

LUDWIG'S ZWISCHEN HIMMEL UND ERDE

Edward Meyer.

Heath's Modern Language Series

Zwischen Himmel und Erde

VON

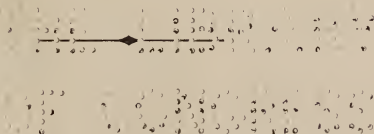
Otto Ludwig

EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

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PREFACE

WHEN, a little over a decade ago, the present naturalistic school of writers arose in Germany, and its zealous propagandists so vociferously asserted the advent of a new drama and a new novel, serious students of German literature thought of Friedrich Hebbel and Otto Ludwig, and smiled with inner satisfaction, knowing that at last the ideas of these great artists of half a century ago had begun to dawn upon the laity. This is not the place to discuss the relative merits of the first real, consistent naturalists in German literature and their modern inconsistent epigones vacillating between naturalism, realism and symbolism; suffice it to say that the best historians and critics of modern German literature are agreed that Hauptmann has not yet produced a naturalistic drama comparable with Hebbel's *Maria Magdalena*, nor Sudermann a realistic novel equal to Ludwig's *Zwischen Himmel und Erde*.

Of its kind *Zwischen Himmel und Erde* (1856) certainly stands unsurpassed in German literature. Paul Heyse, the master of the German *Novelle*, wrote to Otto Ludwig after reading it: „Wie wenig von dem, was ich Ihrer Novelle verdanke, wird Ihnen aus diesen Zeilen entgegensehen. Und doch war sie . . . wochenlang unser Gespräch und verleidete uns außer den Seldwylern¹ alles andre, was sich für Roman oder Novelle ausgeben wollte. . . . Ich kann mich noch jetzt, wenn ich der Höhepunkte Ihres Werkes gedenke, sogar physisch auf die Erschütterung zurückbesinnen, mit der mich das wunderbare Schicksal anrührte. Wie Orgelmusik, in welche sich vom Chor herunter Posaunen mischen, durchdröhnte mich's feierlich und ge-

¹ Gottfried Keller: *Die Leute von Seldwyla*.

waltſam und melodifch zugleich. Vergleichen iſt wohl in Proſa nie erſchaffen worden.“ Richard Meyer, the beſt hiſtorian of modern German literature, ſays: „Der prächtige Roman, ‚Zwiſchen Himmel und Erde,‘ iſt ſein reiſteſ und ſein größtes Werk. . . . Die deutſche Litteratur hat nicht viel, was dieſem Werk an die Seite zu ſtellen wäre. Wunderbar iſt die Beherrſchung der Sprache. . . . Meiſterhaft iſt die Handlung geführt . . . Ruhig, ernſt ſchreitet die Erzählung fort, von kleinen Aufhaltspunkten wirkungsvoll unterbrochen: . . . wie geſchloſſen, wie ganz aus einem Guß ſich dieſes Wunderwerk inmitten der zerfließenden oder zuſammengeſtopften Romanproduktion Deutschlands ausnimmt. . . .“

It ſeemed down-right ſacrilege to cut out even a ſingle word of this maſterpiece, but it was neceſſary to do ſo in order to bring it within the compaſs of an ordinary text-book. The editor, however, has left out as little as poſſible (about 30 pages in all, moſtly of technical matters regarding the ſlater's trade) and has endeavored to omit nothing eſſential to the underſtanding and appreciation of the ſtory.

The text is taken from the definitive edition, *Otto Ludwig's Geſammelte Schriften*, in ſix volumes, by Adolf Stern and Eric Schmidt (Fr. Wilh. Grunow, Leipzig, 1891), but modified to conform with the moſt recent changes in German orthography. A liſt of the moſt important works upon Ludwig is appended; ſtudents deſiring more detailed bibliographical data are reſpectfully referred to Meyer's *Grundriſs*.

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E. S. M.

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INTRODUCTION

OTTO LUDWIG

OTTO LUDWIG was born and bred in the heart of Germany, in Thüringen, „das Herz und die Seele des Vaterlandes.“ This province, „dreifach segend, fagend, sangberühmt,“ has always been the home of German legend, poetry and music. As Voss says in the *Luise*, it is a land, „wo jeglicher Bauer Musik weiß.“ Lying midway between the sombre, realistic North and the sunny, idealistic South, its inhabitants have the characteristics of both. They are at once sturdy, matter-of-fact realists and dreamy, out-of-the-world idealists. Their country has been the scene of the most realistic fact as well as the most idealistic fiction. To the same beautiful castle, the Wartburg near Eisenach, Tannhäuser is fabled to have returned from the enchanted Venusberg, and Luther really did make his way from the momentous Diet of Worms; the former to give rise to the finest fiction, the ideal legend of the great masterpiece of modern art, Wagner's *Tannhäuser*; the latter to forge himself the greatest fact, the real truth of modern life, the freedom of the human intellect, the inalienable enfranchisement of the individual. And this land has been the garden of both the luxuriant Blütezeiten of German literature. About the year 1200 the Landgraf Hermann von Thüringen gathered around him at Eisenach the great poets of the first period, Heinrich von Veldeke, Wolfram von Eschenbach, Walter von der Vogelweide, and perhaps Hartmann von Aue; six hundred

years later the Grossherzog Karl August those of the second period, Goethe, Wieland, Herder, and Schiller at Weimar.

Otto Ludwig was a typical son of Thüringen, a poet and a musician. He was also at once a realist and an idealist; he was practically the first realist in German literature, and the last idealist in German life; a realist in art, an idealist in life. He was born February 12, 1813, at Eisfeld, a small industrious, conservative and yet decidedly democratic town, situated in the southern part of Thüringen on the Werra in a beautiful and peacefully secluded valley. He came of a well-to-do and respected family. His father, who was a lawyer by profession and had studied at the universities of Erlangen and Jena, became the *Stadtsyndicus* of Eisfeld; Otto called him „einen schroff ehrlichen, bis zum Eigensinn festen, innerlich aber zarten und weichen Mann.“ His mother, Sophie Christiane Otto, was the daughter of a rich merchant and a woman of fine culture. Both parents were artistic; the father wrote and published a volume of lyric poems; the mother was an excellent musician.

The father possessed the best house in town, as well as a fine summer home with a large garden on the outskirts. Unfortunately, he was much annoyed at the end of his life by unjust accusations of extravagance in office. In 1822 a great fire destroyed almost the entire town, causing great loss to the father. Not only was his house completely destroyed, but also the town treasury-box was robbed in the four days' conflagration and confusion. After replacing all the stolen money from his private means, the father was left with little or nothing save the summer house and garden. He died a broken and embittered man in 1825.

Otto, the third born of four children (of whom he alone grew to maturity), was named for and brought up by his mother. He was a frail, nervous, imaginative child, who needed the utmost care. His devoted mother simply worshiped the tender boy and early fed his eager curiosity with tales from the dramas

of Shakspeare. She also gave him excellent instruction in music, teaching him most of the sonatas of Mozart.

His regular, or rather, irregular education was almost entirely autodidactic. After some private tutoring by his father's secretary, he entered the *Stadtschule* in 1824. Here he paid little attention to his studies, but read omnivorously, especially the dramas of Goethe and Schiller, of Tieck and Hoffmann. It is noteworthy that he preferred the latter (romanticists) to the former (classicists). With several of his companions he was soon acting various scenes from the many romantic dramas of his favorite authors, as well as from some manuscript plays of his grandfather, which he had found in the garret. These soon led him to improvisation and imitation in little romantic plays, the heroes of which were usually robber knights. At the same time he was greatly attracted to and much engrossed by the popular operas, Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* and Weber's *Der Freischütz*, in amateur performances of which he took part. He carried on his musical studies with such zest and devotion that he was pronounced a finished artist at fourteen by his able instructor, Cantor Morgenroth, who had formed a trio of Otto, Karl Schaller and Jacob Beer.

After four years in school at home his uncle, who owned a store in Eisfeld, wished to take Otto into his business; but the mother decided to send him to the *Gymnasium* in the neighboring city of Hildburghausen, where he spent the year 1828. Here again he devoted himself more to music and poetry than to study. Finally his uncle refused him further support and he was thus forced to return to Eisfeld and enter the uncle's store as a clerk. He was conscientious in his duties, but proved inefficient. Very fortunately the uncle allowed him plenty of time to pursue his studies in music with his intimate and life-long friend Schaller.

When the devoted mother died of consumption in 1831, Otto felt so uncomfortable at home, his uncle having taken in a shrewish housekeeper, that he left Eisfeld for Saalfeld,

where he entered the *Lyceum* in 1832. Here he overworked himself severely in vain efforts to make up his neglected education. The formal and pedantic restraint of the school also was repugnant to him. All at sea with himself, he became desperately dejected and fell very ill. He sought to soothe his over-tasked nervous system by long walks in the great forests about, but he could not get away from the poetic visions of his vivid imagination which now clamored incessantly for expression. While in Saalfeld he republished his father's book of poems with many corrections and additions of his own: *Gedichte von Ernst Ludwig und Otto Ludwig*.

Despairing in physical exhaustion and mental dejection of his poetic talent, he returned at Christmas, 1833, to his uncle in Eisfeld and decided to become a musician. Soon restored to good health again, he spent the year 1834, the happiest of his life as he afterwards told Auerbach, in his own garden-house with Schaller, devoting all his time to music and recreation. Here, romantic as the young Rousseau and divinely lazy as Eichendorf's *Taugenichts*, he led a very idyllic life, roaming the beautiful valleys by day and playing his grand piano by night. He was ever passionately fond of nature and loved his favorite haunts as if they were living beings. „Es ist seltsam, daß die Natur für mich personifiziert ist, daß ich nicht nur in ihr lebe, sondern wie ein Mensch mit dem andern, Gedanken austauschend, nicht bloß empfangend, und Gefühle, und zwar so, daß mir einzelne Plätze förmlich zum Individuum werden.“ Schaller says he often ran and shouted for joy when wandering through the wood. Nevertheless he now studied music zealously, and planned and partly composed several operas in the style of Mozart. It is interesting to note that, like Wagner, he wrote his own texts. Unfortunately almost all his compositions remained fragmentary, as indeed did his whole life-work. Even at this early period of his development, his imagination was so vivid and his mind so active that he could scarcely hold himself in restraint long enough to draw up plans, — to say nothing of

executing them. Although music was now uppermost in his thoughts, nevertheless the poetic impulse often asserted itself in the form of several ballads and plans for dramas.

Three years spent thus, summers in his garden-house, winters with his uncle, brought forth nothing but plans, among which the more interesting poetical ones were a long ode on music *Polyhymnia*, a novel cycle *Octavian*, a Norse epic *Svanhildur*, a tragedy *Agnes Bernauer*. Finally he produced in the amateur theatre at Eisfeld, of which he was dramatic poet and music director, a Tyrolean opera, *Die Geschwister* (1837). It was successful and gave him much-needed satisfaction and courage. But he could not get either *Die Geschwister*, or a second opera, *Die Köhlerin*, accepted in any of the larger German cities to which he sent the manuscripts. The court music director Grund in Meiningen, to whom Ludwig sent the latter opera, saw unmistakable marks of musical talent in it, however, and commended the young composer to the Duke, who after inviting Ludwig to Meiningen, offered him an allowance with which to go to Leipzig and study music for three years under Mendelssohn.

When Ludwig went to Leipzig in October, 1839, he soon saw for himself what Mendelssohn told him, that he was nearly half a century behind the age in music. He had schooled himself in Haydn and Mozart, knew little or nothing of Beethoven (†1827) and had never heard of Schumann. Naturally enough, Mendelssohn advised him to stop composing until he should at least become acquainted with modern music. Ludwig soon saw also that he could learn nothing from Mendelssohn, since their natures were poles apart; with Schumann, unfortunately, he never came in contact. Dejected and living in the utmost isolation, he was again very ill. He let his music study drop altogether and devoted himself again to poetic plans — epic, lyric, dramatic, even satiric. It is extremely interesting to note that he even anticipated the idea of the music-drama later so gloriously realized by Richard

Wagner. „Wenn man nun wirklich eine neue Form der Oper versuchte, eine eng dramatische, rouladen- und tiradenfremd, nicht aufhaltend am unrechten Orte, sodaß am Ende der Zuschauer nicht wüßte, ob er ein Drama oder eine Oper gesehen.“

Of his many literary plans he finished only a few poems and a short story which, however, no publisher would accept, since it seemed too simple fare for the public palate. In his ideas of literature Ludwig now saw that he was even farther removed from his contemporaries than in his ideals of music. With Laube and Gutzkow he had even less in common than with Mendelssohn and Schumann. They seemed to him as artificial in their intricate, complex expression as he himself was natural, simple and direct. He claimed rightly that they all (Schumann should have been excepted) lacked what he was striving for, „das Naïve, Natürliche, Nächstste“; that they were „zu vornehm und ohne Herz.“ He could feel nothing but disgust for the Jungdeutschen, their Tendenzpoesie, and Tendenzkritik. In literature as in music he wanted neither affected originality nor artificial super-culture, but insisted upon the simple and natural, expressed in the simplest and most natural way. Now more at sea with himself and his surroundings than ever, — „ein halber Tragikus, ein halber Musikus“ — after another severe illness he returned home in October, 1840.

He remained in Eisfeld a little over a year, living in a rented room above a baker's shop to avoid contact with his uncle's shrewish wife. Here he decided to devote himself entirely to poetry, feeling that music was too vague and indefinite for his finally developed, very clear and definite ideas. „Doch genügt mir das Bage der Musik nicht mehr! Gestalten muß ich haben! . . . dieser plastische Trieb scheint das Entschiedenste in meiner Natur zu sein. Ich sehe es, in der Poesie muß ich meinen eignen Weg gehen.“ Much annoyed and disgusted with the petty parochial gossip which his manner of living (he was very irregular and irrational in his habits) naturally aroused in Eisfeld, he decided to return to Leipzig. Encouraged by Laube,

who received him kindly in Leipzig, Ludwig worked for a year upon his various poetic plans, and finally finished the drama upon Agnes Bernauer, which he called *Der Engel von Augsburg*. He went then to Dresden with great hopes of getting it accepted there. At the advice of his uncle he had sent the manuscript to a distant relative, the famous actress Karoline Bauer, who highly recommended the drama to the director of the court theatre. It was refused, however, for fear of giving offense to the related Bavarian house by bringing onto the stage one of the cruelest episodes in its annals.

Although much disappointed, the poet decided to remain in Dresden where his cousin had procured him the acquaintance of several artists and literati, whom he found congenial. From the spring of 1843 on, he lived in or near Dresden for the rest of his life. His uncle having died and left him some money, he was able to satisfy his great longing for close contact with nature by renting a charming little cottage in Nieder-Garsebach, about thirty miles out from Dresden, near Meissen. Here he lived a very idyllic life, roaming through the beautiful Triebischthal, thinking, reading and writing as the mood was on him. Here he also met and was betrothed to Emilie Winkler, who later became his wife. Encouraged by his fiancée's implicit faith in his poetic ideas, he worked hard at two dramas, *Friedrich II. von Preussen* (the prologue of which, *Die Torgauer Heide*, appeared in Laube's *Zeitung für die elegante Welt* in 1844) and *Die Rechte des Herzens*. But he could get nothing accepted by the theatres, although he spent several months of the winter 1844-45 again in Leipzig for that purpose. From Meissen in 1846 he sent the manuscript of the latter drama to the famous actor-manager Eduard Devrient, who was most enthusiastic over the play, but could not bring it out because the characters were Poles, against whom there was a strong prejudice in Dresden. He gave, however, a reading of the drama before his large circle of friends and thus gained for Ludwig a host of enthusiastic admirers.

Inspired by this first recognition of his genius, the poet recast his *Engel von Augsburg* and submitted it to Devrient who did not care for it at all. When next in Dresden, in 1847, Ludwig went to Devrient with two plans, one a tragedy on a ballad by Bürger, *Des Pfarrers Tochter zu Taubenhain*, to be called *Die Pfarrrose*, and an original forest tragedy called at various times *Die Waldschützen*, *Die Waldtragödie*, *Das Jagdrecht*, *Wilm Berndt* (finally *Der Erbförster*). Devrient was especially attracted by the latter and urged the poet to complete it at once. In Dresden at this time Ludwig met Gutzkow, who wished to produce his Polish drama, *Die Rechte des Herzens*, but found the prejudice still too strong. After two months of concert and theatre-going, Ludwig returned to Meissen-Niederfahre fired with enthusiasm for his *Erbförster* by a remarkable performance of Lessing's *Emilia Galotti* which he had attended. But, strange to say, he set his masterpiece soon aside to work at *Die Pfarrrose*, and a drama, *Fräulein von Scudery*, founded on Hoffmann's tale. Again ill and completely discouraged in the chaotic political crises of 1848-49,¹ he thought of abandoning literature altogether and becoming a school-teacher, or of opening a lending library in Dresden. His finances were very low and he had little hope of replenishing them.

Fortunately his forest tragedy, *Der Erbförster*, now took firm hold on him again. He finished it finally and submitted it to Devrient, who at once called him to Dresden to make one or two changes. It was accepted at the court theatre in September, 1849, but appeared only after much delay and trouble March 4, 1850. The effect on the audience of this first realistic tragedy was very powerful, though almost all found the ending entirely too crass.

Encouraged by the signal success of his dramatic masterpiece on all the important stages of Germany, the poet at once

¹ Ludwig had great hopes of a united Germany and even expressed them in several political poems.

turned again to his many dramatic plans. In the summer of 1850 he recast the *Pfarrrose* again and called it *Die wilde Rose*. The following winter he was very ill, but worked hard at *Die Makkabäer*, a biblical tragedy, upon which he had been long at work, and which he finished in its first form the next summer. In January, 1852, he married and settled down in the Trompeterschlösschen in Dresden, after refusing an invitation from the Grand Duke of Sachsen-Weimar to take up his abode in Weimar. The next two years were the most satisfactory of his life in the simple little home his devoted wife made for him, although he felt keenly the loss of his friend Devrient, called to Karlsruhe. In the summer of 1852 at Strehlen he put *Die Makkabäer* into its final form; the following winter it was played all over Germany with great success. He then took up again his *Agnes Bernauer*, but abandoned it since two dramas appeared on the same subject, by Hebbel and Meyr respectively.

About this time Ludwig came in close contact with Auerbach, who turned him from the drama to the novel. In 1853-54 he wrote the delightful humoristic sketches of Thüringian provincial life, *Die Heiterethei*, which was published in the Feuilleton of the *Kölnische Zeitung* in 1855, and *Ihr Widerspiel*, as he called it, *Aus dem Regen in die Träufel*.¹ In 1855 he wrote his masterpiece, the novel *Zwischen Himmel und Erde*, which appeared the next year and made him even more famous than had his tragedy *Der Erbförster*.

The liberal König Max of Bavaria now gave the poet a stipend of 700 Gulden for one year. But in the midst of new dramatic plans on the subjects of *Agnes Bernauer*, *Genoveva*, *Marino Faliere*, *Wallenstein* and others, his malady, a partial paralysis of the lower body, began to cause him serious alarm. Utterly incapacitated to work for weeks at a time and foreseeing that he had not much longer to live, he began to brood too much over his plans, thereby aggravating his illness and in-

¹ Both were printed together at Frankfurt in 1857.

creasing his irresolution. He finally got a strange and fatal idea into his head. He thought that by a most careful and minute study of Shakspeare he could work out for himself a perfect technique, with which, in the hours free from his now almost incessant suffering, he could finish all his dramatic plans and put them into perfect form. This delusion proved fatal; he lost himself completely in his six years' incessant study of Shakspeare. Ill physically and mentally he bore his heavy burden manfully to the end, even with poverty staring him in the face. (The king's pension had been only for one year; he had been forced to sell his last little possession, the garden in Eisfeld also.) New inspiration and hope were given him in 1859 by the great success in Vienna of *Die Makka-bäer*, for which the Schiller prize was awarded him in 1861. But he was too ill to work; he suffered severely and almost incessantly for the next four years.

As his end drew near, Ludwig felt more than ever the intense desire to finish his many dramatic plans. Especially did he long for surcease of suffering enough to complete two dramas on Albrecht von Wallenstein and Maria Stuart, wherein he wished to show the difference of his conception of the drama from that of Schiller. The forms of Agnes, Marino Faliere, Wallenstein and Maria Stuart gave him no peace by day or night. „Die Seelen auß meinen Dramenplänen stehen nachts an meinem Bett und fordern ihr Leben von mir. Dem muß ich ein Ende machen. Ich bin zu krank, ich kann den Seelen ihren Leib nicht mehr schaffen.“ Finally death came to him while at work upon a tragedy on Tiberius Gracchus, February 25, 1865.

His life was as simple and sincere, as strong and manly as his work. Tall, erect, noble and dignified, with a massive head and heavy beard, bright eyes and a kindly smile, he was a perfect picture of a German patriarch. Had he but realized that his forte was epic, not dramatic composition, he would have been a happier man and a greater poet. But he was so passionately devoted to the drama that all other composition

seemed to him insipid in comparison, — and yet at times he knew that *Zwischen Himmel und Erde* was his masterpiece. And so he burned out his fine genius in feverish uncertainty, planning and replanning, writing and rewriting, never satisfied. Not for a moment, however, did he waver in his artistic convictions. Like Keller and Auerbach he felt nothing but contempt for the literary charlatans about him sacrificing truth for success. Alas he was almost too exacting, too earnest, too severe in his demands upon himself; he brooded himself to death over his ideas and ideals. He lived, breathed and had his whole being in artistic ideals, however realistic they were. This realist was really the most ideal of idealists. His personality was — more perhaps than any of his productions — a work of art, a poem.

OTTO LUDWIG AS POET

Otto Ludwig lived his life in such simple, idyllic isolation, that he never came enough in contact with the real, complex world to grasp its great problems. However much he longed to know life, his temperament kept him aloof from it. Lack of self-confidence, as he himself said, was his besetting sin. He who wanted to write great world-tragedies never really got beyond the parochial idyl. Unfortunately with all his anxious introspection he did not know himself and never learned his own limitations. He struggled arduously all his life to do what he was quite incapable of doing and accomplished, almost unconsciously, in a few weeks what he alone was capable of accomplishing. The world-drama *Die Makkabäer* is a failure; the Thuringian short story *Zwischen Himmel und Erde* is a masterpiece. It would have been well for him had he only recognized his limitations in literature as he did in music. He could not understand Mendelssohn, who was for him too intricate and complex! — but thought to systematize and emulate Shakspeare!!

Otto Ludwig considered himself a naturalist. The distinctions that he made between idealism, naturalism, and realism are the best possible. „Der Naturalist nennt wahr, was historisch, d. h. was als geschehen beglaubigt ist; der Idealist, was nie geschieht und, wie er meint, immer geschehen sollte; der Realist, was immer geschieht. — Dem Naturalisten ist es mehr um die Mannigfaltigkeit zu thun, dem Idealisten mehr um die Einheit.“ This cult of manifoldness in description and motivation, to the detriment of artistic unity, is characteristic of all his work and led him later from naturalism into realism. He was as little in sympathy with Schiller's idealism as with Tieck's romanticism and thus was somewhat allied with *Jung-Deutschland*, which, however, he heartily hated. He protested as strongly against Schiller's fine speeches as against the problems of the *Jungdeutschen*. He hated all that was not absolutely essential and true. And yet he was a thorough optimist who had no patience either with Schiller's idealistic pessimism nor the *Jungdeutschen* realistic scepticism. He believed in the union of life and poetry; in fact, that life is poetry and that poetry should be only real life, and that the divine purpose of art is to give us enhanced „Liebe und Lust zum Leben.“ „Die Kunst soll sich nicht vermessen, klüger zu sein als die volle Pracht des Lebens.“

But this poet, who tried to be an objective realist in execution, was a subjective idealist in conception. His description of the process is one of the most perfect any poet has ever given. „Es geht eine Stimmung voraus, eine musikalische, die wird mir zur Farbe, dann sehe ich Gestalten, eine oder mehrere in irgend einer Stellung und Gebärde für sich oder gegen einander, und dies wie einen Kupferstich auf Papier von jener Farbe, oder, genauer ausgedrückt, wie eine Marmorstatue oder plastische Gruppe, auf welche die Sonne durch einen Vorhang fällt, der jene Farbe hat. . . . Wunderlicherweise ist jenes Bild oder jene Gruppe gewöhnlich nicht das Bild der Katastrophe, manchmal nur eine charakteristische Figur in irgend einer pathetischen Stellung; an diese schließt sich aber sogleich eine ganze

Reihe, und vom Stücke erfahre ich nicht die Fabel, den novellistischen Inhalt zuerst, sondern bald nach vorwärts, bald nach dem Ende zu von der erst gesehenen Situation aus schießen immer neue plastisch-mimische Gestalten und Gruppen an, bis ich das ganze Stück in allen seinen Scenen habe; dies alles in großer Hast, wobei mein Bewußtsein ganz leidend sich verhält, und eine Art körperlicher Beängstigung mich in Händen hat. . . . Nun findet sich zu den Gebärden auch die Sprache. Ich schreibe auf, was ich aufschreiben kann, aber wenn mich die Stimmung verläßt, ist mir das Aufgeschriebene nur ein toter Buchstabe.“ His conceptions were virtually hallucinations and had little or nothing to do with real life. Figures and scenes stood often before his mind with such vividness that he thought them real. His heroic, but for the most part futile, efforts to reproduce these visions in tangible scenes from real life, herein lies his tragic failure. He was never satisfied, though he made a hundred plans of one scene; the visions were so vivid that any and all reproduction seemed but colorless sketches in comparison. He had the primal intuition of the world's greatest poets, without sufficient insight into life to realize his visions. But one man in our day has had both, — Richard Wagner. Like him Otto Ludwig felt all the inspiration of art (not of the disjointed, lifeless arts, be it well understood), but he could not express himself. After years of most arduous and incessant search for the secret of expression, he thought to find it in Shakspeare, and believed himself saved where he was irrecoverably lost. Shakspeare's life is not our life; his most objective technique could not possibly have profited such a subjective dreamer as Ludwig even if he had learned it thoroughly. The study of Shakspeare, which he intended only as a means to an end, became an end in itself. The little creative power left him was soon completely sacrificed. Even Goethe had feared the fascinating omnipotence of Shakspeare; how could Ludwig help but succumb? Had he sought his technique, as Goethe did, as Shakspeare did, and every great poet has done, in the real life of his times and of all time, he would have found it.

But, like Grillparzer, he turned away from life, and life took a terrible revenge upon him.

Otto Ludwig began his literary career under the fantastic-satiric influence of Tieck und Hoffmann with the tale *Die wahrhaft Geschichte von den drei Wünschen*, in which, however, there are decided naturalistic tendencies. In his next serious story, *Maria*, naturalism prevails; in *Aus einem alten Schulmeisterleben* he strikes his realistic, psychological style. Then he suddenly left epic for dramatic composition; unfortunately, for in the drama his subtle psychology led him too much into detail. Thus for nearly thirty years, he racked his brains to find a psychological justification for the ruthless murder of Agnes Bernauer. He tortured himself in vain with various solutions for a problem of which there could be none. His antipode the pessimist Hebbel, whom the optimist Ludwig heartily hated, grasped and depicted the subject quickly and graphically in his tragedy, *Agnes Bernauer*, where the heroine is just what she really was, simply the victim of political necessity. Where Hebbel with his broad use of essentials alone in characters and scenes succeeded so well, Ludwig with his minute over-elaboration of psychological details could not but fail.

His earlier unproduced dramas are of little importance except for the naturalistic tendencies gradually developing into realism. *Hanns Frei* is a merry comedy of old Nürnberger life, somewhat in the manner of Hans Sachs. *Die Pfarrrose* is a tragedy upon Bürger's ballad, *Des Pfarrers Tochter zu Taubenhain*, in the style of Iffland, but showing a strange mixture of Tieck's romantic manner. *Die Rechte des Herzens* is a piece of Polish intrigue and crime in which modern realism prevails. *Das Fräulein von Scudery* is a dramatization of Hoffmann's famous tale, and is remarkable for the character of the goldsmith Cardillac drawn with great realistic power.

Ludwig's idea of the drama was nearly that which Ibsen has so deftly developed in our day: „Die günstigste Handlung

ist ein einfacher Stoff, in dem eine nicht zu große Anzahl durch Gemüthsart, Intentionen u. s. w. scharf kontrastirter Personen vom Anfang bis zum Ende auf einen möglichst engen Raum zusammengedrängt sind. . . . Ein gutes Stück ist eigentlich nichts als eine Katastrophe und ihre sorgfältige Motivierung durch Charaktere und Situationen.“ But Ludwig, like many another naturalist, as, for example Hauptmann, although he saw most clearly certain persons and scenes in his dramatic plans, could not put them well together. To psychological manifoldness he usually sacrificed dramatic unity, just as Hauptmann does. Of his many dramas and dramatic plans but two are vital.

With *Der Erbförster* (1849), a tragedy in five acts and in prose, Otto Ludwig cast aside all stage convention and produced the first consistent, realistic drama in German literature. His ideas and their effect upon the first audience are best told in his own words: „Das Stück ist eine Kriegserklärung gegen die Unnatur und konventionellen Manieren der jetzigen Theaterpoesie sowohl als Schauspielkunst. Ich habe alle die Kunststücken, mit denen man das Publikum packt, aus deren immer neuer Zusammensetzung man seit zwanzig Jahren, man könnte sagen seit sechzig Jahren, Schau-, Trauer- und Lustspiele zusammengewürfelt, darin über Bord geworfen; Natur, Wahrheit, schöne — nicht zu enggenommene — Wirklichkeit sind meine Kunststücke gewesen, die ich angewandt. Es wird zu kämpfen geben, denn alle dramatischen Handwerker hab' ich gegen mich, sogar einen großen Theil des verdorbenen, verweichlichten Publikums; aber namentlich fallen mir die bessern unter den Schauspielern zu. . . . Der erste Eindruck war ein merkwürdiger. Diese Totenstille, die ersten Aufzüge enthusiastisch applaudiert, bei den letzten eine förmliche Angst, sonst das Lärmen der Aufstehenden, schon wenn das Zeichen zum Fallen des Vorhanges gegeben; diesmal noch nachher zwei bis drei Minuten, wo man jeden einzelnen Atemzug hören konnte; es war, als hätten sie vergessen, daß Komödie gewesen und diese nun aus war. Die Schauspieler übertrafen sich alle selbst, sie spielten mit Begeisterung, besonders Debrient, mein erster Verbündeter. In diesem Spiele war auch nichts Konventionelles, Herkömm-

liches, so wenig als in der Dichtung, nur schlichte und doch so furchtbare Wahrheit." But Ludwig's realism is not by any means as crass as that of Hauptmann; it contains just that indefinite atmosphere of individual interpretation so essential to real poetry; Laube called it romanticism, „eine realistische Kraft welche mit Romantif verziert war." The *Erbförster* is Ludwig's most characteristic drama; its theme is the conflict between man's natural feeling for justice and the written law. The problem is well worked out in the person of the honest, blunt, old forester and his struggle against unjust laws. The characterization is excellent and the *milieu* perfect. Several scenes are superbly drawn, but there is also over-elaboration of detail, and the conclusion is entirely too crass. The motivation too is inconsistent, and much of the action improbable. As in all of the poet's dramatic work, the central figure and the main scene could not be better, but all else is poor in comparison. This was inevitable from his manner of conceiving and working out his ideas. So vivid was his vision of the incipient character and situation that all else was of necessity obscure. A finer figure than that of the old forester has seldom been drawn, nor a more dramatic situation than where he is forced to cry out, „Ich habe unrecht!" but the minute psychological introspection is wearisome on the stage, and the final murder of the daughter, revolting.

So, too, in *Die Makkabäer* (1852) we find one great character, Judah, and one great scene, his defiance of the Assyrians in the second act, but all the rest is too detailed and confused. Unfortunately the poet's pronounced naturalistic, almost realistic ideas and ideals never were and never can be suited to the drama, least of all to such subjects as he chose for dramatic exposition. Like many another German dramatic poet, Ludwig completely lost himself in his theories.

Over-elaboration of detail and too subtle psychological introspection are the salient faults of Otto Ludwig apparent in all his dramatic work. He was well aware of this at times, for

he chided himself with his „*Kleinpsychologie . . . eine sich immer steigende Individualisierung des schon Individuellen.*“ But these very faults, these realistic ideas which spoiled him as a dramatist, stood him in good stead as a novelist, especially when he limited himself to the local life he knew so well. No better insight into real provincial life has ever been given than in *Die Heiterethei* (1854) and *Zwischen Himmel und Erde* (1856). With the utmost art each least detail of person and place is worked out into an almost perfect picture of Thuringian life, in the former, comic; in the latter, tragic.

ZWISCHEN HIMMEL UND ERDE

Otto Ludwig wrote *Zwischen Himmel und Erde* in the summer and autumn of 1855, and dedicated it to Auerbach. It was originally intended for Keil's *Gartenlaube* in Leipzig. Since the editor considered it too long for his purpose, it was submitted to Cotta for the *Morgenblatt*, but was not accepted. At Auerbach's suggestion it was then given to Meidinger in Frankfurt for his new magazine. He was so impressed with it that he urged Ludwig to bring it out as a whole, and not piecemeal; so it was finally printed in Darmstadt (E. W. Leske) in the spring of 1856. It was at once very successful; a second edition appeared in 1858 and was followed by several others. Forty years ago it was one of the widest read books in the world's literature, translations having been made into almost all the European languages.

This novel is at once the author's best and most characteristic work and the one that will live the longest. It would be impossible to imagine a better picture of Thuringian town life than is given in this story. The characters have all the stubborn honesty and tenacity, the hidden passion and pride of the Thuringian folk. The story itself is intensely tragic and the style thoroughly realistic; the author has sought truth rather than beauty, which to him were not synonymous. „*Wahrheit*

ging mir von je über alle Schönheit." The central figure, about which the whole story turns, is the stern, well-to-do, old master-slater Nettenmair, who loves his honor and prominence, the reputation of his business and the respectability of his family more than life itself, and guards them with all the stubborn tenacity so characteristic of the German Biedermann. Even when ailing and blind he would not give up his authority. The two sons inherit his two principal traits: Apollonius, the passionate love for honor; Fritz, the equally passionate zeal for authority. These traits are developed to excess and finally dominate completely the brothers; the former becomes almost fanatically over-scrupulous; the latter sacrifices even his very soul for the appearance of authority. The two brothers are well characterized, perhaps a little too frequently, the former as a „Fiederchenfucher," the latter as „jovial" in all things. It was his reckless greed for personal aggrandizement which led Fritz to play his trusting, reticent brother false and steal from him Christiane, whom he deceives and crows into submission and silence. And when finally Fritz himself forces Apollonius to deprive him of the last vestige of authority in trade and home, he clings in the agony of despair to the last straw, the fiendish terrorizing of his wife; he would even murder his own brother rather than let go of this. (A more intense scene physically and psychically has perhaps never been depicted than the fatal one between the two brothers on the church-steeple, — between heaven and earth.) And then, when Fritz has met his just doom, Apollonius is too honest, though it should cost him his life, even to look upon Christiane with eyes other than those of a brother. Otto Ludwig himself wrote: „Die Schicksale beider Enden der Menschheit sind im Werke dargestellt, des Fribolen und des Angstlichen. . . . Ich zeigte in zwei Menschen die Extreme, zwischen denen es tausend Nuancen gibt, in deren Mitte das absolute Ideal liegt. Der Tod des Bruders wäre für tausend andre ein Glück gewesen, für Apollonius ist es kein. Seine zu große Gewissenhaftigkeit ist nahe daran, ebenso sein Verderben zu werden, als die Gewissen-

losigkeit das des Bruders wurde. Meine Absicht war, zu zeigen, wie jeder Mensch seinen Himmel sich fertig mache, wie seine Hölle."

The story is written in such a simple, inevitable style that it is at once convincing and inspiring. It must be admitted that the action is occasionally impeded by too close psychological introspection, but this can scarcely be considered a fault in a novel; certainly not in a novel of this kind where suspense is needed between the intense scenes. And how superb these scenes are!—the one already referred to; Fritz in the shed cutting the rope when Apollonius' raised lamp throws its light upon him; the old father calling Fritz to account for his brother's life upon the church steeple; Apollonius catching the hysterical Christiane in his arms; Apollonius extinguishing the fire! But to mention all the great scenes would be to give the whole of the wonderful story. It is all so great and so wonderful that it stands unsurpassed in German literature. And it is none the less great because its sphere is limited. Ludwig himself often said, and rightly, — „Des Herzens wahre Heimat ist die Enge." The underlying thought is that which the poet himself sought and found in his cottage near Meissen, — peace of soul and self-control. Like Grillparzer he thought and taught: —

„Eines nur ist Glück hienieden,
Eins: des Innern stiller Frieden
Und die schuldbefreite Brust!"