

A WONDERFUL CHILD.

THE little German child, Otto Pochler, who, when he was only two years old, astounded people by his marvellous faculty for reading printed matter and manuscript, still continues to excite the wonder of the many scientists who have visited him, and verified for themselves the actuality of his peculiar gift.

Carl Stumpf, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Berlin, and member of the Academy of Sciences (Berlin), has contributed to the *Revue Scientifique* of Paris a very interesting paper about the child, in which he tries to analyse the nature of his remarkable mental endowment as the result of a series of experiments he made with the little fellow during a number of visits.

The history of the child is very simple. He is the child of a fairly well-to-do butcher in Brunswick, Germany, and is now four years old. It was when he was still a mere baby in arms that his extraordinary powers began to manifest themselves. He was but twenty-one months old, a nursing baby just beginning to speak a few words, when his mother in carrying him through the streets noticed his strange excitement when he saw the lettered signs and printed cards over shop doors and in shop windows. He clapped his baby hands and his eyes glistened with pleasure. When his mother stopped and read them to him his delight was still greater. To her amazement he read them over after her. Passing the same shops days after he would again read the signs and read them correctly. When he saw the same words in printed books he read them off glibly and correctly.

His vocabulary of printed words grew with amazing rapidity. He learned the letters of the alphabet almost intuitively. By the time he was two years old he was reading glibly from every newspaper and book that came into his hands. Every inscription on a monument he passed he read and remembered. Now, at the age of four years, he devours histories and biographies, and can tell the dates and places of birth of scores of Germany's worthies and great men.

Speaking of Otto's method of reading, Professor Stumpf says—

'The fine experiments of Mr Goldscheier with reference to rapidity in reading have brought into a strong light the considerable part played by the mind in rushing ahead of the text actually at the moment being read, and this in the case of ordinary reading by people ordinarily equipped. This faculty in Otto is so great that it develops an unheard of rapidity in reading. The child devours whole sentences, and, if he is reading out loud, often skips syllables and even words so as to get on more rapidly.

I saw him read in barely ten minutes an entire picture book having a printed explanation of the subject under each plate, and some of these little stories he was afterwards able to repeat word for word. The rapidity of his reading often makes him pass over mistakes of orthography, the idea of the word striking him instantly and effacing the word's form from his mind. With words that he is seeing for the first time, his reading naturally becomes slower, but is of marvellous exactitude.'

One of the peculiarities of the child is his restlessness. He is never still for a moment except when his attention is fixed in reading, and then his countenance shows a concentration and his eyes a penetrating keenness that give his baby face an expression of intelligence so abnormal that it produces something like a shock to look at it. Physically he is not a handsome child, having irregular features and rather flaring ears, but his head is remarkably developed, being long and full both in front and behind. He is perfectly healthy, and, with the exception of his mania for reading, is no different from other children of his age in his tastes and amusements. He plays with tin soldiers, tin railroad trains, and other toys dear to everyday little boys.

But there is one thing Otto cannot endure, and that is music. He not only hates music, but cannot distinguish one note from another.

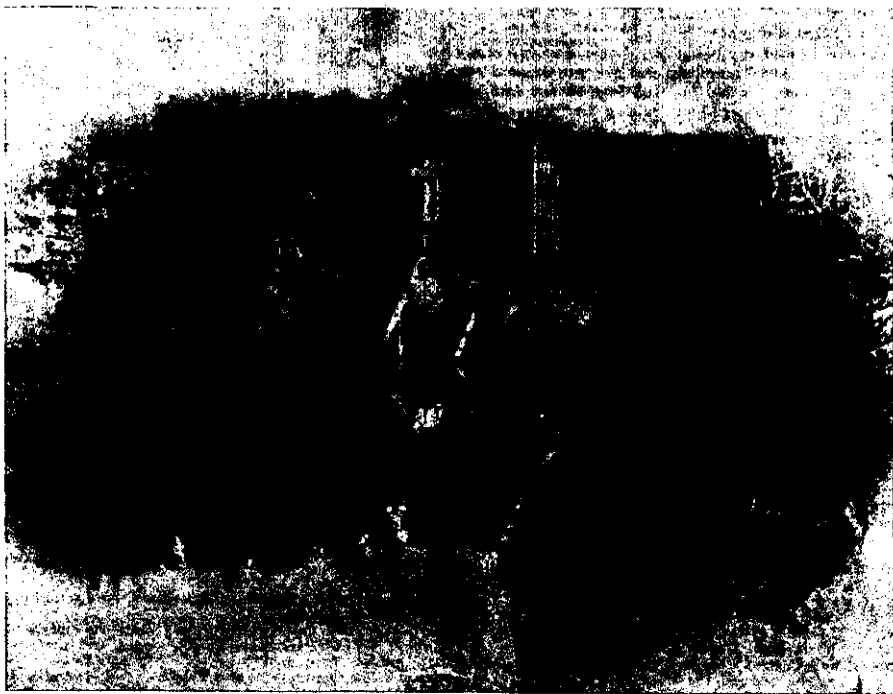
The child has not the slightest notion of how to write, although he reads writing, and even bad writing, fluently. Furthermore, he shows no desire to learn how to write. His full mental energies seem to be bent towards one thing—reading. The general conclusion reached by the scientists who have studied him is that his marvellous memory for words and his gift for reading is in no sense mechanical, but is based upon and co-operates with a solid and very great intelligence.

A NEW BIRTH IN LITERATURE.

AN eminent literary man, discoursing on the future of art and literature, proclaims his firm belief that a 'new birth' is at hand. 'We have knelt to ugliness too long,' he says; 'the world has lost its enthusiasm, its faith, its confidence; we are no longer men, but children. The mere fact of living ought to be a cause of rejoicing. And, if this could be brought home to man, happiness, not sorrow, would be general. I was called upon to formulate my views about literature recently, and then believed the moment favourable for a new Renaissance.'

'I believe it more strongly now, and I repeat what I said then, that it will have, in common with the old, the character that this latter derived from the Hellenic period of art—that is, a worship of beauty for its own sake. Both these ideal springtimes of human imagination derive their extraordinary arrogance from a magnificent strength, from the sentiments of energy and power exalted to their supreme degree. Both signified the most superb affirmation of Life. And in the one, as in the other period, art was the natural transfiguration of persons and things in the plenitude of their being.'

'The new Renaissance ought to commence with the re-establishment of the cult of Man. And the new artist, like the old, will share with science the faculty of creating, will continue the work of Nature in its highest manifestation and noblest form by holding up to man an ideal. Guided by the ancient spirit, the artist to-day must join art and life indissolubly, discovering truth, creating beauty, and distributing joy.'



W. Beattie,

THE ALUM BATH, WHAKARAWAREWA.



THOSE TRUSTING GIRLS.

AWFULLY ENJOYABLE

She—I understand that Miss Krochet played on the piano at the reception last night. Did they appear to enjoy her performance?

He—Oh! immensely. It was the most enjoyable time of the whole evening. Everybody was talking away as if they would split their throats.

Blifkins—That Billings never told the truth in his life. What lie was he springing on you just now? Flipkins—He was telling me that you were a scholar and a gentleman.

'Well, sir, we've been comparing notes, and find you have made the same declaration to a I three of us. What have you to say for yourself?'
'That I didn't know I was running up against a trust!'