

GERMANY—AND THE
“ODYSSEY.”

We have already reviewed “Marlborough and other Poems,” by Charles Hamilton Sorley, sometime captain in the Suffolk Regiment (Cambridge University Press, 3s. 6d. net), but the third edition contains “illustrations in prose” which Sorley’s friends will not like to miss. These prose passages are nearly all taken from familiar letters, and they are worth reading at least for two reasons, for they illustrate the poems, in particular the author’s passion for the “Odyssey,” and they contain, moreover, the last opinions of a young Englishman of culture and much intellectual promise on Germany just before the war. Between leaving Marlborough and waiting for his freshman’s term at Oxford, Sorley spent six months in Germany and did not leave until just after the declaration of war. Like many other young Englishmen, he enjoyed his stay there, but he kept his independence of judgment: he recognized Germany’s “lack of real insight and sympathy with those that differ from her. We are fighting a bully, not a bigot.” He found German prose “like a stale cake compounded of foreign elements”; but when tired of it he could turn to his “Odyssey” for comfort. When Karl said at table, “Don’t tell me anything sad while I’m eating,” he remembered the parallel, and that in the “Odyssey” and in Schwerin alike “they are perfectly unaffected about their devotion to food.” He saw something, too, of a type common enough before the war—that of the insincere student “who hunts me down ostensibly to ‘tie a bond of good comradeship,’ but really to work up facts about what ‘England’ thinks.” These impressions of Germany, boyish as they necessarily are in some respects, have now an almost historic value. He was a careful letter-writer, and his letters, though they were probably written quickly, are quite free from the curse of many brilliant English lads, the excessive use of public school slang. They add materially to the value and dignity of this memorial volume.