of bramble and dead hazel sticks  
And a faggot of twisted thorn with snow lumped in the  
pricks.

And piled the smoulder high. Soon a blaze tore  
Up through hissing boughs and shrivelling leaves, from  
a core

Of quivering crimson; soon the heat burst and  
revelled,  
And apparitions of little airy flames dishevelled

Gleamed and vanished, a lost flight as if elfin wings,  
Trembling aloft to the wild music that Fire sings

Dancing alive from nothing, lovely and mad. And  
still  
The snow, pale as a dream, slept on the old hill,

Softly fallen and strange. Which made me more to  
glow,  
Beauty of young flames, or wonder of young snow?

LAURENCE BINYON.

## GERMAN LITERARY CHRONICLE:

1914-1918

JUST before the war—how remote it seems!—Mr. Martin Secker was publishing a complete English edition of the plays of Gerhart Hauptmann. Someone in Germany was returning the compliment by issuing a complete German edition of the plays of Bernard Shaw. These two instances are a proof of the fact that there was previous to August, 1914, more literary exchange between

England and Germany than a good many of us would now care to admit. Modern English literature in the original was, of course, chiefly through Tauchnitz, much better known in Germany than German literature here—rightly so; but we managed, thanks to the enterprise of translators, publishers and play-producers like Mr. Granville Barker and the Stage Society, to know a good deal about contemporary German poetry, drama and novels. We need not now be ashamed—have we not enjoyed Wagner more during the war than ever before?—of having seen plays by Schnitzler, Sudermann and Bahr, of having admired the poems of Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Stefan George.

And if this be so, the question will naturally occur to us as to what is the present position of German literature after the past four years. Has it shown any exceptional activity? Have new literary geniuses arisen? What is the prospect before German literary art in this culminating humiliation and distraction?

We shall find that certain leading writers—one or two of them familiar to us at least by name, one certainly by the notoriety of his works—have disappeared. Christian Morgenstern, the delightful fantastic poet and satirist; John Henry Mackay, the Anarchist poet and exponent of Max Stirner, author of *The Ego and his Own*; Gustav Falke, the poet; Peter Rosegger, the well-known Austrian novelist; Maria von Ebner Eschenbach, the Austrian poetess; Hedwig Lachmann, a leading woman-poet of Swabia and the South; Max Dauthendey and Frank Wedekind—all these have died. The last two probably leave the largest gaps from the point of view of the history of contemporary German literature. Of Wedekind nothing need be said—Mr. Ashley Dukes having said most of the essential things in his book, *Modern Dramatists*, which was published in 1911—beyond these two facts, first, that he, even he, was drawn into the stream of German super-patriotism at the beginning of the war and wrote dramatic dialogues, never produced, I believe, based on incidents in Bismarck's career; secondly, that an autobiography by him is announced, which should be one of the most interesting volumes of literary confessions issued for many years. Max Dauthendey, though probably of greater significance, is far less known here. He was in the East Indies when war broke out, and, failing in his attempts to reach Germany, went to Java, where he died at the beginning of September last. He was a poet in the style of Whitman—at least this is true of the works of his maturity—and one of his volumes, *Die geflügelte Erde* (The Winged Earth), contains some of the best lyrics in contemporary German poetry.

Of the older poets and dramatists who remain there is not very much to record. Practically all of them, including, as we have seen, even such rebellious people as Wedekind, were swept along with the flood of Jingoism which overwhelmed Germany during the first eighteen months of the war. Some of them signed the notorious "Es ist nicht wahr" manifesto; some of them engaged in furious propagandist controversy; Ernst Lissauer set a fashion by writing a particularly good commination lyric called *The Hymn of Hate*, which we seem to have forgotten; and all of them—Hauptmann, Sudermann, Dehmel, Rainer Maria Rilke, Ernst Hardt, Ludwig Thoma, Arno Holz—thought they would serve their country by writing poems for the most part commonplace and stuffed with cliché rhymes and phrases about heroes, victory, the sword, "perfidious Albion," "Gut" and "Blut," "Krieg" and "Sieg," "Morgenrot" and "To(dt)."

Later, when the war-fever was lessening, some of the writers named wrote works of greater consequence to the impartial historian. Dehmel has written a realist drama, for example, the *Menschenfreunde* (The Friends of Humanity); Hauptmann has written a novel, *Die Ketzer von Soana* (The Heretics of Soana), a story in the style of his novel *Atlantis*, of which an English translation was issued in 1918, and a long dramatic poem, based on a story by Selma Lagerlöf, *Winterballade*, which is quite worth reading;

Sudermann has published a volume of plays, *Die entgötterte Welt* (The Godless World),\* showing how degenerate the world was before the war. Of the activities of the other poets and dramatists of standing it should be recorded that the leading woman-poet, Else Lasker-Schüler, has issued her *Collected Poems*; Schnitzler a comedy of the newspaper world, *Flink und Fliederquersch*; Stefan Zweig, the critic and translator of Bernard Shaw and Verhaeren, a tragedy entitled *Jeremias*; Hermann Bahr, a Catholic novel called *Himmelfahrt* (Ascension) and a similar religious play entitled *Die Stimme* (The Voice); and Stefan Georg, who throughout the war has stood apart from the war lyricists and has been much condemned for doing so, a hundred or so new lyrics.

The ebbing of the Jingo flood seems to have left George with a much increased reputation and influence. His well-known poetry review, *Blätter für die Kunst*, written now mainly by himself, has appeared occasionally during the war. Most of the other literary reviews of importance seem to have continued regularly—the *Neue Rundschau*, originally organ of the famous "Freie Bühne," where Hauptmann with other important dramatists began his career; the *Literarische Echo*; the *Weissen Blätter*, edited by the Alsatian poet, René Schickelé—not very favourably regarded by the Jingo—the *Sturm*, organ of the *Expressionists*, artists and poets; and the *Aktion*, organ of a now well-established group of young lyric poets, chief among whom stands Wilhelm Klemm. Wilhelm Herzog's literary and critical review, *Das Forum*, was suspended by the authorities for some time, but was allowed to reappear shortly before the recent changes in Germany.

There are three main characteristics of the German literature being produced by the younger men which should be noted. The first is a growing aversion from realism or naturalism, in part due, no doubt, to the increased influence of Georg to which reference has been made; Hölderlin, in many respects Georg's master, also seems to be inspiring much contemporary poetry. Secondly, one will note the preference of the younger poets for the dramatic form. And in this connection we must chronicle the foundation in Berlin, some months ago, of the society "Junges Deutschland," under the presidency of Max Reinhardt, with the object of producing the works of the younger serious dramatists. Chief among these are Reinhard Goering—his non-patriotic Jutland battle play, *Seeschlacht* (Sea-fight), the action of which takes place in the turret of a German cruiser, produced a painful impression when it was presented; Wilhelm Hasenclever, author of a remarkable neo-classical play, *Antigone*; Reinhard Sorge, one of Georg's most promising disciples until he fell on the Somme; Franz Werfel, a poet of the Whitmanian school; and Fritz von Unruh, an Uhlan early in the war, whose war tragedy, *Ein Geschlecht* (A Race), a critic called "a self-conquest over militarism." The phrase might broadly be applied to the activities of most of the school; they represent the reaction—not too self-conscious to be programmatic—against the literary Jingoism of their elders.

Finally, in this hurried sketch we must note the emergence of the German-Swiss poets and dramatists. One name, also of a dramatist, is being acclaimed as that of a young man of great literary promise—Max Pulver, of whom, as of the new individual German-Swiss literary school, much might be said.

On the future of German literature as a whole it is impossible to prophesy. Political events and the exhaustion of the German people may hamper artistic achievement; on the other hand, the removal of a blighting political system may lead to a revival. The latter seems to be the greater probability. If this be so, and a time of great artistic inspiration be in store for the Germans, it will still find a number of young poets and dramatists ready to carry on—it may be surpass—the work of the years before the war.

ALEC W. G. RANDALL.

\* This was reviewed in THE NEW STATESMAN for August 12th, 1916.