NATIONALITY AND WAR
France and Germany. The History of a Thousand Years.
By Professor J. HALLEN. Translated by DORA VON RENZELER. Constable. 7s. 6d.

The Lock-Locked Lake. By Lt.-Col. A. A. HANBURY-SPARROW. Barker. 7s. 6d.

A secret and sarcastic reason of their own, the publishers of France and Germany say that Professor Haller is "no national propagandist," and that his book is "an extraordinary achievement" in detestability. Actually, it is a masterpiece of special pleading, and is for that reason of great interest to anyone seeking to understand modern Europe. Here is the gristy story of Franco-German relations as seen by many informed and reasonable Germans. There is no question of text-book propaganda, of the distortion, or omission of facts. Professor Haller knows all the facts, and outfaces them—building them into a story with so clear, so shrewd, a moral that a German may be excused for accepting it as the one plausible interpretation, and hence for training with enthusiasm for the next war. And it is horribly clear to an outsider that a well-intentioned Frenchman could make these same facts into a deadly indictment on the other side.

Beginning with some salutary remarks on the Middle Ages, Professor Haller's story does not take form until it reaches the fifteenth century. It was in 1477, according to Professor Haller, when Maria of Burgundy married Maximilian, the Emperor's son, that "the seed of Franco-German hereditary enmity was sown." It was after that marriage that the French began to contend that "the necessity of defence" caused their periodic attacks upon their neighbours. By the sixteenth century the possession of the Rhine frontier had become a recognised French ambition, and "formed the subject of scientific polemics between Germans and Frenchmen," with much argument about Caesar and Strabo, both of whom had stated that the Rhine was the boundary of Gaul. It is in terms of this French desire for the Rhine frontier—cherished by the French for motives of "security" and opposed by the German rulers for the same high-minded reason—that Professor Haller explains the next three hundred years of Franco-German history. The Rhine was the object of Richelieu's foreign policy; it was the cause of most of Louis XIV's wars; and when, by 1697, France held Alzey, the result, according to Professor Haller, was that "the seed of Franco-German hereditary enmity had sprung up." The quasi naturalis occidentis, the almost innate inerocity of the time of the Crusades, had been given a tangible object and a permanent fostering soil.

It is perhaps natural that up to this point Professor Haller should have told his story in terms of French depreciation and innocent German grief. And, even after the rise of Prussia, it is easy to see how a German historian might maintain this view of Franco-German relations until the close of the Napoleonic wars. (English readers, however, will be interested to note what this "detached" historian makes of the twenty years of war beginning in 1799):

This war, like every world war of the last three hundred years, was in the first place a Franco-German war. . . . It began in Germany, was supported and conducted with German forces, and ultimately terminated by German forces, and the transformation of the German map in its most tangible result.

Gentlemen's remarks, when the Congress of Vienna refused to deprive France of Alsace, were unquestionably sound: "What will be taken from France, what she will have to compensate for is more than sufficient to exasperate and irritate her, but nothing will be done to protect us. Here lies the germ of new wars." When, however, Professor Haller explains the Franco-German wars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as solely caused by France's desire to extend her holdings along the Rhine, the explanation wears thin. We are told that the reason for Louis Napoleon's rise was the hope that "Bourbon and Orleans had failed" in extending the Rhine frontier. We are told that in 1870, "Bismarck, that is to say, Germany, wanted peace, France did not want it, so war was the result." Bismarck and William I were left grieved at depriving France of Alsace and Lorraine, but forced to do so for their country's "security." Bismarck, after the war, "courted France," doing all he could to ingratiate himself; but France's remorseless ambition made her see these touching attentions, made her adopt the wicked policy of encirclement in order that she might once more return to the Rhine. The war of 1914 was the result, France's war must be the "same as they had been at all times during the last centuries." And in an ominous conclusion, Professor Haller writes:

So things continue through the centuries: Marquis and Louis XIV. Vengeuses, Danton and Napoleon I, Chateaubriand and Pagan. Tichy and Napoleon III appear to us as contemporaries and assume the features of Poincaré and Clemenceau. Foeh and Trotsky in their new actors in old and well-known parts in a play that forever repeats itself.

The enthralling and terrible fact about this story is that it represents historical truth for many millions of people. In summary, it may sound nonsensical; but Professor Haller is brilliant at reconciling the external data with his thesis. Whether or not, from this view, nor the opposing but equally cordial French interpretation, can be overcome by "facts." The emotional and political foundations of two great nations must be changed before one can be said to have vanquished the other. Meanwhile, Europe lives under a curse, and not that of Orestes, going about her business with the knowledge that from time to time she must be seized with blood-curdling Dico! quia ruinares de sang coaled omnis de nos! Any reader who cares to imagine, or to remember, what the ruïneuse de sang feel like, at first hand, can find no better picture than Colonel Sparrow's book. This is a faithful and clear tithe picture what one man saw and felt during the war. The outcome of a long struggle and of a long war is a professional soldier, thoughtful, imaginative, and human.

He found the war "an intense spiritual experience," and to recreate it in those terms. The book, therefore, is neither bitter nor sensational. War is not attacked; it is merely pictured as seen by a very young man who found much of it great and some of it great terror. As a result of this moderation, the book is tolerable that war should come again. And unquestionably the reader of Professor Haller's book will feel it is currently thinkable that war should be long postponed.

HERBERT ASL

A SATIRE AND SOME STORIES

Public Faces. By HAROLD NICOLSON. Constable. 3s. 6d.

The Burning Bush. By SEGID UNDERT. Cassell. 6s. 6d.

Invitation to the Waltz. By RICHARD PLANN. Constable and WARD. 7s. 6d.

The Fallow Land. By H. E. BATE, Cape. 7s. 6d.

Little Comfort. By GEORGE MARSHALL-SANDERS and GREY. 7s. 6d.

Anna Priestly. By EVAN HENDRICK. Cape. 7s. 6d.

Marriage of Hermione. By RICHARD CHMONTON. Marrable. 7s. 6d.

Mondo in Scorpis. By HELEN GRANVILLE-BARKER and JACOB. 7s. 6d.

Mr. Nicolson's novel is in a different category from the other. It is set, and must be judged apart. In 1938 an international situation arises. Britain finds herself able to use atomic bombs from a mineral deposit on an island held by the British from Persia; the other Powers, after the death of the prime Minister, are only partially aware of its value, persuade Persia to cede the concession. What is to be done? During four days of an international suspense war of the most horrid kind is imminent; in a series of satirical and pseudohistoric scenes in Dowling Street, Tehran, Washington, and London, Mr. Nicolson shows it coming nearer and nearer, driven by the small intellectual and political passions of diplomacy in the world. The introduction of real people—Mr. Garvin, Miss Eliza Ralbone, Sir John Keith and Oliver Baldwin are among others—lives up to the conceit of the little characters; while Mr. Nicolson's diplomatic experience lends a fearful point to his wit. For a lively, perceptive, exciting and interior book, the reader might once more return to history, diplomacy, Public Faces takes some beating.

The remaining novels deal with life as it is seen by the eye, not through the magnifying glass of satire. The

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Bush is the second volume of Sigrid Undset's latest trilogy. Its theme is that of The Hound of Heaven; Paul Selmer, the wilful woddling, driven ever towards the Will which closes round his own, is at length received into the Catholic Church. The reader who shares Paul's faith will find no disappointment in a deep pleasure in the glowing descriptions of the metaphysical phenomena of conversion; while the agnostic will deplore with equal conviction the cruelty and healing of a free mind. The critic who approaches the book from the purely literary point of view must, I think, observe that the unfortunate tendency of the religious novel to make its hero into a pet in has here surmounted even Sigrid Undset's genius. It is surely a wise instinct on the part of the ordinary reader to guard with suspicion a man who is always in the position of forgiving, for forgiveness implies a conviction of moral superiority, very distasteful to the scientific mind. Accordingly Paul, who is busy forgiving his vulgar little wife and austere mother all through the volume, is not an attractive character, and his two plump children are quite insufferable. In spite of this the book, like all this writer's work, thrills with life; one feels its pulsating warmth on every page. The landscapes, too, are magnificent; the early scenes with little Sunnie, before she becomes converted, piercingly, radiant true; the analysis of the defects of modern civilization, profound. It is notoriously unfair to judge an incomplete work; we must wait for the third volume before coming to a final decision on the value of Paul's experiences.

It is this same quality of warm thrilling life which makes Invitation to the Wells—in outline a mere trille—so pleasing. It reminds me of nothing so much as a beautiful red plum: coloured, smooth, round, glowing, small enough to rest comfortably in the curve of the hand. Kate and Olivia, the daughters of country gentility, are invited to a dance. They make their preparations, live through the weeks which intervene, and at last attend the dance. That is all. But what an air of youth and love we move in! The joys, the heartaches, the hopes, the disappointments, we are made to feel! Kate has beauty, and a sureness of touch which is the admiration and despair of her immature sister; Olivia hasn't yet found herself, she can't put herself together, doesn't feel all of a piece. Kate finds love at the dance; but Olivia has a wider range of experience with her partners: a poet, an old lecher, a blind man, a fiery sailor, call in upon her joy and her compassion. Life is about to begin for her, thinks Olivia, and runs joyously to meet it. As for the grace and wit of Miss Lennard's writing, I am going to illustrate it by quoting her description of a cabbage bed. For roses lend themselves easily to raptures, but fine writing about cabbages is the real thing.

She admired the cabbage bed—its frosty sea-lilies and greens, the modelling of the huge, compact nestles with their strong swollen curves and crisp-cut edges. The looser outer leaves held sparkling drops and violet shadows. She shook one, listening to its silky crack, watched the tranquil, quiet water beds slip and blur like quicksilver. And these proud vital shapes were doomed to be chopped up, boiled, swallowed by humans with the utmost boredom and contempt. The very word cabbage was a joke, a term of ridicule.... But it was no good bemoaning over the suffix, the unjust fate of vegetables.

The Follow Land and Little Comfort are both novels of farm life, and very different as electives and chalk. I put the familiar comparison that way round, because Mr. Bates's novel is made (like cheese) from living material, and Mr. George Manning-Sanders' from a convention which ought to be as dead as chalk if it unfortunately isn't. The people of Little Comfort are all "rustics," seen from the outside by an urban P wych's eye; they go in for dark lust and talk abominable literary dialect. "Did widow say off the name all pot, or did shudder and crimp if it ran through her blood and brain, like so much naughty magic?" demands the midwife archly. For, of course, there is a Midwife, just as there is a Loose Beauty, a Sensitive and Debauched Young Father, a Marvellous Mother, and a Stranger with the Hump. Mr. Manning-Sanders means well and writes well, but has as yet nothing to say.

The Follow Land, on the other hand, is a grave, true piece of work, narrated by some impression, but rising at times to living beauty. It is the tale of fifty years of a woman's life. Deborah, maid to a bedridden old man, meets Juss Mortimer, the farmer's son, at a country fair, marries him, and spends the rest of her life in an endless struggle to do him justice. She bears him, is deserted by him, loses her sons to war and then to post-war degeneration, but throughout never ceases to love the land which to her, as to Mr. Bates, stands for life itself. And this should sound too romantic, I hasten to say that Mr. Bates is a realist as well. His dialect is not literary; Deborah says fair whacked " when she is tired, and means it. This modernism makes for authenticity of emotion; the return of zest, for example, old and worn and deaf, is extraordinarily moving. The stream of life does not flow so rich and warm before. Even Deborah's happiness in living town, and the moments when there are moments when Anna is passionately alive. But these moments are muffled in a superfluity of incidents; the novel lacks shape, probably because it has no unifying theme. Its revolt against the sombre meaning of her life, Anna gives herself to the more worthless of two brothers who love her because she pays for it all her days, but there seems no special significance either in her endurance or her revolt.

The last two novels on the list present the extremes of nature and sophistication. Miss Rhehamn Crompton, like Mr. and Miss Herbert, has given us the chronicle of fifty years of a woman's life. But though the theme is the same, the handling is not, and oh, the difference to me! Marriage of Hermine is to a perpetual diet of milk pudding; wholesome perhaps, savourless, monotonous, of the nursery. Miss in Summer, on the other hand, is so highly civilized that there is no life left—a great disappointment after the slight but charming Julia. The scene is Rome, the characters Anglo-American, the atmosphere pseudo-Henry-James, the inconsequential. Hermine has beauty but no youth, Frances youth but no beauty. The intervals of inspecting objects of art they fall in love with the same man, with disastrous results. In this novel it is as axiomatic that nature never loved a woman who lacked beauty—a proposition so false that one has barely patience to read the narrative based on it. "Olivia and her friends," one of the characters, "didn't belong to the present; she been exactly—they were cut off from the future. And a good thing too.

PVELLS BENTLEY

VIRGINIA WOOLF, CRITIC

The Common Reader: Second Series. By Virginia Woolf. Hogarth Press. 10s. 6d.

Virginia Woolf. By WINTERLY HOLTV. Wishart. 6s.

In most literary criticism, it is the subject that is important, not the writer nor even what is written; just as, when something is lost in a dark room, it may be necessary to hold up a light to find it, but neither the light nor the hand that holds it is important thing. But when Mr. Woolf writes, as she so often does in this latest volume of essays, about secondary matters, she has beauty—-a proposition so false that one has barely patience to read the narrative based on it. "Olivia and her friends," one of the characters, "didn't belong to the present; they were cut off from the future. And a good thing too.

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