# OUTLINES

OF

# GERMAN LITERATURE

BY

JOSEPH GOSTWICK,

AUTHOR OF "GERMAN POETS," "ENGLISH POETS," ETC.,

AND

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# GERMAN CULTURE AND CHRISTIANITY:

**THEIR CONTROVERSY IN THE TIME, 1770-1880.**

**By JOSEPH GOSTWICK.**

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This compendious book gives, in an English style, a fair and generous account of the controversy in which, for more than a century, German learning and philosophy have been engaged in opposition to the central tenet of the Christian religion. The history begins shortly before the time of LESSING, and ends with the date 1880. The names of a few of the authors noticed—so far as their writings relate to the controversy—will indicate the scope of the work:—REIMARUS, KANT, LESSING, LAVATER, JACOBI, HAMANN, CLAUDIUS, HERDER, FICHTE, SCHLEIERMACHER, HEGEL, SCHLEGEL (FR. V.), STEFFENS, SCHELLING, SCHOPENHAUER, NEANDER, BAUR, MÖHLER, THOLUCK, FEUERBACH, MICHELET, STRAUSS, SCHENKEL, HETTINGER, KEIM, BIEDERMANN, PFLEIDERER, LIPSIUS, HARTMANN.

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TO

THOMAS CARLYLE

THIS

"HISTORY OF GERMAN LITERATURE"

IS

BY PERMISSION

Respectfully Inscribed.

*March, 1873.*

# PREFACE.

THIS compendious history is designed to supply a want which the wide-spreading study of the German language and its literature has created. Though this study has rapidly advanced in England during recent years, it has been mostly confined to the writings of modern authors, and many readers may still ask for a book giving a general view of the literature of the German People from the earliest to the latest times. This history extends from the year 380 to 1880.

It may be asked, why have we not translated one of the best of many German books on the History of German Literature? The reply is, that, in some instances, they are too extensive; in others they are rather critical than narrative or descriptive, and are designed for readers who already have some considerable knowledge of the subject. The work now offered to English readers is compendious, and while many critical remarks may be found in its pages, its general character is descriptive. As far as is possible, writers of various schools and of several periods are here allowed to speak for themselves. In several of the quotations given, the form of abridged translation is used, in order to gain more breadth of outline. No translations, either in prose or verse, have been borrowed.

It is not long since a notion prevailed, that a review of poetical literature, with a few brief notices of history and biography, might be accepted as the history of a national literature. But theology and philosophy are, though not immediately yet closely, united with general culture, and we have, therefore, made no attempt to evade the difficulty attending the treatment of these subjects.

All the parties engaged in polemic theology, and in the pre sent controversy of independence against external authority, are fairly represented. As far as our limits allow, we have endeavoured to let all—Catholics, Mystics, Lutherans, Pietists and Rationalists—speak for themselves.

The literature of the time 1830-80 has not been treated with the freedom of criticism asserted with regard to preceding periods. The reasons for reserve are obvious. In our study of the literature of our own age, we have no aid from criticism confirmed by the verdict of time. Many of the writers named in our later chapters are still living, and their reputations have still to be tested. For the account here given of recent literature, no respect is claimed more than what is due to a careful statement of facts.

The demand for a second edition of these *Outlines* has led to a careful revision of the original work. Some of the graver disquisitions on philosophy have been lightened, and the translations from German poetry—none borrowed—have been increased. Chapters XXXV. and XXXVI. have been re-written, with new matter brought up to date, and Chapter XXXVII. is entirely new. A brief sketch is here given of the literary productions of Germany since the publication of the first edition of the Outlines, that is, during the ten years extending from 1873 to 1882. The last chapter is a general Review of the relation of the several parts of Germany to its literature, its eminent writers, poets, and philosophers.

Special attention must here be drawn to the additional Index which has been compiled for this volume. The first Index is one of names of authors and a few other persons; the second is one of the topics treated in the text and of the titles of books. Thus, for example, under "Poetry" in this second index will be found a list of all the metrical translations in the volume; while, under the title of "Faust" will be found a reference to Goethe, under "Redmantle" the name of the author Fouqué, under "Leute von Seldwyla," Gottfried Keller under "Gisela," Marlitt, and so on through a wide range of German Literature. It is hoped that these and the like references will be found useful to enquirers.

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*June, 1883.*

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### *SEVENTH PERIOD.* 1770-1830.

'GÖTZ VON BERLICHINGEN'—'WERTHER'S LEIDEN'—THE MEN OF 'STURM UND DRANG'—THE HAINBUND—PROSE WRITERS.

In 1773, the drama of 'Götz von Berlichingen' was published without the author's name, and was generally received with enthusiastic admiration. In several respects it realised the ideal desiderated by 'the originals,' or the literary men of revolutionary tendencies. It was a national drama, and the character of its hero, Götz of the iron hand, one of the latest survivors of the old *Ritterthum* (knighthood), was not too remote from popular sympathies. He had given proofs of generosity in the time of the Peasants' War. In his biography written by himself, he describes in a tone of childlike innocence such exploits as would now be called robberies, and the frank and kind expression of the author's portrait can leave no doubt of his sincerity. He lived in the days when the princes were making use of the Reformation as a pretext for exalting themselves on the ruins of the *Ritterthum*, and he fought, as he believed, for the right. Goethe departed rather widely from the facts of his hero's autobiography, and gave expression in Götz to some of the revolutionary notions prevalent when the drama appeared. The play was written in defiance of the rules of the French drama, and therefore was hailed as being in accordance with Lessing's theory and Klopstock's patriotism; while 'the originals'—the men who would derive all their morality from crude nature—were charmed by the scene in which 'brother Martin' declaims against monasticism. On the other hand, Götz gave offence to all admirers of the French theatre, including the king, who spoke of the new national drama as 'a detestable imitation of bad English

plays,' and 'full of disgusting platitudes'. This critique might have been fairly applied, in all its severity, to a series of wild, shapeless 'Ritter dramas,' called into existence by the success of Götz. Nothing indeed can be said in favour of the model itself as a work of art; for it is only a series of scenes, each having a separate life and interest. Its greatest and most permanent merit is found in its truly popular style.

A still greater success followed the publication of the sentimental romance, 'The Sorrows of Werther,' which first appeared, without the author's name, in 1774. It was soon translated into several languages and circulated throughout Europe. Some parts of the work were, doubtless, founded on the writer's own experience; but it must be remembered that he was a Proteus in his sympathies. The fate of Jerusalem, a young man with whom Goethe had but a slight acquaintance, was described in connection with several fictitious circumstances. The heroine Charlotte—one of Gothe's friends when he lived at Wetzlar—was afterwards married to a man whose character was falsely supposed to be represented by that of 'Albert,' the weak husband in the romance. The public accepted the 'Sorrows of Werther' as a faithful biography of Jerusalem, and, for a time, the incidents of the story were talked of as well-known facts that had taken place at Wetzlar. 'Lotte'—afterwards, Frau Kestner—became celebrated as a heroine, while her husband felt annoyed because it was imagined that he had been described under the disguise of Albert. Travellers came to Wetzlar to find some relics of the melancholy man who died for love, and the landlord of an inn there, to please his visitors, raised a small mound of earth in his garden, and, for a trifling gratuity, exhibited it as 'the grave of the unfortunate Werther'. All the blame of this extravagance must not be cast on Goethe. His sentimental romance was the effect of a literary epidemic that might be traced back at least as far as to the English novels of Richardson, whose influence had been very extensive in Germany. Even such a recluse metaphysician as Kant had loved to read of the sorrows of 'Pamela' and 'Clarissa Harlowe'. Many of the enthusiastic admirers of 'Werther' were readers who thought Ossian a greater poet than Homer. A dreamy sentimentality prevailed, and Goethe sympathised with the feeling. The epidemic was spread, but was not created, by Goethe's romance. It was a dream of his youth—

a morbid dream. Schopenhauer, the arch cynic, regrets that Goethe employed his genius so often to write of love, but admits that the topic is hardly to be avoided; for, says he, gravely, 'it will intrude itself everywhere, disturbing the plans of statesmen, and the meditations of philosophers'. Wolfram von Eschenbach, in his 'Titurel,' had long before made the same apology, but in a far more poetical style.

It must be admitted, however, that the tendency of Goethe's earliest romance was enervating, and he was soon convinced of his error. He then wrote his 'Triumph of Sentimentality' as a satirical antidote to 'Werther'; but the medicine had no great effect. The romance had been recommended, not only by its purport, but also by its excellent style, of which one proof is the facility with which it may be translated into French.

It is hardly necessary to add that 'Werther' was followed by a crowd of imitations barely worth mentioning. Among them the tedious romance of 'Siegwart' by JOHANN MARTIN MILLER, might be referred to as one that enjoyed a remarkable popularity. We notice a few other inferior writers of fiction in these times, because their productions serve to show by contrast the merits of Goethe and Schiller, whose best works were written in defiance of the degraded taste that prevailed in their days. We cannot fairly estimate such works as 'Iphigenia' and 'Wilhelm Tell,' if we know little or nothing of the lower poetical literature that found numerous admirers, from the days of Klinger and Lenz to the times when Iffland and Kotzebue had possession of the German stage.

Goethe's young contemporaries belonged to two classes—the men of the Göttingen School (the 'Hainbund'), and 'the originals,' already generally described. It is among the latter that we find the more prominent characteristics of the imaginative literature of the age. Its worst errors may be sufficiently indicated by a brief reference to the writings of WILHELM HEINSE (1749-1803), who in his youth was patronised by Father Gleim, and afterwards was an imitator of Wieland. It is enough to mention his romance of 'Ardinghello and the Fortunate Islands' as a specimen of debased fiction, of which the contents are as impure as the treatment is unartistic. The less offensive parts of the book consist of some dreamy attempts to describe works of art. To pass over all the worst parts of the story—its sentimentality on the subject of

friendship may be noticed as one of the errors from which even the early writings of Goethe are comparatively free. There is nothing real and manly in Heinse's notions of friendship, and his language is so full of bad taste that it can hardly be quoted. This is the style in which he represents the sudden formation of 'an everlasting bond of friendship'—'he sprang up from his chair so violently that the glasses were knocked off the table, as he exclaimed: "Oh happy, singular, wonderful coincidence! so young, so handsome, and so full of good sense and experience! we must be friends for evermore! nothing shall part us—darling of my soul!"'

When we turn to notice another prevalent fault—the taste for such violent, unartistic writing as is now called 'sensational'—we see at once the distance existing between Goethe and his young contemporaries, the dramatic authors, Lenz and Klinger. About the time when he was writing 'Götz von Berlichingen,' Goethe became acquainted with these sensational playwrights. They had read Shakspere, and had been carried away by the vehemence of his dramatic power, but had learned nothing of the art by which that power was controlled. The result was that they wrote some deplorable dramas, which, however, found admirers.

JOHANN REINHOLD LENZ, born in 1750, studied at Könisberg, and was for some time employed as a private tutor before he came to Weimar. There he made himself noticeable for his defiance of the conventions of polite society, and was soon compelled to leave the town. He afterwards lived at Zürich and in Russia, was afflicted with insanity, and died in very miserable circumstances in 1792. In his dramas—such as 'Der Hofmeister,' and 'Die Soldaten' (1774-76)—he mingled comedy with tragedy, and treated with an equal contempt the rules of art, and those of decency. His contemporary FRIEDRICH MAXIMILIAN VON KLINGER, born in 1752, was a far stronger man in intellect and character, and his worst personal eccentricity, during youth, seems to have been his dislike of a complete suit of clothes. But this is only what was said by Wieland who was the enemy of all men of Klinger's school. After visiting Weimar, where Goethe treated him kindly, Klinger was engaged for some time in writing for the Leipzig theatre. His dramas 'Sturm und Drang,' 'Die Zwillinge,' 'Konradin,' 'Der Günstling,' and others are, with regard to their

offences against good taste, worse than his didactic romances, though these are also destitute of moderation and sobriety. His purport in most of his prose-fictions is severely moral; but he thinks it necessary to teach ethics by exposing crimes and miseries in all their bare deformity, and by the use of unchastened language, such as we find in 'Faust's Life, Actions and Doom'. Klinger's best romance—'The Man of the World, and the Poet' (1798)—is morose and misanthropic in its tone, but contains useful warnings for idle dreamers. In his 'Meditations and Thoughts on the World and on Literature' (1802), he gives his severe notions on ethics in a style less tedious than that of his romances. Of these it will be enough to notice very briefly one —'Faust'—as a specimen of the taste for demonology prevalent in Klinger's day. When Faust is summoned to his doom, he defies the arch enemy in words so daring that, says Klinger: 'never since Pandemonium was founded, was there such a silence as now reigned throughout the abodes of everlasting lamentation!' In short, Faust frightened all the demons. In another passage, when the tempter appears in his true form before his victim, the scene is thus described: 'Satan towers up to a gigantic height; his eyes glow like thunder-clouds from which the beams of the setting sun are reflected; his breathings are like the sighings of a tempest through chasms, when the crust of the earth is burst open; the earth groans beneath his feet, and his hair, through which a storm is raving, floats around his head like the tail of a threatening comet!' Another of the young men classed with 'the originals,' the painter, FRIEDRICH MÜLLER (1750-1823) treated the same subject in his 'Faust' but hardly with such energy as Klinger displayed. In 'Genoveva,' a drama and in several of his ballads and idylls, Müller wrote in a natural and popular style, and, in some respects, anticipated the tendencies of the Romantic School in poetical literature.

FRIEDRICH DANIEL SCHUBART, born in 1739, may be mentioned here; for though he was not personally associated with the writers above named, his characteristics belong mostly to the time of *Sturm und Drang*. He was a Suabian schoolmaster, and a man of versatile abilities. At one time he supported himself as a teacher of music, then as a public reciter of poetry, and lastly, as the editor of a newspaper *die Deutsche Chronik*, notorious for its audacity. Writers of Schubart's biography have described him,

on one side, as a dissolute man, on the other, as a patriot. He had good talents for music and poetical declamation and was often well paid for his services; but he had everywhere the misfortune of finding or making enemies. He was expelled from his place as organist at Ludwigsburg for writing a parody on the litany. After that he was patronised at Mannheim, but soon made himself unwelcome there, and his usual bad fortune haunted him when he went to München. Then he started 'The German Chronicle' at Augsburg, where he had a brilliant success as a reciter of poetry. Again he made enemies, and was driven away to Ulm, where he continued to publish his paper. Having given offence to the Duke of Würtemberg, the editor of the chronicle was enticed into the domains of that ruler, and there was sentenced, without any form of trial, to suffer ten years' imprisonment. In his own account of this transaction he wrote, with some pathos, of his separation from his family; but he forgot to confess that he had been a careless husband and father. The imprisonment was a most despotic act; but it should be added that Schubart's faithful wife and his family were better cared for while he was kept in confinement than they had been sometimes when he was at liberty to provide for their wants. After his release, he returned to his old habits of dissipation, and died in 1791. In literature, he partly represents a taste for the grotesque and horrible, expressed in ballads beginning with such lines as :—

'See you the blood-stain on the wall?'

or,

'Ha! here's one bone and here's another!"

Goethe, in his grotesque ballad, 'the Skeletons' Dance,' showed that, if he chose, he could excel Schubart in this sensational style :—

'Then ah! what a dance in the churchyard lone!
And oh! what a clatter of bone upon bone.'

Schubart's poem, entitled 'the Vault of the Princes' was generally admired in his day. A few verses may serve to show another literary trait of the times, declamation on the wickedness of ruling families :—

'And here they lie! these ashes of proud princes,
Once clad in bright array;
Here lie their bones—all in the dismal glimmer
Of the pale dying day.

And their old coffins in the vault are gleaming
Like rotten timber side by side;
And silver family-shields are faintly shining—
Their last display of pride.

Oh, wake them not—the scourges of their race,
Earth has for them no room!
Soon, soon enough will over them be rattling
The thunders of their doom.'

Though their offences against good taste, morals and rules of art were hardly pardonable, the sensational poets, already so often referred to, were progressive in some of their innovations, and an excuse may be found for their extravagance when it is contrasted with the tameness of the so-called poetry of the 'Hainbund'. This union the latest of formal associations of literary men in the times of Klopstock, was formed by several young students of Göttingen, and in a manner suited to their sentimental taste. They were assembled one evening, near a clump of oak-trees in a field, while the moon was shining clearly. Here they agreed together to form a school for the culture of patriotic poetry, and pledged themselves to act honestly towards each other in their exchanges of criticism. Their meeting ended with the ceremony of crowning themselves with oak-leaves. In nationality they endeavoured to make themselves worthy followers of Klopstock. On the anniversary of his birthday (1773) they assembled to honour their master, and on the same occasion, they burned Wieland's portrait and some of his writings. Both the 'Hainbund' men and the men of *Sturm und Drang* disliked Wieland; the former, because he had introduced a foreign and licentious taste; the latter, because he cared for rules of art and had common-sense enough to know that Klinger was not a second Shakspere. On the whole, the Göttingen men of the 'Hainbund' were conservatives in poetry, and their representative, Voss, wrote bitterly against all the innovations of the original geniuses and against those of their successors, the Romantic School. But the 'Hainbund' produced no great poets. Bürger, the most powerful of the men associated with the union, was not, strictly speaking, one of its members. With regard to his cultivation of a popular style in ballads, he might be reckoned among Herder's disciples, while in other respects, he was associated with the sensational school.

GOTTFRIED AUGUST BÜRGER, born on the first day of 1748,

studied at Halle and Göttingen, and during his youth, was attracted by the charms of English poetry; especially by Shakspere's plays and Percy's ballads. Of the latter he translated several, but deviated considerably from their simplicity, in order to suit a taste for so-called poetic diction. Bürger's practical life was irregular and unhappy. However great his sins might have been, he was severely punished in his third marriage. A sentimental and frivolous woman pretended to be fascinated by some of his poems, and wrote to him in verse, offering her services as a mother to his three children. He was weak enough to accept the offer, but he soon bitterly repented. This third wife made him wretched for two years and then left him, about the time when his literary reputation was attacked by the severest criticism ever written by Schiller. There was only one consolation left for Bürger—his death, which took place in 1794. It was a miserable spectacle to see the woman who had embittered his last four years, when, after his decease, she travelled about the country and made small profits by reciting his ballads with affected pathos.

Bürger had great merits of style and versification. His wild spectral ballad of 'Leonora' was rapidly spread through Germany and soon translated into several languages. An English version was Sir Walter Scott's first publication. Other ballads, such as 'Lenardo and Blandine' and 'the Pastor's Daughter of Taubenhain' were generally admired for their graphic and popular style, though in some respects they were severely criticised. Several of Bürger's songs are good, and his sonnets are excellent. The opinions of critics have been divided respecting the poet's general merits. Those who have praised him highly have spoken chiefly of his best ballads and of a few of his lyrical poems, while they have studied rather the style than the purport of his poetical works. Others, who have viewed his poems as a whole, and have had regard to their purport, as well as to their fluent versification, have censured the poet for his want of refinement, and for such passages of inflation or bad taste as are found in his *Ritter Karl von Eichenhorst*, *Frau Schnips*, 'the Rape of Europa,' and even in one of his prettiest lyrical poems, 'the Hamlet'. But however critics may differ on the general merits of Bürger, they must agree in praising his melodious versification which, though it has the characteristics of ease and simplicity, was the result of careful study. Klopstock, in his old age, when talking with Wordsworth,

expressed his belief that Bürger was a more genuine poet than either Goethe or Schiller. This strange judgment was pronounced in 1798, when Schiller had published his finest ballads.

JOHANN HEINRICH VOSS (1751-1826) the best scholar among the men of the 'Hainbund,' was far more respectable as a translator of Homer than as an original poet. He wrote in tedious hexameter verses a long idyll-epic called 'Luise' (1784), which suggested to Goethe the form of his 'Hermann and Dorothea'. In other respects, these two poems should hardly be named on one page. It has been absurdly said that the notion of domestic 'comfort' is peculiarly English, but the whole purport of one of the idylls of Voss is to expatiate on the snug and soothing circumstances of a country parson. Voss was a great enemy of all romance and mysticism, and admired a clear, didactic tendency, such as is well adapted for catechisms and reading-books in elementary schools. He was an industrious man of highly respectable character and scholarship, but was intensely prosaic, and avoided, not only everything that could be called fantastic and unreal, but almost every thought that would rise above the level of commonplace. His rural epic 'Luise,' is divided into three idylls:—in the first, a walk through a wood is described; then the pastor of Grünau—the heroine's father—joins his family in a pic-nic party on the bank of a stream, and, when every minute incident of the excursion has been tediously described, all the insipid characters return to the vicarage. The second idyll is hardly more lively, for here a young man named Walter (of whom we know nothing more than that he is betrothed to Luise) pays a visit to the old parson of Grünau and finds Luise fast asleep. In the third idyll Walter and Luise are married. No reason whatever is assigned why the reader should feel sympathy with any of the characters introduced, for they are hardly distinguished by more than their names, and they all talk the same commonplaces. Voss was proud of this idyll-epic, and preferred his own creation, 'Luise,' to Goethe's heroine, 'Dorothea'. 'They may say what they please in favour of Dorothea,' said Voss, 'she is not my Luise,' a statement afterwards universally accepted, though not in the sense the author intended. Voss was the representative of a class of versifiers, including such names as Neuffer, Kosegarten, and Schmidt, whose chief characteristic was their extreme homeliness. Take away all the poetry, humour and sentiment from

some passages of Goldsmith's 'Deserted Village' and the 'Vicar of Wakefield,' and leave only some descriptions of homely articles of furniture, and the result might be something like the idylls written by Voss. As they must be ranked thus low in art, it is pleasant to say anything in favour of their moral purport. They express contentment in circumstances of moderate prosperity, and such natural piety as is likely to be fostered by a general sense of comfort.

The names of a few other associates of the 'Hainbund' might be mentioned here, but it is enough to say that they hardly rose above mediocrity. There might be found one or two exceptions to this statement. JOHANN ANTON LEISEWITZ (1752-1806) wrote one tragedy, *Julius von Tarent*, which was praised by Lessing and contained some passages of powerful pathos. MATTHIAS CLAUDIUS (1740-1815), known also by his pseudonym 'Asmus,' wrote several good lyrics expressive of simple pious feelings, such as are found in his 'Evening Hymn' and his 'Peasant's Evening Song'. His *Rheinweinlied* is national and popular.

Enough has been said of inferior poetical writers to indicate the literary tendencies of the times when Goethe was educating himself as a poet. A few years passed away, and the author of 'Götz' and 'the Sorrows of Werther' had left far behind him the wild nature-worship of his youth, and had produced such true works of art as 'Iphigenia,' 'Egmont,' 'Tasso,' as well as some parts of 'Faust,' and many beautiful lyrical poems and ballads. Before we attempt to give an account of this second period in Goethe's literary biography, it may be well to notice the works of a few prose-writers belonging to the earlier part of the period 1770-1830.

Among writers of harmless and amusing fictions JOHANN MUSÆUS (1735-87), the author of many stories founded on old popular legends may be mentioned, with some praise of his lively and fluent style, though his best work, a series of Fairy Tales, has been cast into the shade by the later collections of old popular myths, edited, as *Kinder-und Hausmärchen*, by the brothers Grimm. On the ground that harmless fairy tales are better than misrepresentations of real life, we may leave unnamed many empty novels and wild romances containing neither truth nor poetry. A romance written in the form of 'Travels in the South of France' by MORITZ AUGUST VON THÜMMEL (1738-1817)

was distinguished from the crowd by its lively style, and by some true observations of life in France, but it was partly based on Wieland's notions of morals and contained some imitations of Sterne's 'Sentimental Journey'.

Another imitator of Sterne was THEODOR GOTTLIEB VON HIPPEL (1741-96), the writer of some books partly narrative and autobiographical but mostly didactic, in which there is no want of versatile talent, though order and clearness of arrangement are utterly neglected. If we may trust Hippel's biographers, his life was a series of contradictions and in its want of logical sequence was like his writings. To gain the means of supporting himself and a wife, he studied law, and with such industry and success that he gained what might be called wealth in his times, but instead of marrying, as he had intended, he contented himself with writing a book 'On Matrimony,' in which he laid down rules for the conduct of husbands and wives. It is noticeable as being one of the earliest arguments in favour of 'the emancipation of women'. Imitation of Sterne is found merely in the erratic form of Hippel's works. His best thoughts were borrowed from Kant, whose lectures he had attended. The eccentricity of Sterne was more closely imitated in 'Tobias Knaut,' a strange romance, at one time falsely ascribed to Wieland, who did however write a favourable review of it. The author, JOHANN KARL WEZEL, who wrote several other fictions and some plays, was afflicted, in 1786, with a delusion of the most extraordinary nature. He placed over a series of his own works in his library the inscription *Opera Dei Wezelii*, retired from society into profound solitude, and remained in this state of mind until his death, which took place in 1819. It was characteristic of the times that one of Wezel's works was ascribed to Goethe.

Many examples might be quoted from the novelists and romance writers, of morbid thought and sentiment, of license supposing itself to be liberty, and of extravagance mistaken for a proof of genius. The chief characteristic of numerous productions in prose-fiction was their total want of union with practical life and its realities. The words sobriety and moderation, when applied to literature were in these times regarded as severe terms of reproach. One of the most extravagant and absurd fictions, 'the Adventures of Baron Münchhausen,' may be named here, because its authorship has been falsely ascribed to the poet Bürger. The

true author, RUDOLF ERICH RASPE (1737-94) was a librarian who, after committing a robbery at Cassel, escaped in 1775 to London, where he wrote in English, beside other books, the above-named extravaganza, which was translated into German by Burger in 1787.

In leaving the department of prose-fiction and passing to that of didactic prose, we may mention a narrative writer whose works, though partly imaginative, were doubtless founded on realities. JOHANN HEINRICH JUNG, otherwise known as STILLING, the son of a poor tailor and schoolmaster, was born in 1740. After enduring many privations, he went to Strassburg, where he became acquainted with Goethe, from whom he probably received some help in the authorship of the book entitled 'Heinrich Stilling's Youth'. It was so successful that it was soon followed by several other stories of the same class, all mostly founded on the early experiences of the writer. There may be some doubt where fact ends and fiction begins in these stories, but the individuality of several of the characters introduced leaves no doubt of their reality. The village pastor who studies alchemy, and becomes melancholy in his old age; his opposite, the surly and proud parson who keeps a ferocious dog, and calls his parishioners clodhoppers and boors; Johann Stilling, the genius of the family, who ponders long on the quadrature of the circle, and grandfather Stilling who, in extreme old age, climbs cherry-trees and helps to thatch cottages; these are no literary inventions, but true recollections of the author's youthful days. The trust in Divine Providence so often expressed in the stories of the Stilling Family was the chief trait in the author's own character. His misfortunes served only to confirm his faith. When his failures in some other endeavours had led him to study opthalmic surgery, and when he became celebrated for his successes in operating for cataract, he felt sure that Heaven had led him to his choice of a profession. Though a Pietist, he was neither narrow nor bigoted. With regard to both his breadth of sympathy and his childlike credulity, he might be classed with another of Goethe's early friends, the eccentric mystic, pietist, gossip, preacher, patriot and physiognomist, Lavater.

JOHANN KASPAR LAVATER, born in 1741 at Zürich, was an enthusiastic preacher, who gained his literary reputation chiefly by his treatise on the supposed science of 'Physiognomy'. His

lively and declamatory style and his firm belief in his own skill in detecting the characters of men made his book amusing. As the shrewd satirist Lichtenberg said, 'Lavater could find more sense in the noses of several authors than the public could find in all their books'. He was as hardy in his assertions as in fulfilling his duties as a pastor and a patriot. When Zürich was occupied by French troops, Lavater preached boldly against the tyranny of the Directory, and published the substance of his discourses. He was engaged in reproving the violence of the soldiery in the streets of that town, in 1799, when he was shot by a French grenadier. The patriot's sufferings were severe, and he was not released by death until 1801. It was characteristic of the times that Lavater, on account of his enthusiastic piety, was suspected of being associated with the Jesuits. No charge could be more absurd. His errors belonged to the head and not to the heart. He was exceedingly credulous and was fond of gossip. His religious works, of which an indescribable treatise called 'Pontius Pilate' is the chief, are written in a fluent but incoherent style. Perhaps the most amusing of all his books is his (so-called) 'Private Diary,' published in 1772, full of confessions of such sins as wasting his time on light literature and in gossiping, followed, here and there, by such a reflection as, 'Do you call this living for eternity?' Lavater was acquainted with almost all the leading literary men of his times, except Lessing, and loved to give aid and encouragement to every good movement. He was, in short, a fanatic utterly destitute of the passion of hatred, and, if only on that account, would deserve to be remembered. This pious man was made a butt of ridicule by a clever and humorous writer, already named, GEORGE LICHTENBERG (1742-99) author of a commentary on the works of our great painter Hogarth. Lichtenberg's chief studies were scientific, and his light and fragmentary essays were merely his recreations. 'I once lived,' he says, 'in a house where one of the windows looked into a narrow shady lane running from one street to another. There I noticed that passengers, on stepping out of the strong daylight of the street into the dusky little thoroughfare, would suddenly change their expression. The man who had been smiling in the street would look grave when he stepped into the shade of the lane, or the demure tradesman would smile slyly, as if he had just gained the advantage in a bargain. Here was a puzzle for Lavater. Would he trust the face in the

street or the face in the lane?' This may serve as a specimen of the satire levelled against Lavater's new science of physiognomy. He certainly deserved ridicule, for nothing could be more presumptuous and arbitrary than many of his assertions; for example, the following on the features of Jesuits:—

Let a Jesuit disguise himself as he may, a skilful physiognomist will easily detect him by three signs—the forehead, the nose, and the chin. The first is generally boldly convex and not angular, but rather capacious; the nose is commonly large, more or less Roman, and has a strong cartilage; the chin is rounded and prominent. . . . It is a remarkable fact that among so many Jesuits who are men of great erudition, you will hardly find one truly philosophical head.

Among the writers of criticism who were associated with Herder and Goethe two may be mentioned, with regard rather to their personal influence than to the value of their writings. JOHANN GEORG SCHLOSSER, born in 1739, the friend and brother-in-law of Goethe, edited a critical journal published at Frankfort (in 1772 and afterwards) to which Herder and Goethe were contributors. JOHANN HEINRICH MERCK, born in 1741, maintained an extensive correspondence with the chief literary men of his times, and exercised the influence of a teacher over his junior friend Goethe, on whom he impressed one maxim, never forgotten—that a man of genius needs education. Merck was very unfortunate in his domestic and financial affairs in the later years of his life, and perished by his own hand in 1791.

Of the merits of the greatest among didactic authors in these times, IMMANUEL KANT, born in 1724 at Königsberg, no adequate estimate can be given in these outlines of general literature. His metaphysical doctrines belong to a closely connected system of reasonings begun by Hume and ended, as some writers have said, by Hegel. By the publication of his lectures on morals and æsthetics, Kant made a great impression on the general literature of the decennium following 1781. In opposition to the doctrine that would base all morality upon calculations of utility, he asserted the authoritative character of the moral principle in the conscience of man. It is, as he contended as superior to all our likings and our interests, as the law that rules the solar system is superior to the masses which it governs. 'Two things,' said Kant, 'fill the soul with wonder and reverence, increasing evermore as I meditate more closely upon them; the starry heavens above me,

## ERRATA.

Page 148, line 7, *for* HOFFMARSWALDAU, *read* HOFFMANNSWALDAU
„ 205, „ 22, „ Welfenbuttle, *read* Wolfenbüttel
„ 228, „ 4, „ HAMMAN, *read* HAMANN
„ 256, „ 21, „ Ilmaneau, *read* Ilmenau

# INDEX OF NAMES.

MOZ



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SAN

# SUBJECTS AND TITLES OF BOOKS.

NOTE.—*The figures of the page in the following index apply for the most part to the topics in the body of the work. The titles of books are referred to the names of the authors given in the first index.*