# GERMAN LITERATURE,

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

OF

WOLFGANG MENZEL.

BY C. C. FELTON.

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OF

# VOLUME THIRD.

# MENZEL.

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## GOETHE.

When I utter this great name, I conceal from myself neither the amazing intellectual wealth and the enchanting power of one who is unquestionably our first poet in all that relates to poetical form, nor the attachment cherished for him by the greatest part of the cultivated world. The well-understood demand has been lately made upon me, from many and very respectable quarters, to become a convert to Goethe, and to give up an opposition which could only disturb the literary peace of Germany and help forward the intellectual confusion breaking in upon the country. It is singular that this is said to me at a moment when I am contending precisely in the spirit and for the interest of those who are summoned to guard the well-won inheritance and the honor of our literature, against those lawless young men, on whose banner stands no other name than Goethe. This single fact shows that my opposition to Goethe is not an old, preconceived prejudice on my part, which I could now lay aside as a thing gone out of fashion, but that it is at the present moment more seasonable than ever.

Goethe's literary life stretches from the days of Lessing to our own. His influence upon literature not only was, but is, and will long continue to be, immeasurable. This influence is various; excellent in many respects, but harmful in a still greater variety of ways. Inasmuch as he flattered many of the weaknesses and errors of his age, he has become the highest authority for all those who are hardening in these weaknesses, and who carry these errors to still more extravagant lengths. When I behold among his admirers the noblest spirits and the most respectable characters of the nation, whose example I might indeed follow, I see no less among them all those parties, also, whose tendency I regard as mischievous, hostile, deadly to the most sacred interests of the nation, of religion, of morality, nay, of art itself. I am, therefore, willing to let whatever there is about Goethe's mind and powers, that merits admiration, have its influence with those noble men; but I shall still war against these ignoble spirits, and against every thing in Goethe which they use as a pretext for their own baseness.

If I were not guided by a profound feeling, and an immovable conviction, verily, I should not take it upon myself to oppose so great a number of respectable admirers of Goethe, between whom and the miserable inference makers I draw a wide distinction.

The entire phenomenon of Goethe, the sum and substance of all his qualities and manifestations, is a reflex, a closely-compressed and variously-colored image of his age. But this was an age of national degeneracy; of political imbecility and disgrace; of

a malicious unbelief; of a coquettish and sensual cant; of a deep demoralization; of a passion for pleasure, smoothed over by an appearance of taste, under the mask of refined manners; of contempt for every public interest, and an anxious care for self. All these sad phenomena of the times, which occasioned the downfall of the German empire, and brought about the triumph of France over our despised and neglected country, Goethe has not resisted like a hero, or bewailed like a prophet. He has merely given back their images, and poetically embellished them; nay, not merely applauded them indirectly, but in express terms.

We recognize in Goethe the exact opposite of Lessing. As Lessing emancipated the German mind from foreign influence, Goethe subjected it to this influence by toying with every people under the sun; and, as Lessing opposed the sentimental style with all the force and gracefulness of his manly spirit, so Goethe adhered to that effeminate enervation of the age, and led the affections to its snares by the sweetness of his strains. To all the luxurious, soft, effeminate vices that have made their way into German literature by the sentimental spirit, and to all the false, perverted, and foppish mannerisms that have been introduced by aping foreigners, Goethe lent the most powerful aid, and elevated imbecility and unnaturalness to a law. The only good which he had with this bad tendency, and that by which he attained so great power, was his *form* — his talent of language, of representation, of dress.

When we pierce through the many-colored cloud of the Goethean form, we perceive egotism to be the inmost essence of his poetry, as of his whole life; not,

however, the egotism of the hero and the heaven-storming Titan, but only that of the Sybarite and the actor, the egotism of the passion for pleasure and the vanity of art. Goethe referred every thing to himself; made himself the centre of the world; excluded from his neighborhood, and from contact with himself, every thing that did not minister to his desires; and really exercised a magic sway over weak souls by his talent: but he did not make use of his power and his high rank to elevate, improve, and emancipate men, or to announce and support any great idea whatever, or to fight in the battles which his contemporaries were waging, for right, freedom, honor, and country. By no means. He only carried the world away with him like the stage princess — to enjoy it, to play his part before it, to get admiration and pay. If he but found applause, he cared nothing for the sufferings of his country; nay, he took occasion to utter his venomous hate against the free and mighty movements of the times, the moment he was disagreeably affected and disturbed by them. The prevailing feebleness of his age, the aping of foreign manners, which had become the fashion even before him, as well as the sentimental tone of the day, made it easy for him to turn his own weaknesses to good account, and, when he had at length gained sufficient fame and applause by his really extraordinary talent, he gave himself up, like an adored stage princess, to all his pleasures and petty caprices. He not only ceased to put the least disguise upon his egotism, but made it a matter of pride, and imposed upon his slavish readers by the unabashed display of his thousand vanities.

The essential matter of all his poetical works is the deification of himself. His ideal was himself, the weak-hearted, pleasure-loving, vain child of fortune. In all his works, some few mere imitations excepted, this miserable ideal appears, and is caressed by him with the genuine affection of an ape. Werther, Clavigo, Weisslingen, Fernando in "Stella," Egmont, Tasso, "The Man of Forty Years," Wilhelm Meister, Edward in the "Elective Affinities," and Faust, — all these are but reflections of his ideal. At first, he seems to have been a little ashamed of himself; and, although he very fondly represented Werther, Clavigo, and Weisslingen as the most amiable and interesting personages, he thought there were still among his readers some men before whom he would have been compelled to blush, and to them he sacrificed his heroes, at least at the conclusion. Things went unfortunately with them; they were punished for their weaknesses. Afterwards, when he saw that the women, and womanish men, among his readers, had prodigiously increased, and that the few genuine men had been driven into the background, he restrained himself no longer; he no longer sacrificed his heroes; he punished them no more; but he made them, with all their weakness and vanity, victorious and triumphant, particularly those of his two leading works, where he blazoned his own character at full length, just as he was — "Wilhelm Meister" and "Faust."

In "Wilhelm Meister," Goethe pointed out the relation he bore to this world, in "Faust," his relation to the other, as egotism and blind vanity dictated. The "Meister" is only a poetical, nay, it was intended

to be a moderate, description of his own life. He played himself through the drama of life, up to the part of the Aristocrat. His highest aim in this life was to be ennobled — to enjoy with comfortable security the high taste of aristocracy, with wealth at the same time; and here he differed so little from the stage princess, — who finds, at last, for her remaining charms, and her accumulated treasures, a noble, or even a princely admirer, to procure her the honor of the *tabouret*,[1] — that he even made Wilhelm Meister a player.

Goethe did not shrink from playing this part even into the next life. His "Faust" was meant to show that the privilege of the aristocratic voluptuary extended beyond the grave. This Faust may offend against every moral feeling, against fidelity and honor; he may constantly silence the voice of conscience, neglect every duty, gratify his effeminate love of pleasure, his vanity, and his caprices, even at the expense and to the ruin of others, and sell himself to the very devil; — he goes to heaven, notwithstanding; for he is a gentleman — he is one of the privileged class.

That the "Faust" is Goethe's greatest poem — that the "Faust" contains, too, the fullest and completest expression of his inmost character and his view of the world — is universally acknowledged. It is therefore worth while to prove, from this poem, that Goethe cared for nothing else but to see things under the light that suited his aristocratic vanity; and to this end he merely played off a frivolous game with everlasting truths.

[1] [That is, the right of sitting in the king's presence, enjoyed by persons of high rank. — TRANSL.]

Goethe was himself conscious that his "Faust" was a poetic problem, the solution of which must be sought beyond the sportive region of poetry, in the serious kingdom of religious truths. Thus he found the tradition ready to his hand. It was the last and profoundest legend of the Catholic middle ages, — the legend of the reformation, of the victory of the devil in secular learning. The tradition, however, like the age which produced it, is of a twofold nature. It may be interpreted according to the spirit of the lovers of darkness, as well as of the freethinkers. Faust, the representative of the free mind, either yields to superstition or defies heaven and hell alike, as the real *microcosmus*, as the real mystical man, who is more than all the devils and angels put together, who is alone like the Deity himself, who is God's second self.

Now, although Goethe, in the first part, appeared to raise his Faust into this lofty region of intellectual freedom, yet he has, again, in the second part, lowered him beneath the power of superstition. Nothing more is said of fearless control over spirits, of superiority over all terrestrial and superterrestrial greatness, of onward progress not to be restrained; on the contrary, Faust must submit to choose between the confinement and tediousness of the mediæval hell and the mediæval heaven. With all his mental greatness, he must come down to one of the small Dutch dairy farms; he must either crawl into the pigsty of hell or sneak into the sheepfold of heaven, among the little angels, clad in white, and newly washed, with little red ribbons round their necks. The old tradition did not remit the punishment of the daring Faust. The devil had to take him.

From a lower point of view, this seems the wholly necessary and natural conclusion. From a higher point, we may adopt the idea of an original essence and power of the human mind which is elevated alike above the torments of hell and the sweet dainties of heaven, to which all the pious imaginations of this sort appear merely childish, as the earlier Faust of Goethe expresses more than once. But if we are once transported to that illusion of the middle ages, and yield to its spell, surely, we can proceed only according to the old legend; that is, we must make the devil carry Faust away for his wickedness.

A philosophy which removes man beyond the limitation, the sorrow, and even the guilt of his mortal life, would annihilate poetry, since this loves only the limited. It was, therefore, very praiseworthy of the poet to represent, in the first part of "Faust," this daring philosophy as only the arrogant invention and the madness of Faust, while he makes this madness against heaven and hell pass for a reality, according to the conceptions of the middle ages. Why, then, did he not remain faithful to this mode of representation? Why has he departed even from the ancient tradition? The Catholic view required imperatively that Faust should go to hell. Upon this view, the devil is not a mere bugbear to frighten children, but, in every respect, a terrific reality. Taking this view, the doings of Faust are not a slightly-adhering stain, but deadly sins deeply branded into the soul, which lead, past redemption, to everlasting torments. This view recognizes most distinctly in Faust a fallen angel, to whom restoration is absolutely impossible. This

view recognizes a grace and a heavenly expiation, which may be obtained without merit, by intercession alone, from which, however, certain deadly sins irrevocably exclude; and such a sin is the league with the devil, the blood shed for the devil, which rivets the soul to hell as the blood of martyrdom rivets the soul to heaven. Now, when Goethe, wholly departing from the old popular legend, makes the angels descend, chase the devil away, and lead Faust triumphantly to heaven, it pointedly contradicts the faith of the Catholic middle ages, and is at war with the illusion in which Goethe, following the popular legend, steeped his poem.

If it was Goethe's wish not to follow the popular legend, his only remaining course, according to the spirit of the first part, was to delineate Faust as absolutely raised above the world of spirits, who were playing their antics about him; as a free being, that nothing could enchain; in whom there is something absolutely divine, something greater than all the devils, greater even than all the angels. In that case, heaven should have had as little power over Faust as hell; neither ought to have held him. Faust appeared to us, through the first part of the poem, like a high tragic figure, a heaven-storming Titan, a conqueror of hell, sublimely elevated above vulgar terrors, inaccessible to fear, a spirit who gives us some intimation of what freedom means. So he appeared, and so he continued at the end of the first part, with unbending attitude, gigantic. But what becomes of him in the second part? Like Tamino in the "Magic Flute," and like Max in the *Freischutz*, he is delivered, without any effort of his own, by the

help of convenient machinery, and so there is a perfectly operatic conclusion — the throne of the benevolent goddess amidst the flames of Bengal, a happy pair of lovers kneeling before her, choirs of angels around, and, on the foreground, pyramidal groups of saints disposed in amphitheatrical order. Is that still Faust? Can this spirit, which broke through all restraints, be enchained by such a celestial comedy? by the tinsel show of angelic choirs and ballet-dances? Are such Christmas splendors of more value before the eyes of Faust than the terrible images of hell? Can he be more accessible to the insinuating tone of the flute than to the menacing storm? Are not both illusions of the senses which are pierced through and through by his sun-bright eye? Can we think of Faust any longer in this nunnery heaven? Will not the sing-song soon disgust him? And his Gretchen herself — will he, can he, be more faithful to her a second time? What! should Faust end here? Should he feel forever satisfied here?

Not even conversion precedes Faust's translation to the maiden's heaven. I approve of that; for it would be intolerable to me to see Faust a penitent; and this the poet has fortunately avoided. But, since he is not converted at all, — since he is afterwards, as well as before, the free and unbridled spirit still, — how can we rid ourselves of the persuasion that it is impossible for him to hold out in that maiden's heaven? A Titan may be crushed under the mountains which he piles up, or, like Prometheus, languish forever, chained to the rock; but he cannot submit — cannot humbly pay court to the heavenly powers, and have a little cup

of nectar brought him by Hebe at the lower end of the table of the gods. Titans never become proselytes.

Even supposing that Faust were only that often-recurring woman's hero of Goethe's writings, and sought, during his "storm and pressure period," less the supreme dignity of the king of spirits, and a semblance to the gods, than the enjoyments of love, — still the question must arise, whether the heaven into which Goethe here introduces him would secure him the highest gratification even of this enjoyment. This heaven forbids him all change hereafter, excludes him forever from the beauty-beaming Helena, and forces him to an indissoluble marriage with Gretchen, whom he has already once deserted from weariness. Admitted, that Gretchen can secure him the highest bliss; still we cannot perceive why he did not find it out just as well before. Was not all heaven contained in Margaret's innocence at first? Was there needed, to secure Faust this heavenly feeling, the absurd decoration of angelic hosts and music choirs, triumphal arches and starry heights? And can all these forms of royal nuptial illumination stun the torturing feeling of broken faith, infanticide, and the scaffold? the obscene remembrance of the witch night, and of the colossal sodomy with the spectres of the ancient world? O no! the poet would have better satisfied the human heart, had he permitted Faust to die in Margaret's solitary cottage. Here he has found his heaven, here he has lost it forever.

Had poetical consistency, whether according to the spirit of the old popular legend or according to the spirit of the first part of the poem, required another

conclusion, nothing can justify the present termination but Goethe's real and serious belief of the unconditional offer of pardon by the everlasting love that governs the world.

This belief is beautiful — is worthy of a patriarch at the close of his days — and as sublime as it is natural at the last moments of the dying sage, the departing mother, the long-active benefactor and father. But the same faith is too convenient for an old sinner, and too effeminately soft for a bold sinner, like Faust. To be sure, it is a truth known to all the world that nobody is more sentimental than the devil himself, and that all poor sinners have an extremely soft spot somewhere about the heart; but that is the very thing which poetry must constantly dissemble; for what of a poetical character can remain to the sinner, if it be not power? The poor sinner only, the cowardly knave, requires such a convenient ass's bridge to heaven; the haughty Titan scorns it, even if rocks crush his breast, and vultures devour his heart by the thousand years.

And does everlasting love really bear that relation to the sinner which the *mater gloriosa* here does to Faust? Is this a Christian love which receives the penitent with open arms? or is it not rather a court favor, an aristocratic privilege? Goethe really sets before us the Christian heaven as the household of some lively princess, somewhat like the court of the condescending Marie Antoinette. Around her we see only court ladies and pages, as the greater and smaller angels. No man is to be seen through all heaven, excepting a few worshipping mystics, the devoted porters at the entrance. Now the poor sinner is led in:

whether Clavigo, or Weisslingen, or Faust, it is all the same: he is handsome: a young court lady intercedes for him: the queen of heaven smiles: and — the sinecure of heaven is his, though hundreds of thousands of other poor sinners, who are less genteel, have to expiate their sins below in hell. Thus has Goethe represented the elevation of Faust to the Christian heaven. Where does God remain? Is there no man in heaven?

Goethe has indeed made every thing turn too much here upon the favor of the fair and gentle sex, and forgotten, while talking about the "everlasting manly," the "everlasting womanly." But souls do not steal into heaven, as the family friend steals to the wife when the husband is not at home. In heaven, matters do not go on so conveniently, so French *à la Crebillon*. There is a manly Deity, as there is a manly love and a manly honor, and both are one.

What worth can a love lay claim to, which is destitute of honor? A Kotzebue may pardon treachery to love, but nobody else. It is honor which elevates love above the promiscuous intercourse of the brutes. Without honor, there is no true love. Faithlessness is the death of love, as Uhland so truly sings —

> "Ah! love is gone, ah! love is gone,
> And never more returns!"

Goethe himself felt this correctly when he wrote "Clavigo," his *truest* work. He felt that it was impossible to restore Clavigo to Marie Beaumarchais. This

healthy feeling afterwards deserted him, and, like Kotzebue, he brought together again those who had broken their faith. Earth or heaven is all the same. It was just as impossible to unite Faust and Margaret again in heaven as Clavigo and Marie Beaumarchais on earth. Woman may pardon, may wish this reunion, but man cannot receive the happiness that is proffered him. She will love him, but, like Marie Beaumarchais, her heart will break at the thought, "He has betrayed me." But he, if he is not a complete imbecile, that is, a born villain, can never wish to return. Faust could not but disdain heaven, even if he could enter there.

It is extremely interesting, psychologically, if not poetically considered, to see how Goethe plays the sophist with his "Faust." Because Faust has anticipated heaven from the love of Margaret, he must be allowed to share it. But do we trample what is sacred under foot? Is that dreaming of heaven with the beloved object coldly to yield her a prey to the cruelest fate? Is that a merit which gains heaven to destroy heaven? to fasten all the torments of hell upon a heart where dwelt before the joys of Paradise? If Faust merits heaven because he seduced and deserted Margaret, then every swine that rolls over in a bed of flowers deserves to be the gardener; and, if he trails the jewelled ornaments of a queen through the mud, he deserves to be king; and so, in all cases, it would depend only on the costliness of the theft how much the thief should be rewarded, instead of being punished.

Goethe anticipated something of this reproach. For

this reason, he makes the perfected angels say, "There always remains in us an impure earthly residue, which no power of the mind, no angel even, can take away, and which only the Eternal Love can remove." But, if it really does this, — if heaven really has a river of Lethe, which washes away every sinful and impure recollection, — to what purpose, then, all the spectacle of the devils and hell? If every sin can be forgiven, hell is no longer needed.

The devil is quite too great a loser by this belief; and that ought not to be, at least in the poem, and particularly as the devil plays so imposing a character through the first part. We no longer recognize this capital Mephistophiles. How terrible he was formerly! the very original devil with features sharply-drawn! the sovereign Wickedness from the beginning of the world, reigning over the whole universe far as its shadow is thrown, unlimited, towering above all, subtle and crafty! And now, through this second part, he is flat, stale, derides himself with senile wit, and completely falsifies his vigilant nature by letting himself be cheated of his prey. He becomes a stupid devil throughout. But is this a natural change? Has it even a mere poetic probability to justify it? The serpent of Paradise, the pimp, who glided along so smoothly with his primeval craft; the mighty enchanter, who thoroughly knew the weaknesses of man, and all the means of seducing him; who entices others ever by the allurements of the senses, — which, when he wants them, are at his command in prodigal abundance by means of his dominion over the spirits of the elements; — is it possible that even he should allow himself to be

seduced by the sensual charms of some of the angels? In this second part, the devil not only loses all the terrors which he carried with him through the first, — not only that mysterious horror which he awakened disappears, — but there is scarcely a trace remaining of the intellectual preëminence, the mastery of a thousand years' experience, of that diabolical craft which flatters the highest capacities most, of the mental grace of the original father of lies. He has now merely the prudence of old age; he is talkative, and feels, as it were, his own tediousness, since he is no longer terrible, no longer necessary — since he is now only an accompaniment, and tries to gain attention only by marginal notes and *Tame Xenia*, which are far, far below what he uttered in the first part, at the height of his power, each word a flash of hell. In short, Mephistophiles was formerly the active evil principle; now he is nothing but the modern mockery of the hoofed, horned, and tailed fancy picture of the middle ages. Formerly he was the principal figure of a tragedy worthy of Æschylus; now he is only the secondary figure of a spirited masked farce after the style of Gozzi.

I do not mean to be the *advocatus diaboli* in an ecclesiastical, though I do in a poetical sense. The devil is a poetical idea which no poet has seized so completely as Goethe in the first part of his "Faust." When the poet brings the devil forward, it is, before all things, necessary that he believe, or at least *make* believe, in him. We do not conjure up hell for nothing. Whoever has called upon hell must give it all the horrors which it maintains in the illusion of the nations.

When Goethe, moreover, recognized not merely its sensible terrors, but also its mysterious intellectual magic, the basilisk glance of the evil demon, the genius of pure wickedness, and the charm of the consistent lie, — when he created from all this an image of Satan of terrific truth, — it seems incomprehensible that he should have been willing to destroy again the belief in this admirably-drawn character. If the poet must needs have it so at all events, this Mephistophiles might have lost the power he had held over Faust; only he should not have allowed himself to be cheated of his prey during the conflict. Even though conquered, he ought to have withdrawn to the resignation customary of old, which he expressed so spiritedly during even the first scenes, in Faust's study. The very devils have a certain dignity, which consists in their power and craft, and Mephistophiles was himself conscious of it; he ought never to have sunk beneath it; he ought never to have grown stupid. He might have completely turned the rough side out, with the most grotesque malice, but he ought never to have grown stupid.

Thus has Goethe built himself, in the second part of "Faust," a convenient bridge to heaven. Thus may a Pompadour, when she comes to die, snap her fingers, and think, "What matters it? I am too handsome not to be a mistress in heaven, as I was here the mistress of the king."

The universal badge of the vanity of Goethe is, the utter change, which he admired, of demeanor between the two sexes, and which might be called chivalry reversed, and romanticism perverted. In nearly all his dramatic works and novels, he represents an interest-

ing man, his own likeness, whom the women woo, for whom they struggle and enter the lists, as men only do elsewhere for the good graces of a lady. This is his type, his air, which he is always bringing out with different variations. The necessary consequence is, that his hero is a person of girlish vanity, simpering and coquettish; but his female characters, on the other hand, are either too masculine or too much like prostitutes. Don Juan is at least active; but Goethe's heroes are passive, and rather let themselves be loved than love. Don Juan is at least sturdy and material, and does not try to seem better than he is; but Goethe's heroes are sentimental, prate continually about the love of souls, conjure, and demean themselves like girls who ogle with the moon, although at last the clock strikes the hour of happy love.

Goethe was an æsthetic Heliogabalus, and sentimentalized himself into effeminate enjoyment. There is nothing with which he may be better compared than with a woman, independent, rich, capricious, fond of finery, coquettish, sentimental and sensual at the same time, passionately enamored of a thousand trifles, taking offence at a thousand trifles, exacting to the highest degree, and indolent. Hence his finical niceties, his obstinate seclusion in the interior of a poetical harem; hence his secret hatred of the new times, which required men and found them again.

Lessing was a man at all points, in an effeminate age. Goethe remained completely a woman, in a manly age.

How can we otherwise explain the attitude which Goethe assumed towards the spirit of his times? Had not Goethe been so completely absorbed by his effemi-

nate passion for pleasure, his vanity and love of ease, he would have been compelled by necessity to take part in the great affairs of his country during the storms which agitated it. Every one of his words was received like an oracle; but he has never struck upon the right word to remind the Germans of their honor, or to animate them to any noble sentiment or action. He let the history of the world pass before him with indifference, or was only vexed because he was now and then interrupted at a moment of poetical rapture by the tumults of war. Germany slumbered on till the French revolution. By this event our country was terribly awakened. What sentiments must this have aroused in the heart of our foremost poet! Must not the poet either have been kindled to enthusiasm, like Schiller, in behalf of the new character of the times, or, like Görres, burning with shame for the treachery and deep disgrace that overwhelmed his country, have called to mind the ancient honor and greatness of Germany? But what did Goethe do? He wrote some frivolous comedies — "The Citizen General," and "The Excited" — the weakest things that Germany has opposed to the French revolution, and the most worthless things that, at such a time of the wrath of Heaven, could spring from the brain of man. Then came Napoleon. What must the first German poet have thought and said of him? He must, like Arndt and Körner, have cursed the destroyer of his country, and set himself at the head of the "League of Virtue;" or, if, after the German fashion, he was more of a cosmopolite than patriot, he must, at least, like Lord Byron, have comprehended the deep and tragical meaning of the hero and his destiny. But what did

Goethe really do? He waited until Napoleon said a few flattering things to him, and then turned out an insipid *epithalamium*. Napoleon fell; the German soil quaked under the roar of the battles of nations; nothing so prodigious had been seen since Attila stormed over the world; since the annihilation of Varus, never had such a sacred thrill of freedom quivered through the German breast. What here was the task of the first German poet? and what did Goethe do? He shut himself up, studied Chinese, — as he himself self-complacently relates, — and did not find it worth while till afterwards, till after the peace, and upon various exhortations from high quarters, to write something patriotic; namely, the "Waking of Epimenides" — a miserable piece of patchwork, of forced and hypocritical sympathy. Finally, he was commissioned to write an inscription for Blücher's monument; and the first German poet wrote a few silly verses, which would have disgraced the most wretched German ballad-monger.

We might have expected that Goethe, who lived far into the nineteenth century, by advancing along the path that Lessing opened, would have perceived that sense of honor in the nation which Lessing only saw in the individual man. The disgrace of the nation summoned the poet to this great vindication of honor. Instead of this, Goethe gave up even Lessing's individual feeling of honor, took, from all the representations of modern life, whatever Lessing had so carefully introduced, and ingrafted upon them a feeble sentimentality, and a frivolous egotism, which, unhappily, has become their standing character. I admit that, even without Goethe, the age of our deepest political humiliation would have inclined to this sort of sentimental and

frivolous effeminacy; but it does no honor to him who is confessedly the greatest poet of Germany to have lent a helping hand to this effeminate degeneracy, and bestowed upon it a beautiful form. He ought, on the contrary, to have thundered and lightened, and to have rescued our honor, in the name of God, near whom every poet stands.

That he never entered the lists for the honor of Germany, was less injurious than his openly favoring, by every means his rich intellect afforded, the beaten course of infamy. He created that infinitely-extended species of modern poetry, which, under the pretext of adhering to reality, and taking its bright side, only aimed to palliate all its weaknesses, vanities, follies, and sins. The apology makes itself heard. Every present has its claim. This kind of poetry, which takes up the social life of the day, has a great advantage over the counterfeit presentments of a past mode of life, which appear to us, under the veil of distance, less sharply defined and less faithful, and which cannot operate so directly upon our inclination and modes of conduct. Goethe, however, has not taken upon himself the trouble of ennobling the present by a poetical idealization, nor has he even adhered to the Homeric clearness and impartiality which limits itself to a faithful delineation of nature; but his prevailing tendency was, on the one hand, to take under his protection the sentimental cockneyism, the imbecility, which ripened us for Napoleon's gigantic scythe, and, on the other hand, the aristocratic privilege of frivolity, the high-bred exceptions from the moral law, and the poetical license belonging to the Don Juan nature. One required the other. That aristo-

cratic libertinism is only possible as an offset to cockneyism under the night-cap. Thus Goethe found his nation. Thus it was just right for his selfishness. Thus he wished it should remain.

Therefore he showed his devotion to the cockney by his "Hermann and Dorothea," and to the political night-caps by his "Citizen General," and by "The Excited." Therefore he supported the soul-enfeebling sentimentality of the age by "Werther." But, by these, he occasioned innumerable similar works, and fixed among the German nation that narrowness and imbecility of character which had been accidentally introduced by the circumstances of the times, as if these circumstances were alone natural, were the most satisfactory and poetical, and were to be retained forever.

On the other hand, however, he might the more securely allow himself an aristocratic license, and indulge the thousand genteel pleasures to which his selfishness impelled him. Hence his polite contempt for ordinary morality, as a ridiculous thing cleaving only to vulgar natures. Hence his extravagant voluptuousness, which is not satisfied with the seduction of innocence, with the cruel delight of torturing a heart to death, as in "Faust" and "Clavigo," but which seeks the exquisite pleasures of variety, as in "Wilhelm Meister;" which covets another's, as in the "Elective Affinities;" which longs for the enticements of bigamy, as in "Stella;" which leers upon a beautiful sister, as in the "Brother and Sister;" nay, which, even amidst the horrors of the grave, seeks, by making love to beautiful spectres, a high flavor of enjoyment, as in "Helena" and the "Bride of Corinth." Next to this is the

vanity of the upstart which, at the same time, hankers after the aristocratic, the royal, in women, partly shown by "Wilhelm Meister," still more by the "Tasso" and the "Natural Daughter;" and, on the other hand, the vanity of the aristocrat contrasted with the grisette, as in "Egmont," whose star of the order of the Golden Fleece the beloved object must needs admire; and the vanity of the toilet, in the "Man of Forty Years."

In this direction, also, Goethe has found innumerable imitators; and it is this by which he continues to corrupt the immoral youth who affect the air of the rake and the man of genius. Since Goethe made Don Juan a standing and even respected character of German poetry, he has appeared under innumerable masks; now as an enthusiast for art in Heinse, now as a pious twaddler in Frederick Schlegel, now as a revolutionist in Heine; and, whether we are enthusiastic for the ancient faith, or for modern freedom, the genius, as it is the fashion to call him, attaches himself, with his "pressure," to every exaltation of the time; but the "pressure" is always the impulse of a Don Juan, whether he has to do with a saint or a goddess of reason. And perhaps it is a piece of good fortune if vigorous sensuality comes forth boldly and openly. We know then where we are. The love of pleasure and the affectation of genius are far more pernicious if they remain shut up in the region of the mind as an unsatisfied desire, and do not descend to the region of the senses; for then they generate the most insane extravagance, and the most ridiculous arrogance of the sentimental Don Juans, who can and will not, and of the philosophers corrupted into poets, who will and cannot.

Goethe has ingrafted upon our youth a melancholy disease, by teaching them to want to be more than they are, and either to break their heads against the hard walls, or, high above the world, to look down upon it with aristocratic affectation, or to complain in elegiac strains that the world is too vulgar for them. This passion for genius, this self-caressing and setting up pretensions before any thing whatever is done to support them, have ruined, or led into evil courses, many persons of real talent, and do so continually. The belief that one is a man of fine genius, and must be acknowledged, and even worshipped, as such, has turned many heads, and often prevented young people from ever becoming what they already thought they were.

But Goethe's aristocratic frivolity has also promoted low vulgarity. Without Goethe, Kotzebue would never have dared to make debauched gentility, and sentimental licentiousness, mistresses of the stage. Without Goethe and his imitators, Frederick Schlegel would have limited his licentiousness more, in the province of the novel.

Goethe's fame, however, rests by no means merely upon the inclinations which he flattered — upon the sympathy of all imbecile and frivolous souls. His poetical kingdom stretches far beyond the province of the cockneys and the Don Juans, and embraces, besides, the antique, the romantic, the Oriental; and there reigns every where over it a magic of form, which accounts for his being recognized by all persons of poetic feelings, as the master-poet, as the king of an infinitely rich poetical world.

But people have gone too far; for they have prized the beauty and richness of his poetic forms above every thing else, and have drawn the strangest conclusions.

The very highest pitch to which admiration can by any possible means be carried, has really been the lot of Goethe. It has been believed that in him the ideal of a poet was found, and, without more ado, the task of solving the problem of the phenomenon which he presented has been identified with that of solving the problem of all poetry. With characteristic harmony, he is declared the King of Poets, in order to mark in him the legitimate principle, the highest authority, deriving its rights from itself alone. He is, to them, law, king, Messiah, and God, of all poetical matters, as the perfect incarnation of poetry. The devotion of the believers was not a little confirmed by the fact that the Consecrated One himself gave them his sanction, and behaved as if it must be so, and, with an aspect of benevolence and grace, approved all the praises that were lavished upon him, praised those who praised him, and wore the kingly crown that was set upon his head not without majesty and an imposing assurance. Like the Homeric god, Goethe condescended kindly to receive the sweet savor of the sacrifice from every altar.

Count Platen saw in Goethe the true German emperor; Augustus Wilhelm von Schlegel saw in him even a god. Carovè believed that poetry, which had begun in the East, after completing its great cycle through the nations, had returned, in Goethe's "West-Eastern Divan," to its original fountain, and was now finished and wholly exhausted.

In these exorbitant eulogies, the essence of poetry

is always confounded with the form. With regard to the first, Goethe has left a great deal still unexhausted; the latter he has ruled with the absolute power of a king.

With Goethe, form was every thing. The secret of his felicitous hand was to recommend every object, even the most heterogeneous, by an agreeable form; to embellish every thing he touched, even what was naturally most deformed, by the dress with which he clothed it. This gift is what we call *talent;* no more and no less. Much as this definition has been disputed, I must adhere to it, because it is just.

The poetry of every poet has a peculiar character; but this always corresponds to an inward property or tendency of poetry in general. The synthetic unity of all the poets is only the analytic unity of poetry itself. If the latter is correctly expounded from the former, if the rules are drawn from the examples of beauty, and if the metal king of æsthetics has been driven, from the golden coins on which every autocrat of the empire of poetry has stamped his royal image, into the philosophical retort, then the reverse of this ought to be applied without qualification to the characteristics of the poets. Every poet is the revelation of a special æsthetic power, and the whole world of poets is the revelation of all these powers. To every individual belongs particularly that power alone, which he unfolds with more richness and taste than others.

Now, the power which marks Goethe's poetical character is talent. We understand, by this, as every body knows, the capacity of æsthetic representation generally, without regard to a self-determination, to a

poetry belonging to the poet himself; for it can paint without being guided by a sentiment, nay, often the very opposite of the poet's real feelings, precisely as the actor often represents something wholly different from what he really feels. Just as little does talent depend upon any outward determination, upon any poetry belonging to the object itself; for it can veil things, which in and by themselves are unpoetical, under a poetic garb, and, on the contrary, very poetical objects are often unpoetically represented by poets who have no talent. The essence of talent therefore consists in representation, dress, style.

The prominence of talent with Goethe has been clearly and correctly pointed out by Novalis in his fragments.[1]

[1] "Strange as it might seem to many, yet there is nothing more true, than that it is only the treatment, the outward form, the melody of style, which induces us to read, and enchains us to this or that book. 'Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship' is a powerful proof of this magic of style, this pervading enticement of a smooth, agreeable, simple, and yet varied language. He who possesses this agreeableness of language may relate to us the most insignificant trifle, and we shall find ourselves attracted and entertained. This intellectual unity is the soul of a book, by which it assumes, before us, a personal and efficient character.

"Goethe is a wholly practical poet. He is in his works what the Englishman is in his wares — to the highest degree simple, neat, commodious, and durable. He has done for German literature what Wedgewood has done for English manufactures. He has, like the English, a noble taste, naturally economical, and acquired through the understanding. Both comport very well with each other, and have a close affinity, like the affinities of chemistry. In his physical studies it is perfectly clear that his inclination is to complete entirely something unimportant, to give it the highest polish and convenience, rather than to begin a world, and

Goethe himself admits this, and holds that beauty is a work of talent; for this sentence stands, written with his acquiescence, in "Art and Antiquity," vol. ii. p. 182—"The beautiful is the result of a felicitous handling."

Talent is universal by its nature, and must prove itself so by the greatest variety of applications. There is nothing in the world to which talent cannot give a poetical coloring. The musician very justly affirmed

doing something of which one may know beforehand that he cannot carry it out to perfection, that it remains always unwieldy, and that he can never arrive at a masterly dexterity therein.

"'Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship' is in a manner wholly prosaic and modern. Romance disappears from it; so does the poetry of nature, and the element of wonder. The book treats merely of ordinary human affairs, and nature and mysticism are wholly forgotten. It is a poetized tale of common and domestic life, and the wonderful is expressly treated as poetry and enthusiasm. The spirit of the book is artistic atheism. The economy by which a poetic effect is produced by prosaic and cheap materials is remarkable.

"'Wilhelm Meister' is properly a Candide directed against poetry; the book is unpoetical to a high degree, so far as the spirit of it is concerned, how poetical soever the representation may be. After the fire, the madness, and the wild appearances in the first half of the third part, the confessions are tranquillizing to the reader. The superintendence exercised by the abbé is troublesome and ludicrous; the tower at Lothario's castle is a great contradiction to Lothario himself. The muses are turned into actresses, and poetry plays a part almost as in a farce. It may be asked which loses the most, the nobility that they are reckoned poetical, or poetry that it is represented by nobility. The introduction of Shakspeare produces an almost tragical effect. The hero opposes the admission of the gospel of economy at the outset, and finally the economical proves to be the true and abiding character."

that every thing could be set to music, even a list of names. A poet of talent can perform equal wonders with language. Hence, also, Goethe was so many-sided. He could make every thing, even the smallest and meanest, delightful by the magic of his representation.

Here, however, we strike upon the first great sin of the poetry of Goethe. Art must be like an enlightened religion, that makes only what is really sublime, noble and pure, what is really godlike, the object of worship; it must not resemble a whimsical Fetichism, which turns the little, the vulgar, and the obscene, every thing, in short, into a vehicle of adoration, into an idol. The form must be proportioned and congenial to the subject. Comic poetry alone is permitted, and only for the sake of comic effect, to travesty what is sublime, and to distinguish a vulgar subject with a grotesque elevation. On the other hand, every seriously-intended sentimental embellishment of vulgarity, by means of a pathetic dress, is wholly inadmissible. But Goethe was the first to delineate feeble and infamous characters as interesting, amiable, and even sublime, and to excite a sympathy for the conceited Werther, the mean-spirited, worthless Clavigo, the effeminate and coquettish Wilhelm Meister, the sentimental Don Juan Faust, as if these were really the ideals of a manly soul. Since this example was set, German poetry has been overrun with weaklings and scoundrels who pass for heroes.

To this highly-unpoetical difference between the beautifying form and the ugly substance belongs also the manner, which had its origin with Goethe, of

representing common, vulgar, and little matters, or things that are absolutely dry, prosaic, and tedious, by means of an affected air of importance, as full of meaning and captivating to the senses. I will here only allude to the "Toilet of the Man of Forty Years." Goethe was fond of mystifying his readers by such means, and of putting them, as it were, to the proof how much they could bear without grumbling.

Beautiful nature is the only object, the imitation of which by the serious poet pleases us, and deformed nature ought to be exclusively the subject of comic and humorous poetry; but Goethe staked his whole reputation upon making deformed nature, with all seriousness, pass for beautiful, by the aid of his powers of representation; and we need only read the work written by Falk, on Goethe's life, or the *Tame Xenia* and aphorisms of Goethe, and some passages of his "Faust," to be convinced what diabolical fun his readers made him, when they allowed themselves to be so easily duped, and were rapt into wondering admiration and reverence, if Goethe mysteriously thrust out his tongue, twisted his features into a grimace at the highly-respectable assembly, and, like Mephistophiles, made an indecent gesture.

Nothing characterizes him better than the poem with which the *Musen Almanach* of 1833 was opened. He there insults his senseless worshippers by a strain of coarseness and indecency which is too vile to be repeated here. To this length of impudence Goethe ventured to go with the German people.

To the Goethean form, as well as to poetic form generally, belongs, not merely the language, the beautiful diction, the harmony of verse, but also the dress and decoration of the materials by thoughts and imagery. This kind of form has very often been taken for the essence of poetry, particularly in Goethe, and he has been pardoned for every unpoetical subject, if he merely clothed it with a beautiful dress by fine thoughts and fascinating images. But, so far from confounding the two, we should rather consider it the most criminal abuse, the most heinous sin against the holy spirit of poetry, to attempt to make an unpoetical, ignoble, vulgar, if not even detestable subject, agreeable by the ornament of ingenious phraseology and a dazzling play of fancy. Every ingenious thought, and every beautiful image, to be sure, has its value by itself; and thus far I am by no means inclined to deny the applauded beauties of Goethe's aphorisms and descriptions, which are found scattered over nearly all his works; but, when we see Goethe generally aiming to win the reader over to the egotistical or frivolous idea of his works, by such charms of mere form, and to bribe him by these means, all those charms suddenly appear under a different light, and disgust us like the varying colors of a snake, or of a standing pool. Who can help admiring the spirit and poetic power with which Goethe has conceived his "Faust" from beginning to end? Who can object that the single beauties of this poem, broken up into mottoes and apophthegms like mosaic, are, as it were, precious stones set in gold? But what becomes of

the whole? What has Goethe attained with all this expenditure of beautiful representation? What is, at last, this "Faust," so royally adorned? A whitened sepulchre, a gorgeous but empty bubble, a smoothing over of the stalest egotism — in a word, a lie! The poem is, despite of the truth of many single verses, completely untrue as a whole, an utterly abortive attempt, not even a desecration of holy things, which might easily be excused in the spirit of Voltaire or Byron, but a disfiguration of them, which is utterly and forever without excuse. A man may hate and ridicule religion, and yet be a great poet; but he cannot belittle its character, nor disarm its sacred seriousness for the purposes of a miserable weakness of heart and vanity, without making himself doubly infamous.

This distinction must be firmly maintained. The main thing is the core of a poem, not its shell. The rough material, if truth is but there, is worth more than the most artificially elaborated form which veils a lie; and nothing is more painful, nothing wounds a noble feeling deeper, than vulgarity which puts on the veil of decency, or even of holiness, and falsehood under the mask of intellectual ability and profound understanding: such an outrage, however, lies hidden under all the works of Goethe.

Talent delights itself with variety. Every virtuoso strives as much as possible to be "allsided," to bring his talent to light in all possible ways, to astonish by having the command of the richest instrument and its clefs, by bold and adroit changes of the keys, and by the accomplishment of the juggler, who plays a dozen instruments together, while standing on one foot.

This inclination goes hand in hand with talent, for the reason that talent is characterless, and not dependent upon a fixed and permanent direction. It considers nothing serious and sacred except the satisfying of selfish desires; on the contrary, it looks upon every sentiment, and every object, taken by themselves, with perfect indifference, and values all things only so far as they afford the means of display: it views the representation only as important, whatever may be the thing represented. It is, therefore, never controlled by any particular object; it rather exercises a control over all; it delights to exchange one for another, as this proclaims its power. Thus we see Goethe constantly shifting; and for this reason it is foolish to attempt to fasten upon any particular representation or part whatever, among the various forms which he has assumed. The essence of his poetry consists precisely in this, that he has constantly varied his parts. He himself expresses this very significantly, in one of his *Tame Xenia.*

"'Thy foes are menacing thy peace;
From day to day the storms increase:
How calm thou hear'st the din!'
Unmoved the tempest I abide;
They only tear the serpent's skin,
The last I threw aside;
And when the next has reached its growth,
I cast the slough again,
And roam, with life renewed, and youth,
Where bright immortals reign."

Talent by itself is wholly theatrical, is absolute masking. We have above characterized all our modern

poetry as theatrical; and here we find the same thing true of its greatest representative — Goethe. He unites nearly all the parts of the other poets in his drama alone. Hence it comes, also, that people could consider Goethe the general representative of all poetry, inasmuch as they confounded, like simpletons, the poetry of representation with that of the sentiment and of the subject — the dress with the essence.

Talent is a *hetæra*, and surrenders itself to every body. Incapable of being independent, it attaches itself to every thing. Inasmuch as it has no point of support within, no inward impelling cause of its external manifestations, it lies at the mercy of every outward impression, and is bandied about from one thing to another. Thus we see Goethe's talent, like the chameleon, assume all the colors, one after the other. To-day it embellishes this, to-morrow that. All his inconsistences are explained by this shifting of parts; and it is useless to try to explain them, or even connect them together by any other way. Some have, to be sure, attempted to extract from Goethe's writings a system of philosophy, a system of politics, nay, even a system of religion. But, with such a changeling, the parallel passages on politics from "Götz," "Egmont," "Tasso," "Wilhelm Meister," the "Citizen General," the "Waking of Epimenides," would answer to patch up a sort of Harlequin's jacket, and at the Platonic *symposium*, where his moral views should be brought together in a social union, doubtless a devil would seat himself by every angel, and a goat-footed satyr take his place by the side of every grace. But religion is never to be spoken of in connection with Goethe's writings.

Religion, which conceals itself in the inmost depth of sensibility, is at the farthest remove from the surface, from the mask of external representation.

Since talent follows, without any character of its own, every external destination, it is guided and directed most of all by the present and its prevailing modes. Therefore Goethe has paid court to all the modes of his time, and made all their contradictions his own. He always swam with the stream, and on the surface, like a cork. If he ever acknowledged allegiance to a good spirit, to great ideas, or to virtue, he did it only because they had become the order of the day; for, on the other hand, he has, again, served every weakness, vanity, and folly, if they were but looked upon with favor at the time: in short, like a good player, he has gone through all parts. It was acting a part only, it was only falling in with the fashions of the age, when he took up at one time the antique, at another time the romantic taste. But as modern life had the ascendency, Goethe's talent was particularly directed by that.

Talent is eminently fond of representing what is vulgar and common, because this has to serve it as a foil. The more insignificant the subject represented is by itself and in nature apart from the representation, the more brilliant appears the representation as such. Finally, talent universally requires an external acknowledgment; for, as it wants independence of spirit, so it wants inward content. It strives for fame. This is the characteristic of all *virtuosi*. But for this reason it pays obeisance to the inclinations of those by whom it seeks to be admired. It is insinuating;

it favors those by whom it hopes to be favored in its turn. It chooses first and foremost to hold up whatever happens to please its public. All these circumstances taken together explain the phenomenon, that a man of preëminent talent delights especially in the representation and embellishment of present life, and takes no offence at all at its unpoetical and vulgar character.

Accordingly Goethe devoted himself especially to modern poetry, and applied his unsurpassed talent to the representation of modern life. He adhered to nature, to the nearest nature, to his own. His own nature stood in exactest harmony with that which had become the reigning character of the modern world. He was the clearest mirror of modern life in his own life, as well as in his poetry. He needed only to delineate himself in order to delineate the modern world, its turn of sentiment, its inclinations, its worth, and its worthlessness. The same talent that he manifested through his poems, acquired the ascendency over his life also; and who can deny that it has become the universal life maxim of the modern world? The talent of outward life, the art of convenience, ease, and refinement, daintiness of enjoyment, was his talisman in reality, and, again, appeared to him the worthiest object of poetry, inasmuch as he only mirrored the advantages he himself represented. Most of Goethe's poems contain only his own portrait; but it is a model picture of modern life, and every one recognizes it as such.

For this reason he was able to acquire a popularity which no ancient or romantic poet, with the exception

of Schiller, ever gained. All that was noble and generous in the nation took sides with Schiller; the reigning tone and manners of the moment with Goethe. Schiller is acknowledged by the noble of all ages: Goethe was the idol of his own age: this he could not otherwise be than by giving himself up, no less to the feeble and unnatural vices of the times, than to the noble feelings, whose influence might still be felt. He is the idol, but the creature, too, of his age. It cannot be doubted that vulgarity first flattered him, held itself up to him as dear and precious, and even poetical, before he repaid the flattery, and made himself dear and precious to it, and embellished it with the charm of an incomparable poetical representation. He is not the seducer of his age, but is himself seduced by it. As, according to Schiller's poem, each of the Olympian deities sets a mark upon genius, so have modern times set a mark upon their son and darling, and every prevailing tendency of these times, every idol of the public, has furnished a talisman to the poet king; and, as fashion has ruled the people, so he has directed the fashion.

The most refined tone of the modern world we seek and find in Goethe. External decorum, an aristocratic air, a cheerful mask in social intercourse, the talent of insinuation, finical delicacy, the most hypocritical malice, the *aqua toffana*, which circulates like cold blood through the veins of polished and aristocratic society,—these magic arts of talent we may find unfolded by Goethe in a masterly style. Hence he forms a school of social culture. We mould and refine our manners upon his works. We recommend them as the models of all finished education. A countless

host of accomplished young men rally round him, the disciples and apostles of this doctrine of decorum, the fiery antagonists of ancient rudeness, Freron's gilded youth in Germany.

But under this smooth and pleasing mask there lies hidden an exquisite Epicurism, a sensuality and love of pleasure, which, however refined, remains still low and infamous, ridicules all that is serious and sacred, and entices those who are easily led astray into an earthly Paradise, into that Venusberg, whence there is no more escape to the light.

Goethe's poems are to be considered as the blossom of the prevailing materialism of the modern world, which has established its power at the lowest step of the physiocratic system. His talent is the highest phenomenon of fabrication. It serves to prepare every thing for the most delicate enjoyment. This enjoyment is of two kinds. Cruelty is coupled with sensual pleasure among the brutes, and this connection of the two is transferred to the most refined and delicate enjoyments of men.

That pleasure is the more exquisite, the more it ministers to vanity. Hence, nearly all of Goethe's heroes are little sultans, for whom maids and matrons must toil and moil. They are beloved, and their answering love is nothing but an agreeable toying with enjoyment. However truly the refined sensuality of such heroes may be caught from nature, — however much it may flatter the inclinations of most men, — it is still something vulgar, and not worth the expenditure of the embellishing talent. It is the more disgusting because vanity contrives to create from it a kind of religious devotion. We find the relations

of the sexes and of marriage lightly and frivolously treated by the poets of foreign nations; but there is nowhere such a sentimentality connected with this frivolity as in Germany. Among the Spaniards, from the earliest time, a fiery passion; among the Italians, an amiable fancy and liveliness of the senses; among the French, refinement and wit, the spirit of Queen Margaret; among the English, tragical contrast,—have softened the disgusting impression of tales of "elective affinities" and breaches of conjugal fidelity. But the Germans, since Goethe's time, have carried it on, as a business, with demure aspect, or even as a religious affair, with pious devotion. Sensuality and the baser passions, how strongly soever they may have prevailed, have always, among other nations, been subordinate to what is noble and holy; but we Germans, who have much more sobriety, have been so far perverted, as to confound this sensuality with what is sacred, to raise to the dignity of a goddess what in France is never anything but a courtesan. Sensuality is first justified by vanity, and then held up by talent even to the admiration of others; but that which is originally vulgar remains so under the most brilliant, deceptive, and moving disguise. Art is wedded to nobleness; and, though she acknowledges Goethe to be her favorite in many respects, still she does not yield to all the caprices of his muse; she banishes beyond her borders the vulgarity of corrupt social relations, the sugared representation of modern vice, the gourmandise of an unnatural appetite, the coquetry of men, and the lover-like attentions the women lavish upon the men, the "toilet of the man of forty years," and the

translation to heaven of so many a Don Juan, to whom a wholly different place properly belongs. If even art must be defended against this abuse of her noblest powers, morality too has by all means a sacred right of condemning what is utterly infamous there.

Little concealed as are the dark sides of the character of Goethe, still the greater part of his readers deceive themselves upon these points, either by refusing, out of an incomprehensible good nature, to see what they see, or by allowing themselves to be attacked on their weak side, and bribed. Goethe possessed to the highest degree the talent of making his reader an accomplice — of forcing from him a feeling of approbation. He carried in his hand the talisman which controls all hearts. No poet has so completely mastered the charm that language possesses. He is always and every where agreeable and persuasive. We cannot guard ourselves against the sweet enchantment with which he captivates our inmost soul, and seduces us to the very opposite of all we have previously believed and felt. When we see the sin and the vulgarity plainly before our eyes, he compels us to sin with him, to become vulgar with him, and we cannot escape from his presence without the shame of having for a moment forgotten ourselves.

It would indeed require a Plato to utter certain truths about Goethe, which, by themselves, are easily observed, with a moderation and delicacy that would not trench upon the respect due to the great poet. One should speak, as Plato did against Homer, after the following manner: "I must therefore speak out concerning Homer, though a certain delicacy and

modesty, which I have felt towards him from my youth up, make it difficult for me. For, among all the good tragic poets, he appears as the Coryphæus and leader. But yet, as a man ought not to be more highly prized than the truth, I must also express what I think. If, therefore, dear Glaucon, you meet with eulogists of Homer who say that this poet has been the instructor of all Greece, and that it is worth while to study him, because by him one may learn well to manage human affairs, and to demean himself becomingly therein, and hence that one ought to order and conduct his life according to the directions of this poet, — we ought not, to be sure, to treat such people with harshness, but to meet them with all friendliness, because they endeavor to be excellent men, according to the best of their ability; and we must concede to them that Homer is a most poetical spirit, and the Coryphæus of the tragic poets; but, at the same time, we must observe that nothing more of poetry ought to be received into the state than songs in praise of the gods, and in celebration of noble deeds. On the contrary, as soon as thou receivest the sweet muse therein, be it of the lyric or of the epic kind, just so soon will the arbitrary ebullitions of joy or sorrow reign in the place of law and reason."

Even Plato reprobates, with severe earnestness, the desecration of poetry by laying open unnatural lusts. He reproaches Hesiod and Homer for relating so many obscene and disgusting things of the gods. He says with perfect truth, "Even if such things exist in nature, they ought not to be related in the hearing of young people, but should be silently passed over

more than any thing else whatever. If a necessity should ever occur to speak of them, these things must be heard not otherwise than as mysteries, by as few as possible, who should have brought beforehand for sacrifice, not a miserable pig, but some great and costly offering, to the end that as few as possible may have an opportunity of hearing about such matters." It is true that the mysterious affinity of choice, the principle of conjugal infidelity, — it is true that licentious enjoyments, such as are described in "Stella," — really occur in nature, but they are excrescences; and we should not allow ourselves to be deceived about nature, or rather about the nature of these things, by a captivating poetical embellishment, by confounding them with the most sacred feelings of pure love; for, as Plato proceeds to say, "No one is willing to admit a lie into the noblest part of himself, and with respect to the highest things."

We have yet to speak of the cruelty which accompanies refined pleasures. Goethe has a predilection for painting human weaknesses and prejudices, and feasts upon the sufferings that have their origin there. It is so with "Werther," "Clavigo," "Tasso," "The Natural Daughter," "Elective Affinities," and others. The cruel pleasure consists in this, that the poet amuses himself with crimes and sufferings, and makes not the least atonement for them whatever. This cruelty oftentimes seems aimless, often merely involuntary, as the consequence of the indifference with which the poet contemplated the world. The calmness and clearness with which Goethe draws his pictures, look frequently like perfect indifference, and not like the godlike

repose which springs from the fulness of the idea. It has the effect, therefore, of the lifeless laws of nature, and not of the inward satisfaction of the soul. Hence Goethe offers so many discords which have no solution.

But we do not assume to require of Goethe that he should be something different from what nature intended him. Goethe could not change his nature; he could only perfect it; and he has, truly, thriven admirably with the talent that was lent him. By the force of his talent, Goethe stands unquestionably above all other German poets; and his power over excitable spirits was the more energetic as talent generally is the mark of the power of poetical execution. Schiller, Klopstock, Herder, Novalis, and many others, pass only for well-meaning kings, who lack the power of securing to the world as many blessings as they gladly would, because the dominion of their ideas extends only over a proportionately small number of men who are capable of feeling them. Goethe, on the contrary, sets himself up as an all-conquering usurper, who with his talent has subdued the hearts of men as Napoleon enslaved their bodies. The best will fascinates less than an action, even though it were a bad one. In our age, especially, the present moment, and whoever enables us to enjoy that, are more highly prized than an effort calculated for eternity. A drama, the shifting art of the mime, take our senses captive with every kind of folly, and we have grown too feeble and sluggish to collect our senses, and lay the foundation of works for eternity, or even to understand them. Art is degraded to an enter-

tainment, and all that is deep and sacred is wearisome to the sluggards, because they have been accustomed, by Goethe and his innumerable imitators, to be ministered to, and to spare themselves every vigorous effort. Before the mass, in fact, it is easier to represent the vulgar, — to which, besides, every one has a natural inclination, — than elevated sentiment, which is perfectly familiar only to the noble; and, as sublime ideas would moreover be a punishment upon the baser sort, they will least of all be able to vie with flattering vulgarities. The multitude turn away with disgust from the dark prophets, and run to the mountebank booths of these friendly and ever-smiling demagogues, who easily succeed in driving, by glittering sophistries, those prophets from the field; for they only stammer while speaking of what is divine, even because it is divine.

Goethe ruled his age by courting it; he enchained it by winding himself into all its folds. But the spirit of his age was an ever-changing, creating, and destroying one, always revolutionizing and protesting against itself: it was perfectly mirrored in Goethe, and the character of the one, as well as of the other, is a want of character. Goethe is at every point the universal heir of the moral, as Napoleon was the heir of the political, revolutions of our age. The gain also of this concentration is about the same for the moral and for the political world. In the life of the great Corsican, the whole political life of the age might be said to be personified, by the practical carrying out of all its theories, from anarchy to the two extremes of the republic and of despotism, and

again by the reconciling medium of constitutional monarchy. In Goethe's works, too, the commotions of the moral world, which required a poetical talent of delineation, just as the political movements required an active and practical one, were imbodied; the one required a poet, the other required a hero. Thus this phenomenon of Goethe is only to be explained by the phenomena of the age; and parallels to all his works may consequently be found among the different fashions through which the moral spirit of the age has undergone its changes. That he was favored here by fortune, like Napoleon, is undeniable. He found his age just as his age found him, and as he needed it; and he had to contend with no strong opponent. All the tendencies of the age subserved the play of talent, and were wholly alienated from the seriousness of profound ideas. Sentimentality, the spirit of chivalry playing its ghostly pranks in empty armor, the rage for the theatre, mystery-mongering, mysticism, the Græcomania, Anglomania, Gallomania, Italian travels, the first republican paroxysm from North America, the domestic character, the half-naked sensuality of the Gallomania, and the utterly shameless sensuality of the Græcomania, — all these tendencies were generated, during the long and profound peace after the seven years' war, merely as amusements to kill the weariness of the time; but they nowhere stirred up the inmost depths of the national spirit; they could neither remain nor endure; they supplanted each other successively, just as they had come up. That was just the right time for Goethe, and his talent easily mastered all these tendencies. He was the great leader of the revels

during this trifling age. When, however, seriousness returned first with the great philosophical tendency of the Germans, and then with blood and flames on the theatre of political life, and, finally, with religion, whose consolations the distress of the times could no longer dispense with, — then Goethe was fortunate enough already to have gathered in his harvest; for his later crops found nothing to thrive upon. It is true he essayed his talent upon the earnestness of the later times, but it would not stand the trial. Notwithstanding the great pains he put himself to, to master the philosophical tendency, by attacking it on the side of nature which was the most natural to him, he was nevertheless obliged to content himself always with playing the third and fourth part. His judgments upon matters of taste have met with still less success, because they were so utterly destitute of principle. Least of all, however, would the wild steed of politics allow himself to be harnessed before Goethe's triumphal car; and his attempts in this way have not exposed him to ridicule, merely because people would not be offended, out of their former reverence for his name. It is consistent with his entire character, that he always took sides with the reigning party. For this reason, he sung the praise of Napoleon; but his song was of far less importance to the world than a mere gazette. Afterwards, again, when the times had changed, his song of victory, "Epimenides," was designed to be the canon of German enthusiasm. But the little circumstance, that the bard marched behind the army instead of before it, — that he had kept silence when a word of his would have been a sword, and did

not begin to speak until swords had already spoken loud enough,—left the heart cold, as was right; and the miserable stiffness and unwieldiness of that drama showed, besides, that it was a mechanical production of talent, and not an organic life springing from enthusiasm itself. In this attempt, which lay beyond the circle of talent, even talent could not help finding itself a stranger. Thus we miss in "Epimenides" even the poet's acknowledged talent. After such a mishap, Goethe could not renounce the pleasure of trying to master the religious feeling of the age, which had at last made its appearance. How foreign this sphere was to him is proved by the feeble attempts in the *Wanderjahre*.

Goethe lived to a great age, and not only survived his predecessors, but many of his contemporaries. As he dazzled the eyes of men by the outward splendor of his forms, he was often considered an inventor where he was only an imitator. In his novelties, the older originals, not German, whence he drew, were forgotten.

He never travelled except upon trodden paths. His first work, the "Sorrows of Werther," is nothing but a sort of imitation of Rousseau's "Nouvelle Heloise." All this sentimental extravagance originated not with Goethe, but with Rousseau; and Goethe only put on a laurel crown that belonged to the Genevan. Besides this, "Werther" stands below "Heloise," however interesting many of its pictures may be.

In the little comedies, the "Accomplices," and others, Goethe copied Molière and Beaumarchais; and this, too, without equalling the originals.

In his first prose tragedies, Goethe took Lessing, and, partly, Shakspeare, for his model. "Clavigo" is a feeble copy of "Emilia Galotti." "Götz von Berlichingen" and "Egmont" betray a blending of the language of Shakspeare and Lessing; and the beauties of "Götz," for the most part, owe their origin to the well-known and true-hearted autobiography of that knight. And yet there is nothing in these prose tragedies which made them worthy to stand by the side of those of Shakspeare and Lessing. On the contrary, even these show a great deal of coquetry and affectation.

In his lyrical poems, Goethe copied the old popular songs, and did not hesitate even to appropriate formally the originals to himself, — for example, "Rosy Red," the "Erl King," — as if he had himself first invented them. In these, he was greatly influenced by Herder, as he was, with regard to the poems already mentioned, by Rousseau and Lessing. In "Hermann and Dorothea," he copied old Voss.

His later iambic tragedies are the fruits of his emulation of Schiller. Without the rivalry of Schiller, there would have been no "Iphigenia," no "Tasso," no "Natural Daughter."

Goethe is really original only in "Faust" and "Wilhelm Meister," because, in these, according to the remark already made, he copied himself.

Goethe is not, however, remarkable merely on account of the great variety of his manners, but first and foremost because he had a passion for mingling together the most heterogeneous manners. This also sprung from the very essence of talent. The virtuoso, who

is nothing but a virtuoso, will not only play the fiddle, flute, harp, hunting-horn, and so forth, each by itself, but will attempt, wherever it is possible, to conjure all their tones out of one instrument alone. It was only from this juggler's vanity, that Goethe committed the great sin against good taste of attempting to be, in the same poem, at once antique and romantic, northern and southern, eastern and western, Christian and pagan, Greek and Indian, old German and French.

By this means, Lessing's great work of purifying taste, and freeing German poetry from the coquetry of foreign manners, was again overthrown, and the Gallomania, Græcomania, and Anglomania, which were followed further by the old German, the northern, the Spanish, the Italian, and the Indian manner, were joined by a manner which was far worse still than all these together; namely, the blending of all manners. Goethe is the parent of this new departure from taste. He who has been called preëminently the objective poet, the faithful delineator of nature, removed himself so far from all natural truth, that he even made it the business of art to confound the most heterogeneous illusions of nations and ages. He moved with a special delight over this region of poetical mongrelism. If people only admired the adroitness with which he imitated Sophocles, Shakspeare, Hans Sachs, Confucius, Reinecke Fuchs, Hafiz, one after the other, it was to him a matter of perfect indifference whether this patchwork from a hundred pieces was natural and beautiful or not. He forgot the first principle of taste, the unity of the illusion, which cannot be wanting where the poetical charm is directly sought from national character,

from faithful costume. Comic and humorous poetry may alter, transpose, change every thing, at will; its charm consists in perpetually destroying the illusion. On the other hand, serious poetry must avoid every disturbance of this kind; and, when Goethe knew correctly the high charm which belongs to a peculiarly national poetry, it was, on his part, the most criminal presumption to confuse arbitrarily its effects. In fact, he could only destroy one by means of another.

If it is a piece of false taste to undertake to jump out of a German skin, and become a Greek, or an ancient knight, or a Chinese, it is a far greater error of taste to attempt to be all these at once. Every age has its history and poetry which are peculiar to it. He who attempts afterwards to imitate them can only painfully copy the already existing originals, and had better let these originals alone.

Goethe, however, had brought himself to think that nothing was more sublime than the confusion of tastes. As he believed that the highest mastery of talent was attained there, so he required that the most refined enjoyment should be derived from it. Therefore he says, in his "Posthumous Works," "Let us still be many-sided; Brandenburg turnips taste good — best, mixed with chestnuts. And both these noble fruits grow far apart from each other."

It did not occur to him that the form was inseparable from the substance, and the national form from the country, and the nation, and the age. He saw, for example, in the cathedral of Cologne, not the marvellous work of the middle ages, inseparable from the spirit and life of the middle ages, but only a sort of

architectural form. In "Art and Antiquity," he expressed a wish for "a little ornamental chapel," after the model of the cathedral of Cologne, to embellish his garden. That was all he wanted. He asked not after the Deity in the cathedral, the great age in which such a house of God arose, nor after the truth; to his eye, the sublime work that sprang from the genuine ardor of devotion, and from the deep fulness of ideas, shrunk into a pretty little show chapel; and, accordingly, we ought not to be surprised if he placed by the side of this little show chapel a little Greek temple, a little Chinese house, and more of the same kind, in his poetical garden, like a child playing with his motley Christmas box.

Goethe's power over language was certainly extraordinary, in so far as he could make himself familiar with so many manners; and I am very far from wishing to deny to his talent that quality which was the talent itself. Yet Goethe has shown, during his later years, that the habit of affectation necessarily leads even the poet to the same point where coquettish old ladies arrive. Easy movement degenerates at last into mincing. Hence the agreeableness of Goethe's language vanishes from his later court poems and critical writings. They are stiff show works, completely shackled by the considerations he had to keep sight of, and by his own self-estimation, which allowed itself to be seen only on the proud and prancing steed, or with the air of Spanish grandeur, and became still more striking if it put on the dressing-gown, after a somewhat fatherly German fashion. Since the "Poetry and Truth," every thing of Goethe's has

been written in a certain aristocratic and official-state-paper style. We think involuntarily of the King of the Muses, and his royal state. The phenomenon, however, becomes easier to explain, if we consider that Goethe was translated to the gods alive; and this was the summons to translate all his self-love, finally, into just as boundless a reverence for himself. Hence the last task of his coquettish old age was to "illuminate himself," as the author of the "Posthumous Letters" so finely says. He sought not only mentally but corporeally, by a skilful drapery and proper disposition of the light, to appear under a favorable view. Every thing which he gave from himself must be as complete as he was, as high-bred as he was. He put silk stockings on every one of his smallest and most indifferent thoughts, and did not let them go from his presence until they had made him a low bow. The pedantry of arrogance cannot be carried farther.

But Goethe's age is past, never to return. A wakeful life has succeeded to the place of the soft slumbers which conjured up his variegated dreams before him. Goethe's profoundest doctrine, which he laid down in Wilhelm Meister's indenture, was, "Seriousness surprises us." Yes; it must surprise those who, taken up with sports and dreams, have paid no heed to the realities about them. Against this seriousness Goethe turned to a chrysalis, and wove the insect web around him, and buried himself among his ten thousand bawbles; and his disciples have encircled him with a laurel grove like a wall. But he is now dead; his pleasure-garden is as desolate as Versailles, and the

spirit of the age, passing earnestly by, bestows scarcely a transient look upon the ostentatious sepulchre.

Vainly a poetical church, animated by his spirit, assemble, and attempt to dream over again his happy dream. The years of eighty are past, never to return. Vainly they say, "Goethe is not dead — we have him in his works — he is in the midst of us." What you want is not Goethe, but his age, its commodious cockneyism, its oblivion of all great public interests, and its absorption in poetical fopperies.

All the older adherents of Goethe agree in complaining of the new times, on account of the barbarism which is overwhelming them, because we have ceased to occupy ourselves exclusively with art, and the theatre, and with the Baron von Goethe, and begun to think of more important matters.

The younger adherents of Goethe have understood better what advantages to draw from him, by bringing prominently forward his frivolity and his materialism, and making him the Messiah of a new religion of sensuality, opposed to the Christian, in order that, protected by his authority, they may conveniently give a loose rein to all their vices. But of this hereafter.

## POETIC COCKNEYISM.

The antique, romantic, and modern, were found together with Goethe. The antique naturally could be nothing more than a plaything of a few scholars, and could never reach the people; the taste for it, and imitations of it, therefore, visibly decreased. On the other hand, the modern and romantic poetry — that is, the representations of present life, and the representations of a mediæval or dreamy poetical existence — formed the great contrast of the poetry of Germany, as it has been unfolded since the time of Goethe.

This poetry of modern times rests on the principle that our every-day existence is beautiful, that we ought to be contented with it, and not grasp after the dream of a foreign and impossible world. The romantic poetry, however, is opposed to the prosaic and trivial side of modern times, points to a more beautiful past, to more beautiful ideals, and brings into play the deeper and nobler wants of the human heart, so far as they cannot be satisfied by the prose of life.

The moderns divided themselves into three classes: the cockneys, who acknowledged nothing higher than their domestic life, their home happiness; the sentimental, who looked upon modern life from the melancholy side, without being either able or willing to break away from it; who, for the most part, wept only

tears of self-indulgence or effeminacy, since their sorrow had nothing of an elevated kind; and the frivolous, who followed the opposite direction, and took up the common-place, every-day world from the joyous side, and allowed themselves every license, in order to banish weariness.

But the contradiction between the state of affairs in Germany during the last century, and that which is worthy of a great nation, was too striking not to be felt by the poets too. Hence each of the above-mentioned modern parties was inclined, on one side, to opposition. Among the cockneys were the so called true old German gentlemen, honest blades, hearty fellows, and chips of the old block, who were turned to ridicule on the stage, not only under the name of the old roisterers, but who gained also true respect in the province of lyric poetry and the novel, and, really, revived, to a certain extent, the decayed national feeling. From the sentimental class proceeded the idealists, who wanted to idealize modern life; not after the ancient or the romantic model, but according to the demands of humanity and sensibility. Even the frivolous class, finally, must needs come forth in opposition to every thing belonging to our modern world that reminds us of the earlier unmodern world of the middle ages. These were the Nicolaites, so called, who not only attacked superstition, feudalism, catholicism, not only the old romanticism, but even took up arms again against the new romanticism.

We will consider them singly.

During the long time of peace between the seven years' war and the wars of the revolution, the German

was limited to his intellectual world and to his family. Excluded from all political activity, he lived so much the more for the domestic circle; and, to a very great extent, the citizen became, by the arrogance of the governors, and the blind prejudices of the nobility, fixed in his cockneyism, which, like a sweet habitude, appeared to him dear and precious, and, lastly, even poetic. To be sure, the Gallomaniacs and Græcomaniacs had already celebrated rural life after the fashion of Horace, Theocritus, and Guarini; but this had always remained an ideal, Arcadian kind of pastoral poetry. True, the Anglomaniacs had already delineated common life after the model of English novels, but in the humorous or satirical style; and the novels were called, by way of distinction, comic. They did not yet venture upon representing their prosaic reality, seriously, as beautiful and worthy of love. Old Voss first took the notion into his head to fly into the face of the nobility, to strut about like a cock upon his own dunghill, and to crow up his petty domestic life as the sum and substance of all poetry. This was enough to stir up the whole cockney world to rebellion. Every body now bawled out, "Domestic circle, Family, Grandpapa, Night-cap, Dear mamma, Green-room, — we've found it! the poetry which we looked for among the French and English, among the Greeks, and all over the world — it is in the midst of us; here it sits in the nursery, here at the table, here by the bedside, here at the coffee-pot, and with the pleasant evening pipe."

Goethe had hardly noticed the astonishing miracles which Voss had brought to pass among the Philistines,

when he made all haste to rob him of his laurels. Scarcely, therefore, had the famous "Louise" of Voss been born into the light of the world, when Goethe sent after her the "Herrmann and Dorothea," and accomplished his object; for the Philistines, who had not yet become quite reconciled to all Goethe's aristocratic caprices, reverenced him from this time forth with boundless devotion. He appeared among them at once with dressing-gown and night-cap, and from this time German hearts were gained over to him forever.

The two epic poems above mentioned, "Louise" and "Herrmann and Dorothea," were imitated many times. The "Jukunde" by Kosegarten has risen to some importance, although this, also, after the model of Voss, merely delineates the quiet life of a country parson, and, with the exception of the local background, the Island of Rügen, has no originality. I must confess that this transplanting of modern domestic self-indulgence and imbecility to the home of the old Saxon race, among the vigorous inhabitants of the moors, as it was done by Voss, or to the romantic Rügen, as by Kosegarten, appears to me odious and disgusting. Where ancient national vigor, dress, and manners have maintained themselves more freely and proudly than elsewhere, — there modern cockneyism is out of place; and where so much solidity and mother wit still predominate among the people, sentimentality is most preposterous; and where all is northern, there the affectation of classical taste is most absurd. To those already mentioned was added Baggesen, the Dane, with his "Parthenais," in which, for the first time, northern sentimentality and gentility

became enamored of the sublimity and simplicity of Swiss nature, like a conceited old beau who falls in love with a blooming country damsel. People were attracted to nature, but they took all their pedantry on the way with them, and could not see a cow without turning to the ancients, and breaking out in raptures that the cows should still look exactly as the ancients described them.

A better way was opened in Southern Germany. Although there, also, the poets were unable to tear themselves away from the ancient hexameter, still Neuffer and Schuler — the one in his "Vintage Festival," the other in his "Summer" — gave unaffected and faithful pictures from their own home life, where a whole country and an entire nationality are mirrored, in which nature is represented at one of her brightest moments, and the nation in joyous activity and in proper costume. The still more natural "Sheep-shearing," by Müller, the painter, written in prose, belongs to the same description.

Claudius formed the transition from pedantry to the *naïve* poetry. The celebrated "Wandsbeck Messenger" makes, when we read it now-a-days, a singular and more touching than agreeable impression. Not that its beauties are not always beautiful, its vigorous common sense always sensible, but the form, the language, belong to an age long since departed. It appears to us as if we saw one of our great-grandfathers, with the lofty night-cap, jump up from an easy chair, and skip through a wedding dance. The fun is sincerely meant, but somewhat ungainly. Had not the inborn good-nature, and tameness and timidity

schooled by the pressure of his private affairs, laid too many restraints upon the poet's satire, it would certainly, with his great talents, have grown up to something distinguished. But Claudius did not belong to the more fortunate class of poets, who, like Lessing, Wieland, Herder, Thümmel, Rabner, and Lichtenberg, raised themselves above the common wants of a petty and dependent existence, partly by a better position in civic life, partly by the force of their own genius, or, at least, by their good-humor; he belonged rather to those who, like Voss, Bürger, Moritz, Stilling, Schubart, Seume, could not free themselves, their whole life long, from the feeling of narrow circumstances, and the pressure of want; who, with all their longing for freedom, with all their defiance of fate, still bore upon their brow, ineffaceably impressed, the Cain-mark of low life and vulgar awkwardness. It is necessary to read the "Wandsbeck Messenger," Salzmann's "Human Misery," the "Anton Reiser," by Moritz, Stilling's Life, and the poems of Bürger, Schubart, Pfeffel, and Seume, the "Sebaldus Nothanker," "Sophia's Travels," and the novels of Müller von Itzehoe, to make it intelligible and excusable that Goethe should seek his fortune at that time in the freer and more commodious sphere of noble rank, the prejudices of which he colored over so brilliantly in his "Wilhelm Meister," only because he had had too good occasion to know the advantages he enjoyed contrasted with the oppressed existence of the common citizen of that time. Still there is one song by Claudius — the celebrated "Rhine Wine Song" — which is forever in the people's mouths. Usteri, also,

belongs to this class, with his universally-known song, "Life let us cherish."

Voss attempted, also, to corrupt lyric poetry. He composed domestic songs for all family and house-keeping occurrences — songs even for milk-maids to sing at milking-time; and the subject of all these songs was universally the praise of domestic life. He was here imitated particularly by the field-preacher Schmidt, who, though in a Brandenburg village, amidst the most unattractive scenery, and among the rudest peasants, yet undertook to praise the deep poetry of domestic life in the country.

> "Turn thy nose up, city popinjay,
> If my only coat I wear all plain
> Till each thread is wholly worn away,
> And my woman trims my wig again."

Or,

> "O, how fair, when, with long willow rod,
> The goose-boy drives his motley people by."

It is well known that Goethe has furnished a masterly burlesque upon this painter from nature, in "The Muses and Graces strolling over the Marches." With regard to this matter, too, a better course was taken by South Germany. Domestic life was there raised to the higher power of nationality. Hebel, in his "Alemannic Poems," sought the idyllic spirit, under the condition of a beautiful nationality, and gave it the most natural poetical dress, by not only rejecting the ancient measures, but even the cultivated High German language, and by using at once the beautiful dialect of the Black Forest. But he still shows that it was the age of queues he fled

from, when he took refuge with this lovely rural life. He carried the pig-tail with him; and the more unsurpassable — nay, I might say, the more eternal — many of his poems are, the more disagreeably are we struck by the others, which express nothing but the transient and ridiculous cockneyism of his age. He often puts into the mouths of his peasants of the Black Forests sentiments and forms of language which lay far beyond the circle of their ideas and feelings: he often makes servile allusions, and shows himself a place-man. This introduces into idyls a very offensive and really police-like interruption. Still, the poems in which such inconsistencies do not occur, in which the illusion of a beautiful nationality is not dissipated, are of high and permanent value. Scarcely any where else have the unpretending domestic and household character of the Germans, and their hospitality, the simplicity with which they give themselves up unreservedly where their confidence has once been placed, the morality far removed from all foppery, and the naturalness equally removed from all prudery, the innate true-heartedness of this people, found so faithful and so beautiful an expression. Such are our mountaineers; so appears simple domestic life, sanctified by the original charm of innocency, of a beautiful nature, of uncorrupted national manners, of a becoming and beautiful costume. The pictures drawn from the polite circles, from domestic life in the cities, corrupted by absurd fashions and prejudices, pretensions and affectations, admit of no comparison.

Hebel has been frequently imitated; best of all by

Castelli in the dialect of Lower Austria; worst of all by the otherwise amiable poet Hoffmann von Fallersleben, who, though a North German, took it into his head to write Alemannic poems, like Hebel, without having ever seen Swabia. The excellent comedies of Wagner, in the dialect of Würtemburg, belong rather to the province of satires, like the similar local farces of Frankfort and Strasburg, and a great many of Vienna.

The stage, also, did its part to flatter the cockneys of the pit. German pictures of manners, family pieces, dramas of common life, gained the upperhand; Lessing's delightful "Minna" had shown that German life could be brought upon the stage. Then Gemmingen brought the German father of a family, and, soon after, Iffland brought the whole circle of German cockneyism, with all its varieties, upon the boards. Every thing became common prose, the substance as well as the language. Now, nothing more was heard of the stately Alexandrines, of principal actions and political actions, of great destinies and tragic passions. Smoothly and simply the heroes of the German stage, from this time forth, spoke in German prose, and they were no longer apostles, Roman emperors, antique gods, or Turkish viziers, but German councillors of court and commerce, parsons, magistrates, and master joiners.

Schiller was right in asking, "What is there great that can occur to this miserable state? What great thing can be done by it?" Every thing revolved round petty domestic affairs, household wants, poverty, narrow prejudices; and if this contracted circle

ever opened to large public affairs, it was only done when a servant in livery arrived and handed to the hero of the piece a gracious letter, and, in the highest case, the prince himself entered incognito, threw open his overcoat, let his star be seen, tamed down the old roisterer, had the *obligato* intriguer thrown into prison, and gave the young couple to each other. The contemptible part of all this species of poetry is, that the great national point of view was narrowed down to the contracted scene of a sentimental Little Peddlington.

Such domestic pictures might, nevertheless, pass as idyls, had not the illusion been destroyed by the prose of titles and of conventionalisms. The character of the idyl is naturalness. A domestic life, a simple and innocent love, may preserve the highest poetical charm as an idyl, but not under the overcharged style of our cockneyism. This admits only a comic treatment, and has no other poetical destiny whatever than to be the object of ridicule. I will not detract from the prosaic merits of the members of the civil service; but they are positively good for nothing to poetry, with their civil uniforms and titles. How can we imagine the least particle of heroism, of manly beauty, like that of a Percy or a Quentin Durward, in a German member of the board of guardians? or any thing loving, enthusiastic, and dreamy, like Romeo, in a German upper court assessor or inspector of customs? And so of the women. Can the wife of a counsellor of justice, of a general superintendent, nay, a real female privy counsellor, be a

Portia, Desdemona, Imogen, or even a mere Phædra? By no means. She can figure only in a comic novel as a caricature, as the representative of a fashion, which, though of ancient birth, is still ever new. She belongs only to the province of the ridiculous; her title excludes her forever from the province of the pathetic and sublime. German titles came into the world like abortions, still-born in poetry; and woe to the poet, or the poetess, who attempts to breathe the breath of life into these dead caricatures of poetry.

Such representations are the most disagreeable, when they are not even true; when the modern civil uniforms are filled out with the most extravagant virtues and sentiments, with that romantic refinement, which no man thinks about in real life. When this is avoided — when people are painted naturally as they are, with all their weaknesses, prejudices, vulgarities — such pictures have, at least, an historical merit, and are faithful mirrors of their times; and then only. Iffland's dramas of common life, also, with a few sentimental exceptions, have this merit. Next to the works of Nicolai and Salzmann, they are indeed the most faithful pictures of the manners of the age of perukes.

Iffland, too, has written some plays, at least, which approach the poetic delicacy of idyls, inasmuch as they delineate men, who stand, by their vocation, in close proximity to nature, like the "Hunters;" or paint the human heart and German affections conflicting with political corruption, as in the "Advocates," and in "Official Duty." Hence Iffland passed out of the class of the proper Philistines, into that of the

fine old German gentleman, and his works resemble Schubart's "Opposition," and Schiller's "Cabal and Love."

In the later tragedies and comedies the pure cockney tone has rarely been hit: they have, for the most part, diverged into the sentimental and frivolous, to which Kotzebue gave the key-note.

Cockneyism has settled down most comfortably into the novel, which, like a spacious sofa, was best fitted to accommodate its hroad hoop-petticoat. But, without returning to the great historical principle, and to the broad horizon of the "Island Felsenburg," and of "Simplicissimus," and without retaining from the Anglomania its fine comic trait, people contented themselves with the flattest descriptions and eulogies of every-day life in the family circle; and the novel allowed the omission, even, of the interest of a conflict with adverse circumstances, which the stage, at least, had to adopt, in order not to weary the spectators to death. The novels were much more tame than the dramas even of common life.

There were a few good novels that preceded the many wretched family novels. They show that what was afterwards the prerogative and characteristic of this species of novel, namely, the night-cap, loyal insipidity, and womanish feelings, was only, in fact, a colossal degeneracy.

It required some time before the better spirit, which came over to us with the Anglomania, again disappeared. For this reason so many of the older novels are so excellent. Hermes made his "Sophia," on her journey,—which was somewhat tedious, to be sure,—

come in contact with all classes, and thus gave a rich picture of the times. Hippel delineated with masterly style the educated country nobility, and Müller von Itzeho, the uneducated. His "Siegfried of Lindenberg," though by no means a masterpiece of our elegant literature, yet will always remain a very interesting antiquity, and a picture of the manners of his age, as faithful as it is whimsical. The honest blockhead of a country squire, the sage schoolmaster, and the various green and brown geniuses, are the genuine offspring of their age, and personages, in fact, which other times and the rest of the world have never exhibited. And yet they are not so completely individual, but that an important quantum of the German national spirit is personified by these tragicomical figures. It is said that Napoleon placed in his library the novels of our German Lafontaine, doubtless as the representatives of German soft-heartedness, tearful bliss, weakness of mind, and meanness of spirit. I should also have advised him to take "Siegfried of Lindenberg;" for he would have perceived from this that the Germans, even, when they were not shedding tears, and trying to be tender, but laughed and were coarse, remained still just as stupid as before. Napoleon must have experienced an enjoyment of a wholly peculiar kind from finding the two leading aspects of German decline, whining sensibility, and honest, but easily-cheated coarseness, so well represented by two of our poets. That he had a suspicion of it, at least, is shown by the desire that he expressed, even in Italy and Egypt, to make a campaign through green, fat, good-hearted, and stupid

Germany. Have the Germans changed since then? We dare not affirm, though we fancy so. German milk has stood too long not to have turned sour at last.

The Protestant clergy were delineated in the "Sebaldus Nothanker" of Nicolai, the schoolmen in the "Spitzbart" of Schummel, and the private tutors in the "Kaskorbi," which have been already spoken of in an earlier part of this work, with much more fidelity, and under a much more definite relation to the whole of our nationality and political life, than was done in the affected parsonic idyls of Voss and Kosegarten, and afterwards in the life of a poor country preacher by Lafontaine.

"Lorenz Starck," by Engel, was the best representation drawn from the higher, and "Anton Reiser," by Moritz, the best drawn from the lower, classes of citizens. The latter belongs to the most remarkable phenomena of our literature. In this work Moritz described his own life—told how, from a perfect little vagabond, he became an apprentice to a hat-maker, then a play-actor, and at last a professor at Berlin. But his adventures are far less interesting than the representation of his mental condition in the mean time, the fine psychological delineation. Immediately after this ranks the biography, under the novel form, of the well-known ghost-seer, Jung Stilling, who grew up a peasant-boy in the country, learned the trade of a tailor, and, at last, became the most celebrated oculist of Germany, and the favorite author among the pietists.

Without reading all the novels here mentioned, we cannot obtain a complete picture of German manners

through the last century. Next to them are classed many of less note, which, however, are much better than the later sentimental novels. Thus there were not a few novels, which might serve for a warning, as mirrors of manners, and, among them, "Julchen Grünthal," or the history of a boarding-school, has become the most famous; besides comic pictures of manners, for example, the "History of the Stout Man," in which the proverb "Hans gets on by his dulness," is turned to good account, and the age of routine and of favor repressing merit are well hit off; besides the witty "Tour of Brunswick," by Knigge.

More recently two poets of South Germany have kept the old fidelity in the delineation of manners, without straying into the affectation of sentimentality; and, like the epic poets Neuffer and Schuler, and the lyric poets Hebel and Costelli, Ulrich Hegner, also, and Bührlen, have imbodied the national characters in their novels, and lent to simple private life a higher charm by the sensibility of South German popular feelings.

Ulrich Hegner has written, as a critic of art, upon Holbein and the treasures of art at Paris; but his principal works are novels. His leading talent consists in the fine power of observation, and the mirror-bright clearness with which he reflects the scenes of the nearest real life, pictures of travel as they accidentally offer, after his quiet and charming manner of representation. He always delineates reality with no poetical ornament, often only vulgar and every-day life; but he knows how to make the most insignificant thing, by some means or other, in-

teresting. Hence he often reminds us of Goethe, the acknowledged master in such delineations. But we will not wrong his unpretending character by this comparison. It certainly never occurs to him to give out the insignificant for something important, simply because he says it. His simplicity is not the result of art. It seems as if he were talking, unheard, to himself; and by this very means his expression gains a *naïveté* which he never would have had if he had calculated at all upon listeners. I must recommend, as the most beautiful of his works, the delineation of manners from the time of the Helvetic revolution, namely, "Saly's Days of the Revolution;" for here the author shows himself with all the peculiarities of his character, and under his most amiable aspect. Here he surrenders himself wholly to his inborn nature; here the materials harmonize perfectly with his talent. The pictures of life in Switzerland, which he has given in this work, are as faithful and beautiful as they are unique after their kind, and their delightful truth unquestionably surpasses the beautiful poem which the same author has furnished us under the name of the "Whey Cure." There is, in fact, no novel known to us which admits of any comparison with "Saly's Revolutionary Days," unless it be, perhaps, Goldsmith's "Vicar of Wakefield."

Closely connected with him is Bührlen, a native of Ulm, who exhibited by his "Pictures of the Black Forest," his "Tales," and by the novel of "The Enthusiast," an equally charming talent for the representation of quiet life, and modest, rural, and common society.

I must dwell one momemt upon these phenomena, because they show us the great difference there is between genuine pictures of manners and the cockney literature. Life, even our unpretending common and peasant life, is full of poetry, if our eye is only unprejudiced, not exacting, and unaristocratic — if it is child-like and Homeric enough to perceive what is poetical. It seems almost as if our thousands and tens of thousands of poets were trying with all their might to disguise from us the beauties of real life, as a wit once affirmed that language was invented not to express, but to conceal our thoughts. How much trouble, for instance, some hundreds of German authoresses, of very recent times, are taking to draw characters, which are so blown up and empty, so unnatural and perverted, that they are never seen amidst the very scum of society, but exist only in the diseased and corrupt imaginations of their authoresses! while, in actual life, there pass before the eyes of every reader a multitude of real men, whose infinitely-diversified characters require only the observant eye to furnish a picture far surpassing, in poetical effect, all those novel caricatures. Let every reader but look around him over the circle of his female acquaintances, and ask himself whether he does not discover characters there, and in every character numerous single traits, which are to a high degree poetical, and, if not beautiful, are still piquant; and then let him compare the results of his own perhaps narrow experience with the unnaturalness and wretched uniformity of the novel heroines. Must he not, then, confess, that, with regard to this, we have not greatly the advantage over

the Tartar races of Asia, who worship horrible caricatures of man in images, while their own bodies are distinguished by the most beautiful form?

But the connection of our poetic caste is so strong that scarcely one poet of a thousand can free himself from prejudices and scholastic usages, so as to judge, by comparison, whether the water of Hippocrene still tastes like the natural mountain spring, or has not been turned, under their hands, into tea-water. Such a one, therefore, passes for but little; and Hippel and Hegner, for example, stand modestly in the background of the elegant literature of Germany, like single patches of the blue sky, seen through the holes of the roof upon the poetical barn under which Hogarth represents the strolling actresses as making their toilet.

Bührlen's most ingenious novel is the "Enthusiast." This picture of manners belongs to the finest that we possess. The poet has seized the finest traits of actual life, and sketched them with that humorous pathos which hitherto the English and Germans alone of all nations have attained. The character of the "Enthusiast" is purely national. This contrast between enthusiasm and domestic anxieties, romanticism and cockneyism, runs through the whole being of the Germans. The creature that now sweeps through the highest regions of the empire of mind, with the blessed feelings of an angel, or with the lordly look of a god, and which, an hour afterwards, has to eat and drink and pull off its boots, — the tragicomic, sublime and ludicrous, twofold nature of man, — is the everlasting temptation to humor; and the German has a very peculiar inclination to contrast the ideal and real tendencies of

his character, which must, perhaps, be looked for, not merely from the general wealth of his intellectual being, which embraces all the contrasts of heart and mind, but preëminently also from the age and from the outward relations amidst which he is placed. The discord between the æsthetic ideals and the reality has never been so great as in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nothing can be so directly opposed to the romantic impulses of our hearts as our certificates of baptism, infant schools, examinations at the gymnasia, titles, money matters, official supervision, leases, plush breeches, tailors' bills, visits of ceremony, and the like. Hence poetic humor first came up at the time when romanticism took leave of the helmet, and made room for the modern classicism of the peruke. But since that time the poets have taken three courses: one party would borrow no charm whatever from the modern prose; they held fast to the old; and even if it had vanished from reality, they brightened it up by the colors of poetry at least; and they divided themselves into imitators of the antique and of the romantic. Others said, on the contrary, "Let us be content with the modern prose; that alone is reality, and our present destiny: it is ridiculous, this dreaming ourselves back into ages which are no more, and never will return." Thus, then, reality, with all its littlenesses and follies, was worshipped, and the highest subject of poetical efforts became the German papa wearing the calamanco dressing-gown, the mother with her coffee-cup, and the entrance upon office, the betrothal, marriage, christening, princely visits, official jubilees, and patents, on the one side; on the other, poverty, potatoes, burglaries,

children seduced after the style of Lafontaine, bankruptcy, presidents like Iffland's, and imprisonment.

Intermediate between these imitators of a departed poetry and the worshippers of the present prose, a third class of poets sought to seize the contrast between the two, and therein to express the real truth of what is poetical in the present generation. It is true, for example, that we can as little transport ourselves wholly into the beautiful times that are gone, as surrender ourselves wholly to the unpoetic present. Hence these poets seem to me to deserve the preference before the blind imitators of the past, and the blind worshippers of what is narrow and little in our age. Man stands, not only above his age, and not only in his age, but above it and in it at the same time; and, properly speaking, the question is, not what ideals man purposes to himself in general, nor yet what partial form every age assumes, but what relation the effort after the ideal bears to an age that wears such a partial form. The earth does not stand still, nor yet does it fly off in one direction, but revolves on its own axis, and, at the same time, round the sun.

But the vigor of the true delineation of manners was soon relaxed among the Germans. All the good that was done by the Anglomania was spoiled by sentimentality. There grew up a morbid tendency to embellish modern manners, to cultivate a false enthusiasm for them, and to cherish effeminacy, after the most comfortable fashion, in poetry as well as in life.

The novels which form the transition here, belong to the better sort in proportion as they stand nearer the more ancient times.

Starke's pictures, like those of Iffland, have a historical value, because they are faithful representations of their age, and particularly of one tendency of that age. The old German honesty and true-heartedness are expressed in Iffland's pieces, which enforced a lively sense of right, not, to be sure, without the periwig, and under pious forms besides. This sense of right is equally prominent in Starke's pictures, but after a milder and softer form; and he is the true representative of those good-humored Germans who, during the long period of peace after the seven years' war, found a heaven upon earth in the bosom of their family, in the business of some petty office or trade, in the enjoyment of some prosperity, and some intelligence, and before whom, in their narrow idyllic circle, all that is great in nature and history, church and state, science and art, vanished as into a romantic distance, or did not exist for them at all, and to whom, at first, even the French revolution appeared only with the friendly form of a Dorothea, whom Goethe reverently united to a modern German Herrman, without suspecting that a new fight of Arminius was to be fought, and the idyllic huts to be set on fire.

Next to Starke came Ebert, with similar pictures. Besides, there were Reinbeck, Schmiedtgen, Mosengeil, whose novels and tales, though slightly tinctured with the sentimental, yet always held fast to German morality and sound sense, and were far removed from the extravagances of the Werther fever, and of the frivolous style. Among the writing ladies, Henrietta Hanke is the best delineator of ordinary domestic life, and womanly fortitude under distressing circumstances; and

she understands how to paint, with delicacy and clearness, not only the petty details of the house, of the chamber, even of the wardrobe, but those of the affections, without departing from truth of sentiment into whining, and from the delicacy of sentiment into the impassioned tone of many of her romantic sisters.

## SENTIMENTALITY.

THERE is no poetry whatever without sentimentality. We find it already in Homer, who showed, somewhat earlier than Sterne, that the principal charm of the pathetic consists in the simplicity of the expression. For a long time, none but the lyric poets of the melancholy species were allowed to have a wishy-washy sentimentality, which, for example, was not wanting among our old *Minnesingers*, to water with its streams the flowery mead of poesy.

During the last century, however, various peculiar causes conspired to transfer sentimentality also to the drama and the novel, and to raise it generally to the prevailing fashion of elegant literature.

Rousseau's influence gave the external impulse, but there was already existing a great susceptibility for it. The educated Germans were then very effeminate, and had at once relaxed and over-refined their nervous system, in consequence of the fashions, the new pleasures, the excessive care of the physicians, and their delicate treatment from youth up, as well as the affectation of gentility, which allowed, for example, no gentleman to make a foot journey. Besides this, they made no account of public affairs; peace continued long, and the luxury of tears alone could help them banish the tediousness of life. But many persons of deeper

feelings experienced a real and genuine sorrow over the great misery of the age, or felt themselves unhappy, without exactly knowing wherefore; they felt the oppressive atmosphere of the chamber in which they were pent up, without the least suspicion of the free air abroad. Thus sentimentality was favored, the false as well as the genuine.

The broad and turbid stream of our sentimental literature sprang up pure and crystal-clear from the lyric poetry of Salis and Hölty, as from two pellucid tear-drops. Their noble simplicity and unpretending character, and the truth of their sentiments, will make them outlive many of their celebrated imitators. Verses like

"When, O fate, when will at last,"

and

"The grave is deep and still,"

or

"Sweet and holy Nature,"

will never more vanish from the lips of the people. Both poets are near akin, but the Swiss Salis is the more cheerful, the Lower Saxon Hölty is the more melancholy. The latter was, besides, subject to physical disease, and died like an early withering flower. A presentiment of death, a trait of mingled joy and sorrow, pervades all his poetry, and his songs are like the spangled garlands suspended in country churches as memorials of departed friends, the sight of which once so deeply affected him.

Hölty expressed genuine sadness with the simplest and tenderest touches; but, soon after, Matthisson imbodied affected melancholy in a style of the most bombastic affectation. This celebrated Matthisson, a servile soul, seeking his fortune, and finding it, by fawning

upon all literary and political authorities, surpassing, in the number of presentation snuff-boxes and rings that he had begged, all the other favored disciples of Apollo, gained this favor by taking upon himself the part of howling, and weeping his crocodile tears before the loftiest dignitaries, the high nobility, and the respectable public. This mushroom of fortune was designed neither by nature nor by destiny for sighing and the shedding of tears; but he made a lucrative trade out of them, because sentimentality had become the fashion of genteel society; and so, after a good meal, he seated himself comfortably among the ruins of an old castle, and turned out melancholy verses. At a hunting-party, an all-powerful young nobleman, in order to get rid of him, recommended him to stop under a tree, until the dignitaries should return, and make an elegy; and he made the elegy. In his melancholy, therefore, every thing is studied for effect; there is the most disgusting hypocrisy that I have ever met with. Even the form, for which he is celebrated, the elaborately-polished verses, the pretty flourishes, the frequent bringing in of little arabesque ornaments, and the like, are proofs of the untruthfulness of his sentiments, and the hollowness of his heart. Although he made a business of melancholy, and lived at a time when the German was fairly entitled to excite a profounder sadness, it never occurred to Mr. von Matthisson to devote one lament to his country, but, on the contrary, he offered incense to Napoleonism, and made the notorious festival of Diana the theme of song. His melancholy was never drawn at all from the sufferings of private life; it was the genuine reflection of the weariness of luxury, the morbid affectation of inflated

indolence. Among the ruins of an old castle, to bewail the extinction of its possessors; or, with excellent Rhenish before him, to consecrate a tear to their future death,—long delayed, it was to be hoped;—and, while so doing, to dandle himself with the fond conceit that he was going to sit down in Elysium, wearing a laurel crown, with Plato and the other Greek notabilities, under Anacreon's myrtle grove;—these were the worthy subjects of Matthisson's melancholy muse. Along with his poems, his "Reminiscences" have made a great figure. He tells us, in many a volume, how all his life long he had driven about in a coach, to call on all the genteel people and famous scholars and poets; how he respected them; how they respected him, or, at least, graciously admitted him; publishes some of their expressions, and tame little anecdotes; and, finally, sticks all the visiting cards obtained from them round his mirror, where he gazes upon his image with amorous eye. Yet this man, who was designed by nature for a hireling and undertaker, circumstances have raised to the dignity of a classic poet of the Germans; for this he is still called by gentle dulness every where.

Along with him, the *canonicus* Tiedge is usually named; who, indeed, resembles him so much in elegiac forms, and in the affectation of melancholy, that we might doubt, with regard to many of his poems, whether they were Matthisson's or Tiedge's. But Tiedge always had a more honest purpose, and did not play the hypocrite with so distinct a consciousness as Matthisson: he was of a soft, almost womanish nature; and these natures, we know, work themselves up into such a state of emotion by the force of fancy, that they can

cry between the soup and the boiled dish; so that they can see nothing, hear nothing, do nothing, without giving it a sentimental twang. Hence, also, Tiedge by no means observes so judicious a measure as Matthisson, and cannot govern himself so well, but gives a loose rein to his melancholy, and bathes in the stream of tears he has himself shed, with a feeling of comfort, and would not merely, like Matthisson, please people, but infect them too, and sweep away every thing by the stream of tears. In his "Urania," he guides this stream like another milky way through heaven, and dissolves astronomy into amazement, ecstasy, and admiration of the greatness of God, sorrow for our littleness, and, finally, tears of emotion, of thanks, and of resignation.

Of the many, nay, innumerable imitators of this melancholy manner, I have nothing at all to say. They have become important only in the literature of the books of devotion and edification, under which head I have already mentioned them.

Hölderlin appeared after a wholly original style. The deep-felt sadness of the age overmastered this beautiful genius. He became insane thirty years ago, and left us a monument of his glowing melancholy in the noblest pictures. He saw vulgarity all around him, a literature which Kotzebue ruled, a nation who worshipped only foreign tyrants: therefore he sang —

"Alas! the multitude are pleased with what is current in the market,
And the bondman honors only the man of power.
Those only believe in the godlike
Who are themselves what they believe."

But his better feeling, coupled with an irrepressible impulse to advance, found no resting-place, and no outlet, during that wretched period. Therefore he himself announced the tragical aberration of his intellect.

> "The blindest, however,
> Are sons of the gods; for man knoweth
> His house, and to the beast was given
> Where he should build; but to *them*
> The woe of knowing not whither to go,
> In the inexperienced soul."

Matthisson knew whither, and died in the midst of honors. He was no son of the gods. Hölderlin sank down under the sacred night of madness; but his resurrection will be brighter than that of Mr. von Matthisson. His deep and wonderful tones bear the same relation to Matthisson's versifications, as Ossian's harp, resounding in the storm-wind among the rocks, to the tinkling of a cymbal. Hölderlin's sorrow is that of a great nation; Matthisson's, that of an over-fed lap-dog.

Hölderlin's feelings belong to that rare class, which are poetical by nature, and breathe poetry through every external manifestation, as the flower sheds its constant and peculiar fragrance. He thinks of nothing poetical; he takes no trouble about making or working any thing up to poetry; he is poetry itself. He flashes out the poetical fire only from within: he lets it burn in artless, nay, wild flames, until it has burned itself out. His soul is a delicately-strung Æolian harp, first moved to a low melody by the wind, then seized by the storm, and broken among terrific tones, but

beautiful always. If ever poet felt what he sang, he is that poet. In the stream of his songs, every drop is drawn from his inmost heart.

I must here mention another poetic passion-flower, which, like the lotus blossom of the ancients, was carried down to the depths below by love. I mean the poor Louisa Brachmann, who quenched her burning heart in the cold flood. Her sadness, also, was original and genuine, and, therefore, many of her poems are of real beauty. They are the more peculiar because the feminine character, and that German gentleness which advantageously distinguishes her from the Grecian Sappho, are never falsified in her sorrow. Even amidst her despair, there is an expression of resigned tenderness.

"Thousand times heretofore wished I, wretched, ne'er to have seen him;
Wished for my quiet again, which he had caused me to lose;
Ah! if a god were to grant me to live contented and quiet,
And to forget him, my heart death and his image would choose."

Although impure hands planted thistles and thorns over her grave, still her poems bloom up like roses, ever fresh; and I will pluck one more to preserve a memorial of a lovely spirit. She sang of herself—

"Why wouldst thy hapless destiny bewail
That love is gone, and joy's bright visions fail?
Who would his transitory bliss control,
Feels love his due, in his exalted soul.
The outward world hides not the fount of joy;

Swift-changing lights across the landscape play—
Now sullen shadows, now the cheerful ray;
Yet still the place that charmed the eye is there,
The enchanting spot continues still as fair,
If darkness veils or golden light adorns."

If power is not expressed by the works of a man, they are good for nothing. If love is not expressed by the works of a woman, they are of as little worth. Nothing is so intolerable as the cold prudery of a Theresa Huber, and other scribbling Amazons, who have sworn eternal hate against the sweetest passion, in order to surrender themselves up to a sour affectation of solemn gravity. But there is nothing more natural and more suitable to a songstress than the voice of a tender heart. For this reason I have always defended Louisa Brachmann and Fanny Tarnow. These maidens possessed a genuine womanly feeling; they loved, they sung what they felt.

The Countess Ida Hahn-Hahn strikes a freer and bolder, but not less delicate key; and this redounds to her honor. She does not shut up her heart; she gives way freely and entirely to her beautiful feelings, and she knows too well how much the fire of poetry gains by the fire of love to separate the two. Far from representing herself as destitute of feeling, or from washing away her feelings seven times in the water of a starveling prudery, she leaves them their first ardor and strength. Still no one ought to wonder at her openly confessing her love before all the world. There have been, and there still are, learned ladies among us, who want to act always just like men, and who have purposed to place the two sexes on precisely the same

footing. This is absurd. Women should not occupy the professor's chair with spectacles on nose, nor appear under arms, nor stand up in the pulpit; all this they should leave to us. But they must love; that fits them well; that is natural and beautiful of them.

Or should every one be silent about her love — lock it up in her inmost breast? That is generally the case; but no rule is without exceptions. One need not be exactly a Sappho, in order not to be able to resist the tide of song. Wherefore is not the nightingale silent? There must be something which impels her to sing.

Among the later poets there is one, Lenau, in whom a sweet sadness, the genuine poetical melancholy, manifests itself. The everlasting longing of the heart is not, perhaps, so touchingly expressed by any other poet; not with passionate wildness, not even with sorrowful complaints, but in what the English call the luxury of woe.

"Deep is my heart a rankling thought corroding,
Whereby I am forever more forlorn:
'Tis whispered by my heart, — the dismal boding, —
'She has not yet upon this earth been born.'"

"Some hour ———
Will draw her to the cool of cypress groves,
And guide her steps, absorbed in silent thought,
Unto thy tomb, moss-grown and all forgot.
Then roams thy restless ghost thine ashes round;
Then soul and dust would to reunion leap;
Then will the maiden, seized with awe profound;
Beside thy grave stand silently and — weep."

A great many younger poets incline to the sentimental

species; for example, Ferrand, von Ischnabuschnigg, Henrietta Ottenheimer, Braun of Braunthal, Otto Count von Löben, and others.

In dramatic poetry, the sentimental spirit for a time raised the pathetic plays to a prevailing fashion, the *Comedie larmoyante*, as the corresponding species was called by the French. Iffland inclined this way in several of his pieces, particularly the "Old Bachelor," although common life and the hearty old German character predominated in his works. Kotzebue wrote the greatest number, and the most popular, of the pathetic plays; but as his sentimentality and frivolity always went hand in hand, and particularly as his whining piece "Misanthropy and Repentance" is, at the same time, his most frivolous one, I prefer to speak generally of his manner, when I come to the following chapter.

The dramatic sentimentality, moreover, did not remain stationary with the modern domestic and pathetic pieces alone; it adhered, also, to romantic tragedy. Even Schiller gave himself so far up to this, — though in a very noble spirit, — that his numerous imitators upon the stage again caricatured it; and Goethe's theatrical heroes caused still more mischief among the herd of imitators, inasmuch as they clothed every species of weakness of heart, vanity, and sensuality with the most refined sentiments. As long as sensibility made its appearance only among the everyday characters and modern weaklings of Iffland and Kotzebue, they still had a certain naturalness. Men had really grown effeminately soft, or, at least, cultivated sentimentality as a fashion. They affected

pathetic emotion no less in domestic life than on the stage. A far greater offence against poetry, however, was the transferring of this modern effeminacy to romantic characters, and even to historical heroes. This fault has grown so common that the later poets have fallen into it almost involuntarily, inasmuch as they found a perfectly formed style, adapted to this spirit, ready to their hands—I mean the well-known phraseology of the iambic tragedies, over whose track they moved comfortably along, and by a sort of natural necessity, as if it had been a railroad. The desire of expressing sentiment has always outweighed, among the dramatic poets, the duty of letting the action speak for itself. Hence, in our dramas, of every description, the fine passages, so called, where the poet must needs exhibit his own exquisite soul, interrupt so frequently the natural progress of the action, and obliterate the sharp delineation of character. Hence the everlasting repetition of sentimental flowers of speech, even from the lips of rude warriors, tyrants, and criminals. Hence the disagreeable and utterly worthless character of the palliation, and would-be reformation, of the poetical Don Juans, and Clavigos, and Hugo Oerindurs, who are represented as committing all possible crimes, and yet end off as very loveable and feeling souls. Hence Kotzebue's, so called, "noble falsehood" is the common tendency of a numerous class of works, at the head of which stands Goethe's "Faust."

But not to anticipate too much, we will dwell upon the domestic and civic sentimentality, and see the mode by which it has gained a stronger hold of the

province of the novel than any where else. Goethe's *Werther* and Miller's *Siegwart* stand here at the head: *Werther* is nothing but Rousseau's *Nouvelle Heloise* under a German costume. There is the same vanity of heart, the same unscrupulous sporting with sensibilities, the same vain complaints. But we must consider every literary phenomenon in its historical connection with others; and thus we shall not be able to conceal from ourselves the fact, that the frivolous views of marriage, which have become the fashion since Queen Margaret, Boccaccio, Ariosto, Lafontaine, Voltaire, and others, have, at length, found a sentimental counterpart, and that the merry marriage-breakers of former times could not fail of producing their opposite in the whining adulterers of the present. The happy paramour had enjoyed his turn; the sighing one must have his too. The secret lust that would overcome the marriage vow, had to slip into the house, like Tartuffe, in the midst of tears and sighs: thus a show of decency was kept up, and it was not perceived that the sentimental swains were the most dangerous. Thus, in *Werther*, Goethe held marriage in outward respect; but he made it repulsive and hateful, as a mere prosaic affair, and as an unpoetical interruption of a poetic connection: all the ridicule of his descriptions fell upon poor marriage; all the light upon the interesting and very melancholy lover. The doctrine deduced from this, that a refined soul is raised quite above all the common duties of life and the laws of morality, became far more dangerous than the earlier immorality of the French, which was guilty of crime, but only as crime, and not under the name of fastidious refine-

ment, or even of virtue itself. From this time forth, it became an easy matter for all the voluptuaries to palliate their licentiousness. Every paramour affected to be a person of refined and fastidious feeling, and to regard his connection with another man's wife, as a poetical union, contrasted with the prosaic relation of husband and wife. *Werther* became immensely popular; one imitation chased after another, and even frivolity, which had hitherto been dry, witty, and malicious, borrowed from him a sentimental veil, as it had in France from Rousseau. While the sentimental novels began to grow frivolous, the frivolous novels also began to grow sentimental.

*Werther* has also had a bad influence in another direction. Even very intelligent, cultivated, and moral young men, have been led astray by him into that finical affectation of fastidiousness which is wholly at war with a manly tone of sentiment, and which, if it becomes a prevalent fashion, must even be regarded as a national calamity. A Narcissus, to whom every thing that he takes in hand, to whom every object on which his eye happens to fall, is made a mirror of, and who must, of necessity, become perfectly effeminate in the course of this admiring self-contemplation, or be ruined by it, is a bad model for the German youth. The egotism of these fastidious souls, who want to be loved and adored for their own sake alone, without having deserved any thing whatever of the world or their country, is the most dangerous disease of the German youth. It is true that the *Werther*-fever, so called, has seduced but very few really to shoot themselves; but the many others who have been infected by it, have the more

easily spread abroad the morbid matter, the pride of heart, the assumption of superiority, the feeling of self-inflicted misery, the sickening at the prose of the world, the eternal affirmation of the right of superior minds, the neglect of every manly duty, the display of the meanest personal vanity, and the contempt of all the interests of native land, which might utterly perish, for all they care, provided only these tenderlings may gratify their coquettish propensities. It is well known that Napoleon carried *Werther* with him, in his camp library, as the most favorite novel of the Germans, and by it judged, with some appearance of justice, not the whole German nation, but the generation with which he had to deal. The constitution of the empire furnished only a few guaranties; but external political relations would not have reduced us so low, and bowed us under the yoke of France, had not the intellect of the nation been unnerved; had not the Baron von Goethe taught our youth, by the *Werther*-fever, that intellectual self-pollution which made them, among their gloomy broodings over themselves, and while pampering their diseased imaginations, insensible to honor and country, and disinclined to all public activity, which could not basely be made to minister to æsthetic egotism and intellectual voluptuousness.

This state of mind among the young has been mirrored forth by a great multitude of similar novels, since the example set by *Werther;* sometimes with a spirit of pride and scorn, as by Heinse, who therefore passed out of the barriers of sentimentality; sometimes plaintive and whimpering, because the world is too rough for delicate souls. Very recently such novels have ap-

peared in still greater numbers. Instead of the young man's putting on a manly spirit, rushing joyously into the warfare of life, submitting himself with military pride to the necessary discipline, and resisting and overcoming all opposition with the rapture of a hero, — like a child, spoiled by tender treatment, and kept too long at home, he fears to venture into the open air; he shivers if he merely throws open a window; the world appears to him full of misery, cruelty, and rudeness, and he takes refuge again by the warm oven, and the variegated golden spangles of his childish Christmas box. A perusal of Hotho's "Preliminary Studies" is enough to convince us that the *Werther*-fever continues to rage; that, even at the present day, young men, born to exercise a powerful influence over their age, withdraw from the world, out of an affected fastidiousness of taste, and a ridiculous aristocratic feeling — a thing that is never pardoned in young men, that is only pardoned in old and scarred veterans, or in mincing old maids. We easily understand how it is that all these babes and sucklings are the greatest worshippers, and, as it were, the body-guard of Goethe. This name is held in greater honor among them than God, country, and the universe, because he flatters their vanity and imbecility, and opens to them an asylum, already held by prescriptive and acknowledged right, where they are protected from the coarse demands of duty.

Along with *Werther*, poor *Siegwart* excited the greatest attention between '70 and '80. He is much more harmless; but his weakness makes an impression the more disagreeable upon a manly spirit, because it

was a symptom of misery, anguish, and resignation, extensively spread through the age itself, and marks but too significantly the then deep-sunk spirit of the nation. Siegwart would love, and must betake himself to the cloister. Modern worldliness entices him, and he cannot freshly, and freely, and vigorously grapple with it; the ancient church still holds him fast, and yet vouchsafes to him none of the poetry which dwelt aforetime within her sacred walls. The biographies of Bronner and Schad, who made their escape from the cloister, and the whole literature of the *illuminati*, shows that the poorer and yet educated Catholic young men of that age passed through this melancholy medium between *should* and *may not*, and *would* and *can not*. The more powerful minds took refuge with the frivolity of a Blumauer; the gentler, with the sentimentality of a Siegwart, from whom they sought to draw the consolation of tears. But the whole phenomenon is a morbid one, and the only consolation about it is, that it can be but transient.

These suffering and self-denying characters stood only on the border — at the side. The broad medium of life, as well as of the novel, adopted the domestic sentimentality which, though still hampered by the cockney spirit, yet sought to ennoble it by more refined sentiments, and more refined language. Lafontaine here undertook the principal part. His numerous novels belong to the period which stood between the bag-wigs and pig-tails, on the one side, and the modern French Titus-heads and the Greek draperies, on the other. The very frontispieces made this observable. But the gentle Lafontaine was very far from

adopting the frivolity, with the nudities and curling heads of the French consulate. He knew France and the revolution only from books, and went back as far as Rousseau, from whom he took only the good, like the little bee that sucked the honey from the flower, but left the poison there. Thus, Lafontaine made German domestic life a repetition of the French revolution, after the most harmless fashion in the world, and for this purpose used, instead of blood, nothing but tender tears. The young revolutionary generation clipped off the pig-tail, led the enamored parson's daughter to the bower, talked her out of her hoop petticoat, and pokes, and frizzled hair; and the nightingale's sweet piping proclaimed aloud the triumph of naturalness over the old-fashioned restraints of the manners of our fathers' days. Then comes upon them the severe mamma; she has all the vigor of the olden time in her little fist, which she presses angrily against her side. The good papa would gladly help the giddy-pated children, but he is too weak, is himself afraid of mamma, and lets her have her way. Now tears, fainting, abduction — finally return, forgiveness. The papa himself cuts off the pig-tail, the old mamma smilingly tries on the new cap which her son-in-law has brought back with him. Such are all the novels of Lafontaine; and what else are they than faithful pictures of the French revolution? The papa, — Louis XVI.; the mamma, — the aristocracy; the nightingale, — Rousseau and philosophy; the *eclat*, tears, and fainting, — the reign of terror; the abduction, — Napoleon's foreign wars; the reconciliation, — the new constitution. Is it not a pleasant

jest, and does it not prove the good nature of the German, that the great overturn of the age could appear to us under the form of a little domestic revolution? Certainly this was the triumph of sentimentality.

Properly speaking, the overthrow of the old stiff Philistinism presented only a comic aspect; and, in this respect, Kotzebue's frivolous talent preëminently showed itself. Seduction under the name of innocence; fallen spirits of angelic purity; virtuous youth who are all soul, so that they appear not to know what the body does; the sentimental consummations, where nothing is done but sighing and crying, and the tears are fruitful notwithstanding, — all this matter is a little unnatural. But this coquetting with innocence made the little sin more piquant; soft tears heightened the enjoyment, and yet furnished an outside show of decency: for this reason, they were received with infinite favor. Lafontaine was devoured; young men and the ladies carried him in their hands.

Kotzebue, too, did not fail to represent his Cyprians as Vestal virgins, as virgins of the Sun and Gurlis, as simple children of nature and innocence; and nothing has gained him more fame and fortune. To the most original works of this species, the "Easter Eggs" of Soden belongs. A native child of the Alps, a young Swiss damsel, is carrying eggs to market. She is met by a Cossack officer. The eggs are broken. The good child weeps for nothing but the eggs, so that the father himself says, "Child, thou hast lost, it is true, thy maidenly honor, but not thine innocence."

She gives birth to a hearty little Cossack, whom the aristocratic lady, who has been betrothed to the officer, conceals inside of an artificial egg, and sends,

according to the popular custom, to her faithless lover, at Christmas time. Surprise, emotion, tears. He marries the Swiss girl, and the betrothed lady magnanimously takes another. A single story of this kind is enough to characterize the whole class.

By far the greater number of domestic novels meantime continued faithful to decency and morality, and connected sentimentality with a pious enthusiasm for virtue, with a love of being sacrificed for the cause of virtue. This called out a new class of novels — the self-denying novel — which were principally written by women. A noble maiden loves, but sacrifices her inclination to a higher duty of honor, and voluntarily renounces her passion. Or, she loves, is betrayed, and avenges herself by the noblest magnanimity. This is the sum and substance of this numerous class of novels. Those of Fanny Tarnow I prefer to the rest, because, in them, virtue appears under the most unpretending form, and tenderness is least disguised by prudery. In all her works, she represents a maiden of natural feeling and tender disposition, who shows, by her noble manner of bearing misfortune, that she is worthy of a better fate, and inspires us with sympathy as if she were our own daughter. Most of the prodigiously numerous lady-novels occupy a middle ground between hers and those of Madam Theresa Huber. The latter indicates the extreme of sentimental prudery, inasmuch as she teaches that the fair sex is too tender and delicate not to be broken, like glass, by merely coming in contact with man; that the highest destiny of woman is to be an angel, perfectly sufficient unto herself, and not to de-

grade herself to a brute by love and marriage with men. Her "unmarried women" are, properly, female Werthers, delicate souls that are far too good for this world, motley fools of arrogance, Amazons of sensibility. I consider them, for this reason, if for no other, as unnatural caricatures; because they are the creations of a woman who has outlived two husbands, and because no maid has ever yet written such novels, or praised the state of single blessedness after such a fashion.

The celebrated Neuberin only burnt the harlequin; but she burnt him, and that is always an honorable death.[1] But our celebrated prudes, the Vestals of Parnassus, or, worse still, the female imbeciles, drown Cupid; they drown him in their novels — a very miserable death indeed. The raving *bacchantes* never fell with more fury upon Orpheus than our celebrated scribbling prudes on the poor little god of love, who is lost past redemption; for, should he, as he did of old, mischievously draw his bow to avenge himself upon his fair enemies, and chance to look about him, the sight of their ugliness would so terrify the son of Venus, that bow and arrow would drop from his hand.

When women who know how to manage the breeches so well with one hand, clutch the pen with the other, and give vent to their wrath against the men, it is all very pleasant. If one is not himself Socrates,

[1] [The allusion here is to the attempts of Godsched to reform the stage, and make it more classical, by extirpating the opera, the comic opera, and by banishing the Harlequin. He had this character publicly burned, in conjunction with the stage-manager Neuber, in 1737. The wife of this person seems to be designated here under the name of Neuberin. — TRANSL.]

he is always gratified by the sight of a Xanthippe. But it is a shame that these good ladies restrain themselves too much before the public. Instead of giving men a box on the ear, they only give them good lectures. Aunts, mothers-in-law, are the oracles, nay, even girls are the female tyrants, over marriage. In the "Letters" of an unknown "Julie," which have been thrice published, and have become very popular, a maiden exercises such power over her tender lover, that she forces him to marry another, in order that she may, herself unmarried, trim the new couple down into a pattern of matrimony, by everlasting instruction and admonition. Can any thing be more crazy? But sentiment makes every thing possible. The rejected lover is moved, the goslin of a mistress is moved; and, in this state of emotion, the man that loves allows himself to be united to a woman who is not loved, by the woman that does not love, with all innocence.

The intellectual preponderance of the women is also acknowledged by De Wette, who, in the novel "Heinrich Melchthal," represents a young man as wholly educated by women, and by North German women, too, at æsthetic tea-parties, as if the highest culture worthy of a man were to be found there alone. The question is not one of mere social culture, of the rules of good breeding, which are undoubtedly best learned from the society of women, but of the culture of intellect and the formation of character, which De Wette makes the young man acquire by means of a sentimental lady, as if there were not, under all circumstances, a school of men for that purpose—I mean toil, and conflict—as if, to use

the words of Plato, we could learn among women any thing else than what is womanish.

This modern race of Amazons, who oppose the intellectual powers of women to those of men, as the antique race of Amazons opposed their strength of body, belong to the caricatures of the times, and merit, just as much as the ancient, the ridicule of an Aristophanes, whose *Lysistrata*, and *Ecclesiazousai*, or "Women holding Town-meeting," contain more common sense than the whole of our lady-literature.

Matters could not fail to come to this Amazonian extreme, since the sentimental literature is a surrender of every manly sentiment whatsoever. The egotism of Werther is womanish, the soft resignation of the Siegwarts is womanish, the domestic emotion of Lafontaine is womanish. Manhood is wanting throughout all this literature. What wonder, then, that the women as poetesses take formal possession of the supremacy?

Poetical servilism is also connected with this womanish character. Is it not characteristic that the French call the court and saloon circles the fashionable world, while we Germans call them the great world? The French carry their taste with them into society; they want to enjoy themselves there as in something beautiful. We, on the contrary, bring our subordination, our devotion, our title follies, and desire only to look up to, or down from, titled greatness. The most diminutive little princess is, to the German, not a beautiful, but a great personage; and she herself, perhaps, admires, in her mirror, less her divine look than her high and mighty turned-up little nose. Besides, there is nothing more natural than the optical

illusion by which our scribbling dames see the great world in that world which, for the most part, is so very small. Some of these authoresses live and move in that world, and it is their all; others have lived in it, and constantly recall the days of their youth; others would be glad to live there, and constantly transport themselves in imagination thither. Hence, among the lady-novels, scarce one out of thirty deals with common life; and certainly the other nine-and-twenty move in the great world. All their heroines are princesses, countesses, baronesses, ladies — particularly court ladies; the heroes are princes, counts, barons, Herr vons. The theatre is the court, or the noble ancestral castle, or the manor. Life is made up of balls and the preparations for them. But when some tragical seriousness must be introduced into this paradise of fools, it is done by means of a mismatch — that leading spring of all lady-novels, which is, at the same time, the parent of self-denial — or by means of conjugal infidelity. But if these mischiefs are cured, nothing more can disturb the perfect bliss of the great world, that heaven upon earth, and the female evangelists of this kingdom of heaven give themselves up, with the best of humors, to the delight of describing all the splendors there, — ball-dresses, ladies' bonnets, ornaments, uniforms, gloves, stars of orders, compliments, refreshments, dancing, declarations of love, court scandal, female criticism, etiquette, frivolity and prudery, dulness and court learning.

The matter has a serious aspect also. Inasmuch as by far the greatest part of these numerous novels belong to the sentimental class, the views and examples

therein contained must necessarily exert a bad influence upon the boundless circle of male and female readers, among whom they are, moreover, frequently the only reading. They find the most miserable imbecility of heart, and vanity, praised in the novel as the sublimest virtue; they see that, with regard to the simplest conflicts between duty and conscience, the novel creates artificial difficulties, and palliates the infirmity that wanders from virtue. They see how often all common sense is treated with derision, and the novel heroes despair, and weep, and doubt, and do what is least fit to be done. Nay, entire works of fiction are often constructed upon such exhibitions of the most ridiculous weakness alone. If the hero or the heroine would only reflect a moment, and act like a rational being, all the lamentation and the whole novel would be unnecessary. Such novels must have a bad effect upon the less cultivated male and female readers. They cannot fail to seduce the feeble character to yield to his infirmity, because it is represented to him as beautiful; and even the strong they may lead astray. I have known cases of vigorous and healthy natures having made themselves ridiculous by holding it to be becoming to put on the refined and tender character.

I am, moreover, thoroughly convinced, that the sentimental literature is one of the principal causes of the directly opposite vulgarity which has gained a footing in literature and in life. The pretension to ideality led to the coarsest affectation of nature; sentimental tenderness to cruelty; the prudery which, from over-refined delicacy, regarded the body as wholly out

of the way, to shameless obscenity, — for one extreme always calls out another.

Indeed, a sentimental lie pervades the whole system of manners among the moderns. All the ceremonial part of our social intercourse rests upon it. We hardly meet one another in the street without lying to each other. We do the most indifferent thing under the forms of affectionate feeling; nay, good breeding lends even to contempt the external drapery of respect, to hatred the disguise of love. But these forms have become, by their commonness, perfectly indifferent; we think nothing at all about them. But the case is altogether different with the sophistry of the heart, which, in novels and plays, turns, with its lies, disease into health, unnaturalness into beautiful nature, even vice into virtue, smooths over with sentimentality every weakness, and every licentious pleasure.

It was not until this contradiction appeared, that a phenomenon, which was unknown to the earlier ages, became possible, namely, sentimentality conscious of its error, and deriding itself, incapable, nevertheless, of giving up the sweet habitude of tears, and the luxury of the soft, melting mood, and now strangely oscillating between laughter and crying, pleasure and chagrin, devotion and scorn.

It is true that Shakspeare's "Hamlet," and Sterne's "Sentimental Journey," already furnish us something similar; but this earlier English humor is not in every respect like the later humor of a Hippel or Jean Paul, although that, too, is a wholly modern phenomenon, which was unknown to the middle ages and to classic literature. Humor expresses, generally, the clear con-

sciousness and the deep sentiment of a contradiction in the age — of a hated or unsatisfying present, from which, however, there is no escape — of a longed-for ideal which can never be attained — in short, a mode of thought, and a state of the affections, which made their appearance for the first time after the reformation; for, before this, man knew better how to adapt himself to the order of the world, and remained faithful, body and soul, to his nationality, his rank, his faith, or passed, body and soul, into a new condition, without being half drawn away, and half clinging still to the former state, as happens to the modern race. Man was always his own master, whithersoever his birth and his destiny might lead him; for he was temperate and strong. He did not require impossibilities, and knew how to make the best of his fortune. At present, however, men are immoderate in their demands, and will not be content with any thing, and are unable to tear themselves away from the smallest thing to which they have become accustomed. He who views himself in this not very enjoyable state of contrariety is a humorist.

But the humor which is brought by Hippel and Jean Paul into immediate connection with the sentimental literature is only a particular species of humor, and by no means the only form under which German humor must of necessity have manifested itself always, however often an imitation of it has been attempted. I consider this form inseparable from the sentimental period, as Tieck and Arnim's humorous comedies are inseparable from the romantic, and Börne's humor from the political period.

Hippel first introduced among us laughing emotion

and weeping ridicule by his "Biographies in an Ascending Line," and by his "Knight of A — Z." He lived in Prussia, on the Baltic Sea, in the neighborhood of Hermes, and, at the time of the first enthusiasm for English literature. Hence the influence of Goldsmith and Sterne upon him is not to be mistaken; but he borrowed only the courage to express his feeling, not the feeling itself, which cannot conceal its German nationality. He was the first who transferred the lyrical spirit to prose, and sunk down to the deep sadness of Hölty in his delineations of quiet, of solitary wretchedness, of sacrifices obscure, and yet hard to make; while he had the power of satirizing, with the most spirited ridicule, like Rabener, Thümmel, and Lichtenberg, the prejudices, affectations, and fashions of the age. The finest humanity, the rarest power of exciting emotion, and an excellent style, have, at last, secured to this formerly unappreciated poet the high rank in German literature which he deserves.

An intellect near akin to him, which, however, was favored by a still higher and more brilliant talent, was Jean Paul, so universal a favorite with the Germans, next to Goethe a man of unquestionably the greatest talent for the representation of modern life. Goethe and Jean Paul are properly the *Dioscuri* of the modern kind. Both delineate the life amidst which they lived, but according to two very different modes of viewing it. Goethe leered upon, approved, praised this form of life, and took it up in its unity, as a whole: Jean Paul, on the contrary, looked upon it humorously, half in sorrow, half in ridicule, and took it up in its disjointed state, in the infinite contradiction which pervades it,

and which distinguishes our time so broadly from the self-secure and self-satisfied middle ages. In this, too, both poets harmonize — that they were so many-sided, and loved to let their personal feelings predominate, and to make themselves the subjects of their representations. Goethe was manysided, because that is talent; and he liked to represent himself by his lovers and heroes, because all *virtuosi* like to gaze upon themselves in a mirror. Jean Paul was manysided, because the humorous view of the world reaches and penetrates every thing; and because to self-knowledge belongs the key to all the knowledge of mankind; and because, like a genuine humorist, he saw in the tragicomic twofold nature of the outward world only the reflection of that within himself.

This twofold nature is the distinguishing characteristic of Jean Paul. Its first propelling force is sensibility, the sentiment of suffering, which, being double, partly elevates itself to tragical woe, and partly sinks quietly down into idyllic sentimentality and childlike emotion. By this a real musical rise and fall of sentiment is expressed. Now, we hear from Jean Paul a lament and a deep woe for the weakness of human nature, for earthly wretchedness, for the vice and unnaturalness, particularly of the corrupted social relations; and he delineates every species of modern misery and modern profligacy with the liveliest and truest colors, and the deepest feeling. Now, his burning sorrow passes into gentle sadness, and he escapes with his wounded tenderness into the world of innocence, which always makes its little idyllic garden hard by the wild highway of the warfare of

life. He delineates uncorrupted souls, children, pure men, rural and quiet life. But there prevails, even through these delineations, either a touch of sadness, or of playful irony in the other direction.

The second impelling force of this twofold nature is ridicule, which raises itself more to the manly character, above the world and its own sorrows, and vigorously attacks the same defects and vices, which inspired the poet with such melancholy feelings, by the arms of wit. Even in this ridicule we distinguish a rising and falling movement. At one time the poet rises to the bitterest sarcasm, to a satire that burns into the very bones; at another he plays with happy irony. That sarcasm is most frequently united with his tragic sorrow, this irony with his idyllic sensibility.

Both these elements so run into each other through nearly all the representations of Jean Paul, that he often changes, on the same page, from the most pathetic to the most ludicrous pictures. He has frequently been reproached for this, without reflecting that the truth of humor and its most powerful effect consist precisely in this. If we separate the twofold nature of humor, we destroy its very essence. The two opposites of humor are so blended together, that language can never express, with sufficient fidelity, this intimate union, or the rapid change of successive feelings.

It is more justly objected to Jean Paul, that his mode of representing is too little objective, where it should be objective, particularly with regard to the truth and keeping of his characters. It cannot be denied that many of his heroes and heroines, particularly the serious and sentimental, or idealized characters, and in Titan,

especially, have too little inward truth and naturalness, and are too obviously the mere work of poetical creation, and do not look like real beings. But even here we can excuse the poet. It was not a part of his plan, nor did it belong to the nature of his poetical manner, to give us unities. Wherever they occur with him, they appear only as external frames for the fulness of his sentiments and of his wit. These are the principal points. Humor every where proceeds upon the analytic plan, and divides the given unity of life, as well as of characters. With sentiment, it penetrates into the deepest folds of the finest parts; Jean Paul can only go into a psychological detail when he gives up external keeping; and if he had seen fit to finish off his characters, and to introduce more symmetry and proportion into the arrangement of his novels, he would have had to cut off all the best part of his finest and richest details, of his digressions and episodes. Besides this, the subjective view predominates throughout with humor, and it would be unjust to require, in addition to the beauties which it furnishes, others, still, which are contradictory to its nature, and which we may seek and find with other poets. But as to what has been said about the faultiness of his altogether too frequent and learned metaphors, we may admit the justice of the charge, without taking too much offence at it. We would excuse every one his faults of manner, if he were a Jean Paul; and a fault of affluence is always better than one of poverty.

But the most honorable thing we have to say of Jean Paul, and what ranks him with the noblest men of the nation, is the elevation of his tone of thought, his pure virtue, and the fire of noble passion, his moral wrath

against vice, those sublime traits of character which he shared preëminently with Schiller. Jean Paul, too, like Schiller, every where contrasts innocence with vice, and right with wrong. There is scarcely a crime of the age which his keen glance did not detect, against which his affectionate temper did not utter a friendly warning, or which his lively ridicule did not powerfully satirize. But there was nothing innocent and beautiful, there was no virtue of the age, which Jean Paul did not acknowledge, and hold up for a model, in touching pictures. He discovered the light and the dark side of every thing; and there are few of his contemporaries who observed the age so closely, and appreciated it so justly.

Many regard this amiable poet as too soft and womanish, and are offended by the excessive frequency of his emotions. It is true that his soft heart is sometimes extravagant, and his sensibility oftentimes repels us by an exaggerated and morbid tenderness; but he only surrenders himself to this sweet melancholy, when he is indulging his feelings by himself, undisturbed; and it gives way to a bold and manly elevation at once, when a higher idea summons him to instruct or to punish. Formed by nature to tenderness, he becomes strong, like a man, by every pious and moral idea; and then he is not wanting in the passion of virtue, the noble glow of anger, and the love of truth, regardless of consequences. But the inborn gentleness of his spirit, however, begets a tolerance such as has seldom been witnessed by our age, namely, that patience, which, without being indifferent, takes a broad survey of all parties, and

universally acknowledges the good, wherever it may be found. In this kind of tolerance, Jean Paul comes nearest the great Herder. Notwithstanding the infinite affluence of his wit, he never abuses this dangerous weapon; and his conscientiousness in this respect can never sufficiently be praised. He is the most peaceful and loyal of our poets; and yet he is the very man who possessed incomparably the richest arsenal of wit and of dialectic skill for controversy. Of him who had every thing requisite for being the true *advocatus diaboli* of this age, we must say that he was the gentlest and most innocent of all our poets. No one could have been such a devil, and no one was such a pious and childlike angel as he.

It was manifestly only love, — the excess of the warmest affection, — that constantly electrified his fancy. Every thing was bright to his eye, because he looked upon all with affection, as the lover looks upon his mistress. Age itself did not quench his ever-blazing fire. His soul was a prism, which conjured up many tinted rainbows around it, amidst the slough, as well as on the sun-lit heights of life, ever alike variegated, lively, blooming, and vigorous. Even upon his smallest scrap, about the most unimportant subjects, the butterfly wings of his fancy have impressed their variegated splendor. With him every thing assumed the form of a poetic image, or a witty antithesis. Whatever but touched him, struck out the divine electric spark of genius.

In nearly all the works of Jean Paul, a genuine German trait assumes a characteristic prominence; I mean good-feeling, united with high and rich culture, but des-

titute of practical skill, and exposed to a thousand embarrassments of common life. As the hero of Goethe's works is universally a sentimental Don Juan, who trains the women with high feeling, but only as he would train horses, and who is accomplished in all the arts of egotism, so we encounter his opposite in the works of Jean Paul, an innocent, timid youth, full of soul, which shrinks, like a sensitive plant, at every touch, full of intellect, which he either cannot bring to bear, or only at the wrong place. In the one, we have the early schooled Frankfort patrician; in the other, the simple boy of the Fichtelgebirge: in the one, we find French cookery; in the other, genuine German moderation.

There is something infinitely touching about these true-hearted youths of Jean Paul's, who expose themselves to ridicule so often; there is so much truth about them. They have, or, at least, have had so many prototypes in reality. Brought up under a system of pious and moral education, and a modest poverty, this maidenly reserve was a common trait among a great portion of our young men, and may still be frequently found. The warlike element was wanting; no pealing trumpet, no joyous delight, summoned the young man to public life. Grown up in the narrow domestic circle; devoted to solitary studies, by the arbitrary will of power, or the preponderance of favor over merit; repelled and intimidated by aristocratic manners every where, good-hearted by nature, and readily reverencing a divine law in tradition, — there really were a multitude of cultivated young men, possessed of deep affections, who were completely such as Jean Paul delineates, and who, at least, show that the German nature, originally noble,

can always maintain its character, in spite of all political demoralization, in spite of all effeminacy and systematic enervation. Innocence, modesty, right feeling for the great and the beautiful, deep horror of the vulgar, are ever newly born — exist as of themselves; and when these good qualities of youth are finally transformed to the evil traits of age, — when they are at last swallowed up by the prevailing vulgarity, — still there needs only a great incitement from without to convert the delicate sense of modesty and honor — which long appeared merely womanish, shy, nay, timid, in youths like those delineated by Jean Paul — suddenly into a manly enthusiasm and warlike wrath.

Before we leave Jean Paul, we must speak of a man who has come nearest his manner, and yet was but little known, because he wrote principally for medical readers alone, and always preserved his assumed name. Mises, the medical humorist, sometimes reminds us in a lively manner of Katzenberger's sarcasms, sometimes of the sweet and soft disposition of the Margraf of Jean Paul, and is one of the most spirited, as well as one of the most amiable authors, that we possess. He commenced, in 1822, with a *Panegyricus* of the then state of medicine and natural history, full of biting satire on the arrogant ignorance of the physicians. Then he published the *Stapelia Mixta*, and the "Comparative Anatomy of Angels," full of the most original thoughts, and, finally, two medical satires — "A Defence of the Cholera against the Physicians," and a demonstration that the moon is made of iodine. Still it remains ever remarkable

that such writings are less read among us, than so much that is trivial. As Mises is still so very little known, I will here recommend him to all the lovers of lively reading.

A far wider celebrity has been attained by Saphir, who, also, took Jean Paul for his model. His fancy is very rich, his excellent wit inexhaustible. No one has surpassed him in verbal wit. Would that he had never left Vienna, that he had never entangled himself with the theatrical controversies of Berlin and Münich. This placed him in a position where he could not fail to expose his weak side, and to fall into an injudicious and perverse course of conduct, which added to the hatred of those whom his wit had offended a contempt that was not always unmerited. But I have always excused his conduct by his situation, and I do it here again. Merry humor is so rare in our times that we ought to prize and spare it. But every thing is so combined to confound and dishearten it, and it is wont to be so unhappily coupled by nature with open-heartedness and frivolity, that it cannot stand the test of too severe trials. Saphir has become, in many respects, the martyr of humor. In an age less excited by passions, and with a more certain mode of existence, domiciled at Vienna somewhat like the whilome father Abraham à Santa Clara, he would only have found friends, instead of making enemies every where. If we take from his numerous writings all that is trivial, controversial, and of momentary interest,—periodical essays, for the most part,—there will still remain a germ of precious wit, and a book which even posterity will read with merry laughter.

Oetinger, also, has devoted himself to the same species of local and transient wit; but he buried his natural talent under the vulgarity of theatrical criticism. Brennglass lately wrote a very humorous book, in which he collected the popular jokes of the Berliners.

Lax, Zweibein, and Nork have made attempts after the style of Jean Paul's humor, but with no great success.

## FRIVOLITY.

First, of the modern only; of the romantic, later.

As soon as cockneyism was taken up on the joyous side, — and that was done by every aristocratic or rich idler, every rake and freethinker, — frivolous literature, of necessity, came into existence; nay, to a certain extent, it was called into being by the insipidity of the cockney reign. Sentimentality, also, contributed its part. Wantonness is enchanted by pedantry and seeming holiness.

Frivolity appeared as an innocent and even moral satire upon the mischievous and absurd follies of the age, and, in this case, was aimed, not against sacred things, but only against the abuse and desecration of them. Such was the frivolity of Wieland, Thümmel, the disciples of Nicolai, the illuminati. Such, at a later period, was many an excellent flagellation of the Philistines, by which even the otherwise worthless Kotzebue rendered some service.

The frivolous literature assumed a more disagreeable character with the aristocratic spirit, by delineating a refined immorality as the privilege of the upper classes; nay, even as the grace which belonged peculiarly to them. Here the French, and, unhappily, Goethe also, took the lead, by giving it the support of their example.

Frivolity became more venomous still by learning to

use the sentimental mask, and only peeped out like a cloven-foot under the hermit's stole, or the plumpness of the vestal. In the first manner Goethe particularly distinguished himself; his Faust, for example, prates about heaven, and the stars, and eternity, while his sole purpose is the seduction of Gretchen. In the last manner he takes Kotzebue for his master, in whose works gentle innocency always gets into a family way, it knows not how.

But as frivolity, according to its nature, admits no restraint, and, finally, not even any thing of embellishment to its deformity, it could not fail, after it had got through with its hypocrisies, of becoming revolutionary, and, finally, figuring in shameless nakedness. It had to work itself clear of the civilization of the present, and seek something new, as did Heinse and Frederick Schlegel, who, for this purpose, struck off into romanticism; or, incapable of enthusiasm for what does not exist, and too practical to be under an illusion, too shameless to withdraw,—in the midst of civilized society it had to carry, with the abandoned character acquired from the French consulate, the Greek nudities, and the whole physiognomy of the brothel, for a show. Such was Julius von Voss.

The witticisms of Haug were of an extremely innocent character. This modern German Martial, the only professed epigrammatist, was, at the same time, the most peaceable and gentle of our men of letters. The wittiest things he has written are the hyperboles on Wahl's huge nose: a great many of his impromptus have never been printed; for example, that upon the not very celebrated poet Schoder—

"Apollo sprach zu Schoder,
Sch————oder!"

His countryman Weisser had not the art of concentrating his wit thus agreeably, so as to offer it in small glasses, like Haug. He poured too much prose into the cup. A third countryman, Schlotterbeck, rose to a masterly style of occasional poetry by unpretending and very quiet humor.

Weber, the author of "Letters of a German Traveller in Germany," and of "Monachism," is a remarkable, and, after his fashion, a very delightful phenomenon. He possesses, to the highest degree, what makes a brisk sexagenarian agreeable; one who, as an old bachelor, is not accustomed to much restraint, and is readily pardoned a little freedom for the sake of the cheerfulness which he brings into society, and on account of the zeal which he devotes to entertainment. His celebrated work on Germany is, in fact, a very friendly companion and guide, to which we are not unfrequently indebted for the knowledge of the most peculiar things that belong to our dear fatherland. The entertaining gayety that runs through the book, must put every reader into good humor, and is the true traveller's wit. Who would hear a grumbler narrate his travels? We will not, therefore, take it ill of the author that he reckons Bacchus and Venus among his deities of travel, and never fails to call our attention to the places and cities where good wine and pretty faces are to be found.

A very valuable trait of his work is, that he gives his attention not merely to things really remarkable, but even to those common affairs, which are often the very

points most worthy of attention, because they are so different in different countries. Together with celebrated beauties of natural scenery, treasures of art, and great historical reminiscences, he never forgets to turn his attention, also, to men in common life, and to observe personal appearance, and modes of living, dress and manners, dwellings, and even the cattle. In this way he has observed a multitude of characteristic peculiarities which any other writer of travels would hardly have pointed out, and which are more instructive to us than any thing else, and which give us a lively picture of localities. Thus, among other things, he quotes the popular proverbs and maxims of nearly every out-of-the-way place, which are, at the same time, specimens of the different dialects.

Weber is a German, body and soul; and how could he be otherwise, since he knows our great country far too well to be narrow in his notions, and to love and value his own little province alone? Every thing that he says about the mutual tolerance which the Germans owe to each other, and the respect we ought to entertain for ourselves, when compared with foreign lands, is thoroughly excellent, and well worth taking to heart. Doctrines of this kind are particularly to be recommended to those who know nothing but their own dear home, and consider their narrow horizon as the only land of the elect, and either ridiculously look down with negro pride upon every other country, or with envious malice seek to detract from foreign superiority: hence our author derives the word *hämisch* (spiteful) from *Heimath*, (home,) and marks it as

originally the quality of narrow-hearted cockneys, fixed immovably in their own home.

The tone of gayety prevails through his other works — a slight frivolity; and yet in the background there is always a patriotic and even moral earnestness; for even his "Monachism," overflowing with licentious scenes, after the spirit of Voltaire, is only written to expose abuses, and to warn against a recurrence to them. Moreover, as he lived in the old times of the empire, and in small Catholic states, he often speaks as an eye-witness. I shall be very much mistaken if his fame, and the pleasure taken in his agreeable works, should not increase with time; for, at present, he is less esteemed than many an older author who is far inferior to him.

In Weber, the lively Franconian, trained in the school of life, is not to be mistaken. The good humor of the olden time, the frivolous way of passing life, manifested itself in him, not without a certain manliness of feeling, which the conflict with depressing circumstances, and scorn for the prevalent narrowness of the times, could not fail to produce. The case is different with the jesters by profession, amidst the great city life of Berlin and Vienna. The only object here is to tickle the senses of the worn-out fashionable world.

Langbein, the favorite merry-maker, belongs to the good old Berlin times, before the battle of Jena, like Kotzebue, Lafontaine, Julius von Voss, and others. Fun, as light as Berlin white beer; harmless ambiguities; nice little adulteries, intended only for amusement, and without offence; poverty and noble-mindedness together; the highest respect for money, and yet contentment with what Heaven has bestowed; some

sentimental emotions and sober exhortations to be always dear good people; universal philanthropy, and freemason squeezes of the hand, — these are the elements of that old Berlin humor. They were still joyous; a little dissolute, to be sure, but still good-hearted, for "good-hearted are they all," says Schiller. People were then really more amiable than they are now. They have now grown no better, but only more tedious. The same emptiness and frivolity which appeared then more cheerful, as it was, now passes for religious and philosophical depth; or, in a word, "an old bead-woman has been made out of the young wanton."

Poetry, also, then stood in close connection with social life. The poets were the agreeable counsellors of the ladies, and complied with the first intimation of their wishes, and did not torment them with the difficult and foreign romance of a Fouqué or a Walter Scott. Then it was said,

> "A moment only blossoms May;
> Then it swiftly flits away.
> Maiden, mark thou what I say, —
> Pinions hath our life's brief day;
> Shrub and flower wilt at last;
> Beauty's roses wither fast."

Then every poor little woman, who had a cross old husband, was most kindly and gently supported. Then the lover playfully slipped into her house, and avenged insulted nature, and made it known complacently to all the world, that the old gentleman carried a magnificent pair of horns. Then nothing was known of the

deep fidelity of the holy Genoveva, which, since that time, Ludwig Tieck has preached up in such beautiful verses, for the use and behoof of all gouty old gentlemen, to the romantic sufferers rolling their eyes and crossing themselves, and to the Countesses Dolores. Then they rushed together with all innocence, like the animals of paradise. Then Lafontaine painted the white-robed little parson's daughter so ambiguously amidst the twilight, that nothing but the nightingale, piping her bridal song, gave us a hint of what the dear souls themselves did not know; for, as the sentimental poet of nature, mentioned above, said, "They had only lost maidenly honor, but not innocence." Then Julius von Voss wrote his sentimental "Love in a Penitentiary." Then Langbein, also, wrote his favorite drolleries. Sweet and holy nature, let us follow thy footsteps. All creatures love, — all build nests, says Kotzebue's brother Moritz. And is it not pleasant to change nests once in a while? says the cuckoo. There is the host sleeping with his wife, says Langbein, and the little daughter separately, and two travellers, too, separately. One of the ladies goes out, and then one of the gentlemen. Now they return, and mistake their way, and so on. In the morning, then, all are very pleasantly surprised, and separate from each other very well satisfied. At another time, the merry story-teller goes on to tell us, a pretty little woman receives a visit from her lover. A knock at the door. "Quick, quick! up on the tester!" The second lover comes. Another knock. "Quick, quick! under the bed." The husband returns; he has lost all his money at play; the wife consoles him; "He, up there, will

repay you." "What!" says the lover, "I?" Then all creep out; and — they laugh, and are reconciled. There you have the very form and pressure of the olden times. O, why is it no longer so pleasant? Ah! those times of innocence, perhaps, will never more return.

And then this contentedness with little, this moderation carrying with it the bliss of heaven, and, even before the full goblet, exclaiming,

> "Joyous beaker, pass around,
> Brisk from hand to hand away;
> Only, on thy journey's round,
> Take us not from reason's sway.
> Fools delight in noisy din,
> That distracts both head and heart;
> But to us it seems a sin,
> If, for drink, from sense we part."

Could one be happier than with such a humor, that is ready for any thing, and avoids only passion; that does not feel under the least restraint from any moral law, and is only anxious not to get unnecessarily heated? Is thy wife unfaithful, — laugh at it. Is the best wine set before thee, — drink not too much. Preserve always the quiet of thy feelings! Art pleased with thy neighbor's little rose, — pluck the rose; but she must smile, thou must smile, papa must smile; only there must be no whining; none of Schiller's infanticides, and Bürger's Leonores, and Faust's Gretchens. Art pleased with thy neighbor's wife, — hush, hush, and only steal over to her; but the husband must be reasonable, as thou art, under the like circumstances; and there must be nothing bloody, no duelling, no stabbing,

and the like; only every thing must be without passion, —only repose in the feelings,—only all uneasy rushing of the blood must be avoided.

This is the philosophy of life belonging to the so called good old times, for which many an old gentleman, who cut off his pig-tail thirty years ago, still secretly sighs. We must not be unjust towards those times. The prudery of the present day is overdone to a no less mischievous extent than the frivolity of earlier times.

They—these men of old—gave themselves up too much to epicurism, and, as they were men only in opposition to women, they forgot to be men in every other respect. If we read the drolleries of Langbein, the novels of Julius von Voss, and the list of officers infamously cashiered during the winter of 1807, for running from the enemy, and for cowardice, we shall be fully aware, that the heroism of that time consisted principally in putting horns on the civilians, and that the civilians made it the duty of a citizen to blow a merry blast upon the said horns. People lived in the most delightful harmony; all mutually loved and embraced, like the gentle sparrows on the house-top. It was needful, therefore, that Napoleon should come and have a shot among them.

Mr. Castelli also belongs to this class; but he is from Vienna, and the good Viennese humor, which he possesses to the highest degree, is nothing like so transient as was the Berlin literary frivolity, and nothing like so extravagant. In Berlin, debauchery succeeds pietism, and pietism, again, succeeds debauchery; in Vienna, people remain the same. To be sure the grave and

tragic Muse has set up her throne at Vienna also; and the most recent poets rival the rest of us Germans with their ghastly tragedies, and melancholy songs, and hyper-old-German ballads; but that is a fashionable affair among the educated,—the proper public of Vienna belongs still to Castelli, and is still as well disposed for merriment as Castelli.

The ridicule of old fashions is peculiar to all this joyous brotherhood of the most wretched epoch of our politics and literature, though nothing was more contemptible and pitiable than their own fashion as soon as it was out of date. This ridicule was often only a childish derision of ancient costume; but it became often a hostile mockery of ancient virtue and strength also.

The most successful caricaturist of provincial and old-fashioned costumes and personages is Prätzel, whose drolleries are much more harmless than those of Langbein.

The greatest vigor among the frivolous delineations of character during that age, was shown by Julius von Voss, who has taken up the state of Prussian affairs, before and immediately after the battle of Jena, better than any other person whatever. Several of his novels paint the aristocratic insolence and the debauchery then existing in the Prussian army; and, perhaps, the historical inquirer will find nowhere else so clear an explanation of the causes why things could not have happened otherwise than they did, as by reading the works of this most acute observer. In his "Honey-Moon" he draws a picture of those profane and precipitate marriages, and separations, which

were then very frequent at Berlin — a masterly work, of profound psychological truth, like the best satires of the ancients. In his "Baron von Schievelbein," he represents an upstart of fortune, who rises, without the smallest merit, to the highest military and political dignities: of this he found prototypes enough in those times. In his "Artist's Pilgrimage," he introduces us to the æsthetic craziness, the passion for the theatre and for concerts, which also then were all the rage at Berlin. And thus nearly all his novels and comedies are faithful pictures of his age: nay, it cannot be denied that even his obscene pictures, drawn from the dregs of the people, such as "Love in a Penitentiary," show a vigorous truth of pencil. These authors, who were not unjustly neglected by their own age, are, like a Petronius, still valuable to posterity. When thousands of the silly pieces of sensibility, sentimental mirrors of virtue, historical novels, and so forth, will be forgotten, because they give false representations, the writings of this Julius von Voss will still be esteemed, on account of the truth with which they paint his age at a moment of the deepest moral and political degradation.

A pseudonymous Emerentius Scævola has also thrown off somewhat coarse and vigorous pictures of immorality, in which debauchery and crime drink to each other, and in which there are as many murders, and adulteries, and thefts, as heart could desire. But this writer is delicate when compared with Althing, a name under which a professor, a teacher of youth, was accustomed to entice and guide, not only to natural, but even to every species of unnatural lust, unpunished,

without coming to the gallows, and whose writings were recently printed and openly offered for sale by a Leipsic bookseller.

Along with this coarse literature, a very refined species took its place; and if the former descended to the rabble, the latter aspired to the lofty regions of society. The "Memoirs of the Baron von S——a," by Woltmann, the historian, contain pictures as frivolous as they are faithful, drawn by a master's hand, of the mode of life among the higher classes, and particularly among the diplomatic circles. This book also belongs to the phenomena of the times, according to which the past will sooner or later be judged by posterity. Not only what is spirited itself, but chiefly what mirrors the spirit of an age, will be of interest to coming generations. Count Benzal-Sternau also belongs to this class, although his spirit and wit are less concentrated, and he contented himself with a sort of tittle-tattle, formerly after the manner of Kotzebue, latterly after the manner of Zschokke. The knowledge of the world and the clever satire which every where gleam out from his early works, prove that he might have become a far more important writer, if he had been able to restrain himself from the adoption of foreign mannerisms, among which that of the Bavarian letters least accords, in their constitutional pathos, with that of the "Golden Calf."

The cleverest, and, at the same time, most popular frivolity was at home on the stage. Comedy demands it, cannot dispense with it, even among the noblest nation and in the most moral age. Nor do I see any thing immoral in this. The comic effect necessarily

destroys the seductive character of frivolous representations. When vices are laughed at, they cease to be dangerous. It is only the sentimental embellishment of vice that seduces and deceives the heart. Hence it is a characteristic fact, that our comic poets grew more immoral the more sentimentality they blended with their pieces, while the unsentimental poets of former times, notwithstanding their very free and often coarse language, appear morally pure.

Next to Lessing, Schröder, the celebrated actor, stands at the head of our modern comedians. He adapted foreign and domestic theatrical pieces with much taste, and invented new ones himself. The power of faithfully copying the frivolity of the higher classes at the time, the cicisbeism universally introduced, the double domestic establishments of every fashionable aristocratic marriage, the perfectly French gallantry, and the ability to take them up on the comic side without caricaturing them, he shares equally with the liveliest Frenchmen, for example, Beaumarchais. His "Ring" is, in this respect, one of the most spirited comedies that have ever been written. Much as it is to be regretted that this aristocratic tone of gallantry afterwards became predominant on the German stage, still it is very questionable if a better could have been introduced. Such was the world, and the stage had to mirror it forth; and something was always gained if the poets possessed refinement and grace—the last defences against the encroaching vulgarity of the sentiments they expressed. It was a piece of good fortune that Schröder's refined grace, and not the filthy baseness which Goethe threatened to bring on the stage by

his "Accomplices," rose to supremacy. It is to the credit of the German public that they never acquired a taste for this, the most infamous of all the works of Goethe. Had they allowed themselves to be seduced by it, Goethe would probably have supplied them with more after this pattern.

More recently still, Jünger has, like Schröder, written good comedies, in which he passed still more from fashionable into common life. Who could have imagined that this cheerful poetical spirit would have ended in profound melancholy? Among the great multitude of later comic authors, who have playfully ridiculed the weak sides of social life with the same airy and agreeable frivolity, Schall, Bauernfeld, Blum, Lebrun, and others, are distinguished.

High above all towers the world-renowned August von Kotzebue, who knew well how to flatter his contemporaries in the most sensitive part, by a happy union of frivolity with sentimentality; and hence, in spite of Schiller and Goethe, he became the favorite of the public. He turned Parnassus into a brothel, and undertook the office of procurer himself. No one knew so well how to tickle the weaknesses and evil inclinations of the educated, and the vanity of the uneducated public, as he. In refined gentility alone Kotzebue could not succeed. His nature was too vulgar to find merely the delicate language under which vice knows how to conceal itself with the more refined natures.

It is strange enough that Kotzebue did not raise himself to a more independent position by his extraordinary talent. If he had but made every thing the

object of his ridicule! But it marks him as the genuine son of his age, that he, like Goethe, censured freely on one side only, and, on the other side, gave himself up to sentimental weakness. Formed only to caricature his age by taking it up wholly on the comic side, Kotzebue piqued himself upon seizing at the same time its noble, serious, and pathetic side, upon idealizing it. But he did the latter only to gain friends, after he had made enemies by his ridicule. All his attempts at the pathetic are solely designed to gain the favor of the sentimental public, which was very large at his time, and to veil the many sins of his private life with the mantle of love. Hence the inconsistency of his representations. While to-day he paints to us the German cockney with such a delightful talent that the fidelity and delicacy of the lineaments surprise us, and force laughter even from the austerest Cato, he represents to us, on the other hand, the ideal of a German man, whom he would raise to something surpassingly excellent by investing him with every sort of sentimentality, and who is yet far more of a cockney than the former, whom he had yesterday ridiculed. As the "Provincial" is his best piece of the former class, so his "Misanthropy and Repentance" is his worst, though the most celebrated, of the latter; for, in this, the German good nature is abused by frivolity after a fashion which no nation ought to bear from any one of its poets whatever. In France, Queen Margaret and Lafontaine have arranged whole collections of very delectable stories of adultery. These collections are immoral, but there are in them true stories, to a great extent, and

very natural and witty traits borrowed from common life; and the lover appears as a sly rogue, the wife faithless, the husband a blockhead, who observes nothing, or, like an Othello, takes a cruel revenge. All this is natural, and nothing is disguised there. But, in his "Misanthrope," Kotzebue represents a cuckold, who is neither comic nor tragic, who is set forth neither as the old Pantaloon or Pierrot with the merry traits of Harlequin, nor does he, in the highest fury, use the dagger like Othello; but he takes to himself again his better half, with tears of emotion, after she has run away from him with a dissolute officer, her husband being still a young man, very brave, very respectable, and even after she has deserted her children. This person is held up as the noblest of mankind, as a character of ideal excellence; this pardon, granted under circumstances where the holiest obligations — not only the fidelity of the wife, but the duty of the mother — are violated, is pointed out as the highest of the virtues. And yet Kotzebue had no other aim here than to smooth over the frivolous desecration of marriage, which then reigned as a French fashion — to justify, after a poetical manner, French heartlessness by the most infamous abuse of German good feeling, and French vice by the false reflection of a German virtue. This is an incredible outrage upon all men who speak the language in which so infamous a piece could be written; and yet the demoralization had spread so far that this work made the author an object of admiration and love.

As, in the tendency of Lessing's mind, manly honor every where shines out, so dishonor is equally prom-

inent with Kotzebue, and is the universal characteristic of his works. What respect does he pay to the dignity of age, in his "Page's Tricks"? to the dignity of man in general, in his "Roebuck"? One might easily put together, from his numerous pieces, a complete system of perverted morality, and find examples for all possible cases of imbecility of character or positive baseness. The whole society, which he brings upon the boards, consists of noble liars, noble thieves, noble betrayers, noble cuckolds, noble prostitutes, noble pimps, and so on. His "Barth with the Iron Brow," in which he literally wallows in the mire, is far from being his most infamous work; for here, at least, he does not gild over the filth, does not set forth the lowest baseness of heart as a virtue.

The dignity of women would naturally pass for as little, with him, as that of men. Hence he is vilest at the very place where he means to paint innocence. His Gurli, in the "Indians in England," and his "Virgin of the Sun,"—the one of whom, out of pure, transparent innocence, wants to marry every man who enters the door, and the other, out of pure, transparent innocence, does not know that she is likely to become a mother,—were once favorite characters on all the German theatres. The same Kotzebue described, in a printed book, the medical treatment he had himself applied to his good wife, and would have us believe that he who could laugh, instead of shedding sentimental tears, over such a touching domestic act, must belong somewhere beyond the region of humanity. And, again, the same Kotzebue openly printed the fact, that he had left his dying wife helpless, had travelled to

France, and had visited brothels on his way. His base falsehoods, in denying the authorship of his "Barth with the Iron Brow," and of the "Bulletins," belong to the same chapter of shamelessness. His life, written by Körte, is a highly-interesting contribution to the history of German manners. What he offered the public only shows to what lengths he was allowed to go. He was no worse than the public who tolerated and even worshipped him. This toleration and worship indicate a degree of public demoralization which could not but make us deeply blush, were not his age happily long since past. A bloody death put an end to his miserable existence, and, at the same moment, to the charm with which he had captivated the German nation. This murder, legally speaking, differs from no other. Politically, it excited apprehensions that have not been verified. It has, throughout, only a moral importance, as Görres said at the beginning. Germany would, even without this murder, have weaned herself from Kotzebue; but the poetic spirit, that pervades the history of the world, loves effects, the strong language of facts, ineffaceable signs, and symbols engraven upon the ages "as the lightning writes upon the rock." And such a sign was the frightful end of the merrymaker.

We have now to speak of the noble Clauren, who joined to Kotzebue's frivolity the peculiar insipidity of Berlin, and masked what with Kotzebue assumed the character of utter impudence under a certain loyal decency, and even halved the words, — as, *Küss*, *Wäd*, for *Küsschen*, *Wädchen*. Kotzebue's Gurli, who falls, it is true, rather improperly upon one's

neck, is more tolerable than Clauren's simple, poor, potato-peeling lace-woman, who dreams how her lover, dressed up like a Cupid, big and tall as the fellow is, rows her about on board a skiff. The gentle innocence of the pregnant virgin of the sun is much to be preferred to the disgusting prudery with which such dreams are modestly related. Better open than secret sins; better Kotzebue than Clauren.

Among the great multitude of frivolous and semi-frivolous novel-writers, Anton Wall, Laun, Gustav Schilling, and others, gained great fame, at least among the circulating libraries, and their dull productions were in every body's hands.

Müchler, of Berlin, marks the transition from the frivolous kind to the later ghastly manner. He began with erotic wantonness, then collected a mass of anecdotes, and, finally, dished up bloody stories of crime.

The old age of this once young and arrogant frivolity is characterized by the novels of adultery, for a time the favorites, after Goethe's "Elective Affinities," which many old authoresses, in particular, busied themselves with writing. Formerly, the novel commonly stopped with marriage; afterwards, it began with marriage. It had formerly pictured the enthusiasm and extravagances of young people; now it pictured the refined sins and disgusting offences of riper years. This is the transition from "Werther" to the "Elective Affinities." But it cannot be said that these representations had grown into a prevailing mannerism. They did not appear until a time when life generally had already become more moral in Germany.

All these phenomena belong still to a former period. But frivolity, with the changes of the times, passed over to the romantic tendency of taste, and only assumed a new garb there.

So long as cockneyism exists, so long as it is not banished by a great and noble popular existence, an inclination to frivolity must always set itself up by way of contrast, and will even break forth under new forms. Whatever public manners want on the score of beauty, will be added without fail on the score of frivolity. Morality without beauty is not powerful enough to guard against social dissoluteness.

## THE STORM AND PRESSURE PERIOD.

Some powerful natures must of necessity break out of the petty quiet and comfort in which the cockneys, the sentimentalists, and the frivolous, were moving. Hence, when modern poetry took the three directions mentioned already, an indefinite "storm and pressure" of minds, which could not yet find its proper direction, began contemporaneously, on the other hand. All these minds agreed only in being ill at ease with the present, and in forming an opposition against it; while the cockneys, the sentimentalists, and the frivolous, were very well contented with their existing condition. We distinguish again among the members of this new opposition the shades of difference in the majority. From the cockneys came the old-fashioned gentlemen and noisy patriots, after Iffland's style, who expressed themselves vigorously against the corruption of the times, and, by calling to mind the ancient German freedom, unexpectedly arrived at romanticism at last. Thus Schubart's poems, Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*, and the chivalrous novels, are explained. From the sentimentalists were formed the enthusiasts for the ideal, who no longer carried on a small trade with their hearts, but embraced the whole world with their love, and were seized by the first pure and noble enthusiasm of the North American and

French revolutions, and Schiller at their head. Two kinds of opposition parties were formed from the frivolous, both of whom, indeed, came into conflict with existing institutions, but were again divided among themselves; namely, on the one side, the followers of Nicolai, that is, the illuminators of Berlin, under the ægis of Frederick II., and the *illuminati*, that is, the South German *illuminati*, under Joseph II., the enemies of all abuses, and of all the poetry too, which was still preserved from the middle ages by the church, aristocracy, and the guilds; and, on the other side, the æsthetic Don Juans, whom an insatiable passion for new enjoyments drove from life to art, from the present to the romantic past, in order to reëmbellish life with its pillaged ornaments. This was the case with Heinse and Frederick Schlegel. The former aimed to improve the world, the latter wanted only to enjoy it; all strove to metamorphose the present according to some idea or whim of their own; all formed a united opposition, and are therefore of great importance in the progress of German literature. The supremacy of romanticism was introduced by them first, although the victory of its onesided tendencies was by no means contemplated by all who belonged to the storm and pressure period.

The poetical patriots were immediately connected with the cockneys, "parading like papas in their dressing-gowns." Even Klopstock, with all his pedantry, was a good patriot, and Claudius was no less so. In Iffland's works, formal advocates of freedom made their appearance, German "honest gentlemen" fought

for oppressed justice, cabals were overthrown, the simple citizen triumphed over the powerful minister. But Iffland is always so loyal that he represents the prince as elevated above every responsibility, and as always making up by his own nobleness for the corruption of his wicked servants. On the other hand, Schubart passed over the servants, and held up before the eyes of princes their responsibility, in such republican verses that we cannot wonder if he had to travel the road to jail. The only surprise is, that a poet, about '70 of the last century, dared to write the "Prince's Tomb." The same Schubart, in his very interesting chronicles of Swabia, dared, alone among all the authors of the times, to make the first partition of Poland the subject of a poem, in the spirit of a Mickewicz. In short, Schubart was a Timoleon, despite of powder and bag wig. Twenty years even before the French revolution, all its fire and fury were burning in his German soul, while the French themselves as yet had no intimation of what was to come. From his prison he sang with the voice of a lion—

"Thou, sacred Freedom, lift for me
The clanking chains upon my arm,
That I may storm upon the strings,
And sing thy praise.
But where do I find thee, holy Freedom,
O thou that art of heaven first-born?
Could outcries arouse thee, I would shout
Till the stars reeled
And the earth beneath me trembled;
Till the cloven rocks
Before thy sanctuary rolled,
And burst its portals open."

Truly, if that age had any reason to pride itself upon its "storm and pressure," the honor of it belongs to Schubart. The rest of the stormers took the thing more comfortably, or lost their courage, or were too great charlatans, like the contemporaries, Basedow and Barth.

Seume, although nearly a whole generation younger, has become most like him. His poems and aphorisms breathe the gentle sensibility, and the wrath, too, of a patriotic heart. In him the impulse of freedom was not the cause, but the consequence, of ill-treatment. In his youth he had been forced into the army, and, like many thousand white slaves resembling him, — that is, German subjects who were, in those times, sold by their princes to the Dutch and English, — he was shipped off to the colonies. An edition of Homer, in Greek, which he used to read, discovered his literary attainments. He gained his freedom, but not happiness; for the loss of his own freedom had taught him to feel the mighty weight which oppressed his whole country. He breathed forth his longing for the freedom and honor of his native land in songs and flashing thoughts, and with them his sorrowing soul, nor lived to see Napoleon's downfall. In his taste he seems more akin to the antique than the romantic forms.

It is impossible to decide who first introduced the romantic element into the poetic opposition. Even during the first half of the last century, an edition of the *Nibelungen* and the *Minnesingers* was prepared at Zurich, and Shakspeare, Ossian, and the old English ballads, had become known through the Anglomania.

Wieland carried us back to Ariosto, Herder to the popular songs and popular legends. Now all this was an indirect opposition to cockneyism. A direct opposition, of some consequence, made its first appearance with Count Stolberg, who wrote the first ballads after the hierarchical and feudal spirit of the middle ages, when he chanted the chivalry and love of his own ancestors, and thereby excited an old Guelfish interest against the Ghibelline, and established the union of church and aristocracy against emperor and people. Obscure as were the ballads composed in this spirit, by Stolberg, at the outset, yet they have acquired no small importance, by the great progress which Catholic romanticism soon after made. Then he took it up only in general, as a way of eulogizing ancient vigor contrasted with the modern effeminacy.

Even Goethe looked to nothing else when he wrote his *Götz von Berlichingen*. The vigor of the middle ages, "which still had calves," was to be contrasted with the effeminacy of the present, and ideas of universal freedom to be connected therewith. Goethe put the cockneys into an ecstasy, and yet was very careful that loyalty sustained no damage, for vigor was overcome, and freedom was an idle dream of the mob. Moreover Goethe made all haste to desert this course, which placed him, against his will, among the members of the opposition.

It was Bürger, preëminently, who cultivated the reviving taste for ballads, introduced by Stolberg; but he stuck fast, at the same time, in the honest old gentleman's night-cap, and even partly in the Græcomania. He was not born for so vigorous an opposition as Schu-

bart; and the more refined development of the legendary poetry he had to leave to the school of Tieck and Schlegel. He is an interesting phenomenon on the boundary line between the heterogeneous parties, which marked the progress of romanticism. His poetical forms are distinguished by a beautiful rhythm. Some of his ballads, particularly "Leonore," are certain of immortality. He has excited a universal sympathy, inasmuch as he became a victim to poetry. It was a part of the false poetical enthusiasm of his age to sacrifice common sense for a few verses. A maiden made proposals of marriage to poor Bürger by a poem: enchanted with this, he fancied the marriage of a poet and poetess must be a paradise on earth; and he was — deceived.

Painter Müller stood, likewise, on the dividing line between cockneyism and romanticism, with an overmastering sentimental idealism. His "Sheep-shearing" is an excellent prose idyl, depicting country life in the Palatinate, with great fidelity, more after the style of Hebel than of Gessner. In his "Niobe," and other poems, he aimed at the wreath which Goethe afterwards gained for "Iphigenia." Finally, by his "Faust," and by "Genoveva," he has also made a foray into romanticism. But because he changed from one taste to another; because he was a painter as well as poet; and particularly because the ardor and fulness of his heart vented itself too much by exclamations, and did not permit him to gain that quiet command of form which distinguished Goethe, he must always remain far behind him, as his earlier rival. Single passages and particular sentiments among his works are frequently noble.

A like notice is due to Klinger, whose "Faust," to be sure, does not amount to much, but who, in his "Raphael de Aquilas," — a novel which has become very popular, — showed an ardent love for freedom and the rights of man, and who, having gone to Petersburg, afterwards collected his experiences and observations, in a work called "Remarks upon various Objects in the World and in Literature," which ranks with the most spirited productions of our literature.

Ernst, Wagner, and Meissner, appear to me trivial; and perhaps this fact is the only cause of their good success.

In spite of many vulgarities, the notorious Spiess, Kramer, Veit, Weber, were distinguished by their chivalry, robber, and ghost novels, their stories and tales of adventure, by original and genuine German vigorous turns of expression, and often by their inventive powers; and, by the boundless circulation which they enjoyed, they were the natural antidote against the sentimental style. They adopted from Goethe's "Götz" both the idea and the language; and there is, at the bottom of all their representations, a wild, sometimes tragic and sometimes comic, vigor of nature, which wars against the tame manners and narrowing prejudices of the age. At one time we have knights, who, like Götz, avenge themselves on princes and priests; at another, robbers, who avenge themselves upon monopolists and partial magistrates; then, again, roaming geniuses, who traverse common life like a meteor. But, to render these new adventures more interesting, all the magic of romanticism, ghosts, devils, and witches, was called upon for aid; and thus,

after a very rude but triumphant fashion, the triumph of romanticism was prepared.

Babo and Count Thorring Seefeld adhered more expressly to Goethe's "Götz;" and the "Otto von Wittelsback" of the former, and "Agnes Bernauerin" and "Kaspar the Thuringian" of the latter, are, wholly after the manner of "Götz," vigorous demonstrations against tyranny, in antiquated prose, which were by no means so much a matter of pretence with these poets as with Goethe. To this class belongs Leisewitz, whose "Julius of Tarentium" even surpasses these works with regard to tragic value.

Although Schiller raised himself far above all these poets, yet I can find no more suitable place to speak of him. His imperishable influence proceeded originally from the same storm and pressure, from that same first romantic coarseness, which we recognize as a profound and genuine feeling in Schubart, and as an affectation of a fashionable affair in Goethe's "Götz;" nay, the form and language of his earliest robber and revolutionary pieces seemed to adhere to the favorite manner, until it was observed, that a much mightier spirit had opened here only the first path before it. The truth is, that Schiller bears the same relation to the mob of knight, robber, and spectre makers, that Charles Moor does to his fellows, their peer for a time, and yet elevated far above them.

Schiller was drawn into this very miscellaneous society, because power with him existed much earlier than the grace which controls it, and because he, grown up under a petty military discipline that prescribed every motion, could not but be gratified with

the opposite extreme of an unbridled wildness. But, on his very first appearance, he proclaimed the higher mission of which he was, as yet, unconscious.

He first perceived, that while modern poetry had, indeed, returned from the false ideals of the Gallomania to simple nature, on the other hand, it had again become the problem of romantic poetry to return from false nature to pure ideals. Most of the storm and pressure poets and romanticists, up to this time, had contented themselves with holding up the pictures of other times and manners, contrasted with the modern character; often other costumes merely, or fantastic, dreamy states, conjured up for the gratification of every whim and every vanity. But Schiller took up the matter more profoundly, and would not have one age opposed to another, but the everlasting ideal contrasted with temporary vulgarity, so that we might not rest satisfied with costume, and external circumstances and conditions, but might represent man in great pictures of character. Whether antique, romantic, or modern, it is all the same; human nature is alike through all ages. It ennobles or degrades every age; and the poets, according as they take it up, contribute to the elevation or degradation of men. Therefore Schiller believed it was the highest problem of the poet to treat human nature after the spirit of the noblest ideality, as Greek art had done at its most flourishing period, though only in the representation of corporeal beauty; that is, it had represented the godlike form of man. In this, the highest of problems, all the controversy of the school appeared to him to be annihilated, and he himself, though Goethe was constantly

urging him, was averse to making a strong distinction between the antique, romantic, and modern, and to wearing one mask after another, like his aristocratic friend. Modern in "Cabal and Love," romantic in "Wallenstein" and the "Maid of Orleans," antique in the "Bride of Messina," Schiller is every where the same, notwithstanding, and variety of form disappears before identity of spirit.

But as, during his life, attempts were made to seduce him into idealizing, and to drag him down to vulgarity, and to toying with forms, so he has been, since his death, often misunderstood, and assailed upon the same ground. Now he is censured for the philosophy, and now for the morality, with which he has adulterated poetry. Even his warmth of feeling, which seems too lyric for the drama, was made a subject of reproach, only that the fault-finders might constantly deceive themselves and the public as to Schiller's real greatness. It is very natural that this greatness, being moral by its nature, should be looked upon with deadly hatred by the frivolous and vulgar-minded poets of every age, and not less by his false friends than by his professed enemies. He represented great and noble characters; but the Philistines and sentimentalists only wanted what was petty, and the frivolous only what was immoral, only the embellishment of every vice and every infamous imbecility. From the quarter last mentioned, Schiller was violently assailed by the romantic licentiousness of the school of Schlegel, with that malice which the impure, when opposed to the pure, can so rarely repress. Schiller was admired by the cockneys and sentimentalists,

without being understood. It never occurred to them that Schiller, when inculcating a noble humanity, required of them, too, that they should invigorate and ennoble their own characters.

But yet Schiller became far the most popular of all our poets; his works were in every body's hands; his name outshone every other before the people's eyes, even that of Goethe, who held a higher rank only among the aristocracy of the educated. This boundless fame has been produced by no coterie, no criticism, no favor, but altogether by the simple operation of Schiller's poetry on the majority of yet unsophisticated readers, of the yet uncorrupted youth, or of the people, acting under the impulses of their genuine character. They are always carried away by the power of truth, by the beauty of a genuine nobleness of soul, by enthusiasm for every thing holy and elevated; and by this susceptibility, they not only put to shame the more highly cultivated, who are too corrupt or too enervated to feel it themselves, but even neutralize their pernicious influence. I love Schiller for two reasons — because he is not only so noble, but because his countrymen have acknowledged it, and because his name scares away legions of base spirits, who toil at the destruction of the German character.

That which has lent Schiller's works such great power over the minds of men, is, at the same time, their most amiable characteristic; namely, their youthful spirit. He is the poet of youth, and will always continue so; for all his feelings correspond to the earliest aspiration of the yet uncorrupted youthful heart, of love yet pure, of faith yet unshaken, of hope

still warm, of the vigor of young souls not enervated. But he is, also, the favorite of all who have preserved their virtue — whose sense of truth, and right, and greatness, and beauty, has not perished in the mart of vulgar life.

Schiller appeared with youthful vigor, in a corrupt and decrepit age, with a heart of wondrous strength, and, at the same time, of virgin purity. He has purified and regenerated German poetry. He has warred with the immoral tendency of the prevailing taste of his age more powerfully and victoriously than any other. Undazzled by the brilliant wit of his time, he has ventured to appeal again to the purest and most original feelings of man, and to oppose to the scoffers an austere and holy earnestness. To him belongs the glory of having purified, cleared, and ennobled the spirit of poetry. Germany already enjoys the fruits of this transformation; for since the appearance of Schiller, all our poetry has adopted a dignified tone. And even neighboring nations have been seized by this spirit; and Schiller exercises upon that great change that is now going on in their taste and poetry a mighty influence, which they themselves loudly acknowledge.

We have to thank him for yet more than the purification of the temple of art. His poetical creations have had, beyond the province of art, an immediate effect upon life itself. The mighty charm of his song has not only touched the imaginations of men, but even their consciences; and the fiery zeal with which he entered into conflict with all that is base and vulgar, the holy enthusiasm with which he

vindicated the acknowledged rights and the insulted dignity of men, more frequently and victoriously than any before him, make his name illustrious, not only among the poets, but among the noblest sages and heroes, who are dear to mankind.

There is no principle, no feeling of honor and right, which might not be supported by a beautiful passage or a pregnant sentence from Schiller's poems; and these expressions live on the people's lips.

Schiller has concentrated his whole poetical power upon the representation of man; and, in fact, of the ideal greatness and beauty of the human soul — the highest and most mysterious of all miracles. The external world he looked upon only as a foil, — as a contrast or comparison for man. He set the moral power of man in opposition to the blind force of nature, to exhibit the former with its more elevated nobleness, or struggling with victorious strength, as in "The Diver" and "The Surety;" or he assigns a human sense to nature, and gives a moral meaning to her blind powers, as in "The Gods of Greece," "The Lament of Ceres," "Hero and Leander," "The Cranes of Ibycus," "The Bell," and others. Even in his historical writings, he is less concerned for the epical course of the whole, corresponding to natural necessity, than for the prominent characters, and for the element of human freedom as opposed to that necessity.

Schiller's ideal men are the soul of all his creations. Every where he delineates only man; but man in his highest moral beauty and sublimity. It seemed to him almost impossible to give this honored name to a poetry which does not idealize man. But though

Schiller did delineate to us ideals of morality, this alone would only redound to the honor of his own morals, but would settle nothing concerning his poetical value. On the contrary, most of the earlier and later poets of virtue have been great sinners against poetry; and it is just as difficult to paint as to possess a noble and natural human character; but nothing is easier than the assumption of both. When ideal moral excellence is to be imbodied in a character, it is an indispensable condition that fidelity to nature should be inviolably preserved. It is just as great an error to try to justify an unnatural, and untrue, and, therefore, unpoetic representation, by the morality of the subject, as to hide the immorality of the subject under the naturalness and grace of the representation. Most poets, with regard to this point, resemble bad painters of saints, who excite a reverence for the most offensive caricature, if it can only be made to pass for a saint; few, only, are like a Raphael, whose saints are really saints — whose art equals the sacredness of the subject. Among these few, however, Schiller stands high. Even in the earliest productions of his youth, the inward truth to nature gains the victory over the unnaturalness upon which they are so often censured, and which, for this reason, occurs no more in his later poetical works. We have great poets who have represented other than moral beauties; who were, perhaps, superior to our Schiller in the talent of representation; but no one has had the art of uniting the interests of virtue and poetry like Schiller. We possess no representation of virtue more poetical, and no poet more virtuous.

In Schiller's ideals, we meet with no dead mechanical law, no theory, no dry system of morals, but a living and organic nature, a stirring life of acting men. This ideal nature is the creation of genius. Schiller himself says—

> "Understanding repeateth what has already existed;
> Thou only, Genius, canst nature in nature enlarge."

Genius unfolds from its inmost depth the higher nature of man. What in others slumbers at the root beneath an earthly covering, in genius puts forth its full and glowing blossom. The marvel in the history of men, that comes over us with a surprising power, is, that among them new natures are perpetually born, whom no one calculates upon beforehand; whom no traditional measure fits, but with whom the world itself is rather born again, by the new modes of apprehending it; who show the old and customary existence under a new light, the old nature at a higher stage of progress, and disclose in ourselves the hidden secret, bring to light the dreamy germ, develop in us inclinations, knowledge, virtues, and talents, enrich, improve, and elevate us, and, in a word, unveil all nature within and without us, by the reflection of their own, at a higher stage, with a new brilliancy of enchantment. This new and higher nature of the poet is his poetical world; and the greatest of marvels is, that these poetical worlds are so peculiar and yet so varied. Greater than the world itself are the worlds that are born again within it. The one nature blossoms out in a thousand natures, which ever assume richer, more wondrous, more beautiful, and more delicate

forms. This second birth is the work of genius. Every great genius is a rare flower, existing only in a single specimen, wholly peculiar as to form, fragrance, and color. The inward impelling and living power of such an intellectual flower is a mystery, self-produced, to be unriddled by no one. Who has ever explained the spirit of the flowers, or the fragrance of the blossoms, which is one thing in this, another in that? Who has explained to us the charm which excites an interest in Raphael's pictures, so entirely peculiar? and who the intellectual breath, and fragrance, and the inner charm of soul, in Schiller's characters? Definitions of the understanding are to no purpose here; it is only by comparison that we can define the feeling more exactly.

Raphael's name has forced itself involuntarily upon me; and it is undeniable that the spirit of moral beauty hovers over Schiller's poetical creations, as the spirit of visible beauty hovers over Raphael's pictures. The moral element appears in the changes and the life of history; and action, struggle, is the sphere in which it moves: visible beauty, like all nature together, is confined to quiet existence.

Thus Schiller's ideals must show themselves in conflict; those of Raphael, in gentle and sublime repose. Schiller's genius could not shun the office of the warlike angel Michael; Raphael's genius was only the gentle angel who bears his name. That original and inexplicable charm, however, the heavenly magic, the reflected splendor of a higher world, which belongs to the faces of Raphael, belongs also to the characters of Schiller. No painter has been

able to represent the human face, no poet the human soul, with this loveliness and majesty of beauty. And as Raphael's genius remains the same, and as that angel of light and peace, under many names and forms, always gazes upon us, from amidst repose and transfigured glory, so Schiller's genius is always alike, and we see the same militant angel in Charles Moor, Amalie, Ferdinand, Louise, Marquis Posa, Max Piccolomini, Thekla, Maria Stuart, Mortimer, Joan of Orleans, and William Tell. The former genius bears the palm, the latter the sword. The former rests in the consciousness of a peace never to be disturbed, absorbed in his own splendor; the other turns his lovely and angelic countenance, menacing and mournful, towards the monsters of the deep.

Schiller's heroes are distinguished by a nobleness of nature which produces at once the effect of pure and perfect beauty, like the nobleness expressed by the pictures of Raphael. There is about them something kingly, that at once excites a holy reverence. But this beam of a higher light, falling upon the dark shadows of earthly corruption, can but shine the brighter: among the spectres of hell, an angel becomes the lovelier.

The first secret of this beauty is the angelic innocence which dwells eternally in the noblest natures. This nobleness of innocence recurs with the same celestial features of a pure young angel, in all the great poetic creations of Schiller. In the clearest transfiguration, like the purity of childhood, perfectly unarmed, and yet unassailable, like the royal infant, who, according to the legend, played unharmed and smiling among the wild

beasts of the forests,—this innocence stands forth in the noble picture of Fridolin.

If it becomes conscious of its own happiness, it then excites the envy of the celestial powers. With this new and touching charm, we see it in "Hero and Leander." Adorned with the warrior's helm, its blooming cheeks blushing with the fire of noble passion, youthful innocence comes forth against all the dark powers of hell. Thus has Schiller delineated it in "The Diver," and "The Surety," and in those unhappy lovers, Charles Moor and Amalie, Ferdinand and Louisa, and, above all, in Max Piccolomini and Thekla. Over these moving pictures a magic of poetry hovers, which is nowhere equalled. It is the flute-tone amidst wild and shrieking music, a blue glimpse of heaven in a storm, a paradise within the abyss of a crater.

If Shakspeare's pictures seemed to be charmed into a still purer lily tint, yet Schiller's maidens claim the prerogative of that soul of the lily, of its powerful and living fragrance; and here they bear a closer resemblance to the poems of Sophocles. They are not feeble, like the saints of Carlo Dolce, or Correggio, but they bear about them a sacred fire of strength, like the madonnas of Raphael. They not only move us,—they inspire us.

The holy innocence of the virgin appears under the noblest light when she is selected as the champion of God. The profound mystery of Christianity, and of Christian poetry, is the fact that the salvation of the world comes from a pure virgin, the highest power from the purest innocency. After this spirit Schiller has

composed his "Maid of Orleans;" and she is the most perfect manifestation of that warlike angel who bears the helmet and banner of Heaven.

Again, in another way Schiller has had the art of wedding this innocence to every noble development of genuine manliness. Here three holy and heroic forms tower above the rest — that martial youth, Max Piccolomini, pure, uncorrupted among all the vices of the camp and court; the Marquis Posa, whose mind, armed with all intellectual culture, had remained a pure temple of innocence; finally, that robust and powerful son of the mountains, William Tell, after his way a complete counterpart to the Maid of Orleans.

If, in these cases, innocence shines with its purest glory, Schiller knew, also, the contest of original innocence with the contamination of self-contracted guilt, through the violent passions; and he has conjured it up before our souls with the like love and the same perfect art. How deeply the Magdalen character affects us in Mary Stuart! What can be more touching than the self-conquest of Charles Moor? With what unsurpassable spirit, truth, and terror is the conflict in the great souls of Fiesco and Wallenstein represented!

We turn now to the second secret of the beauty belonging to Schiller's ideal characters. This is their nobleness, — their honorableness. His heroes and heroines never discredit the pride and the dignity which announce a loftier nature; and all their outward acts bear the stamp of magnanimity and inborn nobleness. Its perfect opposite is the vulgar character, and that conventional spirit which serves for a bridle and lead-

ing-strings to the vulgar nature. Strong, free, independent, original, following only the guidance of a noble spirit, Schiller's heroes rend asunder the web encompassed by which vulgar men drag along their common-place existence. It is a very distinctive mark of Schiller's poetry, that all his heroes bear that impress of genius; they have that imposing character, which in real life usually accompanies the highest nobleness of human nature. All his heroes wear the stamp of Jove upon their brows. In his earliest poems, we might, perhaps, consider this free and bold demeanor somewhat uncouth and sharp-cornered; and even the poet, at elegant Weimar, suffered himself to be seduced into giving his robbers a little touch of civilization. But who would not look through the rough outside, into the solid and pure diamond germ of the nobler nature? Whatever follies are to be found in "Charles Moor," in "Cabal and Love," and in "Fiesco," I can consider them under no other light than the follies of that old German Parcifal, who gave a proof, when a rough boy in child's clothes, of his noble and heroic heart, to the shame of all scorners; nay, the force of moral beauty in a noble nature can nowhere operate more touchingly and affectingly, than where it is thus unconsciously laid open to onesided derision.

The third and highest secret of the beauty of Schiller's characters is the fire of noble passions. Every great heart is touched with this fire: it is the sacrificial fire to the heavenly powers; the vestal flame, guarded by consecrated hands in the temple of God; the Promethean spark, stolen from heaven, to give a godlike soul to men; the Pentecost fire of

inspiration into which souls are baptized; the phœnix fire, in which our race renews its youth forever. Without the glow of noble passions, nothing great can flourish, either in life or in poetry. Every man of genius bears this fire in his bosom, and all his creations are pervaded with it. Schiller's poetry is a strong and fiery wine; all his words are flames of the noblest sentiment. The ideal characters which he has created are genuine children of his glowing heart, and parted rays of his own fire. But before all other poets, Schiller maintains the prerogative of the purest, and at the same time the strongest passion. No one of so pure a heart ever sustained this fire; no one of such fire ever possessed this purity. Thus we see the diamond, the purest of earthly substances, when it is kindled, burn with a brilliancy and an inward strength of heat, compared to which every other fire appears feeble and dim.

Let us ask ourselves if there can be a more chaste and holy love than Schiller felt and breathed into the souls of his lovers? And where, again, do we find it so fiery and violent, invincible against a world full of enemies, arousing the highest energies of the soul, and bearing with joy the most overwhelming sacrifices? From its gentlest charm, from the first meeting of the eye, from the first soft beating of the heart, to the terrific storm of all the feelings, to the astonishing heroism of maidenly courage, to the sublime immolation of the lovers, — love here unfolds the boundless riches of its beauty, like sacred music, from the softest tone of the minor key, to the full storm of the most overpowering strains.

The glow of the inspired heart, in Schiller, lays hold of every sacred thing whose influence should be felt by man; and thus his genius arms itself with the flaming sword of Heaven: here the conflict of that martial angel with the spirits of the deep is begun.

Schiller's pure spirit could endure no wrong; and he entered harnessed into the lists for the defence of everlasting right. He announces, like an inspired prophet, the holy doctrine of that peace that dwells with justice, and of that destruction which infallibly follows wrong. But the truth of his piercing judgment is never dimmed by the glow of sentiment and the dazzling ornaments of language, but is only brought forward with a more brilliant and striking prominence.

That freedom which is inseparable from justice was the dearest jewel to his heart. But that unbridled freedom, which springs from wrong and leads to wrong, belongs to the demoniac powers, against which his genius wages a mighty conflict.

We have no poet who has represented right and freedom with such fiery enthusiasm, with such beautiful embellishments of poetry; and none, too, who has represented them with so pure and uncorrupted a tone of thought, with such triumphant truth, shunning every extreme.

His genius belongs to mankind. The rights of man, considered from the highest point of view, are defended by his Marquis Posa. For the rights of nations, his Maid of Orleans enters the lists. William Tell maintains the rights of individuals. But in all his

other heroes, too, we see right and freedom conflicting with arbitrary will and power; and Schiller manifests here the same affluence of genius as in "Love."

This may suffice to represent to us the spirit that animates Schiller's poetry, so far as it can be done by a few general outlines. The feelings of every one who is familiar with Schiller will tell him more than can be told here.

And these feelings will never perish, and coming generations and distant ages will share them; and, perhaps, it will be vouchsafed to them to recognize Schiller's greatness more purely and worthily; for his efforts belong to the future, a freer and nobler future, which his holy aspirations and firm faith in human nature foresaw, to which he has hastened before us, from which his genius beckons to us with blessed promises. Many have gone down into the dark past to bind the spirit of man with the ancient fetters; but Schiller, an angel of light, has placed himself at the portals of the future, lifted the veil, and opened a free and serene prospect to the longing eye.

The serious and solemn feelings with which we are inspired by Schiller, the elevation to which he raises our souls, the sacred awe which encompasses him, are certainly not suited to please the æsthetic exquisites, the dull, self-sufficient, lecherous disciples of art, who are terrified to the very soul before his presence, and who censure him from a feeling of personal revenge. It is a speedy mode of settling the matter to call him unnatural, stiff, pedantic, and coarse, and to decry him as a poet of unmannerly youth and of the mob. In-

deed, all that is great and noble has become unnatural in your eyes, because you are thoroughly corrupted, because vulgarity has become your second nature. Virtue seems to you pedantic because you have to hear it preached from others' lips, because it does not speak in your own hearts. All bold freedom seems to you coarse, because it breaks through your conventional preserves and your enclosures, and shatters your little idols to pieces. On you alone falls the disgrace, if uncorrupted youth, and the people, whom you call the mob, reverence the great poet better.

In the attacks on Schiller, his reflections and his declamation have been brought prominently forward. It is true, there prevails, in his "Song to Joy," for example, a reflective turn, which furnishes us only with philosophical meditations, instead of something poetical. It is true there predominates in what are called the fine passages of his tragedies a declamatory character, which goes beyond the natural tone of dramatic dialogue. But this confounding of a philosophical problem with a poetical, a lyric with a dramatic, is a small error, which touches the form only, and which does not the least affect the great spirit which lives through all the works of Schiller. To turn such trifling errors of form into an offence would be pedantry, were it not a piece of perfidy. Schiller's forms have to atone for what properly belongs to his character. It is this alone which is hated. Under all circumstances, there is nothing more odious to refined vice, which clothes its inward vulgarity with external politeness, and bribes the mob by a brilliant sophistry, than a straight-forward and

honest nature, a full and overflowing heart, a freedom and integrity that breaks spontaneously through all their considerations of expediency, a moral healthiness, the mere look of which involuntarily tortures painted vice. Now, for the sake of avenging themselves on a virtue like this, they call it rude, unpolished; they lay hold of outward appearances, and ridicule them, as formerly the noble officers who had run away from the battle of Jena, ridiculed the citizen officers who had fought bravely under the command of Schill. "Good God, how awkwardly this *canaille* of citizens behave! Upon honor, they can dance no *ecossaise*." This is just the same as finding fault with Schiller's outward forms, and forgetting his spirit the while.

Schiller was imitated so often, and his influence extends so far over the new schools, that I shall not speak upon this point until I come to the subsequent chapters. I merely remark here, that, among the dramatists, Theodore Körner, among the lyric poets, Gustav Pfizer, resemble him most. Not only the iambic measure, but even the movement and harmony, and peculiar phraseology, which distinguish Schiller in this kind of verse, have become universally prevalent, even to satiety, in German tragedy. Formerly the attempt was made by Klingemann, as it is now by Raupach, to manufacture tragedies upon the Schiller last, by the dozen — a real desecration of poetry, which, as was to be expected, has operated unfavorably even upon the pleasure which we derive from the works of Schiller himself. The most beautiful image, the finest sentence, a thousand times repeated by imitators, appears worn out at

last, and we want to hear nothing more about it. Thus we find that a great many of the finest passages from Schiller's works, like certain texts of Scripture, have grown uninteresting, or even excite nothing but a smile.

The influence of Schiller was more favorable upon the patriotic and political poets of 1813.—But we return.

While the "storm and pressure" took its most elevated course in Schiller, it descended so much the lower in another direction. With Goethe began the romantic Don Juanism, which, under the mask of genius breaking through all restraints, and of noble freedom, brought up again all the vulgar frivolity of Kotzebue, or which affected a godlike despair, and, at last, aimed only to satisfy utterly brutal appetites. In this odious course, we have already found Goethe active, with peculiar zest. Next to him stood Heinse, who was an enthusiast for art; but who, at last, made proposals to one muse after another, which ought not to be done to a goddess at least. The artist, roaming free throughout the world, familiar with the beautiful, making a pilgrimage to Italy, there revelling in the recollections of an age of sensual beauty, must naturally have been peculiarly exposed to the fascinations of the Don Juan genius, and is, therefore, entitled to a special exculpation. But this moral aberration gave the death-blow to the brilliant romantic school. What would the Schlegels and Tieck have risen to, how infinitely greater and more popular would they have been, had they been able to restrain

themselves from treading in the slippery footsteps of Heinse!

The end of the "Knight and Robber" novels, the transition from this old and honest coarseness to the all-devouring frivolity, is indicated by a novel which is worthy of attention, particularly because it was for a time the favorite book in the circulating libraries, — "Rinaldo Rinaldini," by Vulpius, — in which a noble and magnanimous robber, copied after Schiller's Charles Moor, is, at the same time, a coquettish Don Juan, and a universal ladies' man. This inclination to play at once the hero of virtue and the all-enjoying voluptuary, the man of destiny and the conceited coxcomb together, — sprang first from the great spirit of Goethe, but has, as it appears, nestled fast in the German nature; for, again, our most recent novel literature has united enthusiasm for political freedom, and licentious enjoyments, the sufferings of the Poles, and naked orgies for a piquant stimulant to readers.

## ROMANTICISM PROPER.

THE poetical opposition to the modern tone of feeling became at last exclusively Catholic, mediæval, and what, in a narrower sense, is called *romanticism*. This did not take place until after the French revolution, against which it was the reaction. The new romanticism was of a political origin, without, perhaps, having been perfectly conscious of it.

Had not the French revolution declared that "the old God had ceased to reign;" had not the priests been guillotined, the Gothic churches disfigured and mutilated, then the poets of Germany, too, — and particularly of Protestant North Germany, — would not have been seized at once with so warm a love for religion, and, even, for the Catholic form. Had not the French beheaded their king, the German poets would not at once have proclaimed the poetical kingdom, the mythical legitimacy, the divine consecration. Had not the nobility of France been banished and put to death, the German poets would not have meditated so profoundly upon the glory of the feudal ages. Had not the treasures of mediæval art been wantonly dispersed beyond the Rhine, German poets would not at once have been inspired with such an enthusiasm for this art. Finally, these poets would have laid no such decided stress upon

the German manner of being, and the long-buried love of country would not, perhaps, have been so early roused by their strains to a proud resurrection, had not the French conquests so deeply mortified our national feelings.

German romanticism was directed not only against the French revolution and its consequences, but also against its causes, against the whole spirit of modern times, as the fruit of which that revolution was regarded. The modern spirit, it was said, is the parent of that trivial equality in the state as well as in dress, of that self-complacent vulgarity which needs a God just as little as it needs a poetry; and the French revolution has only carried out, on a great scale, what had long been prepared in private life — the destruction of every thing elevated, various, and beautiful, by an insipid and monotonous deformity. The more the old was destroyed, and continued to be destroyed, in real life, the more zealously did the poets occupy themselves with grasping it in its former completeness, as a perfect picture, with the first freshness of all its colors, and comparing the contemptible reality with this beautiful ideal.

At the present day, we are frequently unjust towards these romanticists. We forget in what an age they began. The jealous love with which they embraced the antiquity of Germany, and strove to inflame the patriotism of their contemporaries by appealing to its reminiscences, is worthy of the highest respect, with all their extravagances. The poetical fanaticism, with which they strove to urge the marvels of the ancient Catholic world again upon our own,

appears very intelligible, when we reflect upon the lively surprise they must have felt on the first discovery of them, in the age of pig-tails, domestic novels, and Rastadt congresses. The profound disgrace of the country, which was the consequence of the modern state of affairs, justified the most glowing enthusiasm for the more ancient and honorable condition of Germany.

We must make another distinction in this species. The old German poetry itself contains two elements, a pagan and a Christian, and was accordingly cultivated as the poetry of the sagas, and as the poetry of Catholic legends and chivalry. The more recent romanticism, also, has accordingly adopted either the pagan sagas and the most ancient national faith, or the Catholic spirit of saints, priests, and knights. Ludwig Tieck is the representative of this entire class in both tendencies.

The ancient popular saga sounded, constantly and throughout, with the old popular belief and superstition, through all the changing melodies of the spirit of the age and of the fashion, like a long-protracted and deep-drawn tone. At the period of French illumination, it sank to the lowest pitch, and almost died away. It served only the purposes of wit and irony in the heroic poems, like those of Wieland. Even the amiable Musæus took up the legends, often those most significant, as lightly as possible, after the manner of the French fairy tales, of the Blue Library. But his popular stories will always belong to the most attractive that have ever yet been written in the German language; and he has certainly contrib-

uted very much towards diffusing a taste for the ancient legends.

Herder was the first to take up the legends seriously, and from the national side. He showed first that a profound meaning lay concealed under the sportive and amusing poetry of the tales of wonder, and that they were not made merely to excite laughter by ludicrous representations, or, when used in the operas, to astonish by fairy-like splendor, but that, when original and genuine, they are of inestimable value, as "voices of the people," as remains of a wondrous past.

The poetry of these old legends made the most powerful impression upon the age. Despite all the illumination, which was the boast of the times, people were irresistibly drawn by the sacred obscurity of this poetry. Its great effect unquestionably rests upon the fact, that it appears to be, not the artificial composition of men, but an immediate manifestation of nature. The playful fancy of the poet has not invented these legends; they have spontaneously sprung up in the hearts of all nations. They are inseparably united with the history of nations. All that is within comes out, manifests itself, and becomes historical. Hence the spirit of those nations and ages is unfolded to us in the twofold image of the legends and of history, and their philosophy lies completely disclosed. As the legend always leads us back to the practical ground of history, so history always conducts us into the ideal province of the legends. All the

legends are historical; but all the histories of that time, too, are again legendary, full of hidden meanings, and mystical. The heart of the people, in both, expresses itself by deeds, which are as marvellous and full of supernatural intimations as was that heart itself. All these deeds are unmeaning unless they are referred to that heart; hence the ordinary historical representation of the middle ages, after the migrations, is so intolerable. We must understand them in the sense of legends, as revelations of the people's heart.

In this manner the legends are an inexhaustible fountain of poetry; and their materials are immeasurable, and, generally speaking, have been so little worked up, that the modern poets might well borrow from them. On one hand, the antiquated form, in which perfectly elaborated legends have been preserved, is become foreign to us; on the other, most of the legends really exist only in rude outlines, which we have first to complete. Thus it happened that our most distinguished poets have vied with each other in digging up the golden treasures of the popular legends, and throwing them again into circulation newly stamped.

The modern ballads, at the beginning, took their origin from these — a species of poesy, under whose modest veil the noblest poetry lies concealed. Our greatest poets distinguished themselves here, and the most so when they adhered to the genuine old legendary materials. This was the case with Goethe, Schiller, Stolberg. Bürger devoted himself principally to ballads, but disfigured them by boorish coarseness, which he confounded with the popular tone. But a proper

patriotic aim, for the readoption of this kind of poetry, was not then thought of; hence, also, the conception and the form of the ballads and tales were for a long time uncertain. For example, ancient Greek materials were treated like mediæval legends, and mediæval legends like classical elegies. Thus Goethe and Schiller.

Tieck first introduced a native tone into this species of poetry, and showed the necessity of reverting to the illusion of the time when the legends originated, to feel their true spirit. He therefore laid the question before the people, and children, among whom unperverted feelings still are found. He dared to furnish this enlightened age with tales for children. He dared to draw back the clouds from the moon, and to display to us the moonlit magic night of our nation's childhood, to awaken again its primeval recollections, and to make the most mysterious chords of sensibility resound with long-forgotten and deeply-moving melodies.

Herder was only the porter of romanticism; Goethe, with his cold understanding, stood always outside of its depth and ardor: the first poet whose whole soul it absorbed was Tieck.

But we are not to regard him as a mere imitator, who copied after mediæval forms somewhat as the Græcomaniacs copied the antique. He has a higher significance. He is no mere antiquarian poet, who looks back with reverted neck into a perished past. Rather, he has brought the past into a living union with the present, and built up the new on the foundation of the genuine old German poetry. As a medi-

ator between the two great stages of the culture of the German nation, he will always maintain, in the history of its progress, one of the first positions. The modern German poetry was developed from Protestantism, and after antique models, in marked opposition to the old German poetry. The onesided poetical manner of the Protestants, averse to all that is wonderful, was polished by our greatest poets to a humane and cosmopolitan manner; yet it frequently diverged from the peculiar German character, and followed after foreign models. But our poetry gained back more and more its national physiognomy, along with its independence. By its own innate power, it threw off the foreign element, and restored their value and importance to the peculiarities, which had been so long disregarded. The time could not but come at last, when the close relationship of the modern and ancient German should be made clear. The German heart had recovered itself. It was conscious of an intimate connection with those old feelings and sentiments which were intrusted to immortal song by the hoary past. Whatever higher culture we have won during the course of ages, whatever of foreign origin has become to us a second nature, the original natural stock still remained. The moment we recognized this, the necessary consequence followed; we again set our poetry to the tune of the ancients, or rather our heart to the ancient tone of feeling. Sharp contrasts, and extravagances, could not fail of being brought out, by the conflict of this new with the earlier Protestant and antique poetical tendency. In the extravagance of the enthusiasm with

which the Germans are accustomed to take every thing up, antiquarian zealots and pedants would exclusively elevate the old German poetry above every other, while their opponents utterly condemned it as a barbarism. On the middle ground between these extremes, others still would establish the natural compromise of the old and the new. Tieck, before all, was summoned to bring about this important mediation. In him, the most national of our poets, the genius of ancient Germany was born again, and renewed his youth like a phœnix. His poetical creations are such genuine German, that they stand the test of both these far-distant times. They are as closely connected with the middle ages as with us. The appearance of this poet, which is deeply significant, and infinitely rich, marks a turning-point, in our modern culture, of incalculable consequences. Our poetry has gained a new basis through Tieck. Formerly establishing itself on antique models, and running out into idealism and universalism, it has again, since Tieck's appearance, struck its roots into the primeval German nationality, that it may put on, sooner or later, a wreath of genuine national productions. Both tendencies are now at war with each other. The romantic, or rather the national, has, for some time, labored under a disadvantage; imitation of foreign models has again gained the upper hand; but this will not continue. Poetry will go forward upon the flowery path of Tieck.

I consider Tieck as the most German of German poets. And he shows that he is so, most, perhaps, where he is involuntarily affected by the foreign influences that take up their abode in our own home-

stead, so much to our harm. He, whom a foreign passion has clutched with its burning claws, like the author of "William Lowell," and who yet is able to unfold all the sweetness of childlike affections, is of honest birth: he stands the fiery trial of Thetis; he is consecrated, like the horned Sigfrit, in the fire of the Dragon's poisonous breath.

As Schiller guided us to conscious purity and enlightened power, so Tieck led us back to the unconscious innocence and simple vigor of German antiquity. But both agree perfectly in resisting the vulgarity of modern life, by the images of this sacred innocence and power. There is, really, no difference of tendency between Schiller's young and storming enthusiasts, who set up the rights of sons of the gods against the rabble rout that surrounds them, and Tieck's young and laughing heroes, who do the same without knowing it. In both cases, we have a noble nature, capable of every high and magnanimous deed, and of every sacrifice in action, and of every refinement of feeling, contrasted with the modern contemptible, imbecile, anxious, and calculating spirit, and the vulgar tone of sentiment. The two poets differ from each other only with regard to form. Schiller adhered more to universal humanity, and Kant's "Criticism of Reason;" Tieck more to German national peculiarity, and to Schelling's school.

Tieck sprang wholly from the romantic reaction of the age. He was not, like Görres, a born Catholic and Rhinelander, a genuine son, the late-born offspring of the middle ages; but being a born Protestant and Berliner, he was, from his very origin, part and parcel of

the opposition to the middle ages; but, at length, the all-powerful sympathy, which, at certain epochs of the world's history, draws the opposite poles together, or reverses them, introduced, through him, into the very centre of protestantism and the modern spirit that remarkable regeneration of mediæval and Catholic poetry. And it is this fact which gives this phenomenon its importance. We see from it, that it is not an old thing come after its time; it is not a blossom in autumn; but something youthful — a blossom in spring.

At the outset Tieck understood only the frivolous treatment of the ancient tales of wonder. In his "Ostrich Feathers," he adhered first to the manner of Musæus; and, even in his earliest dramatic tales, he was yet too much of a mere scoffer. But the inner charm of the tales of wonder came over him more and more, and he soon mastered all the ancient enchanted kingdom of the national legend, purified it from modern trash, from modern abuses, both as to form and as to sentiment, and restored it to its genuine simplicity.

From the ancient pagan legend, he advanced to Catholic mysticism; from the sacred primeval forest to the tinted twilight of the Gothic cathedral.

His "Wild Horn-Blast," that allures from afar, gives us the first intimation of a return to the "Forest Solitude."

What was Broke's earthly satisfaction in God, and Kleist's "Spring," compared with this new and yet primeval intuition of nature? Just what a Dutch farm is, compared with a magnificent primeval forest. What we possessed of poetical landscape painting before Tieck is unworthy of mention. Our poetry

was limited to man, — the house, — the city; at best, it condescended only to a dietetic walk. But all around lay scattered still the great limbs of the old German primeval forest, and no one seemed desirous to be reminded of the fact that the Germans are children of the forest, and that to-day, as well as two thousand years ago, poetry rides through the fir-grove on a lily-white palfrey, adorns herself with wild flowers, awakens the echo of the woods, and breathes the fragrance of the woods.

What was Rousseau's much-praised return to nature? A new method of education at a foundling hospital. If man would find again his own earliest childlike nature, he must return also to external nature, in her original sacred wildness, in her fierce and beautiful maidenliness, as yet profaned by no culture; he must cling to her bosom like her child, and then again he must struggle with her hostile spirit. Nay, in spite of all culture, the secret sympathy of man with wild nature will always form the leading trait of his poetical character.

In Tieck's works, the forest, the wild beauties of nature, first surprise us by the picturesque; but when we become more familiar with them, a profounder mystery of nature comes over us. Wondrous is the rustling among the trees. The presence of spirits quivers in the streaks of light of golden green, through the deep obscure. Amidst wild nature Tieck yet saw even the "silent people" reigning, the spirits of the elements, which are as old as the history of our nation, and inseparable from it. The belief in elves was carried infinitely further in the German North, than in the

South, and became a fountain of the most charming and fanciful poetry.

Has not Tieck himself something elfish in his nature, which now resigns itself to the sweetest love, entices by the most amiable caresses, and now skips away from us, with the most fickle indifference, or suddenly hurts and insults us by a little unexpected piece of malice? And does not this elfish nature still appear to be overmastered by something higher? Has it not, like the lovely and volatile Undine, won a soul by devotion to the knight, strengthened itself into firmness of character, by the transition from the pagan forest sagas to the legends, and to the Catholic chivalry poetry?

His masterpieces are *Genoveva* and *Octavian*, which bear the same relation to each other that faith bears to love — the lily to the rose. The one holds up to our admiration the victory of religion, illustrated by the fidelity of a woman; in the other, chivalry and love display all their romantic charm. The leading idea of both is, that the Christian religion ennobles and invigorates the nature of man, melts away all that is impure from it, subdues its fickleness, and gives it quiet and peace, and sunbright clearness of spirit; and that, on the other hand, every originally well-organized, vigorous, and noble nature turns to the sublime faith of the Christians. Tieck could not endure to think of God according to the vulgar Protestant conceptions, only as the schoolmaster, or the sick-tender, of an agonized and wretched people, and to look for the criterion of true religion in the poverty and deformity of all their symbolical or ceremonial relations to the world and to nature. He

sought this criterion, on the contrary, in the fulness and beauty of these relations, and praised a religion that made saints and heroes out of men, and that gave a sanctity to all the beauty of life.

Further, the modern Protestant poetry, ashamed of the poverty of its religious apparatus, threw off all religion whatever, and created that "literature of despair," which sought an outlet, now in the suicide of a Werther, and now in the shameless self-worship of a Faust. If this egotism run wild, this boundless wantonness of the insatiable *I*, reeling in arrogance, like Phaëton attempting to guide the car of the sun, has gone on increasing since the time of Goethe, then Tieck's Catholic productions acquire, by this contrast, a new value and charm.

How noble and amiable do Tieck's transparent forms appear, contrasted with those mystified egotists of Goethe, and the whole modern school of Don Juans! like a lofty mountain on which the sunlight shines, contrasted with a storm among the clouds. The profound calmness, security, and harmony of an inborn nobleness of soul, or of a self-conquest gained by religion, is what is most wanting, not only to our poetry, but to our daily life, although very few indeed feel its absence.

The mysterious bond of that new-born harmony of man with God, and the world, and himself, in the noble poetical creations of Tieck, was trustfulness. God, the promiser of grace, was trusted; and fidelity to him, too, was observed. Since then, distrust has appeared. "Who knows the region beyond the grave? Who can tell how it looks there? The promises are not God's, but the priest's. If we do

not certainly know what justice we can expect of God, we ought not also to bind ourselves to the performance of the duties which he lays upon us." Thus every sin follows from distrust of God. And would he who puts no trust in God have more confidence in men? Would not he who once distrusts them believe his egotism to be fully justified?

Trust, — thou loveliest of all the angels of God, — thou hast returned to heaven, and livest among us yet only in delightful fictions.

Can the present age conclude a genuine league of trust, like those believing, by-gone times? Tieck has not proved it. Modern times, formerly his native element, have overmastered him too. As Undine had to return to the fickle element from which she had arisen, so has Tieck. The elfish nature again took possession of him. Irony prevails in his later stories, a spirited mockery at every thing, with resignation to the impossibility of change — a cold resignation, which is at times serious to melancholy notwithstanding, or even falls back into all the former joyousness of youthful recollections.

Even during his Catholic period, Tieck constantly joined the wittiest attacks upon the modern spirit with his believing glorification of the middle ages. The "Prince Zerbino," and the "World turned upside down," were exclusively devoted to it. Here, and especially in the noble "Fortunatus," the young, and vigorous, and animated spirit of poetry, every where appears contrasted with the weakly, and cold, and senile prose; magnanimity and nobleness of soul, opposed to vulgar and petty egotism. Tieck has since

dropped this contrast, and no longer shows a predilection for the lighter part of his figures, and a disinclination for the darker, but treats them all after the like manner, with irony; nay, he has taken a peculiar pleasure in exposing any thing morally distinguished to the lively sallies of his ridicule, and, on the other hand, in furnishing excuses with equal ingenuity for gross aberrations by giving them some humorous turn; so that we have the feeling, at last, that it really amounts to the same thing with the human race, whether they take the trouble to be wise and polished, or allow themselves to be pleased with ordinary fooleries.

There is something touching in Tieck's descending from his romantic elevation to this resignation; but, by doing so, he has given a new exhibition of the inexhaustible wealth of his mind. A beautiful enthusiasm like his could be permitted to exist only a short time; it was the intoxication of youth and love. When he woke up, the old cloister — where he had fallen asleep with Wackenroder the Friar, and dreamed the most beautiful dream — had turned into a factory. Wheels were clattering, spindles whizzing. Heavens! it cannot be disguised that utility has assumed the control of the world; and so we must make up our minds to it, after a romantic dream take a good breakfast, and let the world go, as it goes, with its wheels and its spindles.

Had not Tieck been so romantic before, his tales would have had an unlimited circulation. But the great majority of rationalists throughout Germany had taken offence at his Catholicism, and distrusted him

even where he was wholly a man of to-day, and as rational as possible, and always feared that there was something Catholic in disguise. But Tieck would never have reached this grace of resignation, this amiable sympathy, and even tenderness for a world, which is despised notwithstanding, had he not been a romanticist before — had he not filled his whole soul with poetry, with love. True, the precious pearl had fallen from its shell, but the broken pieces still reflected the world with the lustre of mother-of-pearl. Whatever he touched assumed a poetical coloring, even when he wanted to express indifference and contempt more than interest.

Tieck's irony is the objective side of that whose subjective side is humor; that is, irony shows the whole outward world in that twofold sense which appears to belong to all existing things, as humor shows the heart of the poet himself. The external world stands visibly simple to the eye of humor; and self-contented, as contrasted with human feelings, where alone discordant powers are struggling with each other: but with irony the reverse is the case; the feelings are perfectly clear and quiet, while the external world only seems to be entangled in inextricable contradictions, which supply the poet, from his fixed point of view, the subjects of sportive treatment. But the passion for taking life up with these contradictions, and men in the midst of their weaknesses, and the maintaining of poetical consistency by applying the diminishing-glass to great affairs, and the magnifying-glass to small ones, by ridiculing what is held in high respect, by praising what is despised, and, finally, balancing all

the phenomena of life by the general confession, "All of us are not worth much," and by a negation that scoffs at all honest emotions, and excuses every vulgarity, — this is a dangerous path, into which poetry has been led by Tieck. For many begin where he left off, and give us only the sober disenchantment, without the beautiful illusion which preceded it — the thorns that remained behind without the rose. A heart that has ceased to feel warmly is something different from a heart that has never felt warmly.

Among all the German romanticists, Arnim stands next to Tieck — a Protestant also, and a Prussian nobleman, from the celebrated family Arnheim. The reproduction of the middle ages was carried further by him, after a somewhat chronological order. Tieck had advanced from the old legendary world to the Hohenstauffen age; Arnim came down even to the reformation, and worked up, particularly, the later national legends, popular songs, and common Christmas pageants; nay, he was bold enough to introduce, in the midst of representations of modern life, a vein of piety and chivalry, which were meant to show that the age of romance is not really gone, but continues to exist in Protestantism, which he was not inclined to surrender. Beautiful as this pride of birth and creed might appear, still it brought Arnim into many perplexities. Modern life opposed the romantic conception of it; and the noble, tender, and profoundly poetical Arnim was far from gaining the popularity which was showered upon the vulgar Kotzebue.

Besides this, Arnim's fancy was so overflowing, sparkling, volatile, and dreamy, that he was unable

to keep its affluence under control, to tame down its strength; and he frequently allowed himself to be carried by it so far, that he lost the thread of his narrative, and, as if borne aloft into the air from the solid earth, came out God knows where, so that the end and aim of his work were entirely lost from view. This, however, troubles most readers; for an economical order is better liked than a rich confusion.

His "Halle and Jerusalem," his "Crown Warders," suffer particularly from this excess of fancy; and the dark and mystical leading idea of these works increases the uncertainty of the reader, who sees one brilliant dream-picture after another hurry before him, as if in a poetical wild chase. The "Countess Dolores" has more inward harmony, and is, in every respect, Arnim's masterpiece. Here, too, his fancy runs into excess in all directions; but these excrescences are to be regarded as episodes, skilfully adapted to the whole, without destroying its unity. The poet resembles a gigantic tree of the primeval forests of South America, which grows up vigorously, and scarcely seems to notice that, besides its own flowery ornaments, it bears those of hundreds of parasite plants of a thousand colors, which creep around it from root to topmost bough, and far beyond its branches, and bear it down with their weight. All his small tales and plays are like the single episodes of the greater works, most delightful, each a whole, painted with a liveliness of pencil, such as Goethe only could display in the most transparent part of "Wilhelm Meister."

If, with Tieck, the pagan elf-nature and Christian

chivalry remain separate, with Arnim they appear united into one spirit, and struggling together — a very extraordinary mixture of modern frivolity with the depth of the middle ages, of the most ordinary guilt with the most extraordinary expiation. We see, indeed, that the poet is a Protestant. To him, religion is not, as to the Catholic, the mistress into whose arms he throws himself with ecstasy, but the friend, the mother from whom he seeks consolation, and the strict judge who imposes upon him expiation. But the sin is so amiably drawn, the sanguineous temperament of woman is treated with such fidelity to nature, or in situations and collisions of such infinite truth, that we are ourselves compelled to regard the somewhat affected atonement that follows thereupon as entirely corresponding to this character.

But a trait of the noblest manliness runs through these almost womanish sentimentalities and fancies that are so frequent with Arnim. Arnim was a patriot, and felt deeply the sufferings and disgrace of his country; nay, he was himself fully aware that this occupation with the Muses and Graces, to whom he was devoted, was but a poor consolation at a time when heroes were required. Oftentimes his secret repugnance to the effeminate pursuits of the age, the devotion to gallantry and versification, and his dislike of all the scribbling *mania* of the Germans, is not to be mistaken.

"Since Germany is named in books alone,
The Germans have therein divided grown,
As once in council. Those from council spurned
Have to the various paths of letters turned,

Tradesfolk dismissed, without their daily bread,
And soldiers, who are neither rich nor dead."

For this reason he interested himself particularly for those literary efforts which aimed at recalling to the memory of the nation its nobler and more beautiful past. With this intent, he, in conjunction with Clemens Brentano, gave, under the singular title of the "Boy's Wonderhorn," a large collection of fine old German popular songs, which did not remain without their effect upon modern lyric poetry.

Brentano was still less popular than Arnim, although his "Ponce de Leon" is a very delightful piece, executed after the spirit of Shakspeare and Calderon; and his somewhat strange "Foundation of Prague" contains, at least, great beauties in single parts.

Novalis was much less master of the fulness of his mind than Arnim. He too was a nobleman, a North German, a Protestant, from the celebrated family of Hardenberg. But with him the mystical profoundness of the ancient romanticism was destined to be born again. He had no sense for the single, the limited; the whole world alone could furnish the materials which he undertook to treat with poetical spirit.

In the highest antiquity there originated great world-poems, cosmogonies, wherein the creation and existence of the world were mirrored. A system of more or less clearness lay at the foundation of all. The problem was to bring the infinite variety of the world into a well-ordered system. From the cosmogonies and religious systems sprang the philosophical systems, so far as they undertook dogmatically to construct the world, and did not merely investi-

gate critically what might possibly be, but announced apodictically, *It is so.* All these dogmatic systems sprang from a poetical inspiration, from a higher revelation, from visions, from an illusion of the inflamed fancy; hence they are, for the most part, proclaimed in images, and in a prophetic and sacred language. No one disputes their poetical character and value, although the whole critical philosophy of the schools utterly denies their philosophical worth, and would have them wholly banished from the province of philosophy. Still these poetical revelations often possess a deeper foundation of truth than the narrow systems of criticism.

Their poetical value rests partly upon their matter and partly upon their form. Their subject is the great and everlasting miracle of the world. They mystify us; they show us the marvel even of what is comprehensible; while, on the contrary, criticism endeavors to make what is really marvellous intelligible and common-place. They have nothing to do with philosophical effect, with the annihilation of wonder, with the enlightening of the understanding, but only with poetical effect, with increasing the marvellous, with interesting the feeling and the fancy.

The poetical form of these world-poems is to be sought less in the images, and the sacred language, than in the architectonic structure, the harmony of the system. It is not at all inconsistent with the conception of the beautiful, that *it*, too, may dwell in a system, — in a structure, — be it logical or material.

The poetical charm of harmony is disclosed in profound mathematical combinations — in the province of matter by architecture and music, in the province of

mind by systems. Matter is not adequate to the finest artistic movements of harmony, either in music or in architecture; this kind of art only reaches its summit in the harmony of mind. But though mathematics, with regard to the first-mentioned arts, impresses itself upon the senses, yet this higher harmony remains concealed from the bodily eye and ear, and a higher sense is needed to perceive it — a sense that is rarely found. Hence people commonly examine, in the most artfully-elaborated structures of this kind, only the single parts; and to penetrate the whole design, to explore its construction, appears to most minds too difficult, or they do not think at all of the existence of the art which is hidden from them. They have no suspicion of that higher music whose tones are ideas.

This kind of poetry, therefore, takes its origin from vision; its essence is the mystery of the universe; its form is harmony. Among us Germans, Jacob Böhme stands at the head of this class. All his works are poetical visions, wherein he beheld common nature under a mystical, magic light, as amidst the golden splendors of the morning red, and looked through her body and frame to the very heart and centre, as into a transparent crystal palace. This mysterious frame, hidden from the common eye, he constructs with the most ingenious outlines and winding passages, wherein no philosopher has surpassed him. Whatever has been attained by stereometry, Gothic architecture, and the theory of fugue, as to bold and subtle constructions, — is all found united in Jacob Böhme's marvellous frame of nature. Among the modern philosophers of nature, the material mass of the

ideas outweighs the art of construction. They construct mostly according to the common geometrical proportions, without suspecting a higher harmony. On the other hand, they gain on the prosaic and philosophic side, by a greater sum of ideas of experience. With Jacob Böhme art preponderated; among the later philosophers of nature, the materials. Out of little he makes more; out of much they make less. Even his errors have a high poetical charm; they, on the other hand, borrow their splendor from truth alone.

The most beautiful of the later philosophical poems, or poetical revelations under a systematic form, are the philosophies of nature. Here the whole world seems to be dipped in the magic light of the wondrous; the commonest thing rises up into something full of meaning, and mysterious; all is harmonious; all appears as if adorned with holiday attire, and arranged for the festival of the Most High. We see into the profound coherence of nature as into a structure raised by art, and into the history of the world as into a drama. All reality appears like art; all that is ordinary is turned into wonder. The survey over the whole produces the sublimest poetical impression; but even in single parts the novelty of the allusions, the unsuspected harmony of things apparently remote from each other, the singularity of the contrasts, the beauty of the reflections, take us by surprise. An infinite fulness of enjoyment streams in upon us, and we imagine that we are plunging into a sea of poetry. But this is just the enjoyment that but few understand how to procure, because it can be adapted only to a very comprehensive intellectual

organ. Most men enjoy only in aphoristic portions, because they are unable to take in and contain much at a time. To them, therefore, the most magnificent structures of harmony are closed. They pass from one particular to another without ever surveying the whole. But, by this, the particulars also remain enigmatical to them. Hence they consider the single parts of a work, belonging to the philosophy of nature, as strange but unmeaning arabesques.

Novalis formed the transition from the severe architectonic to the free picturesque form. He brought his philosophy into the form of an historical novel; yet his strange poem is constructed upon wholly architectonic principles; his characters are less beings of free agency than mere personified ideas, and yet are grown into the whole edifice of ideas, as into stone. He entertained the amazing purpose of showing the whole universe from the poetical side; nay, from every possible poetical side at once; to knit every thing that exists — nature, mind, and history — into an infinite poetry; to build up all imaginable beauty at once into a great cathedral of poetry. He has therefore not only taken heaven and earth into his poem, but also the views, the faith, the *mythi* of all nations. He drew every thing to his great heart; he poured over every thing its light of love. As he united all by his love, he was himself the god of his infinitely rich creation. We have already intimated that Novalis translated the god of Fichte into poetry.

That godlike ME, which with Fichte was employed upon the severe labor of self-creation, hallows, with Novalis, the first Sabbath, and sits upon the throne of

his excellence, gathering around him all the enchantments of heaven and earth, which bow adoringly before him. What the manly will was with Fichte, that, with Novalis, was the love of man; both alike original, free, infinite, godlike.

But the too bold poet was overpowered by the abundance of his materials; and, like the Titan, when he would be a god, was overwhelmed by the mountains he had himself piled up. What there is of his works lies there, a huge Torso, broken in pieces before it was completed; an Egyptian temple, laid out with gigantic proportions, begun, and then half destroyed, and covered over with hieroglyphics.

His wondrous world-allegory, "Heinrich von Ofterdingen," and the fragments which, like the remains of a departed world, give proof of a still bolder and stranger creative power, are set off in a touching and surprising manner by the sweet simplicity of his few, and, for the most part, pious lyrical poems

Frederick Schlegel, whom Novalis enriched with ideas, but who took Goethe for his chief model as to style, assumed too many forms to be ranked with any one poetical class. He rendered great services to romanticism, particularly by giving it the political direction, wherein it helped to support the reaction against the influence of France. He did not content himself with patriotic poems, with the tenderest cherishing of old German recollections; but he also became Catholic, served the imperial cabinet against France, and endeavored, as a philosophic historian, to give Catholicism a new importance, for the purpose of using it as a weapon against the influence of France.

In the league of the hierarchy and ancient monarchy against the frivolous French democracy and military despotism, he was a connecting link of very great influence.

Notwithstanding this, he belongs less to romanticism than to that extravagant school, which we shall more closely discuss hereafter, in the chapter on the confusion of all tastes. He also devoted himself to the antique, by imitating as a poet, and criticizing as a literary historian. He was the first in Germany to engage in the study of Indian literature, and thus to open to our view a new, and rich, and wondrous world of contemplation. Finally, he even adhered to the most utterly frivolous modern spirit, though this was a point blank contradiction to his hierarchical tendency. Even at Paris, the most abandoned women of the *sans-culottes* grown rich could not be more impudent in their Greek costume than the Lucinde of the pious Schlegel. But voluptuousness is here palliated by the same enthusiasm of art as in the works of Heinse; and Schlegel, whose mystical tendency is not to be mistaken here too, and who had been accustomed to paradoxes by his intercourse with Novalis, thought he might unite the lowest sensual enjoyments and the sublimest feelings, and proclaimed "A Religion of Voluptuousness."

This shameless book, and the fact of his becoming a proselyte, and of his coming out, not only as a patriot against the influence of France, but also against all the free movements even of Germany, and not only against political, but also against religious freedom, against the reformation, and so forth, and his attempt to exhibit, as a philosophic historian, from this party

point of view, and with a hireling pen, a picture of former times very wide of the truth, — all this has made him unpopular, and has not been pardoned to his brilliant talents and his earlier patriotic services.

Oehlenschläger, who, at least, belongs half to us, has, like Tieck, treated the ancient sagas, but those of the north, which are tragic almost throughout. He wished to adapt them to the stage, and wrote them in iambics; but our modern stage is much too small and contracted for the gigantic forms of the northern saga. His working up of the "Island Felsenburg" is far more attractive; it is a novel full of rich and warm life. But he did not confine himself to northern and German character. He also wrought over Oriental tales of very great beauty, after the free and lively manner of Tieck. His celebrated drama "Coreggio" became the fruitful parent of the "painter dramas," which appeared in great numbers, along with the "painter novels," after Heinse, in his "Ardinghello," and Tieck, in "Sternbald's Travels," had made the romantic life of the artist the subject of fiction.

Romanticism was inspired at the sight of the architecture and the painting of the middle ages, no less than with the songs of love and heroism, and the legends and sagas. Hence the old painters only received a tribute of thanks, by being brought into novels and plays. Then Albert Dürer, Van Dyk, and others, and even Ostade, strode across the stage. Hagen wrote a multitude of Nürnberg artistic tales, and Kind dramatized the private life of Van Dyk. The old poets had their part too; Furchau wrote

a biography of Hans Sachs, of great historical interest likewise, with reference principally to the *Meistersingers* of that age, and Deinhardstein brought Hans Sachs upon the boards. These are only the more important phenomena. Besides this, there are painter dramas, painter novels, painter stories by the dozen.

Goethe delineated the poet in "Clavigo" and "Tasso," and the player in "Wilhelm Meister." Afterwards Hoffmann added the musician also. The painters, however, remained the prevailing party. The cause of this frequent occurrence of tales of artists consists principally in the desire of the poets, since the example set by Goethe, to contemplate and lovingly gaze upon their own image reflected by a mirror, and to make themselves the heroes of their own works. But instead of a poet, they preferred to draw a painter, whose occupation gave opportunity for journeys and adventures, and who, in spite of all his dissipations, ever remained near the church, and who, therefore, answered as the most convenient hat-stand, to hang all the small sentimentalities, vanities, finicalities, and enthusiasms upon, of which the poets themselves were full.

None of all these Coryphæuses of romanticism — Tieck himself not being excepted — became popular, and penetrated to the mass of the nation. None but the chivalrous Baron de la Motte Fouqué, a Protestant, a Berlin-man, an officer sprung from a celebrated French family that fled from their country at the time of the religious persecutions, succeeded with his brilliant pictures of the middle ages, and became, for a time, the favorite of the public, because he

flattered, by his representations, the warlike spirit of the times, patriotic indignation, and, not less, military vanity.

The ground plan of most of Fouqué's poetical works is, to be sure, the golden ground of the middle ages; and faith, love, and honor, are the leading tints of all his pictures. But he passes out from the inner spirit, more to the external appearance, the costume of the middle ages. A correct and profound appreciation of characters passes with him for much less than an exact and circumstantial delineation of manners and dress. This predilection easily degenerates into childishness. It entices him into transferring the antiquated even to modern times. He is pleased to look upon himself as the offspring of the ancient knightly barons, and affects the old chivalrous air when he is merely speaking of himself. Thus, also, all his representations of modern noble families and officers have an antiquarian tincture, and therefore something of the Quixotic. On the other hand, also, he transfers much that is modern to his representations of the middle ages. As his officers must be knights, so his knights have something of the nature of modern officers about them, something of the barrack style, and coxcombical passion for finery, self-complacency, study of effect with arms, horses, and dogs. He is himself too much taken with this finical pedantry to comprehend its incongruity with the old knightly character. In the same way he fails to hit the tone of ancient gallantry, and the whole ancient style of speech in general. Though his heroes often act in perfect consistency with the character of the middle

ages, yet they do not talk so. Their sickening and mincing language has not the least in common with the simple, natural, warm, and vigorous tone of the old knights; and the quaint old catchwords, turns, and phrases which Fouqué is fond of using, are only a shadow, with no real substance, and contain as little of the spirit of the middle ages, as Voss's affectations of the antique style contain of the spirit of the antique.

But this mannerism is only the excrescence of a poetical power, very noble originally, to which we are indebted for excellent works. Fouqué's "Undine" will always continue one of the most delightful creations of German poetry. Also the little story of the "Mandrake" belongs to the best elaborations of the old national sagas. In his larger novels, dramatic and epic works, we shall every where find masterly delineations, although the tone of mannerism which marks the whole vexes the simple reader, and although the composition is often extremely unnatural. In the "Magic Ring" he has thought it necessary to adopt the mixture of all tastes expressly; and the various amours of the knight Hug Trautwangen, in all countries and among all nations, give him an opportunity of presenting a series of costumes as in a picture-book. A good will, nay, the best will in the world, is nowhere to be mistaken. He belongs to the class of men, not very rare among the Germans, whose warm affections can grasp nothing without enthusiasm, and who are perfectly serious, even when they appear to be affected.

Tales of wonder and popular legends gained a pretty wide circulation. They passed into the litera-

ture for children. They appeared on the stage, sometimes under a serious, and sometimes under a comic form. Mahlmann, Apel, and Laun, wrote tales of wonder for the greater reading world, which acquired an importance from the fact that Kind's "Freischütz," set to music by Karl Maria von Weber, derived its origin from them. The Vienna poets of the Leopoldstadt theatre printed their farces which were founded on the tales. Bäuerle wrote a great many with the regular local humor. Raymund rose to a higher sphere of romanticism; and his musical dramas, "The King of the Alps," "The Peasant turned Millionaire," "The Spendthrift," are so delightful, such genuine poetry, that I consider them among the most excellent that our stage possesses of the lively kind. Add to this the hearty and joyous music of Menzel Müller. The seriously attuned spirit can find no more beneficial diversion than surrendering itself to this laughing fairy, under whose transporting merriment a profound knowledge of man and the noblest feelings of the heart are recognized. What nation has a poet like Raymund?

Auerbacher, of Münich, has distinguished himself by his "History of the Seven Swabians," by a short but very spirited recasting of the old legend of "The Wandering Jew," and by several tales and drolleries, in his "Little Book for the People," in a manner worthy of observation. If Hebel, as a poet, is superior to him in verse, yet Auerbacher's popular and idiomatic prose is not inferior to his "Jewel-Box;" nay, the language of "The Seven Swabians" cannot be surpassed.

A great deal was done for the legendary poetry, particularly by collections of the older, and translations of foreign legends. Thus the indefatigable, and learned, and patriotic Grimm, a scholar never to be sufficiently praised, collected the German domestic stories, Irish elf stories, and Swedish ballads; Büsching, too, collected a multitude of German sagas, Schneider the Rhenish, Massmann the Bavarian, Schuster those of the Hartz Mountains, Bechstein those of Thuringia, Minsberg those of Upper Silesia, Ziska the Bohemian, Mednyanzsky the Hungarian, Talvj and Gerhard the Servian, and Wenzig the Sclavonian. Lately, the popular songs of the Poles, and Russian tales, have been published anonymously. Diez wrote a great work upon the Troubadours, and Habicht published the thousand and one tales of the "Arabian Nights."

Since the restoration, romanticism has again lost the favor of the public. Fouqué is heard of no more. New romanticists have appeared only with fear and trembling, to try their hand at a national legend here and there; but, out of respect for the spirit of the age, no one has ventured into the proper sanctuary of romanticism, into its Catholic essence. Romanticism is divided between patriotism, the love of the marvellous, passion for what is foreign, and the confusion of tastes, and the historical novels — species which we will directly consider more closely.

We will here take up only a few poets, who have devoted themselves eminently to the legendary poetry.

Gustav Schwab, along with Uhland, whom I prefer to class among the patriotic and political poets, has

cultivated the ballads in their original simplicity, as the "Boy's Wonderhorn" teaches us to recognize them for the genuine old German popular songs, in a manner that Bürger, Stolberg, and even Schiller himself, who mingled too much of their own personal feelings, did not attain; and which only Goethe had first attempted in his imitations of the old popular songs; although I agree by no means to the opinion of Kannegiesser, that Goethe, under all circumstances, has improved the popular songs; for, on the contrary, he has often given to them a touch of sentimentality or frivolity, which is highly modern and over-refined, and which the people, from whose feelings these songs had their origin, had never thought of.

Egon Ebert has worked chiefly upon the legends of his native Bohemia. His most celebrated poem, "Wlasta," the legend of the "Bohemian Maiden's War," clothed in the Niebelungen measure, shows, in a remarkable manner, how little modern sentimentality is suited to those wild old times. The very able poet allowed himself to be misled, by an excess of tender feeling, into making a whining novel heroine out of the terrible Amazon of the Bohemian forests. The hard virgin heart of the middle ages must needs be melted down by modern tears. But how in the world does it appear that this Bohemian Brunhild, the Titaness of romanticism, ought to grow sentimental, because her poet happens to be sentimental? Far from comprehending the wild native power, the ferocious chastity, the heroic arrogance of a true Amazon, a genuine Diana, he makes the good

Wlasta feel tenderly in all her battles and slaughters, nay, love as sentimentally as a Sappho. It is not her inborn wild-nymph nature — no, it is a slighted love — that is the motive of her war against men. The poor damsel wants to avenge herself upon the whole sex, because one of them has despised her. But she does not surrender herself wholly to the insane passion for revenge; no, she always has a new emotion, and the sensibility of her soul betrays itself on every occasion. Thus, out of one of the most attractive, piquant, and rarest characters, the poet makes a perfectly nonsensical mixture of ancient barbarism and modern novel virtue. Thus, with the best design, he perverts a theme, such as romantic poetry has no second to show. A wild and beautiful Diana, bubbling over with power and petulance, cold by nature, more strange to love than hostile to men, unfeelingly cruel, heroic, rash, adventurous, who is made up of nothing but womanish caprices, after the most grotesque style, — such a Wlasta was to be delineated, and such a one none has yet delineated. If the poet wanted to bring love in, his proper course would have been to ascribe it to the men who aimed at subduing that enchanting maid.

But, as the poet was determined to improve his heroine, after the modern meaning of the word, at every cost, he considered it necessary to palm off the greatest part of the cruelties, for which she is notorious in the legend, upon her companions and an old, ugly witch of a she-dwarf. This reminds us too disagreeably of the "Freischütz," and Hauff's "Lichtenstein." The good Kind laid all the guilt upon poor Kaspar,

for the purpose to bring out his dear Max from the scrape with only a black-and-blue eye. The good Hauff palmed off upon the poor humpbacked chancellor all the vices of the Archduke Ulrich, that he might award him all the virtues of his successors. But neither history nor legend ought to be thus marred. It is not only untrue, but unpoetical. We have, at all events, not many original characters: why rend and mangle these few?

The error which I am censuring here is common to very many poets of later times; and the fact that it is not considered as an error at all, but as a virtue, shows how far our general taste has become sickly. Nearly all the heroes and heroines of our novels, tragedies, and epic poems, are at once too full of moralizing, and too soft-hearted. Modern humanity is attributed to even the wildest characters from the ancient world of the wondrous tales, or from the ages of sword-law; worn-out moralizing expressions are put into their mouths, and cowardly emotions into their souls. Nay, we have seen that Müllner could venture to prink out the most infamous and dastardly criminals with the cant of virtue and feeling, and that he received great applause. By this means, then, all poetical heroes are supplied with a uniform, which distinguishes them from the heroes of ancient poetry, and makes them not a little ridiculous. For the very reason that virtue is the highest and rarest thing, it becomes ridiculous when it is made vulgar, and laid on finger-thick, like a mere paint. This paint, however, disfigures the real physiognomy of the heroes. The true nature of a passion, of a rough, wild, and

wicked character, must necessarily be falsified, if the poet attempts constantly to soften it down, by blending with it generosity or sentimentality, or by inventing motives which apparently justify the criminality. Why, then, do they not remain true to nature? Why dare they not to be cruel? Why do they not take up the characters as they were in reality, and in those ancient tales which, with all their grotesqueness, preserve the traits of nature so faithfully, whose lapidary style is the original language of man? Look around you over history; look around you in the old poets. What an affluence of terribly beautiful characters, whose fearful look nothing softens, except their beauty — a beauty that consists in nothing but this genuine terribleness, which nothing softens! How true is the evil! how natural the crime! What need is there of silly outward motives, to harden a heart, to lift up an arm for outrage? The natural character of man is more powerful and original than all outward incitements. The character is born, and creates its own destiny. Bad characters also are born. How pedantic, feeble, and untrue, is the assumption of our modern poets, that man is good by nature, and not only good, but sentimental too! The worst of it is, that these poets lie; that they know better, and only want from a conventional hypocrisy, to make a display of their own greatness of soul when they ennoble their heroes.

The poem must be moral, not the hero; the reader must be moved, not the hero. The whole rule is expressed by these two propositions. The old poets followed, the modern poets have reversed them. The old poets have delineated daring, cruel, monstrous charac-

ters, as the caprice or wanton power of nature produced them from time to time, and yet their poems are not therefore immoral. The modern poets represent scarcely any thing but virtuous heroes, and do not allow even the villain to sink utterly; and, precisely on account of their insipid ostentation of virtue, and their palliation of vice, their poems are very often immoral. The old poets wrote coldly and severely, never put soft phrases into the mouths of their heroes, never made them discourse pathetically in long monologues; and yet they move us. The modern poets write warmly and softly, represent their heroes constantly excited and moved, make them constantly paint out all their feelings to us; and yet we, the readers, are commonly the less moved, the more the hero and the poet are moved themselves.

Duller, also a very able romanticist, has fallen into an extreme of another kind, into what Jean Paul called *Nihilism*, the empty fantasticality, the romantico-humoresque play of allegory, wherein all reality disappears; and yet, from the chaos of the metamorphosis, no new poetical reality has been formed. Night, and in it the tempest, in it the chasing clouds, in it a black, folded mantle, and dark and mysterious figures; finally, a mad and restless hobgoblin, springing forth; figures that hardly begin to interest us, when they tell us not to put any trust in them — they are nothing real, only allegories, and the fever fits of a poet's dream, from which they sprung, will chase them away again; they lament very much that they can abide with us no longer, but it cannot be otherwise; the wind changes backward and forward, and they must onward.

They leave nothing behind but a desolate feeling. They have excited without satisfying us, and without our knowing exactly what they wanted. To be sure, we discover, by their exaggerated outlines, that the greater number of them mean to inspire us with terror, and the others to force from us a spasmodic laughter; but it is exactly this excess of exaggeration which fails of effect. Would that our poets might please to try the homœopathic method, and see that, with a very little seriousness, we are much more terrified than by the maddest jugglery of the devil! Would they might read that too early forgotten book of the able Edmund Burke, "On the Sublime," only once during their lives, for the purpose of convincing themselves, in the clearest manner, that the knit brow of the Olympian Jupiter is more terrible than the wolves' cave of the "Freischütz," and that the sublimest and most terrible, like the most enchanting and most beautiful, are nearer akin to the calm than the storm. Duller seems to have become satisfied of this truth; for he has more recently applied himself to the historical novel; and we see how the fantastical chase after images is vanishing from his mind, to unveil before us the scenery of fair, and cheerful, and real landscapes.

Julius Mosen, in Venlot, has devoted himself to this play of allegories, and has also more recently turned to the historical tragedy. He is every where spirited to the highest degree, and shows a rare depth and beauty of feeling. His best poem is the "Legend of the Knight Wahn," treated after the epic style, which I unhesitatingly number among the noblest works of our poetical literature.

Möricke, who had already shown a rich fancy in his "Painter Nolten," has manifested, very recently, a talent for the tales of wonder, to which we shall, perhaps, be further indebted for much that is beautiful.

In romantic landscape painting, Wilhelm Müller and Karl Mayer particularly distinguished themselves. The former wrote very pleasant millers' songs, and hunting and travelling songs, the background of which is every where green and fresh nature. The latter chose an almost epigrammatic form, to give the richest picture the shortest expression, and to paint a whole landscape, not unfrequently within the compass of four, or even two lines. They are pearly drops of dew, which, within their little space, show us earth and heaven. The Swiss poet Tanner, and Hess, of the Black Forest, are less productive; but the few songs they have written contain very delicate landscape pictures.

## PATRIOTIC AND POLITICAL POETRY.

Along with that poetry which was confined to the illusion of the middle ages, another species was cultivated, which laid hold directly of the politics of the day. It was, in part, closely connected with the romantic poetry, and developed only its patriotic element exclusively; in part, it was most decidedly opposed to that Catholic tendency, and was much more subservient to the modern liberalism, and to the spirit of freedom which sprang from the French revolution, although almost always pledged against the French interest. Very frequently, both romanticism and liberalism are found united in the same poet.

All this was very natural, and is explained by the extraordinary revolutions of the age. A multitude of romanticists, — old Germans, — who, under the name of freedom, had understood the external liberation of Germany from the yoke of France, afterwards came to comprehend, under the same term, the domestic freedom of the nation, and took sides with the constitutional opposition. But the more this was repressed, the more every thing coöperated to make Germanism ridiculous; the more easily, also, the old friends of the French revolutionary ideas, and the new friends of French liberalism, made their own sympathies more widely felt; and so were formed two ranks

of political poets, the patriots of 1813, and the scoffers of the subsequent period of the restoration.

The patriots, again, were divided into those who set out from old German reminiscences, from national feeling, from the point of view established in romanticism, and those who started from general ideals of freedom, and the dignity of man, or from Schiller's point of view. But we propose to divide them according to dates.

The poets of 1813 will live in ever-dear remembrance among us. Theodore Körner attuned the solemn war-song, first and loudest, inasmuch as he himself, inflamed with holy enthusiasm, rushed to meet the balls of the enemy, and died a glorious death in the cause of his country. In this youthful poet the nation saw a model for their young men, and a rich promise for the future. Then he was pronounced happy, that he had not lived to grow older, and that hope died with him in all the loveliness of youth, before it became pale and wrinkled. Besides his noble war-songs, he wrote tragedies, also, which gave proof no less of patriotic ardor and of the purest nobleness of soul, but adhered quite too slavishly, perhaps, in form, to Schiller's manner. His little comedies can scarcely be mentioned here, being of secondary importance.

The noble Collin had helped, before his time, at the same place, at Vienna, and after the same manner, to encourage patriotic feelings against the domination of Napoleon, by political tragedies. But his materials, whether from inclination or design, were borrowed from the antique world.

The Prussians did not remain behind the Austrian

patriots. The League of Virtue worked silently; and when the hour struck, and they rushed upon the foe with a delight such as the Berserkers of the North only knew, to avenge the longest and deepest disgrace with terrible and crushing blows, — then the Jubilee of Vengeance also found its poets. The trumpets pealed with loud laughter, as if summoning to the dance. All the songs breathed delight and clamorous joy.

Arndt, who exercised an influence by his pamphlets also, was then the most popular poet; for he understood best how to strike the popular tone, and not only to excite great and noble sentiments in the educated man, but to carry away the common man, too, by the simple force of his language. Hundreds of thousands then sang —

"Why are the trumpets blowing? Ye hussars, away!
'Tis the field-marshal rideth, with flying fray;
He rideth so joyous his mettlesome steed,
He swingeth so keenly his bright-flashing blade!

"His oath he hath redeemed; when the battle-cry rang,
Ha! the gray youth! how to saddle he sprang!
It was he who led off the last dance of the ball;
With besom of iron, he swept clean the hall!

"At Lützen, on the mead; there he struck such a blow,
That on end with affright stood the hair of the foe;
That thousands ran off with hurrying tread; —
Ten thousand slept soundly the sleep of the dead!

"At Katzbach, on the water; he there played his part;
He taught you, O Frenchmen, the swimmer's good art!
Farewell to you, Frenchmen! away to the wave,
And take, ye *sans culottes*, the whale for your grave!

"At Wartburg, on the Elbe; how before him all yielded!
Nor fortress nor castle the Frenchmen shielded;
Again they must spring like hares o'er the field,
And the hero's hurra after them pealed.

"At Leipsic, on the mead; O, honor's glorious fight!
There he shivered to atoms French fortune and might;
There lie they so safely, since so heavy they fell,
And there the old Blücher played the field-marshal well."

Wilder still were the battle-songs which Follen sang:—

"By the Katzbach,[1] by the Katzbach, ha! there was a merry dance;
Wild and woful whirling waltzes skipped ye through, ye knaves of France!

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[1] [The above poem refers to the battle of the Katzbach, which was fought on the twenty-sixth of August, 1813. The Russians and Prussians, under the command of the veteran Field-Marshal Blücher, defeated the French under Macdonald, Ney, Lauriston, and Sebastiani, and drove them pell-mell into the Katzbach. Skirmishes had previously taken place at Goldberg and Jauer. The day of the battle was rainy, and the soldiers had to fight in part with the butt-ends of their muskets. The poet represents the scene as a ball, under the management of old Blücher, who, it is well known, had received the name of Marshal Forward, from his extraordinary vigor and promptitude.

Ludwig Follen, the author of this poem, is a brother of Dr. Charles Follen, who recently perished in the burning of the steamboat Lexington,—himself a poet of no little fame among the patriotic bards of Germany. The death of this amiable man and profound scholar is a heavy loss to letters, humanity, and religion. The calm beauty of his balanced character, the gentleness of his temper, the purity of his heart, his integrity, and his high sense of honor, secured the respect and admiration even of those who were most opposed to him on

For there struck the great bass viol an old German master famed —
Marshal Forward, Prince of Wallstadt, Gebhardt Lebrecht Blücher named.
Up! the Blücher hath the ball-room with the cannon's lightning lit!
Spread yourselves, ye gay, green carpets, that the dancing steeps in wet!
And at first his fiddle-bow he waxed with Goldberg and with Jauer;
Whew! he's drawn it now full length, his play a stormy northern shower!
Ha! the dance went briskly onward; tingling madness seized them all,
As when howling, mighty tempests on the wheels of windmills fall.
But the old man wants it cheery; wants a pleasant dancing chime;
And with butts, distinctly, loudly, beats the old Teutonic time.
Say, who, standing by the old man, strikes so hard the kettle-drum,
And, with crushing strength of arm, down lets the thundering hammer come!
Gneisenau, the gallant champion: Allemannia's envious foes
Smites the mighty pair, her living double-eagle shivering blows.

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many of the exciting topics of the day. The multiplied and accordant testimonies to his intellectual powers and moral worth, which broke forth immediately after his death was known, in private conversation, from the press and from the pulpit, and from persons of the most divergent opinions upon the political, literary, and theological questions which are agitating society, — are the highest honor to the memory of the departed, and present a cheering view of the bright side of human nature. The excellent writings of Dr. Follen, it is understood, are to be collected and published, together with a memoir of his studious, but eventful life. — TRANSL.]

And the old man scrapes the sweep-out![1] hapless Franks and hapless trulls,
Now what dancers leads the gray-beard? Ha! ha! ha! 'tis dead men's skulls!
But, as ye too much were heated in the sultriness of hell,
Till ye sweated blood and brains, he made the Katzbach cool ye well.
From the Katzbach, while ye stiffen, hear the ancient proverb say,
'Wanton boobies, venal blockheads, must with butts be beat away!'"

From these songs, we can even now estimate perfectly well the wild delights, the *furor Teutonicus*, of those days of battle and victory. To the most beautiful songs of that age belong those of the noble Max von Schenkendorf, who survived the period of disenchantment, and thereupon died. Hence his swan-song —

"There's gnawing at my heart
A secret, subtle bane;
Too soon from us will part
Freedom of speech and pen!

"The spirit called upon
To save us in our need,
Forgotten now and gone,
Where stays he? Is he dead?"

One of the most vigorous poets of that time, also, was Frederick Rückert, who sang, under the name of

[1] [The *Kehraus*, or *Sweep-out*, was formerly the concluding dance at balls and parties in Germany. All the company, headed by the musicians, danced through every room in the house, up and down every staircase, and into every corner. This *Kehraus*, or *Sweep-out*, closed the festivities of the night.— TRANSL.]

Freymund Reinmar, sonnets in armor, and bold songs of battle and liberty: —

"Thrice a day and a night
They have holden at Leipsic the fair;
With yardstick of iron they've measured you there,
And brought out your reckoning aright.

"Thrice a night and a day
They've hunted at Leipsic the lark;
A hundred they've caught at a jerk; —
A thousand at once borne away."

He not only sings the songs of triumph, but expressed the deepest sorrow for the disgrace that preceded the victory. His laments are more sublime still than his triumphal songs: —

"What forgest, smith? 'We're forging chains; ay, chains.'
Alas! to chains yourselves degraded are!
Why ploughest, farmer? 'Fields their fruit must bear.'
Yes; seed for foes — the bur for thee remains!

"What aim'st at, sportsman? 'Yonder stag, so fat.'
To hunt you down, like stag and roe, they'll try.
What snarest, fisher? 'Yonder fish, so shy.'
Who's there to save you from your fatal net?

"What art thou rocking, sleepless mother? 'Boys.'
Yes; let them grow, and wound their country's fame,
Slaves to her foes, with parricidal arm!
What art thou writing, poet? 'Words of flame
I mark my own, record my country's harm,
Whom thought of freedom never more employs.'

"I blame them not, who with the foreign steel
Tear out my vitals, pierce my inmost heart,
For they are foes created for our smart;
And when they slay us, why they do it, feel.

"But, in these paths, ye seek what recompense?
For you what brilliant toys of fame are here,
Ye mongrel foes who lift the sword and spear
Against your country, not for her defence?

"Ye Franks, Bavarians, and ye Swabians, say,
Ye aliens, sold to bear the slavish name,—
What wages for your servitude they pay.
Your eagle may perchance redeem your fame;
More sure his robber train, ye birds of prey,
To coming ages shall prolong your shame!"

Rückert has since suspended the sword upon the wall, and gone forth to enjoy the peace that has been gained, into the garden among the flowers; and from every bud a new song came to him, and the flowers and songs infinitely increased, and the poet went on dreaming ever in the flowery path, and came to a wondrous land, with a strange vegetation overgrowing all beside, and again to another; and Persia, India, and China, scattered over him their thousand-colored rain of flowers, and every flower again is turned into a song, and his pen, like that of Simurg, grows never weary of writing what is delightful to us.

Are we to consider the poet the more fortunate, who, like Goethe, writes nothing without reflection and cool circumspection, or the other, who, like Frederick Rückert, willingly surrenders himself to his emotions? Nature wanted both, and therefore she has allowed both. Without that calm consciousness of what one is doing,—without the sharpest and most critical handling of the chisel,—those works which are called classical, and of which but very few have been produced through all ages, would

be impossible; but, without this childlike yielding to the first outbreak of the feelings, that romantic *naïveté* also would be impossible, which spontaneously unveils to us the profoundest and most beautiful mysteries of the human soul. Nearly all poets belong to one or the other of the classes here pointed out; and Shakspeare alone, of whom it may be said that he unites marvellously the eminent qualities of the two, stands, on this account, above them both.

Rückert keeps no guard over himself, yields himself to the current of his sentiments, thoughts, and images, and lets his flowers blossom without selection, in delightful irregularity. Nothing but paths and the shears seem to be wanting to his rich and incense breathing garden; the blossoming vegetation has wildly overgrown every thing else. But is not this the true human heart? Can the tropical sun in the poet's breast feebly light a well-defined French garden? Must it not rather awaken flower after flower from the dark and dreamy sleep upon the ancient tree, with pleasing wildness, as in a primeval forest of Brazil? This style of poetry, coeval with nature, first awakened and cherished in India and Persia, then during the age of the Swabian *Minnesingers*, in the intellectual spring-time of the nations, if it has not given out entirely the peculiar fragrance of wild nature, has yet put forth, very recently, more magnificent blossoms by the aid of art. In abundance of images and thoughts, Frederick Rückert surpasses all the moderns; nay, his flowery spirit converts the language itself into a prodigious forest of flowers, by rhyme, assonances, and alliteration. No one has

had this power over language to such a degree. He sports with the greatest difficulties, and frequently commits the error of looking them up where they are uncalled for, merely to enjoy the satisfaction of conquering them.

King Louis, also, of Bavaria, sympathized, when crown prince, with the deep sorrow of his country, and poured out the feelings of his heart in songs, which could not, however, be publicly printed until he had ascended the throne: —

"Its highest point the tyrant's power attained,
And, like Laocoön in the serpent's coils,
Europe lay strangling, held within his toils; —
O'er all the world the sword resistless reigned;
Destruction threatened whosoe'er complained;
The nations all were struggling with despair,
When suddenly new life has risen there,
And nobler men the tyrant's fury dare.
Who early sowed the seed within the heart
Of valiant deeds by fame and victory crowned, —
To them may endless gratitude redound;
Who in the Germans roused the German part,
Who cherished goodness with each faithful art, —
Shall ever shine with glory circled round.'

The following strophe of his is no less beautiful and true: —

"Solemn silence over Aspern falls
Calm, like the still quiet of the grave;
Sculptured marble never there recalls
Deeds of glory done by patriots brave.
Well the Germans how to conquer know,
But, to their own weakness yielding low

Slumber in their ancient sleep again,
Waking only to repose once more;
Lethe's cup a second time to drain,
And in dreams to lose the honor won before."

Then the classical epigram —

"Ill-omened image of Germany's empire, two-headed eagle!
Where two heads may be seen, ah! there is wanting a head!"

The royal poet has, besides, chanted many lays of love and friendship, many songs, wherein his enthusiasm for the arts and for Italy, or his pious feelings, are expressed.

The Baron von Wessenberg, although a poet whose prevailing character is didactic and religious, yet takes an honorable place among the patriotic minstrels; for a warm love of country gleams out through all his works; every where we see an effort to strengthen the native virtues of the nation, and to warn them against foreign vices and seductions. He is a priest, but a genuine German too. When I think of all the sentimental poison-weeds, which turn to moisture if they are barely touched, — upon the soft, unmanly, hypocritical song-writers, who adulterate Christianity, and pander to every infirmity of heart, to false culture, to all the polite debaucheries of the age, to the mawkishness of the Goethean school, and even to political considerations, — I cannot honor Wessenberg enough, who stands forth a man among so many women and womanish slaves. One of his finest poems is the indignant piece on seeing the Dying

Gladiator, the celebrated statue on the Roman capitol: —

"Who art thou, champion, that so seemly diest?
That, with the posture and the play of limbs,
To gain base gold of feeble Romans triest,
And with thy blood, thy life itself out-streams?
How drunk with pleasure every eye doth shine,
To see thy head so gracefully decline!

"O shame of slavery, and to man disdain!
Barbarians, up! and haste with wings of storm,
Nor unavenged your forest son be slain,
The pastime of the seven-hilled mob to form!
See, now he pales! and hear the shouts from all
The seats around for vengeance fiercely call!"

Thus must every German feel at the sight of this statue.

Among the patriotic poets, Friedrich Augustus von Stägemann is conspicuous; his antique measures, however, were less adapted to gain for him a great popularity. This poet, moreover, looked upon the German war of liberty against Napoleon, throughout, only as a Prussian and an aristocrat, and, for this reason, pointed the cannon of his fiery enthusiasm instantly against every popular convulsion which expressed any discontent with the established order of things. And, finally, he has even chanted against the cause of the unhappy Poles, which looks only like the cruel arrogance of prosperity towards the proud risings of adversity, and is an unhandsome thing.

What strange contrasts there are in sentiments! While Stägemann sings the song of triumph, Cha-

misso, of whom we shall hereafter have more to say, sings the song of delirious sorrow, the invalid in the madhouse: —

"Leipsic, Leipsic, cursed soil!
Wrong by shame thou didst repel;
Freedom sounded! forwards! forwards!
Drank'st my red blood; wherefore, tell.

"Freedom! cried I; forwards! forwards!
Fools believe whate'er is said;
And, by heavy sabre-cuts,
Cleft asunder was my head.

"Waking up to cruel pains,
More and more inflames the wound;
Safely here I lie in chains —
Watchers grim are standing round."

Among the poets who form the transition from the enthusiastic to the disenchanted times, Ludwig Uhland stands certainly at the head; for in him we find the beautiful warmth and varied fancy of the earlier romantic times, and the wise and practical tendency of the modern — in short, both ages, with all their good qualities united. Hence, also, his twofold life, as a poet and a member of the legislature, is full of meaning, and by no means barely accidental. The changes of the times are reflected here. The noble enthusiasm of the poet does not exclude the sagacious conduct of the statesman; loving absorption in the recollections of the old romantic past does not shut out sympathy for the youthful and vigorous growth of the present. As there are various and often extraordinary tokens of the morbid condition

which belongs to the development of our age, so there are tokens also of the healthy nature, which, in the very midst of disease, remind us of the existence of an unconquerable and indestructible power; and such a token seems to me to be given in Uhland's simple style of action and poetry.

He has surrendered himself to no chimerical hopes, and therefore he never laments with wayward despair. Quiet, manly, assured, he goes on his course, well knowing that sunshine will again follow the rainy days, and the soft blue of heaven will reappear after the storm.

"Once more would I breathe the air
Of the golden fairy realms;
But a soul of song severe
Now the harp-strings overwhelms.

"Freedom is my fairy called,
And my champion's name is Right;
Up, then, champion! unappalled,
With the savage dragons fight.

"Shall my song forever yield
But a harsh and serious strain?
And enjoyment's gladsome field
Barren evermore remain?

"When the forests once are cleared,
And the sloughs are drained away,
Then the pious eye is cheered
By the unobstructed ray."

This resignation of manliness, which works and creates, without calculating upon recompense, for coming ages, and, if not for them, for everlasting justice on its

own account, — this is something which certainly inspires respect, and which, by its unpretending modesty, is a standing reproach to all those arrogant persons who would fain turn only the questions of their own vanity, or their own advantage, into the great questions of the age.

"Ye sages, must ye now be told, —
Ye wise ones, who would all things know, —
How, from the simple hearts and bold,
For honest rights the blood did flow?

"Think you the Phœnix Time did snatch
New youth amidst the fiery glow,
That she the eggs might merely hatch,
Which you, so busy, set below?"

No censure, no disgrace, no odious insinuation, ought to make man's simple fidelity to duty waver.

"If the over-wise ones scorn,
Who in their own orbits turn,
Only hold the more secure
Right, of old approved, and pure.

"If they scorn, — the heartless, cold,
Who for folly ardor hold, —
Warmer, truer ardor feel
From the fire of noble zeal.

"Scoff they, who ne'er understood
Honest motives unto good, —
Show them, in a fairer light,
Simple sense of truth and right."

Even where he is not treating of such serious matters, Uhland maintains the noble simplicity implanted

in him by nature. His poems are pervaded by it. Simple naturalness and truth, the absence of all affectation, are the characteristics which strikingly distinguish him and his style.

Our lyric poetry, since the disappearance of the *Minnesingers*, had fallen into an odious affectation, from which even our best poets have not entirely freed themselves. Down to the middle of the last century, they put on the French pretension of a passion for rural life, after the style of Horace and Anacreon; then came successively the affectation of the Pindaric strain, by Klopstock, Voss, and Matthisson, and of the classic elegy; then the affectation of honest and downright Germanism, by Gleim, Claudius, and Bürger; then came the didactic, cosmopolitan, and patriotic bombast, of the Schiller after-growth; afterwards, the twofold affectation of northern bloodthirstiness, and of old Catholic enthusiasm among the followers of Tieck and Schlegel's school, particularly with Fouqué; and, last of all, the very recent affectation of the irony, from whose frivolous touch nothing is spared, which, starting originally from Goethe's didactic poems and *Tame Xenia*, has reached with Heine its poetic culminating point, and is going down again among his imitators, particularly Immermann. Deny it who can, that affectation prevails here universally? This is not found with Uhland. He has carried lyric poetry back to that natural tone, which distinguishes our genuine old German popular song so advantageously from the artificial lyric poetry of the moderns. It is true that Goethe preceded him with his imitations of the old popular song and the old ballad, and

Tieck, the two Schlegels, Novalis, Arnim, and even Schiller, with some of his ballads; but this simplicity and naturalness are so wholly and exclusively predominant with no modern poet as with Uhland.

But, as ill luck would have it, this natural style has been again left to the imitators, and hitched into the unnatural and affected productions. In the journals and poetical collections of the present day, we read ballad upon ballad, which run into a childish lisp, when they would fain reach by art the simplicity of Uhland. Necessary words are left out, that the language may acquire a quaint brevity and abruptness; the arrangement of words common at the present day is reversed; old-fashioned expressions are smuggled in without the least necessity; a beginning is made with a wholly unusual construction; and the frequent repetition, common among children and the common people, of "and," and "there," is used to satiety.

Uhland is honored especially as a lyric poet. But his dramatic works, "Ernest of Swabia" and "Louis of Bavaria," first give us a true image of his character; for, in these poems, friendship and fidelity between man and man are celebrated.

Along with Uhland, Anastasius Grün maintains the first rank among the lyric poets of the period of the restoration, whose sentiments harmonize. Austria never had a better singer. His poems are of a kind that never perish — gold, purified by the fire, thrown, it is true, by the veiled poet, in the silent night, carelessly, as it were, upon the waves, but only like the hoard of the *Nibelungen*, to salute the bright day again.

There are but few poets whose spirit, born in the deepest heart of the nation, lends words to its prophetic dreams, and sees clearly in the darkest night of time. These few words, however, continue sounding ever the music of the future, and, when the future is come, are just as sweet a strain from the past — a laurel ever green around the poet's brows.

The fundamental thought of these poems is —

"Giant Austria, how splendidly thou dost before me shine!
Bright the mural crown I see around thy temples proudly twine;
And the soft, luxuriant locks fall o'er thy shoulders unconfined,
Golden yellow, like thy harvests, waving gayly to the wind;
And with festal pomp attired, thy lovely form, in velvet sheen,
Like a silver girdle, clasps the Danube, and the grape-vine's garland green;
Flashing, burns the shield, from which the lark and eagle take their flight;
Proving unto all mankind thy league with day and with the light.
Let a cloud for evermore conceal our heaven bright and blue;
Such a land your laws will fit, but for ours will never do;
Bid your herald trumpet them abroad into the midnight air,
And your spies make haste to send like hounds into their lair;
But the land is still so blooming, rich in harvests, spring-like green,
And the people sound and gay, and strong and bold in youthful mien, —
Poison not their bread, I pray you, nor their verdant meadows soil,
Nor their bright skies darken over, nor their sparkling vintage spoil."

After he had celebrated the youthful emperor, Max, in his "Last Knight," he devoted his finest songs to the present, its lamentations and hopes, in his "Walks of a Poet of Vienna," and in "Rubbish." It is not, however, mourning, but hope, which predominates with him; and a joyous and courageous tone runs through these genuine songs of youth.

In the poems of Gustav Pfizer, there is expressed, notwithstanding their predominating tone of reflection, all the noble disquietude of a poetic heart, ill at ease with this prosaic age, sometimes mourning, sometimes indignant that no great action is performed, and that the world, notwithstanding, returns no more to the peace of old, the beautiful repose of earlier days; that the time for heroes is no more, and the time for poets, too, for the serenity of art, and the happiness of love, is no more. How different is this proud resignation from the pitiful, nay, disgraceful attempts of young rakes to seek the satisfaction they do not possess from the lowest vulgarity of sensual enjoyment, as the Russian slave consoles himself with the beastly drunkenness of brandy! They would fain reproach the moral, who take their stand against such abandoned conduct, with cold and unpoetical feelings. Very well. Here you have a youth, deeply susceptible to all the enjoyments of life, giving himself with cordial love to the beautiful enchantment of poetical delight, and yet resolved to lock up his fire within a breast of rock, rather than quench it in the mire of vulgar pleasures; — a very noble example. Youth is not made for patience; but self-conquest, forestalling the age of manhood, sits well upon the young; as, on the contrary, nothing becomes them

less than the anticipated enervation, effeminacy, and shamelessness, of fawnlike gray-beards, by which the antipodes of those nobler German youth, the new Gallomaniacs, hereafter to be described, have recently come into prominence.

Ortlepp has taken his stand as a political and occasional poet on a broad scale. He has let no new event of importance pass by without devoting to it an ode, universally expressing, by its full and harmonious tones, enthusiasm and the warmest patriotism.

The attempts of Henne and Klemm were peculiarly directed to a return to the glorification of ancient Germanism, as Klopstock, the modern "bard," had already attempted to do. Henne worked over the history of Diviko, and of the oldest Helvetian wars with a specially patriotic purpose, interweaving the northern mythology, and using an original style, adapted to the Swiss dialect. This well-meant attempt, however, had too little inward necessity, was too arbitrary, and carried out with too partial a spirit, ever to succeed. Klemm delineated the ancient Germans in the hexameter, which is indeed unsuitable, because the hexameter is not a German measure, much less an old German form; but Klemm has furnished excellent pictures, and made use of the historical sources with a good deal of fancy.

In the historical dramas and novels, we find frequent political and patriotic strains; but then they are only strains. Raupach brings nearly the whole middle ages upon the boards; but the patriot can look upon them without growing warm. In the numerous historical novels, our poets are much more ready to work up their

feelings into the patriotism of an Italian, a Frenchman, an Englishman, a Pole, than to show a natural patriotism for their own country; or they concentrate all the interest upon rank, and limit it to one province or city, passing over the general claims of Germany; so that I justly exclude this poetical class here.

The gallant old Ehrenfried Stöber, of Strasburg, sustains a peculiar relation to our patriotic poetry. He adhered to Pfeffel, Jacobi, Hebel, whose friend he was; he wrote Alsatian ballads, and tender lyric poems after the German style. But, with all this, he was an enthusiastic adherent of the French government, and devoted to his zeal for French freedom many German songs, wherein he always calls France "my country." It is a small thing, but is enough for the deep dishonor of the German national pride. And it ought not to be — it ought to be utterly impossible — that a German could ever desecrate German poetry to such an abuse of the sacred name of country. That it is possible, shames, wounds, and provokes us.

If you have opened your German hearts in Alsatia, so that you gayly sing with us in the German tongue, what madness comes over you, to imagine at the next moment that you are Frenchmen? You are an old portion of our empire, shamefully torn from us. Your country, your fields and vine-clad hills, your cities and villages, are as wholly German, as they are distinct from the foreign character of those on the other side. You all speak German, as far as the green mountains, which divide you from the foreigners beyond, are to be seen. Your minster, with its

sacred pyramids, reminds you of the original spirit of German art, which the aliens on the other side could only destroy, but could neither establish nor even understand. Your past is German, and your future will be German again. We would pardon ourselves, but we would not pardon the French for the present.

Two men of distinguished abilities form the transition to the political satirists. G. A. Baron von Maltitz is still full of the Prussian wrath of the war time; but he turns it against another object, — against the stagnation and retardation of the age, — and gives it that peculiar sarcastic dress, that unites wrath and ridicule so well. Although from an ancient family, he never shows the smallest pride of rank; his very popular style occasionally runs even into plebeian expressions. The impression made by his vigorous humor is all the better, because there is no such thing as mistaking the fact that he means it honestly — that his zeal is really in earnest. The leading theme of this zeal is —

> "A dangerous thing 'tis to recall
> The German from his wild excess;
> But the most frightful thing of all
> Is his continued soberness."

Still it is strange that people have so rarely understood what a prodigious advantage this sobriety, this *vis inertiæ*, has given us Germans, during the course of time, over the passionately excited people around us. There is nothing the French are so much afraid of as this astonishing sobriety, — this phlegm, — made for endurance, which will at last inherit the property of all

the drunkards. Maltitz, though himself a Prussian, has no good to say of Berlin.

"Ope to me thy halls so bright,
Proud and splendid royal town;
Of thy sisters, there is none
Shines so fair in beauty's light,
So adorned by artist's hand;
But, alas! thy sand, thy sand!

"Let me by the glory wait
That within thy walls resides,
By the goddess that abides [1]
Throned upon thy pillared gate,
Looking o'er the mighty land,—
Ah! and over wastes of sand!

"Ha! what shining palaces,
Yonder, stretch along the street,
For the mighty lords' retreat,
Listed scene of festal bliss!
Here, too, blows,—O, what a bore!—
Dust and sand from door to door!

"But, behold! how proudly glances
Yonder building, heavenward swelling!
Deep within its walls are welling
Mighty fountains of finances.
But, O woe! unhappy land!
Ah! that, too, is built on sand!

"Now receive me, linden trees,
Lofty, lovely promenade,
Where, so coolly smiles the shade,
I shall breathe at last the breeze.
But, alas! through foliage gray
Sandy dust e'en finds its way.

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[1] [A statue of Victory on the Brandenburg gate.—TRANSL.]

"Forth, now, to the gate we hie;
Through the neighboring shady grove
Sure 'twill pleasant be to rove —
Still to ear, and green to eye.
But here wafts, too, — what a land! —
From the training-ground, the sand!

"Now, forever fare thee well,
Sand-encompassed, windy place,
Which no true enchantments grace;
But, with coldly-borrowed spell,
Round about the broad, dry land,
Throws in every eye the sand."

Sand has evidently been thrown into his own eyes, that he has seen no better what Berlin possesses besides sand. By this, I mean not the Hegelians, nor yet the pietists; not the Königstadt theatre, nor yet its poets; not the Berlin "Journal," nor the Berlin "Weekly Sheet;" not Raupach, nor yet Willibald Alexis; not the old Wednesday club, nor the still more ancient Stable Clerk Street; not the white blood of the poets, nor the pale ale of the journeyman tailors; not the bad jokes, nor the good sentiments found there; — but what Berlin, in spite of all these, is, and will always continue, — a magnificent city in spite of the sand, a seat of learning in spite of mechanic scribblers, the quarters of brave men in spite of bragging.

Fröhlich, the Swiss, who has also written very charming lyrical poems, after Uhland's simple manner, is particularly distinguished, as a fable-writer, by excellent political satires, which refer, it is true, first merely to the disorders of Switzerland, but still, like every thing connected with politics, admit, also, of a more general application. Disteli has designed very fine caricatures

to accompany them. The following picture of the times may serve to characterize them:—

"Recognition of their right
Once bestowed the noble born
Even on the sheep, the shorn;
And they, when their prayer was heard,
Chose one for their cause to fight—
One among the long-eared herd.
At the court, then, he appeared,
Was with friendly welcome cheered,
And the dogs, the ministers,
Round him smelt with courtly air;
E'en the lion, in his ears
Whispering, bespoke him fair;
And he found himself well off,
For they gave him corn enough;
So he could not but reply
Unto all their motions, 'Ay!'"

There were still some men remaining from the old period of the French revolution, who had been at the time inspired with youthful enthusiasm, and did not afterwards conceal their inclination towards French ideas of liberty. These persons made it their particular business to ridicule the tedious and dragging course of affairs all over Germany, and the romantic extravagances and absurdities of those who only made the evil greater by attempting to mend matters after the model of delineations of the middle ages, or according to vague philosophical theories, without the least practical acquaintance with life.

In the midst of the confusion of the revolutionary years, at the time of the melancholy catastrophe of Rastadt, a pseudonymous Momus wrote very good

satires, — "The Princes turned Private Men," and "The Princesses turned Private Women," and many others. He painted humorously the lamentable disorders of the empire. And why should he not have laughed? Those who had brought upon the country infinite wretchedness, were even more ridiculous than detestable. It was impossible not to laugh when the imperial benches broke down under the representatives of the whilome great German nation, with their perukes and bag wigs; when the petty spiritual and temporal sovereigns took the highway by the dozen, and on their rapid flight dropped crown and sceptre, and bishop's mitre; when Talleyrand sold at auction German provinces and cities, and German princesses and countesses of the empire paid the prices with their own persons, merely to be laughed at, to pay again in their simplicity, and again to be laughed at. Yes, they deserved the hellish laughter which the *sans culottes* set up.

But the sufferings of the German nation were too great for the possibility of being derided long. Napoleon inflicted on us a woe, and a disgrace, to expiate which, streams of blood will flow once more through the fair fields of France; for nothing has yet been atoned for; the Strasburg cathedral still bears the French cockade. Our sufferings were so oppressive that we could laugh no longer. The confederacy of the Rhine still had, during its shameful existence, a last remnant, at least, of the feeling of honor. It slew brothers, but did not treat them with dishonor. The satires against Prussia proceeded from Prussia itself. Massenbach, Cölln, Julius von Voss, were Prussians. In the south, Zschokke alone wrote under the pay of Napoleon; and

Hebel, in his "Little Jewel-Box," was vulgar and frivolous enough to treat the brave Tyrolese with derision. But I will penetrate no deeper into the chapter of dishonor.

Lackeys, venal authors, are not suited for political satire: this is commonly an affair of the opposition. Hence writers of this class did not make their reappearance in Germany until the pressure of foreign tyranny had been taken off, and the calamities of war had ceased — until new parties had been formed during the period of profound peace.

Two men of affairs, who had calmly looked on the progress of the age, and always observed it with careful eye, were the first to venture upon satire again, — Jassoy, of Frankfort on the Maine, and Lang, of Anspach, the excellent historian. The former wrote "The World and the Age;" the latter wrote "The Tour of Hammelburg;" — both works of the highest wit, and unsparingly severe satires upon the falsehoods, deceptions, weaknesses, and follies, of the present times. While others, Görres, for example, were still indignant, these were laughing. They had hoped for less, and therefore had been less disappointed, and were less inclined to anger than ridicule. Besides this, they did much to put a check upon the young people, who had been thrown into a ferment ever since the festival of Wartburg. The ridicule of the Frankfort advocate, and of the Hammelburg traveller, did more than all the measures of the diet to bring the young to their senses. The consequence of this was, however, that the opposition, which had hitherto been ultra German and romantic, now acquired a sober modern and French cut. The wrath of a Görres

went out of fashion; the wit of a Jassoy came into fashion. The dreams of the empire, of political life on a broad scale, disappeared, and the petty warfare against local grievances began. During the continuance of wrath, more confidence had still been felt; wit poisoned it utterly. Wrath had only put forward general demands; wit went into detail, and, as it came from men of business, it gave the public, imperceptibly, a taste hitherto unheard of for the details of public affairs. What no theorist, however enthusiastic, could have attained, the men of wit successfully accomplished. They taught the art of overcoming the tediousness of such an occupation by jests and laughter. Hence, also, they are authors of historical importance. The key to the great revolution of German liberalism, between 1815 and 1830, is to be found in their hands.

Friedrich also, with his short, witty pieces, belongs to this class, though he does not slash so deeply into the age as those before mentioned.

Seybold, the former publisher of the "Neckar Gazette," who held one of the ablest pens among all the journalists, has also written comic and historical novels. His "Patriot" is a capital satire upon the intrigues of the demagogues, and their mystifications. His "Caspar Hauser" is a terrific picture, which has borrowed all its colors from reality, and is far the best thing that was ever written upon this political infanticide.

As political ridicule was directed against the reactions and retardations of Germany, so, by degrees, a vein of eulogy upon those states which had made a somewhat greater progress began to be infused into it. But France being an object of greater solicitude than

England, this eulogy was soon paid chiefly to the French; and ten years had not yet passed since the battle of Leipsic, when the Gallomania again broke out: one was the consequence of the other. Patriotism had been betrayed, and was indignant; it was punished, it grew ridiculous, it ridiculed itself, it sought to forget itself, and was changed again, as it had been before this cure, into the love and imitation of foreigners. One man still thought only, *Ubi bene, ibi patria*, lounged about at Paris, took up all the Parisian fashions, jokes, follies, and vices, and was happy to be thought a genuine Frenchman — a thing, to be sure, which could only pass among his heavy countrymen. Another cursed a nation which would not recognize and demean itself as a nation; he now believed only in a universal brotherhood of man; and saw in France the champions for its salvation, hoped from the arms of France alone for the salvation of the "men of Germany," and became a traitor to his country from patriotic motives. A third, physically and mentally tainted with what is called the *morbus Gallicus*, sought to infect all his countrymen with it, at least mentally, and, to the end that the new Gallomania might want nothing which the old possessed, warmed over too kindly all the old stenches that had ever made their way across the Rhine, — sansculotteism, community of goods and women, the abolition of God, and the like.

We must spare a separate chapter for this new and very important Gallomania, since it is the newest of our literary fashions. It suffices to have indicated here the method by which oppressed patriotism gradually arrived at the point where it went over to this extreme of the opposite party.

## THE SCHOOL OF CALLOT-HOFFMANN.

THE predilection for the demoniac, the horrible, the insane, belongs to the most original and singular phenomena of our more recent literature. Very different causes have coöperated to give it, despite of its contempt of rules, so great an importance in the most enlightened age, that it maintains its footing among us, along with other tendencies of poetry, and, in France, has even been raised to a predominating fashion.

The romantic reaction against the modern spirit could not but lead back naturally to superstition, with which Goethe, to be sure, only coquetted, but which Tieck took very seriously. This superstition is inseparable from the poetry of the national sagas and legends; nay, their poetry often chiefly rests upon it.

A second external cause was magnetism, which really came into the world as a new wonder; and the belief in spirits again awakened by it.

Still this would not explain the great interest that was devoted to this strange anomaly, had there not been already existing in the age itself, in the tone of its feelings, an inner sympathy with dark demonism.

Just in proportion as men had become more sober and enlightened, the more susceptible were they to the silliest pictures of terror. Oppressed belief always

avenges itself by superstition, and fancy, weighed down by the understanding, avenges itself by phantoms. Locally, superstition is found most developed where nature is the most meagre, — in the north, and upon the deserts of the south. With regard to time, it is found at its fullest blossom when the nation has too little, or has acquired too much understanding. At Rome it came in with over-refinement, and was called out by an excess of philosophy. So many sophists — and so many witches and wizards. This was natural. Nothing but faith in an everlasting love, and the harmony of the world which that sustains, can protect us from fear. If this faith is overthrown, a silly, childish fear, which shrinks with terror before the smallest thing, necessarily makes its appearance, along with the pride and insolence of philosophy, which arrogates to itself the greatest authority. An aspen leaf makes the god of this earth tremble. The faith in the one good spirit, which is born with every man, avenges itself, when opposed and checked, by a belief in many evil spirits. He who sees no marvel in the whole frame of the universe, but deadens the perception of the marvellous by the driest understanding, which looks only to interest, will be annoyed and terrified by small and single wonders. But he who has discovered the unsatisfying nature of rationalism, of trivial illumination, and prosaic utility, feels a vacuum within himself, and a deeper poetical want; he will curiously grasp every thing, for the sake of contrast and novelty, which the mysterious land of superstition furnishes.

But with Hoffmann we perceive that it was only disgust at the spirit of modern times, and their unpoetical

dryness, which was raised to the highest point, and even amounted to despair, that drove the poet suddenly forth, as it were, from a rational and courtly society, with brilliant lights and tea, into night and feverish madness, among the witches, spectres, and devils. Jean Paul's Schoppe suffered under the same despair, but did not venture the bold leap into the spirit kingdom; and even his delirium was only humorous. But still there was only a single step from this position of Jean Paul to that of Hoffmann.

To this must be added — what is not the most unimportant — a secret inclination for cruelty, which has crept into the nineteenth century, while before, the eighteenth was inclined to sentimental indulgences, and gracious pardon, and reconciliations; and, if it did not show, at least affected a humane magnanimity as a matter of fashion. The last generations are, again, much more savage. The beast in man has tasted blood during the French revolution; and since then he has a secret passion for the forbidden pleasure. Family histories are no longer desired upon the stage, nor affecting groups, but bloody abominations, and crimes that make the hair stand on end: we want to sup full of horrors, and the agonies of the scaffold. With the French, this ferocity is more material; with the Germans, more intellectual. At Paris, the executioner is actually brought on the stage, and made to strike off heads with such a deceptive likeness to the reality, that the blood spirts about the mimic scaffold. But, in Germany, we are perhaps more ferocious, inasmuch as we paint the tortures of the soul, all the stages of delirious suffering, the imprisonment and death of the soul, by magnetism, by incan-

tations, by leagues with the devil, and the like. French ferocity is ruder; ours is more refined, but, on this very account, more painful.

But how comes our highly-cultivated age to such a tendency? Is it the consequence of too much culture? of blunted taste, which yearns after new provocations? of a weakened palate, which can only be a little excited by Spanish pepper? Are we like the Romans, who became so refined and so savage at the same time in their tastes, that they required bloody combats, terrific butcheries of animals, and the like, at the most voluptuous and luxurious banquets and symposiums? Or is this ferocity less that of age than of youth? Is it, perhaps, the ferverish dream of a full-blooded youth, oppressed with idleness, and urged to action?

I fear that this tendency will be the cause of woe to coming generations. It manifestly marks, independently of every thing else, a retrograde movement of men, for it is united with rudeness, — with the beast in man; while the earlier humanity and sentimental mildness served the highest nobleness of soul — served the angel in man. By the gentleness of noble minds during the eighteenth century, the masses themselves were improved; and many a trait of magnanimity and fine feeling, during the wars and revolutions, owed to this its origin. But when even the noble minds of the nineteenth century turn savage, what are we to expect for the future from the rabble? We shall learn at length, though late, that it was a bad school wherein men were accustomed to the sight of cruelty.

The farther we go back, the more tame and innocent

was the poetical passion for the marvellous. We distinguish two species of this superstitious poetry; one whose object is to cramp the intellect; the other which aims to inspire dread and terror. Both, however, agree in putting forth nonsense for sense, and taking after the silliest superstition. Both delineate wonderful events, brought about by unknown and dark miraculous powers, which make man the sport of an arbitrary will. In the first class, these dark powers appear like mystical and secret clubs of supernatural and magical beings; and the men or heroes of them play the part of disciples who are undergoing a probation. In the second species, these dark powers are destiny or the devil; and men here are the victims whose tortures are to produce the poetic effect.

The species first described was the earlier. It sprung originally from freemasonry, and the passion for the marvellous, which sought out mysteries of every description in the secret societies, during the last half of the preceding century. Curiosity regarded the impossible as possible; and simple foolhardiness longed to attain the mastery of wisdom by taking the most convenient way, — by getting itself received as a member of a secret league. Finally, the vanity of children of a larger growth carried on its idle freaks by real societies, or by their counterfeits. How could literature remain a stranger to an impulse which was making so great a sensation over the real world? How could poetical literature, especially, fail to treat a theme thus productive, when the passion for the marvellous had so poetical a coloring? The scenes which Gassner, Philadelphia, Wöllner, the Freemasons, Rosicrucians, and *Illuminati*, were bringing

out upon the stage of real life, were reflected by innumerable tales of spectres, enchanters, and mystical societies. Even distinguished poets permitted a chime of this marvellous character to sound from their works, half seriously, half ironically, as Goethe in "Wilhelm Meister," and "Grosskophta," Schiller in "The Ghostseer," Jean Paul in "Titan." One of the most celebrated German operas, Mozart's "Magic Flute," surrendered to the mad uproar, and had no little influence upon the passion of the public for this nonsense. Among the novel-writers of this class Vulpius was the most distinguished. His "Rinaldini" contains the whole apparatus of mystical societies, and surprising pieces of magic, and became a truly national book. But the highest summit of this poetry was reached by Werner, who strove to elevate it to tragical dignity.

Werner endeavored to bring about this elevation and improvement, by converting the magical powers, or mystical societies, upon whom the guidance and probation of the uninitiated should be dependent, into God's delegates, and brought the whole subject of the marvellous under the religious ideas of providence and predestination. This man possessed the fire of poetry, and still more of passion, but, perhaps, too dry a brain, — for who can deny that his brain was a little scorched? Seeking salvation from the flames that were consuming him within, he threw himself into that ocean of Grace, where poor sinners like him commonly put off the old man of earth, that they may put on the heavenly. Amidst his deep contrition, the poet felt the truth of the saying of the pious, "Self-justification is a garment of abomination before the Lord," with all its severity.

He felt that a man's own actions and virtue were vain; that man fulfils the decree of destiny devoid of will and blindly; that he is predestinated to every thing that he does and suffers. All his poetical works maintain this doctrine. His heroes are guided, by the leading-strings of destiny, into the clear realm of "azure and light," or to the dark abode of "night and flames." A mystical society undertakes the guidance on earth; and we cannot fail to perceive here an analogy to the hierarchical tribunals. Those sons of the valley, those mystical old men, at one time, form a holy *Fehme;* at another, an inquisitorial tribunal, under a most venerable and holy man; and this old man of the valley and mountain can say, as the grand inquisitor of Schiller's "Don Carlos" said of the hero of the tragedy —

> "His life,
> At its beginning and its end, is there,
> In Santa Casa's holy records writ."

The heroes are destined from their birth to all that they have to do or suffer. Some of them are "Sunday children," born angels, who, after some theatrical farces, — after they have, like Tamino, passed through fire and water, — comfortably enter the heaven destined to them time out of mind. Destiny plays at hide-and-seek with them a little while; here is the mysterious valley, and there the mystical beloved is hidden from the elect, and finally the bandage is taken from their eyes. The disciple becomes an adept, and the lover finds his other half. No matter how widely the two people were separated from each other; destiny brings

them together, even if the "north pole should have to bow to the south."

As all freedom is taken away after this fashion from the heroes, this species of poetry can never rise to tragical dignity, however great the pains Werner has taken to this end. Still his poems show no deficiency of religious depth, and of a certain ardor of devotion, particularly in the lyrical passages, which lend them a value off the stage. Moreover, he has almost always taken only the bright side of fatalism; his only complete night-piece was the "Twenty-fourth of February." The former kind of fatalistic poetry, with the whole apparatus of mystical societies and supernatural leagues formed in secret for the welfare of man, has nearly died away of late. They are now only laughed at.

The second species has grown the more important. This takes up the same fatalism, but from the dark side. Here the grim demoniac powers are the secret managers of the prodigies; and they have been represented sometimes according to the Christian idea, as the devil, the tempter and seducer, sometimes according to the ancient idea, as Nemesis, or as Hecate and the Furies; and sometimes, again, even in novels and tales, sometimes in tragedies. Of the one, Hoffmann was the Coryphæus; of the other, Müllner.

After the example set by Werner, Müllner carried the tragedies of destiny to that fearful degree of caricature, with which they long fumed and fretted on all the stages. Werner's "February" gave the first impulse, Müllner's "Guilt" reached the summit, and others have since diffused this style more widely. It is to

be classed directly with the style of Werner already described, only because it makes destiny always a hostile, vengeful, and destroying power. But it will be necessary to draw a distinction between the new and the old tragedies of destiny.

In the tragedy of the ancients, iron and inexorable destiny was truly sublime, terrible, and beautiful, worthy of the idea we are compelled to entertain of inscrutable fate. It stood as an eternal necessity, opposed to heaven-storming freedom; and the measure of its sublimity was to be fixed by the power and dignity of the hero. The more free, the greater, and the more godlike the hero, the more mighty, profound, and holy the power which bade him stand still. The struggle of the hero against fate was the fundamental idea of tragedy; and fate, which, by itself considered, remains, it is true, unconquerable and ever the same, could not fail to acquire a relative greatness by the strength of resistance, and by the value of the sacrifice — the only greatness which befits it in poetry. In the free will, in the power and inward worth of the hero, lay, therefore, the criterion of the tragedy. The greater and more dignified the hero, the more powerful the destiny, the more sublime the struggle, and the nobler the poetical creation. The resistance of the hero was the standard by which the whole poem was to be judged. Schiller has taken the same view of tragedy, and raised it to a favorite kind of poetry among the Germans. But what else has been the result, than that a morbid passion for originality, and a moral imbecility, have fancied they might softly repose on the laurels of Schiller?

The heroes of the new tragedy of fate have no

will, no worth, no dignity. From their very birth, they are under the power of dark night. They commit their horrid misdeeds, not from a free will, but from predestination. A curse, born with them from some ancestress, or brought upon them by the devilish arts of a gypsy, impels them; and their sins, as well as their punishment, are inseparably connected by the stars themselves with an inevitable hour of their lives. The poor sinner must be wicked because to-day is exactly the twenty-fourth or twenty-ninth of February. He does not sin from passion, or from his own will; if he has any passion, it is fastened on him by witchcraft or by an imprecation. Nay, the devil never once takes the trouble to lead him astray; he cannot help sinning when the clock strikes the hour of midnight; and the dagger is the index that points the hour, and the heart he is to pierce is the fatal number; the index moves, and the terrible deed is done. The view indicated by the witch trials is really intellectual and enlightened, compared with this fatalistic principle. According to that, man still has a free choice, and the powers of darkness must make an effort to win him. There is a heroic struggle, like Sintram against his comrades, or an honest agreement, like that between Faust and Mephistophiles. But here the hero has neither choice nor enjoyment; and the powers of darkness themselves have not the satisfaction of overcoming the strong spirit of man, his heroic power, or his wisdom; they have not the triumph of victory, but only an insipid play with puppets. The devil himself must have got heartily tired of a game in which he had no one to seduce, no one to overreach, no holy power to desecrate,

no angel to entice to his fall, but merely to complete the hangman's duty upon a subject belonging to him from the first.

Destiny itself here seems quite as much changed as the hero. The hero has lost his original consequence, and so has destiny. It is no longer the holy necessity, the blind force of nature, the everlasting limit set to the too great boldness of the hero; but it has become the sport of arbitrary will. It is no longer sublime, because it meets with resistance no longer; but it is low and grovelling, because it only plays with puppets. But, properly speaking, destiny has itself become the hero, because it alone acts, and, indeed, according to an arbitrary plan, which it carries out by some curse or other, and because the hero does not act, and merely keeps himself in a passive state, and lets fate do with him as it will. We feel an interest only for the doings of fate; for the subtle, crafty, cruel pranks to which it subjects man. The poet, therefore, must try to produce the effect of his tragedy, not by the character of the hero, but by the character of the destiny. The effect, which is no longer to be attained by the dignity of the hero, must be attained by the artificial plan, by the strangeness and cruelty of the destiny. Destiny has no more to do, except to play with its victim like the cat sporting with the captured mouse, and to give him the fatal blow at last. In order to please, this must now be done with the utmost circumstantiality, and the greatest possible cruelty. The more maliciously she plays with him, the longer she hides the deadly claws from the poor little mouse, and the more artfully the springs are directed, until,

finally, the unhappy wretch makes the *salto mortale* into the wide-open jaws, — the more effect the whole play produces. The poets, therefore, do not strive to present the tragic hero in a greater and more dignified attitude, but only to prolong his punishment by artificial means, and increase his tortures.

Hence they select their heroes not from Plutarch, but from the stories drawn from criminal records, which are put into the calendar for the warning of citizen and peasant. The dagger, poison, suicide, and incest, are the daily bread, as it were, of these heroes; and the only puzzle of the poets is to make the thing horrible enough for the play of destiny to have some charm of novelty. Pity only that the province of tragic destiny begins where criminal justice ends. Justice should not interfere with the poet's business, nor the poet with that of justice. When the one makes away with vulgar criminals, it is as bad as if the latter were to judge according to principles of æsthetics, instead of the *corpus juris*. Truly, he who makes the scaffold a theatre, is ready to make the theatre also a scaffold.

Unworthy, nay, infamous, as is this desecration of the tragic muse, yet its authors have enjoyed great applause; partly because the public is always coarse and bloodthirsty enough to luxuriate upon these butcheries, partly because the most favorite pieces of this kind are really furnished with beautiful verses, maxims, phrases, and sentiments. But the abuse of the poetic form can never be excused; and the more beautiful are the forms, the more abominable is it to adorn with them a substance so degraded. However much pains these poets take to invest the most

vulgar thing with the sublimest pathos, to stamp the most worthless villains, or the mere puppets of destiny, in bravura monologues, as genuine heroes, — still, the vulgar character always shows through every phrase; and we may apply to it what was once said by Plato — "We must not suffer ourselves to be persuaded, nor endure the assertion, that a god has practised such fearful and impious things as lying poets now relate of him. On the contrary, we must require the poets, either not to relate such actions of heroes, or not to represent them as sons of the gods."

There is one thing more which I consider worthy of remark in this class of the tragedies of destiny. They are unnatural, artificial, forced, from their very origin. They do not spring from an impulse of the heart, but from a calculation of the understanding, which aims to force something new and extraordinary. The poet cares only for effect, for ephemeral applause, for the praise of the reviewers. Hence the curious phenomenon of self-reviewing even in the piece. The heroes reflect, with well-arranged verses, on the very stage, upon their tragical significance and originality. This was carried by Müllner to an insupportable pitch; for all the arrogance of the critic was also blazoned out by his tragedies.

He found, notwithstanding, many imitators — first, Grillparzer, whose "Ancestress," who wanders about as a spectre, until her guilt is expiated by the destruction of her name, was wholly after the style of Müllner, both in general tendency and in the Spanish trochees, and had the same success on the stage as Müllner's "Guilt." But Grillparzer has again deserted

this absurd manner, for the purpose of applying himself to the historic tragedy, and the manner and versification of Schiller. Houwald, also, imitated Müllner, to say nothing of many others, although I reviewed them in my *Literaturblatt*, with more completeness, nine or ten years ago, when they were still the fashion. This nonsense, thank God, is now out of fashion again. One of the most ridiculous of the tragedies of destiny was the "Fourteen Antlered," by Mörtl, so called because destiny regularly announced its strokes by the hunter's shooting a stag with fourteen antlers.

The school at whose head stands Hoffmann—called Callot-Hoffmann, by way of distinction, because his grotesques seemed to bring to mind the manner of the fantastic painter Callot—is much more important than that established by Werner and Müllner. This school has been diffused chiefly over France.

Hoffmann does not, like Werner and Müllner, play with effects, and calculate them, as it were, by mathematical rules. There is something about his character that forces us to admit that he has taken the matter up very seriously; that the terror of the realm of spectres has really come upon him; and that, some time or other, the hand of a demon has touched his burning brow. His sentiments are drawn from a depth, his dream-pictures from a night, which has no idle sport, no hunting after effect for a background. A genuine disease, a real sorrow, of the age, and not a mere put-on despair, is here expressed. There is too much light shining upon our age, and therefore the shadows on the other side are darker.

Hoffmann was not wholly without predecessors. Let

us consider these highly-interesting poets first. Heinrich von Kleist led the way from Catholic romanticism to modern magic. His somnambula, "Kate of Heilbronn," and his lunatic, "Prince von Homburg," are wonderful intermediate creations between the noblest simplicity and true-heartedness of mediæval antiquity, and the most delicate fastidiousness of modern times. Of inimitable beauty, as completely painted, as transparently clear, as those of Homer or Shakspeare, these poetical works yet conceal under their flowers a serpent of the modern spirit, which makes us feel a secret shudder, and enables us to comprehend how it was that so amiable a poet became a suicide.

He who understands the mysterious power of sympathy, at the same time snaps its invisible cords asunder. Here recognition is despair and death. This is the veil of Isis, which no one is permitted to lift. Drawn by strains of another world to the throne of the infinitely beautiful Being, to the embrace of that which is loveliest, towards which our most hidden longings always impelled us, we are suddenly surprised by something prodigious and monstrous, inseparably bound to that loveliest object, as the dragons are inseparable from the enchanted princess. In a word, he whose meditations lead him too deeply into the sweetness of sympathy, is surprised by the antipathies with overwhelming mastery. He who ponders too deeply on the riddle of love, can no longer endure the hatred with which the world is filled; and he must die.

As the sweet pain of dying away is shown by Heinrich von Kleist, so the saucy humor of despair is shown by Adelbert von Chamisso. By the one

the dependence of man upon a superhuman power is taken up on the pathetic, by the other, on the comic side. But how came Chamisso, the circumnavigator of the globe, the lover of nature, living on the most beautiful, and perhaps the only oasis amidst the Berlin sandy ocean, like a Hindoo enjoying the profound peace of the most delicious vegetation, — how did he arrive at a poetry of wild delirium? Is it the force of contrast that grants to the gentlest natures the talent of creating the most terrible scenes — just as, on the other hand, the maddest merriment of the comedian often comes from a deeply melancholy soul? And has not the poet drawn, with profound wisdom, an image of the present age, under the character of the restless wanderer, who pursues his own shadow through the world in seven-league boots? Is the poet only a transparent sea, which reflects the storm of mists and clouds with the more beauty the calmer it is itself? I believe so, though I have no particular acquaintance with the amiable poet. "Peter Schlehmihl" is his greatest and most excellent work; on the whole, one of the most classical works of romanticism, which nobody who has once read it can ever forget, and therefore written for eternity. But every where throughout his smaller works, also, we discover the profound poet, who sees and laments the secret woe hidden under the folly of men, which others merely laugh at; on the other hand, however, in the most terrible thing that makes others' hair stand on end, he finds out the side which forces us into involuntary laughter, and makes us comprehend the strangest of all sensations, that of amusement at suffering while we are suffering ourselves, and enables us to stand upon

our own centre, and, at the same time, above ourselves.

With Hoffmann, the sentimentality of Kleist and the humor of Chamisso appear to be fused together. He was the head of the new demoniac school, and the poetic Pluto, who reigned over the dark realm through its widest extent. Or, rather, was he not himself ruled by it? It is the poetry of fear that gives all his works such a peculiar stamp. Hence the sense of hearing, which is so closely connected with the feeling of terror, was with him so highly developed. Therefore his ear detected every where the mysterious tones of nature, as well as of art, which transport our inmost being into a gentle fright, or into a horror like that which creeps over us when ghosts are near, or that which we attribute to the thunder of the day of judgment. And therefore did he even descend to childish phantasies, that he might poetically revel again in the terrors of childhood. And yet we can accuse him of no exaggerated softness, or effeminate unmanliness; for his principal works are taken up with a sorrow, a despair, a boldness, and an agony of thought, and a feverish glow, of which man alone, not woman, is capable. It is disease, overstraining, delirious, but always manly.

From the devil down to caricatured children's puppets — from a discord of life, which rends the soul, to a discord of music, which only splits the ear — the boundless kingdom of the ugly, the disgusting, the annoying, was gathered around him, and his pictures represent with inimitable life and truth these tormenting objects, one after another, and the agonies they prepare for a sensitive spirit. He is himself that mad musician Kreisler,

who, with his acute sensibility to the purest and most sacred tones, is reduced to despair by the discords which every where maliciously strike him, as if echoing from hell. But he carried this acute sensibility not into music alone. Through all the spheres of life, he finds those ugly and hostile caricatures, those demoniac powers, corresponding to musical dissonance, which subject the noblest spirits to the greatest torture.

When we see what the French have made of him, we gain the first correct view of the beautiful aspect of his character. They carry the sensations of disgust to exhaustion, to procure themselves a ferocious delight; and they forget, what Hoffmann never forgot, the beauty of the soul in the very midst of these offensive objects. They imitate his caricatures, his discords, but not the beauty and melody of which they are the contrast. They comprehend in Hoffmann, at most, the painter, but not the musician; and yet Hoffmann's inmost being is music, and the prayer of Saint Antony is never wanting to his hellish caricatures, the Christmas bell to the witches' Sabbath, nor to the concert of devils the pure and piercing tone with which the virgin soul takes leave of a shattered and priceless instrument. It is true he paints to us the soul only in its shattered state; but the soul was ever noble, and carried heaven with its harmony.

Hoffmann shares with Jean Paul an acute sensibility to pain. I would not have this made a general rule among men. Still we should degenerate to barbarism, were not its existence ever proclaimed by the poets from time to time. Steel is not only hard, but brittle, and a breath can soil it. The hardness is proved by thou-

sands of men; shall not the susceptibility of the polish be proved by one?

We have had as many womanish and timid men as we want. Their despair has often enough made itself known after a very paltry fashion. I think it has assumed a purely æsthetic character in Hoffmann's poetry. Posterity will say, that the discord which pervades our age was treated by no poet after so poetical a manner as by Hoffmann; and perhaps the poetical charm rests upon the very fact that he did not, like so many other poets, seek a political solution of the discord, and appeal to the future, but held fast the illusion of a darkened fancy, of a dream, without awaking. The flowers which bloom by night are lovelier if we do not think of those which bloom by day. Hoffmann never read the newspapers, and felt a dislike for them, like an albino's aversion to the light. This was not his world. But, then, this is the very reason why the political poets of French romanticism should not attempt to imitate him. By day, every owl is merely ridiculous; and the moon, who rules the magic night, pales at the crowing of the cock.

The relation of this dark side of life to theology and natural science is far more natural. The mediator here is Justinus Kerner, the amiable prophet of Weinsperg, whose friendly home, among the luxuriantly trailing vines near the famous old castle "Weibertreue," is thrown open with boundless hospitality to the dead as well as to the living. His earlier connection with the romanticists at Heidelberg, and his later activity as a magnetizing physician, which brought him into connection with the celebrated female seer of

Prevorst, and with the spiritual world, have impressed the stamp of extraordinary peculiarity upon his literary works. As a poet, he is closely related to Uhland in the vigorous and hearty simplicity of genuine lyric poetry; but there is the most singular contrast between these immediate manifestations of purest and noblest feeling, and the fancy shown by his "Shades of Travel," sporting with an inexhaustible variety and abundance of imagery, and with the most insane audacity; and both contrast, again, with the pious, nay, theological bearing of the poet, when he gazes upon the other world, whose portals he believes have been opened.

Demonism came upon the stage also. Besides, Weber's celebrated "Freischütz," "The Vampyre," "The Somnambula," "The Marble Bride," and other like pieces, became favorite subjects of the opera. The novels and tales took no less to the thing; and, for a time, no poetic "Pocket-Book" appeared, which did not contain a magnetic tale or ghost story. The most active author belonging to this class was Kruse, who also worked up many stories of crime, and whose writings have a psychological value, because, generally, he made use of cases only taken from real life.

## THE INTERMIXTURE OF ALL TASTES

GERMAN poetry had passed through the Gallomania, the Græcomania, the Anglomania; had been absorbed by the illusion of the middle ages, and after Herder had adopted the histories, legends, and forms of the East, and of the remotest nations, and Goethe had given a practical demonstration, that the German was able to master, with the talent of connoisseurship, the most various and heterogeneous manners at the same time.

The natural consequence of such examples was, that many acquired a liking for this versatility. Some were fond of putting their talent to more than one trial, like Goethe; others availed themselves at one time of the advantage presented by so large a choice of manners, to seek out the least difficult, and at another, for the sake of originality, to select the most difficult.

The variety of our own masters exercised its mighty influence on the mass of subsequent poets to an almost greater extent than the variety of foreign nationalities. In the same collection of songs, the same poet imitated not only Greeks, French, English, Spanish, old German *Minnesingers*, Persians, Hindoos, and Chinese, but also Goethe, Schiller, Tieck, Matthisson, and others.

As Goethe was the head master, and the unapproachable prototype of this school of schools, so the brothers

Schlegel gave it laws, and a name, and Solger became its philosopher. They traced back all those tastes to the unity of artistic beauty, which, according to them, runs, like a golden thread, through the history of art, and on which all that is poetical belonging to all ages and nations, spontaneously arranges itself. Hence their deification of Goethe; hence their own attempts after the Greek, Spanish, old German, Hindoo manners, and so on; hence their doctrine of æsthetic polytheism, which, like the religious polytheism at the time of Hadrian, adopted all the gods of all nations.

Who can deny that a genuine German trait of character, the universal humanity and the fellow-feeling with every thing that concerns the whole race, — a feeling and a talent not possessed to so high a degree by other nations, — here manifest themselves? Still we have gone too far with the enthusiasm — I might say with the rabid appetite — for accumulation and enjoyment, for the poetical conquest of the whole world; and we have overloaded our stomachs. The peculiar German character has been too much repressed under the load of foreign peculiarities. The measure and the boundaries have not yet been ascertained. I have endeavored to trace them in the first part of this work, where I pointed out the distinction between receiving and giving back, translating and imitating. Even if we unquestionably ought to make ourselves familiar with all that is foreign, and love the beautiful therein contained, and if we are bound to take into our own minds as much of it as we can, still it does not follow from this that we should slavishly imitate every thing foreign, too, and, thereupon, forget or falsify our own peculiarity; nay,

falsify the foreign original itself by a miserable imitation. This, however, has been often enough done, and is still done every day.

The same school of Schlegel raised, also, the Goethean principle, that the external form was the only important thing, into a law. According to this, nothing but the highest polish of a poem ought to be the poet's aim. This required the skilful use of foreign measures, the musical coquetry shown by the solution of difficulties by language, a prose style, correct even to painfulness, and an elegance of pen, which, with Varnhagen von Ense, literally extended to calligraphy.

The third and most characteristic peculiarity of this elegant school, is the assumption of a lofty and high-bred air. Goethe had many friends — nay, we might say, he had a whole nation — before he had a court. The brothers Schlegel formed an ante-chamber, that they might be distinguished as lords of the bed-chamber, from the rest of the nation; and they carried at their backs the keys of the poetical heaven, with a very becoming demeanor. They soon found imitators. The natural passion for servility has always united with the passion for gentility. To surrender oneself wholly to Goethe; from every puff of his to snuff up an oracle, — a word of God; and to make a show of this folly, and to look down with the smile of aristocratic contempt upon the profane, who do not possess such refined nostrils; all this was only a repetition, within the province of literature, of what has a hundred times been witnessed in the province of politics. It was a second edition of the placemen, who dress elegantly, and put on an infinitely important, knowing, and lofty behavior.

Ernst Schulze is properly the representative of this class among the poets. No one has mixed up all tastes as much as he; no one has made such smooth and elegant verses; no one uses such genteel and superfine perfumes. His "Cecilia" is a ragout of all the beauties of Homer, Ossian, the *Nibelungen*, the northern sagas, Tasso, Ariosto, and the Orientals put together; a spirit extracted from all the epic poets the world has ever produced. His "Enchanted Rose" is the *ne plus ultra* of sweetishness, flowery phrases, and coquettish melodies — genteel, poetic, unsubstantial gossip; for the only substance it has is a trivial allegory. This cockering and over-exquisiteness, this vanishing and exhaling away, this dying of a rose in aromatic pain, which has been called *Nihilism* by Jean Paul, ends really in nothing, and, fortunately, the sooner the more excessive it becomes. We may, therefore, call this whole manner, which is particularly characterized by Ernst Schulze, the galloping consumption of poetry; and it is one of her most fortunate diseases, because it does not last long. Moreover, it seems to surround itself with so many rosy odors, merely to overcome its own corpse-like smell.

Count Platen avoided the intermixture of manners, and cultivated each according to its own peculiar character, but committed the error of trying his hand upon too many of them. At one time, a romantic comic poet, after the manner of Shakspeare, Gozzi, Tieck; anon, assuming the antique style, by the most faithful imitation of Aristophanes; then turning Oriental, with capital gazelles, — Count Platen had the skill to strike the right key in all, and distinguished himself by an extraordinary mastery of versification; but they were only copies;

the matter of his poems was not taking, and appeared only the more unsatisfactory the more finished was their form. Grown up under the teaching of Goethe and Schlegel, he was unable, all his life long, to comprehend either the error of his conduct, or the disapprobation of the public. In a fit of chagrin, he went to Italy, refused to return until he should be acknowledged the greatest poet of his country next to Goethe, announced works that should fill all with amazement, but that never appeared, and died upon a foreign soil. His most eminent imitators are Kopisch, who attempted to equal him in melody, and Hermann von Herrmannsthal, who composed very beautiful gazelles.

One of the freaks of this man was his entering into so violent a poetical controversy with Immermann, a poet, who, among all the other German poets, resembles him most, belongs to the same school, suffers from the same errors and the same wounded pride. Immermann's verses are not so classically correct as those of Platen; but he has rambled through a still greater number of manners, unsatisfying and unsatisfied with all. From romanticism he passed first to Schiller's tragic seriousness, then to Heine's frivolity, and every where leaves upon the reader's mind a feeling of distrust. We believe neither the seriousness nor the jest; the only thing we do believe is, that the poet is tormenting himself about the one as well as about the other, and that his whole heart is fixed upon neither. He produces the impression of various talent, which is very active without the least enthusiasm, and only makes the mistake of putting on enthusiasm, or complaining of the want of it.

William Müller leaped over from merry travellers'

and millers' songs to Philhellenic heroic strains, and then to tales after the manner of Tieck and Hoffmann. Waiblinger passed from a novel, which was something between Goethe's *Werther* and Wieland's *Agathon*, to modern Greek heroic songs after Byron's manner, and, finally, to moral fairy tales and stories after the manner of Tieck. Edward Arnd passed from the romantic drama to biblical poems. Stieglitz tried to imitate all the Oriental styles at once. Similar transitions and attempts after the most heterogeneous manners, occur in the works of numberless younger and less important poets.

To this class belong also the various efforts to treat romantic materials under the form of antique hexameters. The prince primate of Hungary, Ladislaw Pyrcker, with his "Tunisias," and "Rudolph von Habsburg," as well as Lindenhan, with his "Malta Delivered," stand foremost here, by their masterly style of managing the verse. Kannegiesser's "Tartaris, or Silesia Liberated," has, also, many Homeric beauties. Conz and Gries have distinguished themselves more by translations than by their own poems. The first was devoted to the antique and chivalrous style; the latter laid himself out most upon the Italian and Spanish.

Falk, also, was a reflex of heterogeneous cultures. Antique, romantic, modern, every thing was spinning round together in his head; and he sought to unite all these styles under the most lawless and whimsical forms; but he perceived early enough the folly of such a beginning, and turned away from the all too motley picture, to the pure and simple light. The orphan's father, — he died with the well-merited reputation of patriarchal piety.

There is a well-known anecdote of the physician who advised a patient, suffering under inconsolable melancholy, to see the celebrated comedian on the stage, and received for answer from the sick man, "Alas! I am myself the celebrated comedian." Wild hilarity is closely allied to melancholy; but that the extremes of poetical wealth and Christian poverty, of the satirist and the pietist, can pass over into each other, has been shown by Falk. Falk became an Abbé de l'Epée from a Scarron. However, the former character appears to have been far more natural to him than the latter; for he had no originality as a satirist. His wit flickered unsteadily, and merely grazed its objects without wounding them deeply by its sting. He had by no means the cutting severity of a Rabelais, Swift, Börne, nor the happy humor of a Tieck and a Jean Paul. A great part of his satires seems made up, artificial, imitated, even with regard to form. He could not, therefore, succeed. When he discovered that he had mistaken his calling, and became conscious of his proper vocation, and threw the satiric pen aside forever, and established at Weimar the institution for the education of orphan children, which has become so celebrated under his name, he set a signal example of self-denial and genuine courage. Casting off all the vanity of the author, he returned from the world of appearance to the world of reality, from the void of fantasy to nature, and devoted himself to a hard and severe employment, to the utter sacrifice of every selfish desire. Letting the ridiculous vanities of the fashionables alone, his efforts henceforth were given solely to the enterprise of softening, lessening, or destroying, in the germ, the misery and vice of the meanest among the people. Never did a satirist gather such noble grapes of thorns.

Most of the imitations and attempts at blending opposite manners came up in dramatic literature. Schiller's iambus, Schiller's melody, Schiller's entire phraseology and style of declamation, prevailed almost exclusively; but an inclination was, at one time, felt to try the greater freedom and bolder humor of Shakspeare; at another the more genteel stateliness and formality of Goethe; and sometimes, also, the manner and the versification of Calderon. The prose style, in which Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller, wrote tragedies, still so remarkable, was banished, as if by universal consent, from the stage. This is natural. One's own thoughts belong to prose. In verse, one can continue more conveniently to play the melodies he is already acquainted with. Hence that host of tragic poets, who, year in and year out, hammer upon the cothurnus, and furnish us every fair with some dozen of five-act tragedies, purely written in iambic verse. I am very far from denying these mediocres their little talent; but they are to be pitied for accomplishing nothing wholly bad or wholly good; for exciting in the reader neither a hearty love nor a hearty hatred, by the uninteresting, half-way character of their productions. The talent of the mediocres is limited to a mere knack at form, at style, at versification; and I confess that I do not estimate this very high; for, in point of fact, it is not difficult to travel upon the iambus track of the German cart of Thespis, which has been journeyed over a thousand times before. What the mediocres are destitute of, is, however, the power of invention, fancy, deep sentiment, warm and lively representation, and, before all things, mind. Without

the least originality, they constantly repeat the old tune, played a thousand times, of the boldly aspiring hero, who is overthrown, and a pair of young lovers, who must die. The heroes, as well as the lovers, talk forever in the same phrases. Once in a great while, a new or magnificent image, or thought, swims upon the washy iambic sea, like two or three spots of fat scattered over a water soup.

The want of invention is made up by sentiment. But as a general rule, this is unhappily introduced. Tragedies are dipped, as it were, into sensibility. All the characters, even the *obligato* villain, run over with delicate sentiments. The very just principle, that even the vilest sinner is still a man, has been translated by our poets into this — that the vilest sinner, also, continues to be noble and sentimental. No one raves, kills, assassinates, steals, betrays, and lies, but that he is a sweet enthusiast of tender feelings. Raupach's Russian prince, who makes a bondman out of his own brother, and Raupach's Abdallah, who robs his wards, are, like Müllner's Oerindur, who shoots his friend from behind, sentimental praters. But even the virtuous characters talk only of their virtue; and this is almost always nothing but an unnatural prudery, a caricatured delight of self-denial, self-coquetry, and sententious senile wisdom, which talks like a book, but not like a man.

The holy Aristotle, the church father of tragedy, says that it must excite pity and terror. But what is excited by your tragedies, ye who tune up forever the iambic phrases of Goethe and Schiller? Who else is pitied but yourselves? and what else are we terrified at than the idea of your writing any more such stuff?

You aim at effect, undoubtedly, but you only make us gape. This comes from your feeling for us beforehand; from your moving, not us, but yourselves; from your making the characters of your pieces feel so much that there is nothing left for the public. Laugh with the laughter of hell, and we shall weep; but if you weep yourselves, we laugh at you. Give a quiet air to the most horrible thing, and our hair will stand on end; but when your hair stands on end, when we are not ourselves frightened, but only see how frightened you are, —we keep our seats with the utmost indifference. In a word, ye foolish poets, treat us, the public, as women must be treated, and we shall at once get up a prodigious interest for you, and you will do wonders. Only do not be finical, do not be vain, do not be sentimental; be vigorously natural, be courageous, and you will be astonished at your progress. I see you smile. You fancy you have already tried your hand upon the rude. Not at all, simple shepherds; your villains would be bad enough, if you would only have the heart to paint them wholly without magnanimity and sentimentality. But that is quite impossible to well-educated children, like you. Magnanimity sticks to your fingers; if you take up the *obligato* sinner ever so tenderly, so as not to damage his precious rascality, your own amiableness alights upon him, and he sparkles with enthusiastic expression. In your innocence, you first thought you would terrify us, as Aristotle requires; but, since it turns out otherwise, you comfort yourselves. "Terrify, to be sure," you think to yourselves, "the villain will no longer; but he will please; and is not that worth a great deal more? Strange, strange, that the villain has

turned to such a dear young man under our hands! But what is the harm? Does it not show that every thing we make must be amiable? And will not the poet, if the villain excites less terror, appear so much the nobler? O, the poet who can draw a perfect villain, must himself have a bad heart! Is it not so? No; come hither, my dear villain; I will give you a friendly touch or two: there! now I need not be ashamed of you."

The confusion of tastes has, really, gone so far, that the same means are used for moving and pleasing, for terror, nay, even for horror. Hence we find every where on the stage beautiful young women, who act as if they were insane, or practise horrible vices; and, on the other hand, abominable villains, who must needs melt sweetly down into a puddle of tender feelings and fine phrases.

But as the tragic writers feel that neither the melody of their verse, nor their sentimentality, can make any thing great out of their puppets, they seek to produce effect chiefly by the accumulation of terrific situations, or by the splendor of costume and decorations.

It is astonishing how hard it is to make the tragic poets comprehend that stage effect is much oftener attained by moderation than by excess; that one misfortune moves us more than three, vying with each other to affect us; that one wounded man excites our compassion more than a whole lazaretto; that a single tear is worth more than a flood of tears; one word is worth more than a throng of verses; that a stifled sorrow is more infecting than one that bellows aloud; and a modest reserve of genuine emotion much more beautiful, than one of the Iffland and Kotzebue family groups,

where the whole household, down to the dog and cat, embrace each other. But, nevertheless, it is a fortunate circumstance that the tragic poets, with all their exaggerated attempts at brilliant effect, still cannot wear out the true effect of tragedy. Often as they exaggerate sublimity and terror, true sublimity and true terror remain sublime, remain terrible. This is clearly seen on our theatres. The most ferocious destiny-pieces go out of fashion, or have but few and cold spectators, while the far more simple, but genuine, tragedies of the good old times, like "Emilia Galotti," are witnessed with an interest ever new. In Heaven's name, what long, well-rhymed, madly-phrased, and full and wordy monologues would our modern romantic poets have heaped upon the good Emilia! And how would our pathetic dramatists have made Tellheim sigh and declaim! — the poor Tellheim, who says so little, and always carries his arm in a sling.

Costumes and decoration are made to supply the place of the effect which the threadbare characters and forms of expression can no longer produce. It is said of Shakspeare, that his pieces need no decoration, in order to affect and move us most deeply. Almost the reverse of this holds true of our tragedies. There is scarcely any need of the piece; the decoration and the costumes alone are every thing. Hence the historical tragedies, which are partly copied after the historical novels, have recently become such favorites. The tragic stage is turned into a masquerade; and more depends on the achievements of a manager, who travels over the world as an enthusiast for the wardrobe, to procure every where costumes and prospect

copied after nature, and who then reproduces them most faithfully on the stage; or of an antiquary, who demonstrates from old engravings and designs the correctness of a costume of the middle ages; and on the achievements of the theatre tailor, than on those of the poet.

No tragic poet for the stage, since Schiller, has succeeded so well with the public as Raupach; and no one since Kotzebue has written so many pieces. He continues to supply about a dozen every year. He is unquestionably distinguished by a great familiarity with the stage, by an adroit management of the scenic part, by a nice calculation of effect; but, to secure the latter, he is ready every moment to sacrifice poetical truth and dignity. His fault is, that he writes only pieces for effect, and yet always aspires to write dramas of character. His comedies are better than his tragedies, because comedy admits the study of effect much better. But even in these he produces a much smaller result, by too great means, than he would with a little more economy. The efforts he makes to strike are every where too visible. There is an almost offensive designedness running through all his works; and the simplicity of genius nowhere flashes out; we see none of those godlike negligences, without which no poem quickens the soul, because a work of art must look entirely like a work of nature, if it is to take hold of our feelings as a poem should.

Besides this, he borrows his effects; and it is impossible to fix upon a germ of originality in him, as we do in the other great tragic poets. In tragedy, he alternates with the solemn declamation of Schiller, the humorous copiousness of imagery of Shakspeare, the

cold, aristocratic air of Goethe, the transporting fervency and force of Calderon; but we feel that this language is nothing but the feeble copy of well-known originals, and this feeling becomes vexatious, when, at times, phrases are repeated actually word for word out of celebrated poets; or, when he affects a higher tone than is natural to him, he falls into pompous absurdity, and silly bombast, or else suddenly sinks from the lofty tone to the vulgar. In his comedies, he alternates precisely in the same way with the imitation of the most heterogeneous originals, among which are to be recognized the convenient and volatile Kotzebue, and even the Vienna farces, along with Goldoni's delicacy and Shakspeare's broad jokes and far-fetched metaphors; and all this makes, to be sure, a very heterogeneous mixture.

Unfortunately, he shares with Müllner the passion I have censured above, for giving vice and vulgarity a sentimental air, as is eminently shown by his infamous Abdallah, the opposite of Shylock — the most decided antithesis of poetry. Shylock, by nature a vulgar and miserly Jew, is ennobled by the genuinely tragic passion of national hatred, and sacrifices the lower passion for money to a higher impulse. Abdallah, exactly the reverse, is delineated as a naturally good man, and his character is not sullied until he permits himself to be overcome by the love of money. Thus, then, Raupach leads us from the pure heights of the tragic passions into the sphere of peculation, gaming-tables, and bashful beggary, after the manner of Kotzebue and Iffland; — into the sphere of the lowest vulgarity, where every thing revolves about Mammon. This sphere, like every thing

vulgar, belongs to comedy, not to tragedy; for its passions are destitute of all nobleness. For this reason, no great poet, of any age, has introduced such debasement of character into tragedy; and Shakspeare has shown by his Shylock, that Mammon and all his spells must disappear at once, when tragic passion and dignity begin. But, plunged over head and ears into vulgarity, neither our poets, nor a great part of the theatre-going public, know how merely to distinguish between what is vulgar and what is not.

Probably Raupach felt that he was not made to invent poetical characters; he therefore devoted himself to historical personages, and brought upon the stage the "Hohenstauffen," "Cromwell," and others. This was rational; and these pieces are really his best. He adheres as closely as possible to history, and brings before the public persons and scenes which are worth remembering, at all events. He sometimes ventures, also, to make an allusion to politics, but, I think, not very happily. His wit is too tame and far-fetched for this, and his loyal tirades are cold studies. His "Isidor and Olga," alone, is a tragedy which has really some significance for our Sclavonian neighbors — a frightful picture of villanage, which would affect us still more deeply if it had no improbabilities in the drawing of the characters, unnecessary attempts at effect, and if the style were not often too artificial.

Before Raupach, Klingemann wrote a multitude, mostly of historical iambic tragedies, in the phraseology of Schiller, which, however, were remarkable

neither for poetical inspiration nor for ornament, and which are already forgotten.

Edward von Schenk gained great theatrical reputation by his "Belisarius." In it he celebrated the fidelity of the servant to his lord, which was, in this case, at the same time, the fidelity of the citizen to the state. His very polished verses incline more to the quiet and clearness of Goethe, and delight in melody, like those of the Schlegels and Platen. The Baron von Uechtritz shows the same general tendency; his "Alexander and Darius," though highly recommended by Tieck, yet never became popular.

The Baron von Eichendorff exhibited much more romantic warmth, and a closer observance of the Shakspearian manner. The Baron von Auffenberg wrote, after the forms of Calderon, with the most glowing feeling; his "Alhambra," however, went beyond the limits of the drama, by a quite too Oriental copiousness of language and imagery. A great deal of fire was shown by the Baron von Zedlitz, who merits still more distinction as a lyric poet. Michael Beer wrote "The Pariah," in a beautiful style, and with profound feeling. Deinhardstein aspired to a fidelity of costume, and to a livelier tone, which are certainly very desirable, for the purpose of banishing from the boards the stereotyped ideality, and the hollow tone of traditional phrases. Still, he has not wholly broken away from sentimentality and pathos.

The genteel iambic tragedies leave the public cold. On the other hand, pieces have been brought forward, written in a popular style, and with some warmth, and

set off by splendid scenery, which remind us of Schiller's "Robbers" and Goethe's "Götz;" and, though they may not, perhaps, stand the test of a severe criticism, yet are always witnessed with pleasure. This remark applies to the pieces of Madame von Weissenthurn, and Madame Birch-Pfeiffer; and even to the rude pieces of Holbein. It seems to me the public is wholly justified for preferring these well-meant and unpretending pieces, which are particular favorites on the provincial theatres, to the genteel and elaborate productions for court theatres, in iambics of glassy smoothness and glassy coldness.

Gentility has at last been made to feel its unpopularity, and has put on the air of despising it; or really soft spirits have been perfectly spoiled by overcultivation, and have sought protection from the barbarity of the multitude within a sort of æsthetic cloister. The power of great poets has exercised such an influence on many minds, that they have never gone even so far as to imitate them, but have contented themselves with mere devotion; have surrendered themselves, utterly passive, to another mind; and have continued to live on in him alone.

For a time, Jean Paul, and then Tieck, had his poetical communion; and the peculiar refinement of these poets required, in fact, a very select public. But Jean Paul strained the nerves, and Tieck was too much of a Catholic. Thus a far more powerful community was formed around Goethe, which appropriated to itself a far higher degree of gentility, and, besides, at a much cheaper rate. To worship Goethe and say something about him was considered better than

to write an original work. The Camarilla, who thought they alone understood him, looked upon every thing else "over the shoulder." All the more recent poetry was compassionated as a descent from the elevation of Goethe.

No one can fail to recognize in the Baron Augustus William von Schlegel the lord chamberlain of the aristocratic circle of court lackeys about Goethe; he absolutely called Goethe a god, and Goethe looked down upon him, with aristocratic contempt, as his bondman. Schlegel himself has composed but little; for he could not bring himself to it, for admiration of Goethe. On the other hand, he has instructed the people how to reverence Goethe as god and king at once. He was the theologian and expounder of his god, as well as chamberlain and diplomatist of his king, and established a priestly nobility, who should have, by preference, the real advantages and enjoyments of aristocracy, because they alone knew the godly mystery of the Goethean books, and all advantages and enjoyments at once, because they were supreme.

If Franz Horn, Schubarth, and Kannegiesser, introduced the contemptible pride of having commented on the writings of Goethe with the industry of the scholiasts, so Augustus William von Schlegel elevated this civic sense of duty to the arrogance of a privilege of nobility, by connecting the whole doctrine of high-bred manners with the supposed deeper understanding of the poet. All the greatness and beauty, which they would fain find in Goethe alone, was now concentrated upon the idea of *the genteel.*

The gentlemanly spirits, so called, were formed.

These separated themselves, like a nobility, from the common civic minds — a thought which gave Steffens especial delight. But August William von Schlegel felt correctly that the genteel mind should have a genteel body; that a nobility should never be cynical, though it may be faunlike; and that the philosophic and æsthetic nobility could never grow up to any importance, unless it allied itself with the political nobility, with fashionable society, with diplomacy, and with the moneyed aristocracy. He was the more correct, as Goethe himself had always set the highest value upon the social privileges of the nobility. Schlegel followed his example, got himself ennobled, drove about, in the train of Madame de Stael, to call upon all the political persons of quality, and tried hard to bear himself according to the most polished manners of the courtier.

This struggle after a twofold aristocracy — that of intellect and that of social life — showed itself strikingly in the case of Rahel, who has very recently become celebrated. What delight did every contact with people of quality give her! With what childish glee she coquets with every princely acquaintance! And what a parade she makes every moment with her intellect! No thought is refined enough for her; she must needs rub it up a little more. And all this in the holy name of Goethe! After him we must aspire, in him we must live and die — the new Messiah of the Jews!

Another lady, Bettina, has become enamored of Goethe, not, like the former, with the understanding alone, but with the whole heart. But she had made here a very great mistake, as Börne very well observes; for Goethe was all his life long the creature

of the coldest calculation, and incapable of any other love than that of Aristippus, who required of a mistress no more than he did of a meal — namely, to taste agreeably to him. It is touching, however, to see how the glowing Bettina, a female Pygmalion, embraces with living warmth the cold block of stone.

Hotho seems less fortunate. He does not so much live under a beautiful illusion as attempt to transport himself there by artificial means, when he declares that he can find no salvation in the whole circumference of the world, except in Goethe. There is besides something painful about this incorporation, or rather this *inspiritualization*, into another's mind, carried out to the pettiest details. If magnetism were actually to be in play here, we should be tempted to think of Jean Paul's magnetic eating. One ate in reality; the others only made the same motions after him, and fancied they were eating, while they had before them nothing but empty plates. Thus Goethe revelled in the full enjoyments of the world; but his disciples only look on, and, hungry themselves, enjoy his appetite, or, even when they get a glimpse of wholly new pleasures of their own, merely think how Goethe would have liked them. Nay, there are poets, who are so incapable of loving after any other fashion than Goethe's, in any other name than Goethe's, and with any other words than Goethe's, that they sin, even in the most faithful matrimonial state, by becoming their own rivals.

But this marvellous magnetism has also its convulsions and variations. Nature arms herself against the foreign spirit which would wholly control her, and yet she cannot wholly escape that spirit's power. Hence, to-

gether with the perfectly passive disciples, appears an active class who comment upon the master after their own fashion, and turn him round and round with violence. The former carry on the business of mystification, and darken every thing that was clear in the master, and turn very simple earthly truths into a godly mystery. Others work their way into single thoughts of the master, and build up systems upon them, often of surprising onesidedness, and engraft them on the most opposite sciences, and apply them to the most heterogeneous occurrences. From the most worldly of poets is drawn a religion, from the driest of philosophers a system of æsthetics, as if by the butt-end. Christianity is explained out of Goethe, and Shakspeare out of Hegel.

The exclusive and endless digging into the works of the masters, is manifestly not now the highest task of human culture, as long as so much else remains for us to do, to think, and to experience. And, in general, the mind is born to remain free, not to surrender itself a captive to another's mind. Intellectual bondage is even more odious than the slavery of the body.

It is vain to attempt to conceal the disconsolate character of this modern idolatry. He who is not initiated by a fortunate frivolity into the aristocratic mystery—he who supposes there is, beneath the aristocratic triviality of the Goethean egotism, a sacred seriousness, and hopes to satisfy here a yearning after an endless poetry—must assuredly, like the poor Charlotte Stieglitz, be reduced to despair. She, too, lived at Berlin, in the very midst of Goethe's worshippers,

heard nothing else talked about than the transcendent excellence of Goethe's poetry, and formed to herself so lovely a picture of a life to be realized according to this poetical model, that she soon fell a victim to the monstrous contradiction between this picture and the reality, and could endure the world no longer. In short, she became a perfect feminine Werther. So she killed herself, because the world no longer satisfied her sublimated æsthetic desires.

But she was a wife! To what a pitch of unnaturalness must that artificial desire have arisen, to seduce the wife of a youthful and beloved husband to suicide! These are the fruits of that school of poetical over-excitement and insatiable desires, which leads the mind to misapprehend the simplest duty, and the most natural and noble happiness, and to chase after idle phantoms, and perish in the pursuit. Dim anticipations of the gratification of egotism hover before the overstrained feelings, which the power of imagination can never bring into a definite form, and which amount to nothing at all, because the highest happiness depends only on the renunciation of self, on resignation and on moderation, and, I venture to say it, on the fulfilment of our duties. "Werther" and "Faust" taught the desolated heart a melancholy æsthetic epicurism, which talks forever and ever of the rights of human nature, and delicately leaves its duties unperformed. But I would consent to this hunting after the highest intellectual delight, if the end were attainable, if it must not necessarily lead either to death, as was the case with poor Charlotte, or to a cold resignation, as was the case with Goethe,

or to the most worldly frivolity, as with Heine and his school, leaving the point to which the unbridled impulse aspired ever unattained.

For some time past, this wild chase of the mind has been called the impulse of freedom. The mighty name of freedom is desecrated to mark an emancipation from all nature, all reason, all duty. While we neglect to furnish freedom where it is wanted, and where it belongs, we seek it where it is nothing but a caricature. Hence the emancipation of women and children in our age, to the utter forgetfulness of the emancipation of men.

The poor Charlotte also suffered herself to be maddened with the wretched idea of the emancipation of woman, and took up every thing that the most extravagant absurdities of our days have brought forward upon this point. The writings which she left behind her are a remarkable monument of the æsthetic aberrations of the present age. She saw an everlasting and divine law in the doctrines of Goethe, which often nothing but the enjoyments of a faun only suggested to that Sybarite at the moment. She perceived, in the malicious and doting harangues against matrimony, in which several of our older female scribblers saw fit to indulge from some private predilection of their own, a profound wisdom, and verily believed that woman ought to be free from the shackles of marriage. But the husband must be free too; and, in order to set her own husband at liberty, and to make a sacrifice for his sake, she thrust the dagger to her heart. What a melancholy delusion! what perverted ideas of duty towards her husband, and of her own rights! Here is an example to show how Goethe can

turn the heads and pervert the hearts; and how religion and morality have really been buried by him under the pretext of the beautiful. Thus a noble victim has bled for this idol, while priests and prophets arise on all sides to proclaim him as the new Messiah, first of the Jews and then of all the world; a Messiah who has come to put an end to the old religion of Christianity, and to establish a new religion of pure egotism and the flesh, on which the school of Heine chiefly rests.

For a very long time, all those vulgar natures, who had the art of disguising their vulgarity under a fine exterior, have appealed to Goethe as their master, and, in a certain sense, as their poetical redeemer, inasmuch as he taught them how vulgarity could be poetically reconciled and consecrated.

Vulgarity is an idea that belongs only to cultivated times. It marks the falling back of culture into original rudeness, which, however, endeavors to embellish itself, because refinement is standing by its side. The rude and uncultivated man can never be vulgar; but the cultivated man who cannot leave his original rudeness, who yields to it, and merely embellishes it, — he is vulgar. This vulgarity is one of the leading evils of our age. In spite of all cultivation, man feels himself now, as before, exposed to a throng of savage passions; and these passions, under the restraints of external manners, have only multiplied still more, and more fiercely burn. But the disease, as well as its cause, is dissembled and palliated; and the poets, especially, have taken upon themselves the office of lending the veil of grace to every vulgarity, and of joining all the coarsest inclinations

of a rude and degenerate nature with decency and with culture, with poetry, and even with religion itself. These panders are then highly praised, as is just, and reap the rich reward which so many sinners are ready to pay. They are new sellers of indulgences, who pardon sins in the name of poetry. They have the art of tricking out any vulgarity whatever with something charming, fair, desirable; of giving a dainty and amiable air to every sin; and of stripping it of all that is odious. They introduce vulgarity under the guise of a refined demeanor, of higher culture, and of an aristocratic air; and, if the wickedness cannot be wholly concealed, it is cloaked over as an amiable weakness, with all the graces and little loves, or held up to admiration as a trait of genius, a bold freedom, and a permitted exception. The guise of aristocratic refinement is best suited to embellish the baser passions, because these have really become refined, and are most at home among the fashionable world. The more delicately they are veiled, the more fascinating they become; and the poet has the advantage of operating at once most effectually upon the corrupted senses, while he seems most intent on decency and taste. Nothing but coarse rudeness would draw down upon itself moral censure; but then that would tickle the dainty palates no more. Refined vulgarity, on the contrary, escapes all reproach, and yet is the very thing that is most enticing.

This tendency of Goethe and his school was yet earlier assailed by Pustkuchen, in a remarkable quizzing imitation of Goethe's *Wanderjahre;* by Posgarn, in a spirited story; and by Wessenberg, in his work

on the influence of polite literature upon the religious and moral feelings.

Baron von Rumohr strikes us as a singular but very delightful phenomenon, from an aristocratic quarter. His agreeable materialism does not seek to degrade the æsthetic taste to mere beastly enjoyment, but rather to elevate the physical taste to a perception of the beautiful, by a masterly work on cookery. Such hospitable phenomena of the good old time will probably grow more and more rare. Here or nowhere it is comfortable, or, according to Goethe's pet expression, *behaglich.* At this well-spread table, we can still transport ourselves back to the good old times of "eighty," but not by the perusal of the empty and pitiful book of Hotho, or at the grave of the beautiful Charlotte, or among the filthy and spasmodic debauches of the school of Heine.

## THE NEW ANGLOMANIA.

All the old schools had outlived their vigor; romanticism had lost its popularity through its connection with politics, and had fallen into the imbecility of age; patriotic poetry had been reduced to silence; the delirium of the school of Hoffmann was, by its very nature, only a brief paroxysm. Thus every thing was dissolved into an anarchy of taste, into the most party-colored confusion of manners.

But a dark instinct impels poetical individuals to unite, and form a solid mass of granite in the sand. The creative power of German genius was exhausted; there was nothing but feeble after-births. Patriotism was arrested, thrown into the dark, and had gone to sleep. No new and reviving impulse came even from science to German poetry. The enthusiasm of philosophy had ceased too. The new dominant school of Hegel was unpoetical to its inmost core, unyouthful, petrifying, unexciting. Our poetical literature, therefore, was again exposed to the influences of foreign countries, as it had been before Lessing; and our neighbors needed, on their side, merely to unfold a new poetical energy, to make us once more the slaves of their intellect, their blind imitators, and to render their taste again the ruling taste among us.

They did so. The English and French cultivated

among themselves, after a peculiar and national manner, the romantic taste they had adopted from us, with all the energy that is natural to them; acting under the consciousness of their national unity and their elevated position in Europe, and with the applause which nations arrived at maturity, and free from the influence of petty rivalry, are accustomed to pay to their great minds. During the first period of the restoration, the English poets Walter Scott and Byron took upon themselves the poetical dictatorship, not only beyond, but this side, too, of the Channel. Soon afterwards, the French began their literary revolution; and their romantic Jacobinism is now on the point of supplanting the supremacy of the English.

But we Germans have again retreated from the heights of our elegant literature, and gone back, like the crab, through the Anglomania, to the Gallomania. Walter Scott and Byron have made almost greater conquests among the German public than in England, and, notwithstanding their innumerable English imitators, have found still more among the Germans. But, at present, French romanticism has begun among us a similar conquest, which is making forward strides every day.

It was unavoidable. The whole history of our literature proves, that the risings and fallings, the strengthening and relaxation, through the literary world, every moment, depend upon the state of public, especially political, affairs. Thus, when the national energy of the Germans was unstrung after the immortal wars against France, and the restoration took the course which is well known, and the German mind was fettered

and lulled asleep,—it could not be otherwise, and we were forced to yield again to the overmastering influence of foreign nationalities. And we have no deliverance from these bonds, which, perhaps, are to shift oftener than heretofore, except through a new patriotic energy, let it come from what quarter it may.

The new Anglomania, as well as the old, has its good aspect. The English nation has remained the same; the steel of its manhood has not grown rusty. If we were condemned to go to school to foreigners, we have found in the English able masters, if nothing more. The style of the historical novel is suited to a manly nation; for the great lessons of history are thereby extended, and the view enlarged. But Byron, too, was a manly character. Nothing has reached us from England that did not remind us of strength.

Other circumstances contributed to the rapid advances which the historical novels made among us. The passion for being transported into the illusions of all nations and ages had, finally, to choose the most convenient among the thousand forms between which it wavered. The difficulty of foreign and artificial measures, and still more the wearing them threadbare by frequent use, could not but wean a multitude of the poets and the public still more from the lyric airs; nay, they made people take to their heels, like the reading of the riot act. On the other hand, the novel form offered itself as the most natural and agreeable; and, at the same time, could not fail to be the most lucrative for the poets, since it had long reigned supreme over the circulating libraries; but the great mass of readers al-

most exclusively drew their poetical nourishment from these reading establishments.

But the spirit of the age, too, was favorable to the historical novel. The interest felt in the great events of the world, the love of history, had strikingly increased since the last wars. At the same time, the whirl of political theories had been laid aside, and experience and historical estimation had become the order of the day. The present, also, was frequently disguised under the representation of the past, and lessons for the former were veiled under the form of the latter.

The historical novel began very early in Germany, without having been fully developed and raised to a fashionable affair. Something has already been said upon this subject, on occasion of the Gallomania. The "Simplicissimus" was a perfect and noble historical novel. The "Gallant Saxony," by Pölnitz, was no less so. Nicolai's "Sebaldus Nothanker" deserves this name too, as a masterly picture of the manners of the last century. It is remarkable that a woman should have made the first beginning of working over the older history of the country by numerous novels. She was the celebrated Naubert, whose "Eginhard and Emma," "Conradin of Swabia," "Hatto of Mentz," "Elizabeth of Toggenburg," "Alf of Dülmen," "Conrad of Feuchtwangen," "Philippine of Geldern," "Ulrich Holzer," "Walther von Stadion," the "League of the Poor Conrad," "Frederick the Victorious," and many other novels, placed before the eyes of the great public the former times of Germany in living pictures. Schlenkert followed her, with less success and talent.

He gave us the whole histories of the emperors under the form of tedious dialogues. On the other hand, the historical novels of Baczko, the Prussian historian, were far better, and more popular. The shorter and anecdotical sketches of Meisner, who, as to other things, was trivial enough, had the greatest circulation. The declamatory and sentimental novels, wherein Fessler began to delineate the ancient world, the life of Aristides, of Marcus Aurelius, and of Attila, met with less acceptance. His cold representations were far surpassed by Madame Caroline Pichler's "Agathocles," which is, to be sure, somewhat modernized by the sentimental tone, but yet is taken up with far more warmth and life — a novel which seized, from a real poetical point of view, the contrasts between Christianity and paganism, the northern, antique, and Oriental characters, during the earliest ages of the Christian era. The same woman has since written several patriotic novels — "The Swedes at Prague," and "Frederick the Warlike."

Up to this time, however, the historical novel continued a subordinate species, and was but little cultivated. The great wars against the revolution and Napoleon, which threw the nations together, and brought the remotest into contact with each other, which carried the Mamelukes of Egypt into the Netherlands, the Highlanders of Scotland to Greece, the Portuguese to Moscow, the Biscayans to Paris, — these groups, with the most various costumes, which really passed before our astonished eyes, first occasioned that great multitude of copies, which came into vogue under the name of historical novels. Kotzebue had already

brought all possible costumes upon the stage, with an eye to the same interest.

But when all was so peaceable around us, we were able to live, with all our poetry, as it were like one family. Now, things are different. As we had ourselves been torn away from the bosom of peace and family, and carried into the great political arena, our poetry also had enlarged its circle. The tender pair, about whom nearly all poetry had hitherto revolved, has grown up to a nation. Our poetical as well as real heroes have been lost in the nation. If all the great men of the age, even he, the greatest of all, fell before the nation giants, who woke from their ancient slumber, — why should not Poetry, also, acknowledge her allegiance to the spirit of nations? We have seen this spirit stride across the stage of the world; with our own eyes we have seen revolutions, campaigns of nations, marvellous destinies, prodigious deeds and sufferings; and how small, when compared with this great reality, appear all that we have hitherto imagined and dreamed amidst the quiet family circle! If Poetry would not now be put to the blush, she must emulate History; and if she would keep pace with the spirit of the age, she must adopt the historical element, as, during the last century, she espoused the philosophical. The historical novel is, consequently, the genuine offspring of its age.

The historical novel holds naturally a very close relation to historical composition; and though it regards particularly the beautiful, or only the interesting and the enchanting, — whereas strict history, on the contrary, looks to the true, independent of every thing that pleases, — yet the materials are the same for both cases.

The fact is that, in the province of special history, the borders of the two come so near, that, properly speaking, they run into each other. Universal history has already attained such a growth, that we find it difficult to keep up a general view merely of its most important facts. We must separate the details; we can no longer work them up into the representation of general history as an entire edifice. The collections embracing a hundred or more quarto volumes, which treat universal history in detail, and reluctantly omit a single Assyrian king, or German electoral prince, are justly gone out of vogue on account of their monstrous unwieldiness. We endeavor to comprehend the weightiest part of general history, in a compressed and connected form, and to put the details into biographies, delineations of manners, and memoirs, like pictures set in small frames. These are the only forms under which those things that the history of all ages and nations, or of the whole human race, is compelled to pass over unnoticed, can be satisfactorily described. He who follows up the course of general history, cannot divide his interest indefinitely; but the interest in details is perfectly satisfied when we leave the higher point of view, and transport ourselves to a single moment of history, to a particular place, and to the historical circle of one man, or of a few men. Here, however, special history passes immediately into the novel. The difference is but little, whether the biographer describes reality with all its fascinating and romantic details of particulars, or the novel-writer adapts his work exactly to the spirit and tone of a definite time. If the poet's aim is not a common love intrigue, or some philosophical idea or other, he will only con-

jure up the spirit of olden times, the recollections of by-gone days; and, if he seeks from this the reputation of remaining faithful to nature and reality, then he really takes rank with the historians. The novel, therefore, is only a freer form of historical composition; but it is a form by which the spirit of history is often more faithfully reflected, than by mere dry statements of fact. From some of the old French and old English novels, we derive better information as to the manners of the age, and the character of the nation, than from the works of any historian whatever; or, if we consider the tales of Cervantes, what Spanish historian has so livingly transported us into the very midst of that age and country? It may therefore be truly affirmed that the historian is quite right to summon the novel-writer to his aid. Recently this is become the more necessary, because the materials of history have infinitely increased, and it can be comprehended satisfactorily, with all its variety, from the position of the novelist, biographer, and memoir-writer alone. Since the reformation, history has been growing more and more complicated; the historian can only follow the course of the leading events, and must leave the innumerable little episodes by which the particulars are to be illustrated, to the biographers, and especially the novelists, who know how to give such little pictures of details the most suitable frames, and whose works will furnish posterity with a livelier picture of the past than is set before them by our newspapers.

From what has been said, the reason is clearly explained why the historical novel is cultivated in our age, and so universally among all civilized nations,

with one accord. Although the English had given the key-note, yet every ear, and not the English alone, understands it. The English are entitled to the precedence, because they have from the first adhered to their nationality better than other nations. We are not here speaking, however, of the English national poetry, but of national poetry generally. In Walter Scott we imitate, not the Englishman, but the poet of the past; and every nation has its own past. For this reason, all national prejudices, which have, at other times, made themselves so loudly heard against other foreign poets, have been silenced with regard to Walter Scott. The manner of Walter Scott is universally national, whenever a nation feels and comprehends itself; and we hear no echo to his voice from those countries alone where the people still slumber under the oppression of despotism — still know nothing of themselves.

Even the haughty republic of North America, which never gave itself to fiction before, has at length begun to cultivate poetic creation by way of imitating Walter Scott. The republic could not embrace the poetry of monarchy and aristocracy, but embraced the poetry of democracy in an instant.

Strange enough, Walter Scott professed personally aristocratic opinions, though he had been summoned to give to poetry a democratic air. His fate also was that of a man from the mass of the people, and working for the mass. The respect which is paid him is very far from reaching that almost adoring reverence which was devoted to the elder poetical aristocracy; and he bears to them the relation of a plebeian. But, on the other side, he surpassed every body else by his immeasurable popu-

larity among the masses, and the incredible number of his imitators. This, too, is plebeian. Walter Scott, without intending it, has stripped poetry of its aristocratic privilege, and made it the concern of the multitude.

This poetry is democratic both as to substance and as to external form. The inmost essence of the historical novel is to be sought in something wholly different from that to which historical representations have hitherto been confined. In the drama, history has been turned merely into a trial of the power of man, and a foil to ideal beings. In epic poetry, a divine superintendence over history has been assumed, and the prose of reality has been to a certain degree freshened and vivified by marvels from above. In the one, man stood up free, beyond the range of history, and fighting against it; but in the other, the deity disposed of history from beyond it, and treated it as inanimate matter. The historical novel shows us something wholly different, according to the spirit with which Walter Scott has taken it up. Here, man is only a product of history—a blossom, as it were, which vegetates from the midst of it, nourished by its sap, and held fast by its secret powers. But the deity, too, is not divided from the spirit of nature that silently controls the course of history; he does not hover above life, but is life itself; he works no miracles from on high, which are distinguished from common life below; but he accomplishes every thing only from within, and every thing he produces, or nothing, is a miracle. In this sense, poetry goes back to a certain extent, to the oldest form of pantheism, and the worship of the elements, and receives intimations of holiness from every thing that is, but no longer forms to itself

gods beyond and above other things. Hitherto, poetry had been devoted to polytheism or monotheism, inasmuch as it placed only certain groups of illustrious men and families, or even but a single hero, upon the foreground. On the other hand, the new manner of delineating whole nations instead of those heroes; instead of individual characters, the physiognomy, spirit, and tone, the manners and peculiarities of whole countries and ages; instead of single deeds, the course of life of whole generations — is certainly to be called a poetical pantheism. But this poetry may also be indicated by the character of the democratic spirit. The hero upon the foreground is always the poetical monarch, and entire groups upon the foreground form a natural aristocracy. The people, too, at the background, have really always been degraded to a very miserable mute part. But, in the new historical novel, the people take the lead, and those of them who are placed upon the foreground, are merely their organs, taken from the midst of them, from all classes; nay, from their very dregs. Therefore the heroes of all the novels after Walter Scott's style, are never ideal characters, but only common men, the representatives of a whole class; and so far as one of these heroes seems to take the lead through the whole novel, he merely serves the purpose of a thread, on which to string a series of pictures of countries, nations, and manners.

From the beginning, man was the theme of all poetry, and the new poetry of the novel cannot vary therefrom; but the latter takes up man more by classes, while he formerly was considered by his individuality. Its hero, therefore, is no longer properly the individual man, but

the people. By this means, however, it is more closely connected with nature and real history; for the species follows unalterably the silent guidance of nature, and the individual alone tears himself away, and copies after ideal excellence. The poet can make of an individual what he pleases; but he must take a nation as it is. Nothing remains for him here but to discover the poetical element in the reality, not to create it by his own power. Happily as the man has been idealized, yet we have never succeeded in idealizing the whole species, nor even a particular nation. The dreams about model nations are always very idle things, mere air bubbles; and the embellishments of real nations — the Swiss idyls of a Clauren, for example — have ever been very silly. The moment the poet delineates a nation, he must delineate it with fidelity, like nature.

The elements of a national poetry like this are already traced out by Nature herself. The nation is rooted, like a plant, into a certain soil and climate. The country prescribes the conditions of its character, as well as of its entire existence, and furnishes the poet first with the opportunity of rivalling the landscape painter. This rivalry, which has elsewhere been censured, holds here its proper place. Unquestionably the little idyllic pictures, which aim to give only landscape views, are commonly nothing but trifles; and the painter always surpasses the poet, where the poet aims merely to equal him. The case is very different with Humboldt's large views of nature; for here a philosophical spirit is added, which the painter cannot express, but the poet can. Still more does language surpass color, and the poet the painter, when the

object is to mark the historical spirit of a place. This historical spirit — if I may use such an expression — is commonly the most interesting, the most attractive, and eminently the poetical trait of a place. It is breathed into it, as it were, by the spirit of the inhabitants. Not only the nation takes a certain peculiarity from its soil, but the soil from the nation, at least in our imaginations. Thus every historical soil is distinguished from that which is newly discovered, and, as yet, unsettled; and by this one inhabited country is distinguished from another much more than by its merely physical properties. We never think of such a country without thinking at the same time of the people, their character and history; and by this means it first acquires for us a romantic charm. No one can better excite this charm than the poet; who paints not merely the place, but the people, and their history besides; who transports us not only into the midst of animated nature, and of space, like the painter, but also into the midst of the times, and of the events. The poet has the additional advantage of making places highly interesting, which would never be so to us if the painter only portrayed them.

A second element is furnished by the physical character of the nation, the national physiognomy, the nature of the stock, the temperament wherein nature unfolds an inexhaustible abundance of interesting peculiarities, and deeply romantic charms. Here a boundless field is opened to the poet, which has, as yet, been but little cultivated. The poetical productions of different nations have, hitherto, borne a national impress, only involuntarily, as it were. The poet's efforts

were not directed to trace out what was national, but rather to separate something human, something of general interest to man. The innumerable multitude of heroes, whom poetry has been creating for thousands of years, may be distributed better into the classes of a psychological system, wherein a model man appears as the type of the whole race, than into the departments of geography and history; or — to avail myself of a philosophical expression — better according to the analysis of the possible, than according to the synthesis of the real. Most poetical works merely transfer something of general human interest to a fabulous world which nowhere exists, and have nothing to do with any actual place upon the earth, or any actual period of time in history. Their heroes are such as they appear in the sweet dreams of the universal reformer, and not such as actual life produces. They are the ideals of all the virtues or the vices, of all perfections and enjoyments or sufferings, which are possible to man, and not the true mirrors of what actually exists. What is more natural and innocent than the imaginary enjoyment of the delights which reality fails to supply? and what is there more exalted for man, than to idealize, ennoble, and deify himself in poetry, as long as he fails to do this in life itself? Poetry points out to man the path of all greatness, virtue, and holiness; and he ought not to pine away amidst the vulgar habitudes of the every-day world. But the more freely his spirit exalts itself, the less will he be able to contemplate nature, and those first holy bonds which enchain us to reality, with a hostile eye. He will reconcile himself to necessity; and

what, in that, seemed to him at first hard, oppressive and narrowing, petty and mean, will clothe itself with new charms. Reality, from which he had endeavored to escape into the land of ideal beings, will acquire over him a silent and all-powerful charm. Full of bright anticipations, he will believe he has found again, in the supremacy of nature, that holy power which he had perhaps vainly sought amidst his boldest dreams, and had given up with a feeling of despair. This, too, will soon lead him to find every thing in the great garden of life interesting after its kind, but especially the whole, with its harmonious coherence, and with its enchanting variety. A little flower, which he had else despised, will become valuable to him through its importance as a part of the whole. Thus he will now find the actual life of the present and the past, men and their doings, as they really are, wonderfully attractive; and the future and its ideals, if he does not forget them, yet will not be regarded as alone worthy of attention. To the poet it will now be vouchsafed, to win for poetry, by taking a new and grateful course, what had hitherto been so unseemly, what had never been found sufficiently worthy of sympathy to admit the possibility of being used for an idyl or a farce. He will be able to elevate the common man from the people, merely because he belongs to this people, to this rank, to this place, to this age; and this will lend a romantic charm to him who has otherwise no very distinguished personality. We shall see in him, not the personage, the hero, the shepherd, or the caricature, but only the representative of his nation, of his age, and of its manners. The romantic charm which this physiognomy lends him, is

still more heightened by contrasts; and, finally, we see such men, with different faces, attitudes, and dresses, not merely brought together, as in a child's primer, but they live and act in their own age, and set it before us with all the peculiarities of its character. National qualities have hitherto been treated too much as something accidental or indifferent; or all nations have been judged according to some one ideal model, and that only has been considered important by which they resembled each other; or it has been proposed to make them all alike, to smooth them down with the great plane of culture and illumination. But, under the peculiar characters, the differences, and the separations of the nations, the spirit of universal humanity lies as wonderfully concealed as the light in colors, and it can never be separated from them. A certain temperament corresponds to every physical variety of the nations — a disposition, tendency, and power of the soul; and the sum of all these tendencies first reveals to us the infinite riches and depth of the nature of man.

The third element — the intellectual character of the nation, its soul — is closely connected herewith. This is more difficult to delineate than the outside of a nation, if we would finish the picture down to the nicest shades; but what is inexhaustible there, is the very thing that constitutes poetry. All nations are nearly alike with regard to the unfathomableness of their character, and to the romantic depth, which hides from our view the germ of different and peculiar cultures. The poet finds something holy and incomprehensible belonging to every nation, something which exists, nobody can tell how or why, which is as real and natural as any thing else, and, at

the same time, so wonderful. Manners and institutions are far from stamping clearly all that slumbers deep within the soul of nations; nay, history itself only skims over its surface, only shows shifting moments of that which is fixed. History finishes the circle every moment, and what is past never returns; but, in the national character itself, the fountain of new cultures flows forever from an unfathomable depth. The Poles furnish us with the noblest and most striking example of what makes a nationality — the inborn, indestructible national nature, and national heart. It is not, indeed, to be denied, that a glance over the nations of the earth furnishes many a melancholy sight to the friend of man; but, on the other side, "every thing high and excellent upon earth" is found, knit to the innocent and virgin existence of those noble races, among whom the force of nature has immediately accomplished what the highest culture has not again attained. And, supposing there were an equally cultivated, universal human race, wherein all national differences were annihilated, a masonic league extended over all the earth, — how uniform, colorless, and dreary would it appear, when compared with the full, many-colored garden of the nations of the past! And, should the philosophers really succeed at last in turning all the national streams into the ocean of a single and similar fraternity of the universal human race, the poets would ascend the streams to their sources again, and return to the mountains which stand on the horizon of history.

As the last element, let us consider the destiny, the deeds, and the history of nations. The saying of Schiller, "In thy breast are the stars of thy desti-

ny," applies also to whole nations. Nature determines herself, the soul forms to itself a body, the soul of the nation imbodies itself in peculiar organs, which we recognize as manners, classes and states. Through these organs it acts or suffers, and its inmost peculiarity is, at the same time, its external destiny. This view, which is no longer unknown even to historical composition, recommends itself far more to the poet, for it is poetical throughout; nay, it is the only poetical key to history. The poet, however, can take his point of view by different methods; he may transport himself into the midst of a nation, or place himself above them, or between the nations; and, from every point of view, history appears to him invested with new charms. If he transport himself into the very soul of his nation, then his work will burn with that patriotic ardor which kindles every heart with the like glow, and has from of old maintained an irresistible poetical power; and this is the lyric poetry of the historical novel. If thè poet takes his stand above life and the age, he will then be able to grasp the most perfect image of them. The spirit of nations answers our questions best at some distance, like echo. Therefore it speaks most distinctly from the past. Time has already effected what is requisite for the poet; namely, it compresses together the picture of nations and of history. Distance, too, of itself spreads over every object a magical haze and a veil, which lends it a touching interest, and the poet's elegiac means are not required first, to pour the gentle charm of melancholy over a picture of antiquity. Above all, the nations that have perished, and by-gone days gen-

erally, appear to us of themselves poetical, and every-day vulgarity, and common-place prose, are enthroned only amidst the present; just as we become wearied out with the country where we live, while the great panorama of the nations around us excites our astonishment and longing, and satiates the soul with an infinite abundance of images and sentiments. From the whole circuit of the distant and the past, the poet now selects clear and coherent pictures, and sets them before our eyes in a pleasing frame. We gaze upon another present, upon another world, wherein every thing is as natural as if it were still living; and this is the epos of the historical novel. Finally, the poet brings different nations together, and selects particular moments of history, when they have actually come into lively conflict. Here every peculiarity is increased by contrast, and the collision unfolds the highest activity of the national spirit. During wars and revolutions, all colors play and melt into each other, the physiognomy is made more distinct, the slumbering powers awaken, and reveal through great passions what lies at the foundation of the national heart. This is the dramatic element of the historical novel, and its completion.

If we take all this into consideration, it must be admitted that the national hero is always to be considered the only proper hero of the historical novel. Upon this depends, also, the law that the poet must study the most objective representation possible; for, though it is permitted to make a single individual speak his own thoughts and sentiments, this is by no means allowable in the case of a nation or its representative. The nation must be faithfully delineated after the truth, and

the poet should never take the liberty of arbitrarily disfiguring its history. Many novels present us with disfigurations of this kind. Some poets transfer to the past the interests, sentiments, and party views of the present age; and this is a sin against poetry. Every age has its own poetry, and it must not be falsified. A second world of fancy stands open to the poet, and thither he may transplant whatever he himself invents; but, on the soil of reality, he must leave poetry just as it was planted there by nature.

Besides this, the poet must avoid two extremes, if he wishes to mark characteristically the poetry of nations. He must shun what is too high and what is too low. Some of the heroes of history, who may be said to pass out of the circle of the nation, in whom reigns the genius of the whole human race, whose overwhelming power snaps asunder the bonds of habit, of country, and of manners, are too high. These heroes, wherever they appear, fix all eyes upon themselves, and the nation withdraws into the obscurity of the background. He, therefore, who would delineate the nation, must grasp it at the centre, and not at such high and distant points. But there is also a sphere too low, where, especially, it cannot be viewed without being wholly misapprehended. Then the poet paints only like a Teniers and Ostade, at the utmost limits of humanity, where it passes into the character of bears and apes.

The modern triviality wrought into pictures of the past is still more unsuitable and more frequent. We expect a faithful picture — and original because faithful — of the age into which the poet transports us; and

what do we find, in most cases? Nothing more nor less than the pair of lovers with whom we have long been acquainted, from thousands of novels, who occupy the foreground of the picture, with their struggles, sufferings, and self-denials, while the so called historical background is miserably daubed over with colors borrowed from the historians. The scene may be laid in Spain or Poland, in Turkey or Scotland, in the age of Charles the Great or of Luther, of the Hohenstauffen or of Frederick the Great, — the foremost figures are invariably the well-known youthful lover, and the sentimental damsel, who loves and weeps for a time, and then heroically renounces her passion. These lovers talk, too, after precisely the same fashion, whatever be the country and age, and use exactly the same lofty and swelling phrases of virtue and magnanimity. This, then, is what is called an historical novel. The only difference is what is made by the decoration. Harlequin remains always on the stage, and the scenes are shifted behind him; to-day he is the son of a Scottish clan, to-morrow of a Nuremburg citizen of the sixteenth century, day after to-morrow a French emigrant. If the real heroes of history occasionally appear, they for the most part stalk silently across the stage, and very rarely disturb for a few moments the long-winded dialogues of the lovers, or of those who are plotting against their love. If we were to cut off these dialogues, and the whole modern foreground, scarcely ten pages, which are really historical, would be left of many a thick historical novel.

In very many historical novels, the simple history is disfigured by an infusion of whimsical adventures,

which are no less out of place than the lovers' dialogue, already censured. Here, mysterious spies, guardian angels disguised, crack-brained or prophetic old hags, and inhuman villains, must needs brighten up the feebleness of the lovers, who are the principal characters; and this medley of tediousness and nonsense is none the less called an historical novel. Thus it frequently happens that perfectly well-known events of history, which furnish a rich abundance of poetical characters and situations, are so distorted that we cease to recognize them. The novel does not introduce the known heroes of history, but wholly foreign figures, and does not relate the known events, but accumulates adventures upon adventures, which have nothing whatever to do with actual history.

We cannot pass unnoticed a thing which is unfortunately so strikingly displayed by novels of every description — I mean their tedious style. It is far from being a fault of mental poverty alone; it is more — it is a predilection, a fashion, which many of the better writers sanction by adopting. With the praiseworthy design of mystifying the readers, and keeping them in suspense as long as possible about the issue, they take particular pains to spin it out, to have tedious and empty intervals, circumstantial preparations, and a kind of artificial playing at hide-and-seek, which makes us ten times suspect the catastrophe, and deceives us ten times more. Here, however, they forget that the novel is not a drama; that a tedious preparation — that a dialogue inordinately extended, and filling up the intervals — occupies us by no means so agreeably as the preparatory and episodic scenes on the stage;

and that, when we know the issue at the conclusion, nothing in the world can tempt us to a second reading of a novel thus toilsomely elaborated. None but novels which enchain us on every page by their spirited representations, will be read again and again, with ever-new delight. Novels, on the other hand, which are purposely so written that they disgust the reader on every page by empty and unimportant things, and excite him only so far that he reads on hastily, for the purpose of getting to the interesting part at last,—such novels are never read but once, as we devour one meal only to go soon to another.

The intolerable tediousness and prolixity of the historical novels chiefly arise from the tasteless custom of minutely painting all the situations, personal traits, and costumes. Every thing is described; not a button or a seam upon the dress is forgotten; as if we had to deal with a tailor, and not with a poet!

Lastly, we find in the historical novels, as in the school of Hoffmann, a prevalent love for the horrible, which has been carried to a greater excess by the new Gallomania. Our nerves had first to be weakened by the numerous barbarities which they dished up for us from the middle ages, and by the rudest scenes of soldiers, North American savages, pirates, and so forth, that they might be made susceptible of the most subtle moral poison of French literature.

These faults, of which Walter Scott had already given a slight forewarning, came out strongly among his imitators, of whom there are yet many of great distinction, who have even surpassed him often in beauty and delicacy of imagery, if not in richness

and truth. I mention here only the most distinguished and popular; for it is not possible to glance over the whole of the yearly increasing host of novel-writers. Hans Sachs became a poet from a shoemaker. Our poets turn shoemakers again, and hammer the leather on Walter Scott's last. This labor is carried on after a perfectly mechanical fashion; for every semi-annual fair brings out from eighty to a hundred historical novels.

Tieck recognized the great value of the historical novel, when he himself wrote one—"The Insurrection of the Cevennes." For his tales, also, he frequently selected an historical background. But the ironical view of the world was always uppermost with him, and he showed a clever turn for sporting with the opinions and pursuits of men, which mutually annihilate each other. So far from transporting us to some definite time, he forces us, with a mischievous malice, away from every illusion, since he himself no longer lives amidst the illusions of Catholicism; and he has the art of inspiring us with such an extraordinary incredulity, that we fancy there is something ridiculous concealed under what we had once thought serious.

On the other hand, the philosopher Steffens took up the historical novel with great seriousness. He wrote three, which all look very much alike, which mutually supply each other's deficiency, and, properly speaking, are but one work. Steffens wanted only to present a picture of himself in all his relations to science, religion, and the state, and then of his times, from the beginning of the century until now; his work, however, must needs be a novel, and, after

the fashion, must contain a multitude of love tales and domestic stories; and, finally, all this must sustain a very special relation to Norway, his native country. What had been united subjectively in him by a strange juncture of circumstances, was now to be objectively combined in a single novel. Thus a strange mixture of description of nature, historical delineation, philosophical reflection, and enthusiastic outpourings of the heart, was the result; and, though we readily admire the whole for the flashes of a very comprehensive genius, still we are at times disturbed by the looseness of the connection, and the preponderance of philosophical reflections, which interrupt at every moment the quiet course of the narrative, and destroy the illusion. Inasmuch as he universally ascribes to his fictitious personages discourses which refer only to Steffens, his personal inclinations and relations, and which are much more closely connected with his last controversial writings than with the course of the novel, — we are borne away from it against our will, and forget the book while listening to the author — a thing that is always a fault, at least in a novel.

In this style of discussion, Steffens has been followed by Tieck, except that the latter, obeying almost unconsciously an æsthetic necessity, tempers the freedom of the philosophical digressions, and guides back along the line all the threads of the entertainment to a binding centre of beauty, while Steffens, with the carelessness of genius, lets the separated threads hang out from the novel, as if for ornament. Though Tieck shows himself here preëminently the poet, yet he has taken a more Platonic, more philosophic course;

Steffens, on the contrary, though preëminently the philosopher, has taken a more fanciful and poetical course. This phenomenon is not a solitary one. If we go through all our poets, we observe, among those who are most exclusively poets, the severest regularity and self-limitation, and the greatest irregularity and arbitrariness, on the other hand, only among those who are more inclined to the side of reflection and philosophy. The result, however, seems to be, accordingly, that poetry, in proportion as it departs from the philosophical form, is really more philosophical in essence; and philosophy, on the contrary, is the more poetical, the less it avails itself of the poetical form. It seems to be only a defect belonging to the subject, which misleads the poet here to the philosophical, and the philosopher there to the poetical form. Suppose that the same genius could produce, by the same creative power of fancy, a Homeric poem and an Aristotelian philosophy; still he would not have the right to blend them together, but must give each its separate classical form, as if the one were a natural history, the other a system of algebra. The differences belong to the materials; and, even if the same artist were to execute them both, the artistic forms would have to be very different, according to the conditions and limitations to which the materials are subjected. It is well to call attention to this original rule of an inalienable classical principle, in our romantic age, which melts down the peculiar qualities and forms that are to be seen all over the world into a Corinthian brass, and which at last fuses them all together, and dissolves every thing into the universal amalgam.

One of the best writers of historical novels is van der Velde, who forms the transition from romanticism proper, and the legendary poetry, to the historical novel, and occupies about a middle ground between Fouqué and Walter Scott. We may unhesitatingly concede more poetical genius to Fouqué than to Walter Scott, while the latter is more sustained and manly, and never falls into the Berlin style of playing the simpleton, like the gold-harnessed German baron. Van der Velde, if not more poetical than Scott, is more sustained than Fouqué. The fact that, in the choice of romantic subjects, he resorts as frequently to the legendary world as to the historical age, is a proof that he cares less for the minute painting of historical descriptions than for a genuine poetical interest, which latter he has also the art of impressing upon historical representations. He employs the fancy in an agreeable manner; and we might call him, in every respect, a good story-teller, according to the meaning of the term when we speak of the well-known class of story-tellers of the East. Although fluent, as story-tellers must be, still he never falls into the intolerable tediousness of the English and German Walter Scotts; and we must praise him particularly because he places the fairy world not, like an idle decoration, by the side and at the background, filling up the foreground with a wholly modern pair of lovers and their appurtenances, as so many historical novel-writers do, who disguise the Hermann Langs of Lafontaine under a harness, and the aunts of Madam Schopenhauer under a nun's dress, and then pass off this whipped syllabub for an historical novel.

Willibald Alexis imitated Walter Scott so well, that his "Walladmor" was for a time really thought to be a work of the Scotchman; and on this Alexis properly founded his literary fame. But he does not unite an original power of invention, or a profound delineation of character, with a felicitous hand, with a talent for easy imitation, and with an agreeable style. Consequently he has always wavered, and imitated now Tieck, now Hoffmann, now Walter Scott, and, again, the measured style of Goethe, and, very recently, he has attempted to attract readers by political allusions. But he shows himself so much of a Berliner here, that his temperance sermons, and his feeble jests upon liberalism, have as little power to bite as his Prussian patriotism has of exciting any glowing enthusiasm.

If it can be said of any poet that he has been acknowledged the German Walter Scott, that poet is Spindler. It is true many thought him too rude; but they were forced to confess that no one surpassed him in the richness of his historical groups and figures, and in warmth and vigor of fancy. He is one of those rare natures, which belong to an earlier, more vigorous, and more glowing age, and which make their appearance like a tardy blossom, in our modern times. Among the dwellers on the mountains, among the nobility who keep themselves at a distance from courts, where a nobility still does so, among some of the handicrafts, and particularly among the Catholics, such characters of the olden times are still found; in literature they very seldom occur. Spindler, however, is one. To the genteel literary aristocracy, which I will designate by

the name of Schlegel, he will never appear to be an admissible person. They will never pardon him the roughness of form, for in painting alone they know how to prize the vigorous and even wild pencil; works of poetry, on the contrary, they require to be licked as smooth as van der Werf, and forgive no one for having dust on his shoes, even though he came straight out of the far-off land of romance. The reading multitude, on the other hand, eagerly as they devour the works of Spindler, yet are unable to appreciate his real charm, and unquestionably take greater delight in what is censurable, than in the delicate traits of genuine poetry, which smile upon us from his works, strange and wondrous, like the face of an angel from the throng and bustle of a madcap holiday, or from the obscurity of a murderer's cave. In what species of historical novels do we find this unpretending charm of an unconscious beauty, in the midst of descriptions which would not lead us to expect it? I know a great many more classical, more elaborate, more smooth, particularly the English; but in none of them do I find that wildly beautiful splendor of single delineations, and that sweet and strange charm of minute, heart-winning traits. We feel well assured that the moving form, whose look for some moments so wondrously enchains us, will never, never come forth from the picture; and it speedily disappears among the variegated and bustling images which excite us to no emotion of sadness. But is not this the truest charm of the poetical? I should esteem Spindler less, if he made more use of his gift—if he were

to paint out fully the beauties which he only indicates.

In poetical warmth, Bechstein has a strong resemblance to Spindler; but this amiable poet is also distinguished as a lyrist by an enchanting melody of verse, and by the noblest tone of sentiment — for example, in his poem on Luther. Like van der Velde, he is fond of selecting national legends for the subjects of his novels and his series of ballads.

Storch abounds with figures, like Spindler; but there are rude things about his works, which are wholly unbecoming. The voluminous novel-writer Belani, also, allows himself the same indulgence.

While these poets are still inclined to romantic extravagances, there are others who have laboriously applied to the purely historical, and to fidelity of costume. Thus it is with Tromlitz. The scenes of most of his novels are laid in the age of the reformation, and of the thirty years' war; and such delineations he succeeds with best. He is the Wouvermann of poetry, the painter of battles and groups of horses, of the Walloon and Spanish court dresses; and things of this kind he paints gloriously. But the pictures of a rude and wild age present a strange contrast to the language of the dialogue in which Tromlitz imitates the modern daintiness of Fouqué and Lafontaine. The dear sweet maidens under the old-fashioned coifs, and with the great bunch of keys at their girdle, chatter as much nonsense and conceit as if they had been spoiled at a modern boarding-school; and the sunburnt partisans of the thirty years' war, who

did not spare the child in the mother's womb, lisp like the scribbling lieutenants at our Residences.[1]

Blumenhagen is closely allied to Tromlitz. He, too, pleases himself and pleases others best with representations from the age of the reformation. He, too, has the art of painting very cleverly the old war-steeds, head-pieces and mustaches, the burgomasters with furred coats and black bonnets, pious daughters with silver-clasped prayer-books; and he adheres conscientiously to the stately and venerable tone of that age. He is less peculiar in representations drawn from more recent times. We should probably make more out of him, if he would not write so long, so much, and so patriotically. He should have limited himself to fewer, but perfectly finished pictures, elaborated with love and industry, instead of filling up every year all the "Annuals" with new stories. And as to his Brunswick patriotism, he ought to reflect that, to-day and forever, Brunswick sausages spoil the stomach of the public at last.

Bronikowsky showed a very eminent talent for pictures drawn from the past history of Poland, Russia, and Hungary.

But Harro Harring has made a far deeper impression upon his contemporaries by his few but very animated pictures of the unhappy Polish nation. He himself served in Constantine's guard at Warsaw, and narrates as an eye-witness. This interesting young Frieslander wandered round the world for a long time, called himself a sentimental Don Juan, played the Werther, until he exchanged the passion of love

[1] [*Residenz* is the word usually applied to a small German court. — TRANSL.]

for the passion of freedom. Then his representations became more manly; and his "Poland" will affect even coming generations.

Rellstab, also, delineated pictures of the present and the most recent past, the Russian campaign of 1812, and the conquest of Algiers in 1830. He writes very agreeably, but the deep shades of the passions are wanting.

Wolff penetrates deeper into the passions of history. His "Victoria," and still more his "Mirabeau," give us a glimpse of the agonies of the revolutionary age. But he shows no less talent for the style of the fairy tales, and even for painting idyllic still-life, in his little stories.

The Baron Sternberg has very recently joined himself to the more fashionable poets, Tieck and Steffens, with historical tales, wherein certain questions of literature or of the heart are talked over, very much as in a society of cultivated ladies.

Among the fashionables of the literature of historical novels, we reckon, too, the great censor Rehfues, whose Italian and Oriental pictures are certainly richly colored, and brilliant and showy like parrots; but they fill the eye and ear without gratifying the soul.

On the other hand, Leopold Schefer has a great deal of soul, but, as it seems, cannot find the right forms. The romantic entanglements, in which he takes such great delight, are not at all adapted to his talent, which is made rather to paint inward mental states, and delicate pictures of the life of the soul.

What Hauff would have become it is difficult to determine. He began with an imitation of Clauren,

which he exchanged by my advice for the style of banter, with which he had great success. He wrote, besides, fairy tales for children, the memoirs of the devil, so called, and a historical novel in the costume of the middle ages, — consequently very heterogeneous things, — with as easy a hand as Willibald Alexis had written. But he died early. The unfortunate Lessmann, also, belonged to those men of talent whose blossoms faded early. He wrote the histories of Italy and the south of France, and sketches of travel; but suddenly the news came that he had hanged himself. Somewhat undetermined, also, was the talent of George Döring, who also died young, and who, despite his enormous productiveness in romantic and modern novels, yet never attained to an original cast of character. Very recently, Gustav von Heeringen has composed some very good historical tales, and, subsequently, larger novels, which are not so good.

Lewald, also, has written a number of historical novels and tales, which, with a great deal of fancy, have too little originality; but this author's talent is so much the greater for small pictures from actual life, as is particularly shown by his sketches from Paris and the Tyrol; and such *tableaux* are well worth more than romantic inventions, which we have been making from earlier times. A kindred talent has come forward in the unknown author of "Pictures of Life in America." He seems to be a German, although he writes just like Cooper and Washington Irving.

Hitherto we have considered the influence of Walter Scott. Lord Byron, that great genius, along with him, exercised no less influence on German poetry, although

he formed no peculiar school. His adherents and imitators joined other schools rather, — the romantic, the Callot-Hoffmann, and the political schools, — or they passed over into the new Gallomania.

Byron was so great a man, and his sorrow was so genuine, that the attempts of beardless boys to imitate him must always have remained very paltry. As there was already existing among us a genuine sorrow for the age, it needed no new foreign manner to express itself. The coquetry of despair, however, found soon a more fruitful field in the imitation of new French romance, which spared German vulgarity the trouble of affecting the noblé air of the British poet.

Still it cannot be denied that Byron supported, by his authority, the whole modern "literature of despair." The moving springs of his poetical efforts were noble; he really became the martyr of poetry; and his divine madness was founded upon nothing but the fact of experience that all that is beautiful in the world is subjected to the overmastering power of the base and the vulgar. But his unbelief, his contempt of the world, was only adopted by the same base and vulgar rabble whom he so ardently hated, and used as a means against the beautiful, for the sake of which he had fallen into his poetical despair.

The unhappy Byron belonged to those Titans who cannot comprehend that the earth should be destined for pygmies. Prometheus draws the fire for them from heaven, but they only know how to boil their soup by it. Although an error, it is still the error of great souls, to require that reality should corre-

spond to the sublime picture of fancy; and this error is so closely coupled with greatness, that it would be impossible to console the sorrow of a Byron, which the contradiction of reality to fancy causes him. Glowing for all that is poetical in the real world, Byron saw it forever ignominiously defeated, trodden into the dust, and exterminated by the vulgarity of his age. From the gouty feebleness and night-gown ease of the last century, mankind raised themselves to ideas and actions of wondrous splendor. Harnessed and mounted on a milk-white palfrey, Poetry traversed the earth, and the nations followed her as if under the spell of an enchanter. Byron gazed upon her when still a boy, but was soon compelled to see how she stumbled and fell; how the charm vanished, and the gray shadow of a broad cockneyism followed the fleeting splendor over the whole earth. And Byron saw his own countrymen most busy with this reaction of prose, and his patriotism started back with a shudder from heroes like Sir Hudson Lowe. Byron now sought from nature for what he no longer found in history. But on the ocean, too, and along the lovely shores where he looked for uncorrupted nations, and the ancient simplicity of the heart, — every where he saw only the victory of vulgar policy over all that was distinguished by greatness, nobleness, or innocence; and every where it was his own countrymen whom he found again to be the beadles of poetry. Here, in unhappy Greece, he saw in Maitland's ugly face the pendant to Sir Hudson Lowe; and ought we still to wonder that his eye, created

only for beauty, was tortured even to madness by these hateful masks that were everlastingly pursuing him?

But the antipathy to the vulgar and the ugly in the history of the time, would not mark with sufficient distinctness the poetical character of Byron. Byron is not too pure a spirit of light to be himself untouched by blame, when he blazed out, with the noblest wrath, for injured right and insulted honor. Along with this heroism, which must certainly be called holy, he has something very unholy. At the moments of relaxation which followed the sacred exaltations of the poet's genius, Byron gave himself up to all the weakness of his human nature, and exaggerated its mad freaks in a spasmodic manner, so that he appears not unfrequently bestial, and even diabolical. In his "Don Juan," he often follows an extremely degraded train of ideas, and debases his genius to a pander of the ignoblest appetites. On the other hand, in many of his darkest night pieces, he extends, as if under the influence of an agonizing dream, the shadow that has accidentally fallen upon his spirit, or upon the circumstances around him, like a pall over the whole earth, and revels upon imaginations of the blackest kind, by which, if one may say so, he coquets a little too much with the devil.

But we cannot divide Byron's light and dark sides; and, on the whole, it must finally be perceived that such a man is to be taken as he is, without finding fault with him. Even what is censurable about him is only the necessary complement and foil of his noble qualities. The finest pictures in the world are no Chinese pictures without shades, but, as an enthusiast justly remarked, "they must make a black spot upon a white wall."

Between Goethe and Byron, the greatest poets of their age, there was a hidden affinity. Both strove after happiness — the full possession of the beautiful — after the highest enjoyment of love in the world, by cultivating a certain godlike epicurism, peculiar to poets alone. Goethe, knowing well the fickle goddess of fortune, satisfied himself with a prudent and egotistical moderation; but Byron misused the gifts of Fortune, for she satisfied him the less the more she offered herself to him; and he would have been reduced to despair, even in the possession of all earthly beauty, since his great heart required that the whole world should renounce vulgarity and misery; for what would heaven have been to him had he known that hell was near? Hence with Goethe every thing refers itself to the security of a limited enjoyment; with Byron, on the contrary, every thing is referred to the despair which seeks a lost Paradise.

Byron can satisfy himself with no *succedaneum* of happiness — with no illusion, with nothing transitory. There is a truth in the fire of his desires, which consumes again amidst its flames the fairest of his self-created pictures; and religion, the quiet waiting for another life, makes him laugh wildly, for fire knows no control, no repose.

If we wished to trace out through German poetry the proper imitators of Byron, we should find it difficult, because many have adopted from him only single things; and those who seem to come nearest diverge again from him to other schools. At first, the young Waiblinger undertook to copy him, and to write fiery Greek songs, and daring fantasies, blending together voluptuousness,

unbelief, despair, and death, and to surrender himself to a savage cynicism of genius, to which he unhappily fell a sacrifice by an early death.

As a dramatic poet, Grabbe showed the greatest Byronic boldness, and sought, by his "Don Juan and Faust," to outdo all that had ever been written after this style. It is an eccentric idea to bring Don Juan and Faust together into a poem. In a certain sense, these two heroes may be called the two highest ideas of tragic poetry, inasmuch as they indicate the two extremes of manly power — Don Juan the highest vigor of life, and Faust the highest vigor of mind. One idea of this kind alone is powerful enough to exhaust the mind of the greatest poet; and here a poet ventures to unite the two, to shut up together the *Dioscuri* of manhood, like two Nemean lions, and to make each a Hercules to the other. What can they do but rend each other? Like the devil himself, he seizes the two heroes right and left, and dashes their heads together like nuts. It almost seems as if the poet meant to destroy poetry itself; as if, like Samson, he had laid hold of the two main pillars of modern tragedy, to bring it down into a heap of ruins.

The poetry of the one manifestly destroys and annihilates the poetry of the other. Goethe's "Faust," and Mozart's "Don Juan," have each a peculiarly beautiful coloring, which, however, produce a very disagreeable contrast, when they are set against each other. Each requires a peculiar illusion, and each destroys the illusion of the other.

But it is an original and golden rule of the gardeners, not to plant trees too near each other, and of the

poets, to leave the stage always to one great hero alone, and to-morrow, again, to another; but not to bring on at the same time a Cæsar and a Napoleon. But our age can observe measure no longer. It does violence to itself on every occasion, to surpass itself. But it only destroys the effects by attempting to double them. It overdoes the horrible, and it is turned to caricature.

In his historical dramas, Grabbe has been more temperate; and they deserve our admiration, on account of the vigor and brevity of expression, wherein the rich and deep life of the ages is compressed into a clear picture, especially in the "Hohenstauffen" and "Napoleon."

Zedlitz, who has already been mentioned, reminds us, by his "Garlands for the Dead," of Byron's sublime laments. Byron has unquestionably contributed much to the warm interest bestowed by the German poets on the tragical fate of Napoleon; and a poem, composed by Zedlitz, ("The Drummer, who rallies Napoleon's Armies of the Dead,") has become, through the French translation, a very favorite, popular song of the French. What a triumph of humanity, should its cause be somewhat aided thereby, should national interests thereby be reconciled, should every future enmity thereby be prevented! The Baron von Gaudy has sung the praises of Napoleon under the title of "Imperial Songs," and, under the name of "Legends of the Shield," has celebrated the armorial bearings of the German nobility, as if the fame of the son of a Corsican advocate, and that of the German nobility, did not directly contradict each other, like revolution and restoration.

Very lately, Freiligrath has published only a few poems, in a style that wavers between Byron and Mickewitz, the noble Pole; but poems of such elevated beauty, that we cannot but promise ourselves a great deal from this deeply feeling heart, and this mind that masters the realm of fancy, and of language, at will.

If the brilliant qualities of Lord Byron have not remained without their influence upon us, his dark sides, too, have cast their shadows upon our literature. As he despaired of the good, and gave himself up to wild excesses, every thing which he ever wrote at an evil hour, in favor of unbelief and licentiousness, was made to serve as a pretext for the basest passions of our days. These passions began to ferment most especially in French literature; and so the magnificent form of Byronism, for us, also, took that of the new sansculotteism of the French.

## THE NEW GALLOMANIA.

FRANCE once ruled over all the rest of Europe, which was still somewhat rude, by the agreeable elegance of her manners. She stretched her power too far, and, as happens in all such cases, a reaction followed here also. The barbarism, which had been driven back to the uttermost borders of Europe, made its appearance at once at Paris itself. Since then, courtesy and sansculotteism have there been waging a continual warfare. Both have equally maintained their ground; and between the two have been formed the middle classes — the Jacobinical courtiers and the elegant sansculottes.

The two literary parties agree only in a single genuine French trait of character — in *ésprit*. All that they write must be spirited, piquant, and such as either to flatter the dominant interest of the day, or to surprise by its novelty. The seriousness and truth of the matter must every moment be sacrificed to the applause which is expected of the listeners. Every thing must be calculated, not to exhaust the subject, but to fill the public with ecstasy.

But as we Germans belong exactly to the other extreme, and neglect too often that clearness and grace of manner and expression, which we owe to our readers, for the depth with which we endeavor to explore every subject, the example of the French is certainly

instructive to us; and we deserve praise for imitating them to a certain extent; I mean so far as the truth and solidity of the matter allow.

Of the two French parties, again, the *elegant* deserves all acknowledgment on our part. The learned arrogance, which purposely carries the barbarous language of its scholasticism to excess, founds an aristocratic privilege thereupon, and refuses every concession to the popular wants, has more recently formed a league with a *belles lettres* cynicism, and with the rudeness of political passions. In opposition to this ferocity of manners, we ought, indeed, to hold fast to the urbanity of better society; and it cannot be denied that social ease and grace are now, as formerly, more at home in Paris than any where else. They wish to have the battle waged, but only with Platonic courtliness, not with Lutheran coarseness.

Elegance belongs to the character of the French, and, therefore, it has survived the storms of anarchy; and a boundless political and social experience, and the filling up of the fallen aristocracy by civic talents of every description, has only given it a still more brilliant setting, like a genuine diamond. The ancient nobility have laid aside their prejudices rather than the amiability of their social character; and the upstarts have been able to secure to themselves the power, only in proportion as they have, at the same time, appropriated that social grace, without which, at Paris, one can only lose his head, like Robespierre, but can never set a crown upon it; or can only for a time control a portfolio, a tribune, a coterie.

The ancient French urbanity had already found an

entrance into Germany; but since Wieland and Thümmel, we have heard but little about it. The abundance of the scientific materials, the affluence of mind, the enthusiasm of feeling, the overrunning fancy, romanticism, finally, the political enmity to France, drove those old and smooth French formalities wholly out of our nature. But I have already shown how the restoration again reconciled us, by degrees, with France. Our political literature was the first to strike the French key-note again. How could that which we must at heart honor and prize among the French — their urbanity — fail to exercise an influence upon us?

Among the highest circles of society, this French elegance, together with the French language, had always remained the order of the day. A civic class, rich in intellect and in money, had not now, indeed, like the corresponding class among the French, penetrated into these highest circles; but the old families of the second rank were far more widely separated than before from the families of the first, by arrondissements and mediatizations, and had been brought nearer the mass of the other subjects, or of the common citizens. We could not have been surprised that the feeling of fallen greatness should manifest itself with the genuine romantic spirit, in some princely poet, as perhaps in Stolberg's youthful poems. But we ought to be still less surprised, if this feeling manifests itself under the form of an intellectual resignation, of an agreeable philosophy of life, and of the pride, through which Frederick the Great might have boasted of having been a great man, even had he not been king.

The Prince von Pückler Muskau unites with native

elegance the finest observation of all the tendencies of the age, which have forced him out of an obscure aristocratic existence, to a brilliant, and yet, in the strictest sense, only a civic career; and he has the art of extracting every delight from the novelty of the situation. He has retained only the comforts, the refined Epicurism, the polished manners of his rank; and, if he sometimes mentions his "armorial bird," we have no right to reproach him with it, for the entire literary phenomenon which he presents, is rather a concession which the high aristocracy makes to the spirit of the age, than a reclamation. It is a phenomenon which would have been impossible without the revolutions of the age, and particularly without the social revolutions of France. It is a flash of light thrown from France upon Germany; and the Prince Pückler bears the same relation to modern and civic France, that Frederick the Great bore to the old and philosophical France.

Hence, too, the prince, like Frederick, is French as to form. No writer has had the art of expressing himself in the German language with so much of the French spirit. His is not only the easy memoir tone, — it is before all the still more piquant, conversational tone, seasoned with all the graces, both of ingenuousness and coquetry. The desire to appear always under an advantageous and amiable light without exciting envy, to be imposing without hurting the feelings, to flatter without prejudice to himself, — this first rule of the genuine social intercourse of the French, takes precedence of all others with Prince Pückler Muskau. If he frequently lingers, particularly in his beautiful work on England, upon the thought, that the aristocracy has

been more and more driven out of political life, yet he himself demonstrates that the better aristocratic element is always called upon to maintain its supremacy over social life. The aristocracy of fine manners can never be rooted out; or it will always be reconstructed on the ruins of society. Mere wealth even will always establish its privileges; and it is not the least advantage of the writings of Prince Pückler that so many of the rich can find there directions how to acquire and enjoy with taste, and, by their own enjoyments, to pay the commonwealth at least the tribute of beauty.

Opposed to this cheerful prince stands a gloomy republican, in whom the spirit of the French revolution still survives, whose cynicism is heaven wide apart from the elegance of the prince, and yet is of the same French origin.

At Frankfort on the Maine, where the great Goethe was cockered up, a patrician child, a poor, diseased infant, came into the world — Baruch the Jew. He was ridiculed by Christian children while yet a boy. He saw daily on the Sachsenhaus bridge the infamous statue, which represents Jews grouped in the most offensive manner with a sow. The curse of his nation weighed heavily upon him. When he set out upon his travels, *Juif de Frankfort* was insultingly put into his passport. "Am I not a man like others?" he exclaimed; "has not God furnished my mind with every power? and you venture to despise me. I will avenge myself by the noblest means. I will help you fight for your freedom." He became a Christian, assumed the name of Börne; he joined the German patriots; he

burned and wrote for German freedom. Even Görres furnished essays for his "Balance."

But this noble ebullition was terribly disappointed. Nothing was seen in Börne, afterwards, as well as before, but the Jew; and this was the more studiously cast into his teeth, the more he yearned to be a patriot. Finally, patriotism itself came to such a lamentable issue, that Börne looked vainly around him to find it, and laughed bitterly.

From this time forth, he gave up all his German sympathies, or else they were converted into antipathies; and he inclined more and more to the principles of the French revolution, which have sprung up again among the republican party, particularly since the revolution of 1830. He believed that the Germans were not ripe for freedom, and that they were too servile and phlegmatic by nature to make any progress. He adopted the belief, to its full extent, that the freedom of one nation was not of much consequence, and that the freedom of the whole human race was alone worthy of his regard; and that national hatred, whose effects he had himself so deeply felt as a Jew, was the greatest obstacle to the acknowledgment of the universal rights of men. Yet he believed he ought to yield the preference to the French, because they had carried emancipation the farthest, and had been required to give the impulse to other nations. There he sits now, at Paris, the political Timon, and raving because even the French will have nothing to do with the matter.

Börne's wit is annihilating, like that of Aristophanes and Rabelais. His sole mistake has always been that he scorned alike the errors and the vices of men, and would

make no concession whatever to the slow progress of development. He not only offended, by this means, many of the most honorable men, but harmed the cause of that gradual development. A terrorism of words, without the emphasis of acts; a fist thrust into the pocket; a trick of falling impatiently into a passion while seated on a wooden horse, which yet will not budge an inch, — produce at last a wholly opposite effect. If Börne had not expressed wishes; had not surrendered himself to delusions and expectations; had not harangued and played the alarmist; if he had from the beginning assumed an attitude of cold repose, and looked upon the world with scorn, taking it as it is, and requiring of it nothing better, — then his sarcasm would have appeared more magnificent and diabolical. But I think his faith so often betrayed and his blind wrath speak more to his credit. He has a profound feeling, that led him early to a most cordial love of Jean Paul, and that transported him more than once to the noblest enthusiasm for his country, and for universal freedom. This profound feeling was constantly wounded and mortified by unmerited enmity, by infamous ill-treatment, and by the ever-recurring consciousness of having been deceived. Then it swelled up into hatred, and, like the crater of Vesuvius, poured out streams of glowing lava. But when the wild blaze died out amidst the sober light of day, the friendly vineyards still were ever seen, and the blue sea below, resting at the foot of the volcano, and hushed into the profoundest repose. What a lovely landscape, and what a hell beneath it! What poetry and what passions!

An innate sensitiveness, long disease, and a life full

of annoying collisions, must have kindled the soul of Börne into this fierce fire. No one can read Börne without being incessantly delighted by his fascinating and inexhaustible wit; but the impression it leaves behind is melancholy. The enchanting and ever-varying arabesques of his flowers are only hieroglyphics of the deepest sorrow. The parent of these whimsical jests is Melancholy, who looks with bitter laughter upon their pranks, and seems to make derision itself the object of her scorn.

Still no writer has exposed with such piercing acuteness every weakness and folly of his age, and pursued them with such inexorable hate. Börne is not always wrong; he sees not too darkly; but, as he brings forward the dark side universally, and hunts only after stupidity and baseness by preference, we miss in his writings a counterpoise. A laboratory wherein all the poisons of nature are collected together, is not nature herself. Jean Paul never gave us the thorn without the rose. Börne twines for us crowns and garlands of thorns alone. Görres is very much like Börne as to his all-penetrating political wit; but before the fiery Elias chariot of this genuine prophet of the new era, the pale horse of Death is harnessed along with the joyous steed of Life. Börne makes Death upon his pale horse tramp alone through Germany, draws Harlequin's motley vestments over his dry bones, sets the cap and bells upon his naked skull, and puts the scythe, for a whip, into his bony hand. This is wit royally arrayed as master; no longer serving good-humored playfulness or castigating earnestness; the malicious imp, that mows down all at his own will, and for his own pleasure.

Wit produces nothing great and entire; it only destroys what is great and entire. For this reason, all of Börne's writings are nothing more than reviews, fragments, aphorisms. He shows us, not an army on parade, but a battle-field, upon which we only know from the positions of the dead bodies where the living once stood. Here lie the poor German and French poets, with their broken lyres and shredded hearts; there, the actors without arms and legs; yonder, the German scholars, of whom we scarcely know whether they have merely gone to sleep, or are dead; farther on, the patriots of 1813, without their heads; yonder, the corpulent cockneys, with ripped-up paunches; all around, the erasures of the censorship, like trenches; Gruithuisen's telescopes, like spiked batteries of artillery; pens, like muskets; doctor's hats, like grenadier's caps; and old newspapers, like cartridges.

In the letters from Paris, the slaughter is still more terrible, as all the patriots, all the cabinets, all the legislative assemblies, all the journalists, and every thing else, fall pell-mell, and entire Europe becomes one broad battle-field; and, when every body is dead, a legion of hyenas are let loose upon the corpses, to satiate once more an inextinguishable revenge.

But, like the spirited war of words kept up by the French journals, Börne's wit is chiefly for the moment, only to-day and to-morrow, but, the day after to-morrow, is no longer intelligible. Political wit, like lightning, lives only for an instant. It can neither be bottled up nor pickled for him who sees it not, who is not struck by it. It is here, and, presto! it is gone. Of what avail now is the cold northern light, that counter-

feits the stormy sky of the glowing summer? It does not make even the leaves of a single tree to rustle. The icicles hang quietly from the dry branches.

The exaltation which once transported our German phlegm to enthusiasm and wit, as by an electric shock, has again passed away. It was an unusual, and, though custom may become a second nature, an unnatural straining. The heat of enthusiasm first left the heart, and then transferred itself to the head, where it flashed, for a time, like heat-lightning, as wit, until here, too, it cooled off completely. This, I think, happened by a very natural process; for an over-tension can never last a great while. The relaxation which follows upon it is, perhaps, accompanied by too much dryness and coldness; but is it, on the whole, any thing to be lamented? No! The present quiet is perfectly conformable to the German temper; the Germans are doing very well with it. Though Börne calls it a sleep, it is a healthy sleep, and happy is he who sleeps quietly. I should call it a vegetable slumber, a still and thriving growth. This is true of our physical as of our intellectual condition. On the whole, external well-being has increased, and an endless multitude of abuses of former times have been abolished. Literature, also, shows, that we are making intellectual progress, and the last ten years, obscure as they seem when compared with the ten years preceding, have yet really been much richer in the germs of power and progress. We should never judge any human condition by the highest measure of the ideal. Of all tyrannies, man is perhaps least willing to submit to that of reason. Too much was required at once; now we thrive with the little we actually

have, and that is the only solid path towards bettering our condition. The fact, that we can no longer, while busied with our present unassuming and vigorous industry, rightly comprehend and endure the "unhappy feelings" of the old enthusiasts, is a very good sign, even should the obdurate insensibility of the Helots, on this account, be charged upon us. With all his hatred against the old, Börne has too little love for the new; his imagination is too much taken up with the corruption of the past; and he sees not, as he ought to see, beneath the decayed and powdered bark of the ancient willow trunks, the young, green sprouts peeping out.

Nothing but destruction can come from the feeling of uneasiness and from scorn: what is to be soundly and freshly unfolded, whether belonging to physical or to intellectual life, must come from the consciousness of ease and sympathy. Scorn has a meaning and a value only when love and labor build up something better where that is pulling down. But this is really doing. If we compare our present situation with what it was before the dissolution of the empire, we must perceive that we have taken, during a short time, a great step in advance. We need but compare, if we would be just. I will not enumerate one by one the industrial, scientific, and even political advantages, which we at present possess. Let it suffice merely to hint, that we enjoy the inestimable blessing of advanced age — that of having got well over a multitude of follies, and of having grown wiser by time itself. This increase of wisdom among the Germans cannot be disputed, notwithstanding the many ancient absurdities of single schools and parties. I believe, too, that wisdom does

not come at once, when we have perceived our folly; it does not come until our folly and the pain it gave us have passed away; a pause for reflection, a time to cicatrize the wound, is requisite. As long as we are still vexed for not having been wiser, so long we are not yet wise. Now, for this reason, I believe that, during the last ten years, we have been growing wiser, or, perhaps I should say, we have grown wise at length, while, ten years ago, we hastily thought we were already so. We are now come to that pause of reflection; yes, we are pausing, but the pause in music has some meaning; the musical composer of the history of the world must here make the sign of the pause. Certainly, the repose into which German life is at present hushed, self-absorbed, is a sign of its inner fruitfulness; and I think it is rather to be compared to the quiet contentedness of a teeming mother, than to the brutal winter slumbers of a bear, as Börne would have us believe. It is no time for sinking into lethargy, disheartened and angry; unpretending activity, through all the branches of practical and scientific life, is allowed to enjoy its undisturbed and thriving operation. The activity and cheerfulness which have not only remained our faithful supporters, but have been roused to greater animation, promise and secure to us more than dark complaints, and discontent with every thing, can take away.

Börne flees from the hated sight of the Germans, and feels himself young and surrounded by the present only among the French. He would be the happiest, and most frolicsome, and most amiable of Frenchmen, were he not a German; he would be the gay Laertes, were he not the melancholy Hamlet. But Care never

leaves him whom she persecutes, as that rogue of a Horace long ago declared; she takes her seat behind him in the cabriolet, on the Eilwagen, and travels with him across the Rhine. Even among the gay Parisians, Börne cannot rid himself of that unhappy fund of German intuition that pays him usury with agonies; nor can he save himself from the sharp stings of his keen power of judgment, which pierces through every appearance, and, finding the truth no where, always buries its point in his own bleeding heart at last.

Like the angry scorpion that poisons himself to death, the unhappy Börne has at last begun to write French, forsooth, and to get pay for abusing us Germans before a French public. This is truly a lamentable moral suicide.

Heine is almost always named with Börne, either because he is or was a Jew, or because he lives at Paris a voluntary exile, or because he scatters sarcasms against Germany, or because he writes extremely witty prose. And yet, despite this external resemblance, he is very different from Börne; nay, to a certain extent, his opposite. Börne has deep, and glowing, and sorrowful feelings; whereas, with Heine, it is all toying and affectation. Börne often lifts the Cyclopean hammer of his heavy wrath to smite a fly; Heine, on the contrary, takes the most important and sacred things into his mouth as lightly as he would a cigar.

Heine has some advantages over Börne. He is not only a prose humorist, but, as a lyric poet, he is the founder of a new school; for he was the first to introduce irony into the lyric forms, and to unite the boldest freedom and most cutting wit with the softest sentimen-

tality. If, while doing this, he thought of Lord Byron, and affected Byron's sorrowful air, yet he was far too frivolous by nature seriously to resemble the great Englishman. He coquetted with burning sorrow for the sufferings of the nations, with dreamy amorous dissipation, with the debauches of genius, with playing the voluptuary, with antichristian freethinking, — but he only coquetted with them. The deep seriousness of Byron, and, above all, Byron's noble spirit, were wholly wanting to him. For we were struck, when we witnessed the first outpourings of his heart, by his Judaism, by his boasting, in prose and verse, less of the favors of the fair than of the gold which he protested he expended for them, and by the repeated affectation of seeing in Christ nothing but a common Jew, and in the blessed virgin Mary a fair Jewess, whom he ogled after the most unbecoming fashion, with his hands thrust into his breeches-pocket. His vanity was so various, that he went through every stage, even to loathing. To set himself above every thing, and to cast himself utterly away, was all the same to him. To move the reader by awakening the tenderest feelings, and then suddenly to startle and insult him by a piece of genuine buffoonery, gave him the highest delight.

Unhappily, he entangled himself with politics. What spirited young man would not have done the same, at so interesting a period? But Heine, Heine was exactly the man that was not made for it. He was too much a poet of zephyr lightness not to be drawn down, sooner or later, into a slough by the leaden weight of politics.

He went to Paris. The July revolution filled him

with enthusiasm. He wrote "The State of Affairs in France," an historical picture of characters, his best prose work, wherein he certainly showed that his talent was also adequate to cope with a solid subject. But the applause which this book received enticed him away more and more from the poetic path to the political, critical, historical, and philosophical.

Still he was not yet quite clear to himself. The great fame of Börne among the revolutionary young men weighed upon his mind. He sought to outshine him by political satires; and, for a time, the two seemed to rival each other, by struggling to see who should say the worst things of Germany in the wittiest manner. But, though Heine was so perfect a master of form, the true, inward energy of sarcasm, the decided tone of sentiment, was wanting. He endeavored to supply its place by a system which never entered Börne's thought. Börne respected religion and morals. This made him a German Philistine in the heart of Paris, and isolated him from the youths who cast off all restraint. Now, while Börne drew back with lofty independence, Heine went the more flexibly into the new tendency of the young, flung aside with scorn every thing that Börne still regarded as sacred, and began to assume one of the first parts in the systematic warfare against religion and morals, which had sprung up and taken the place of the unsuccessful political commotions.

The more dangerous this part was, and the more severely it deserved to be condemned, the more readily we must acknowledge, by way of excuse for Heine, that he took it up at first as a poet; that it had for him all the enchantment of a poetical illusion. The

overthrow of Christianity pictured itself before him with as sublime a beauty as the burning of the city of Rome did to the eyes of Nero; but he was frivolous enough to stir the fire himself. For the sake of this poetical gratification, he sacrificed all that men deem sacred. He doubtless calculated upon the admission of this poetical excuse, should things come to the worst; but he took no less pains to put on a serious look and the dignity of the teacher, towards his adherents, that he might be acknowledged, if the result should prove favorable, as he himself exultingly declared, the new Messiah of antichristianity.

As early as 1831, in a supplement to his sketches of travel, he had ridiculed Christianity after the most shameless style; had called it a miserable, bloody religion for criminals, and Christ a haggard, bloody Jew, who had robbed the world of all its joys, and, what was much to be lamented, had destroyed the far more beautiful faith of ancient paganism. But, in 1835, his system had been fully unfolded, and in his "Saloon" he laid it before the public, under the form of a critical history of philosophy. Here he pointedly declares, that Christianity is now annihilated by philosophy, and is retained by hypocrisy only for the sake of appearances. Borrowing his poetical images from the infamous "War of the Gods," by Parny, he paints it all out before us; how the whole garrison of heaven must be put to the sword, how God is weltering in his blood, and Immortality is lying at the last gasp. He affirms that no rational man believes in Christianity, or in a God at all. He says it is all over with morality, too. He declares that the distinction between

good and evil was only a crazy dream of Christianity; that there is no such thing as vice; that nature is divine; nature may allow itself every indulgence, and can never sin. The senses, too long held under thraldom by Christianity, must be completely emancipated. Matter is God; sensual enjoyment alone is holy; and sensual festivals must take the place of Christian ordinances. After submitting to oppression so long, the senses must avenge themselves on Christianity by orgies and uninterrupted debauchery. Saint Simonianism must be farther carried out, its pedantry must be taken away, and it must aim wholly at enjoyment. All mankind must constitute themselves into a republic of the happy, and no longer toil and starve, but eat pies, drink sack, and embrace fair flesh. How it is that *all* are to revel, that *all* are to have enough, and nobody go away empty handed, he does not say.

In a second work on romanticism, he carried the same thought through an improvised history of poetry, and appears, at the same time, as the founder of a sect, when he announces himself the head of the literary party who sing hosannas to him in Germany, under the name of *Jeune Allemagne*, and praises their apostolical zeal.

These doctrines are precisely the same as were announced, shortly before the French revolution, by Holbach, and were carried into practical operation by Anacharsis Clootz, Marat, Hebert, Chaumette, and the Parisian municipality, during the revolution. Every body knows that, in 1793, the priests were put to death, the churches stripped, religion declared a crime, and a decree was passed "that there was no God." Every body knows that festivals of sensuality

were solemnly held, and that matter was deified. But, soon after, all these materialists laid their heads under the guillotine, and France washed clean her bloody hands. It was not until after the July revolution, that an attempt was made to revive the old Jacobinical reminiscences; and there was again found a German systematizer, a second Holbach, to take the young Frenchmen to school; and that was our Heine.

"Young Paris," overrun with refugees from all countries, constituted itself the "young Europe." From it, as is well known, sprang a "young Italy" and a "young Germany." "Young Italy" was carried by Silvio Pellico over to De la Mennais and the new French Puritanical party, which, after the spirit of the English revolution under Cromwell, aims to conquer freedom by means of religion. This party has recently sent us forth the declaration, from Switzerland, that it throws itself into the arms of religion. "Young Germany," on the contrary, was carried by Heine over to the French freethinkers, who are combating with religion, and with morality still more, and who have declared against them a war of extermination.

A number of young men, all from the north of Germany, formed themselves into a coterie, to spread systematically over Germany the antichristian doctrines of Heine. But, as Heine had only drawn from French sources, they, too, went directly back to the same, and collected carefully all the poison, which the sun of July had generated in the stagnation of French affairs, for the purpose of spreading also among us the pollution and the pestilence.

Wienbarg wrote his "Æsthetic Campaigns," and his "Political Zodiac," through which he preached the

French St. Simonianism with regard to politics, and, at the same time, with reference to religion, the materialism of Heine, the religion of the flesh, and projected a republic, where property and women should be common, and where, under the name of a completely æsthetic life, the most exquisite sensual enjoyment should be the highest aim.

The "Manifesto of Reason," by Clemens, sounded somewhat tamer. He wanted to guide to the same goal, not, however, independently of all Christianity at once, but by the gradual undermining of Christianity.

Gutzkow endeavored to surpass Heine and Wienbarg, inasmuch as he not only called Christ a fool and impostor, the apostles oxen and asses, Christianity a piece of hypocrisy and a penitentiary system, — but would have nothing to do with any religion at all, and set up the assertion that it would have been better had the belief in a God never been entertained; and so, by consequence, he rejected all laws and institutions of morality, shame, fidelity, marriage, and the like. But, as he felt that he could not immediately reach the German people with such assertions as these, he endeavored to operate the more variously upon them indirectly, by taking the literary fascinations of the French for his model. He endeavored, by frivolous delineations of political characters copied from the French journals and memoirs, to operate upon newspaper readers, and, by novels and dramas, upon the numerous readers of the circulating libraries. The new French novels — those of Sand, for example — return to the atheistic and licentious tone of the old French romances, wherein, as in *Therese la Philosophe*

and *Justine, ou les Malheurs de la Vertue*, every virtue is made ridiculous, and vice is represented as the only practical and delightful thing. Gutzkow wrote his infamous novel "Wally" after these filthy models. On the other side, the new romanticists of France have taken the passion for the horrible from our Callot-Hoffmann school, caricatured it after their fashion, and connected it with the ferocity of the reign of terror, which has been again awakened in literature, and with which the young republicans are so ready to coquet. At the head of this school stands Victor Hugo, through whose works the most savage ferocity of manners, the most unhumanized modes of thinking and acting, the most abandoned characters, and the most horrible situations, vie with each other by an uninterrupted succession of licentiousness and murders, to find sympathy among the readers of the most corrupt metropolis on earth. Gutzkow wrote his "Nero" upon this model. At Paris, the exclusive coteries are powerful, and journalism becomes a weapon scarcely to be resisted, when wielded by their hands. This, too, Gutzkow took for his model, organized a coterie, and proposed not only to establish a great German review according to the French spirit, but actually gained over a great many other papers, by lavishly promising to the editors literary advantages, and to the publishers substantial profits, and expressly invited all the young men of Germany to join with him, when he guarantied to every one, under this condition, to proclaim him, through all the affiliated journals, as one of the first nobilities of literature. Thus, then, he declared his purpose to be, not to judge things as a critic, but to

give the character of persons, with the view of exciting speedily the greatest attention, and of bringing speedily all the men and measures of any worth before a rabble, such as is usually collected upon every public uproar. He hoped, by these French means, to produce a greater effect upon Germany, where their application is still new, and to make up by impudence what he wanted in real talent and knowledge.

The coterie called itself "young Germany," but only as an emanation of "young Europe;" for they expressly declared that "patriotism was only an animal impulse of the blood," and that we must devote ourselves not to one nation, but to the whole human race, (which, however, is to be derived from France;) and therefore the hitherto national literature must be annihilated, and a literature of the world substituted for it.

They received the greatest applause, in Germany, among certain Jews, who had for a long time worshipped their Heine; then, too, among many rationalists, who had long endeavored to undermine Christianity, and now were joyfully surprised by the bold young men, who shot so swiftly by them, while they were toiling at this tedious labor. The old Paulus wrote a pamphlet for Gutzkow, but had not the courage publicly to acknowledge himself its author. Like a young hare, the old theologian had been gnawing and nibbling all his life long at the tree of Christianity, without being able to do it much harm. Now, before his end, he saw the wild boars break in, and get their snouts ready to root it up without further ceremony. There he stood by their side, and wept tears of joy.

But when the hunter came, and stretched the black brutes on the ground, the little hare absconded, and secretly wrote a small flying pamphlet for the defence of the boars.

Goethe's followers, also, should be blamed with regard to this matter. The immoral coterie did well to appeal to Goethe, and showed, by doing so, with how much justice I had assailed Goethe's frivolous tendency from the beginning. But even the more refined Goetheans, who did not justify the other brutal proceedings of the French *Propaganda*, were nevertheless much delighted to have gained new and vigorous allies. Mundt, of Berlin, made himself the go-between with relation to this matter. Laube is only a feeble copy of Heine. I consider his immoral tirades as the mere charlatanry of imitation. The other young Germans are not worth mentioning, for they are nothing but obscure scribblers.

Apart also from this particular coterie, the Gallomania has taken root in our elegant literature. Theodore Hell, the writer of the "Evening Gazette," brings upon our stage the most horrible caricatures of the Parisian pieces of crime, by miserable translations; and lately a certain William Müller (not to be confounded with the song-writer, now dead) has begun to compress in novels, after the fashion of Janin and Sand, all the physical and mental agonies, and loathsome details together, that are possible under the moon. A book published anonymously—"The Conspiracy at Berlin"—paints licentiousness as nakedly as those works delineate agonies, and may serve as a proof how far this taste for filth, which we have borrowed from the French, has already gone among us.

## CRITICISM.

CRITICISM itself is most severely criticised. Whether it be just or not, it always makes itself enemies. Still it is indispensable, and exercises great influence. To consecrate its often misused weapons by a right use of them is a difficult but a noble task.

Genuine criticism has a duty to perform as noble as it is necessary. As thinking is propagated by reflection, so is literature by criticism. Every new book grounds its right of existence only on the criticism of its predecessors. Under the guidance of criticism, one race after another grows up and ripens, and the contest is unceasingly carried on with one hand, and the edifice is building with another, as was done at the temple of Jerusalem.

Criticism, so far as it concerns single sciences, is also an integral part of their literature. But, above and beyond this, critical surveys over the whole range of literature have become necessary; and this want has most naturally joined itself to that of literary reviews. Men desired to know what had appeared in literature, and what was its value; and so the reviews connected themselves with the booksellers' advertisements; and, as the books were periodically published, they were reviewed periodically; the critical literature became essentially a periodical literature.

The periodical form, and the exclusive attention to what is new, make a partial and onesided character a condition of this literature. It is by this means withdrawn from the real interest of criticism, and given up to a mercantile interest. A great multitude of new works are undeserving of criticism; but they must be noticed, because they are upon the bookseller's shelves. A good book happens to be reviewed unfavorably, or is passed over entirely; and when the moment is once gone, and it is no longer new, nothing more is thought about it. The number and importance of the works by this means forgotten, or falsely estimated, is so great, that Jean Paul was perfectly right to propose a literary journal for the arrears, a retrospective review which should be devoted exclusively to literary rescues, after the manner of Lessing. We must perceive at once that criticism should not be a mere fair, where, amidst the throng and pressure of the present, one cries himself out of breath to praise up his merchandise and supplant the rest. By the aid of bribery, of fashion, or of accident, a worthless book often receives a brilliant eulogium from a dozen journals; and just as often an excellent book is misapprehended, abused, and forgotten. What is old falls out of the course; but can criticism be confined to the interest of the day? Besides this, fashion rules with tyrannical sway over the daily journals. The criticism which should bring all the movements of literature to the test, from a fixed point of view, is itself hurried off into the same careers; for the same interest circulates the books and the reviews among the reading world, and seeks purchasers for both.

The reviews are established, more frequently, either for reputation or gain; and, whether for one or the other, the reviewing is done like manufacturing. The universities often publish their journals merely to escape the reproach of inactivity and obscurity; and the sheets are filled up, *ex officio*, with such materials as it pleases Heaven. Most of the other periodicals are the undertakings of booksellers, calculated for profit; and here the reviewers formally sit, like manufacturers, and perform their appointed task. This mechanical criticism, then, brings out that monstrous number of reviews which nobody can look over. Manufactories of this kind are every where established, and managed by a majority of hungry stomachs and shallow heads, who write at random for the day what no mortal man will read the next year.

To speak generally, the critical journals are divided into the learned and the *belles lettres* reviews; and the learned, again, are divided into theological, medical, educational, and juridical, according to the several departments of science. The distinction, which was touched upon at the beginning of this work, between the learned and the natural writers, prevails strikingly through our critical literature; and this is just the place where it is most injurious. In criticism, at least, the spirit of the nation ought to soar beyond the internal distinctions and divisions of culture and opinions, and to occupy an independent position. Here the results of science should be accommodated to the public at large, and life and poetry to the retired students. Criticism ought to appreciate all for every one. To this end, an independent literature is appointed for it. The

nation ought to see itself reflected here, as from a great mirror, and to learn, by taking a broad and intelligible survey, to know and prize all the operations of its intellect. True, we have no public that could interest itself about every thing; the scholar here, and the æsthetic lady there, have not yet found the third element, wherein they might make themselves understood. Who among the fashionable world would like to read the learned comments that fill the literary journals? and who of the learned world cares to read the blue-stocking gossip of the *belles lettres* magazines? But there ought to be a higher national criticism, which should supply neither those comments for the exclusively learned, nor this gossip for mere women and fops, but a popular estimate of the intellectual works that have been produced by the nation, and that have some importance.

Together with this opposition between the learned and the followers of nature, all the oppositions between the several parties on either side of the questions of the day prevailed through our critical literature. There are journals exclusively for Catholics and Protestants, and again for the subordinated parties of these divisions, for different schools of medicine, and so on. They are the arena of controversy.

Still it is to be lamented that the parties are far from being sufficiently concentrated. This comes from the fact that their adherents are scattered every where. We have no great metropolis, but only a multitude of universities, and cities of literary pretensions elsewhere, which, a hundred leagues apart, form a critical concert of quite too many voices. Hence, instead of one good journal, ten inferior jour-

nals of the same party; instead of one all-pervading consistency of opinion, ten or a dozen diversities of view; instead of one great party interest, ten or a dozen personal interests.

It is remarkable that, for more than a hundred years past, individuals of clear heads have taken pains to introduce a unity into this confusion of opinions, and to place criticism on a higher ground, commanding a view of the whole range of literature. Thomasius, of whom honorable mention was made in a former part of this work, first made the attempt at the close of the seventeenth century. He excited great attention, encountered the most tumultuous opposition, was persecuted by all the faculties, and died without finding a worthy successor. But he had cleared the way vigorously; had supplanted the Latin scholastic language by the German, and hundreds of narrow-hearted prejudices by broader views; and, particularly, had opened the way for the study of French literature — although the Germans borrowed from it not the freer spirit, as he wished, but only absurd fashions and corrupt manners. When this French taste had become predominant, Godsched undertook the judicial office of critic during the first half of the last century. The Græcomaniacs and Anglomaniacs fought against him with zeal. At length, however, Lessing put the ancient pedantry completely to rout. But, meantime, as that noble spirit was generally absorbed by the minutiæ of art and of antiquarian studies, and cast only an occasional glance upon the wide circuit of literature, without subjecting it as a whole to a systematic judgment, Nicolai undertook this boundless labor in the

"Universal German Library." But, although he was most undoubtedly enlightened by the spirit of Lessing, and thus far labored successfully against the old Latin scholastic lumber, the unbending prejudices, the diffuseness of style, and the like, and though he gained great reputation by his efforts to illuminate the age,—still he gave himself too much to an arrogant habit of passing sentence upon whatever, as an affair of feeling, did not agree with the then domineering understanding, or, as an affair of deep religious and national poetry, did not coincide with the modern frivolity. Add to this, that the greatest part of the immeasurable critical labor of that library had to be intrusted to underlings of very inferior capacity.

Romanticism now asserted its claims against these efforts. Goethe and Schiller wrote the *Horen*, and the Schlegels began their *Athenæum*. The followers of Nicolai were overthrown; their boasted understanding dwindled down to a shallow, and filtered away through the sands of the Mark.[1] A new enthusiasm for art, and even for religion, caused the good to be forgotten which the derided Nicolaites had originally purposed, and, to some extent, actually accomplished. But no permanent and unrestricted critical establishment of romanticism was formed. One succeeded another, and all soon went down. Criticism was divided into that of the learned, and that of the fashionable journals. In erudition, the spirit emancipated itself from the letter, and the taste

[1] [*Mark* is the old German word for *country*, or *province*, signifying, properly, however, the *borders;* thus, *Mark-Brandenburg*. The word appears, also, in such names as *Denmark*. The English word *marches* is used in the same sense. The allusion here is to the sandy plains round Berlin.—TRANSL.]

from the ancient pedantry, so far that nearly every university, and not only so, but almost every science, opened a critical journal, by which the new achievements of the learned were announced and discussed in the German language, and with a dignity not merely borrowed from rank, but from the thing itself. Most of these establishments, however, have by degrees lost their credit again. The men who, at the beginning, managed them with ability, grew old, morose, or indolent, and yet would not give up the control of the works, but employed partisans and subordinates, who only kept on along the old beaten track, and frequently substituted the lumber of the letter for the spirit. On the other hand, the fashionable journals devoted themselves exclusively to the greater public, and principally to the female readers, accommodated the fashionable taste to their range of culture, and, by that means, fell into a trivial spirit, which stood far below the elevation of the Hamburg *Dramaturgie*, the *Horen*, and the *Athenæum*.

It was only under such circumstances that a man like Müllner could possibly set himself up for a time as the tyrant of elegant literature. Without principle, without settled opinions, a man of the vilest taste, and of very superficial attainments, but coarse and crafty, and without the least delicacy as to the choice of means, he had the art of frightening the lovers of peace, of flattering the rabble, and of gaining over a wide public to his private predilections and private hatreds. The fact that the tone he first gave still prevails, at least through our theatrical criticisms, proves how much he adapted himself to the tastes of the vulgar. He never had any other object than the gratification of his vanity, of his

love of revenge, and of a universal fondness for public scandal, whereupon, like a buffoon, he always attempted to bring the laugh over to his own side, by the most shameless wit. Every higher aim was so completely beyond his view, that he never once excited the attention of the scientific public, and felt himself so much the more at his ease, among the *belles lettres* readers, where he was the cock of the walk.[1] Great as was the noise he made, he is now nearly forgotten.

Brockhaus, of Leipsic, who deserves praise on many accounts, endeavored to supply a want of the times, by establishing, together with his favorite *Conversations-Lexicon*, — which was intended to give, in alphabetical order, every thing that could possibly be worth knowing, for all classes, — a conversation paper also, the present "Journal for Literary Entertainment," wherein learned works, and works of lighter literature, a motley and various assemblage, were to be discussed for all classes; in short, every thing for every body. Pity only that the principles of this criticism were just as various as the subjects; that the numerous articles that poured upon this journal from all quarters, presented views as divergent from each other as if they had been sent forth by a hundred different journals.

These critical efforts, coming from the unlearned quarter of literature, made even the learned feel the necessity of setting up something new. The literary reviews were quite too observably suffering under the imbecility of dotage. The energy of a critical principle was felt to be wanting. A journal was contem-

[1] [*Wie ein Hahn im Korbe:* literally, "like a cock in the basket," a German proverbial expression. — TRANSL.]

plated which should adhere to a definite system. After repeated trials, repeatedly given up, the Berlin *Jahrbücher*, for scientific criticism, was established under the influence of the philosophy of Hegel; but this journal, too, could command the attention of the public only so far as it adopted the principle of an historical eclecticism, and atoned for the offences of the philosophical dictatorship by enlightened and profound criticism. Hegel died; the historical tendency continued; but the desired intellectual unity, on which alone a governing authority can be founded, was not attained; a controlling influence over the whole circle of the sciences was not gained. Together with the many other critical journals, a new one was now established, which was advantageously distinguished from the common-place character and the controversial tone of some of the older journals, by an industry and a decency of manner before unknown; but no unity was secured for the anarchy of learning — nay, enthusiasm was not even once awakened.

About the same time with the journal of Brockhaus and the Berlin *Jahrbücher*, I began my critical labors. Literature lay before me like a boundless chaos, which I endeavored to bring into order. No general view of this world of books had then been gained. The nation knew not its own wealth, and still less knew how to separate the good from the bad. Combination and comparison on a great scale were wanting. Ancient customs and modern fashions, party spirit, the underhand manœuvres of coteries, or the personal impudence of individuals, raised some tendencies to power which deserved to be utterly rejected, and kept down others which would have deserved to enjoy a wider influence

over the popular mind. The public allowed themselves to be pleased with every thing, because they had no means of obtaining a general survey. Amidst the universal confusion, they followed the first they could find; and, when they had become accustomed by reading-rooms to a variety of journals, and consequently to the most contradictory opinions, then literature began to sink from the rank of a means of instruction, which it had before maintained, and always should maintain, to that of a mere entertainment; nay, many practical men turned wholly away from this chaotic literature.

Under such circumstances, a revision of our whole, and particularly of our recent literature, became very necessary, to clear up the view over the mass of books swelling more and more into a prodigious pile, and in order to set aside the remainder, the unnecessary, or the utterly worthless, by discovering and bringing to light the good, the great, and the beautiful.

I ventured upon this revision, led to it by an irresistible impulse of the deepest and strongest feeling. I felt that I must see clearly into this hurlyburly. I felt that I must war against every thing which the prevailing confusion, the stultification of the times, and the desecration of so much that is noble, were producing and increasing every day. I saw that a sophistry of the understanding and the heart, a spirit of falsehood, a genteel vulgarity, which did not appear to be sufficiently excused by the celebrity of great names, had penetrated to the highest circles of science and art. I perceived that, on this very account, a truly healthy operation from above, from those higher spheres, upon the lower circles of the public at large, was checked. I perceived how the vulgarity of the fashionable literature was ex-

tending itself over the lower classes of society, and, regardless of every loftier consideration, snatched only at a frivolous entertainment for the day. I saw how religion had been desecrated by superstition and unbelief, manners by prudery and disguised licentiousness, science by affected omniscience and rude ignorance, art by a finical, die-away over-exquisiteness and coarse naturalness, the sense of right by servility and anarchical tendencies, love of country by a narrow cockneyism and a passion for foreign lands. But it was not enough to carry on a vigorous warfare against them; clearness of view, and conscientious uprightness, above all things, were requisite.

As I had united, for twenty years, an indefatigable study of German political history with the history of German literature, I thought it necessary to estimate every individual author, and every individual book, both in its connection with the whole range of the age when the author lived, and with the science or art to which the book belonged. Justice requires that this external connection should be always taken into consideration, even when individual works by and for themselves are to be criticised with sound judgment. The grounds of a decision have a double power, if they are taken not only from the general judgment of reason and taste, but also from the historical connection.

It would indeed be a useless trouble, were I to express my views of the kind of reception which my labors met with at the hands of my contemporaries. I will not recapitulate with how many parties and coteries, with what a host of vulgarities, I have been compelled to grapple. The ferment must have time to

subside. It is now at the highest, since my old enemies, who had been decimated by defeats and death, have been suddenly recruited by my disciples and imitators. I lament that I have hatched this young brood of critics, who dash off their crudities in my confident language, without the least suspicion of my long-continued toils, and who actually overrun the critical journals, with the most presumptuous and daring ignorance; but it was impossible to avoid producing them; for what novelty, what fruit of laborious years, is not instantly imitated by youthful arrogance? The only thing which I could do to counteract this was, not to let my good cause be made a bad one by such an *imitatorum pecus*. I want neither the mediators who attempt to form a *juste milieu* between my truth and the ancient lies, nor the hairbrained Hotspurs who attempt to outdo my vigor by an all-destroying madness. I know very well that all reformers, to whatever department of knowledge they may belong, have had two kinds of disciples, and that they are both unavoidable; but I, at least, will not fall into the error of acknowledging them; for I have no idea of suffering the fate of the old Persian Zohak, who allowed the devil to kiss his shoulders, and forthwith two insatiable serpents grew out of them. My cause shall remain pure.

The new league against me has been concluded in the name of immorality. All those who oppose me have found themselves thrown together in this impure element. Their watchword is sensuality; all the Goetheans of Berlin and the Parisian *Jeune Allemagne* shake hands. They are eager to give to the controversy against me, which has hitherto been confined

almost entirely to personalities of the most vulgar description, the aspect of a great war of principles within the province of taste.

In scientific criticism, all is tolerably clear. The more profound and complete knowledge decides upon that which is shallow and fragmentary, or various interests practise their sophistry to the defiance of better knowledge; and, if we know these interests, we know always where we are.

The criticism of taste only is uncertain — does not depend upon definite knowledge, nor upon definite practical interests; and, although it follows the spirit of the age, like every thing else, still caprice reigns there, with its innumerable contradictions, modified by all degrees of culture and talent. Here every body wants to have his say; no one acknowledges a law; each individual applies his own view, amidst the fluctuating and fleeting element of subjective or personal feeling, without troubling himself about the fixed element of the objects themselves.

Tastes are different by nature, and will always remain so. At a time of the ripest culture, they could not but diverge into a still greater variety, take still more extraordinary directions, partly towards the most obstinate onesidedness, partly into the strangest elective affinities of the most heterogeneous things.

But a separation becomes by degrees observable throughout this chaos of taste. The sensual and moral feelings begin to form an opposition, which is more and more marked, within the province where feeling alone, and not knowledge, can decide.

The two extremes, between which civic life formerly

moved undisturbed over a wide middle space, have been gradually encroaching upon the interval, and crowding towards each other. Formerly, the church and all that was connected with it maintained the utmost severity of manners; on the other hand, the court and the aristocracy were extremely sensual. The people who filled up the interval shared neither the exaggerated austerity of the one, nor the licentiousness of the other. They were moral, but also joyous; unrestrained, but with honor. But, as both church and aristocracy have been overthrowing the wall of separation which divided them from the people, and have disclosed themselves more and more to the people's view, so what was once the characteristic badge of their rank has now passed over to the masses. Thus the theological asceticism became social prudery; aristocratic licentiousness, social frivolity. The honest-hearted and often right merry fathers were succeeded by sons who were much more earnest and gloomy, or much more dissolute and pleasure-loving. The process of dissolution throughout the established order of things is yet going forward: according to this, the separation of those who give the tone to society into a prudish and a frivolous party takes place; and it will perhaps be long before the right medium is again found; and this will probably not be accomplished by literary criticism, but only by a general reorganization of our at present disorganized society.

Sensuality has very rapidly passed from fighting for life to a position of attack. Once it was freer among the privileged laity, side by side with the ecclesiastical austerity of manners, as it was afterwards when a universal prudery gained the supremacy. Mad carni-

val revelries formerly resounded hard by the church, as, at the courts, the scurrilous court fool took his place by the side of the upper court preacher. But this ceased. Many pleasures and enjoyments were already repressed by Protestantism, and a darker spirit of austerity was favored. The courts and the nobility alone set themselves above its control, and defied its warnings. Now, however, the jealousy of the common citizens and of the learned undertook the office of censor of manners, and the privilege of the upper classes was disallowed. To this was added the righteous hatred, and especially the patriotic indignation, against the corruption of manners among the upper classes—the reaction against the Gallomania. The lively and joyous natures, such as Wieland, Thümmel, and others, now again took up arms against this austerity; and Goethe drove back the teachers of morals on all sides, by his immeasurable influence. A wholly new frivolity gained the upper hand, and reigned the more securely the more it concealed itself behind the veil of poetry, the more its corrupting and immoral spirit was hidden under an amiable appearance, like a subtle poison disguised by a sweet substance. The great wars with France recalled us to seriousness. Patriotism purified the hearts that were absorbed by pleasure, and gave new keenness to their vision. Now the serpent that lay among the flowers was discovered. But there still remained a multitude of men of pleasure, who belonged to the elder generation; and, further, the stagnation that ensued after the great wars were over, generated a new corruption of luxury; and, to some extent, we allowed ourselves to be again infected by a new Gallomania, which rushed madly into the basest sensuality. But patriotism took

up arms against it; that lofty spirit which had brought about the great rising of the nation against France, and had by no means disappeared, leagued with the more pious tendency which even theology had now regained.

Many, however, who assumed a middle position, now thought it their duty to defend sensuality, that morality might not prejudice the freedom which they wanted to vindicate to art under every circumstance.

This is the position where we find ourselves at present. On the one hand, an immeasurable system of philosophical and poetical dialectics is wholly exhausted to secure the supremacy over literature to the immoral propensities, by means of art; on the one part making them the leading object and the proper aim, and, on the other, excusing them as a secondary matter and unavoidable, for the sake of the freedom of art, which must be upheld under all circumstances. On the other hand, however, the eye is no less sharpened to see through all these delusions and palliations, to parry all feints, to counteract all diversions, and to hold fast the boundaries which the freedom of art may not transcend, if by doing so it would overthrow religion and morality, and thereby take away its own firmest foundations. The sensual and moral feelings must be harmonized in art; they must cherish a mutual toleration, so far as not to destroy each other by a partial and exclusive predominance, on either side. Art would perish, if the moral feeling were to repress every innocent manifestation of the lively joys of sense, and the love of life; for it has its basis no less upon the senses than upon morals. But the sensual must make the same concession to the moral; otherwise the contest will never end.

Prevailing material interests; an industry inventive of pleasures; unsatisfied political passions, which precipitate themselves into the abyss of sensual dissipation; an acquaintance with the coarse and more refined indulgences of all nations and ages, — will undoubtedly support, for some time longer, the sophistry of taste which battles for sensuality. But the attempts to raise it to universal supremacy; nay, to build up a new pagan religion of sensuality upon it; to destroy the spiritualism of Christianity by the complete victory of materialism; and to annihilate the belief of an invisible God, and of immortality, — will fail, at least in Germany.

The aim — sensuality — is the excrescence of a morbid, unsatisfied, and impassioned age, which will pass by. The instrument — æsthetics — is only the after-birth of an age already gone. The whole phenomenon is a league of the extravagances of the young with the erudition of the old. The former will be drawn off into the great current of political life; and the solution of the momentous questions now pending in Europe, and particularly in Germany, will lead the thoughts away to things of more importance than the gratification of vulgar impulses of sense. The others will die out. The more the nation becomes a nation, the more will the old literary aristocracy disappear, and finally perish of the unpopularity of which it is now sick unto death.

An age of manly ideas and talents will always put an end, early enough, to the league of extravagant youth and sapient age. Germany is travelling slowly but securely towards a position on which it will overlook

all Europe. Nobody will then think of inquiring after the spasmodic convulsions of our days; and the frivolous dissipations, and the wire-drawn subtilties of doting wisdom, which are now the talk of the day, will, when that time comes, be so no longer.

The return of our literature to the Anglomania and the Gallomania; the monstrous extravagances and over-refinements of our philosophy, which have paid the penalty of the most decided unpopularity; the abortions of our poetry, which have become epidemic; and the unnatural increase of literary productions, even under a material point of view,—stand as a disease, which has attacked only the literary part of the nation, in marked contrast with the rest of the extremely healthy and natural growth of the German interests. The nation is sick only on paper, not in actual life. The increasing political culture; the desire of national prosperity, powerfully and irresistibly awakened; the conviction, slowly, and, as it were, timidly, but the more inevitably, maturing, of the might that reposes in Germany's collective powers,—promise us a great future, whose sublime reality will disperse the impure dreams of literature.

The reign of literary extremes of every kind was a consequence of inward uneasiness—of a condition wherein the old could flourish no more, and the time had not yet come for the new—wherein a thousand powers were fermenting together, without being able to harmonize. Such a period never was before, and perhaps will never come again. This sparkling abundance of conflicting ideas bears about it all the power and all the wealth of the olden time, and the germs

of the new, but in a perfect anarchy. It is the chaos of culture.

A new and solid crystallization will here begin by no other process than the operation of the patriotic interest. This was the most forgotten, disregarded; and therefore it is now the newest and freshest. We must come back from the wide vacuum of the ALL, from our wanderings through foreign regions, from "Little Peddlington," and the study where we had obstinately fixed ourselves, to the feeling of nationality. We must come back from the intellectual extravagance which aims at nothing short of heaven, or the absolute and universal man, and from the egotism of private predilections, to the sense of public duty. We must come back from the arrogance of privileged genius, and the humility of the petty cit, to the patriotic sense of honor. In a word, all consciousness and all interests must be brought back to the consciousness that we belong to a great nation, and to its highest interest.

Many believe that freedom, modelled according to foreign ideas and examples, forms the proper germ of future crystallization in the motley fluid of the minds of our nation. They will be deceived. Even freedom, mighty as the conception of it is, subordinates itself to the higher idea of nationality; and we can arrive at the former only by the latter; or, if we try another course, we shall lose our way again.

Many believe that religion is that germ. They will be mistaken. Her distractions were, and are, universally, only the melancholy consequences of a vanished nationality; and when this is revived will the church too revive, and then only.

Many believe that science and art form that germ. But science and art, too, are deprived of their most fruitful soil, of their brightest sun, when they are strangers to nationality. All their diseases spring from this alienation.

Life, from which literature had broken loose, has grown powerful imperceptibly, and forces literature into its service. The authors, long accustomed to chase phantoms and private whims in egotistical isolation, find themselves surprised by the awakening national spirit which begins to penetrate literature, and to mould and transform it for national aims, and not for mere private entertainment.

The removal of the wall of separation between the learned and unlearned, the genteel and the low literature, and the fusion of both into a national literature, are far from being as yet attained; but a beginning has been already made, and the age is pressing towards this consummation. Journalism will advance rapidly on this path, and bind more and more strongly the two portions of the community together.

Should the learned, absorbed with their science alone, abstain from taking any part in what the rest of the nation are doing? Should they not draw new vigor from life itself, and again operate upon life? Is it not their duty to bring out among the people the nobler spirit which they cherish, and to make the people enjoy the fruits of their meditations, and to elevate the masses from the vulgarity of their ideas and inclinations? And should not the people, too, on their part, know what their scholars are doing? Have they not a right to appropriate the advantages of a higher culture imparted to them by their scholars?

Are not the scholars a committee of the nation, and bound by duty to their constituents? Is erudition the affair of a caste, or of a nation? Does not a great part of the ascendency of England and France rest upon the circumstance that, in these countries, two kinds of literature for two classes are not to be found, but only one literature for all the cultivated, and those capable of culture, through the entire nation? Does not a great part of the anarchy of opinions, of the all-pervading colossal misapprehensions, and of the helpless awkwardness, shown on all occasions where a national judgment should come into play, — rest, in Germany, upon the want of a literature alike accessible and intelligible to all classes of society, and upon the separation of the learned from the unlearned world? We feel this, and are correcting the evil.

The numerous journals that are read among the smallest towns and through the country, the reading-rooms which are spreading more and more, the conversations-lexicons, the penny magazines, the German Bridgewater treatises, the popular libraries and manuals for every branch of practical knowledge, and the cheap editions of the classical works of literature, — are operating incessantly upon the masses of the nation, and filling them with an amount of general cultivation which may indeed appear too variegated; it is taken, however, by no means as it is given, but each one receives from it what is most necessary for him.

The mass of the people, among whom the prodigious majority of the industrious classes rules, has lately been seized with the idea which is more powerful and more fruitful, and is destined to operate more strongly upon

literature than many a person perhaps now imagines. The idea and its realization were one and the same thing. Still all are surprised by the result. The Customs Union and the railroads have concentrated the material interests. Henceforth all interests must follow this concentric direction.

Foreign nations are abundantly aware of this future, which still slumbers in Germany. Should we not comprehend ourselves quickly enough, the amazement and alarm of our neighbors help us.

To coöperate towards the analysis of ourselves, at so interesting a period of the progress of German history, seemed to me so sacred a duty, that I thought I ought not to shrink from the enmity of many of my contemporaries. A review of our literature, such as I have attempted, was required by the times. But is not the age hastening rapidly onwards? Do not generation after generation press upon each other? Will not the many-colored tendencies of the most recent past, which stood so near me, amidst which I have grown up, for which I felt so warm an interest of love or aversion, — appear very soon, to the coming generations, foreign, colorless, indifferent? Will not the thousand-fold intellectual tendencies, which I so carefully followed out, be taken somewhat summarily by posterity, and their details be forgotten among the mightier and more peculiar interests of the future? And will not this book, which I conclude here, — the book which my opponents are so ready to denounce for being destructive, — then be regarded much rather as conservative, as a collection of reminiscences which had else been much sooner scattered and lost,

and as a defence of the various merits of German literature, during times which will hereafter be looked upon, not as the most fortunate and most honorable periods of German history, and whose excellences will be only too likely to be misapprehended amidst the far more brilliant achievements of the future? The blindness of the present to its own offences is ordinarily punished by the blindness of the future to the excellences of the past. Thus the philosophical century was blind to the virtues of the middle ages, because the latter were blind long enough to their own faults. The time will come, too, when our age shall be far more severely judged by the future than it has been here by me; and, in the end, I shall prove to have been less the prosecutor than the advocate of my times.

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