


ENCYCLOPEDIA OF FAMOUS WORLD LITERATURE



EDITED BY:

RICHARD GARNETT

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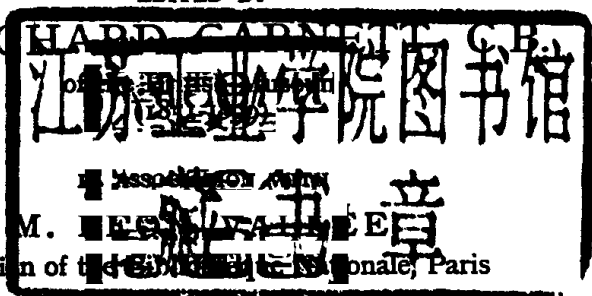
SELECTIONS FROM THE WORLD'S GREAT WRITERS
ANCIENT, MEDIAEVAL, AND MODERN, WITH BIO-
GRAPHICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES

AND
CRITICAL ESSAYS

BY
MANY EMINENT WRITERS.

EDITED BY

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THE MAIN CURRENTS OF GERMAN LITERATURE

BY PROF. ALOIS BRANDL
Of the Royal University of Berlin

IN ushering in to Anglo-Saxon readers a selection of German literature, I may be expected to sketch briefly the main characteristics of German literature, its differences from English literature, its specific merits and demerits.

At the bottom of the German heart there is a good deal of sentimentality. This feeling, which makes us so fond of singing and music, of intimate family life and cheerful conviviality, has given to our literature a peculiar flavour, a popular turn, an inclination to what moves the soul of the peasant and the labourer—sometimes indeed, at the cost of realistic incident or refined form. But out of this prevailing level of literary cottage-life there rises from time to time a bold fabric of intellect, aspiring to the mystical and the metaphysical. In the act of rearing such a structure the German mind has been used to exert all its original power, and then to abandon itself for a while to rest or distraction. In consequence we have had, in the course of centuries, several striking “*Blütheperioden*,” but not that almost unbroken continuity of fine literature that England has enjoyed from the time of Chaucer to the present day.

A popular epic poetry with which, in beauty and in grandeur not even “*Beowulf*” stands comparison marks the brilliant period of our Middle Ages :—the lays of the *Nibelungen* and of *Gudrun*. A popular lyrical singer was *Walter von der Vogelweide*, the classical minstrel of his day; though he was a courtier, his love-lays bear the stamp of the village; his deeper poems express feelings

and ideas that touch every hearer or reader most directly, his verse has a spontaneity that must have proved a source of pleasure both to the educated and uneducated. Few and artificial, in comparison, are the English love-songs of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; while of the more thoughtful English poets of that time Walter Map wrote Latin, and William Langland a long, very long didactic poem. And by the side of these productions, enjoyable for every ear and every understanding, stood Wolfram's mystic romaunt of the Graal, with its intricate symbolism and reflection, without doubt the profoundest Teutonic poem of the Middle Ages. On the other hand, there was no Chaucer in Germany. Chaucer's lighter tales may, as far as flow and ease are concerned, be paralleled by Hartmann's and Gottfried's adaptations of Chrestien de Troyes; but the art of his rime royal, and the judicious realism of his merry pilgrims to Canterbury, are unmatched. It was not the fault of the German courts that courtly poetry did not succeed better with us in the fourteenth century; there had been many more princes in Thuringia, by the Danube, and the Rhine, that gave liberal reward to the singer in the vernacular tongue, than in England and Scotland; the daughter of a German emperor, Anna of Bohemia, extended her protection even to Chaucer, and procured him leisure to write his greatest works; yet German poetry developed in the popular direction. Nothing is more characteristic of this fact than the ebbing away of the "minnesang" into the "meistersang," the production of the guilds—at the same time that in England Chaucer and his school developed that finished style that was to become Shakespeare's best inheritance.

In the century of Sidney and Shakespeare, the translations that were exchanged between the two nations tell the same tale. From Germany popular sermons were exported to England on an enormous scale. Luther's masterly version of the Bible, probably more truly popular than any other translation of the Holy Scriptures, was to no mean extent the model of Tyndale; versions of our popular hymns were sung in London and Edinburgh churches; chap-books like *Eulenspiegel* and *Grobianus* found their way

to the Thames and the Forth; and the mystic saga of Dr. Faustus, perhaps the *chef-d'œuvre* of German imagination during the Renaissance, became the source of Marlowe's drama. But, as to refinement, Hans Sachs is a veritable cobbler compared to chivalrous Sidney; the good dramatists in Holland and Strasburg wrote in Latin, and our vernacular adaptations of Shakespearian dramas, brought over by the English comedians, were coarse and contemptible; we lacked refinement and could not even relish it if it was imported.

The seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were the period when Germany, misguided by a host of princelings, aped France. The neat elegance and witty dexterity of Parisian authors have always had a strong fascination for the German mind, attracting our admiration, bewitching our senses, and stifling our originality of production, just because they are utterly un-German. Our literature became pedantic as it had never been before; until Haller in Switzerland, and Hagedorn in Hamburg, followed by Klopstock, Lessing, and the Göttingen School, held up English models—making the German true to his own kin again. Then Milton awakened a new epic poetry, which culminated in *Hermann und Dorothea*—the revolutionary song of paradise inspiring the song of a village during the great revolution. Percy's *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*, presenting popular and artistic specimens promiscuously, worked only in the popular direction, inducing Bürger to write *Lenore*, and Herder to gather, with young Goethe, ballads from the mouths of Alsatian peasants. Shakespeare, royalist though he was to the backbone, is visible in every scene of Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen* and Schiller's *Räuber*—plays full of opposition against the courts, and of sympathy with the ill-treated people. Young Goethe and Schiller would not have become the classics they are if they had not thus fallen in with our popular taste. No poem of their great English contemporaries, neither of Wordsworth and Coleridge, nor of Byron or Shelley, has ever been chanted by children in London streets, by peasants in English hamlets, remoulded in their mouths, as several of Goethe's and Schiller's are.

This is the outcome of German sentiment ; and at the same time we find the mystic symbolism of *Faust*, the complicated reflection of Schiller's *Ideale* : the same mixture as in the time of Walter and Wolfram.

That our poetry was fashioned to such an extent, not by the taste of the nobility or of the schools, but by the instinct of the common people, naturally had its advantages and its disadvantages. When our nation declined in culture, in unity, wealth, and self-respect, as during the Thirty Years' War and the following decades poetry sank too, much more than the literature of Italy under the yoke of native and foreign tyrants ever did ; because there the poet was quite willing to obey the courts, to feed on splendour, to flourish by princely favours. On the other side, during the latter part of the eighteenth century, our literature, recalled to life by the electric contact with her English sister, effected what no other literature has ever done for her nation : she resuscitated our whole people—which she was only capable of doing because she was not the child of luxury, of the court, or of traditionary learning, but the voice of our race, the embodied spirit of our ancestors. Schiller's *Räuber* excited a sensation which neither Byron's *Childe Harold*, nor Walter Scott's *Waverley* equalled ; there was not only a rush to the booksellers, but a revolution in the minds of the people, who became aware that freedom and justice were banished from the towns into the woods, and who resolved to fight for them, like Karl Moor, the realistic robber. When they read in *Cabale und Liebe* of the departure of the unhappy soldiers whom their wretched monarch had sold to England, to be sent against the Americans, they began to curse the patriarchal system of their little states. With Marquis Posa in *Don Carlos*, the cry was echoed in the breasts of thousands : Sire, give us freedom of speech ! It was in those times that the new empire was founded in the German heart, by the German poets, though in politics two Napoleons had still to do their worst, and their best, to remove the débris of the old Holy Roman Empire, before the dreamy desire could be realised. English literature, with all its refined form and

sound realism, had never been able to do the like; all the Elizabethans, with Shakespeare and Spenser in the van, were royalists, but the next generation erected the Commonwealth; the Puritans commanded Milton's pen, but what ensued was the Restoration; even in our time the Greater-Britain movement had long been spread by political speeches and periodicals, before it found its poetic exponent in Kipling. Similarly, France was saved in the time of her sorest need, not by dramas and ballads, but by an illiterate maid, and when the United States won their independence, American literature was but in its infancy. Only the German war of liberation, first from Napoleonic, afterwards from home tyranny, cannot be understood and explained but by the influence of the poetic word on the masses. It presents the grandest example of what popular literature can do for a nation.

Since the appearance of Schiller's juvenile dramas, things have altered somewhat. As we approach the nineteenth century, we find a higher standard of refined form in German literature, never again, we hope, to be abandoned. The most perfect specimen of it is Goethe's *Iphigenie*; written in blank verse of easy flow and gentle music, with a rhetoric of Sophoclean nobility, with a heroine of love, not of passionate, but of pure, quieting, and healing love; with a plot of grandeur melting into tenderness. This drama, which could not have been written but for Weimar and Frau von Stein, was the best fruit of Goethe's removal from busy Frankfort and Leipzig to the quiet ducal residence by the Ilm. *Iphigenie* was soon followed by *Tasso*, a tragic and warning picture of passion intruding on gentleness. And not only did Goethe exchange the "storm and stress" of his youth with Hellenic beauty and aristocratic dignity; Schiller, too, developed in the same direction, and became his neighbour and friend, his fellow-dramatist and brother-artist. A. W. von Schlegel settled in their shade to translate Shakespeare into a German classic of the same style; Grillparzer established the neo-classical drama in Vienna; everywhere the majority of the educated grew Weimarised. What Chaucer gave to England—a poetic form

capable of expressing the highest thoughts—was now given to Germany as a permanent model, just as Spenser and Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Wordsworth and Tennyson kept on Chaucer's road and did not fall back to alliteration or loose ballad riming.

It was not quite easy for foreigners to see what *Iphigenie* meant for Germany. The drama was soon translated into English, but made little impression. Far more attention had been roused by the juvenile works of Goethe and Schiller, being more racy and original than cosmopolitan. *Götz* and the *Räuber* were praised, translated and imitated in Scotland in the younger days of Walter Scott. *Werther* caused a sensation across the Channel; Lord Byron complained it had poisoned him. *Stella* came in to share the success of sentimental Kotzebue during the last years of the eighteenth century, when Sheridan adapted *Pizarro*; and *Faust*, essentially a work of the young Goethe, impressed a few of the highest minds: Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Carlyle. Only the masterpieces of the ripe Goethe, on which he himself was wont to base his fame, did not strike the Anglo-Saxon taste, their refinement being not new to the countrymen of Chaucer. On such a point the æsthetic judgment of two nations may well differ, according to the law that people admire rather what they do not possess than what is best in itself.

Soon after the appearance of *Iphigenie*, our poetry was influenced in the same direction by that group of authors who, in opposition to classical Goethe and Schiller, called themselves "Romantiker." They drove out a good deal of our cruder popular leanings by overdoing them. They carried simplicity so far that it often became puerility; they exaggerated enthusiasm and bold imagination as though it were the chief task of literature to rove in fairy tales. People grew weary of "Phantasus" and "Der gestiefelte Kater" and "Gickel, Gockel und Gockeleia," and demanded a manlier tone. Experiences such as these have, perhaps, made us too indifferent to the better productions of our "Romantiker"; English critics say, we are unjust to Novalis and Fouqué; certainly Eichendorf has been allowed to drop too much

in the rear. But who will return to the shoes of his boyhood? The Romantiker at times found their own style too high-flown, and tried to balance it by what they called self-irony—not aware of the fact that it might rather make the impression of insincerity on the reader. Nobody was fonder of such irony on himself and his readers than Heine. German opinion has been unusually severe on him, and foreigners have not always understood or explained it correctly. It is wrong to say that Germany doubts his genius; he is unanimously considered a master of song, a lyrist of the first order; every educated person knows his *Buch der Lieder*, and many critics place it only second to Goethe's *Lieder*. We admire the artist, but object to the character. His poems charm you at first with heavenly music and excellent wit, but on a sudden he dismisses you with a mock. You are revering the poet, when all at once he turns gamin. Even so it is with his life: you pity him because he lived in a miserable time, and in a weak body; yet for all your sympathy, he sneers at you, because you are not a Frenchman. How could American citizens honour an American poet that despised Washington, and cursed the stars and stripes? Still, I think, our nation is too harsh upon him. He has mocked us, to a great extent, out of our old sentimentality. For this he deserves our thanks; but disillusion, though it may prove wholesome, hardly ever earns gratitude; people do not like a physician that rids them of a crippled child, however miserable it may have been.

To make German literature manlier, not a little also was done by a later group of authors, called "die Jungdeutschen." They preached realistic investigation; a muscular poetry, a drama of stirring characters and drastic incidents. At a time when two-thirds of our periodicals were exclusively devoted to belles-lettres and fine arts, it must have been a relief to hear Gutzkow's hero "Uriel Acosta" thunder and fight for freedom of creed. After legions of love-songs, the sound advice of Gervinus to devote ourselves for a while to politics came like the recipe of a good doctor.

The result of all these various movements has been, that during the last half century every poet endeavoured to reflect the

character of his part of the country with as much grace and truth as possible. The unwritten programme of modern German literature is a fusion of the popular with the artistic, of the local provincialism with the traditions of Weimar, together with a sharper and more realistic observation. The popular element is purified; it bears quite different colours in the ballads of the Suabian Uhland and in those of the Rheinländer Scheffel, in the dramas of the Viennese Anzengruber and in those of his Silesian contemporary Freytag, in the sketches of the Pomeranian Fritz Reuter and in those of the Styrian Rosegger, in the tales of the Swiss Gottfried Keller and in those of the Tyrolese Adolf Pichler. In England the realism of London is much more apt to absorb that of the province. The historical division into a number of smaller national units, that has generally proved so fatal to our politics, is a source of inexhaustible variety and individuality to our literature.

Astonishment has sometimes been expressed that the re-foundation of the German Empire did not inaugurate a new epoch in poetry. Because the victories of Marathon and Thermopylae were followed by a great rise of the Grecian drama, and the destruction of the Armada by the appearance of Shakespeare, a number of new geniuses were expected with us after 1871. The expectation rested on a theory which does not bear closer inspection. Æschylus had struck out his path before the overthrow of Xerxes, and he was decidedly of more influence on Sophocles than any question of Athenian politics, excepting the question of independence alone. As to England, Marlowe had appeared before 1588; and if no Armada had ever been sent against Elizabeth, there would be fewer Shakespearian Histories, but hardly a different Hamlet or Lear. Slavery or despair can stifle the literary production of a people; many a bird will not sing in the cage; but sorrow and affliction, with a nation that is conscious of its strength, have frequently served to kindle poetic enthusiasm, while the feeling of triumph is only a poor motive. The protest of Germany against French invasion had been sung long ago, by Körner and

Arndt; after 1871 we were glad to keep the peace, and did our best to reconcile our highly gifted western neighbours, instead of provoking them in Indian fashion.

Not the patriotic satisfaction, but the social difficulties arising from the rapid growth of our industry and population, have lately given a new impulse to our literature. The cry of the poor, the insulted, the outcast, after the right not only of existence, but of respectability and joy, has proved a powerful impetus for our poets. In Berlin are the headquarters of our socialist party, and also of the group of young dramatists that deal with the war of the classes and the sufferings of the proletariat at the hands of a society that professes to be Christian. Sudermann in "Ehre" and "Heimat" has depicted such conflicts in striking scenes; Hauptmann has given a loud voice to the poor "Weavers," and has painted a sweet vision of paradise to dying "Hannele," the drunkard's daughter, who had never known what happiness was on this earth. Not a few less famous dramatists work in the same line. It is a poetry of pity and accusation; in theatrical workmanship evidently influenced by Paris and Norway, but in its aim and scope a characteristic outcome of the German heart; a drama for the people or, at least, in favour of the people, indulging not in sentimentality, after the fashion of old Kotzebue, but in problems of reform. At the same time, the second original element of German poetry, the mystic vein, is not missing. Hauptmann's admirers have been puzzled by the autobiographic symbolism of his "Versunkene Glocke," and Sudermann's by the interwoven thread of thought in his "Drei Reiherfedern." At bottom, German literature has still the same character as in the period of the "Nibelungenlied" and Wolfram: more homely than courtly, and still at times haunted by the mystical instinct; only her vesture has become finer, her gait more dignified, her hands more dexterous, her mind riper, and her working power more sustained.

A. Arndt

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THE CAPTURE OF JERUSALEM.

By EDWARD GIBBON.

(From the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.")

[EDWARD GIBBON, the English historian, was born at Putney, Surrey, April 27, 1737. During his boyhood he lived with his aunt, and at fifteen entered Magdalen College, Oxford, from which he was expelled for his conversion to Catholicism. In consequence of this he was sent to Lausanne, Switzerland, and placed by his father with M. Pavillard, a Calvinistic divine, who reconverted him to Protestantism. Here also he fell in love with Mademoiselle Susanne Curchod (afterwards wife of Necker, the French financier, and mother of Madame de Staël), and would have married her but for his father's opposition. On his return to England he served as captain in the Hampshire militia for several years; revisited Europe (1763-1765); was a member of Parliament for eight sessions, after which he retired for quiet and economy to Lausanne. He died in London, January 15, 1794. It was at Rome in 1764 that the idea of writing the "History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" first occurred to him as he "sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while barefooted friars were singing vespers in the temple of Jupiter." The first volume appeared in 1776, and the last in 1788. This monumental work is virtually a history of the civilized world for thirteen centuries, and, in spite of its defects, is one of the greatest of historical compositions. Gibbon also wrote an entertaining autobiography.]

BEFORE the Franks could enter Syria, the summer, and even the autumn, were completely wasted: the siege of Antioch, or the separation and repose of the army during the winter season, was strongly debated in their council: the love of arms and the holy sepulcher urged them to advance; and reason perhaps was on the side of resolution, since every hour of delay abates the fame and force of the invader, and multiplies the resources of defensive war. The capital of Syria was protected by the river Orontes; and the iron bridge, of nine arches, derives its name from the massy gates of the two towers which are constructed at either end. They were opened by the sword of the duke of

Normandy : his victory gave entrance to three hundred thousand crusaders, an account which may allow some scope for losses and desertion, but which clearly detects much exaggeration in the review of Nice. In the description of Antioch, it is not easy to define a middle term between her ancient magnificence, under the successors of Alexander and Augustus, and the modern aspect of Turkish desolation. The Tetrapolis, or four cities, if they retained their name and position, must have left a large vacuity in a circumference of twelve miles ; and that measure, as well as the number of four hundred towers, are not perfectly consistent with the five gates, so often mentioned in the history of the siege. Yet Antioch must have flourished as a great and populous capital. At the head of the Turkish emirs, Baghisian, a veteran chief, commanded in the place : his garrison was composed of six or seven thousand horse, and fifteen or twenty thousand foot : one hundred thousand Moslems are said to have fallen by the sword ; and their numbers were probably inferior to the Greeks, Armenians, and Syrians, who had been no more than fourteen years the slaves of the house of Seljuk. From the remains of a solid and stately wall, it appears to have arisen to the height of threescore feet in the valleys ; and wherever less art and labor had been applied, the ground was supposed to be defended by the river, the morass, and the mountains. Notwithstanding these fortifications, the city had been repeatedly taken by the Persians, the Arabs, the Greeks, and the Turks ; so large a circuit must have yielded many pervious points of attack ; and in a siege that was formed about the middle of October, the vigor of the execution could alone justify the boldness of the attempt. Whatever strength and valor could perform in the field was abundantly discharged by the champions of the cross : in the frequent occasions of sallies, of forage, of the attack and defense of convoys, they were often victorious ; and we can only complain that their exploits are sometimes enlarged beyond the scale of probability and truth. The sword of Godfrey divided a Turk from the shoulder to the haunch ; and one half of the infidel fell to the ground, while the rest was transported by his horse to the city gate. As Robert of Normandy rode against his antagonist, " I devote thy head," he piously exclaimed, " to the demons of hell ; " and that head was instantly cloven to the breast by the resistless stroke of his descending falchion. But the reality or report of such gigantic prowess must have taught the Moslems