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THE LITERATURE OF GERMANY

BY

J. G. ROBERTSON

LONDON
WILLIAMS & NORGATE

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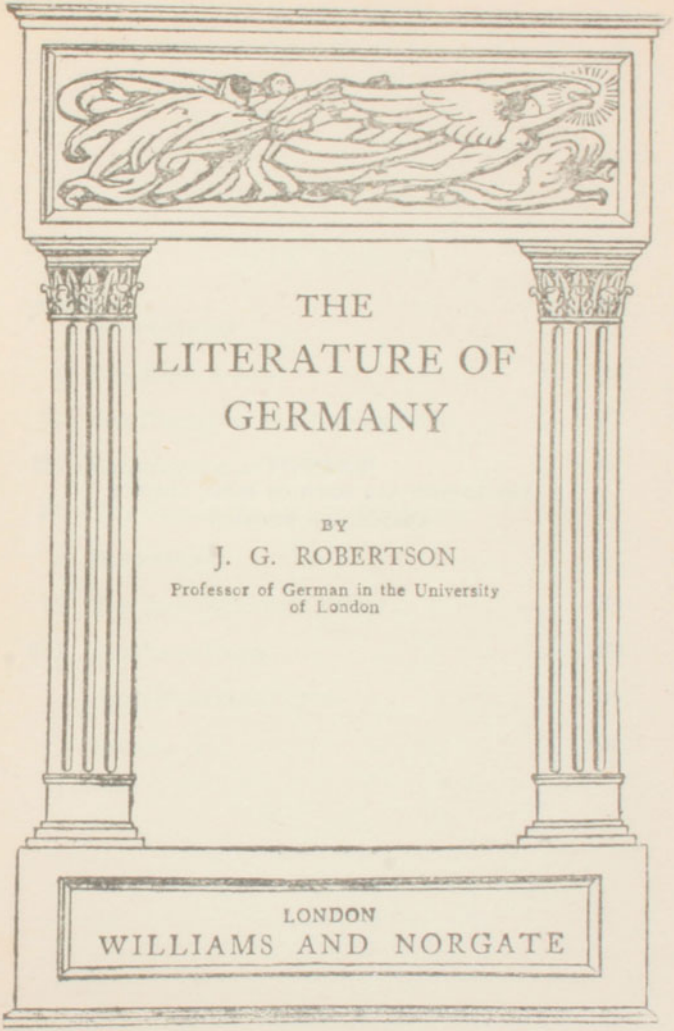
NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY



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PRINTED BY
THE LONDON AND NORWICH PRESS, LIMITED
LONDON AND NORWICH

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

It is not perhaps for the literary vendor to praise the wares he has to lay before his readers, even when, as in the present case, these wares are a literature to which he only undertakes to act as a guide; but a word might be said here in plea for a better understanding of the subject to which the following pages are intended to provide an introduction. There is a certain feeling abroad in modern England—a feeling which was, however, not shared by older generations—that the literature of Germany is of subordinate value, that it is less worthy of study than other modern literatures; that it possesses a more limited range of immortal works essential to the general culture of mankind. This is noticeable in the small output of books dealing with German poetry in England, in the inferiority of our English translations from the German compared with those from the French, Italian and Spanish; in the consequent neglect of even the masterpieces of this literature in

our many collections of universal literature for popular consumption, and in our general ignorance of what the Germans are thinking and doing in the world of letters.

Comparisons between one literature and another are difficult and not always desirable; we do not propose to infringe on the province of individual or national taste by trying to institute any such here. Nor do we wish to dispute the fact that German literary history presents a record of broken and often unrealised endeavour; that its development is irregular as that of no other modern literature in Europe; that its appeal in even its best works is frankly a national one rather than a cosmopolitan one. But there is one claim we would make for this literature, a claim which this little book will try to justify, namely, that German literature is an essentially modern literature; by which we mean that, in its entire range, from early mediæval times onwards, it is in peculiarly close touch with the thinking and feeling of to-day. The reason for this quality is to be sought in the overweening, even one-sided, individualism of German poetic art; it deals more persistently and constantly with the individual human soul than with the external world;

it is essentially subjective. German mediæval poetry may not be as successful in making "the golden Middle Age gorgeous upon earth again" as other mediæval literatures; but it gives us more penetrating glimpses into the inner life of the denizen of the Middle Ages, and thereby awakens a sympathetic interest in the modern reader. Its interpretation, again, of that great new-birth which we associate with the word Reformation appears in the still modern form of a liberation of the individual from a world that took no stock of individuals. Lastly, the great German literature of the eighteenth century deals constantly with problems, ethic as well as æsthetic, which are as vital and real to us to-day as they were to that far-off time. We have to accept frankly the comparative absence of the formal beauty which the Latin peoples of Europe can point to in their literatures; Germany has no Dante, Ariosto or Tasso; no Lope de Vega; no Corneille or Molière; but, on the other hand, her essential contribution to the wealth of the world's imagination has always centred in the interpretation of heart and soul. Her literature, in spite of its broken endeavour, its fragmentary incompleteness, possesses in this universal subjectivity a

perennial fascination; it realises the dream of her great Romantic thinkers at the beginning of last century of a universal poetry; it links up the Middle Ages with modern times; reveals, by virtue of its preoccupation with the psychical and the emotional, the common humanity that binds the European of to-day with his ancestors far back in the darker ages. It is thus less supreme beauty of expression that we have to look for in the great poets of the German past, than that modern affinity, which makes Wolfram von Eschenbach and Walther von der Vogelweide the most modern of mediæval poets, that brings Luther into line with the commanding personalities of more recent times, that makes Lessing a critic of our own day and Goethe still a modern poet.

THE LITERATURE OF GERMANY

CHAPTER I

THE MIDDLE AGES

It is customary for the literary historians who describe the earliest phases of German intellectual life, to distinguish two periods in mediæval literature which, following the nomenclature adopted for the corresponding stages in the development of the German language, they call Old High German and Middle High German. The first of these periods, which extended from about the middle of the eighth to about the middle of the eleventh centuries, may be disposed of here in comparatively few words. The truth is that the particular race of Germanic peoples with which we have to deal, was exceedingly backward in its intellectual development. Other members of the great Germanic family made much more rapid progress. The Goths,

for instance, who had settled in the south-east, on the Danube, as early as the fourth century, possessed a remarkable translation of at least part of the Bible into their own tongue, the work of their famous bishop Ulphilas or Wulfila; and the Germanic races that immigrated into our own island, were intellectually more advanced than their continental cousins. Even the Low German tribes in the north of the continental area, showed themselves capable of having their imagination stirred at an earlier date than the High Germans of the south. In fact, if we were to remove from the record of early German poetry the quota contributed by the Low Germans, what is left would be of very little value indeed. Old High German literature consists in great part of mere translations of the Church liturgy, of prayers, fragments of sermons and similar aids to the religious life. Even poems which earlier scholars used to think showed traces of an earlier, pre-Christian imagination, are now more rightly judged to owe their embellishments to monkish variants of familiar Biblical imagery. The most considerable monument of Old High German verse is the *Gospel Book* of Otfrid, of the ninth century, the first

German poem in rhymed, as opposed to alliterating, verse; it is, however, tedious and didactic, and confuses the simple story of the life of Christ by superimposing subtle, scholastic interpretations upon it.

The real poetry of this early twilight of the German mind is to be sought amongst the Low Saxon tribes of the north. To these Saxons we owe an alliterative verse translation of the Bible, of which the largest section preserved to us is a life of Christ, the so-called *Heliand* or *Saviour*. There is in this old poem a vivid sense of reality; for the poet possessed the gift, rare in those days, of seeing the world which he transferred to his poem, with his own eyes; he was able to interpret the happenings of the far-off eastern story, as if it were being enacted again before him, and in the rude surroundings of his own home. In addition to this naïve realism, the poet of the *Heliand* had something more than a mere memory of the pre-Christian traditions of the Germanic peoples; Christ in his eyes has become a veritable Germanic hero. With all its interest, however, the *Heliand* must yield to another fragment of this early time, which owes its preservation at least to Low German tradition. This is the *Hildebrandslied*, or

Lay of Hildebrand, in which, almost for the only time, we catch a glimpse of the primitive German spirit before the coming of Christianity; in this brief fragment of an old heroic story—describing how a father returns from long years of exile and is obliged to engage in combat with a son who obstinately refuses to recognise him, we have a splendid testimony to the poetic imagination of the Germans in that rough, primitive time before it was chastened and mellowed by the influence of Christianity

To find the vital literature of these dark centuries we have to turn not merely to Saxon literary monuments, but also to Latin. That blotting-out of the vernacular which accompanied the ascendancy of the mediæval Church, was more conspicuous in Germany than elsewhere. The dynasty of the Saxon emperors—Heinrich I., the three Ottos and Heinrich II., in whose hands the fortunes of the German-speaking world lay for over a century (919-1024)—withdrew the enlightened encouragement of the use of the mother-tongue, which characterised Charles the Great and his successors Ludwig the Pious and Ludwig the German, and, from the whole tenth century, the darkest of all the dark ages as far as

Germany was concerned, we hardly possess a line written in the German tongue. The only visible sign of continuity in the literary tradition is to be seen in the work of men who wrote in Latin. Prominent among such writings are *The Lay of Waltharius*, a polished epic by a monk, Ekkehard of St. Gall, of the story, which is also to be found in early English literature, of Walther and Hildegund; the *Ecbasis Captivi* (*The Escape of the Captive*), the earliest verson, written in Lorraine, of the Beast Epic, that vivid, realistic form of allegory which was to play a large rôle in later mediæval literature; and lastly, one of the earliest of European romances, *Ruodlieb*, in which there is some intimation of a return to a healthy joy in living, and a delight in action and adventure. *Ruodlieb* is a forerunner of the vast body of European romance which flourished under the influence of chivalry.

We can hardly say that there was any very clear connection between the sparing literary remains of this early period and its political history. The great age of Charles the Great left hardly a trace on his own people; and its echo in later times in Germany was faint and reflected compared with the enthusiastic hero-worship with which this monarch, as

Charlemagne, was regarded in the land of the Western Franks. Still less did the later Carlovingians mean to German poetry, and the Saxon emperors, with their exotic and Byzantine tastes, meant least of all. The real defining force in literature in those early days was the Church; literature was the immediate product of the monastery in so far as the art of writing was practically limited to the monks, these being the only members of the community who could read and write. How serious a disadvantage this could be for literature is seen at the outset of the new period of German literature in the eleventh century, when the Old High German speech had given place to that simpler modification we know as Middle High German; for with the rise of the Cistercian order of monks, Europe was at the mercy of a rigid, pessimistic asceticism, which fell like a blighting night-frost on the tender new-growths of secular poetry. "Remember death," "renounce the joys of life" was the eternal cry, and it was reiterated in a wide variety of forms through all the literature of the time.

Gradually, however, as the eleventh century moved on, the secular spirit began to free itself; the grip of the Church relaxed. Care-

less, wandering singers, "Spielleute" as the Germans call them, brought back to life the old-world stories that had lived on in oral tradition through all the vicissitudes of the dark ages, stories of early German heroes that had come down from the heroic time when German and Hun stood face to face in the "Völkerwanderung" or "Migrations," that terrible struggle for national existence in the fifth century. These new poets, too, discovered that the Bible was not all gloom and renunciation; they found in it stories which responded to a lighter vein in their own hearts, and these they told over again in their own way. But of all the liberating forces in this age the greatest was that of the Crusades, which, beginning in the last years of the eleventh century, gave Europe a spiritual ideal which maintained its preeminence until after the middle of the thirteenth; the Crusades opened up a new world, satisfying alike to the spiritual and the temporal ambitions of the age, and appealing with extraordinary force to the imagination of Northern Europe.

And in the train of the Crusades came chivalry, which inaugurated an era of cosmopolitanism in the thought and poetry of Europe, a devotion to one ideal of perfect

knighthood to which the whole Christian world paid equal, fervid homage. Rapidly, with these new humanising forces, a mellower light spread over German literature. Asceticism gave place to a love of knightly adventure, the melancholy drab of the monkish poetry became suffused with a lyric, religious mysticism; the oriental wonders, of which the early Crusaders brought back highly-coloured reports, kindled the imagination of the people. The wandering "Spielmann" became a factor of importance in literature and made an appeal to the people such as no monk ever could have made.

As the eleventh century approached its close an exceedingly varied literature began to be written in the German vernacular. Tales of adventures in the East, like *King Rother*, or —still more flamboyant in its orientalism— the story of *Herzog Ernst*, and the *Lay of Alexander*, the latter, a theme which already enjoyed popularity in France, were eagerly listened to by German audiences; from France came, too, at this time the beginnings of a form of mediæval romance which was to become in a peculiar degree the mirror of polite life, the Arthurian epic. Even more interesting was the early development, under

Provençal influence, of the national German lyric, or "Minnesang," and the revival of the sagas of the Migrations in the Heroic or Popular Epic.

Thus, within a miraculously brief space of time, we find Germany—this Germany which, a little over a century before, could hardly point to a single German poem—in the midst of a poetic renaissance of vast promise. With the closing years of the twelfth century sets in the first great epoch in German poetry, the so-called "Middle High German Flourishing Period"; and this flourishing period synchronised closely with the great age of the Hohenstaufen emperors who, between Konrad III.'s election to the Imperial throne in 1138 and Konradin's death in 1268, raised the German people to a dominating position in Europe. It seems a pity that in our latter-day histories of German literature this connection, on which the older Romantic critics laid such weight, is, to a large extent, lost sight of. Possibly it is only, as the scientific historian will have it, a fanciful one; but even if the connection does not admit of scientific proof, it may be accepted as an indication of hidden forces acting together which somehow render poetic vigour and political

power synchronous in the history of nations. It is true, there is but little actual reflection of German contemporary history in Middle High German literature; the great poets tell only of idealised heroes, of warriors of a long past age; the lyric is only in a small degree enlisted in the service of national ideas, and is then taken up with party quarrels and trivial happenings rather than with the real glory of the mediæval empire under Hohenstaufen rule; but none the less, or perhaps for that reason all the more, the same vigorous, self-confident life appears alike in poetry and in statesmanship. The great age of German mediæval poetry, which broke over Germany with such extraordinary suddenness at the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, is rightly associated with the ascendancy of the Hohenstaufen dynasty. As a matter of fact, it was not in the nature of mediæval poetry to take constant account of national movements or actual political life; for the art of literature itself was something of an abstraction, an idealisation that purposely left the realities aside. None the less, the festival, which Barbarossa (Frederick I.) held at Mainz in 1184, was a landmark in the development of mediæval song; and

although Barbarossa himself leaves little impress on the poetry of his contemporaries, his appeal to their fantasy is vouched for by the halo of romantic traditions that clung so long to his memory.

The scope of this little book precludes any very close study of this age; we can only look at a few typical representatives of its poetry. Middle High German literature falls, roughly speaking, into three clearly marked groups: the Court Epic, or Epic of Knighthood, built up for the most part on matters that came by way of France from Britain—the stories of King Arthur and his knights; the National or Popular Epic, which deals with themes drawn from the ancient sagas that had come down from the far distant epoch of the Migrations; and the lyric, or Minnesang. In the first group of poetry, the Court Epic, there stand out three great poets, Hartmann von Aue, Wolfram von Eschenbach and Gottfried von Strassburg. These men were the exact contemporaries of one another, and lived at the end of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth centuries. In their principal works they all "translated," although in a wide and liberal sense of that word, the stories of the Arthurian

cycle, that "matter of Britain" which had already been crystallised into soul-stirring romances by French poets like Chrétien de Troyes. It is obvious to every student of mediæval literature that we cannot, in estimating this literature, employ the criteria applicable to modern periods. For the whole relation of the mediæval poet to poetry, the relation of his personal individuality to his poetic individuality—if, indeed, any poet of the pre-Renaissance epoch can be said to have possessed individuality in the modern meaning of the word at all—was different. Hartmann, Wolfram and Gottfried may only, as we have said, have "translated," but just in the form and manner of their translations lay their poetic mission. In a naïve, unconscious way, due frankly to the want of any training in their art, they bring the poetic matter of another race into touch with a reality based on their own experience. It never occurs to them, as it would to a modern translator, to respect the rights of their originals; the story must, at all costs, be brought into agreement with the poet's own personal conviction, and in doing so, he has no hesitation in altering the matter he translates. Thus the personal note—

keeping in view the peculiar limitations of mediæval personality—is always present; translation or no translation, this poetry affords us a real insight into the constitution of the German thirteenth-century mind.

Of the three poets whose names have been mentioned, Hartmann makes perhaps the least cogent appeal to the modern mind. He is an artist whose peculiar power is to be sought in qualities of form and style, qualities in which the French poets of the same age had shown him the way, and in some respects overshadowed him. His *Erec* and *Iwein* are transferences to the German *milieu* of an art that had been perfected in France; and these poems taught the German poets a lesson in style of inestimable value. Hartmann's temperament—he was, no doubt, a little inclined to melancholy and deeply influenced by the monastic fatalism of his Church—appears more clearly in his non-Arthurian poetry, his lyrics, his delightful idyll, in many respects the most beautiful of the German Middle Ages, *Der arme Heinrich*, and in his severely ecclesiastic legend of *Gregorius*.

Hartmann is the finest artist of the three, but both Wolfram and Gottfried are greater poets and more interesting personalities

From Wolfram's epic *Parzival* we learn, as from no other European work of its age, the attitude of the pre-Renaissance mind to religion, the naïve realism and childlike simplicity with which the mediæval soul faced the problems of Christianity. The spiritual aspiration of the "guileless fool" Parzival, on his pilgrimage through life, is transfused by Wolfram with a suggestive and romantic allegory; the poet's unbridled imagination runs riot in describing the mystic castle and ceremonies of the Holy Gral, and these leave on us moderns an impression hardly less awe-inspiring than that which they left on the open-mouthed, staring hero himself, who is so overpowered by all he sees and hears that he forgets to put the little question of sympathy with human suffering which would have solved the riddle of the Gral. In *Parzival* Wolfram has painted for us the perfect knight, in whom the worldly and the unworldly—two opposites which had been blended in the ideal of the Crusades—are united in perfect harmony; and in this perfect knight, who through doubt and despair rises to a higher life, we recognise a type of manhood that is not mediæval alone, but is to be found again in modern literature. In the problem which

his hero has to face lies the " present-day " element in Wolfram von Eschenbach.

If Wolfram shows the relation of the mediæval mind to its spiritual problems, we might claim Gottfried's poem as an elucidation of the dealings of that mind with moral and social problems. On the surface perhaps this does not seem to be so. Gottfried's *Tristan* is a love story, the most passionate love story of the Middle Ages ; and it might seem as if, so far from being a moral discussion of the theme, it is characterised by a persistent avoidance of all that we moderns regard as a desirable moral standpoint. In fact, there is no moral law for Gottfried ; he stands " beyond good and evil " ; he tells his story with the sheer delight of telling it, regardless of all moral consequences or lessons. But just this lack of a sophisticated moral code makes it the easier for us to get at the real bed-rock of human morality below the surface. Tristan is a moral-less tale, but a tale which just thereby carries with it its own deep moral. The blight of an almost modern fatalism falls on these two unhappy lovers, who have drunk the fatal potion that brings them into clash with society, and holds them by a passion that ultimately overwhelms them.

To this age belongs also the great national epic of the German peoples, the *Nibelungenlied;* it is the chief example of the second class of narrative poetry which we have distinguished in Middle High German literature. The modern reader is at first inclined to place the *Nibelungenlied* in a very different category from those poems we have just been considering. Outwardly it is very different; it is no story of polite Arthurian chivalry; even the very form, the kind of verse in which it is written, is different; and there is a fundamental difference between the matter of the two types of epic. The author's or authors' name we do not know; and indeed the need of knowing does not seem very urgent; there is so little tangible personality behind the poem. One feels that there is, so to speak, less gap, between the present epic and its original basis than there is between the German adaptations of the Court Epic and their original forms. In comparison with the Arthurian stories, the splendid barbarism of the *Nibelungenlied* seems infinitely old; the events here described gave the impression of having taken place far back in the past; and to its contemporaries it must have made an impression similar to that which is left on modern

readers when a poet of to-day deals, say, with a theme from the time of the Crusades. The stories of Parzival and Tristan are, as it were, brought up to date; the *Nibelungenlied*, on the other hand, remains essentially the simple, primitive epic of Siegfried, an ancient hero of the Netherlands, who, in a far back age, won the sister of King Gunther of the Burgundians as his wife, and assisted Gunther to win, on his part, Brünhild, the super-human, half-supernatural queen of Iceland, for his; who fell a victim to Brünhild's revenge and to a treachery due to Hagen's unflinching loyalty to his master, Gunther; and whose murder was ultimately avenged by terrible bloodshed. Even the mythical elements shimmer occasionally through, and betray the original connection of the story with the mythological beliefs of those who first conceived it. Our impression, in fact, of this poem is of a thing essentially old, which has been only partially modernised by the introduction of a gentler religious faith and the politeness of the age of chivalry. The strength of the *Nibelungenlied* lies not in these finer graces, but in the primitive elements of its story; it has the stamp of veracity on it, such as long years of tradition alone give to a work, an inevitableness as of some cataclysm

beyond human control. There is no tragedy in mediæval literature which awakens more pity than the death of Siegfried, unless it be that of him who died in Roncesvaux; no catastrophe more awe-inspiring than the terrible close of the *Nibelungenlied*, in which a ruthless, avenging nature wipes out, as it were, the petty attempt of man to assert himself in opposition to her eternal laws.

The poems we have just been looking at are representative of a vast narrative literature in this age. The Arthurian epics bulk quite as largely in German literature as in French literature, and as time went on, they increased in length, and, unfortunately, also deteriorated in quality. Few poems, outside those of the three leading poets, are generally read nowadays, except, it may be, one or two of the shorter idylls of Konrad von Würzburg, such as his *Herzemäre* (*The Story of the Heart*), or a poem like Wernher's *Meier Helmbrecht* (*Farmer Helmbrecht*), which, in elevating an evil-living peasant to the position of the hero, becomes almost a parody of chivalric romance. The national epic poetry, apart from the *Nibelungenlied*, is likely to be more attractive to the reader of to-day. *Gudrun*, for instance, is a delightful epic of the sea, which, in parts,

at least, appeals to the modern imagination with something of the power of the *Nibelungenlied*; and some of the individual poems of the *Heldenbuch*, as the collection of epics on popular sagas is called, contain, especially in their faery lore, elements of enduring poetry.

Of the great lyric poetry of the thirteenth century it is less necessary here to plead for sympathetic understanding on the part of the modern reader. Walther von der Vogelweide is a lyric poet whom everyone, sensitive to the lyric throb, recognises at once as one of the elect lyric singers of the world. And Walther was only one of a large group of Minnesingers who filled the thirteenth century with song. His predecessors, whom German fancy has described as constituting the "spring-time of the Minnesang," the pioneers who first turned the rich stream of lyric inspiration from the South of France across German lands, and gave the vague lyric inspiration of the German people a form and a polish which it could assuredly not have attained so rapidly, had it been left to itself, have no less urgent claim on our attention. Interesting, too, are the later developments of the lyric after Walther's time, the gradual petrifaction of the higher court lyric, on the one hand, and

the fusion of the lower, more natural forms of lyric with the " Volkslied " to swell the main current of national poetry. But in a higher degree than is true of any one poet of the Court Epic in respect of narrative poetry, Walther von der Vogelweide sums up in himself the lyric of his century. He is not only the most inspired poet of his time, but he is also the poet whose range of expression is widest. He was a master of the courtly lyric, with its quaint conceits and artificial " Minnedienst " ; he was also master of the lyric of the simple life, a singer whose songs are veritable folksongs. And to these two domains he added still another ; he became under the stress of events a political poet and created for the German people a new type of higher poetry, which took cognizance, sometimes satirically, sometimes in direct challenge, of the political controversies of the time, and the political destinies of the German Empire. This varied extent of Walther's talent must be especially emphasised ; for it is one of the reasons why the German Middle Ages looked up to him as their most representative poet. In our appreciation of Walther's love-lyrics it is sometimes doubtful if what we moderns find

particularly to our taste really constitutes his best claim to supremacy; in other words, to the reader unversed in the language and phrases of mediæval love-poetry, Walther's conventional ideas and conventional *naïveté* are apt to appeal with more force than the more original manifestations of his genius. His political song was, after all, a more startling and original innovation in the history of the German lyric than his matchless love lyrics. But we must take his poetry as we find it; and in simple, unsophisticated poetic expression, in delicacy of spiritual feeling and imagining, we may safely say that no other poet of Walther's time surpassed, or even approached him. In Walther we see also that touch of the modern outlook on things, which we have claimed for at least two of the other great German mediæval poets; he had it, indeed, in quite a pre-eminent degree. For he was no careless, joyous minstrel, who merely skimmed the surface of life, and rested content with the political basis provided by Church and State; he, too, attempted to penetrate beneath the exterior, to get to depths unfamiliar to the common man; he, too, was troubled with that divine discontent, which has made in all ages

for poetic greatness. Often he flings out words that imply embittered discontent with the world which had served him so ill, words which form a strange contrast to the gentle lyrics of his early years when he sang with youthful fervour of the joys of spring, and of noble ladies moving in the stately pageant of court life. Like Wolfram and Gottfried, he, too, knew what renunciation meant, and had learned to see life with the eyes of a pessimist.

Owê war sint verswunden alliu mîniu jâr!
Ist mir mîn leben getroumet oder ist ez wâr?
Daz ich ie wânde daz iht wære, was daz iht?
Dar nâch hân ich geslâfen unde enweiz es niht.
Nû bin ich erwachet und ist mir unbekant
Daz mir hie vor was kündic als mîn ander hant.
Liut unde lant, dâ ich von kinde bin erzogen,
Die sint mir fremde worden, reht' als ez sî gelogen.

("Alas, whither have all my years vanished? Has my life been a dream, or is it true? Was that which I always believed to exist anything at all? It would seem that I have slept and know nothing of it. Now I am awake, and what I knew before is as unknown to me as one hand is to the other. The people and the land where I grew up from childhood have become as strange to me as if they had been merely lies.")

The wonderful literature of this first great flourishing period in German poetry was of strangely short duration. As the castle of Munsalväsche, in the story of the Gral, appeared in the evening to Parzival in all its glory, and on the morrow lapsed into a lifeless silence, so Middle High German poetry flashed across its age, appeared and disappeared with inexplicable suddenness. The really inspired poetry hardly outlived the one generation of great poets; no sooner had they passed away, than the light seemed to go out of literature, and it sank to the level of the mere amusement of an idle hour. The great mass of poetry which filled up the later thirteenth century is uninspired, imitative, and without artistic form; it was content to repeat over again the same well-worn themes, to thresh out the traditional ideas and carry to ineptitude the old imagery. Rapidly the great fabric of Middle High German poetry disintegrated and fell asunder, and with the close of the Crusades and the disappearance of the spiritual background of chivalry, its last props were withdrawn from it. The only signs of health in this age of decay was a slight revival of poetic imagination, stimulated by the love of allegory, which in France had risen

to the heights of the *Roman de la Rose*, and the steady growth of that aggressive criticism of life which in literature finds its outlet in satire. There is more hope to be found in the satiric lyric of Neidhart von Reuental, in the outspoken, fearless couplets of Freidank, the author of *Bescheidenheit* (*Worldly Wisdom*), than in the efforts of their contemporaries to keep alive the traditions of the earlier time. For in this satiric literature we see the spirit of the new democracy struggling for expression; it is the voice of a stratum of human society, which in the epoch of feudalism had been closely kept in subjection, namely, the dwellers in the towns as distinct from the serfs of the country, in other words, the new middle class.

Thus we might say that the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Germany were filled partly with the débris of mediævalism, with the remains of the old literature, which could only be kept alive at all with the help of a crass realism and an appeal to the cruder popular instincts, and partly with the gradual struggle for expression on the part of the town-dwellers, who in the sixteenth century, the century of the Reformation—in itself the decisive triumph of the middle-class spirit—

were to assume the leadership in German poetry. Among the phenomena which mark these converse processes are, on the one hand, the epic chronicles of the Emperor Maximilian I., *Der Weisskönig* (*The White King*, i.e., Frederick III.), and the less historical *Teuerdank*, which represent the final stage in the dissolution of the Court Epic at the beginning of the sixteenth century; and, on the other, the substitution of a new and purely popular lyric for the Minnesang, which continued to live on as an artificial, and often grotesquely exaggerated imitation of the external form of the Court lyric, the so-called "Meistergesang." The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries form the flourishing period of the German Volkslied; all the most beautiful popular songs go back to this age. On the other hand, the emergence of the new spirit is particularly noticeable in works like *Das Narrenschiff* (*The Ship of Fools*), by Sebastian Brant, with its ruthless, acid criticism of all the follies that had been handed down from the mediæval world, and had survived the social change; in that scathing analysis of human society under the allegory of the Beast Fable, the famous epic of *Reinke de Vos* (*Reineke the Fox*), which remains the greatest

work of the imagination we owe to the Low German peoples ; and in the rapidly multiplying collections of popular story and anecdote, which with the aid of the democratising institution of printing, were soon disseminated among all classes of the population, in the form of " Volksbücher " or chapbooks. These consist of collections of rough witty anecdote, usually centring round some witty rogue like the famous Till Eulenspiegel, or handy miscellaneous collections of stories like the *Rollwagenbüchlein* of Jörg Wickram or the *Schimpf und Ernst* (*Jest and Earnest*) of Johannes Pauli, both, however, works of a comparatively late date.

CHAPTER II

THE PERIOD OF THE REFORMATION

One has an instinctive feeling that the age which witnessed the spiritual upheaval of the Reformation is one which ought to be pre-eminently "great" in German literature. If a literature is significant in proportion as it is the bearer of ideas, then the age of Luther in Germany should deserve that distinction. And yet this was hardly the case; to the outsider coming fresh to German literature, the sixteenth century is a disappointing epoch. It really appeals with its full force only to the literary student in the narrower sense, that is to say, to one who has an interest in the phenomena of literary origins and of literary germination and decay. The sixteenth century was not a period of ripe literary production, but of extraordinarily interesting beginnings in literature. This is the point of view from which it must be studied. For actual achievement, the intel-

lectual revolution came too early to find an echo in literature of the higher kind, that literature not having yet properly emerged from mediævalism; it was, as it were, not ready to be a vehicle for the new ideas.

None the less, Luther stands in the middle of the epoch. Born at Eisleben in 1483, his first great emancipatory deed was the nailing of his impeachment of Catholicism on the church door in Wittenberg in 1517. And in the next few years the decisive battles of the new faith were fought; in 1522 appeared his three manifestos of Protestantism, *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* and *The Freedom of a Christian;* and between 1522 and 1534 he provided the new faith with a solid foundation by his publication of the Bible in the German vernacular. Luther's German Bible is the greatest work of literature of the sixteenth century; it is the pivot round which all the best imaginative activity of the German people in that age turns. Remembering these dates, one has only to turn to the annals of German literature to see how pitifully unprepared German literature was to draw advantage from the new ideas. Other, more favoured nations were able to respond

at once to the widening of human horizons in the sixteenth century; the renascence of antiquity, the invention of printing, the voyages of the great discoverers, found a ready and adequate echo in England, in France, in Spain; but in Germany even the Reformation itself, the world-shaking event that was happening within her own domains, failed to inspire any great masterpiece of literature. The German, who had got no further than the *Ship of Fools* and *Reineke the Fox*, was entirely nonplussed by the fulness of new light; he was merely blinded by it, and confused.

In other countries—our own, for instance—where the Reformation has been all-powerful, it was preceded by the Renaissance, which prepared poetry to take advantage of the spiritual enfranchisement of the religious movement; in Germany the Renaissance did not become a force of magnitude in literature until the following century. This seems to us one explanation of the imaginative ineffectualness of German sixteenth-century poetry. The only preparation the Germans knew, was that scholarly prologue to the Renaissance which is known as Humanism.

German Humanism dates from the founding of the University of Prague in 1348; and

from Prague it spread rapidly to all the other German intellectual centres, quickening the intellectual life at the universities, and opening up to the German people the treasures of classical antiquity. Its representatives, however, wrote mainly in Latin, and in a cosmopolitan, un-German way, so that it is difficult, in discussing the German literature of this epoch, to include the work of these writers at all. There was, for instance, in the Reformation century, a large and extremely interesting dramatic literature in Latin, but it was merely part of a literature that knew no national boundaries. The Latin literature of Europe in the sixteenth century can only be regarded as one. But the important thing for us to notice is that, before very long the influence of these Latin writers made itself felt in the vernacular literature. The new beginnings in German poetry owed, and realised that they owed, their first material help to the humanists; and the ties that bound the literature of the sixteenth century to Humanism were in reality closer than those which bound it to the Reformation. The humanists were, in the first instance, men of letters; they cultivated, for example, the Latin comedy, not merely by reviving Terence

and Plautus, but by themselves writing original comedies in the spirit of their time and giving voice to their own ideas; and, as we shall see, this humanistic drama soon drew the indigenous drama into its train. Then again, the humanists acted as interpreters of the Classic and Renaissance literatures to the German people, and thus placed at their disposal a rich harvest of literary story and poetic ideas.

But notwithstanding all this, Humanism had not the power to touch the German heart; it left the nation as a whole cold. The real motor force of the literary revival came from another side, from Mysticism, which appears side by side with Humanism in this age. It is interesting to observe the rôle which mysticism has always played in Germany; we have already seen an instance of its peculiar redeeming force at the beginning of the Middle High German period; and we shall meet with it again on more than one critical occasion in the evolution of German literature; for it has been the invariable forerunner of every period of imaginative vigour. From the humanists the literature of the sixteenth century borrowed its form and materials; from Mysticism came its soul.

Meister Eckhart, Heinrich Seuse, Johann Tauler, Johann Geiler of Kaisersberg, all mystics, form a line of philosophical theologians, who handed on the torch from the fourteenth century to the sixteenth; their theology made a strong individualistic appeal by turning men's thoughts inwards to their own hearts and souls, and thus prepared the way for Luther and the Protestant revolt against the domination of Rome.

The literature inspired by Mysticism in these centuries forms an exceedingly interesting chapter, but a very complicated one. We have found the new spirit manifesting itself in the earlier period through the clumsy medium of allegorical poetry; we find it also in more subtle allegories of the Game of Chess, such as were familiar in every European literature; we find it invading the fervid imaginings of monastic singers, nuns as well as monks. The mystically inspired literature of that time suffered under the fantastic exaggeration of its imaginative flights. It seized with avidity on every opportunity for fantastic excess; symbolism and allegory ran riot; and, at a later date, it gloried in the unrealities of the Renaissance pastoral. But the never failing bedrock on which all this

fantastry was erected, was a strong, personal individualism, a subjectivity, which remained eternally true, when often the whole superstructure was insincere and false. Thus, as an adjunct to the lyric, mysticism was a factor of real power. The mystics also gave the Germans their first vernacular Bible; and they prepared the way for the intimately personal Protestant hymn.

But the thinker who first made mysticism an irresistible force in literature was Jakob Boehme, a shoemaker of Görlitz; in 1612 he published his strange, mystic book *Aurora, oder Morgenröte im Aufgang* (*Aurora, or The Rising of the Dawn*). Boehme was no doubt one of Germany's most original spirits; for it is surprising how little of his intricate metaphysical thinking can be attributed to direct borrowing from predecessors. There is, indeed, something unfathomable about Boehme's mysticism; and while the unbeliever can merely scoff, later generations have returned to him again and again, and have never come away empty-handed; his works have proved an inexhaustible bourne for the fact-weary human mind in all ages. The immediate influence of Boehme on his generation is not easy to estimate; but we suspect that it

has been underestimated rather than overestimated. It is to be seen most plainly in the Catholic poets of the sixteenth century, in Johannes Scheffler, better known by his assumed name of Angelus Silesius, the author of that extraordinary precipitate of mysticism, *Der Cherubinische Wandersmann*, in which the most intangible of thoughts are pinned down and concentrated in couplets of startling paradox. It is to be seen, too, in the Catholic Renaissance poetry of the pious Friedrich von Spee, a Jesuit of fine poetic feeling, whose *Trutznachtigall* is one of the most pleasing poetic products of this age. In Spee the mystic element was combined with the pastoral allegory, and resulted in a gentle, non-militant Christian faith, which took little or no account of the storms evoked by Luther. And there is mysticism, too, in Luther himself, stern realist although he was; his hymns and the whole rich literature of religious hymn-poetry, which with marvellous fecundity the Lutheran clergy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries poured forth, would assuredly not have become what they did become, had it not been for this universal solvent which united all hearts.

But it is time to turn from these two

defining forces which preceded and accompanied the Reformation, to the reflection in literature of that movement itself. The Reformation in Germany was Luther, and Luther's Bible was, as we have seen, the greatest book of the century. This is a fact which must never be lost sight of. Luther was one of these men who appear from time to time in history, and stand out as the bearers of a Divine mission of which they are themselves only imperfectly conscious. The Reformation was, so to speak, a task imposed on Luther; he had himself no idea of its magnitude when he first put his hand to it. He had set out merely to reform certain crying abuses within the Church; and he did not know from one year to another, not at least in the eventful, germinating period of Protestantism from 1517 to about 1530, whither he was driving, or being driven. From merely denouncing the sale of indulgences, he had been, as it were, urged forward by some force outside himself, to demand the spiritual freedom of the Christian, to translate the Bible and to reconstruct German society on a new basis of social morality and religious community. He reformed German education, he gave Germany her hymn-book;

and it was no fault of his that, even before he died, the "alte böse Feind" reared his head once more, and threatened to undo all that the Reformation had achieved. The work of the Reformation was, unfortunately, not completed until after Germany had been depleted by the most terrible war in the whole history of humanity.

The main question that interests us here is, however, what did the Reformation mean for German literature in the sixteenth century? It virtually meant everything; its stimulating force is to be traced alike on Protestant and Catholic, and, indeed, one might say that the Catholic writers of the epoch profited more by it than their Protestant colleagues. To begin with, the Reformation brought to triumphant expression that new conception of society which had been struggling half-heartedly against a decrepit mediæval feudalism in the previous century; it marked the triumph of the middle class, of the "Bürger." It wrested the supreme dictatorial power in matters of the imagination from one privileged class. This meant, not necessarily the triumph of democracy in literature—that was still afar off—but the end of the absolute rule of a social aristocracy; from now on,

literature becomes, whether the poets happen to be nobles or peasants, in the full sense, the expression not of a class, but of the nation. It is in respect of such qualities that Luther's Bible may be, and has been claimed, as the greatest German "Volksbuch."

But Luther's services to German literature were far from being restricted to his Bible; although in no sense a lyric poet, he gave Germany her Protestant hymnal, a little rough and uncouth it is true, but full of that intense earnestness which outweighs all else. And he did a great work towards the unification of the German tongue. With the decay of the Middle High German Court literature and the rise of the middle class, a hopeless confusion had set in in the language of Germany. One dialect struggled with another for supremacy, and there was not even a hope that the fittest would survive. The political exigencies of the Empire required, however, some kind of common basis of linguistic understanding amongst all speakers of the German tongue; and thus arose the "Kanzleisprachen," that is to say, more or less normalised forms of German in use between the various chancelleries of the Empire. It was natural that in the establishing of this norm,

the Imperial chancellery should have had the chief say. Moreover, as the seat of Imperial government had been moved, in the course of his history, from one land to another, and had been obliged to employ as its clerks men speaking the most different German dialects, a certain natural normalisation set in as a matter of course. A still more subtle influence in the same direction was the invention of printing. Printers obviously sought as wide a public as possible for their wares; it was to their interest to avoid such dialectic peculiarities as might not be understood outside a limited district. Now, Luther with his Bible furthered the movement towards one common form of speech which these two agencies had inaugurated. He, too, felt that it was vital to Protestantism that the Bible should be understood by the "common man" and throughout as wide an area of the German-speaking world as possible. He tells us himself how carefully he weighed the question, and how he ultimately decided to choose the language of the Saxon chancellery as best likely to fulfil his requirements. But the choice of dialect was only the first step; he was untiring in his efforts to give his great work the fullest validity possible;

and each succeeding edition showed that he considered the language of his translation of the very first importance. It is thus not too much to say that the Lutheran Bible gave Protestant Germany one generally accepted literary language; the Catholic south of Germany alone stood out, and to a slight extent still stands out, against the unifying process.

The first place in the literature of the sixteenth century belongs to satire; the fierce conflicts of that rough age demanded fierce expression, and the German satire of the Reformation is the most ruthless and vituperative in the whole history of this literature. But here, as was perhaps only natural, it was the losing, not the triumphant side, that rose to the greatest heights; the outstanding German satires of the sixteenth century came from the Catholics. The chief of these Catholic poets was Thomas Murner, a monk of Strassburg, who had behind him not merely the conservatism of the Roman Church, but also the whole weight of a humanistic education. Although Murner did not hesitate to descend to depths of scurrility, especially in his venomous attack on the reformer himself, *Vom grossen lutherischen Narren* (*Of the Great*

Lutheran Fool), from which one would have thought readers with the slightest culture would have turned away in disgust, yet he was, according to the light of his century, a highly cultured man; no doubt he thought that so fierce an onslaught as Luther had made on Christianity called for the most drastic retaliation. In any case, the sixteenth century was not an age in which men handled each other with the kid gloves of politeness. In Murner's eyes Luther was a criminal of the worst type, who had destroyed—he made himself no illusion as to the deadliness of Luther's blows—the golden age of a Christianity which had borne the torch of idealism all through the Middle Ages; had discredited the very saints themselves; and for what end? Merely to put weapons in the hands of the common man for which the Church well knew he was not ripe, and which Murner feared he would soon put to evil purpose. Murner is a great satirist, albeit a terribly coarse one; he believed with intense earnestness that, in combating the Reformation, he was championing a holy cause.

The advancing tide of Protestantism had the help of no such man. Perhaps one might

say, the victorious cause had no need of satire to further it. The energy of the reformers was so completely taken up with positive, reconstructive work that it had none left for mere literature. There is little imaginative writing of any kind emanating from the Protestant side in the early decades of the Reformation which need arrest our attention. The only one of Luther's fellow-workers, besides himself, who was associated with literature, was the Franconian nobleman, Ulrich von Hutten, and he was a man of letters less by virtue of his advocacy of Protestantism than by virtue of his humanistic leanings. But Hutten is one of the tragic figures of his age, one for whom the new light was too strong, and who made lamentable shipwreck of his own life.

To find a counterpart to Murner on the Protestant side, we must wait until a decade or two later, when Johann Fischart, from behind a bulwark of confusing pseudonyms, sent out his bolts in the interest of Luther's cause. Fischart, too, was a native of Strassburg, or, at any rate, intimately associated with that all-important centre of intellectual activity in the sixteenth century. His literary pack is a much larger one than

Murner's. Much, however, that he wrote would seem to have been undertaken merely to supply one of the Strassburg printing-presses with matter; it represents too conflicting tendencies of thought to have possibly been the honest expression of a single mind. Moreover, the fact that Fischart appeared at a later stage in the development of Protestantism made a material difference in his attitude to the religious movement. He was not obliged to concentrate, as it were, on the few burning questions round which the first Lutheran reforms raged; he was able to take a wider outlook on the century, and to give a juster picture of it. For better or worse, a great French book, the *Gargantua and Pantagruel* of Rabelais, fell into Fischart's hands, and he determined to give his countrymen the benefit of it. This translation, if translation it may be called, is Fischart's most ambitious work; he has not merely translated, not merely adapted Rabelais to German conditions; he has used the text only as a framework into which to crowd all he himself thought about his time and nation. His German Rabelais—*Affentheurlich naupengeheurliche Geschichtklitterung*, as he called it with his fantastic, untranslatable humour—is an extra-

ordinary conglomeration of the most promiscuous material, inflated by a strange, uncouth exaggeration, and dealing covert, satiric blows at all and sundry. But Fischart was also a poet, and in his *Das glückhafte Schiff von Zürich* (*The Lucky Ship of Zürich*), he produced a poem which, in polish and form, stands alone in the German literature of the sixteenth century.

On the whole, however, the most interesting form of literature which drew its main inspiration from the Reformation was the drama. We have not so far said anything in this little volume about the drama in Germany; and, indeed, there has not yet been much to say. The drama is a form of literature which, in all lands in Europe, begins in a quite unnational way; there is, so to speak, no primitive French or English or German drama, at most, Italy could trace a certain continuity back to the old Roman theatre; there is only a primitive European drama, which owed its sole allegiance to the Church. Thus the Church-drama in Germany differs but little from that of other lands; only now and again, when it strays into secular fields, does it reflect the national German standpoint, such, for example, as in the echo of Barbarossa's glory in

a Mystery-play of the thirteenth century, or in the later legends of *Pope Johanna* and *Theophilus*, the latter a kind of forerunner of *Faust*. The purely national drama does not show itself until the end of the fifteenth century; here the earliest manifestations are, apart from the Latin humanistic drama to which reference has already been made, the beginnings of an extremely interesting form of native vernacular comedy, the so-called "Fastnachtsspiel," or shrovetide-play. The "Fastnachtsspiel" and the Latin comedy, together with the mediæval tradition of the Church-drama, formed the materials out of which a German national drama was gradually welded.

This new drama, however, received an enormous impetus from the Reformation which broke over Germany almost before that drama had had time to develop at all. Clearly no form of literature was likely to benefit more by the liberating forces of Protestantism than this; and the dramatic writers at once put themselves at the service of the Reformation. Thus the sixteenth century drama, when it was not purely Latin and humanistic —and even then—was a Protestant drama. Its beginnings are to be seen most clearly in

Switzerland where Pamphilus Gengenbach, himself, however, no Swiss, wrote rude "Fastnachtsspiele" in the interests of the Reformation; and where Niklas Manuel, a many-sided genius, worthy of greater things, employed the dramatic form in several virile and effective satires on the Catholics. Then Saxon and Central German pastors began to cultivate the new literary form; Sixt Birck wrote a *Susanna;* and Paul Rebhun followed with a drama on this same theme, one of the most frequently dramatised of the sixteenth century. Another favourite theme, which had already found favour with the humanists, was *The Prodigal Son;* and in Württemberg the gifted, but unruly, Swabian humanist, Nikodemus Frischlin, wrote an entire series of plays on favourite Biblical and humanistic subjects. Meanwhile the Latin School Comedy not only taught the vernacular drama the laws of form which had come down from antiquity, the division into acts and other technicalities, but was also itself in turn influenced by it. The most interesting figure in this dramatic movement, however, is the famous cobbler of Nürnberg, Hans Sachs.

If Strassburg was the metropolis of religious controversy and higher intellectual life of the

sixteenth century, Nürnberg, the city of Adam Kraft, Peter Fischer and Albrecht Dürer, was the centre of its artistic life. And here was born in 1494 Hans Sachs; here he died in 1576. His life thus all but fills the sixteenth century, and his work reflects that century as it no doubt was reflected in the placid mind of the sixteenth-century town-dweller. Hans Sachs, in his strength as in his weakness, is a typical representation of the middle class of his age. Compared with the picture of the time we obtain from Murner or Fischart, that which we get from the Nürnberg cobbler's poetry is, no doubt, a somewhat superficial one. Only once, and that in early life, was he really moved, namely, when he himself first fell under the influence of the Reformation; and he came thereby into sharp conflict with his native town. That, however, soon passed, for Nürnberg, before very long, went bodily over to the new faith. For the rest of his life, Sachs or at least his writings, knew nothing of the "time spirit." He lived on placidly and happily, as if there were no wars and no bloodshed, as if the sun were always shining; and even domestic bereavements hardly disturbed his serenity. With the regularity of a definite task he

poured out, day in, day out, his unceasing flow of narrative poems, of Meisterlieder—for he was also a "mastersinger"—tragedies, comedies, and "Fastnachtsspiele." He loved everything and anything that savoured of the nature of a story; and he sought stories everywhere, in every book that came his way, from the Bible to the Italian novelists, from the classics to contemporary German anecdote-collectors; and he turned them all into facile verse, graced often with a kindly humour, but rarely or never with any spiritual depth or seriousness—turned them into poems or plays, as it suited his momentary fancy. It seems to have been immaterial to him whether he called the more ambitious of his plays tragedies or comedies; whereas the "Fastnachtsspiel" was a shorter play of a more anecdotal and humorous or satiric character. Hans Sachs has left a large body of verse behind him, volumes upon volumes—his dramas alone number over two hundred—and almost every separate item is conscientiously dated. In spite of this we can trace little or no development in his writings; little or nothing is based on experiences of his own personal life, so completely objective is his attitude to literature as he understood it.

The absence of development in Hans Sachs' dramatic poetry, however, was not solely due to the conservative character of the man himself; it was partly because the German sixteenth-century drama had got into a blind alley and could not make headway. There is, in fact, something wrong with the entire drama of this age, interesting although it is; it is a drama without real dramatic qualities. In all this very extensive literature hardly a drop, unless by accident, is to be found of the real quintessence of dramatic poetry, the quintessence without which a play, as such, must necessarily fail. Unfortunately, the German drama of this period had sprung up independently of the theatre, or, at best, associated with a totally inadequate one. There had been performances of Latin plays, as there had been of church-dramas, and no doubt the "Fastnachtsspiel" was played on a few boards set up in the midst of the village merry-making at carnival time; but the actors in Latin dramas and in church-plays performed under conditions where the dramatic appeal was superfluous; and the "Fastnachtsspiel" was little more than an acted dialogue. The only lesson in *technique* came from the pale imitations of the

classics, and that was not enough. The German sixteenth-century drama was thus, unlike that of England, in danger of dying from inanition, from want of touch with the theatre. Towards the end of the century a prospect of reform appeared, and that from the very best possible quarter, from England itself. English actors visited the Continent, bringing with them the treasures of the Elizabethan stage, no doubt in very garbled versions. From the German standpoint this was no disadvantage, for it was just the "unliterary" element of theatrical effectiveness accentuated by these actors, that Germany needed. These "English comedians," who wandered all over the Continent at different times, received an especially warm welcome in Germany, the Germans appreciating in particular the clown, whom the companies took care to provide, even in the most harrowing tragedies. Before very long, we find German troupes imitating them, and German playwrights, such as Duke Heinrich Julius of Brunswick and Jakob Ayrer—the latter, like Hans Sachs, a native of Nürnberg—endeavouring to graft this new art on to the dramatically ineffective native drama. Now at last it seemed as if there were some hope for the German theatre;

but before it had advanced very far on the new path, the Thirty Years' War broke over Germany and made the representation of plays of any kind a hazardous and even impossible undertaking.

These, then, are the most interesting types of German literature in the sixteenth century, but we are far from having exhausted the literary activity of the age. There was, for instance, a vast pamphlet-literature in the interest of the new ideas, the pamphlet, together with the ballad, taking the place of the yet unborn newspaper. The spread of printing made demands on those who had talent enough to supply the materials; there was, in particular, much activity in publishing translations from Latin, Italian and French literatures, and these, in turn, helped to spread the humanising influence of the Renaissance. It was too fierce an age for the more delicate forms of emotional "Volkslied"; but there were "Volkslieder" of a new kind which reflected the attitude of the nation to the political issues of the time. Another interesting phase of popular literature is to be seen in the "Volksbücher," or chap-books, which we first meet with in quantity in this century. They formed, we might say, the last refuge-

place of mediæval story; the old sagas, long deprived of their pride of place, lived on now in these rough prose versions, which were sold at village fairs, and provided the literary entertainment of the people. To this group of literature belongs one book of supreme interest, the "Volksbuch" of *Doctor Johann Faust*, which served, two centuries later, as the basis for the greatest of all German poems.

CHAPTER III

RENAISSANCE AND ROCOCO

THERE is no more tragic event in the literary history of the German people than the set-back which befel the nation at the beginning of the seventeenth century. All the splendid promise of the sixteenth century, the teeming spiritual life that had arisen from the storms of religious controversy, came to naught. England rose to the heights of her Elizabethan poetry on the new foundation afforded by Reformation and Renaissance; France, too, was entering on an epoch of unexampled brilliancy in her imaginative life; but Germany, the very home of the Reformation, only drew from the religious struggle blood and tears; her poetry was crushed out of her by unending, embittered strife; and the Renaissance light, which found its way to her so pitifully late, became a mockery and a curse, instead of a helpful aid to the unfolding of her national literature.

The seventeenth century opened not unfavourably for Germany. The nation was steadily increasing in prosperity, and the rumours of war, although ominous, were still at least distant. Literary, or rather linguistic, societies on Renaissance models were springing into existence, and would doubtless, under favourable political conditions, have exerted a widely beneficial influence on literature ; and the drama, which, as we saw, had come to more or less of a deadlock in the sixteenth century, had suddenly been aided by the example of the English theatre. All this augured well ; but then the war broke out, and from 1618 to 1648, Germany lay helpless, trodden underfoot by the ruthless mercenaries of all nations that made up the armies of the Thirty Years' War. The country became the camping ground for both sides in the merciless religious strife which pitted the Catholic Empire against the Protestants of the north. The fairly prosperous land of the beginning of the seventeenth century was impoverished, devastated, and depopulated to the last degree. And to make good the set-back which this thirty years' devastation brought with it, Germany required at least thirty more years. It is thus hardly an exag-

geration to say that the intellectual life of the people was crippled and ruined by the war for little short of a century.

It was almost in the nature of things that such literature as did manage to creep into existence under these circumstances was of a cloistral, academic kind; a thing born of theories and wanting in the life-blood of the nation. The linguistic societies became necessarily closed corporations which troubled themselves little about a merely hypothetical national literature; the literature that interested them, could, in any case, subsist perfectly well without a nation. Thus the word Renaissance in the history of German poetry, instead of connoting that fresh, youthful vigour we associate with the Renaissance in France and England, came to mean something artificial, a hothouse plant, an experimenting with exotic growths. This is why German Renaissance poetry makes so unfresh an impression on us to-day; it was a literature entirely devoid of the buoyancy of youth, a literature that was born old. Its cultivation lay mainly in the hands of a group of Silesian writers, who drew their doctrines from the French Renaissance poets of the Pléiade. Martin Opitz was their

leader; in five days he wrote for them—for the most part, it must be confessed, "conveyed" from Ronsard and other Renaissance theorists—an *ars poetica*, which was observed with reverence by the whole seventeenth century, at least so far as the activity of that century lay within the pale of recognised literature. Opitz's *Buch von der deutschen Poeterei* (*Book of German Poetry*) is the textbook of the German Renaissance, and according to its maxims the poetry of the movement was made. Opitz himself—in spite of a very inadequate talent and inspiration—was untiring in encouraging and aiding his followers. He set them examples of approved dramas, novels and lyrics, and, unless in a few isolated cases where these followers happened to be misled by an obstinate genius that refused to give implicit obedience to the lawgiver, they followed meekly. It is the irony of literary history that only these disobedient members of the school have nowadays a genuine interest for us!

In Simon Dach, the gentle, melancholy poet of Königsberg, we recognise a poet of real emotional power; in Paul Fleming a manly, vigorous singer, whom Opitzian formalism could not silence or kill; in Friedrich von

Logau an epigrammatist of the very first rank, the greatest the history of German literature can point to; and in Andreas Gryphius, a gifted poet in whom is seen only too plainly the devastation worked in imaginative literature by the dry-as-dust theorists. Gryphius wrote lyrics of an intense, almost modern sincerity of feeling, he composed—with help in one case from Shakespeare—two of the gayest and merriest comedies of the German seventeenth century, *Herr Peter Squenz* and *Horribilicribrifax*, but he was condemned by the literary movement into which he was born, to waste his genius on dreary alexandrine tragedies of the approved Senecan pattern, tragedies reeking with blood and horrors, and without a trait of real tragic dignity.

Thus the Renaissance literature of Germany is one long tragedy of the human spirit; one of the most deplorable perversions of a nation's genius that history has to tell of. But there were redeeming features; the obedience of the Opitzians to Opitz was, as we have indicated, by no means complete; and beneath all this formalism there was a certain inarticulate national pride which, as the dark days began to pass, struggled to

expression again. In these times of trouble the German people turned with redoubled zeal to their religious poetry; and the seventeenth century became the great century of the German hymn. The hymn of this period does not differ very materially from that of the earlier days of Protestantism, except perhaps in so far as it stands out against a more assured background; it is not so persistently militant, because it no longer required to be so; but poetically it is characterised by the same limitations of dogmatic expressior as ever, the same modest repudiation o\ subtle literary graces. The most gifted German hymn-writer of the seventeenth century and the most gifted Germany ever possessed, is Paul Gerhardt, who has left a large number of hymns which belong to the treasured possessions of the German people; Gerhardt's poetic talent was not a wide one, but he was genuinely inspired; and his verse appeals to us still as the outcome of intense religious conviction.

In the hymn, German literature was clearly once more getting into touch with the German people, without whom the pure Renaissance literature had tried in vain to live. But a still more hopeful sign is to be seen in

the development of the novel, as the Thirty Years' War gradually began to spend its force. The greatest German book of the seventeenth century was a novel, and a novel of the war, the *Simplicissimus* of Johann Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen. The literary forebears of *Simplicissimus* were Spanish, just as another famous book reflecting the temper of the people in this unsettled age, the *Gesichte*, or *Visions*, of Johann Michael Moscherosch were founded on the Spanish *Sueños* (*Dreams*) of Francisco de Quevedo. *Simplicissimus* is a picaresque novel, that interesting inversion of the romance of chivalry which the democratic spirit had called forth in Spain. It is a story of adventure, of the stormy life of a soldier of fortune in a stormy age; an *Odyssey* of the social and moral life of the seventeenth century, as *Parzival* had been of the spiritual life of the Middle Ages; a book written with abundant realism, and a record, as it no doubt literally was, of things seen and experienced. The artificialities of the Renaissance poetics fade away before the healthy realism of these pictures, revolting as they are, of seventeenth-century barbarism and inhumanity; one feels that literature, even if deficient in poetic style and

delicacy, was at least again getting into touch with life.

Grimmelshausen's novel remained more or less isolated; it drew its life-breath from the war, and when the war was over, German writers sought in vain for any similar inspiring theme to take its place. In point of fact, the long-yearned-for peace, the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, arrived when the country had reached an apogee of depletion and exhaustion; long years of convalescence and rest were necessary before Germany could again assert herself among the nations. The country had hardly any alternative but to sink into a winter sleep, to wait patiently until a new generation had sprung up, capable of facing an active life once more. This explains amply why *Simplicissimus* had no successor, and why the second half of the seventeenth century, which enjoyed the blessings of peace, was in literary respects of less account than the earlier half, which was torn asunder by war. Such literature as these years produced could take no root in the inert national life; and it had recourse once more to those artificialities which had been cultivated abroad.

German Renaissance literature was compelled to go through the same stages of growth

and decay as the similar movement in other lands. After the First Silesian School—as the group of writers who drew inspiration from Opitz is usually called—with their imitation of the early Italian and French imitations of classic literature, came the Second Silesian School, which stands in a relation to its predecessor, exactly analogous to that in which the productions of Marini and Gongora in the South of Europe, or the *précieuses ridicules* of France, stood to the earlier stage of Renaissance development. The analogy is no fanciful one, for the German writers of the later seventeenth century learned directly from their Latin neighbours. Caspar von Lohenstein wrote cold Senecan dramas, quite as full chambers of horrors as anything in France or Italy; and Christian Hofmann von Hofmannswaldau yielded to the siren voices of a mellifluous Italian sensuality. While, however, verbal beauty afforded some excuse for the *concetti* of the Italians, the harsher German speech in its efforts at imitation only made itself ridiculous, and degenerated at once into vulgar rodomontades and bombast. From France came the novel of heroic adventure, that last stage in the decay of knightly story; and the heroic novel

proved an insidious enemy of the new fiction which Grimmelshausen had inaugurated. Inflated speech, impossible actions, highly coloured exoticism, sensual titillation, took the place, in the *Asiatische Banise*, *Römische Octavia*, and similar many-volumed gallant novels of this age, of the plain and simple truth, the straightforward, convincing chronicle of *Simplicissimus*. The German people, like every other people in Europe at this time, lost the taste for the beauty of reality, and could only find interest in books where the colours were heightened and the sentiment falsified. This symptom was the first decisive warning of Renaissance decay; and Germany suffered perhaps more than any other people under it, for she was intellectually so weak, and so much at its mercy. The only redeeming feature of this literature of Renaissance decay in Germany is the slight tinge of national history which Lohenstein infused into his heroic novel of ancient German history, *Hermann und Thusnelda*; for the rest, the German novel had reached a hopeless deadlock.

The first signs of a return to health came in the early years of the eighteenth century from England with the *Spectator* and with

Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, which at one stroke opened the eyes of the world to the superior beauty of reality. Before the solitary English mariner, struggling single-handed against the powers of nature, the whole phantasmagoria of exotic heroes and heroines undergoing incredible sufferings and fighting against incredible odds, faded away. Just as the heroic novel coming from France had found the depleted Germany an easy prey, so *Robinson Crusoe*, coming from England, took a firmer hold on the German mind than on that of any other continental people, and the imitations of Defoe's great novel in Germany were numbered by hundreds.

But there were other signs of returning health in this dark age of Germany's spiritual life. The artificial phase of pastoral exaggeration, which has left a characteristic stamp on the Dresden china of the time, was yielding in every land in Europe before a healthier neo-classicism ; the rococo went down before the soberer spirit of Descartes and the respect for reason. A new stage of Renaissance evolution arose in France with Boileau as its prophet and the great masters of French tragedy as its exemplars ; and this could not fail to find an echo in Germany. Precisely

as in Italy and as in France, the claims of reason and what the reformers regarded as "truth to nature" were vindicated. A new group of poets arose whose war-cry, as that of new literary movements usually is, was "return to nature," but whose practice, unfortunately, was slavish imitation of the French. The vitiated Italian and Spanish influence gave place at the beginning of the eighteenth century in Germany to French influence; and for the first forty years of that century Germany contributed her very modest share to the European classicism, which had reached its zenith in France under Louis XIV. The poets of this phase are frankly beneath notice; the only one indeed who has a claim on our attention was the unhappy rebel of the movement, Johann Christian Günther, who was too genuine a lyric poet to be able to adapt himself to the rule of thumb which his fellows obeyed.

Like all organised movements, this first classic phase in German eighteenth-century literature had a leader, and that leader, Gottsched, may be taken as its representative. Johann Christoph Gottsched was the literary dictator of Germany in the pseudo-classic age; he made Leipzig the Paris of the move-

ment, the seat of his Academy, the "Deutschübende Gesellschaft." He was to this stage of the Renaissance movement exactly what Opitz had been to the earlier one; he gave it its textbook, in his famous and often reprinted *Kritische Dichtkunst für die Deutschen* (*Critical Poetics for the Germans*, 1730). Here were laid down the rules of literary conduct for a generation that could not move a step without such rules; here the age found conveniently docketed its receipts for manufacturing epics and tragedies, fables, epigrams and comedies. And the acceptance of these receipts relieved the users of them from a vast amount of literary responsibility. They knew they were doing the right thing, could depend on the approbation of the critics, and the rest did not matter. Above all, Gottsched, mindful of Boileau's advice to "love reason," expressly warned them against allowing that subtle enemy of reasonableness, the imagination, to get the upper hand in their works. Precisely as Opitz had proceeded from theory to practice, so Gottsched followed up his theoretical textbook with a collection of plays, *Die deutsche Schaubühne nach den Regeln der alten Griechen und Römer eingerichett* (*The German Theatre, arranged according*

to the rules of the ancient Greeks and Romans), which was to provide the reformed theatre with a repertory. These plays were mostly translations, by Gottsched's disciples and by his gifted wife, Luise Adelgunde, of the masterpieces of French classic drama. Gottsched himself rose to a certain poetic originality with his tragedy *Der sterbende Cato* (*The Dying Cato*), which ingeniously combined the excellence of its models, plays by Addison and Deschamps. Indifferent as was the poetic outcome of Gottsched's activity, he at least succeeded in establishing French taste in the German theatre and in raising the status of the theatre as an institution. In later life, when Gottsched's ideals of a German national literature had been discredited, he concentrated his attention to the reform of the German language and the normalisation of German grammar, orthography and style. The value of his services in this field is nowadays unduly overlooked. Gottsched's autocracy was, in the main, restricted to Leipzig. Hamburg, for instance, in the north-west was hardly influenced by it at all; writers there, like Barthold Heinrich Brockes, passed directly from an activity in accordance with the tenets of the Second Silesian School,

to an imitation of English models. Friedrich von Hagedorn, again, Hamburg's representative poet in this age, grew up almost exclusively under the influence of English literature, and although his poetry has little of the freer spirit of the " return to nature " as exemplified in poets like Thomson, it is independent of the classicism of Leipzig.

Such was the condition of German letters at the opening of the eighteenth century. From Opitz to Gottsched, the Germans passed through the same phases of Renaissance development as are to be found in other European literatures; but the real meaning of this evolution did not become clear to them until the age of Lessing, Goethe and Schiller, who brought not only the German classic movement to a climax, but also the whole Renaissance movement of Europe.

CHAPTER IV

THE AGE OF CLASSIC ACHIEVEMENT

THE most marvellous thing about the eighteenth century, the threshold of which we have already reached, is the rapidity of its development. If we compare the state of Germany's literature—we will not say in 1700—but at the accession of Frederick the Great in 1740, when all Europe was agreed that the Germans, as a literature-producing people, were of no consequence at all, with the conditions in the year 1800, when the nation stood in the vanguard of the intellectual and poetic movement, we are confronted with a miracle of recuperative power which has not its parallel in any other modern literature. It is our business in the present chapter to try to understand how this miracle was wrought.

In the preceding chapter we saw how German Renaissance poetry repeated in a listless, ineffectual way the process of evolu-

tion through which all Renaissance poetry had to pass ; the eighteenth century continued this process, but with a material difference. In the earlier time Germany was content to follow humbly in the steps of her Latin neighbours ; before the eighteenth century was very far advanced, she assumed the leadership. Between 1700 and 1740 she had succeeded, with infinite labour and disproportionately small results, in bringing her literature abreast of that stage of Renaissance evolution which we associate with the French seventeenth century ; this, as we have seen, was Gottsched's standpoint. But very shortly after the middle of the century, men like Winkelmann and Lessing initiated in Germany a new phase of Renaissance classicism, which marked a greater advance over French pseudo-classicism—upheld in France with brilliant *éclat* by Lessing's great opponent, Voltaire—than the French classic literature was an advance upon the early Renaissance literature. Winkelmann and Lessing led the Germans back from a false, artificial classicism to a true classicism, that is to say, to a classicism that drew direct inspiration from the masterworks of antiquity and more especially of Greece. But this was not all. The last quarter of

the eighteenth century witnessed a further advance on the part of the classic movement. Other peoples, even if they had neither a Winkelmann nor a Lessing, contributed independently to the movement inaugurated by these men; but the classicism to which Goethe and Schiller rose in Weimar in the years of their maturity was an achievement the credit of which belongs exclusively to Germany. This final phase of classicism, which has been well described as the highest in the long development of Renaissance ideas, accepted the basis of æsthetic classicism the earlier pioneers had laid down, but grafted on to it a new ethical element. The classicism of Weimar, the ripest product of eighteenth century Enlightenment, was a Greek classicism plus a great humanitarian ideal.

How are we to explain this remarkable start which the Germans of the eighteenth century obtained over other nations, admittedly far better equipped than they to assume the intellectual hegemony in Europe? Nations often rise to intellectual supremacy on great political and national movements; but such was not the case in Germany. One cannot honestly say that the Germans of the eighteenth century owed anything particularly

inspiriting or inspiring to their political life; they were emphatically not a political people, not even a nation at all, if "nation" implies a common political aim. The pride of nation engendered by Frederick in Prussia was of far less significance to German literature than that vague, big-hearted cosmopolitanism of the eighteenth century, which had nothing to do with national politics and looked upon all Europe as one common fatherland. Frederick the Great was a passing tonic to German poetry, but little more. Nor can one discover in Germany's social life, in the undercurrents of her intellectual life, or in her educational system any very cogent ground for her rapid advance. Socially speaking, the Germans of the eighteenth century were merged in a trivial provincialism which could hardly have been paralleled in the life of France and England at the time; for Germany was a nation without a capital, and the intellectual salvation of England and France in the eighteenth century came from London and Paris. Educationally, again, in spite of much that was of good augury for the future, one can hardly say that the Germans had any points of superiority over their neighbours; and as for intellectual undercurrents, the

magnificent promise of Leibniz at the beginning of the century was not really fulfilled until the appearance of Kant's great philosophical treatises, after the classical period of the literature had been already established.

And yet in spite of all these disadvantages, there was a pronounced quickening of German intellectual life as the century progressed, an increasing sensitiveness to æsthetic impressions and receptiveness to outside ideas; and if we look more closely into the character of this German advance, we begin to discover certain peculiarities about it which are lacking, or but indifferently represented, in similar contemporary movements in other lands. To begin with, the process of development was one of oscillation from one extreme to another. Between the pseudo-classicism of Gottsched and the "Greek" classicism of Lessing lay an unclassic outburst of German individualism, which found its chief expression, as all German individualism does, in lyric poetry, namely, the lyric of Klopstock and his friends; and between the classicism of Lessing and the humane ideals of Weimar the German spirit passed through the most intense period of subjectivity which is to be found in its whole

history, the period of "Storm and Stress." In fact, we gradually begin to see that it was not the classicism of Germany's classic period that really mattered to the Germans, but the intervening moments of anti-classicism; and the advance of one classic period over the other was due, less to the natural growth of the classic idea than to the buffeting, moulding and adapting of classicism during the intervening periods of revolt. Lessing's classicism arose, for instance, out of his antagonism to Voltaire and his repugnance to the hollow artificiality of pseudo-classicism; Goethe's, again, was influenced by that intensely subjective stage in his early development, which revealed to him the insufficiency of the rationalistic classicism of Lessing. And great as was the ultimate achievement of German classical literature, the last word lay not with classicism but with its antithesis; for, at the moment when Goethe and Schiller had reached the very zenith of their activity, another revulsion set in in Germany which was far more far-reaching in its effects than anything that had gone before; in 1798 the Romantic School was founded, and it imbued the whole nineteenth century—and not in Germany alone—with its subjective attitude

towards art. But to Romanticism we have to return in a subsequent chapter.

The earlier phases of German eighteenth-century literature may be dealt with briefly here. Gottsched, whom we left in the previous chapter in undisputed possession of the field, came suddenly and unexpectedly into conflict with the new spirit in the year 1740, when two Zürich critics, Johann Jakob Bodmer and Johann Jakob Breitinger entered the field as champions of ideas which, originating in England, had already been spreading, with the help of translations of the *Spectator*, to the Continent. To the claims of French classicism that Cartesian *clarté* and reasonableness should be the guiding factors of literature, these men opposed a demand that the imagination should be the supreme factor in poetry. The French "battle of the ancients and the moderns" was thus fought over again on German soil, and, if anything, with keener weapons and more decisive results. From this battle the Swiss party, who had inscribed Milton's name on their banner, emerged triumphant. The fetters were removed from the German imagination, and the way was prepared for a German Milton.

Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock published the

first three cantos of his epic *Der Messias* (*The Messiah*) in 1748, and German poetry made an enormous stride forwards. Not merely was Gottsched dethroned from his dictator's chair, but even the less uncompromising Leipzig *littérateurs*, who had in their beginnings gathered round him, men like the gentle satirist Gottlieb Wilhelm Rabener, the amiable fabulist, Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, and the critic and dramatist, Johann Elias Schlegel—the one writer of this generation who may be fairly claimed as a predecessor of Lessing—found themselves no longer in the vanguard of the movement. Klopstock was the man of the hour, the practical illustration of the Swiss theories. It is, of course, very easy nowadays for us, who find *Der Messias* the dullest of dull reading, to say: a Milton indeed, a very German Milton! But intrinsic worth is not always the measure by which the significance of any particular piece of imaginative literature for a nation's evolution may be estimated; and from this point of view Klopstock's epic, notwithstanding its undramatic, "blurred" reproduction of the last stages of the gospel story, and still more his lyric Odes, couched, as they mostly are, in artificial, un-German

metres, played a rôle of the very first importance in the building of German classic literature. Klopstock is the first of the great liberators of the German spirit; his work stands for emancipation from the fetters of classic rule, and for the triumph of German individualism; and the movement initiated by him was reinforced by other factors in the national life. It coincided with the awakening of national self-respect in North Germany under the influence of Frederick the Great's personality and military zeal; it drew strength from the newly-born interest in the remote past of the Germanic races, which had been stimulated by translations of Ossian—then believed to have been a kind of ancient Teutonic "bard"—and from the analogous interest in the *Percy Ballads*, which appealed particularly to the Germans as a manifestation of the virile untutored imagination of the "Volk."

As has been already indicated, Frederick the Great's influence on German poetry was disappointing. We have, it is true, Goethe's word for it that Frederick gave "body" to the new poetry; but one can only say in a very restricted sense that it inspired it. The war-songs which celebrated Frederick's victories, such as Gleim's *Lieder eines preus-*

sischen Grenadiers, sound very hollow and insincere nowadays, and the poetry composed by other writers who fell under the classic influence of the Prussian Court, rises occasionally to distinction only in spite of that influence. No one reads Karl Wilhelm Ramler's cold, classic odes to-day, and Ewald Christian von Kleist interests us, not as a classic poet, but as one who, in his *Der Frühling* (*Spring*), had learnt to see nature with Thomson's eyes. However Frederick may have inspired the literature of his people, he played no rôle comparable to that of our Queen Elizabeth; we doubt even if his influence was greater than that of other German rulers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. What German poetry achieved under Frederick the Great, who himself spoke and wrote French in preference to German, and who had only contempt for the language and literature of his people, was virtually achieved in spite of him.

After Klopstock came Lessing. Of all the German writers of the eighteenth century, Lessing is the one whom we in England have received with most unmixed sympathy and fullest understanding; his great qualities are all qualities which we, as a nation, can appreciate. He was an inveterate enemy of

intellectual darkness, a champion of freedom of thought; a great fighter for noble, unselfish ends. As a critic—and it is as a critic that his lustre has perhaps remained brightest—he attacked the inaccurate scholarship of his time; he pled for the greatness of Greek literature, reinstated Aristotle as the supreme arbiter of dramatic taste; and, on the firm basis of this newer and more correct understanding, he championed Shakespeare against the French critics who had found the English poet sadly deficient according to their interpretations of Aristotle's doctrine. Thus, although Lessing's criticism was a reversion to classicism, his classicism was consistent with a wide and catholic outlook on literature; one that had room in it for Shakespeare and the Spanish dramatists, as well as for Sophocles; his classicism, in other words, had benefited by the widening process of the anti-classic revolt that lay between it and the preceding classic movement associated with Gottsched. Another valuable aspect of Lessing's criticism is to be seen in his treatise on the limitations of poetry and painting, the *Laokoon*. Here he appears as a fellow-worker by the side of Winkelmann, who in his *History of Ancient Art*, had

proclaimed the Greeks the unsurpassed masters; and from this standpoint Lessing set down the lines beyond which a symbolic sculpture and a pictorial poetry might not go. Lessing, however, was more than a critic; he was Germany's first great dramatist. He began, as a young student in Leipzig, like every other Gottschedian, as an imitator of the then popular French playwrights, Destouches and Marivaux; and all his earlier plays show this influence, tempered, it may be, by the more thorough study of antique comedy. In 1755 he produced what was for Germany the most epoch-making drama in the whole history of her literature, *Miss Sara Sampson*. This remarkable play is not, however, very original, being an imitation of Lillo's *Merchant of London*, supplemented by other ingredients of unmistakable English origin; but it was the first German "bürgerliche Trauerspiel," or "tragedy of common life"; with it this new form of tragedy, the special pride of the eighteenth century, was adopted by the German people, and it has remained, down to the present day, one of their favourite forms of dramatic expression.

Lessing followed up *Miss Sara* with three dramatic works, all of the first importance:

Minna von Barnhelm, the best German comedy of the eighteenth century, in which the Frederician era is mirrored as in no other German work; *Emilia Galotti*, where the "domestic" tragedy is raised to a higher poetic level, and points out the way which the tragedy of the following period was to follow; lastly, *Nathan der Weise*, in which Lessing embodied his own ideal of a classic poetic drama which should take the place of the more artificial tragedy of Voltaire. But *Nathan* is at the same time an epitome, transfigured by the optimism of rationalism, of the great struggle for religious tolerance, which darkened the poet's own closing years.

So far then, Lessing represents an element in German literature which made for stability; but German individualism has always been too intractable a force to be kept in check by mere law-givers. Moreover, the disturbing forces in German literature, shortly after the middle of the eighteenth century, were peculiarly disquieting; a still greater revolution was portending, a still more complete break with the even tenor of Renaissance classicism. At an earlier stage the friends of law and order in poetry had had the moral help of France, but now there arose in

France itself a thinker who in the most direct way fomented the rebellion in Germany. This was Rousseau. The forces which had already been called into life by Klopstock were reinforced tenfold, and Lessing himself despaired of the future when he saw the "Storm and Stress" break over Germany. But before we consider this movement, we have to look to a writer who, in his own way, helped materially to keep his countrymen from losing their balance entirely over Klopstock and Rousseau.

This, the third outstanding writer of the German eighteenth century, is Christoph Martin Wieland. Wieland was a Swabian with as few of the characteristics we usually associate with this German race as that other great Swabian, Schiller. One cannot say that Wieland, like Lessing, opposed the fervour and enthusiasm of his time with a measured, antique classicism; his classicism, such as it was, was rather an aggravated form of pseudo-classicism. What he did introduce into German poetry was a Latin gaiety, hitherto foreign to it; something of the spirit of the French social poets, or of Italians like Ariosto. He met excessive manifestations of feeling with cynicism and raillery;

he told sunny tales of gay adventure—*Musarion*, *Gandalin*, *Oberon*—the seriousness of which was never really serious; and he preached a light-hearted, cynical philosophy of enjoying to-day and letting to-morrow look after itself, which counteracted in some measure the solemnity and intensity of the new school. This by no means exhausts Wieland's many-sided activity. He did valiant work by adapting, in his *Agathon*, the new kind of fiction invented by Richardson and cultivated in England, to German needs; and it must never be forgotten that he gave Germany her first translation of Shakespeare. He is hardly a writer we care to read nowadays, but even if we are obliged to admit that his literary work was chiefly valuable in a negative way, he filled an indispensable niche in the structure of German eighteenth-century literature.

But the coming of the "Storm and Stress" was inevitable; the new individualism could not be dammed back. Lessing's warnings and pleas for imaginative orderliness went unheeded; and in the early seventies the deluge broke over Germany. The genesis of the movement is interesting enough to be looked at in some detail.

The spiritual progenitor of German "Storm and Stress" was Johann Friedrich Herder, who was a much more important force in German intellectual life than the comparatively small popularity of his fragmentary and formless writings might lead us to think. He was a man of extraordinarily fertile ideas, and ideas fraught with far-reaching significance for the future. For the first time, for instance, we find clearly propounded in his works the significant doctrine of historical evolution; filled with a Rousseau-like enthusiasm, he sought the key to the secrets of history in the cradle of our race. But other forces were at work in Herder besides the influence of Rousseau; in early life he had been introduced to English literature and, above all, to Shakespeare by an eccentric pioneer of the new individualism, Johann Georg Hamann —the "Wizard of the North," as his countrymen called him—and from this time on the ties that bound Herder to English literature strongly influenced his activity. The supremely interesting moment in Herder's career was, when, as tutor to two travelling noblemen, he came to Strassburg. Before this he had made himself known to the younger generation by a volume of suggestive

criticism, *Fragmente über die neuere deutsche Literatur* (*Fragments on Modern German Literature*), in which the new anti-classic and also, to some extent, anti-Lessing standpoint found expression. Goethe, then a young student in Strassburg, was eager to make his acquaintance. The two men met, and in days spent together, while Herder was undergoing an operation on his eye, they virtually formulated the doctrine of the new movement which was called by after generations the " Sturm und Drang," or " Storm and Stress." In 1772 appeared a little volume of essays by various hands, Goethe's and Herder's amongst others, called *Von deutscher Art und Kunst* (*On German Ways and Art*), the manifesto of the literary revolution.

There are two chief divisions in the movement of " Storm and Stress," one a dominantly lyric one, which went back to Klopstock as the head-spring of its inspiration, the other, in which the drama was almost exclusively cultivated. The lyric " Storm and Stress " was more particularly associated with the university town of Göttingen. Here a group of young students banded themselves together into a school or " Dichterbund," and published their poetry in an almanack of their

own, the so-called *Göttinger Musenalmanach*. This group numbered among its members Johann Heinrich Voss, the admirable translator of Homer and the author of charming original idylls, notably *Luise*—which subsequently served Goethe as a model for his *Hermann und Dorothea*—a poem in which Homeric *naïveté* and simplicity are adapted, a little crudely it may be, to a German provincial theme; Ludwig Hölty, a gentle, elegiac singer of great gifts, cut off in early youth; Matthias Claudius, a representative of the unsophisticated literature of the people; and, most important of all, Germany's greatest ballad poet, Gottfried August Bürger. In the poetry of these men is to be found reflected all the unsettling tendencies of the age: the fervour of Klopstock, the invigorating contact with the people and the mother-earth, the delight in the folk-song and the ballad, which the Germans had, as has been seen, learned from the *Percy Ballads*, the Romantic mystery and mysticism of Ossian. Nor is the note of political aspiration absent, the craving for personal freedom, a side of the movement which appears to best advantage in the poetry of the brothers Graf Christian and Graf Friedrich zu Stollberg.

Bürger's great ballads, again, such as *Lenore* and *Der wilde Jäger* (*The Wild Huntsman*), were defiant protests against the artificialities of classic poetry, just as his unhappy life was one long, tragic protest against the conventional moral code of the age. *Lenore*, in particular, was a work of European significance hardly less far-reaching than that of Goethe's *Werther* itself.

But the main current of "Storm and Stress" sought the more congenial channel of the theatre. In the year 1773, Goethe, then a youth of twenty-four, gave the world his *Götz von Berlichingen*, and with it opened a new chapter in the history of the German drama. Johann Wolfgang Goethe, who for many pages to come must remain the central figure of this book, was a native of Frankfort-on-the-Main, where he was born on August 28, 1749. In the happy, careless years of youth, which he has described for us with such inimitable charm in his autobiography, he went through personally, one might say, the various stages in the development of his literature which we have just been considering. His first university years were spent in Gottsched's Leipzig, where he, too, became if not a Gottschedian—he came too late for

that—at least a rococo poet of the approved Leipzig pattern; from the rococo he passed, as his literature had done, under the influence of Klopstock, to Lessing, and from Lessing to that momentous time when he first found his feet with Herder's aid in Strassburg. Strassburg was the real birthplace of Goethe's genius, as it was the birthplace of the "Storm and Stress."

Götz von Berlichingen made an incision into the history of the German drama almost as deep as *Miss Sara Sampson* had done, eighteen years before; it became the model—in style and treatment—for a vast dramatic literature which was poured out without stint during the next ten years. *Götz* is a prose play, in which the irregularities of Shakespeare, whom Voltaire in the name of classic taste had stigmatised as a "drunken barbarian," are accentuated and carried to extremes. Goethe is careless of form, careless of adaptability to the stage, careless even of that element of the drama which Aristotle, and after him Lessing, had proclaimed to be of the very highest importance, the plot. *Götz* is a character-drama, the picture of a great strong man, a noble of the sixteenth century, who repudiates the gross injustices of his class,

does heroic deeds, and dies heroically. *Götz von Berlichingen* is, as regards its subject, the first of the so-called "Ritterdramen," that is to say, dramas dealing with the decadent feudalism which marked the close of the Middle Ages. But the "Storm and Stress" dramatists also turned to more modern subjects, being particularly attracted by the type of domestic tragedy which Lessing had popularised; *Emilia Galotti*, which appeared the year before *Götz*, was no less a model for the movement than *Götz*. Here, too, Goethe fell in with the tastes of his time; and in other and less important plays, such as *Clavigo* and *Stella*, he paid his tribute to the "domestic tragedy."

Apart from the work of Goethe and, at a later date, Schiller, the modern reading world is little interested in the dramatic literature of this time. In point of fact, that literature was too much of its time, too preoccupied with problems of the moment, to think of posterity. The whole activity of the "Storm and Stress" is based on negative, destructive premisses, and was more intent on laughing the fogies of tradition to scorn than in creating a dramatic literature of intrinsic worth to take the place of the dis-

credited alexandrine tragedies of the pseudo-classic age. Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz was a playwright of no small gifts, especially in a field which was somewhat neglected at this time, namely, comedy; but his life was unbalanced, and his work, in spite of penetrating flashes of geniuses, shared in the general disruption of the age. Friedrich Maximilian von Klinger, who has the doubtful distinction of having written the play, *Sturm und Drang* (*Storm and Stress*), which gave its name to the period, was an even more unbalanced "Stormer," and one in whose veins the fever of Rousseau burnt fiercely. In later life he atoned, however, for his early discretions; the fever burnt itself out, and, as the author of a series of philosophical novels, Klinger became as staid and respectable a member of the German Parnassus as Goethe himself after he settled in Weimar. Of the other writers, the most important were Heinrich Wilhelm von Gerstenberg, who contributed, even before Goethe, to the dramatic movement *Ugolino*, a play of remarkable imaginative force, and wrote some of the most suggestive criticism of the time; Heinrich Leopold Wagner, who cultivated in a narrower sense the domestic tragedy,

his *Kindermörderin* (*The Child Murderess*) being a forerunner—but a quite conscious forerunner, for Goethe had confided the subject of his drama to him—of Goethe's *Faust;* and lastly, Friedrich Müller, usually known as the "Painter" Müller, who formed a not very effectual link between "Storm and Stress" and the nineteenth-century Romanticists.

But even if all this activity lies far away from us to-day, we cannot afford to overlook it, for it prepared the way for Germany's representative classical dramatist, Schiller. In 1781, the year of Lessing's death, eight years after *Götz von Berlichingen*, appeared Schiller's first drama, *Die Räuber* (*The Robbers*). Once again, a clearly marked line was ruled across the rapidly advancing dramatic literature of Germany. For Schiller was what none of his predecessors of the "Storm and Stress" had been, the born dramatist; he had the right constructive instinct for the theatre, a quality which they had been inclined to underrate. With him the "Storm and Stress" drama first really became what the Germans call "bühnenfähig," adapted to the stage. *Die Räuber* has all the faults of an unbalanced juvenility, but it is an excellent stage-play;

and it has those mirror-like qualities with respect to the ideas of its time which are indispensable to all great literature. From *Die Räuber* onwards, the interests of dramatic poetry and the national theatre become one. This is the real significance of Schiller's début.

Friedrich Schiller, born in 1759, the same year as Robert Burns, was ten years younger than Goethe. Goethe came from the metropolis of central Germany, Schiller was a South German, a Swabian. He had passed his early years amidst more than his fair share of tribulation and suffering; and there was not a little that was heroic in his devotion to his genius. *Die Räuber* brought him fame, but years had to pass before his life got into quieter waters, and then it was due to the exertions of Goethe and the patronage of the Weimar Court. *Die Räuber* was followed by a historical drama of the Italian sixteenth century, *Fiesco*, and by *Kabale und Liebe* (*Love and Intrigue*), a domestic tragedy with a dominant love-story; but even then, and in spite of the fact that these plays were all valuable accessions to the national repertory, Schiller felt so little satisfied with his achievements and prospects as a dramatic poet, that he turned to journalism, then to history, and ultimately

to philosophy. Meanwhile, however, one more play had been added to his list, *Don Carlos*, in which the rebel spirit of "Storm and Stress" gradually began to give place to a calmer, more restful classicism. With *Don Carlos*, which was published in 1787, Schiller, and with him one might say the whole "Storm and Stress" movement, reached a parting of the ways.

The "Storm and Stress" found expression in other forms of literature besides the lyric and the drama. Goethe gave the movement its chief novel, *Werthers Leiden*, the year after *Götz von Berlichingen*. From this book one realises better than before how much German literature owed to Rousseau. It is the fashion nowadays to look down a little on Goethe's first novel as bearing too strong an imprint of the spirit of Rousseau's *Nouvelle Heloïse*, as belonging to an age of effete and maudlin sentimentality; but in many ways it still remains the most living and interesting product of the German "Storm and Stress." To appreciate it at its true worth, we must endeavour to detach ourselves from its ethic aspects, and look at it objectively as a piece of literary art. How far has Goethe succeeded in reproducing the spirit and mood of the

world in which his Werther lived and moved? Has he given it a semblance of reality, or is his hero Werther merely a puppet mouthing ideas and doing actions that stand in no logical connection with the character of the man as Goethe describes him? The answer to all such questions must necessarily be to Goethe's credit. We may not be disposed to weep over Werther's suicide, but we must admit the convincing power with which Goethe has told his tragic story. Of all the heroes of German drama and romance in the eighteenth century Werther alone had sufficient vitality to impose himself on the imagination of the world at large. We no longer look either at Homer or at Ossian with Werther's eyes, but we appreciate the delicate art with which Goethe has reflected the changing moods of his unhappy hero in the poetry of these, for the eighteenth century, so significant poets. *Werther* is one of the very few books of the eighteenth century which, with our own *Tom Jones* and *Clarissa*, have in them elements that have successfully defied the passing of time.

Unfortunately, however, this novel had no worthy successors; it belonged to that by no means rare type of masterpiece which

flashes across the literary firmament, evokes enormous enthusiasm, but proves ultimately barren for the subsequent literary evolution. We saw something of the same kind in the case of Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm*. While very inferior works in European literatures—Lillo's *Merchant of London*, which has already been mentioned in these pages, is a striking example—have turned the whole current of literary development and put their stamp on a century of literary production, others of far greater power and significance have had no effective following. In point of fact, *Werther* did not really stand in the main line of development of German fiction at all; it represented a side issue, the novel in general remaining faithful to the original lines laid down by works like Wieland's *Agathon*. The vast literature called forth by *Werther*, both in Germany and in other lands, is, for the most part, worthless; it degenerated rapidly into reprehensible extravagance; and ruins and moonlight, sentimental tears and harrowing suicides became its staple ingredients. Thus ridicule and disgrace fell on the entire movement which Goethe's novel had inaugurated.

Looking through the novels of the "Storm

and Stress," the modern reader will find a certain pleasure in *Anton Reiser*, an unvarnished, autobiographical story by Karl Philipp Moritz, a refreshing transcript of reality in this age of sentimentality; interesting, too, are the novels of Johann Jakob Heinse, especially his famous *Ardinghello, oder die glückseligen Inseln* (*Ardinghello, or The Blessed Isles*), the Latin atmosphere of which introduced a certain self-consciousness and self-criticism into the childishly naïve outpourings of the Teutonic mind. The real antidote to *Werther*, and for that part to Werther's source, Rousseau, was our English Sterne, one of the very greatest forces on the German literature of this epoch. Sterne, in fact, was the saving of the "Storm and Stress" novel; and towards the close of the period there arose in Germany a writer who, under the spell of *Tristram Shandy*, turned the crudities of the sentimentalists into a new channel, and created a novel which, without winning a permanent place in the nation's esteem, appealed irresistibly to the generation for which it was written—Jean Paul Friedrich Richter. No German writer was ever loved by his generation, and, for that part, by the succeeding generation as well, as "Jean Paul";

his humour mingled with tears, his kindly pictures of the provincial life of his Franconian home, his grotesque and far-fetched similes and imaginings, above all, that soaring poetic fantasy, for which the universe was hardly wide enough, which brought the extremes of the infinitely great and the infinitely little into close touch with each other, were exactly to the taste of his time. And yet nowadays it can hardly be said that Richter is more than tolerated by German readers. We live in an age of sterner æsthetic ideals, when the offences against form and proportion and even good taste in which Richter revels, are no longer judged indulgently; when his laboured humour has gone as much out of fashion as the sentimental humour of Sterne; when a new realism has placed truth higher than mere imagining. All these things have militated against Richter's popularity; but he forms none the less the apex of the "Storm and Stress" novel and its logical conclusion; with him it recovered from the overweening sentimentalism of Rousseau. One other form of fiction deserves passing mention before we leave this period, and that is the philosophical novel. In the "Storm and Stress" itself this had been represented by Friedrich Jacobi, the

author of *Eduard Allwill* and *Woldemar*, rather colourless, incorporeal books, but books of ideas; and, at a later stage, the "Storm and Stress" dramatist Klinger produced, as we have seen, a series of works in which the more restful thought of the time takes the place of the fever and the fret of his early plays.

In the movement of literature, the "Storm and Stress" passed gradually like a dissolving-view into the maturer epoch which we associated with the climax of the German classical period. It is difficult to say when the "Storm and Stress" ceased and the strictly classical period began; in reality, the earlier movement never ceased at all; it merely found its way into lower literary channels; and all through the last decades of the eighteenth century it continued to provide the German public with their favourite pabulum in the form of endless sentimental novels, books which the literary histories do not deign to touch. It also supplied the German stage with its daily bread in the shape of a vast literature of tragedies of common life, "family pictures" as they were called, always lachrymose, but not infrequently, as in the best work of the actor August

Wilhelm Iffland, containing true reproductions of the social conditions. The legitimate end of this dramatic development was the drama of August von Kotzebue, which flooded the German and even the European stage at the turn of the century. The tragedy of domestic incident had been, so to speak, put out of court by the higher sweep which the drama took in Weimar. The tragedy of common life, even before its degeneration set in, had been declared outside the literary pale, and in Kotzebue this "unliterary" drama returned and avenged itself by taking possession of the stage. Kotzebue was a gifted dramatic, or at least theatrical, writer who had gone astray owing to the lack of those responsibilities which the higher poetry places upon her priesthood. He was an outcast from the first, and, like all outcasts, did not feel called upon to minister to ideal aims.

But it is time to turn to the great literature of the closing decades of the eighteenth century. The "Storm and Stress" may have never really ceased until, at the very close of the century, it underwent a resuscitation in the form of a new movement, to be known thereafter as Romanticism, but the

outstanding works of this period clearly mark the beginning of a return to the simpler and chaster ideals of classic poetry. Whatever may be said of the general literary movement and the development of literary taste, we can at least put our finger on the exact point at which the two leading poets, Goethe and Schiller, renounced the literary creed of their youth and embraced a serener literary faith. The transition is seen in two dramas, Goethe's *Egmont* and Schiller's *Don Carlos*.

The beginnings of both these works lay far back in the preceding period. *Egmont* had been planned while Goethe was still heart and soul with the old movement; it is, in great measure, a drama of "Storm and Stress," written in the irregular form of that school. But a mellowness, a more conciliatory spirit, has come over the play; the dark figure of Alba is balanced by the serener atmosphere that surrounds Egmont himself and the incomparable Klärchen; and Egmont goes out to his execution at the close inspired by a vision of the goddess of Freedom, faces death filled with a heroic optimism. This is a very different thing from the death of that other hero, Werther, whose coffin was carried

by workmen and round whose death religion wove no hope.

Schiller's first tragedy in verse marks even more clearly the transition; for here Schiller unmistakably breaks with his whole past. *Don Carlos* had, as we have seen, been begun back in Schiller's "Storm and Stress" days, but it had undergone several transformations. Under the influence of the higher French drama of the eighteenth century, and the taste for that drama which was encouraged by the theatre in Mannheim, Schiller carefully removed all the too-realistic elements of his original treatment of the theme; he determined that *Don Carlos* should not appear to be merely a successor to *Kabale und Liebe*. He idealised his characters in the approved French style; and raised the whole play to a higher poetic level; moreover, he chose as his medium of expression that blank verse which Lessing in his *Nathan* had successfully transferred from the English to the German stage. The main drawback to the work is that, in consequence of the frequent transformations which it underwent, it has lost something of its original clearness and consistency; the plot became hopelessly involved, and what had been

originally a purely human conflict at a royal court, became a drama of political ideas, a plea for the humane ideals of the eighteenth-century " Weltbürger " or cosmopolitan.

Whether Schiller felt that he had not quite succeeded with *Don Carlos*—and as a matter of fact, there were difficulties of getting the drama performed; he even thought he might have to rewrite it in prose as German actors had apparently lost the art of speaking verse!—in any case, after *Don Carlos* the poet turned his back on the theatre for many years, left it time, so to speak, to make up on him. Meanwhile he threw himself into the study of the historical period in which he had been obliged to immerse himself as a preparation for *Don Carlos*, and made a beginning to an ambitiously planned history of the Revolt of the Netherlands. This was followed, somewhat later, by a, picturesque, if, as history, less satisfying, study of the Thirty Years' War. In these years Schiller, as far as literature was concerned, was little more than an onlooker; he edited a literary review, *Thalia*, and his actual contributions were limited to a couple of short novels, and a few poems, in which he

was clearly feeling his way to a new form of lyric expression, the philosophical lyric. Poems like *Die Künstler* (*The Artists*) and *Der Spaziergang* (*The Walk*), *Die Götter Griechenlands* (*The Gods of Greece*), belong to the most characteristic and precious creations of Schiller's genius. Gradually, however, another and peculiarly congenial interest took the place of history. Thanks to Goethe's influence, he had been appointed to a vacant chair in the University of Jena, and threw himself zealously into abstract studies; he fell under the spell of the philosophy of Kant, and devoted himself especially to the study of that thinker's æsthetics. But before turning to Kant, to Schiller's æsthetic writings, and to his friendship with Goethe, it may be well to look for a moment to the steps whereby Goethe rose from "Storm and Stress" to classicism.

Goethe, having outstripped the contemporary movement, also turned away from pure literature, and abided his time. The intense imaginative activity of his "Storm and Stress" days died down entirely when, in 1775, he settled in Weimar at the invitation of the young Duke. He gave himself up unreservedly to the political interests and

the social pleasures of his new surroundings ; and for intellectual solace he turned rather to science than to poetry. He had been rudely uprooted from his early *milieu ;* he could no longer, now that he had been transferred to a higher social circle, remain the crude rebel of *Götz von Berlichingen* and *Werther ;* and he chose to be silent. The literary work of his first ten years in Weimar, which includes a few matchless lyrics inspired by his love for Frau Charlotte von Stein, and a few unimportant plays, might all be included in one slim volume. Thus, as far as published work was concerned, these years, in which, in the world outside, the seething ferment of " Storm and Stress " was gradually dying down, are all but a blank in Goethe's activity. But greater works were in preparation ; and these were brought to final completion by Goethe's visit to Italy in 1786-87. Italy meant many things to Goethe, but, above all, it gave him the opportuuity of coming to a reckoning with himself, of drawing the results of an epoch in his life to a conclusion, of ending one chapter and making preparations for a new one. In Italy he collected and revised his writings for a new edition which was to include the three great dramas of his

middle period, *Egmont*, *Iphigenie auf Tauris* in its final form, and his Italian drama of introspection, *Torquato Tasso*.

The first of these dramas, which partakes to so great an extent of the poet's earlier period, has already been discussed in these pages. The other two, *Iphigenie* and *Tasso*, belong to the most vital creations of the classic age in Germany, and alike illustrate that higher, more chastened classicism, which, after the "Storm and Stress," took the place of the artificial pseudo-classicism in which Goethe made his literary début. *Iphigenie in Tauris* is the noblest restoration of the antique drama which the eighteenth century has to show, and a splendid illustration of the blending of the new humanity, born of Renaissance and Enlightenment, with the oldest humanity of all, that of the Greeks. In the calm majesty and noble beauty of its verse, Goethe's play is, one might say, more classic, in the current acceptance of that word, than the original play of Euripides; for the latter, with his nervous, relentless realism, has little of the repose that Winkelmann, and with him his whole century, attributed to the antique. Here in Goethe is the true Hellenism as Hellenism appeared to his age, the humanising

power of ancient culture. Here the German spirit has set out on its argosy,

"Das Land der Griechen mit der Seele suchend"

("seeking the land of the Greeks with its soul"); and if it did not find the real Greece, it found at least the Greece that revolutionised the culture of the eighteenth century.

Torquato Tasso, the other great drama of this eventful epoch in the evolution of German poetry, is no Greek drama in so far as it deals with the story of an unhappy modern poet; its theme is a very modern conflict, which Goethe had himself to fight out in all its bitterness, the conflict of a sensitive soul with a hard, self-seeking world; but *Tasso*, too, is, in its ultimate essence, classic. Goethe is still under the influence of the lessons of form and beauty which he had learned from Greece in his *Iphigenie; Tasso* is classic because it, too, is humane.

With Goethe's stay in Italy, and with these two great dramas, the last and highest stage of German classical poetry, the foundations of which had been laid by Lessing, Wieland and Herder, opens. And it is meetly symbolised for us in the friendship between

Goethe and Schiller, which lasted from 1794 until Schiller's death in 1805.

Every age of German poetry is associated, in a higher degree than is the case in other literatures, with a philosophical background. In the earlier classical epoch that background had been the cosmopolitan rationalism inaugurated in Germany by Leibniz, Thomasius and Wolff; now it was the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, Germany's greatest philosophic spirit, perhaps the greatest philosopher in the whole range of human history. Kant stands in a similar relation to the abstract thinking of his century, to that in which Goethe stands to its poetic development. He represents the apex of the movement of Rationalism or Enlightenment. Just as Goethe stood for the logical development of German classicism from a false classicism to a true and humane one, and thereby rendered the older classicism effete, so Kant was a great positive force, nullifying the crude utilitarianism of the earlier rationalistic movement. Goethe extracted from the sordid spirit of the earlier literature a poetic idealism of the highest type; Kant superseded the materialism of the eighteenth-century deists by a new spiritual idealism. Kant was a great liberator,

a greater even than Descartes. Alike in metaphysics, ethics and æsthetics, he emancipated the human mind, gave it wings wherewith to soar. By freeing speculation from the subjective bonds of time and place, he opened up limitless worlds to the imagination; by placing human morals above all taint of self-seeking, by making them independent of the bonds of self, he set man morally free; and from this new metaphysics and new ethics he deduced an æsthetic system, which gave poetry an enormous impetus. On Kant's shoulders rose Schiller. From Kant's system, which naturally kept strictly within the sphere of the philosophic text-book, Schiller deduced the practical philosophy of the classic age, and he gave expression to it in his magnificent *Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (*Letters on the Æsthetic Education of Man*), and the treatise *Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung* (*On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*). Here the great doctrine, which underlay the classic strivings and ideals of Weimar, is first clearly stated: the education and liberation of the human spirit by means of art. For the first time in the modern world, the peculiar function of the beautiful as an educative force

in human life was realised. That is the deepest lesson German classic literature had to give to the world.

In the works produced by Goethe and Schiller in the period of their united activity are enshrined these great, world-moving ideas. To take Goethe first. In the beginning of this epoch he published his chief novel, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*), which has been well described as an " Odyssey of Culture." Here we have a book which occupies a central position, to which no other work of the age, except perhaps *Faust*, can pretend. When the novel appeared, it became clear that the long and often confused evolution of German fiction in the eighteenth century, with its imitations of Richardson and Sterne and Rousseau, its extravagance and its truth, its sentimentality and its rationalism, was, as it were, dimly making towards this culmination. Goethe's *Meister* is not merely a novel of the classic age, but pre-eminently *the* novel of German classicism. It is a summation of that wisdom which Goethe had slowly accumulated on the new gospel of art and on the relation of the individual to his fellow-men. It, too, retains the traditional subjective and biographic form

of the German epic—the form of *Parzival*, of *Simplicissimus*, of *Agathon;* for it is the history of a soul on its journey through life, the "sentimental education" of a young man who goes out into life seeking a vocation which he has difficulty in discovering. "Cast forward the eye of the spirit, awake in your souls the imaginative power which carries forth what is fairest, what is highest, life, away beyond the stars." "Travel, travel back into life, take along with you this holy earnestness, for earnestness alone makes life eternity." Such is the highest wisdom which Wilhelm acquires in the course of his apprenticeship.

Schiller faces problems of no less magnitude in the series of his great dramas which opened in 1799 with the trilogy of *Wallenstein*. Here the Kantian antinomies of pleasure and duty, which in their crasser forms had provided the domestic tragedy with endless "problems," are dealt with on the higher plane of idealistic poetry. *Wallenstein* is a "fate tragedy" in which the hero is tormented, not by effete, old wives' tales of Delphic oracles, but by that inner struggle of the soul which constitutes modern tragedy; a struggle outwardly symbolised here in the hero's faith

in the guiding influence of the stars. Wallenstein is a classic hero, who over-reaches himself, who takes the fatal step that ultimately leads him to a tragic fall; but in the course of that fall his soul is stripped of its conventions, and he stands out, at the last, purified and ennobled, a hero who compels our pity and fear. Apart from this, *Wallenstein* unrolls before us a rich tapestry of the most picturesque age of German history, the Thirty Years' War; and bears witness to Schiller's skill, which had been acquired by his long study of history, in clothing the skeleton of Kantian ethics and Greek dramatic theory with a living body. After *Wallenstein* came, in the last years of Schiller's feverish activity and stupendous productive power, *Maria Stuart*, in which, however much we may deprecate his rather superficial treatment of our national history, the favourite tragic conflict of Germany's classic age stands out distinctly: Schiller's heroine passes through the fire of self-abasement to find her higher and noble self. Maria Stuart is a great soul imprisoned, tempted, trampled upon; she emerges in the end chastened and purified, and walks to the scaffold, as Egmont had done, in the conviction of a great spiritual victory accom-

plished, atoning for her sin by a heroic end. We find the same problem again in *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* (*The Maid of Orleans*), the third drama of this final period of Schiller's career. The ethical background of this play is not very different from that of *Maria Stuart;* the heroine sins and suffers, rises through renunciation to higher things, and dies amidst the spiritual transfiguration of her mediæval faith; but how very skilfully Schiller has adapted his technique to this new theme! *Maria Stuart* is, for the most part, painted in the rather drab colours that suggest the tragedy of common life; it deals with passions that are at times the reverse of heroic, and it brings the two queens, Mary and Elizabeth, into a situation that leaves an unpleasant memory with us. *The Maid of Orleans*, on the other hand, is unfolded amidst an extravagant display of mediæval colour and brilliancy; the ethical problem, the rising on one's dead self to higher things, is similar, but how different is the framework! Ever eager to win new domains for his art, Schiller did not rest here; his next work belonged to a totally different category. *Die Braut von Messina* (*The Bride of Messina*) is an attempt to reproduce a

Greek tragedy in a mediæval setting. The outward semblance of ancient tragedy is preserved, the acts being only marked by the introduction of a chorus, while the simplicity of the characters and the fate-swayed theme clearly point to the Greek model. Schiller could not go so far as to introduce an oracle into his Sicilian story; but he put a superstitious faith in dreams in its place, not altogether realising that a mere superstition lacked the dignity of religious conviction which the oracle possessed for the ancients. Within this framework, however, Schiller has given us a powerful dramatic poem, and one that contains some of his finest poetry; but the stiffening formalism of a classic method has laid its cold hand on his figures, who have become more statuesquely simple, but less human and living. No doubt, *The Bride of Messina* was something of an aberration; Schiller soon felt that it was so; and his next work, and the last he was to complete, *Wilhelm Tell*, is a return to a broad, national basis. *Tell* is the national tragedy, or rather drama, of German Switzerland; it brings the entire spirit of the Swiss nation on to the stage, depicts it in the throes of a life and death struggle for autonomy. Tell himself is less

the hero of the old saga, the master-archer, who by his skill with his crossbow avenges himself on the tyrant and rescues his people from bondage to the House of Austria, than an abstract personification of the heroic side of the Swiss national character, as Schiller conceived it. And the action in which this hero becomes involved in the course of the drama, is planned with a view to these wider national issues, rather than to the purely personal conflict. This gives the drama a panoramic, epic quality which, no doubt, weakens its immediate personal appeal; but the German dramatist at all times has regarded it as his chief glory to fight against the laming restrictions of theory; and who shall say that Schiller was not as justified here in widening the purview of the drama, as Goethe had been with his *Tasso*, or, for that part, Lessing with his *Miss Sara Sampson?* Schiller's last work was to have dealt with the story of the Polish pretender Demetrius. Again we find him, in the fragment of the tragedy that has been preserved, striving to attain a more closely knit action, a more intimate fusion of the fate of the hero with his character; and there is little doubt but that the poet would have advanced with this tragedy

another step towards that ideal of a national drama which, in a dim, unconscious way, the entire classical and romantic epoch of German writers regarded as its ultimate aim. With Schiller's death in 1805, the development of the German drama, on the widely human lines laid down by the eighteenth century, came to an abrupt close; for there was no one left to whom the torch of classicism could be handed on. The one great German dramatist who was writing in 1805, Heinrich von Kleist, had broken completely with the eighteenth-century spirit, and had espoused a more intimately personal Romanticism.

While in the works we have just been discussing the essentially humane aspects of Weimar classicism have been emphasised, there was another, and in some respect less pleasing side to the classical movement, its artificial formalism. Some of the most interesting pages of the correspondence between Schiller and Goethe are devoted to a painstaking discussion of the formal aspects of literature, and that, moreover, with a very clearly marked tendency to superimpose on German literature the classic models. The spheres of drama and epic are deliminated; various technical matters, such as the "retarding

moment " in a work of art, are discussed with a dangerous tendency to mere barren theorising; above all, the advisability of stripping the creations of the imagination of all personal and subjective elements is considered, of preserving the sanctity of type, a principle which the Renaissance critics believed they had discovered in the works of Greek antiquity. All these matters were clearly in antagonism to the spirit of Germanic freedom which had given German literature its enormous impetus in the eighteenth century, and on which the " Storm and Stress " had risen to greatness; and German poetry suffered under the check to its spontaneity. We have already discussed the exaggerated classicism of Schiller's *Bride of Messina*, and if Tell is a less individualised hero than Wallenstein, it is to be put down to an undue sacrifice to theory. But the effect of this classic formalism on Goethe was even more marked than on Schiller.

Wallenstein was the first result of the influence which the friendship and intercourse with Goethe had on Schiller's genius; *Hermann und Dorothea* might be described as a proof of the beneficent influence of Schiller's encouragement on Goethe's genius. No poem

of the classical period better illustrates the dark as well as the light side of German classical achievement; for *Hermann und Dorothea* may be reasonably claimed to be Germany's greatest purely classical poem. The classicism here manifests itself in the all-pervading influence of Homer, that poet being to Goethe's epic idyll what Sophocles was to Schiller's classic tragedy. Goethe had no compunction in declaring that his intention here was to transfer the primitive *naïveté* of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to a sentimental story of trivial dimensions. The way was pointed out to him by his predecessor, Johann Heinrich Voss, who, after steeping himself in the poetry of the *Odyssey*, had in his idylls adapted the manner of that epic—or what at least appeared to him as such—to even more trivial and provincial themes than that of *Hermann*. Goethe was too clear-headed a critic not to realise this grotesque disparity, and he endeavoured to get over it by those generalising methods he had distilled from the classic theorists. Here lies the fundamental difference between the realism of Voss's *Luise*, and the classicism of *Hermann und Dorothea*. Goethe aimed at giving his hero, Hermann, a kind of universal significance, at

making him, so to speak, an Ajax or Odysseus of his nation, a type of German manhood; Dorothea, too, generalised into an ideal of noble eighteenth-century womanhood, is lifted above the petty surroundings of her life and fate; and, most skilful stroke of all, Goethe has utilised, as an æsthetic equivalent to the lurid setting of the siege of Troy in the *Iliad*, the impressive background of the French Revolution.

The monumental aspect of Goethe's classicism is to be seen in *Hermann und Dorothea;* but in other works produced under the influence of the same ideas, he carried his theory to such logical extremes as to make it exceedingly difficult for the modern reader to follow him with any kind of sympathy. *Die natürliche Tochter* (*The Natural Daughter*) is, in its cold abstraction, an unreadable tragedy to-day, and *Pandora* is so wrapt in allegory as to be incomprehensible without a commentary. But just as Schiller, after *The Bride of Messina*, came to see the futility of his one-sided devotion to the antique, so Goethe, less rapidly it may be, but in the end more completely, threw over his classic dogma in favour of more warm-blooded and national forms of literature. In 1808 appeared the First Part

of *Faust*. It would be unfair, however, to regard the writing of this, the supreme poetic masterpiece of German literature, as being in direct or conscious antagonism to the rigidity of Goethe's classicism; for the greater part of it had been written long before. We have already seen that the kernel of the first part, the poignant tragedy of Faust and Gretchen, goes back to the days of "Storm and Stress." A comparison of the completed poem with this early form of it shows how assiduously Goethe had worked to bring his drama into line with his new theories; but the original realism did not admit of the complete transformation which he might have desired. In any case, the fundamental changes, the widening of the scope of the poem, had already been planned in the early years of his friendship with Schiller, and before even *Hermann und Dorothea* was written. Faust, the original "Storm and Stress" hero, has in the drama of 1808 been converted, with infinite difficulty, and by no means complete success, into a typical representative of German eighteenth-century idealism; the young rebel has become the mature philosopher; the man swayed solely by passions has become the earnest seeker and striver. The problem of Faust

has been magnified into a philosophical and even a theological one, in which the powers of good and evil enter into a contract to test the hero's staying power, to prove his moral worth. Mephistopheles has become a philosophical illustration of the rôle which, according to the optimist Goethe, evil plays in the world, the work of a Creator who is necessarily responsible for the evil as well as the good. In Mephistopheles's description of himself as :

Ein Teil von jener Kraft,
Die stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft

(" a part of that power which always wills evil and always produces good "), lies, one might say, the last word in the old eighteenth-century optimism, which has run like a silver thread through every phase of rationalism from the " Theodicée " of Leibniz to the ethical systems of Kant and Fichte, the belief in the essential goodness of God's world. The early *Faust* had been a tragedy of personal emotions ; the new *Faust* is a world-tragedy of the human spirit. The early Faust, discontented with his studious, ascetic life, clutched at the prospects which the devil held out to him of experiencing the happiness he had missed ; the new Faust enters into a wager with the

emissary of evil, which virtually resolves itself into a trial of strength. Faust's damnation, according to the new version, depends on Mephistopheles's power to satisfy him, to blunt his soul, to make him contented with life as he finds it:

> Werd' ich zum Augenblicke sagen:
> Verweile doch! du bist so schön!
> Dann magst du mich in Fesseln schlagen,
> Dann will ich gern zu Grunde gehn!
> Dann mag die Totenglocke schallen,
> Dann bist du deines Dienstes frei,
> Die Uhr mag stehn, der Zeiger fallen,
> Es sei die Zeit für mich vorbei!

("If I shall ever say to the passing moment: Tarry awhile, thou art so fair! Then thou mayst cast me into fetters, then I will willingly perish! Then the death-bell may toll, then thou art free from thy services. The clock may stand, the index-hand may fall; then time may exist no more for me!") Now, all this implied a much wider outlook on human life and its problems than was originally contemplated, or, for that part, could have been contemplated by the young poet of twenty-five. One feels that, had this been originally thought out, the Gretchen tragedy, as it stands, could not have been written; for it is visibly inconsistent with the grave problem

that is here initiated. But we cannot be grateful enough to the poet for allowing no petty considerations of artistic harmony or propriety to interfere with his retention of the love-tragedy in its original form.

But one thing had been made clear by the publication of Part I. : the completion of the Second Part was a necessity, if the whole poem were not to remain fragmentary and unsatisfying. The wager with the devil implies that Faust is merely at the beginning of his struggle with the powers of evil. Throughout a long period of faltering and often interrupted work, Goethe completed the Second Part of *Faust*, but not until the very last year of his life. In many ways it was unfortunate that the end should have thus been deferred until the mood in which the First Part was conceived had long evaporated, until Goethe's own literary art had strayed into regions of bloodless allegory and philosophic speculation. The Second Part is certainly not what it might have been, had it been written when the poet had still his vivid, realistic hold on life, and saw things as they were ; but in that case it might have lost qualities which in their own way are also priceless. The Second Part is frankly an

allegory, and carried out with a great deal of the wearisome paraphernalia of allegory. It embodies Faust's adventures in the great world; it shows us Faust at the court of a German Emperor, amusing it and assisting it with the ingenious invention of paper money. But Faust becomes himself entangled in his own creations. He conjures up Helen of Troy for the delectation of his new patron, and himself becomes an ardent worshipper of this incarnation of ideal beauty. And so, through the greater part of its length, the Second Part becomes an allegorical embodiment of what we have just characterised as the highest achievement of German classical poetry, the education of man by means of the beautiful. Helen is that priceless Greek beauty, which Goethe himself endeavoured in his ripest years to bring back from antiquity; to introduce into his own essentially northern literature, as Faust, in the third act, brings Helen to his mediæval German castle. Helen is the embodiment of that æsthetic humanism which combines humanity and beauty. And when Faust fails, or rather when Helena fails to give Faust the satisfying happiness which would at once have placed him at the mercy of Mephistopheles, when the child that she

has borne him—in whom Goethe allegorised Lord Byron—soars, Icarus-like, too high and falls dead at its parents' feet, when Helen fades away, leaving only her mantle behind her, he is led back again into the world of reality. His new activity embraces all the arts of war and peace, and its ultimate end is the creation of a new society. In the last act Faust's work is done; a happy people are busily active around him, active on land that they have won back from the sea, that is to say, created, in the sweat of their brow. Man can do no more; the time has come when Faust can no longer put off the crucial moment when he rests satisfied.

Ja! Diesem Sinne bin ich ganz ergeben,
Das ist der Weisheit letzter Schluss:
Nur der verdient sich Freiheit wie das Leben,
Der täglich sie erobern muss.
Und so verbringt, umrungen von Gefahr,
Hier Kindheit, Mann und Greis sein tüchtig Jahr.
Solch ein Gewimmel möcht' ich sehn,
Auf freiem Grund mit freiem Volke stehn.
Zum Augenblicke dürft' ich sagen:
Verweile doch! Du bist so schön!
Es kann die Spur von meinen Erdetagen
Nicht in Äonen untergehn!—
Im Vorgefühl von solchem hohen Glück
Geniess' ich jetzt den höchsten Augenblick.

("Yes, I am quite convinced of this truth; it is the last conclusion of wisdom; only he

deserves freedom as well as life, who must daily conquer them anew. And so, surrounded by danger, childhood, manhood, old age, lives its active life. Such a throng I would fain see, would fain stand on free soil amidst a free people. To the fleeting moment I might then say: Linger awhile! Thou art so fair! The traces of my earthly days cannot pass away in æons. In the presentiment of such high happiness I enjoy the supreme moment.")

And in this moment the devil comes forward to claim his own, to seize on Faust's soul and carry it off; but this is not so easy in a world where it is the function of evil always to assist in the furthering of good. The heavenly hosts interpose and save Faust's immortal part from the clutches of Mephistopheles's demons; they bear it aloft by virtue of their right to save one whose life has been spent in constant effort and striving; and at the Virgin's feet, a penitent, "once called Gretchen," interposes for Faust.

In the wide span of years that lay in Goethe's life between the publication of the two parts of this, his greatest work, he, too, was ceaselessly active, and his activity, like Faust's, extended over every intellectual field.

In these years he was an art critic of weight, a scientist whose opinions bade fair to revolutionise the study of biology, and he contributed researches of value to both geology and optics. His scientific interests did not now imply, as in earlier years, any weakening of his interest in poetry; for here the universality of his sympathy was more surprising than ever. He kept an observant eye on all that was best in the literary production of his own land, and of neighbouring lands as well. He, who had been so unswerving an advocate of classicism in German literature, was genuinely interested in the Romantic production of Europe during the first third of the new century. More than this, it must be frankly admitted that Goethe's own literary work in these years, from the publication of that great masterpiece of Romantic art, the First Part of *Faust*, onwards, was far more Romantic in its tendencies than Classic.

Der westöstliche Diwan (*The West-Eastern Divan*), for instance, that last outburst of Goethe's inexhaustible lyric genius, is, in its oriental colouring and form, distinctly a contribution to Romantic literature, and, we shall see, it was responsible for a vast body of oriental imitation under Romantic auspices

The lyric inspiration of these verses shows no falling off compared with Goethe's earlier poetry; it is only a little more concentrated; his outlook is a little mellower, his passion more reflective. But the same power of seeing naïvely and with perfect truth, and the same command of melodious cadence, which makes Goethe the supreme lyric genius of his nation, are here too. *Der westöstliche Diwan* is the lyric utterance of a man who has passed the midday of life, but who is able, by virtue of the artist's Protean power, to project himself into his youth again; he sees that youth, as it were, by borrowed light, and with added wisdom and objectivity.

To the last period of Goethe's life belong three great prose works: the novel *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (*The Elective Affinities*), his autobiography, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (*Poetry and Truth*), and the continuation of *Wilhelm Meister*, which bears the title *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*. *The Elective Affinities* occupies a position in the history of German prose writing analogous to *Werther* in so far as it stands apart from the main line of German fiction which had passed through *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. It is the story of a scientific experiment in human

attractions; a psychological investigation of the incalculable forces which manifest themselves as love between man and woman. Thus, like *Tasso*, it is essentially a book in which outward happenings are of little consequence, where the entire interest is concentrated on the spiritual development of the characters. Husband and wife are torn asunder by cross passions, which they are unable to withstand; and Goethe describes, with merciless scientific callousness, the tragedy of their lives. For it is a tragedy, and the firmness with which the poet takes sides with the moral law might once and for all vindicate him against the accusations that used to be current against him, as one who prized individual freedom above the constraints of society. In point of fact, whatever Goethe may have been in his early days of "Storm and Stress," there was now no more convinced upholder of law and order, as laid down in the code of morals which the eighteenth century respected, than he.

The essential solidarity of society is also, in part, the theme of *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*. In that book the hero, who, like Faust, had in his "Lehrjahre" to face mainly personal problems, from which he

emerged a master of the art of living, has now—again like Faust—to face the wider questions imposed on him as a member of human society. His "Wanderjahre" are his period of probation, in which he brings the wisdom acquired in the "Lehrjahre" to bear on life as a whole. He has to deal with problems of education as applied to his own son; the subject of religion is discussed with a fulness which is not to be found in any other of Goethe's works; and social questions, problems of industry and the rights of labour, are introduced in a manner which, so far from being influenced by Goethe's early individualism, has been by some critics characterised as nothing more nor less than unadulterated socialism. But, as a novel, the *Wanderjahre* has little of the charm of its predecessor; and indeed, one feels that Goethe himself fell far short of what he had once dreamed Meister's *Wanderjahre* should be.

These two prose works are necessarily overshadowed by *Dichtung und Wahrheit: Aus meinem Leben* (*Poetry and Truth, from my Life*), undoubtedly Goethe's greatest work of sustained prose. It is the story of his life, told—not, as is sometimes thought, with an

admixture of "fiction" or untruth; that is not the meaning of the title—but with a glamour of retrospect, and from a point of view that takes stock of a future which was still shrouded from the actors in the drama; the "poetry" here is the poetry of Aristotle, which is "more philosophical than truth." With the most painstaking care to get at the real facts which he had to tell, Goethe unrolls the history of his youth; he describes his childhood in Frankfort, then the eventful period of his life from his first immersion in the stream of Leipzig literary culture in the sixties, when Leipzig had still not far advanced beyond Gottsched's classicism or, at best, Lessing's neo-classicism—when Klopstock's poetry was a breath from another world—down all through that wonderful age of jubilant youthfulness, the "Storm and Stress," to his departure for Weimar in 1775. The story of the awakening of Goethe's genius in Strassburg under the influence of Herder's stimulus and the description of the idyll in Sesenheim, one of the most charming love-stories in the history of literature, form unquestionably the most important part of this book from the point of view of pure literature. *Dichtung und Wahrheit* is the

inner, spiritual history of the "Storm and Stress," seen from the standpoint of its leader, and reviewed by that leader across a wide gulf of retrospect, but none the less essentially true. The "Storm and Stress" was, of course, not all bound up with Goethe; but there was nothing vital to the spirit of revolt which Goethe did not share, which he did not experience with an intensity greater than his fellows. Thus from this book we learn what Rousseau and Goldsmith, what Shakespeare and the "Volkslied," and the Gothic majesty of the Strassburg Minster, meant for German thought and art, and once we understand these things, we have got to the very heart of the great spiritual revolution in the Germany poetry of the eighteenth century.

Unfortunately, Goethe had not the courage to carry his story beyond the year 1775; it breaks off with his departure for Weimar towards the end of that year. For the rest of his life we are thrown back for our information on his enormous correspondence, and his diaries, which, especially as he grew older, he kept with a fulness that leaves nothing of importance unrecorded. These sources swell enormously the record of Goethe's life; but they do not take the place of what

he might have given us himself, had he continued his autobiography; after all, they only contain the "truth"; what we miss is the higher "poetry" which would bind this enormously complicated life and personality into one great harmonious whole. *Dichtung und Wahrheit* has nothing to tell us of Goethe's emergence into the serener regions of classicism; or of that phase in his life when he gave the European movement inaugurated by the early Italian Renaissance its final form. Still less have we reliable information from within about that complicated and perhaps most interesting aspect of all Goethe's activity, his relation to Romanticism, and to the ideas of the new time. Goethe's life extended all through the movement of German Romanticism which has to be considered in the next chapter; he may even have been said to have outlived it. We might perhaps go still further and say that this poet, who, under Herder's ægis, caught, amidst "Storm and Stress," more than a glimpse of the positive individualism of Romanticism which was to supersede it a generation later, also realised in books like the *Elective Affinities* and *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* something of that new era of social and

political interests and undreamt of developments in science, which was to take the place of Romanticism when that movement had lived its life to an end.

It will no doubt have struck the reader that the present lengthy chapter on Germany's classical achievement has tapered off in its later stages into an account of two only of her poets, of Goethe and Schiller. He may reasonably ask: Does Germany's classic achievement mean only Goethe and Schiller? To a certain extent it does. The classic age in German poetry was essentially an aristocratic age; one in which the democracy of letters had little say. Goethe and Schiller were leaders, but leaders who could by no means reckon on unanimous followers; for these followers were, to a great extent, still merged in the seething ferment of the "Storm and Stress" which had, as we have seen, in both fiction and drama, fallen upon evil days. When they were not, like Jean Paul, merely belated "Stürmer und Dränger" they were classicists under the sway of a soul-destroying rationalism in its crasser forms; they clung to the past, the past of Lessing, and had learned nothing from the individualism that separated them from

Lessing's and Gottsched's age. Thus, they could hardly be regarded as very serviceable soldiers in the classic movement. The only hopeful elements in the great proletariat of German letters were the younger generation who had come under Goethe's spell in their youth, had grown up with *Götz von Berlichingen* and *Werther*, and had resisted the blandishments of the Enlightenment. But this younger generation formed, in a way, the least reliable forces of all; for they remained firm in their individualism, and refused to follow the great poets on their progress towards a purely classical idealism; they banded themselves together to initiate a new literary movement, which ultimately came into conflict with Weimar classicism. They brought the irrepressible antithesis into literature once more, that antithesis between the individual's claims and society's, between synthetic law and individual liberty, between obedience to restrictions imposed from without and the spiritual demand for inner freedom, in other words, between Classicism and Romanticism. The eighteenth century had been an age of steadily advancing classicism, not, it is true, without certain aberrations of an entirely unclassic nature; but the ground-tone was and

remained classic and social; the new century, which might be said to open with the publication of the first number of the *Athenäum*, the organ of the First Romantic School, in 1798, became the century of Romanticism.

CHAPTER V

ROMANTICISM

It is much less easy to find a formula for the nineteenth century in Germany's literature than for the eighteenth. In the first place, the literature of the later period is more varied; it is quantitatively, if not perhaps qualitatively, richer; its developments and ramifications are more complicated. If we like to continue the hypothesis of alternate oscillations between individualism and collectivism, Romanticism and Classicism, which served us in excellent stead in the eighteenth century, we shall find that—making due allowance for modern literature being influenced by cross-currents and intellectual forces other than the purely æsthetic ones implied in the catchwords "classic" and "romantic"—this does help to introduce law and order into the maze of literary production. The nineteenth century opens, for instance, with the sharp antithesis of a Classic move-

ment centred in Weimar and a new Romantic movement, associated, for a time at least, with the neighbouring university town of Jena. Romanticism was in the ascendant, and Germany remained Romantic virtually until the death of Goethe in 1832; even Goethe himself, as we have seen, was susceptible to its influence. The movement which, in the thirties and forties, supplanted Romanticism can hardly be described as classic, but it was at least antagonistic to that individualism which was the life-blood of the Romantic movement. The new school bore the name of "Young Germany," and was political and even revolutionary in its tendencies, a fact which makes the most convenient dates by which to define its place in the century, the revolutionary years of 1830 and 1848. After "Young Germany" the pendulum swung back again; there came a movement which had more sympathy for the individual, and was tinged with the old Romantic hues, in so far, at least, as these were consistent with a somewhat sombre pessimism. German poetry remained under the signature of this modern Romantic pessimism up to and beyond the war of 1870-71, when the Germans gained sufficient self-confidence to begin

reconstructing their literature on an optimistic foundation once more.

It is with the first of these phases, the Romantic phase, that we have to concern ourselves in the present chapter. Here again we might, in the interest of a clearer survey, have recourse to a rough classification of this extremely interesting period of German literary history. It has been shown in the previous chapter that the rise of Romanticism as a literary power was rapid and unexpected; just when the long movement of German classicism had, with the publication of Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea*, reached a kind of apex, the Romantic School appeared upon the scene, as a veritable bolt from the blue. In 1798 the school was formed in Berlin, but very shortly afterwards its focus of activity was removed to Jena, next door to the little town that was most intimately associated with the efflorescence of classicism. The chief members of the first Romantic School were Ludwig Tieck, a native of Berlin, who, without possessing genius of the highest kind, was one of those sensitive, adaptable writers that are often of greater service to a new movement than strongly marked geniuses; Friedrich Schlegel, the critical leader of the

School, who laid down its theoretical foundations; Friedrich's brother August Wilhelm, who, possessing in a higher degree than he the gift of lucid, attractive expression, popularised in lectures and reviews the new standpoint towards literature; and, most inspired of all, Friedrich von Hardenberg, known as Friedrich Novalis, the poet of the School, who died of consumption at the age of twenty-nine. The productivity of these Romantic writers, as it is to be seen in their published work, was, no doubt, small in proportion to their latent strength. The main channel of their ideas was a journal, *Das Athenäum*, in which Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis formulated in concentrated aphorisms and subtle poetry the tenets of the new faith. Novalis wrote the typical romance of the School, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, an allegory of the Romantic poet and his search for the "blue flower" of Romantic poetry; and Tieck tried his hand at the most varied forms of Romantic literature, including lyric as well as drama, but with most success at the "Märchen," or "fairy tale." The inference one is most likely to draw from a survey of this activity is that the first Romantic School was a movement which

carried its head in the clouds; it had little to do with everyday affairs; it dreamt great dreams that corresponded to no reality; its work was concerned in the main with the expression of the spiritual and the intangible. It touched solid earth mainly with its translations, above all, with that masterwork of A. W. Schlegel's which made our Shakespeare one of the national dramatists of Germany.

The short life of the first Romantic School—and it can hardly be said to have lived beyond the year 1804—was contemporary with a colourless enough period of German political and national life. The great Revolution had hardly come to an end in France when the School was founded; and if the School expressed anything of the "time-spirit" at all, it was that despairing and unfortunate reaction which set in after the Revolution, a reaction which in Germany expressed itself in a revival of Catholicism and in a retrograde movement towards political absolutism.

The second phase of the Romantic movement was associated with the South German university town of Heidelberg in the years 1806-1808, and had to face a very different state of affairs in the political world. In 1806, the Holy Roman Empire, which had

been gradually tottering to its fall, came definitely to an end; Napoleon shattered it, and in shattering it, himself laid hand on the spoils. In that year, the year of the Battle of Jena, Napoleon had virtually completed his subjugation of the German peoples. Thus the background to this new phase of Romanticism was the steadily advancing progress of a foreign conqueror, whom even Goethe at last believed to be invincible. Germany was subjected to a military oppression such as she had not known as a nation since the Thirty Years' War. But this oppression had a quite unexpected effect on her. It awakened her sense of nationality; the virtue of patriotism, which the eighteenth-century cosmopolitans believed they had outgrown and consequently despised, was suddenly called into life. The German people, seeing their holiest possessions in danger, realised what a priceless inheritance had come down to them from their own past, and what strength lay in the national stirrings of their immediate present.

These motives of national pride and patriotism have left a deep mark on the Romanticism of Heidelberg, a mark which is totally absent from the first School. The chief writers

of the younger school were Ludwig Achim von Arnim, Clemens Brentano, and Joseph Görres; the organ of the school, analogous to the *Athenäum*, was the journal *Tröstein-samkeit*, or *Zeitung für Einsiedler* (*Consolation in Solitude*, or *Journal for Hermits*). The dreams of the first Romantic School were here, as it were, brought down to earth; the new school wrote of the national life of the present, or penetrated into the historical past—the real historical past of the German people, not an imaginary one, such as that with which Novalis had been satisfied; and its most characteristic achievements were the anthology of national folk-songs, which Arnim and Brentano edited under the fantastic title, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (*The Boy's Magic Horn*), and the collection of fairy-tales of the people edited by the brothers Grimm. Moreover, in immediate connection with the activity of the literary School came a revival of historical study, a sympathetic understanding for the Middle Ages and the beginnings of German philological science.

The next phase of German literature marked an even more startling advance on the unworldly beginnings of Romanticism;

for it brought that literature, which had so rarely in its past come into touch with political actuality, into the full stream of the patriotic movement. The years of Napoleonic oppression were followed by the Russian Campaign, and the burning of Moscow by the battle of Leipzig in 1813. To this eventful year belongs the remarkable outburst of patriotic lyric, whose leaders were Theodor Körner, Ernst Moritz Arndt and Max von Schenkendorf. The quality of their verse may be often questionable; but the intense actuality of the struggle in which they took part and to which they gave expression, made the Romantic literature seem, in comparison, a mere dallying with things that did not matter.

The events of 1813 are reflected in all the literature of the time, above all, in the work of its chief dramatic poet, Heinrich von Kleist, whom a self-inflicted death cut off from seeing the promised land of German freedom. Kleist, the first great German dramatist of the nineteenth century, shows, compared with Schiller, what an extraordinary incision the new factor of national self-consciousness made in German development. One realises how cosmopolitan the older poet was, how theoretical his attitude to national

questions must have been. To Kleist, however, Romanticism remained only a very dimly realised ideal. He began with an unbalanced play, *Die Familie Schroffenstein*, in which the eighteenth-century "Storm and Stress" returns, tinged with Romantic colours; then came Romantic dramas like *Käthchen von Heilbronn*, which seem to have borrowed little from the modern spirit but an intenser realism; a historical play, Prussia's national drama, *Der Prinz von Homburg*, in which the vacillation and uncertainty of the age are more in evidence than its heroism; and *Die Hermannsschlacht*, a tragedy, in which, under the guise of a far-removed past, the actual political conflicts of Kleist's age are fought out with peculiar rancour. Kleist is also the author of a vigorous realistic story, *Michael Kohlhaas*, a tale of the sixteenth century, which does service as a channel for that spirit of national revolt and independence which culminated two years after Kleist's death with the overthrow of Napoleon. Kleist was not the only dramatist of this era, but the only great one; the others floundered in the morass of unplastic Romantic imaginings, which, as in the case of Zacharias Werner, became morbid and

unhealthy, or they carried the gruesome fatalism engendered by the Romantic pessimism, to the extremes of the so-called "Schicksalsdrama," or "Fate drama," which Werner himself inaugurated with his *Der vierundzwanzigste Februar* (*The Twenty-fourth of February*). Romanticism was, in fact, fatal to the drama; the real Romantic poet had little dramatic blood in his veins; and he preferred to fight for his ideas anywhere except in the world of the theatre. The only form of drama which drew real strength and encouragement from Romanticism was the lyric opera; the operas of Weber and Marschner, the music of Schubert, and, above all, of Robert Schumann, contain the very essence of the German Romantic spirit.

After the battle of Leipzig, literature had to face the problem of its relations to the national life anew; Romanticism could not go back to the unworldliness, or otherworldliness, of the early school. From 1813 onwards the movement became dissipated, and it is difficult to bring it within an ordered scheme. The Romantic stream was directed into the most varied channels; but its new and hardly won realism, its preoccupation with the actualities of the

national life, it could never again abandon. Not that the political conditions which followed the overthrow of Napoleon were very inspiring; the inevitable reaction set in and weighed heavily on the German peoples. The Congress of Vienna imposed upon the nation a burden, in some respects, even heavier to bear than that from which they had so heroically freed themselves. The policy of Metternich, which was particularly galling in Vienna, extended its baleful and stifling influence over the whole art and poetry of the German world. There was nothing at all inspiring in political life to warrant a continuation of that close alliance between poetry and politics which had been evoked in 1813; and consequently we find Romanticism assuming the most unexpected forms in the period now to be considered. Its most interesting manifestations are to be seen in Berlin and in Swabia.

After they had left Heidelberg in 1808, Arnim and Brentano settled in Berlin and became the nucleus of a kind of third Romantic School there, although the word "school" for so loosely connected and varied a group of writers is rather a misnomer. Unless in one or two cases, where the bond of union

was personal friendship, there was little unanimity amongst these men ; each went his own way and cultivated his own particular domain. The only matters on which they were generally in agreement, were a common opposition to such vestiges of the rationalistic spirit as still lingered in Berlin, and a common admiration for the genius of Goethe. Both Arnim and Brentano did their best literary work in Berlin. Arnim wrote several admirable stories, the best being a historical novel, *Die Kronenwächter* (*The Crown Guardians*), in which the century that formed the background of Kleist's realistic *Michael Kohlhaas* is made to serve the same purpose for a story in the Romantic manner. The " Crown Guardians" are a secret society, whose aim is a revival of Barbarossa's empire under the descendants of his race. Brentano, who, as the years went on, drifted more and more into a fatalistic, Catholic mysticism, wrote a fine drama of the vague Romantic kind in *Die Gründung Prags* (*The Founding of Prague*), a play alight with all the high colours of Romanticism, and as varied and variegated as any of Tieck's dramas. He also produced in these later years his *Romanzen vom Rosenkranz*, a mystic religious allegory, or collection of allegories, into which

he wove the spiritual history of his own life; the allegory may be at times too subtle and elaborate, but Brentano's lyric inspiration shows to advantage in his melodious stanzas.

To the Berlin circle belonged also Adelbert von Chamisso, a French emigrant, who ultimately became the most German of German poets. Chamisso owes his place in German literature and in German affections to his heartfelt, simple lyrics, which breathe the very essence of the national "Volkslied"; Chamisso catches, as no other of the Romantic lyricists, its peculiarly childlike and naïve spirit. The scientist in Chamisso—he was a botanist by profession—helped him to see things and people and emotions as they were, and neutralised the distorting effect of the Romantic spectacles. Chamisso has another claim to a place in his adopted nation's affections with his story of *Peter Schlemihl*, a delightful fairy-tale of the man who sold his shadow to the devil. Like *Michael Kohlhaas*, *Schlemihl* is, however, also an allegory of the outwitted German people, who had sold their birthright at the Vienna Congress, and under Metternich were fast drifting back into the spiritual bondage, from which nothing—so, at least, it seemed to contemporaries—could ever

set them free; *Peter Schlemihl*, although its allegorical meaning is hidden under the convincing realism of its style, is thus also a significant document of its time.

Amongst the Berlin Romanticists it is also usual to number Joseph von Eichendorff, although his connection with Berlin was of the slightest; but he was, at least, a North German Romanticist, being by birth a Silesian. Eichendorff is one of the very greatest of the Romantic singers, and one of the most inspired lyric poets Germany possesses. But this statement has to be qualified by the admission that his range was not a wide one, and the mass of the great poetry which justifies our claim for him, is slight in proportion to his complete work. To no other singer of this time does nature appear with such alluring charm as to Eichendorff; his best inspiration he drew from the German forest, and no one lived in more intimate communion than he with the "great god Pan." The joy of the wanderer over hill and dale, the many voices of Nature, interpreted with a keen Romantic intuition of her inner meaning and message, are echoed in this poetry. The distilled essence of Eichendorff's genius is to be found, apart from his great

lyrics, in that most delightful of Romantic books, his *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts* (*From the Life of a Good-for-Nothing*). This is, in form, a " Novelle " or short story, but it is really only a series of lyric emotions, expressed in prose as well as verse, and bound loosely together by an impossible story of a careless German wanderer, whose wanderings frankly do not matter. All we do care for is the poet's power of attuning nature to human moods. Eichendorff's other work is of comparatively little value; his one long novel, *Ahnung und Gegenwart* (*Presentiment and Actuality*), takes its place in the chain of amorphous Romantic fiction, but it, too, is the unsuccessful attempt of a purely lyric talent to write a novel; and Eichendorff's plays are almost more eloquent than his fiction in proclaiming the limitations of the lyric poet's genius.

The third in the trio of great Romantic singers at this time was Wilhelm Müller, whose life was cut short at the early age of twenty-seven. Müller is akin both to Chamisso and to Eichendorff; he has the former's power of reproducing the subtle charm of the " Volkslied," that perfect simplicity of utterance without which no German lyric singer has ever

risen to greatness; and he has the latter's intense faith in the healing power of Nature. But his range is wider, or at least gave promise of becoming wider, than that of either of these men. His popular songs are more varied in their expression; and his love of nature extended to a domain with which no other singer but himself and Heine in modern German poetry are in any measure of sympathy, the sea. In this respect, indeed, he was Heine's model. Besides all these things, Müller was a political singer; his *Lieder der Griechen* (*Songs of the Greeks*) were the first outstanding political poetry the Germans could point to since the War of Liberation. Here, in fact, we have again evidence of the desire to come to grips with realities which beset the German Romantic movement in its later developments, in spite of all its unworldly longings. Once the new literary faith had identified itself with the holy cause of freedom, it could not go back to its former quietism again; and so we find quite an extensive literature at this time, inspired by the struggle of Greece and Poland for freedom, and yet essentially Romantic, a literature that looked up with blind devotion to Byron as its master. The political tendencies of these younger Roman-

ticists, however, gradually passed over into that new movement in German literature which, as we shall see presently, superseded Romanticism.

But the main point to observe is that Romanticism was gradually outgrowing its old dogmas; the changes had been rung so often on the Romantic themes and moods that new experiences, thoughts and emotions, new new fields to conquer, were urgently called for. And in their search for fresh materials the younger poets lighted, not merely upon the struggle of oppressed peoples to retain their threatened national independence, but also—guided by Goethe's example—it went still further afield and found a new source of inspiration in the Romanticism of the Orient, the poetry of Persia and the story of Arabia. The closing period of Romanticism saw the rise of a vast literature of orientalism which maintained its hold on German popular sympathies until long after Romanticism itself had given place to another phase in the literary development. The first poet of eminence who felt this fascination of the East was Friedrich Rückert, one of the masters of verse-form in German poetry. With an astounding lyric fertility, Rückert

poured out volume after volume of poetry, which was for the most part cast in oriental moulds, and distinguished by a delicacy of fancy and an irresistible melodious charm. Everything Rückert touched seemed to turn to poetry. But not all his verse is oriental; his purely personal poetry covers a wide range of emotional expression, from the jubilation of his early love songs to the tragic poignancy of those wonderful dirges, the *Kindertotenlieder*, inspired by the tragic death of two of his children.

In the field of the novel the indications that Romanticism was approaching its end are more clearly marked. Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué laboured, with a talent which, it must be confessed, was none of the strongest, all his life long to maintain the vitality of the Romantic fiction of chivalry and mediævalism. He tried, without conspicuous success, to bolster that fiction up with northern mythology and with an admixture of the orientalism which, as we have just seen, was coming into fashion with a wider and truer knowledge of the East. But there was something old-fashioned about his novels from the first; and the best of them, indeed the only one that can still claim full vitality in our time, is a

little "Märchen," or fairy tale, the story of Undine, the water-sprite on whom love for a mortal confers a soul. But Fouqué, to be just to him, also sowed seed that bore fruit in later ages; it was he who first adapted to the modern theatre the story of Siegfried and the Nibelungs. His *Held im Norden* (*The Hero of the North*) is the legitimate ancestor of Hebbel's *Nibelungen* and Wagner's *Ring des Nibelungen*.

A much more powerful novelist of the later Romantic period, and one of the greatest masters of prose fiction that Germany has ever known, was Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann. It is true, he, too, revelled in a rather morbid, degenerate kind of fiction, the supernatural story, with which the eighteenth-century writers had already made their readers' flesh creep; he suffered, too, by coming at the end instead of at the beginning of the movement. By temperament Hoffmann was one of those distraught natures so frequent in this age, never wholly sane, and in his later years, when his health was ruined by drink and dissipation, not sane at all. The nightmare world of creepy, uncanny sights and sounds which he describes, responded to an immediate craving of his own ghost-haunted life. At

the same time, when one remembers the wise common-sense and the objective outlook of those of his novels in which he draws on his own retrospect, or describes historical events which did not admit of being modified or warped, one cannot help regretting that Hoffmann had to expend so much of his magnificent genius as a story-teller on morbid themes. For Hoffmann was, no doubt, a writer of extraordinary gifts; the French, who have a keen appreciation for genius of this kind, at once scented this power in Hoffmann and took him, as they took no other German author of the nineteenth century, to their hearts. The crying evil of the whole Romantic fiction was its lack of plasticity; its wilful determination, as in Arnim's case, *not* to be plastic and real, *not* to renounce "the light that never was on land or sea"; the novels of the school are, for the most part, shadowy phantasmagories, which have ceased to grip men's minds, now that the Romantic faith has passed away. Not even Sir Walter Scott's influence, which for a time supplanted all that the Romanticists had tried to do in historical fiction, succeeded in out-rooting this indefatigable tendency to substitute shadowy spiritualisation for realities. Now,

it was just in confronting this tendency that Hoffmann's power and success lay. He brought to bear on themes that were in no degree inferior in their weird, romantic appeal to anything that his predecessors had attempted, a straightforward, matter-of-fact treatment, a clear, realistic style, which lay beyond their power; he made characters stand out living from his page, and invested unreal events, however great the claims they make on our credence, with perfect credibility. He justified Lessing's demand that if the poet introduces the supernatural at all, he must make us believe in his supernatural.

We have just referred to the influence in Germany of Sir Walter Scott. That influence was immediate and overpowering; Scott appealed particularly to the German mind, which was, no doubt, conscious of a certain failure on its own part to make the nation's past live again in imaginative literature. After all, the fiction of the Romantic age corresponds very imperfectly to the enormous strides which the historical understanding of the Middle Ages had made under the influence of Romanticism. Now, Scott provided exactly that trend towards day-

light, sanity and realism—always, of course, comparatively speaking, with reference to the existing German literature of the kind—which Germany needed. The imitations of Scott were many and, for the most part, of inferior calibre to their originals. One novel alone deserves to be singled out as, in a poetic sense, successful, and that is the romance from Württemberg history, *Lichtenstein*, by the young Swabian, Wilhelm Hauff. Almost grotesque was the effect of Scott on another—this time a Prussian—writer, Wilhelm Häring, who preferred to write under the pseudonym of "Wilibald Alexis." Häring began his career, not exactly by translating Scott, but by imitating him and passing off his imitations as actual translations! And so skilful was his deceit that one of these books was actually translated into English and presented to the English public in all good faith, as a hitherto unknown romance by Scott! Häring has been called the "German Scott"; but he has nothing of Scott's serene Romantic faith, nor has he his wide humanity and range of vision; he is really less entitled to be called the German Scott than Dumas is to be called the French one. But within his own literature the designation has a certain justification; for

in his riper novels of Brandenburg history, he certainly succeeded in creating a type of historical fiction which was sufficiently independent of the *Waverley Novels* to be in a true and exclusive sense national. The firm, clear outlines of Scott he never attained to; and we doubt if books like *Die Hosen des Herrn von Bredow* (*The Breeches of my Lord Bredow*), or *Ruhe ist die erste Bürgerpflicht* (*Coolness is the Citizen's First Duty*), have penetrated much beyond Germany; but they are, all the same, Prussia's national novels.

Amidst the disintegration of German Romanticism there was one group of poets which possessed a certain cohesiveness, and which was sufficiently at one in its aim to be dignified by the name of a school. This group consisted of South German or, more exactly, Swabian writers. In its origins, the Swabian School was more or less closely associated with the second stage of the movement, the Heidelberg Romanticists; it set out from a similar basis, namely, an undivided faith in the poetic capacities of the German "Volk," in the value of the "Volkslied" as a form of national lyric expression, and with a desire to pierce behind the veil that still concealed the romantic

Middle Ages. It, too, differed from the first school in its greater respect for reality; in its adherence to a Romanticism that takes count of the world as it is. But although endowed with greater tenacity than other forms of Romanticism, this naturalistic phase was in some respect more limited, less capable of progressive development. The particularism of a restricted province lay a little heavy on the Swabians; their outlook rarely got beyond their own geographical boundaries. Another disadvantage under which they suffered, was that, in a land without any semblance of metropolitan life, literature could not be a self-supporting profession; it was consequently degraded to a dilettante occupation of men whose serious business in life lay in quite other fields. And yet, in spite of this, Swabia at this time gave Germany several poets who have left an abiding impress on the literature of the nineteenth century.

The first place in this School belongs, as a matter of course, to Ludwig Uhland; he was the oldest member, his early poems dating back to the first decade of the century, and he is, without question, the most representative poet of the group. Uhland was a mediæ-

val scholar of notable rank; he was a university professor for a time; and he even played an important rôle in politics when, for a brief space in 1848, it seemed as if there were some hope for a larger political life in the conglomerate of nations that spoke the German tongue. As a man of letters, Uhland owes his reputation to his ballads and his lyric poetry. To the German people he appeared as the poet who was destined to carry on the tradition of the popular ballad which Schiller had created; and in the esteem of his countrymen he was regarded, throughout the nineteenth century, as second only to Schiller. Uhland's ballads have, at least after the first ultra-Romantic period of his early life was over, the same firm outlines which distinguished Schiller's; they voice a practical, common-sense outlook on life, which appealed exactly to an age when the Romantic faith was waning. But notwithstanding our appreciation of Uhland's gifts as a poet, we have the feeling that his theoretic studies, which engendered an imitative activity incompatible with naïve genius, set peculiar limitations to his powers.

The other members of the Swabian School, as Justinus Kerner and Gustav

Schwab, are hardly important enough to demand detailed consideration here. They all possessed, in a greater or less degree, the qualities apparent in Uhland, the most dominant being sympathy with the people, what we might call the "Volkslied" note; but, one and all, they assiduously avoided the deeper, more tragic sides of literature; they are indifferent novelists and not dramatists at all. But there is one important exception. The school numbered among its adherents one man of elemental lyric genius, Eduard Mörike. Mörike is a great poet, and stands in the very first rank of Germany's singers; his work is small in its range, and only a comparatively small number of his lyrics are of the first rank; but these retain, as little else of this period, their pristine freshness; they are to be numbered among the few poems of the Romantic age on which the passing of time has had no dimming effect. The qualities that make Mörike, who was a Swabian pastor, and later professor of German literature in Stuttgart, great, are an extreme delicacy of perception, an instinctive apprehension of the most fleeting motives and emotions, and that understanding for the spiritual significance of nature's

phenomena, which in all ages have been the distinctive feature of the German lyric at its best. Mörike wrote one or two admirable short stories, and also a novel, *Maler Nolten* (*Nolten the Painter*), which, in spite of its ineffectual construction and the lack of all dramatic power in presenting character, must be given a place in the main line of Romantic fiction from *Wilhelm Meister* to Gottfried Keller's *Der grüne Heinrich*.

Thus, even if we feel a certain disappointment at the actual literary achievement of the Swabian School, the fact remains that, in the days of declining Romanticism, and, still more, in the shallow epoch of political literature that superseded Romanticism, this school was the most significant force that made for poetry, at least in South Germany and Austria. The greatest modern lyric poet of Austria, Nicolaus Lenau, came into personal touch with the Swabians in the beginnings of his literary life, and they helped him to publish his first volume of poetry. Lenau was a child of the Hungarian pusta, and the wide, lonely moors of his native land, with their deep, inarticulate pessimism, provides the ground note of all his poetry. Even when, disgusted with his native land, he sought a new

home in America, the American prairie only touched again the old chords in his soul; the hopes he had cherished, that he might find what he sought in the "land of freedom" were rudely dashed to the ground, and his Austrian melancholy set in again with tenfold force. After his return to Europe his pessimism rapidly deepened; and the unhappy poet became hopelessly insane. Lenau's poetry, together with that of Leopardi in Italy, is the most concentrated expression of the European pessimism of his century. But in Lenau's case it is, one might say, a purely emotional pessimism, a subjective melancholy akin to Byron's; it has nothing of the philosophical basis afforded by Arthur Schopenhauer, which played so large a rôle in the German pessimistic literature of the next generation. As a matter of fact, Schopenhauer, although his masterwork, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (*The World as Will and Idea*), had appeared as early as 1819, made little headway during the first half of the century. The dominant Hegelianism was too strong for him; it was not until the disappointment of Germany's hopes by the failure of the Revolution of 1848 that there was room for a thoroughgoing pessimism in the German

mind. In Austria, however, the conditions were different; she suffered, as we have seen, far more under the Metternich *régime* before 1848 than after that date; and the resigned, pessimistic strain in her literature was due—that is to say, as far as political conditions had anything to do with it at all—to that *régime*. Lenau is an inspired poet of the first rank; the haunting melancholy of his verses comes from sources that lay deeper than the conventional Romanticism, and give him a place by himself in the literature of the German tongue; no poet of his time, not even the unhappy Hölderlin, whose fate was similar to Lenau's, touched such depths of divine despair as he. The whole Byronic "Weltschmerz," which so deeply impressed his imagination, shaded off here into the darkest and most hopeless gloom. In many ways, Lenau's genius was on a grander scale than that of his fellow lyricists; he wrote epics and epic drama, such as *Die Albigenser* and *Faust*, poems which show a strength of handling and an epic sweep of imagination, which the purely lyric poet rarely attains to. One feels—and Lenau is not the only Austrian of this age of whom this might be said—that Austria possessed in him

a great poetic genius, who needed only the sunshine of happier conditions to have unfolded his powers in all their manifold richness.

The tragic aspect of the Metternich *régime* in Austria is, however, most apparent in the history of the drama. At the beginning of the present chapter, we have drawn attention to the fact that Romanticism, with its indifference to form and rule, was not favourable to the development of the drama, and we pointed out that the chief dramatic poet whose life and work was contemporary with the first flush of German Romanticism, Heinrich von Kleist, belonged to no Romantic coterie. The actual Romantic drama, of Tieck, of Brentano, of Werner and the "Fate Dramatists," occupies a comparatively subordinate position in the literature of the time. Quantitatively speaking, the dramatic production of North Germany in these years, in so far as it aspired to be literature, was divided between anæmic imitations of Schiller's dramas and an endless succession of plays on themes drawn from national history.

The golden age of mediæval Romanticism, the Hohenstaufen epoch, on which the Romanticists had concentrated their attention, was to the dramatists of the day a veritable

gold mine. The theatres were flooded with Hohenstaufen tragedies, for the most part on the model of Shakespeare's historical plays, and occasionally in long chronological series. The playwright, Ernst Raupach, for instance, wrote no less than ten dramas on this theme. Unfortunately, however, the great mass of work of this class makes little claim to higher poetic qualities. Only one North German poet stands out in this era as a man of real dramatic gifts, Christian Grabbe; and Grabbe, too, paid his tribute to the Hohenstaufen mania. His best works, however, are the finely conceived plays, *Faust und Don Juan* and *Napoleon, oder die Hundert Tage* (*Napoleon, or the Hundred Days*), the latter one of the very best of all European dramas on this theme. Grabbe fell between two stools, and that even more pitiably than his predecessor Kleist. Forced by the circumstances of his time into a Romantic mould, he had little or nothing of the Romanticist about him; he was half a "Storm and Stress" poet of the eighteenth-century type, and half a very modern realist. His own life was unhappy, and he died early, a victim to his own weakness of character. None the less, Grabbe was a dramatic poet of

genius, the one writer of his time in the north who understood the essentials of dramatic construction, and was neither misled by Romantic theories, nor tempted to fritter away his talent in artificial imitation.

Grabbe was an exception of genius in an era of mediocrity; the real history of the German drama between the death of Kleist and the appearance of Hebbel is to be sought in Austria. The Austrians have always possessed that most necessary of all conditions for the healthy growth of the drama, a metropolitan centre, the "Kaiserstadt" Vienna. Owing partly to its political situation and partly to the character of its population, Vienna was marked out to be the home of the German national theatre. In the more stolid North Germany, drama and theatre have always been, so to speak, a purely literary affair, and have often had no adequate root in the soil; in Vienna, on the other hand, the popular theatre and the literary drama go hand in hand. The secret of strength in a national drama is to be sought in the unliterary undercurrent of popular melodrama and farce; and Vienna always understood this, even back in the unregenerate days of the eighteenth century, when her literary

dramatists, such as Cornelius von Ayrenhoff, were producing cold, artificial tragedies on the Gottsched pattern, or, somewhat later, hardly less inviting classic tragedies, such as the famous *Regulus* and *Coriolanus* of Heinrich von Collin. Gradually, however, the popular drama encroached on this pseudo-classic tragedy and the widening of Romantic tastes opened the national theatre to the opera or musical drama and the popular "Posse," or farce, in which the Viennese temperament is so accurately reflected. Thus, by one of the ironies of literary history, we find, at the beginning of the Metternich *régime*, which, with its harsh censorship of every form of literary expression, did what it could to crush out originality of form or ideas, the conditions for dramatic literature in a peculiar degree favourable in Austria.

No one suffered more keenly under the adverse political conditions in Vienna than Austria's greatest dramatist, Franz Grillparzer. Grillparzer emerged from Romanticism; his first play, *Die Ahnfrau* (*The Ancestress*), produced in 1817, belongs to that group of ultra-Romantic dramas known as the "Fate tragedy," that is to say, a form of play in which Romantic fatalism and

crudely sensational stagecraft were blended to form a somewhat gruesome modernisation of the Greek tragedy. But *Die Ahnfrau* was, at least, the best of its class; so good, indeed, that Grillparzer's admirers have resented its association with the class at all. *Sappho*, Grillparzer's next play, was a love-tragedy of the classic type. One naturally compares it with Goethe's *Iphigenie*, but there is a mellower, more Romantic light over *Sappho*, less of the older poet's serene majesty of utterance; the classic world is here seen through the sentimentalising spectacles of the new school. A similar adaption of a classic theme to Romantic ends is the trilogy of *Das goldene Vlies* (*The Golden Fleece*), of which the final tragedy, *Medea*, stands out as one of Grillparzer's chief contributions to the drama of his century. This is the ancient story that has attracted so many dramatic poets throughout the ages, told again with modern Romantic subjectivity, and treated with a grace and flexibility unknown in the purely classic dramatists. Grillparzer here fell under the spell of a peculiar strain in Austrian Romanticism, its predilection for the Spanish poets. The first Romantic School had regarded Calderôn, their favourite dramatist, as

a poet of even greater spiritual possibilities than Shakespeare, and they had borrowed largely from him; but it was left to the Austrian poets to take the great Spaniards —Lope in a higher degree than Calderôn— to their hearts, and to assimilate the Spanish spirit. It is this influence which gives Grillparzer's figures, and more especially his women, that peculiar Latin grace and suavity which are unusual qualities in the Romantic drama of purely Teutonic provenance. In *König Ottokars Glück und Ende* (*King Ottokar's Fortune and End*), Grillparzer gave Austria her representative national tragedy; and in *Ein treuer Diener seines Herrn* (*A Faithful Servant of his Master*), one hardly less powerful, although by reason of the uncompromising harshness of its theme, less popular. Here, again, Grillparzer has benefited by the experiments of his Romantic predecessors with Hohenstaufen tragedies and other forms of historical drama; but he was also guided by a finer, more conscientious realism; and in place of the somewhat tawdry Romantic stage-effects, in which the North German theatre revelled, the finer poetic Romanticism of the Spanish stage asserts itself. The failure of Grill-

parzer's one and only comedy, a work of extraordinary power and originality, *Weh' dem, der lügt* (*Woe to Him who Lies*), was fatal to his subsequent career. A moody, melancholy man, who was never equal to life, he went through it, firmly convinced that he was one of its failures. The political tyranny—he was himself a Government servant—lay heavy on him, and the ten years which find expression in the bitter renunciation of the lyrics entitled *Tristia ex Ponto*, were years of very real suffering to him. His hold upon his art was, in face of discouragement, never a very firm one, and when Vienna refused his comedy, he turned his back for ever on the theatre, and spent the remaining thirty-four years of his life in retirement from the literary world. The magnificent poetic sweep of a posthumous play like *Libussa* shows how much the German public lost by its unfortunate attitude to *Weh' dem, der lügt*. Grillparzer is unquestionably one of the great dramatic poets of his century; less virile than Kleist, less subtle than Hebbel, he has a riper, more delicately attuned poetic temperament than either; and his works, with their pessimistic strain of self-distrust, touch chords in the modern man which lie beyond the range of the older drama.

Grillparzer by no means stood alone in the Austria of his time. With its great Hofburg-theater, its many popular theatres, and that splendid histrionic talent, in which the Austrian people, with their admixture of Latin and Slavic elements, have never been wanting, it would have been strange had the theatre not been in the fullest sense alive in Vienna; and until almost the end of the nineteenth century, when the leadership passed over in some respects, but not all, to Berlin, Vienna remained the theatrical metropolis of the German-speaking world. The popular drama possessed in Ferdinand Raimund and Johann Nestroy playwrights of originality and wit; Eduard Bauernfeld, again, was a comedy-writer of quiet, polished humour; and Friedrich Halm (the pseudonym of E. F. J. von Münch-Bellinghausen), a representative of the shallower Romantic drama of sentiment. But all this varied activity only makes one think, how much more might have been attained, had not the drama been ground down in Austria by a merciless and unintelligent censorship, which forced the great talents of the time to have recourse to inept frivolity and sentimentality. The realities of life necessarily disappeared from a theatre, which

could not even tolerate the classic drama of Germany uncensored by the police.

Unfavourable as the Romantic movement was to the evolution or steady development of any one distinctive type of play, it at least had an exceedingly stimulating effect on the drama in general and on the theatre. The age was one of constant and interesting experimentation; an age which, in spite of its comparatively few outstanding monuments of dramatic poetry, contributed more to the moulding of the modern drama than any other. This is its real significance; its stage experiments, and not the untheatrical Romantic drama, as cultivated by the Tiecks and Brentanos of the North, are what make the period of German Romanticism so interesting a chapter in the history of the European drama.

Before leaving the great movement which dominated the spiritual life in Germany in the first third of the nineteenth century, we have to consider two writers, who are usually looked upon as the last outposts of Romanticism, namely, Karl Immermann and August von Platen-Hallermünde. The first of these was a voluminous writer, a clear-headed, not very inspired poet and critic, who was abreast of every phase in the

intellectual movement; he realised in all his writings the need of coming to clearness with himself as to the inner meaning of his time; his whole work, indeed, is a kind of unconscious criticism of Romanticism. As a dramatist, he tried his hand methodically at every form of drama which his predecessors had cultivated; he wrote historical tragedies and "fate tragedies," imitated Shakespeare and Calderôn; and spent a very instructive and helpful year directing special performances in the Düsseldorf theatre, which sum up, as it were, the technical achievement of the Romantic movement with regard to the stage. As a novelist, his position is even clearer. Here he reflected the passing of the movement into which he had been born, and his chief novel, *Die Epigonen* (*The Epigoni*), is alike the last of the purely Romantic novels and the first of the new group of "fiction with a purpose" that took its place. Immermann realised that he belonged to a passing age, and this knowledge lay heavy on him, and paralysed his genius.

Platen's case was somewhat different. He was by no means so completely immerged in the movement of his time; a sharp-witted, facile writer, he not merely stood aloof from

the decadent Romanticism, but satirised it and with a power which only one of his contemporaries, namely, Heine, could equal. He fled from Romanticism, fled from Germany, to find a more congenial world for his classic soul, which abhorred Romantic excesses above all things, in Italy; and here, comparatively early in life, he died. In spite of Platen's apparent antagonism to Romanticism, he could no more get away from it than could Heine; his whole art, his sympathies and antipathies, his flight to Italy, were, after all, characteristic of certain phases of the Romantic movement, and his literary work belongs essentially to that movement. The real element of antagonism was the political realism that broke over Germany when the Romantic movement was nearing its close; and with this Platen, unlike Heine, could have no sympathy. Platen is a somewhat inaccessible poet, who, unless in his remarkably candid diaries, by no means wore his heart on his sleeve. To him poetry was an art, not a confession; subjective truth was less important in his eyes than exquisite polish and perfect workmanship; and Goethe could say that the one thing wanting in him was love. There are no warm emotions

in Platen's poetry ; but he has given Germany her most perfectly moulded verses ; his Sonnets, especially that wonderful cycle, *Sonette aus Venedig* (*Sonnets from Venice*), form the highwater mark of German formal poetry in the nineteenth century.

What were the causes that led to the downfall of Romanticism in Germany ? Did it, so to speak, live its life to an end and die a natural death ? We hardly think so. Certain phases came and went ; but the Proteus-forms of the Romantic mood were not easily destroyed ; all through the next period we find manifestations of their continued vitality ; and, when the anti-Romantic mood waned, Romanticism returned again with something of its pristine force. The causes which led to its temporal eclipse are worth inquiring into. These seem to have been in the main twofold : philosophical and intellectual on the one side, and social and political on the other. Two great facts stand out in the first category ; the passing of the individualistic philosophy of Fichte and Schelling—the latter with its mystic spiritualisation of nature, being the real philosophy of Romanticism—and the supersession of that philosophy by a mightier force than either, the philosophy of Hegel.

Hegelianism, which itself was Romantic enough in its origins, became, as it grew in strength, the chief enemy of the Romantic mood. It entangled the individualism of Romanticism in a web of generalisations, of sociological theories, and petrifying dogmas of historical evolution, which gradually, but none the less surely, destroyed its life. The one great antidote which the time provided, the pessimism of Schopenhauer, was powerless to stay the triumphant advance of Hegelianism; Schopenhauer's day had not yet come. The Hegelian philosophy, moreover, proved itself extremely adaptable to the changing horizons of the time; its metamorphoses, as enunciated by the thinkers of the so-caled Hegelian "right" and the Hegelian "left," made it possible to retain Hegel's most dissentient disciples within the fold. Hegel had thus all the intellectual life of Germany in his ban; its poetry as well as its theology. And so it remained, until his power was shaken by the rise of an unmetaphysical positivism about the middle of the century. Hegelianism could keep the literary impulse in check, but it had not reckoned with the advance of scientific discovery; and the growing interest in

science was, as we shall see, the real enemy, not merely of Hegelianism, but of Romanticism itself.

The social and political development was equally unfavourable to the movement. In fact, it is in its attitude to politics, if anywhere, that the bankruptcy of Romanticism is to be seen. In the early days, the Romanticists had been associated with a retrograde movement in politics; one might say quite frankly that the hopes of Germany after 1813 were shipwrecked on the Romantic, unpolitical passivity of the German educated classes. The Karlsruhe Resolutions, the *régime* of Metternich himself, were emphatically manifestations of the Romantic spirit, helpless to grapple with political questions of any kind, and the apologists of Metternich were thinkers who had, so to speak, taken their degree in the Romantic School. Socially speaking, the movement was still less able to cope with the new conditions. The Romantic generation in Germany were like children when confronted by the development of industry consequent on the invention of labour-saving machinery; and they faced the new problems with far less wisdom than Goethe had done in his socialistic *Wanderjahre*. Thus, in the

confusion and ever-increasing muddle, the young German spirits of the thirties threw Romanticism overboard and looked to France for their salvation. From France came the final blow before which Romanticism went down.

CHAPTER VI

THE POST-ROMANTIC EPOCH

THE end of the long reign of Romanticism in German poetry is, as we have seen, better marked by the July Revolution in Paris in 1830 than by the death of Goethe, if only because that Revolution provided the immediate inspiration of the new literary school of "Young Germany." We doubt if the modern reader will turn with as much interest to the "Young German" literature as to the older Romantic poetry; it is not that we are, in our literary tastes, more romantically inclined to-day than a generation ago, but rather that we are less willing to have our poetry mixed up with politics. At the best, problems of statecraft, and the type of mind they demand, are unfavourable to the production or enjoyment of pure literature, and once the immediate objects of a political movement are forgotten, it is doubly difficult to grow warm over a literature to which these objects

were once the end-all and be-all. Besides, the "Young German" era is still too near to us. It is the fate of an epoch in literary, if not so frequently in political, history, to pass first through a period in which it appears uninteresting and even repellent, the immediately following generation being, as it were, glad to have got beyond it; then comes a stage when it seems merely old-fashioned; and only later do we make the discovery that it has receded far enough to begin to be attractive again. As far as "Young Germany" is concerned, we doubt if that school has yet emerged from the second or old-fashioned stage; only within very recent years, at least, have there been signs of a revival of interest in it in Germany.

But there is one redeeming constituent of "Young Germany," and one which non-German readers appreciate even more readily than the Germans themselves, that is Heine. Heinrich Heine was a "Young German," although a "Young German" who could never belie the fact that his cradle had stood in the old Romantic fairyland. Round no poet of modern Europe has controversy waged so fiercely, no poet has been so warmly defended, none so bitterly attacked as he.

And even yet, controversy has not ceased to rage. To deny the quality of greatness to Heine is absurd, and mainly due to antisemitic prejudice; Heine is a great lyric poet, and what is more, one of the most original lyric poets of modern literature. But, at the same time, there is room for a certain resentment when we consider the form which, especially in England, the admiration of Heine has taken; our critics have made claims for Heine which are difficult to reconcile with the fact that our own greatest exemplars of lyric genius were far from being cast in Heine's mould; we have looked to Heine as the one and only modern German poet, have refused to regard as serious blemishes on his genius, and, what hurts Heine's countrymen still more, have persisted in allowing Heine to blind us to the half-dozen other supremely great singers of modern Germany.

Born in 1797, on the eve of the birth of the first Romantic School, Heine passed in his youth through the entire gamut of Romantic moods; but there were certain factors in Heine's case which conspired against the unlimited domination of Romanticism. The fact that he was of Jewish family gave him, at the outset, a cosmopolitan stamp and cos-

mopolitan interests, and these counteracted the aggressive Germanism of an undiluted Romanticism; it also made for cosmopolitanism that Düsseldorf, Heine's birthplace, had fallen more completely under French domination and had accepted Napoleon less unwillingly than the more eastern parts of Germany. The imaginative appeal of the sea, which stamped itself indelibly on his poetic genius in early days, again, is so sparingly represented in the Romantic movement—we have noticed it only in Wilhelm Müller—that that in itself implied the introduction of a new note into the Romantic lyric. But perhaps the most disturbing feature of all in Heine's genius is that he combined with the most complete abandonment to Romanticism, that intensely matter-of-fact, realistic outlook of life which is characteristic of his race. No other writer of this time showed such extraordinary disparity in the two sides of his nature. Even in Hoffmann's case, there was a more complete blending of the supernatural elements in his stories with the concrete realism of his treatment of them, than there is of the airy fancies of Romantic convention with the outspoken realism of Heine's withering irony and self-criticism.

Irony, it will be remembered, was a constant feature in the poetic art of the Romanticists, but while to them it was merely a weapon in their poetic armoury, which they might use or not as the mood took them, to Heine it was a grimly negative, corroding force that ate into the soul of the unhappy poet himself.

The *Buch der Lieder* (*Book of Songs*) is the most original, as it was the most popular German song-book of its century; published in 1827, it is a collection of all the lyric poetry —some of it had already been published before without attracting much notice—which Heine had written up to that date. The basis of this poetry is essentially Romantic; but the Romantic imagery and *technique* form rather an outer framework than an essential constituent; the very manner in which Heine treats the nightingales and roses and violets of the conventional nature of German Romanticism, reminds us at times of how the thirteenth-century Minnesingers employed the stock images of the Minnesang; this is the least original and the most traditionary aspect of his poetry, although, as is usually the case, the aspect which made the most immediate popular appeal. Heine's

greatness lies in his manner, not his matter; in the use to which he puts these conventions; in the ironic realism he flashes on them; in his skill in adapting them to the expression of his own personal emotions. Not but what he saw Nature with his own eyes—and this is especially true of the North Sea lyrics; but the seeing of nature is to him a less sincere thing than it was to purely Romantic singers like Eichendorff. The accusation of insincerity is one of the most frequent that is brought against Heine; and with a certain justice. His nature-poetry is a distinct adaptation, even falsification of nature to suit his peculiar purpose; there is more personal emotion in it than truth of perception. But in that very emotion, and in the acrid pessimism of his self-irony, there is surely a great and unquestionable sincerity. It may not be the kind of sincerity which one looks for in a lyric poet; but it *is* sincerity all the same. Heine thinks nothing of spoiling, as his would-be admirers like to say, the purest lyric gem with an outburst of mockery or ribaldry that wounds the sensitive reader; and in this mockery there is an expression of the poet's personality which could not have been attained in a lyric of a more conventional type.

Moreover, the really original and new elements in Heine's poetry lie just in this deviation from the poetic tradition. On the other hand, it is only fair to consider the standpoint that Heine's lyric mingles but indifferently with the great stream of national German lyric poetry in which the most subtle artistic instincts of the nation have found expression. In this respect, Heine's German critics are justified in their reproach that he is not a national poet in the highest sense of the word; and it may be regarded rather as a confirmation of that criticism than a refutation, that, of all the German poets of his century, Heine should be the one who has awakened most interest among nations other than his own.

In the midst of the unhappiness and distraughtness which are reflected in his early lyrics, a ray of light fell on Heine. The July Revolution broke over France; and for a time, at least, he saw in France the new Jerusalem, the one place of refuge amidst the political and intellectual bankruptcy of the age. He joined hands with the young political writers of the day, and, like them, he, too, had had his brushes with the censorship, the common enemy. He became a journalist in the service of the new political ideal, and made his home

in Paris. It is at this point that Heine becomes an active member of the school of "Young Germany." The great bulk of Heine's prose writings is of the nature of journalism; it was the only means which an exiled German poet had of keeping the wolf from the door; and he wrote on everything that he could turn his hand to, on Paris daily events, on the Salon, the theatres. But all he did he did supremely well; Heine was no less brilliant a journalist than he was great as a lyric poet. His style is crisp and attractive; in his hands, German prose has become shorn of the long-winded heaviness that had been handed down as a legacy from the classic age. The lightness and vivacity of the Gallic spirit passed over into Heine's blood. He had, however, already made his mark as a prose writer before he went to France, before even the *Buch der Lieder* had taken Germany by storm. *Die Harzreise* (*The Journey in the Harz*), that delightful "sentimental" journey, with which he opened his inimitable *Reisenovellen* (*Travel Novels*) in 1826, is no less important a land-mark in the evolution of German literature than the *Buch der Lieder* itself. In later years, he also wrote on more serious subjects, on German philosophy, on the Romantic

School, on his quondam friend Ludwig Börne. Meanwhile his lyric art was gaining in strength; it threw off its swathings of conventional Romanticism, and rose, in the wonderful collection of songs that bears the title *Romancero*, to heights it had never touched before; while in the ruthless criticism of the poem *Deutschland* (*Germany*) his satire took on Aristophanic colours which his countrymen have never forgotten. The chief work of Heine's later period is *Atta Troll*, a half-lyric and half-epic, half-romantic and half-satiric romance, which in originality of conception had not had its like in European literature since the death of Byron. After years of tragic condemnation to a mattress-grave, Heine died in Paris in 1856.

Less need be said of the other members of the "Young German" coterie. Ludwig Börne, like Heine a Jew, was more completely immersed than he in the stream of political journalism; and he lives now only as one of the brilliant radical journalists of those days, when Paris was looked to as the salvation of Europe, the deliverer from her political fetters. His *Briefe aus Paris* (*Letters from Paris*) are a document of the first importance in the intellectual movement of

the time. Heinrich Laube, a less conspicuous talent in the purely literary field, laboured all his life long to turn the stream of French culture and literature into German lands; and he was largely instrumental in bringing the German theatre under the influence of the modern French social drama. His most conspicuous success was won as director of the "Burgtheater" in Vienna, and later of the "Stadttheater" in Leipzig; here he displayed gifts of a high order; compared with these, his talent for imaginative literature assumes very secondary importance.

The most conspicuous man of letters pure and simple of the Young German movement was Karl Gutzkow. He, too, was a radical in his political views, and made himself offensive to those in authority. In his earlier period he passed through the inevitable phase of "Storm and Stress," and in books like *Wally die Zweiflerin* (*Wally the Sceptic*) shocked and dismayed the religious and moral sense of his contemporaries. But politics are less in evidence in his literary work than in that of the other members of the group; his strength lay in novel and drama. His plays are not masterpieces; the more serious ones, such as the iambic philosophical tragedy of

Uriel Acosta, seem strangely dull productions now, but he was particularly successful with intrigue-comedies of the type popularised on the European stage by Scribe. Amongst the purveyors of the daily fare of the theatre Gutzkow certainly deserves an honourable place. In the novel he struck a more significant note: here he is a genuine pioneer. One might say that the new type of social fiction foreshadowed by Immermann's *Epigonen*, is, to some extent, realised in Gutzkow's *Ritter vom Geist* (*Knights of the Spirit*). The old Romantic subjectivity and *dolce far niente* have disappeared here before an active interest in social problems; the object of the German novelist is no longer to write the intimate history of a single hero, but to make a period live again before his audience in all its manifold variety. Unfortunately, Gutzkow's talent was not strong enough to carry out his admirable ideals in fiction; his later years show a declining power; or perhaps it may only have been that the new type of novel which he created, passed on into younger hands.

Of the lesser satellites of this School, little need be said; the rôle they played, which seemed important enough in their day,

proved from the standpoint of later generations a very transient affair. Like so many new movements—like, one might even say, the first Romantic School before it—the function of " Young Germany " was to awaken and stimulate ; the new lines it initiated were carried to fruitful results by successors who repudiated all connection with the school. So it was with the novel, and in even a higher degree with the drama. But before turning to such developments, we must look at a group of writers who were intimately associated with the " Young Germans," the political poets who assumed an importance out of all proportion to their actual gifts, in the years which led up to the mid-century Revolution of 1848.

Political literature, above all, political poetry, has never flourished in Germany ; the introduction of political ideas into German literature has invariably meant a depreciation of the literary currency ; the patriotic lyric has been more often blustering and blatant than poetically inspired. So it was in 1841 when politics invaded the " Young German " lyric ; up to that date the " Young Germans " had, with the exception of semi-Romantic poets like Heine, produced little poetry of any kind. Now, for reasons apparently quite

unassociated with any particular political event, Germany suddenly resounded with patriotic outbursts of song; the Rhine was celebrated as the symbol of German greatness, the national river *par excellence*. The strain was taken up by the young revolutionary, Georg Herwegh, in his *Lieder eines Lebendigen*. Ferdinand Freiligrath, who had just been making his way into prominence with poetry in the earlier Romantic style, modified by a highly-coloured orientalism borrowed from the French Romanticists, was convinced by Herwegh that all this was the merest trifling; and he, too, placed his genius at the service of the political ideas. And in the train of these two men, who no doubt were the most skilled of the group in the handling of the revolutionary poetry, came a whole crowd of poets. Many, like Franz Dingelstedt, for a time only revolutionists, others, like Hoffmann von Fallersleben and Emanual Geibel, poets whose peculiar genius lay rather in more legitimate and traditional fields of lyric expression; but, for the time, all efforts were directed to the achievement of one political, although somewhat vaguely formulated, ideal. It is difficult to trace in public events the background of this

literary unrest; outwardly, indeed, it would hardly seem as if there was much ground for it at all. Since 1840 a Romanticist, Friedrich Wilhelm IV., had sat on "the throne of the Cæsars"; and the political conditions were no more galling in the "Polizeistaat" of the middle of the century than they had been before 1841. Thus much of the feeling was no doubt a reflection of the unstable conditions which reigned in France between 1830 and 1848. So unconscious, indeed, was the German political lyric of any concrete, political end, that it seemed to rise and fall quite independently of political movements. The French Revolution of 1848 took the German poets by surprise, after they had been for years expending their energy in beating the air. It suddenly dawned on them that here was a possible solution to all their troubles. They concentrated their energies and greeted the March risings with elation; for a time it seemed likely that Germany would be granted constitutional government. When the Revolution failed and, as far as Germany was concerned, failed dismally, the whole political movement, as reflected in lyric poetry, was snuffed out as suddenly as it had been fanned into flame.

With Freiligrath, Geibel was the only poet of the group who can be regarded as, in the higher sense, inspired; and Geibel was only for a brief space associated with the revolutionaries. He came at the end of the revolt, as Herwegh had initiated it; and he reconciled it as best he could with the political conditions that supervened. His own strength as a lyric poet lay rather in the revival of purely Romantic strains in the lyric, than in striking any new note; but he had a rare sense of music, and a power of coining phrases that cling to one's memory. Geibel was the chief lyric force in German literature in the post-revolutionary epoch, and his very lack of originality was expressive of that time. He was a sponsor of the Munich group of writers to whom we have to turn immediately, and one of the few men of poetic genius who, in 1870 and 1871, greeted Germany's triumphs with poetry that is still remembered.

Another and less negative aspect of the political lyric is its stimulating and inspiring effect on contemporary poetry generally; it, no doubt, helped to break the oppressively powerful Romantic tradition, and to clear the way for fresh initiative. Perhaps in a more hopeful age it might have done this more

effectually; but its influence was none the less widespread. It is to be seen in that extraordinarily promising young genius, Moritz von Strachwitz, who was cut off at the age of twenty-three; it is to be seen in the desentimentalised lyric, with its manlier tone, of men like Gottfried Keller and Friedrich Hebbel, and in the vigorous poetry of Germany's greatest poetess, Annette von Droste-Hülshoff. This writer's early narrative poetry goes back to the days of Romantic ascendancy, but she was then more influenced by Byron than by German models; and in her lyric and religious poetry there is an acerbity of tone which is poles asunder from the mellifluousness of the Romanticists. The tonic of realism and the active standpoint with regard to political and social movements, have left their imprint on this lonely, retiring Westphalian singer, who struck the most original note of all in the poetry of this unoriginal time.

The triumph of the "Young German" idea is, however, most clearly seen, as was only natural, in the prose fiction before and after the middle of the century. A new period of brilliancy opened for the novel, a form of literature which had played a quite subor-

dinate rôle in German classicism, and by no means a prominent one in Romanticism. The number of masterpieces of the first rank which we owe to the mid-century novelists may not be great; but their activity was extraordinarily varied, and provided a veritable mirror of the social life of the period. This fiction falls into two main groups, the novel of ideas and the novel of the province. At the head of the first group stands Gutzkow with his *Ritter vom Geiste*, at the head of the second, Immermann with the first modern "Novelle," or short story, of peasant-life, *Der Oberhof*.

Gutzkow's immediate successor was Friedrich Spielhagen. In his first long novel, Gutzkow had expressed the unrest and discontent of the age that led up to the final explosion of 1848; Friedrich Spielhagen, in his *Problematische Naturen*, depicted, one might say, the actual generation that took part in that Revolution; he analysed the ideas that lay behind it, and gave an unforgettable picture of the vague forces of unrest and tantalising indecision—an indecision that wrung from Freiligrath his famous poem, *Deutschland ist Hamlet*—which were responsible for the abortive rising of 1848. Spielhagen

lived down into our own time—he died in 1911—but his important work belongs to the sixties and early seventies of last century. His fiction has all the faults of unwieldy formlessness which clung to German and also in part to English fiction before the influence of France made itself felt in this domain; its sentiment is nowadays old-fashioned and unacceptable; but it was at least the sentiment of its time. The novel already mentioned was followed by *Hammer und Amboss* (*Hammer and Anvil*) and *In Reih' und Glied* (*In Rank and File*), all in the best sense representative books. With *Sturmflut* (*Storm Tide*), published in 1876, a novel that is often claimed as Spielhagen's best, he seems to us to have passed beyond the period in which he was at home; story and ideas no longer move together in perfect harmony.

A less militant novelist of this age, but one who made a stronger appeal to those who seek literary art in the novel, was Gustav Freytag. Freytag's greatest novel, *Soll und Haben* (*Debit and Credit*)—a book that may reasonably be claimed as the most interesting German novel of social life of the middle of the century—appeared in 1855,

five years before *Problematische Naturen;* and yet it is in every respect a more modern creation. Freytag had, no doubt, come to a greater extent under English influences; he was a literary artist of a higher type, and less obsessed by ideas extraneous to his art; all this has lent more enduring qualities to his work. Then, again, the picture of society he gives us, and the problems he deals with, are comparatively free from the revolutionary unrest of *Problematische Naturen.* We are brought face to face with a more hopeful state of affairs; Germany has settled down to work. Freytag describes for us the commercial activity on which the prosperity of a nation depends more than on its politics. Even the conflict between aristocracy and democracy, which is foreshadowed in this novel, is not treated with the implacable spirit of the 1848 period, or of the later social-democratic era; and the conclusion of the story emphasises the advantages of a conciliatory policy between noble birth and commercial efficiency. Thus, leaving the question of priority of publication out of the question, one might reasonably say that if *Problematische Naturen* is the novel of 1848, *Soll und Haben* is the representative German novel of ten

years later. No other of Freytag's novels made so great an incision into the life of his time as this; but his second story, *Die verlorene Handschrift* (*The Lost Manuscript*), ought not to pass unmentioned; and in an ambitiously planned series of historical novels, dealing with the history of a German family through the centuries, *Die Ahnen* (*The Ancestors*), he made, as we shall see, a contribution of importance to the historical fiction of the time.

The third representative novel we have to deal with, *Kinder der Welt* (*Children of the World*), by Paul Heyse, was published in 1873; this book, like its two predecessors, holds the mirror up to its age, that age being approximately a decade later than the period Freytag reproduced. Although Heyse's peculiar gifts are for a form of fiction—the short story—which demands a very different kind of talent from the long novel—his *Kinder der Welt* is a book of abundant power. It has been accused of being lacking in architectural qualities, in construction; but we are inclined to question if it is any more deficient in those qualities than the novels which have just been dealt with. We are more concerned, however, with the ideas of

Kinder der Welt. In a higher degree than its predecessors, it embodies the intellectual strivings of its time; but then it belonged to an age that had more leisure and thought just for these higher interests, for the philosophy of Schopenhauer, for the theological controversies that raged round David Friedrich Strauss and the "Tübingen School," and for the rapid advance of scientific materialism. It is these things that interest Heyse rather than purely social or political problems; the ominous discontent of the later social democracy is in the background, and the novel ends on a triumphant note, with the rejoicings over the victories of the Franco-German War.

The second group of fiction in this era has, at first sight, closer ties with Romanticism than with the "Young German" period. The novel of the province does not belong to the literature of ideas in the political or social sense; but it must not be forgotten that the democratic leanings of the political reformers all led to an increased interest in the German "Volk," to a desire to understand and appreciate the soul of the nation as it was to be observed in the unsophisticated dwellers on the land. The first German master of the peasant novel has, in some respects, never been

surpassed. This was the Swiss pastor, Albert Bitzius, better known under his pseudonym of Jeremias Gotthelf. Gotthelf sees his Swiss peasant folk through no distorting literary spectacles, but just as they are; there is an elemental poetry in his unvarnished realism and even in his naïve and characteristically Swiss fondness for moralising. *Uli der Knecht* (*Uli the Servant*) and *Uli der Pächter* (*Uli the Farmer*) are landmarks in the history of modern peasant literature. Berthold Auerbach, however, the South German chronicler of Black Forest life, was in his day a more popular writer than Gotthelf; and Auerbach's *Schwarzwälder Dorfgeschichten* (*Black Forest Village Stories*) are still widely read. But, unfortunately, he was "sicklied o'er with the pale cast" of a superior philosophic culture; and this came too often between him and the simple folk whose fates he described. Auerbach also employed the wider canvas of the social novel, but here he dropped almost naturally into the wake of the "Young German" School. From Auerbach onwards, the peasant novel is a constant and delightful feature in German literature.

The latter half of the nineteenth century in

Germany is marked by the rise of a highly developed literature of the province. Swabia and Bavaria had each their authors of peasant novels; so, too, had the Tyrol; the Bohemian Forest possesses an extremely sensitive and delicately strung prose poet in Adalbert Stifter; Upper Austria, at a somewhat later date, a faithful, unsentimental chronicler in the dramatist, Ludwig Anzengruber, and, in our own day, it has the novelist Peter Rosegger. The northern provinces also shared, although naturally in a less pronounced degree, in this decentralising tendency; Thuringia, for instance, emerges with a distinct literary physiognomy of its own in the stories of Otto Ludwig, a writer who has to be dealt with immediately as an important contributor to the drama of the middle of the century.

Most marked of all, perhaps, is the revival of an independent poetic life among the Low German peoples in the north of the German area. With the appearance of Fritz Reuter, it seemed as if this Low German speaking population were at last about to assert itself in literature in a way worthy of the people that had given the sixteenth century one of its masterpieces, *Reineke the Fox*. This hope has hardly been realised, for

Reuter stands alone as a master of modern Plattdeutsch prose, although in Klaus Groth, the author of an exquisite collection of lyrics (*Quickborn*), he has a worthy fellow-worker. But the Low German constituents of the modern Empire have made themselves felt in another and more subtle way. The spirit and the atmosphere of the Northern moors and coasts have passed over into High German literature to an extraordinary degree and hold the balance easily with the more picturesque setting of the South. Reuter takes a high place among the novelists of his time. As a humorous, kindly delineator of the types of his Mecklenburg world he is unrivalled; he chronicles simply and unassumingly, and makes the impression of straightforward sincerity. As every writer gifted with humour, he is occasionally tempted to sacrifice absolute truth to an exaggeration of some effective eccentricity, but this is done in such a kindly, sympathetic way that one cannot feel offended by it. On the other hand, Reuter makes little or no pretension to construction in his books; his *Ut mine Stromtid* (*From my Farming Days*), and the novels that followed it, are chronicles without form or architectural qualities of any kind, virtually accounts of his own

life and experiences; he is satisfied to bind together what he has to say with the thread of an unassuming, sentimental story of no poetic significance.

Compared with the social novel and the fiction of the province, the historical novel in this epoch is comparatively unimportant. Not but what it was in high favour with the reading public; in the sixties and seventies it probably enjoyed a popularity which it had never known in the earlier days of Hauff and Alexis; but, as literature, it had fallen to a lower level. *Die Ahnen*, that grandly planned cycle of historical romances describing the evolution of a German family from the dawn of history to the middle of the nineteenth century, which Freytag offered his people as a national prose epic, has already been mentioned; but it stands alone. Rarely do we find anything in the subsequent historical fiction which, from the point of view of artistic achievement, reaches the level of the best novels of Freytag's series. Even the vivid resuscitation of the dark ages which Scheffel has given us in his *Ekkehard*, is an isolated achievement. On the whole, the German historical novel of this period fell a victim to German thoroughness, to the

glamour of that historical research of which German scholarship has every right to feel proud; it attempted to be historical in the first instance and leave the art to take care of itself. Consequently but little importance can be attached in a survey such as the present to the once popular work of writers like Georg Ebers and Felix Dahn; the historical novel had, as such, clearly become discredited.

There is still another form of German romance in this epoch which, although virtually represented by only one novel, is not to be overlooked; for that one novel is unique of its kind, *Der grüne Heinrich* (*Green Henry*), by Gottfried Keller. Keller is Switzerland's greatest modern writer, and a master of the first rank. The significance of his *Grüne Heinrich*, the "Dichtung und Wahrheit" of the author's own early life, is that it is virtually the last great book in the royal line of German fiction; the final link in the chain of great Romantic novels which had culminated in the classical period with *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. *Der grüne Heinrich* is a book of unimpeachable sincerity, one of those masterpieces of the world's literature that convince by their innate truth of expression;

a book that is conceived without the slightest apparent artifice on the part of the writer himself, he being perhaps only dimly conscious of all he has put into it. We will not claim *Der grüne Heinrich* as a great European novel; for that matter, we do not think it has been translated, or is likely to be translated, into other tongues; but it is a great German novel of the national type, perhaps the greatest of its century.

Keller's supreme strength lies, however, not in the long novel, of which this alone has a claim to the first importance, but in the "Novelle," or short story, the form of literature in which Germany has done her best prose work. If the long German novel is, as a rule, deficient in the qualities of form and construction, the Germans have often shown themselves the strictest masters of form in their short stories. The chief place among these writers belongs to Keller. In 1856 he published his first collection of *Die Leute von Seldwyla* (*The People of Seldwyla*), followed by a second volume, and his *Sieben Legenden* (*Seven Legends*); then came, in 1878, *Züricher Novellen* (*Zürich Stories*), and later *Das Sinngedicht* (*The Epigram*). In these collections are to be found at least half-a-dozen short

stories which hold a place of their own in German literature. Here again, as in *Der grüne Heinrich*, the qualities that distinguish Keller are those by which we differentiate genius from mere talent. Other European masters, such as Keller's fellow-countryman, Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, or Maupassant, have excelled him in that crispness and conciseness which have always been the peculiar beauty and merit of the short story in the hands of Latin writers, but he is second to none in the possession of the seeing eye and the sensitive imagination. The tragic or comic effect of these stories is unforced—one might even say, uncontemplated; it comes naturally and unconsciously. There is, indeed, no more convincing proof of Keller's greatness as a writer than the fact that he appears to be so often unaware of his power.

Keller is the master of the German short-story writers, but he is far from being the only eminent one. North Germany possesses in Theodor Storm a prose-poet of a similar type; but Storm's range is not so wide, his appeal not so universal as Keller's; nor is his work built on such permanent foundations. The early "Novellen" of Storm, bathed as they are in the gentle light of a

Romantic retrospect and renunciation, can no longer appeal to our more robust and realistic age. They are the expression—we think especially of gems such as *Immensee*, *Viola Tricolor*, *Im Sonnenschein*—and the very beautiful expression, of a Romantic age, in which human souls were attuned to passive, renunciatory emotions, and all nature sympathised, as only Romantic nature could. When, at a later period, Storm endeavoured to adapt himself to the movement of his time and adopted a more realistic form of narrative art, his strength was not always adequate to carry out his task.

Paul Heyse, whom we have already mentioned, represents still another phase of the German short story. He is by far the most prolific of all; the inexhaustible variety of his many volumes of "Novellen" is marvellous. But Heyse, too, was more the man of a particular period than his Swiss contemporary. His work bears the stamp of an age in which culture was imparted or imposed from without; an age of an artificial—at least so it seems to us now—grace introduced from other literatures; he shows a marked preference for stereotyped characters and for stereotyped ethical and æsthetic problems. Least success-

fully of all has Heyse's brilliant, facile style stood the test of the years. And of the many stories he has given us, very few have maintained a place in the affections of his people, such as Keller's, Storm's, or Conrad Ferdinand Meyer's still do. Another reason for the transiency of Heyse's work lies in the fact that he was the representative of a very distinct and narrowly defined phase of German literature. As one of the leaders of the Munich group of writers, with whom we have still to deal, he was identified with the pessimistic trend of literature in the seventies, and that pessimism took the form of a sharp antagonism to all the new forces of the succeeding period, the forces of truth and realism, which have made for strength in the German literature of our time. Thus Heyse suffered as the "Young Germans" suffered, from the lack of ability to rise above his particular age; and he has had to pay the penalty.

The master of form among the short-story writers of the century is the Swiss writer who has already been mentioned in these pages, Conrad Ferdinand Meyer. Meyer has written little and that little comparatively late in life; thus although a contemporary of the

men we have just been considering, he belongs in his literary production to a somewhat later time. He is practically a writer of the eighties. Meyer writes with infinite care; his style is clear, polished, at times objective almost to coldness; he is a Platen in prose; and his strict regard for form is a quality by no means common in German prose-writers. A devoted lover of the great age of the Renaissance, he seeks his themes with preference from that, or, at least, from some equally remote period, which he reproduces for us in unforgettable pictures unconfused by modern ethical issues or subjective problems. There is aristocratic distinction about all his writing, and not a trace of concession to the sentimental tastes of the day to which the historical novelists appealed too readily. In a higher degree than to his more ambitious romances, such as *Jürg Jenatsch*, and *Der Heilige* (*The Saint*), we are inclined to give the palm to his exquisite short stories, like *Plautus im Nonnenkloster* (*Plautus in the Nunnery*), and *Die Versuchung des Pescara* (*The Temptation of Pescara*). Austria, too, contributed to the "Novelle"; the polished workmanship of Ferdinand von Saar, and the genial filigree art of Marie von Ebner-Eschen-

bach have a charm of their own, and lend strength and variety to this form of German writing.

At first sight the drama of the middle of the century offers less scope for detailed treatment than the novel. To judge by the rather torpid condition of the German theatres, their cultivation of Kotzebue-like talents such as Roderich Benedix, and their enslavement by the French contemporary theatre, it might seem as if there were little to say at all; for the tedious and uninspired imitations of Schiller's tragedy, which represented "literature" on the German stage of the sixties and the seventies, hardly demand more than passing notice. And this is the point of view which will be found generally maintained in older German literary histories. But recent developments of European dramatic literature have put Germany's share in the evolution of that literature in rather a different light. It has been discovered that Germany did assist in a very material way in moulding the latter-day European drama, and that that assistance came neither from her pseudo-historical writers nor from her "Tendenzdramatiker" (or "dramatists with a purpose"), who merely carried on the political and polemical tradi-

tions which had come down from the "Young Germans."

The main responsibility of this task was borne by three men, all of them born in the same year, the year of Germany's national liberation, 1813. These are Friedrich Hebbel, Otto Ludwig and Richard Wagner. Of these, the one who lived longest, Richard Wagner, ought to be considered first; for his work goes farthest back into the past. Richard Wagner, the reformer of the music-drama, which in Germany, as in the Italy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, cannot be denied a place in the history of the literary drama, began in the wake of the Romanticists; his early works from *Rienzi* and *Der fliegende Holländer* to *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser* are all Romantic operas; they deal with Romantic themes and deal with them in a purely Romantic way. The favourite renunciation motive is here; the Romantic sentiment and the Romantic dreams. Nor is the second and greater Wagner, the Wagner of *Tristan und Isolde*, *Die Meistersinger*, *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and *Parsifal*, a man of such modern literary ideas as, for instance, Hebbel is. This Wagner was still at heart a Romanticist, who had absorbed, as no other of his contem-

poraries, the spirit of pessimistic Romanticism which lay over Germany at the time. In *Tristan* and *Der Ring des Nibelungen* the pessimistic movement in European literature, which we have already seen mirrored in the work of the great Austrians, Grillparzer and Lenau, reaches a kind of culmination; *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* might well be described as the best comedy produced by that movement in German literature which has been associated with the city of Munich; while *Parsifal*, in 1882, marks the close of the epoch of pessimism. But by virtue of his magnificent ideals of a German national theatre, which were realised in the "Festspielhaus" at Bayreuth, opened with the *Ring* in 1876, and by virtue of his music, Wagner's influence has extended far beyond the era with which his ideas as a poet are associated; he has exerted a force second to none in the evolution of the modern German theatre.

Much more, however, of a dramatist of to-day is Friedrich Hebbel; indeed, so much was Hebbel in advance of his age, that in his lifetime he received but scant recognition. But he is the pioneer of the whole modern movement in the drama. The production of his first play, *Judith*, in 1840, is a landmark of

the first importance. Hebbel here, no doubt, received his literary stimulus from the "Young German" school, and the more obvious features of that school cling to his early work, clung to him, indeed, all his life long; his fondness for intricate psychological situations and for social problems dealt with in a big, symbolic style, came from "Young Germany." But the virtue whereby Hebbel has become a force in literature was, as far as we can see, entirely his own; he was an autodidact in the art of poetry as in knowledge, and looked at life across a temperament of extraordinary originality. He saw human beings from an angle from which no one had ever looked at them before; so peculiar was it, indeed, that it appeared to his unimaginative contemporaries as merely fatuous. He came to the conclusion that the day for outward, superficial happenings in the drama was passing, and that the real business of the theatre was to present the movements of the soul; he put people into his dramas of a strange, unusual type, inspired with complicated, often superhuman passions, and he involved them in extraordinary situations. And having done so, he proceeded to subject these characters to a penetrating analysis; he stripped them bare, investigated

their most secret motives. Above all things, he was bent on establishing the rights of personality; personality is the fundamental theme round which everything turns in his plays; his heroes or heroines who succumb, succumb in a tragic fight for the rights of their individuality. This is what lends such enormous interest to Hebbel's greater works, to his *Genoveva*, *Herodes und Mariamne*, *Gyges und sein Ring*, *Agnes Bernauer* and *Die Nibelungen*; they are all dramas in which the sacred rights of personality are in conflict with the social order, whether that order be represented by a human antagonist, by the State, or by the ideas of the time in which the drama plays. A realist in the modern sense Hebbel is not; he is not even as much of a realist as many of his "Young German" predecessors and contemporaries. Realism was not his business. Nor would we like to claim for Hebbel supreme rank as a dramatic poet; in respect of verse, of poetic fancy, and certainly of popular appeal, he is surpassed by Grillparzer in Austria, by the masters of the Romantic drama in France; but he is a pioneer and forerunner of that modern individualism which was ultimately to rise out of the ashes of Romantic pessimism in Germany, and which, in the work of

Henrik Ibsen and other modern writers, has turned the whole current of the drama. There is nothing more profoundly original in the literature of the nineteenth century than the plays of Hebbel. The drama of inward happenings, of the subtle movements of the soul, which has ousted the problem-drama of the mid-century French theatre, and rendered effete the type of play which depends for its interest solely on the clash of outward interests, begins with him.

Compared with this, the rôle which Hebbel's contemporary, Otto Ludwig, played, is comparatively unimportant; he was one of those unfortunate writers who find it extremely difficult to bring anything to a conclusion. He was more or less of an invalid all his life, and his collected writings are small in bulk; they include, however, one admirable novel, which occupies a place by itself in the fiction of the time, *Zwischen Himmel und Erde* (*Between Heaven and Earth*), a story of minute, painstaking realism, of infinitely fine detail-work; and one or, at most, two dramas of real significance, namely, *Der Erbförster* (*The Forester Presumptive*) and *Die Makkabäer* (*The Macchabees*). We doubt if these plays would make much appeal nowadays outside Ger-

many; nor, indeed, have they any of that wider significance which attaches to the work of Hebbel. But they did good work in German literature by supplementing Hebbel; the realism which is lacking in Hebbel, is a distinctive feature in Ludwig's work. The drama of "Young Germany" had, it is true, been realistic enough in its way; the tradition of the domestic drama, which remained the most vital heritage from the eighteenth century, was nothing if not realistic; but that drama had fallen, in respect of literary qualities, on evil days. Now, what Ludwig did was to restore to these traditions their lost poetic dignity. His *Erbförster* vindicated again this type of play, and in so doing kept it alive and made it a factor in the later development of the drama. But the difference between *Der Erbförster* and Hebbel's tragedy of middle-class domesticity, *Maria Magdalene*, is significant. Hebbel treated his domestic, middle-class theme with a quite incongruous psychological refinement and subtlety; the issue of his story becomes, indeed, in his hands a high tragedy, a psychological problem of the individual imprisoned in the confines of a narrow home. Ludwig's *Erbförster* deals with strong passions, with unholy revenge; it is a

drama in which the truth of *milieu*, the reality, is the chief thing, in which there is no kind of higher problematic or psychological interest at all. And this same clear realism is imported by Ludwig into his biblical tragedy, *Die Makkabäer*. Here again, the comparison with the " Young German " biblical drama shows significantly the advance towards a healthier outlook on life, undistorted by political biases and tendencies, which Ludwig's work meant for the German theatre.

It was perhaps pardonable in older historians to underestimate these innovations; for they meant so very little to the actual theatre; so little for the development of the drama as a whole, which went on its uninspired way of imitation unaffected. It was not until the rise of a realistic drama in France and a new drama of personality in Scandinavia, that Germany began to understand what pioneers her two mid-century dramatists had been.

We have still, in the present chapter, to deal with one other phase of mid-century German literature, the literary movement associated with Munich. To describe this movement as a " Munich School " is perhaps a misnomer, for there were no very close ties, unless those created by the generous patron-

age of the Bavarian court, which brought the poets in question together. The real tie was a tacit agreement with regard to the pessimism of the age. In this respect the Munich poets may be taken as representative of the outlook on life of the German writers of the sixties and seventies. Some of the leading writers of the school, Emanuel Geibel, for instance, and Paul Heyse, have already been discussed in these pages. But the majority of its members can make no claim to detailed consideration in a survey like the present. The school embraced men of very different types, all distinguished by a high literary culture, a keen sensitiveness to artistic impression, and, we might add, in most cases, a warm love for Italy; but the inertia of a will-less fatalism and pessimism was characteristic of most of them. There were noble dilettantes like Graf Adolf Friedrich von Schack, under whose patronage the movement of the time in painting was brought closely into touch with the literary school; devotees of the mid-century pseudo-orientalism, such as Friedrich Bodenstedt, whose *Lieder des Mirza Schaffy* (*Songs of Mirza Schaffy*) enjoyed an extra-ordinary, but transient vogue; deeply tragic natures like Heinrich Leuthold and Hermann

Lingg, who were yet wanting in the supreme strength to make their poetry prevail; or, again, men like Robert Hamerling, who disguised an inner hopelessness and hollowness under an outward splendour of highly-coloured poetic effects; and lastly, cultured writers of short stories such as Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl. Indeed, the only member of this circle who succeeded in putting a certain stamp on his age as a popular poet, was Joseph Victor von Scheffel, whose romance in verse, *Der Trompeter von Säkkingen* (*The Trumpeter of Säkkingen*), in spite of its often trivial sentiment, had at least the merit of being in healthy touch with the soil.

On the whole, this literature is essentially a literature of the surface; it was not profound, and perhaps even its pessimism was but skin-deep. It added nothing to Germany's stock of ideas, philosophical, ethical or æsthetic; at most, it tried to reconcile the Hegelianism of the earlier time, which it had not the strength to shake off, with the philosophy of Schopenhauer; but it was not original or independent enough to substitute anything fresh for the old, worn-out Romanticism; an air of dilettantism was everywhere, of lack of seriousness, of unwillingness to face

life as it is. The Munich School declared its preference frankly for the gentle trivialities of a poetry that appealed primarily to the superficial sentiments, or for the more reprehensible humour of a beer-table order. But the unrest seethed beneath the surface; all that these writers did was to gloss it over, to pretend that it did not exist.

The time was clearly ripe for a healthier attitude towards literature; and, indeed, signs of a change in this direction are traceable in the intellectual undercurrents of the age. There was no question yet of a revival of German idealism on a new basis; but the Germans were turning their attention to science rather than metaphysics; a knowledge of the real world began to appear of more vital importance than the shadowy speculations of the Romantic philosophers. Thus there is no wonder that the power of Hegel over German minds was beginning to wane, and many turned even to the systematised materialism of Auguste Comte. A new philosophy was demanded in accordance with scientific premisses; and the controversies raised by Darwin's *Origin of Species* took the place of those of the previous generation round questions of metaphysical

idealism. In the fifties and the sixties the favourite reading of the intellectual classes was a kind of semi-philosophical scientific literature, the aim of which was to popularise the new scientific theories and hypotheses. The scientific spirit reacted in other fields, above all, in history ; and, under the guidance of masters like Theodor Mommsen and Leopold von Ranke, there arose a new generation of extremely able historical scholars, who won world-wide respect for German historical research.

Less in antagonism to the spirit of Hegel was the new social philosophy of the middle of the century ; the scientific spirit was here brought to bear on the corporate social life. Industrial organisation necessitated a study of the laws that govern human society ; the fundamental principles of political economy had to be revised and even recast. It is to this age we owe the origin of that social-democratic philosophy which was to play so large a rôle in the subsequent political life of Germany.

But the Germans as a people have never thriven on materialism ; and the unmetaphysical, scientific spirit of the sixties was even more blighting in its effects on literature

than the Hegelianism of a decade or two earlier. Science and literature could not fraternise —not yet at least—and poetry was still obliged to cling to her old-world ideals. The stimulus for new developments had first to come, as almost always in the long history of German literary endeavour, from abroad. With that stimulus we propose to deal in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VII

THE LAST PHASE

When the literary historian comes within the range of writers who are still amongst us, it behoves him to go warily. In a small book, such as the present, it might seem the better part of wisdom to draw a hard and fast line excluding still living authors; but with German literature such a procedure is difficult. The reader has a legitimate desire to see how the new German Empire of 1871 has found expression in literature; and there are certain features and traits in the contemporary activity of Germany which give meaning to the rather arid phase of literary development which has just been discussed in these pages. The recent literary period rounds off the century; the twenty years from 1880 to 1900 gives, as it were, purpose to the twenty years from 1860 to 1880; and, best reason of all for the present chapter, the German literature of our time has shown a vitality and originality

which make it imperative that it should not be passed over in silence.

The strengthening of German national life, which followed the establishment of the Empire in 1871, was slow in showing itself in literature. Of the poetry which the war itself inspired, the less said the better. The depressing atmosphere of pessimism was not dispersed by the victories of the Franco-German War; Schopenhauer was still the dominant force in German thought, and Eduard von Hartmann, in spite of his leanings towards Hegelianism, hardly mitigated the pessimistic outlook. The outstanding artistic achievement of the early years, the performance of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at Bayreuth in 1876, was, as we have seen, virtually a triumph of this pessimistic movement. The only signs of new vigour were to be seen at the universities, and in the increased respect in which the German schoolmaster, to whom Bismarck had ascribed the victory of Sedan, was held. The first effort of the united German nation was not to be a poetically productive people, but to be a cultured nation; and before the idol of culture all went down. History, philology, philosophy, all flourished; poetry alone was left out in the cold.

The stimulus to greater things came from without; and then only when the new generation which had grown up as citizens of the empire came into power. In the eighties a new spirit crept into the intellectual life of Germany. In the philosophy of the schools the long reign of Hegelianism was broken by a reversion to Kant; amidst the crying demands of the living present, historical culture ceased to be the fetish it had been for so long; Goethe became recognised as the supreme poetic force in modern Germany, and pessimism was obliged to loosen its grip. Literature passed into the hands of the young; and the young rarely remain pessimists for long. In Ernst von Wildenbruch's historical dramas the new generation felt a throb of life that they had sought in vain in the bloodless classical and historical dramas on Schiller's model, with which the German theatres in the previous decades had given an air of respectability to their repertories of flimsy, unliterary comedies and farces, and translations from the French. With the importation of the realistic movement from France, Russia and Scandinavia, the drama and novel took a great sweep upwards. Dazzled by the new light that burst upon them, the young

writers of the later eighties and the nineties hardly knew where to begin; they wrote novels in the ultra-realistic manner of the French realists; they wrote dramas dealing with the most sordid aspects of modern society; and in almost every case they seemed bent on being more extreme than their models. The result was necessarily a great deal of crude, undigested literary production, and of what, by its time, was regarded as "unhealthy" literature. But this was only the inevitable prelude. Before many years had passed, the slavishly realistic mood was left behind, and the inborn Germanic idealism began to assert itself anew.

The chief force behind this revival was a thinker who embodied as no other the spirit of revolt against the past, Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche had begun his literary career as a fighter against the traditions that lay so heavy on the German mind; he attacked the intellectual cowardice of his nation, which, ostrich-like, hid its head in the sands of history, instead of facing the problems of the present; and although he had himself graduated in the school of Schopenhauer, his day of reckoning with Schopenhauer soon came. Nietzsche renounced pessimism and what was still

harder for him, broke with his most intimate friend, Richard Wagner; and in the place of the old order of things he set a vigorous optimism which has acted on contemporary Germany like a tonic. Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra* (*So spake Zarathustra*) is the literary masterpiece of the new era in Germany's literature, and the symbol of Germany's regeneration. Be the master of life, not its slave, Nietzsche preached; accept no tradition, however great the authority behind it; "erwirb es, um es zu besitzen." The vital importance of the radicalism of Nietzsche's thought lay less in its positive achievement than in its stimulating effect; it gave the young generation courage to face life in its own way, to see things from its own individual point of view. It has consequently made the new German literature pre-eminently a literature of ideas and an anti-traditional literature.

The signs of revival were most apparent at first in the drama. We have already mentioned the work of Ernst von Wildenbruch as marking a revival of serious purpose in the theatre; but his historical dramas represent rather a pouring of still fermenting wine into old bottles than a renovation of the bottles

themselves, which was quite as necessary. Contemporary with Wildenbruch, there arose in Austria a dramatist, who with greater vigour and less conventional genius replaced the "Volksstück" or popular play, which had degenerated into frivolity and sentimentality, by a serious, realistic drama of peasant life. The dialect plays of Ludwig Anzengruber belong to the very best of their time. But the most hopeful signs of new life were to be seen in Berlin, where a "Freie Bühne," or Independent Theatre, had been formed on the model of the French *théâtre libre;* it was inaugurated in 1888 with what the young revolutionaries of the eighties looked upon as the most powerful drama of its time, Ibsen's *Ghosts;* and *Ghosts* was followed by the first work of a German author, *Vor Sonnenaufgang* (*Before Sunrise*), by Gerhart Hauptmann. This was in 1889, and only a few months later, Hermann Sudermann, another German dramatist, who was hitherto known as the author of an admirable novel, *Frau Sorge* (*Dame Care*), and a powerful semi-historical romance, *Der Katzensteg* (*The Cat's Bridge*), produced his first play, *Die Ehre* (*Honour*). From these two events the new developments in the German theatre took their origin. Since

then these writers, who were its first sponsors, have gone far apart. Sudermann, whose precise, clear-cut talent was trained by the French realists, has passed from one popular success to the other; he has enriched the stage with a large repertory of effective pieces, which, after the manner of Dumas *fils*, have all behind them some dominating idea; and are, moreover, abundantly supplied with telling dramatic situations and contrasting, effective characters. But as the years have moved on, German criticism has grown restive under the monotony of the Sudermann type of play, which has tended, like the analogous drama in France, to become stereotyped. Even when Sudermann turned away from realistic plays of every day—as in his *Johannes*, for instance, in which he challenged a comparison with Hebbel on that writer's own ground of psychological tragedy; or again in *Die drei Reiherfedern* (*The Three Heron's Feathers*), where he experimented with the dramatic "Märchen," or in one of his latest dramas, *Der Bettler von Syrakus* (*The Beggar of Syracuse*), a poetic drama playing in a semi-classical *milieu*, such as in earlier days had been a favourite with the imitators of Schiller—in all these attempts to leave the path that had

brought him fame, Sudermann has only revealed his limitations. One feels that it is always the same Sudermann—the Sudermann of quite modern ideas and modern social problems—under an incongruous disguise. His best works remain *Die Ehre*, *Sodoms Ende*, *Heimat*, *Das Glück im Winkel* and similar pieces; and it is but fair to say that, besides the theatrical effectiveness which modern critics are inclined to look on with suspicion, these plays do possess an intrinsic poetic value which was a distinct gain to the theatre. In fiction, Sudermann has in later years turned to more ambitious themes than the elegiac novel of his youth which has just been mentioned; in *Es war* and *Das hohe Lied* the dominant influence of French models, and a pure outwardness of conflict which degenerates occasionally into mere sensational melodrama, make them somewhat questionable contributions to German prose literature.

It is much harder to arrive at a definite judgment on Gerhart Hauptmann. The difficulty in his case is the extraordinarily Protean nature of his talent. He has tried his hand at more varied forms of literary and, more particularly, of dramatic work than any other writer of his time. He makes the impression

of being a man easily influenced by outward impressions, and ready to adapt himself to these impressions in a manner which is incompatible with a strong personality. He began, for instance, by writing ultra-realistic dramas; then he fell, together with his contemporaries, under the influence of the Scandinavians, and as a result produced that most powerful drama of the first phase of the literary revival, *Die Weber* (*The Weavers*). Next he came under the spell of the new mysticism which had begun to sap the roots of realism all over the Continent. In *Hanneles Himmelfahrt*, he created a modern fairy drama in which an extreme, almost repellant, realism is combined with imaginative fancy of the utmost delicacy. With *Die versunkene Glocke* (*The Sunken Bell*) he gave himself up wholly to allegorical poetry, only to return again to a firmer and more solid realistic basis in *Fuhrmann Henschel* and *Rose Bernd*. Since these days Hauptmann has gone his own way, always eluding just those lines his critics expect him to follow, always keenly alive to the movement of ideas; but not, it must be frankly admitted, with the success that attended some of his earlier productions. It is very doubtful, indeed, whether the

dramatic production of Hauptmann's later years will leave any mark at all in the history of the German drama. In recent years he has turned to the novel; his strange story of Christ in the modern world, *Emanuel Quint*, is full of undeniable imaginative power; but his latest novel, *Atlantis*, awakens grave doubts as to its author's critical acumen where his own work is concerned.

It is impossible, and would hardly be profitable here, to attempt to follow in all its intricacies, the literary movement of which, in the drama, Sudermann and Hauptmann are the best known representatives; it is enough to say that literature has not stood still. Constant experimenting and unlimited receptivity, have been the notes of the German theatre in this time; there has been no movement, however successful or however abortive, in the contemporary European drama which has not found an echo on the German stage; and some of the most striking innovations are of German origin. Only for a brief period did the German drama remain at the standpoint of thorough-going realism; the mystic, the the allegorical, the symbolical soon invaded and took possession of it. In Austria, which had never fallen so completely under the

realistic spell as North Germany, the imaginative idealism was quickest to assert itself. Here men of whom Arthur Schnitzler is a typical example, kept, in the main, to the traditions of the French theatre; but Austria can also point to a poetic drama, of which the most distinguished representative at present is Hugo von Hofmannsthal—a drama worthy of a nation amongst whom Grillparzer is still a power. Perhaps the most interesting form which this new Romantic drama has taken, is the resuscitation of antique tragedy —a resuscitation in its way not unsimilar to that of the French seventeenth century—in which the heroic figures of antiquity are made to appear, not as statuesque demigods, but as very real men and women struggling with passions and problems familiar to us to-day. For the present, the drama seems to have definitely broken with the once all-powerful realism, and to be feeling its way back to that domain of imaginative freedom in which the German mind has been always more at home.

With this insistent appeal of the drama to the best intellectual classes in Germany has gone an enormous development of the German theatre as an institution. Beginning

with the reforms of Richard Wagner, first set before an international public at Bayreuth, and with the conscientious reproductions of classic drama under the Duke of Meiningen, the theatre in Germany has progressed from one triumph to another, until now with the technical achievement of the "Deutsche Theater" in Berlin and of the great Court Theatres throughout the German-speaking area, it easily holds its place as the first in Europe.

Of the modern novel it is less easy to speak. It has proved itself less unwilling to benefit by outside influences; and has fallen successively under the spell of French naturalism and of Scandinavian imaginative realism; above all, it has learned from the masters of the Russian novel, Dostoevsky and Tolstoi. The output has been enormous, and much of that output has been undeservedly swept away by the advancing tide. We are not even sure that those authors and books that have survived the years, have always been the most worthy to survive; for it is in the nature of fiction, even in a land like Germany, which endeavours to sift carefully the makers of literature from the purveyors

of the circulating library, that enormous editions and continual popularity have gone, not to the really gifted, but rather to the skilful imitators and popularisers of what the more original spirits have initiated. In the early period Theodor Fontane was a worthy pioneer of the modern realistic novel on French lines; and his *Effi Briest*, at least, occupies a permanent place in the fiction of this time. But the adventurous souls who, in the eighties, sailed out on to the unknown waters of a new literature, iconoclastic realists, who refused to make any concession to tradition, have been rather submerged by the later movement. It is too soon to attempt to adjudge values in the modern German novel; but we are inclined to think that posterity may take a less kindly view of idols of popular taste than contemporary Germany does, and will no doubt draw the line that separates literature from what is not literature a little higher than it stands at present. But the fact remains that the German novel of to-day does show much healthy promise; and men, at least, like the author of *Buddenbrooks*, Thomas Mann, and one or two women writers, will not be allowed to be forgotten

The last word that has to be said concerns the lyric. In all ages of German literature the lyric is the supreme test of vitality. If there is a living lyric poetry, then all is well; for the lyric is the quintessence of the German literary spirit. And the best testimony to the genuineness and power of the literary revival of our time in Germany is the abundance of original lyric poetry it has produced. Indeed, this lyric revival is the most encouraging sign of all; for in no field did the outlook seem less promising for the young reformers of the eighties than just here. Behind them lay an enormous body of lyric poetry, richer and more varied than any other lyric in the world. The poetry of Goethe and the great classical period was, as it still is, a power in German hearts; and that of the Romantic era shows few of the signs of growing out-of-date which so soon settled like a blight on Romantic drama and novel. And yet in spite of this over-abundant tradition—in spite of the fact that lyric poetry deals with a comparatively small range of emotions which are practically the same in all ages; in other words, that it had no novelty of matter to offer—the German lyric of our time has struck out new lines

and won for itself a "place in the sun." That, it seems to us, is the most promising symptom of the new movement in Germany; and we are inclined to attribute a higher place to the genius of such pioneers of a quite modern lyric poetry as Detlev von Liliencron, Richard Dehmel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Stefan George, and a host of lesser singers, who have discovered the priceless art of looking out on life with their own eyes, of dispensing with the support of tradition, than to the novelists and dramatists of the period.

At the same time, it must be frankly admitted that in the eyes of those who lived through the feverish activity and the boundless hopes of the later eighties and the early nineties of last century, the new literary movement has not reached the heights that were hoped for it in those years. The failing—and it has always been a failing in German literary activity—is that criticism and theory have gone in advance of practice. While with other peoples the poets set the norm, it is more frequently the case that the critics do so here. That had been the case, as will be remembered, in the early eighteenth century; it was again the case

with the first Romantic School; and it is pre-eminently true of this last phase. Almost every step forward which the new literature has taken, has been preceded by a theoretical pronouncement on the part of some school or coterie. The inevitable difficulty when the critics have the power and precedence, is that poetry has either to become a pedant-ridden, artificial product of theory; or it must turn recalcitrant, and fight against the restrictions imposed upon it and against the pedagogic intentions of its would-be masters. In either case the result is unsatisfying. In the eighteenth century and, to some extent, in the Romantic age, the critics were soon overridden by the more virile literature; but the present age, as far as its relations to theory are concerned, seems never to have quite freed itself from its leading-strings. At least, the Messiah has not yet appeared either in the drama or in the novel, and the rebellion of the writers of the day against the confines erected round them has rarely been accompanied by that success which alone justifies rebellion. But there have been other gains of which no one dreamed twenty years ago; literature has broadened out and moved forward,

not perhaps as it was expected to move, but, all the same, in an extremely interesting way; and the flow of strong, earnest talents has never failed. Above all, no one twenty-five years ago could have foreseen the meaning of that movement of ideas with which Nietszche is associated, nor predicted the power and originality of the lyric impulse.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

It is not easy to compress in a brief bibliographical note any very serviceable information with regard to the literature of German literature. On no subject have we so many excellent handbooks and exhaustive studies as on this. The reader who may be tempted to pursue his studies further in English books is referred to the history of German literature by Professor Kuno Franke, of Harvard University, *German Literature as determined by Social Forces* (6th edition, 1903), or to the present writer's *History of German Literature* (Edinburgh, 1902). In German there are many literary histories of the academic type, accurate and solid, but not always characterised by the finer literary graces; of these the *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur* by Friedrich Vogt and Max Koch (2nd edition in two volumes, 1903), will be found most generally serviceable; particularly admirable is the *Geschichte der Deutschen Literatur* by Wilhelm Scherer (10th edition, 1905), which corresponds better to the demands we like to make on historians of literature. Scherer's *History* is also to be obtained in English translation (new edition, 1906). On the other hand, the professedly "popular" histories of German literature in German are rather to be avoided; and the brief ones are rarely satisfactory. One exception to the former class ought to be made in favour of the *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte* in three volumes (1907-11), by Alfred Biese. For any serious study of the literature the invaluable bibliographical *Grundriss zur Geschichte der deutschen Literatur* of Karl Goedeke (2nd edition, 1884) is indispensable. A useful bibliography on

a smaller scale is A. Bartels' *Handbuch zur Geschichte der deutschen Literatur* (Leipzig, 1906).

With regard to the history of individual periods, there is little of a sufficiently general character to be mentioned here, until we reach the eighteenth century. The earlier periods are still in the hands of the academic investigator, and exhaustive monographs on individual poets and periods are innumerable; but no historian has yet arisen to give us a wholly satisfying history of early German literature. And this is more emphatically true of the extremely confused period of transition, the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. For the eighteenth century a study of Hermann Hettner's comparative work (*Literaturgeschichte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, Part III. *Deutsche Literatur*, 6th ed., Brunswick, 1913) is, in spite of the fact that, in some respects, Hettner's standpoint has become out-of-date, still indispensable; more detailed, but less in accordance with our present-day point of view is Julian Schmidt's *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von Leipzig bis auf unsere Zeit*, 5 vols. (Last ed., 1896.) For the nineteenth century, the brilliant and suggestive book by Richard M. Meyer (*Die deutsche Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts*, popular edition, 1912) still seems to us, in spite of many rivals, the best. For the Romantic School, R. Haym's epoch-making book (*Die Romantische Schule*, 2nd edition, 1906) is of the highest value; while the English reader will find much that is suggestive in the volumes of the Danish critic, Georg Brandes' *Main Streams in European Literature*, dealing respectively with the *Romantic School* and *Young Germany* (English translation, London, 1903 and 1905). For the quite modern period, there is also a wide selection, the last and one of the most attractive surveys being that by A. Soergel, *Deutsche Dichtung und Dichter der Zeit* (Leipzig, 1911). Authoritative monographs on the greater eighteenth-century poets are F. Muncker's *Klopstock* (Stuttgart, 1888), E. Schmidt's *Lessing* (3rd edition, Berlin, 1912),

E. Kühnemann's *Herder* (2nd edition, Munich, 1912), A. Bielschowsky's *Goethe* (25th edition, Munich, 1913), and K. Berger's *Schiller* (Munich, 1905 f.).

Of more importance than books about German literature is the literature itself. Anthologies are never satisfactory things at the best, but to the reader who will accompany his studies with samples, *The German Classics*, an anthology edited years ago by Max Müller to provide illustrative matter to Scherer's book (new edition, 1906), has still many good points; there is also an *Anthology of German Literature* on a smaller scale by Professor Calvin Thomas (1910). Of collections of German classics there is no lack; and these are cheap and good. For the earlier period the needs of the general reader are perhaps best met by the series of *Deutsche Klassiker des Mittelalters* (12 vols.), *Deutsche Dichter des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts* (18 vols.), and *Deutsche Dichter des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts* (15 vols.). These series, originally edited many years ago by F. Pfeiffer, J. Tittmann and K. Goedeke, are kept, where new editions have been called for, up to date. The literature of the Early New High German period is, in great part, to be found in the publications of the Literarische Verein of Stuttgart, and in the series *Literaturwerke des* 16. *und* 17. *Jahrhunderts*, edited by W. Braune. For the last two centuries general anthologies are less practicable, but the *Literaturdenkmale des* 18. *und* 19. *Jahrhunderts* should be mentioned as containing much that is otherwise inaccessible. For the entire period down to the first Romantic School, however, the most useful collection is the *Deutsche Nationalliteratur*, planned by J. Kürschner, in 222 volumes (1882-98). Anthologies of lyric poetry—and here the anthology is confessedly in place—have been extraordinarily numerous of late in Germany; we would especially here refer to that published at Oxford (1912) by Professor H. G. Fiedler.

Germany is fortunate in possessing admirable standard and critical editions of all her greater poets. Mention

may be made here of that of Herder's works by B. Suphan (33 vols., Weimar, 1877 ff.); of Lessing's by F. Muncker (22 vols., Stuttgart, 1886 ff.); of Wieland's, at present being published by the Prussian Academy; of Goethe's in the magnificent Weimar edition (Weimar, 1887 ff.), of which over 100 volumes have appeared; and of Schiller's, by K. Goedeke, 15 vols., Stuttgart, 1867 ff.). For practical use the English reader will find the latest editions of Goethe and Schiller, published by Cotta in Stuttgart, most serviceable. For the more modern poets, the choice is wider, and the German publishing houses have in recent years vied with each other in producing attractive editions.

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