

REVIEWS

BOOKS

Iwaya Sazanami's Japanese Fairy Tales. (Tokyo, The Hokuseido Press, 12 Vols.)

Die Sektion für deutsche Sprache und Literatur an der Fu-Jen Universität in Peking (The Section for German Language and Literature of the Fu-Jen University in Peking), by Dr. F. Bornemann. (Peking, 1942.)

"Nahoko" (奈穂子), by Tatsuo Hori.

Among the minor hardships imposed upon us Westerners out here in the East through the present war is the impossibility of buying new books and the growing difficulty of buying even old ones. Among others, children's books are also becoming scarce, so that one day we may be faced by the necessity of having to tell our children fairy tales without being able to refresh our memories from books.

However, there is a series of Japanese fairy tales available in excellent translation, and we have studied these as a possible substitute for our Western tales. Each of the little volumes is beautifully printed and illustrated, perhaps a little too elegant for the nursery. The tales themselves are about animals, goblins, old men, and heroes, and some of them struck us at first as being rather cruel and murderous, till, with a shock, we remembered that, in almost all the Western fairy tales we could recall, someone is eaten, poisoned, burnt, or maltreated.

After having satisfied ourselves that most of the Japanese fairy tales were amusing, interesting, or even thrilling, we still felt that they failed to strike a responsive chord in us. Somehow these tales seemed strange and unreal to us, while our own tales seem very real and alive. Perhaps Eastern tales were not suited for the Western mentality. So we applied the supreme test: we read them to our five-year-old daughter. This proved us to have been mistaken in our assumption, for to her there seems to be no difference between Japanese and Western fairy tales, and the story of Kachi-Kachi Yama is as real to her as Snow White or Sleeping Beauty.—V.

If the German language lays claim to leadership in the European sphere only (as maintained in our article "How Will Europe Talk?" in the May issue), it still has a certain significance in the Greater East Asia sphere too. Dr. Bornemann's pamphlet, written on the occasion of the opening of a new section of the Fu-Jen University devoted to German language and literature, merits praise for clearly defining this significance.

The author takes as his starting-point the question as to the goal followed by the Chinese student in learning German. His answer is that the goal is exclusively the understanding of German scientific texts, especially texts on the natural sciences. With

this he limits the study of the language solely to the role of an aid for the natural sciences. From this again he deducts decisive demands regarding the method of teaching. The method can forego the active command of the spoken and written language and can limit itself to the passive, purely absorbing understanding of the language. In this way a relatively advanced reading ability can be attained within a short time.

This applies, not only to the compulsory study of German for students of the natural sciences, but also to those who make the German language and literature the main object of their study. For them, too, the author limits the goal to good translations of natural-science texts into Chinese. This is where we disagree. If the Sinological institutions of great German universities serve the purpose of penetrating the language and culture of China, should we deny a parallel interest on the part of Chinese in so rich a culture as that of Germany? This is what the author implies.—W.B.



The novel *Nahoko* can be regarded as an aggregate of the author's former works, the chief characters of which are people recuperating in a sanatorium in Shinshu. It is written in his characteristic style of depicting psychological shadows in an atmosphere reminiscent of the works of Philippe Soupault, Proust, and Radiguet.

A young girl of the intellectual class named Nahoko discovers the relations between her widowed mother and a novelist, with the result that she suddenly feels deep misgivings toward life. The beautiful world of her dreams is overcast with dark clouds. In this depressed frame of mind, Nahoko marries Keisuke. But no happiness ensues. In the midst of all this dreariness she falls ill of a respiratory disease and enters a sanatorium in Shinshu. There she meets Akira Tazuki, a childhood playmate, and their old affection is revived.

The theme of the novel is the psychology of Nahoko, whose heart is heavy with the burden of living with an affection which is not real. It is neither a vehement denial of life nor a strong hatred of men which causes her to suffer. Although her present life is far from happy, she is by no means the most unhappy of women. What, then, is she longing for? Is she suffering from the loss of affection toward the novelist? Why does she feel cool toward her husband? Does she really want the resurrection of her childhood affection for Akira Tazuki? At times, Nahoko wonders why she feels so hopeless. Is it that she is really seeking what she has lost?

The novel very subtly depicts the dark shadow over the lives of those people at a psychological crisis and lacking spiritual love. Comparing it with music, it seems to have a touch of the fugue in its composition and the tone of a string quartet. Indeed, it is a most artistic work.—T.N.