

RECENT PUBLICA- TIONS

HOW TO BE SUPERMEN

"The Superman in Modern Literature." By Leo Berg. London: Jarrold & Sons.

The superman antedated Nietzsche and Shaw; in fact, he is known throughout history, though under other names. Carlyle, for example, knew him as hero. Auguste Comte, who wanted to found a new religion—"a Catholicism without Christianity"—had an ardent disciple in Frederic Harrison, who compiled a "Calendar" not of saints, but of "great men," many of whom, indeed, were anything but saints. The dream of peopling the world with a new humanity conceived and trained on scientific principles, has haunted the minds of men ever since Sir Thomas More published his "Utopia." The modern dreamers are the eugenisists. The difficulty with litterateurs is their inability to agree as to the constituents of their superman. National prejudice may have had something to do with Carlyle's preference for Cromwell to Napoleon, and though it did not determine his choice of Frederick the Great, he thought much of Dr. Johnson and little of Rousseau. With Emerson the true criterion of heroism is that it shall not entail slavery as did Carlyle's conception of the same quality. He adopts Locke's apothegm, "God does not destroy the man when He creates the prophet." But other supermen are to be found in Germany, where Herr Berg, himself a German, naturally supposes them to exist in greatest abundance. Germany, he declares, was "always the land of individualities. The Reformation was a revolt against Roman routine." And it is claimed for Germany's great men that they are great enough to appreciate greatness in others.

Caesar and Napoleon

Goethe, "himself the completest personality and the greatest human being we have had in Germany, discerned with astonishment the greatness of Napoleon's operations; Hegel recognised in him the concentration of the will of the universe; Heine glorified the new Messiah, who was to make the nations happy; finally Nietzsche saw in him the prototype of the superman." The doctrine of the superman was not unnaturally discussed in Bismarck's time. But Germans, like other nations, create their own ideals, and these often vary. They keep their old loves till they have new ones to replace them. Hence, long before his official overthrow, Bismarck had been displaced by Bebel and Singer. The German thirst for supermen being what it is, it is natural that novelists and dramatists should people their pages with them, and Herr Berg recalls them one after another. It will be news to some that Adolf Wilbrandt's "Easter Island," in which Friedrich Nietzsche figures as Dr. Adler, is regarded in Germany as "one of the best works of fiction our time has produced." If Adler is Nietzsche, it is Nietzsche with a difference. Nietzsche was (in his own

opinion) such a towering genius that he spent his life in a vain search for a man "with whom I could be serious after my own fashion, and in a much more earnest search for one with whom I could be cheerful." Dr. Adler is more companionable. In his home on Easter Island, in the Pacific, he gathers round him disciples, and the story turns on the fate which befalls him after a series of emotional conflicts. Stories and plays by other authors are lightly sketched by Herr Berg, with a view of showing how general the idea of a superman has become since the tables of dogmatic theology were broken by the German higher critics. Twice in the history of the world have two supermen appeared to the world's astonishment, in Caesar and Napoleon. The name of the former is "a summing-up and an abridgment of all earthly power" while Napoleon has "never ceased to occupy the minds of poets and philosophers, for he has