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## THE OLD FIRES KEEP BURNING

The [redacted] was an ironic fitness in the announcement that the German Minister of Enlightenment was to make an address on the "symbolic significance" of the book bonfires in Germany. They certainly symbolize something. Such an exhibition of the new national spirit, silly and shameful as it seems, bespeaks a mass movement plainly touched with insanity. It is not a passing freak of schoolboys. Although the Government has been trying to withdraw from it as an official act, the mad enthusiasm so far got out of hand that interfering with it would be thought a political mistake. True, steps were taken to prevent the literary holocaust from becoming absolutely indiscriminate. Scientific books of great value, even if not written by Nordics or of the purest blond type, were to be rescued from the flames. It was even hoped that an almost unique collection of medical books which had been consigned to destruction might be saved. But there was to be no mercy for the works of EINSTEIN or FREUD, FRANZ BOAS and HELEN KELLER. Around the fire, in which every publication that is "un-German" was to be destroyed, German children were to gather and to be exhorted to let the fires of love of the Fatherland burn brighter in their hearts. All this is not so much symbolism as it is an alarming symptom of a mental and moral upset.

Many previous generations of Germans would have stood aghast at such a spectacle. They would have said that it was impossible in a literate Germany, where the publishing and reading of books had been cultivated and cherished as one of the chief glories of the German Reich. They would have agreed with Milton that to lay rude and violent hands upon a good book is to violate the "precious life-blood of a master spirit" and are Germans suddenly to announce that they cannot tolerate writings which do not fall in with their own prejudices? What becomes of the famous *Lehrfreiheit* which Germany fought for and established in her universities in advance of other nations? It is a strange doctrine to be preached in Berlin and Leipzig, that students must be made all to read the same things, to think the same things and to mold their whole lives in one pattern. This is one more affront to the true spirit of education and to the intellectual classes in every country outside Germany. At the thought of such an *auto da fe* in the name of German culture many Germans, high and low, whatever they feel at heart, to say, must be penetrated.

It will be remembered that two friends of Don Quixote, the barber and the priest, went through his library and PRINCETON to burn the books which had filled him with "locura" about chivalry and knight-errantry. But in Germany it is the very ones who have been

driven crazy, who set about burning their own books. They are not only doing despite to the mighty dead of their own land, but are filling the world with doubts of their entire sanity.