

THE LITERARY DIGEST

September 13, 1913

~p. 416~

GERMAN RAPS AT FRANCE

GERMAN NEWSPAPERS have recently taken occasion to speak smoothly to and of France. Like the ancient orator, their sentences flow as the honey when they mention their western neighbor, and the burden of their song is peace. They sometimes even extol France, and when the reporter of the *Vossische Zeitung* (Berlin) returned from the last French maneuvers he spoke in terms of high admiration of the Gallic Army, the physique of all the men, the precision of their evolutions, and the perfection of their equipment. There are two Berlin papers, however, society and government organs, which are always conspicuously Gallophobe. One is the *Local Anzeiger*, sometimes known by the name of the *Scandal Anzeiger*, and the other is the *Tag*. These papers are read in every military mess, and almost every drawing-room of the Empire. Not only strictly military news, but social items and social rumors fill their columns. The last ball, with details of the fashionable frocks and equipages, the last martial or marital squabble, are chronicled and described with Germanic piquancy and by the usage of strange compound words. And the everlasting and untiring theme of French inferiority to the Germans is plainly and unblushingly broached once more. The character of such criticisms is well exemplified by a recent article in the *Tag*, written by Professor Fassbender, of the Agricultural College of Berlin. He entitled his paper "The Popular Mind of France," and speaks with bitter contempt of the French Army, which certainly did no credit to the country and the Government by the antimilitaristic demonstrations which recently occurred at Lunéville, Nancy, and Grenoble. He states his views as follows:

"The popular spirit of France at the present moment is precisely what it was at the opening of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. That was the period when a noted German mental specialist wrote a book with the title 'The Mental Degeneration of the French People.'

"All the symptoms of decay and decadence which he described are in evidence now, and especially the symptoms of megalomania, which manifests itself by a vanity which derives satisfaction from a systematic exaggeration of French idiosyncrasies, by a blindness to all French faults and failures, and a tendency to depreciate those who are or are considered to be the adversaries of France. In all this we see a distortion of normal perceptive power accompanied by a complete inability to detect logical contradictions."

The professor asserts that the French Government aims in every way to foment popular hatred of Germany, and that this is backed up by the French press. He even accuses the French Minister of War, Mr. Étienne, of distributing in the various military posts printed diatribes against Germany. On another rather tender point he writes:

"The French have tried to prove that the defeat of Turkey in the Balkans is a débâcle for Germany. The Bulgarian officers energetically protested against this judgment and stated that the victorious Bulgarians obtained at least half of their guns from the Krupp firm."

We must set against these violent statements the fact that France is actually trying to learn from Germany some of the arts which have made the Army of the Fatherland the most efficient in Europe. General Pau, as reported in the *Paris Temps*, acknowledged this efficiency in the debate on the Three Years' Service Bill, which he eloquently supported. He told France to imitate Germany, and what is imitation but the sincerest flattery? This accomplished soldier and Commander of the Legion of Honor spoke as follows in the debate referred to:

"The object of the French Government should be to imitate, to copy, to produce a counterpart of German military organization. Our means of national defense will continue to be inadequate until they resemble the military system of Germany."

—Translations made for THE LITERARY DIGEST.