

GERMAN LITERATURE.

OPINIONS are divided respecting German literature. If we are to believe what is currently reported, and generally credited, there is, somewhere in New England, a faction of discontented men and maidens, who have conspired to love everything Teutonic, from Dutch skates to German infidelity. It is supposed, at least asserted, that these misguided persons would fain banish all other literature clean out of space; or, at the very least, would give it precedence of all other letters, ancient or modern. Whatever is German, they admire; philosophy, dramas, theology, novels, old ballads, and modern sonnets, histories, and dissertations, and sermons; but above all, the immoral and irreligious writings, which it is supposed the Germans are chiefly engaged in writing, with the generous intention of corrupting the youth of the world, restoring the worship of Priapus, or Pan, or the Pope,—it is not decided which is to receive the honor of universal homage,—and thus gradually preparing for the Kingdom of Misrule, and the dominion of Chaos, and “most ancient Night.” It is often charitably taken for granted, that the lovers of German works on Philosophy and Art amongst us, are moved thereto either by a disinterested love of whatever is German, or else, which is the more likely, by a disinterested love of evil, and the instigation of the devil, who, it is gravely said, has actually inspired several of the most esteemed writers of that nation. This German epidemic, we are told, extends very wide. It has entered the boarding-schools for young misses, of either sex, and committed the most frightful ravages therein. We have been apprised that it has sometimes seized upon a College, nay, on Universities, and both the Faculty and the Corporation have exhibited symptoms of the fatal disease. Colleges, did we say?

“No place is sacred, not the Church is free.”

* Specimens of Foreign Standard Literature, edited by GEORGE RIPLEY, Vol. VII., VIII., and IX., containing German Literature, translated from the German of Wolfgang Menzel, by C. C. FELTON; in Three Volumes. Boston: Hilliard, Gray and Co. 1840.

It has attacked clergymen, in silk and in lawn. The Doctors of Divinity fall before it. It is thought, that

“Fever and ague, jaundice and catarrh,
The grim-looking tyrant's heavy horse of war;
And apoplexies, those light troops of death,
That use small ceremony with our breath,”

are all nothing to the German epidemic. We meet men with umbrellas and over-shoes, men “shawled to the teeth,” and suppose they are prudent persons, who have put on armor against this subtle foe. Histories of this plague, as of the cholera, have been written; the public has often been called to defend itself from the enemy, and quarantine regulations are put in force against all suspected of the infection. In short the prudent men of the land, men wise to foresee, and curious to prevent evil, have not failed to advise the public from time to time of the danger that is imminent, and to recommend certain talismans, as effectual safeguards. We think a copy of the “Westminster Catechism,” or the “Confessions of Faith adopted by the Council of Trent,” or the “Athanasian Creed,” perhaps, if hung about the neck, and worn next the skin, might save little children, and perhaps girls nearly grown up, especially, if they read these amulets every morning, fasting. But a more important specific has occurred to us, which we have never known to fail, and it has been tried in a great many cases, in both hemispheres. The remedy is simple; it is a strong infusion of Dulness. Continued applications of this excellent nostrum, will save any person, we think, from all but very slight attacks of this epidemic. Certainly it will secure the patient from the worst form of the disease, — the philosophical frenzy, which it is said prevails in colleges, and among young damsels. We think it does not attack the pulpit. The other forms of the malady are mainly cutaneous, and easily guarded against.

It has often been matter of astonishment to us, that the guardians of the public welfare did not discover German literature when it first set foot in America, and thrust it back into the ocean; and we can only account for the fact of its extension here, from the greater activity of Evil in general. “Rank weeds do grow apace.” So this evil has grown up in the absence of our guardians, as the golden calf was made, while Moses was in the mount, fasting.

While the young men and maidens have been eating the German lotus, the guardians of the public weal have been “talking, or pursuing, or journeying, or peradventure, they slept, and must needs be awaked.” However this may be, they are now awake, and in full cry.

Now for our own part, we have never yet fallen in with any of these dangerous persons, who have this exaggerated admiration for whatever is Teutonic, still less this desire to overthrow Morality, and turn Religion out of the world. This fact may be taken as presumptive evidence of blindness on our part, if men will. We sometimes, indeed, meet with men, and women also, well read in this obnoxious literature; they are mostly, — yes, without a single exception, as we remember, — unoffending persons. They “gang their ain gait,” and leave others the same freedom. They have tastes of their own; scholarly habits; some of them are possessed of talent, and no contemptible erudition, judging by the New England standard. They honor what they find good, and to their taste, in German literature as elsewhere. Men and women, some of them are, who do not think all intellectual and æsthetic excellence is contained in a hundred volumes of Greek and Roman authors, profound and beautiful as they are. They study German Philosophy, Theology, Criticism, and Literature in general, as they would the similar works of any nation, for the good they contain. This, we think, is not forbidden by the Revised Statutes, or any other universal standard of right and wrong. Why should not a man study even Sanscrit Philosophy, if he will, and profit by it, in peace, if he can? We do not say there are no enthusiastic or fanatical admirers of this literature; nor, that there are none, who “go too far” in their admiration, — which means, in plain English, farther than their critic, — but that such persons are by no means common; so that there seems, really, very small cause for the panic, into which some good people have seen fit to fall. We doubt the existence, therefore, of this reputed faction of men and maidens, who design to reinstate Confusion on her throne.

But, on the other hand, we are told, — and partly believe it, — that there is a party of cool-headed, discreet, moderate, sound, and very respectable persons, who hate German literature. Of these we can speak from knowledge.

Most men have heard of them, for they have cried out like Bluebeard in the tale, "till all shook again." They are plenty as acorns in autumn, and may be had for the asking. This party has, to speak gently, a strong dislike to German literature, philosophy, and theology. Sometimes this dislike is founded on a knowledge of facts, an acquaintance with the subject, in which case no one will find fault; but far oftener it rests merely on prejudice,—on the most utter ignorance of the whole matter. Respecting this latter class of haters without knowledge, we have a few words to say. We have somewhere seen it written, "he that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is a folly and shame unto him." We commend it to the attention of these judges. They criticise German literature by wholesale and retail,—to adopt the ingenious distinction of Dr. Watts. They issue their writs, and have the shadow of some poor German brought into the court of their greatness, and pass sentence with the most speedy justice, never examining the evidence, nor asking a question, nor permitting the prisoner at the bar to say a word for himself, till the whole matter is disposed of. Before this honorable bench, Goethe, and Schleiermacher, and Schiller, and Arndt, and Kant, and Leibnitz, Henry Heine, and Jacob Böhme, Schelling of universal renown, and Schefer of Muskau in Nieder-Lausitz, and Hegel, and Strauss, with their aids and abettors, are brought up and condemned as mystics, infidels, or pantheists; in one word, as Germans. Thus the matter is disposed of by the honorable court. Now we would not protest against this method of proceeding, ancient as it is, and supported by precedents from the time of Jethro to General Jackson. Such a protest would be "a dangerous innovation," no doubt. We would have no exceptions from the general method made in favor of German letters. No literature was ever written into more than temporary notice, and certainly none was ever written down. German literature among us encounters just the same treatment the classic authors received at the hands of the middle ages. When those old sages and saints began to start out of the corners where night had overtaken them, men were alarmed at their strange faces and antique beards, and mysterious words. "What," said they, as they gaped on one another, in the parlor, the court, the

camp, or the church, with terror in their faces,— "What! study Greek and Roman letters! Greek and Roman philosophy? shall we men of the TENTH century, study authors who lived two thousand years ago, in an age of darkness? Shame on the thought! Shall we, who are Christians, and live in an age of light, look for instruction to Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, or Seneca, men from dark pagan times? It were preposterous! Let such works perish, or sink back to their original night."* So it goes with us, and it is said, "Shall we Americans, excellent Christians as we are, who live in a land of education, of righteousness, of religion, and know how to reconcile it all with our three millions of slaves; in the land of steamboats and railroads, we Americans, possessed of all needed intelligence and culture, shall we read the books of the Germans, infidels as they are? Germans, who dwell in the clouds, and are only fitted by divine grace to smoke tobacco and make dictionaries! Out upon the thought."

No doubt this decision is quite as wise as that pronounced so gravely by conservatives and alarmists of the middle ages. "Would you have me try the criminal before I pass sentence?" said the Turkish justice; "that were a waste of words and time, for if I should condemn him after examination, why not before, and so save the trouble of looking into the matter?" Certainly the magistrate was wise, and wherever justice is thus administered, the traditional complaint of the "law's delay" will never dare lift up its voice. Honor to the Turkish judge and his swift decision; long may it be applied to German literature. Certainly it is better that ninety-and-nine innocent persons should suffer outrageous torture, than that one guilty should escape. Why should not public opinion lay an embargo on German words, as on India crackers, or forbid their sale? Certainly it costs more labor to read them, than the many excellent books in the mother tongue. No doubt a ready reader

* The following anecdote is quite to the point: One day, in the year 1530, a French monk *said in the pulpit*, "a new language has been discovered, which is called Greek. You must take good heed, and keep out of its way. This language engenders all heresies. I see in the hands of many, a book written in this language. It is called the New Testament. It is a book full of thorns and vipers. As for the Hebrew language, all who study that become Jews immediately."—*Sismondi, Histoire des Francaise*, T. XVI. p. 364, cited in Michelet's *Hist. Luther*.

would go over the whole ninety-eight volumes of Sir Walter Scott in less time than he could plod through and master the single obstinate book of Kant's *Kritik of the Pure Reason*. Stewart, and Brown, and Reid, and Paley, and Thomas Dick, and Abercrombie, are quite easy reading. They trouble no man's digestion, though he read them after dinner with his feet on the fender. Are not these writers, with their illustrious progenitors, successors, and coadjutors, sufficient for all practical purposes? Why, then, allow our studious youth in colleges and log-cabins to pore over Leibnitz and Hegel till they think themselves blind, and the red rose yields to the white on their cheek?

In the name of good sense, we would ask if English literature, with the additions of American genius, is not rich enough without our going to the Hercynian forest, where the scholars do not think, but only dream? Not to mention Milton, and Shakspeare, and Bacon, — names confessedly without parallel in the history of thought, — have we not surpassed the rest of the world, in each department of science, literature, philosophy, and theology? Whence come the noble array of scientific works, that connect general laws with single facts, and reveal the mysteries of nature? Whence come the most excellent works in poetry, criticism and art? Whence the profound treatises on ethics and metaphysics? Whence the deep and wide volumes of theology, the queen of all sciences? Whence come works on the classics of Greece and Rome? Whence histories of all the chief concerns of man? Do they not all come, in this age, from England and our own bosom? What need have we of asking favors from the Germans, or of studying their literature? As the middle-age monks said of the classics, — *ANATHEMA SIT*. It is certainly right, that the ghost of terror, like Mr. Littlefaith in the story, should cross itself in the presence of such a spirit, and utter its *APAGE SATHANAS*. Such an anathema would, no doubt, crush the *Monadnock* — or a sugar-plum.

But let us come out of this high court of Turkish justice, and for a moment look German literature in the face, and allow it to speak for itself. To our apprehension, German literature is the fairest, the richest, the most original, fresh, and religious literature of all modern times. We say this

advisedly. We do not mean to say Germany has produced the greatest poetic genius of modern times. It has no Shakspeare, as the world has but one, in whom the Poetic Spirit seems to culminate, though it will doubtless rise higher in better ages. But we sometimes hear it said, admitting the excellence of two or three German writers, yet their literature is narrow, superficial, and poor, when compared with that of England. Let us look at the facts, and compare the two in some points. Classical taste and culture have long been the boast of England. There is a wealth of classical allusion in her best writers, which has an inexpressible charm, and forms the chief minor grace, in many a work of poetic art. Classical culture is the pride, we take it, of her two "ancient and honorable universities," and their spirit prevails everywhere in the island. The English scholar is proud of his "quantity," and the correctness of his quotations from Seneca and Demosthenes. But from what country do we get editions of the classics, that are worth the reading, in which modern science and art are brought to bear on the ancient text? What country nurtures the men that illustrate Homer, Herodotus, the *Anthology of Planudes*, and the dramatic poets? Who explain for us the antiquities of Athens, and write minute treatises on the law of inheritance, the castes, tribes, and manners of the men of Attica? Who collect all the necessary facts, and reproduce the ideas lived out, consciously or unconsciously, on the banks of the Eurotas, the Nile, or the Alpheus? Why, the Germans. We do not hesitate to say, that in the present century not a Greek or a Roman classic has been tolerably edited in England, except through the aid of some German scholar. The costly editions of Greek authors that come to us from Oxford and London, beautiful reprints of Plato, Aristotle, Aristophanes, Euripides, Sophocles, Æschylus, Herodotus, the Attic orators, and Plotinus; all these are the work of German erudition, German toil, German genius sometimes. The wealthy islanders, proud of their classic culture, furnish white paper and luminous type; but the curious diligence that never tires; the profound knowledge and philosophy which brings the whole light of Grecian genius to illuminate a single point; all this is German, and German solely. Did it not happen within ten years, that the translation of a German

work, containing some passages in Greek, incorrectly pointed in the original edition, and, therefore, severely censured at home, was about being published in Edinburgh, and no man could be found in the Athens of the North, and "no man in all Scotland," who could correctly accent the Greek words! The fact must be confessed. So the book was sent to its author, — a Professor of Theology, — and he put it into the hands of one of his pupils, and the work was done. These things are trifles, but a straw shows which way the stream runs, when a mill-stone would not. Whence come even the grammars and lexicons, of almost universal use in studying the ancient authors? The name of Reimer, and Damm, and Schneider, and Büttmann, and Passow, give the answer. Where are the English classical scholars in this country, who take rank with Wolf, Heyne, Schweighauser, Wytttenbach, Boeckh, Herrmann, Jacobs, Siebelis, Hoffmann, Siebenkis, Müller, Creutzer, Wellauer, and Ast? Nay, where shall we find the rivals of Dindorf, Schäfer, Stallbaum, Spitzner, Bothe, and Bekker, and a host more, for we have only written down those which rushed into our mind? What English name of the present century can be mentioned with the least of these? Not one. They labor, and we may enter into their labors, if we are not too foolish. Who write ancient history like Niehbühr, and Müller, and Schlosser? But for the Germans, the English would have believed till this day, perhaps, all the stories of Livy, that it rained stones, and oxen spoke, for so it was written in Latin, and the text was unimpeachable.

But some may say, these are not matters of primary concern; in things of "great pith and moment," we are superior to these Teutonic giants. Would it were so. Perhaps, in some of the physical sciences, the English surpass their German friends, though even here we have doubts, which are strengthened every month. One would expect the most valuable works on physical geography from England; but we are disappointed, and look in vain for any one to rival Ritter, or even Mannert. In works of general civil and political history in the present century, though we have two eminent historians in our own country, one of whom must take rank with Thucydides and Tacitus, Gibbon and Hume, England has nothing to equal the great work of Von Hammer, Wilkins, and Schlosser. Why need we mention the

German histories of inventions, of art, of each science, of classical education, of literature in general? Why name their histories of Philosophy, from Brucker down to Brandis and Michelet? In English, we have but Stanley, good in his time, and valuable even now, and Enfield, a poor compiler from Brucker. The Germans abound in histories of literature, from the beginning of civilization down to the last Leipsic fair. In England, such works are unknown. We have as yet no history of our own literature, though the Germans have at least one, quite readable and instructive. Even the dry and defective book of Mr. Hallam, — for such it is with all its many excellencies — is drawn largely from its German predecessors, though it is often inferior to them in vigor, and almost always in erudition and eloquence.

Doubtless, the English are a very learned people; a very Christian people likewise, no doubt. But within the present century, what has been written in the English tongue, in any department of theological scholarship, which is of value, and makes a mark on the age? The Bridgewater Treatises, and the new edition of Paley, — we blush to confess it, — are the best things. In the criticism and explanation of the Bible, Old Testament or New Testament, what has been written, that is worth reading? Nothing, absolutely nothing of any permanent value, save some half dozen of books, it may be, drawn chiefly from German sources. Who have written the grammars and lexicons, by which the Hebrew and Greek Testaments are read? Why, the Germans. Who have written critical introductions to the Bible, useful helps in studying the sacred letters? Why, the Germans. Who have best, and alone developed the doctrines of the Bible, and explained them, philosophically and practically? Why, the Germans again. Where are the men, who shall stand up in presence of Gesenius, Fürst, Schleusner, and Wahl; Winer, and Ewald, and Nordheimer; Michaelis, Eichhorn, Jahn, and Bertholdt, Hug, and De Wette; the Rosenmüllers, Maurer, Umbreit, Credner, Paulus, Kuinoel, Fritzsche, Von Meyer, Lücke, Olshausen, Hengstenberg, and Tholuck, and take rank as their peers? We look for them, but in vain. "We put our finger on them, and they are not there." What work on theology, which has deserved or attracted general notice, has been written in English, in the present century? We know of none. In Ger-

many, such works are numerous. They have been written by pious men, and the profoundest scholars of the age. Wegscheider's Theology is doubtless a poor work; but its equal is nowhere to be found in the English tongue. Its equal, did we say? There is nothing that can pretend to approach it. Where, then, shall we find rivals for such theologians as Ammon, Kase, Daub, Baumgarten Crusius, Schleiermacher, Breschneider, and De Wette? even for Zachariæ, Vatke, and Kaiser?

In ecclesiastical history every body knows what sort of works have proceeded from the English and American scholars. Jortin, Milner, Priestley, Campbell, Echard, Erskine, Jones, Waddington, and Sabine; these are our writers. But what are their works? They are scarcely known in the libraries of scholars. For our knowledge of ecclesiastical history we depend on the translations from Du Pin, and Tillemont, or more generally on those from the German Mosheim and Gieseler. All our English ecclesiastical histories, what are they when weighed against Mosheim, the Walchs, Vater, Gieseler, Schroekh, Planck, Muenschler, Tzschirner, and Neander? Why they might make sumptuous repasts on the crumbs which fall from these men's table. The Germans publish the Fathers of the Greek and Latin church, and study them. To the English they are almost "a garden shut up and a fountain sealed." It is only the Germans in this age, who study theology, or even the Bible, with the aid of enlightened and scientific criticism. There is not even a history of theology in our language.

But this is not all, by no means the chief merit of the German scholars. Within less than threescore years there have appeared among them four philosophers, who would have been conspicuous in any age, and will hereafter, we think, be named with Plato, Aristotle, Bacon, Descartes, and Leibnitz—among the great thinkers of the world. They are Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. Silently these lights arose and went up the sky without noise, to take their place among the fixed stars of Genius and shine with them, names that will not fade out of heaven until some ages shall have passed away. These men were thinkers all; deep, mighty thinkers. They knelt reverently down before Nature, with religious hearts, and asked her questions. They sat on the brink of the well of Truth, and continued to draw

for themselves and the world. Take Kant alone, and in the whole compass of thought, we scarce know his superior. From Aristotle to Leibnitz, we do not find his equal. No, nor since Leibnitz. Need we say it? Was there not many a Lord Bacon in Immanuel Kant? Leibnitz himself was not more capacious, nor the Stagyrite more profound. What revolutions are in his thoughts. His books are battles. Philosophical writers swarm in Germany. Philosophy seems epidemic almost, and a score of first rate American, or half a dozen English reputations, might be made out of any of their philosophical writers of fourth or fifth magnitude. Here, one needs very little scholarship to establish a name. A small capital suffices for the outfit, for the credit system seems to prevail in the literary, as well as the commercial world; and one can draw on the Bank of Possibilities, as well as the fund of achievements. One need but open any number of the Berlin Jahrbucher, the Jena Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung, or the Studien and Kritiken, to see what a lofty spirit prevails among the Germans in philosophy, criticism, and religion. There, a great deal is taken for granted, and supposed to be known to all readers, which here is not to be supposed, except of a very few, the most learned. Philosophy and theology, we reckon as the pride of the Germans. Here their genius bursts into bloom, and ripens into fruit. But they are greatly eminent, likewise, in the departments of poetry, and elegant letters in general. Notwithstanding their wealth of erudition, they are eminently original. Scandinavia and the East, Greece and the middle ages, all pour their treasures into the lap of the German muse, who not only makes trinkets therefrom, but out of her own stores of linen, and wool, and silk, spins and weaves strong and beautiful apparel for all her household, and the needy everywhere. "She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple." No doubt, among the Germans there is an host of servile imitators, whose mind travels out of itself, so to say, and makes pilgrimages to Dante, or Shakspeare, or Pindar, or Thucydides. Some men think they are very Shakspeares, because they transgress obvious rules. The sickly negations of Byron, his sensibility, misanthropy, and affectation, are aped every day in Berlin and Vienna. Horace and Swift, Anacreon and Bossuet, and Seneca and Walter Scott, not to name

others, have imitators in every street, who remind one continually of the wren that once got into the eagle's nest, set up to be king of the birds, and attempted a scream. Still the staple of their literature is eminently original. In point of freshness, it has no equal since the days of Sophocles. Who shall match with Wieland, and Lessing, the Schlegels, Herder, so sweet and beautiful, Jean-Paul, Tieck, and Schiller, and Goethe? We need not mention lesser names, nor add more of their equals. *

In what we have said, we would not underrate English literature, especially the works of former ages. We would pay deep and lasting homage to the great poets, historians, philosophers and divines of the mother country, in her best days. Their influence is still fresh and living throughout the world of letters. But as these great spirits ascended, the mantle of their genius, or inspiration, has fallen on the Germans, and not the English. Well says a contemporary, "Modern works are greatly deficient both in depth and purity of sentiment. They seldom contain original and striking views of the nature of man, and of the institutions which spring from his volition. There is a dearth of thought and sterility of sentiment among us. Literature, art, philosophy, and life, are without freshness, ideality, verity, and spirit. Most works, since the days of Milton, require little thought; they want depth, freshness; the meaning is on the surface; and the charm, if any, is no deeper than the fancy; the imagination is not called into life; the thoughts are carried creepingly along the earth, and often lost amid the low and uncleanly things of sense and custom." "I do not, at this time, think of any writer since Milton, excepting Coleridge and Wordsworth, whose works require a serene and thoughtful spirit, in order to be understood."*

As little would we be insensible to the merits of the rising literature of our own land. Little could be expected of us, hitherto. Our business has been, to hew down the forest; to make paths and saw-mills; railroads and steamboats; to lay the foundation of a great people, and provide for the emergencies of the day. As yet, there is no American literature, which corresponds to the first principles of our institutions, as the English or French literature corre-

* A. B. Alcott in "Record of a School."

sponds to theirs. We are, perhaps, yet too young and raw to carry out the great American idea, either in literature or society. At present, both are imitations, and seem rather the result of foreign and accidental circumstances, than the offspring of our own spirit. No doubt the time will come, when there shall be an American school, in science, letters, and the elegant arts. Certainly, there is none now. The promise of it must be sought in our newspapers, and speeches, oftener than in our books. Like all other nations, we have begun with imitations, and shall come to originals, doubtless, before we end.

But there is one peculiar charm in this literature, quite unequaled, we think, in modern days, that is, the RELIGIOUS character of German works. We know it is often said, the Germans are licentious, immoral in all ways, and above all men,—not the old giants excepted,—are haters of religion. One would fancy Mezentius or Goliath was the archetype of the nation. We say it advisedly, that this is, in our opinion, the most religious literature the world has seen since the palmy days of Greek writing, when the religious spirit seemed fresh, and warm, coming into life, and playing grateful with the bland celestial light, reflected from each flower-cup, and passing cloud, and received direct and straightway from the source of all. It stands an unconcious witness to the profound piety of the German heart. We had almost said it was the only Christian national literature the world had ever seen. Certainly, to our judgment, the literature of Old England, in her best days, was less religious in thought and feeling, as it was less beautiful in its form, and less simple in its quiet, loving holiness, than this spontaneous and multiform expression of the German soul. But we speak not for others; let each drink of "that spiritual rock," where the water is most salubrious to him. But we do not say that German literature comprises no works decidedly immoral and irreligious. Certainly we have read such, but they are rare, while almost every book, not entirely scientific and technical, breathes a religious spirit. You meet this, coming unobtrusively upon you, where you least of all expect it. We do not say, that the idea of a Christian literature is realized in Germany, or likely to be realized. No; the farthest from it possible. No nation has yet dreamed of realizing it. Nor can this

be done, until Christianity penetrates the heart of the nations, and brings all into subjection to the spirit of life. The Christianity of the world is yet but a baptized heathenism, so literature is yet heathen and profane. We dare not think, lest we think against our Faith. As if Truth were hostile to Faith, and God's house were divided against itself. The Greek literature represents the Greek religion; its ideal and its practical side. But all the literature of all Christian nations, taken together, does not represent the true Christian religion, only that fraction of it these nations could translate into their experience. Hence, we have as yet only the cradle song of Christianity, and its nursery rhymes. The same holds true in art, — painting, sculpture, and architecture. Hitherto it is only the church militant, not the church triumphant, that has been represented. A Gothic cathedral gives you the aspiration, not the attainment, the resting in the fulness of God, which is the end of Christianity. We have Magdalens, Madonnas; saints, emaciated almost to anatomies, with most rueful visage, and traditional faces of the Saviour. These, however, express the penitence, the wailing of the world lying in darkness, rather than the light of the nations. The SON OF MAN risen from the grave, is yet lacking in art. The Christian Prometheus, or Apollo, is not yet; still less the triple graces, and the Olympian Jove of Christianity. What is Saint Peter's to the Parthenon, considered as symbols of the two religions? The same deficiency prevails in literature. We have inherited much from the heathen, and so Christianity, becoming the residuary legatee of deceased religions, has earned but little for itself. History has not yet been written in the spirit of the Christian scheme; as a friend says, hitherto it has been the "history of elder brothers." Christianity would write of the whole family. The great Christian poem, the Tragedy of Mankind, has not yet been conceived. A Christian philosophy founded on an exhaustive analysis of Man, is among the things that are distant. The true religion has not yet done its work in the heart of the nations. How, then, can it reach their literature, their art, their society, which come from the nation's heart? Christianity is still in the manger, wrapped in swaddling bands, and unable to move its limbs. Its Jewish parent watches fearful, with a pondering heart. The shep-

herds that honor the new-born are Jewish still, dripping as yet with the dews of ancient night. The heathen magicians have come up to worship, guided by the star of truth, which goes before all simple hearts, and lighteth every man that cometh into the world. But they are heathen even now. They can only offer "gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." They do not give their mind, and still less their heart. The celestial child is still surrounded by the oxen, that slumber in their stalls, or wake to blame the light that prevents their animal repose. The Herod of superstition is troubled, and his city with him. Alarmed at the new tidings, he gathers together his mighty men: his chief priests and scribes, to take counsel of his twin prophets, the Flesh and the Devil, and while he pretends to seek only to worship, he would gladly slay the young child, that is born King of the world. But Christianity will yet grow up to manhood, and escape the guardianship of traditions, to do the work God has chosen. Then, and not till then, will the gospel of beautiful souls, fair as the light, and "terrible as an army with banners," be written in the literature, arts, society, and life of the world. Now when we say that German literature is religious, above all others, we mean, that it comes nearer than any other to the Christian ideal of literary art. Certainly it by no means reaches the mark.

Such then is German literature. Now with those among us, who think nothing good can come of it, we have nothing to say. Let them rejoice in their own cause, and be blessed in it. But from the influence this rich, beloved, and beautiful literature will exert on our infant world of letters, we hope the most happy results. The diligence which shuns superficial study; the boldness which looks for the causes of things, and the desire to fall back on what alone is elementary and eternal, in criticism, philosophy, and religion; the religious humility and reverence which pervades it, may well stimulate our youth to great works. We would not that any one should give in his adhesion to a German master, or copy German models. All have their defects. We wonder that clear thinkers can write so darkly as some do, and that philosophers and theologians are content with their slovenly paragraphs, after Goethe has written such

luminous prose. We doubt, that their philosophical or theological systems can ever take root in the American mind. But their method may well be followed; and fortunate will it be for us if the central truths, their systems are made to preserve, are sown in our soil, and bear abundant fruit. No doubt, there is danger in studying these writings; just as there is danger in reading Copernicus, or Locke, Aristotle, or Lord Brougham, or Isaiah and St. John. As a jocose friend says, "it is always dangerous for a young man to think, for he may think wrong, you know." It were sad to see men run mad after German philosophy; but it is equally sad to see them go to the same excess in English philosophy. If "Transcendentalism" is bad, so is Paleyism, and Materialism. Truth is possessed entire by no sect, German or English. It requires all schools to get at all Truth, as the whole Church is needed to preach the whole Gospel. Blessed were the days when Truth dwelt among men in her wholeness. But alas! they only existed in fable, and now, like Osiris in the story, she is cut into fragments and scattered world-wide, and sorrowing mortals must journey their life-long, to gather here a piece and there a piece. But the whole can never be joined and reanimated in this life. Where there is much thought, there will be some truth, and where there is freedom in thinking, there is room for misconduct also. We hope light from Germany; but we expect shadows with it. The one will not eclipse the sun, nor the other be thicker than the old darkness we have "felt" from our youth up. We know there is SIN among the Germans; it is so wherever there are men and women. Philosophy, in Germany or England, like the stout man a journeying, advances from day to day; but sometimes loses the track and wanders, "not knowing whither he goeth;" nay, sometimes stumbles into a ditch. When this latter accident,—as it is confessed,—has befallen Philosophy in America and England, and men declare she is stark dead, we see not why her friends might not call on her German sister, to extricate her from the distress, and revive her once more, or at least give her decent burial. We are sorry, we confess it, to see foolish young men, and old men not burthened with wisdom, trusting wholly in a man; thinking as he thinks, and moving as he pulls the strings. It is dangerous to yield

thus to a German, or a Scotch philosopher. It were bad to be borne off on a cloud by Fichte and Hegel, or to be made "spouse of the worm and brother of the clay," by Priestley or Paley. But we fancy it was better to fall into the hands of Jove than Pluto. We cannot predict the result of the German movement in philosophy; but we see no more reason in making Henry Heine, Gutzkow, and Schefer the exponents of that movement,—as the manner of some is,—than for selecting Bulwer, Byron, Moore, and Taylor the infidel, to represent the Church of England. Seneca and Petronius were both Roman men, but which is the type? Let German literature be weighed in an even balance, and then pass for what it is worth. We have no fear that it will be written down, and should be sorry to see any exaggerated statement of its excellence, which would in the end lead to disappointment.

We turn now to the book named at the head of our article. The author's design is to give a picture of German literature. His work does not pretend to be a history, nor to point out the causes which have made the literature what it is. His aim is to write of subjects, rather than to talk about books. His work is merely a picture. Since this is so, its character depends on two things, namely, the artist's point of sight, and the fidelity with which he has painted things as they appear, from that point. The first question then is, from what point does he survey the field? It is not that of philosophy, theology, or politics. He is no adept in either of these sciences. He is eminently national, and takes the stand of a German amateur. Therefore it is his duty to paint things as they appear to a disinterested German man of letters; so he must treat of religion, philosophy, education, history, politics, natural science, poetry, law, and criticism, from this point of view. It would certainly require an encyclopedical head to discuss ably all these subjects, and bring them down to the comprehension of the unlearned. It was scarcely to be expected, that any one man should be so familiar with all departments of thought in a literature so wide and rich as this, as never to make mistakes, and even great mistakes. Now Mr. Menzel does not give us a faithful picture of things as seen from this position, as we shall proceed to show in some details. He

carries with him violent prejudices, which either blind his eyes to the truth, or prevent him from representing it as it is. On his first appearance, his unmanly hostility to Goethe began to show itself.* Nay, it appeared, we are told, in his *Streckverse*, published a little before. This hostility amounts to absolute hatred, we think, not only of the works, but of the man, himself. This animosity towards distinguished authors, vitiates the whole work. Personal feelings and prepossessions perpetually interrupt the cool judgment of the critic. When a writer attempts, as Menzel does, to show that an author who has a reputation, which covers the world, and rises higher and higher each year; who is distinguished for the breadth of his studies, and the newness of his views, and his exquisite tastes in all matters of art, — is only a humbug, what can we do but smile, and ask, if effects come without causes? Respecting this hostility to Goethe, insane as it obviously is, we have nothing to say. Besides, the translator has ably referred to the matter in the preface. That Goethe, as a man, was selfish to a very high degree, a debauchee and well-bred epicurean, who had little sympathy with what was highest in man, so long as he could crown himself with rose-buds, we are willing to admit. But let him have justice, none the less. Mr. Menzel sets up a false standard, by which to judge literary productions. Philosophy, ethics, art, and literature, should be judged of by their own laws. We would not censure the *Laocoon*, because it did not teach us agriculture, nor the *Iliad*, because it was not republican enough for our tastes. Each of these works is to be judged by its own principles. Now we object to our friend, that he judges literary works by the political complexion of their author. Thus, for example, not to mention Goethe, he condemns Johann von Müller, — whom, as a Swiss, he was not bound to mention among German writers, — and all his works, because he was no patriot. For him “of all the German writers, I entertain the profoundest contempt.” No doubt the venerable historian, as some one has said, would be overwhelmed as he stands in

* *Eurossaischen Blättern* for 1824, I. B. 8, 101–108, and IV., and 233, seq. But these we have never seen, and only a few stray numbers of the *Literatur-Blatt*.

the Elysian fields, with Tacitus and Thucydides, to be despised by such an historian as Menzel!* So Krug is condemned, not for his fustiness and superficiality, but because he wrote against the Poles.† It is surprising to what a length this is carried. He ought to condemn the “Egoism” of Fichte, no less than that of Hegel. But because the former is a liberal, and the latter a conservative, the same thing is tolerated in the one and condemned in the other. Words cannot express his abhorrence of Hegel. Fries is commended as a philosopher, because he was “almost the only true patriot among our philosophers.” Oken must not be reproached with his coarse Materialism, because he resigned his professorship at Jena, rather than give up his liberal journal. These few instances are sufficient to show the falseness of his standard.

He indulges in personal abuse; especially does he pour out the vials of his calumny on the “young Germans,” whom he censures for their personal abuse. He seems to have collected all the “little city twaddle,” as the Germans significantly name it, as the material for his work, and very striking are the colors, indeed. His abuse of this kind is so gross, that we shall say no more of it.‡ Mr. Menzel is the Berserker of modern critics. He scorns all laws of literary warfare, scalps, and gouges and stabs under the fifth rib, and sometimes condescends to tell a downright lie, as we shall show in its place. He often tries the work he censures by a moral, and not a critical or artistic standard. No doubt the moral is the highest, and a work of art, wherein the moral element is wanting, deserves the severest censure. No man can insist on this too strongly. But when a man writes for the artistic point of view, we think it his duty to adhere to his principles. If a work is immoral, it is so far false to the first principles of art. It does very little good, we fancy, merely to cry out, that this book of Gutzkow, or that of Goethe, is immoral. It only makes foolish young men the more eager to read it. But if the critic would show, that the offending parts were false, no

* See an able defence of Von Müller, in Strauss's *Streitschriften*, Heft 2. Tübingen: 1837. p. 100.

† Vol. I. p. 235, seq.

‡ Read who will, Vol. III, p. 228, for an example.

less than wicked, and mere warts and ulcers on the body of the work, he would make the whole appear loathsome, and not attractive. Mr. Menzel is bound to do this, for he believes that the substance and the form of art are inseparable, or in plain English, that virtue is beautiful, and vice ugly. Having made this criticism, he might justly pronounce the moral sentence also. If truth is harmonious, then a licentious work is false and detestable, as well in an artistic as in a moral point of view. But we cannot enlarge on this great question at the end of an article.

Judging Menzel from his own point of view, this work is defective in still graver points. He carries his partisan feelings wherever he goes, and with very superficial knowledge passes a false sentence on great men and great things. His mistakes are sometimes quite amusing, even to an American scholar, and must be doubly ludicrous to a German, whose minute knowledge of the literature of his own country would reveal more mistakes than meet our eye. We will point out a few of these in only two chapters. That on philosophy and religion. In the first, we think the author may safely defy any one to divine from his words the philosophical systems of the writers he treats of. Take, for a very striking example, his remarks upon Leibnitz, (Vol. I. p. 219.) "The great Leibnitz, who stood on the boundary line between the old times of astrology, magic, and sympathetic influences, and the latter times of severe scientific method, united the labyrinth of life, belonging to these austere dark days, with the clear light of our own. He was animated with deep religious faith, but still had the full vigor of thought. Living faith in God was his rock; *but his system of world-harmony,** showed nothing of the darkly-colored cathedral light of the ancient mystics; it stood forth in the clear white light of the day, like a marble temple on the mountain-top." From this statement, one would naturally connect Leibnitz with Pythagoras, Kepler, and Baron Swedenborg, who really believed and taught the world-harmony. But who would ever dream of the Monads, which play such a part in the system of Leib-

* Mr. Felton has translated *Weltharmonie* "Pre-established Harmony," which Leibnitz believed in, but it is not the meaning of the word.

nitz? He tells us, that Eberhard has written a onesided and Kantian history of philosophy, which is very strange in a man who lived a Wolfian all his days, and fought against the critical philosophy, though with somewhat more zeal than knowledge, it is thought. Besides, his history of Philosophy was published in 1788, before the Kantian philosophy had become lord of the ascendant. As he criticises poets by the patriotic standard, so he tries the philosophers by his æsthetic rule, and wonders they are hard to understand. But these are minor defects; come we to the greater. His remarks on Kant are exceedingly unjust, not to speak more harshly. "The philosophical century wanted an earth without a heaven, a state without a church, man without a God. No one has shown so plainly as Kant, how with this limitation earth may still be a paradise, the state a moral union, and man a noble being, by his own reason and power, subjected to law." (Vol. I. p. 223.) We do not see how any one could come to this conclusion, who had read Kant's *Kritik of Judgment*, and *Practical Reason*, and conclude our critic, forgetting to look into these books, in his abhorrence of scholastic learning, and "study, that makes men pale," cut the matter short, and rode over the "high priori road," in great state to the conclusion. We pass over his account of Fichte and Schelling, leaving such as have the ability to determine, from his remarks, what were the systems of these two philosophers, and reconstruct them at their leisure. There is an old remark we have somewhere heard, that it takes a philosopher to judge a philosopher; and the truth of the proverb is very obvious to the readers of this chapter. Hegel seems the object of our author's most desperate dislike. His sin, however, is not so much his philosophy, as his conservative politics, as it appears. He does not condescend, — as an historian might do once in a while, — to give us a portrait, or even a caricature of his system; but contents himself with such abuse as the following precious sentences. "Hegel first reduced God to a mere speculation, led about by an evil spirit, in the void of his heavenly heath, who does nothing but think, indeed, nothing but think of thinking." (Vol. I. p. 259.) "He makes no distinction between himself and God; he gives himself out for God." He says God first came to a clear consciousness of himself "in the philosopher who has the

only right philosophy, therefore in himself, in the person of Hegel. Thus we have, then, a miserable, hunch-backed, book-learned God; a wooden and squinting academical man, a man of the most painful and pompous scholasticism; in a word, a German pedant on the throne of the world." We need make no comments on the spirit which suggests such a criticism upon a philosopher like Hegel. Still farther, he says, Förster "declared, over the grave of Hegel, that, beyond all doubt, Hegel was himself the Holy Ghost, the third person in the Godhead." When we read this several years ago, we believed the words were uttered by some man of an Oriental imagination, who meant no harm by his seeming irreverence. But on inquiry we find it is not so. One who heard Mr. Förster's Oration, who had it lying before him, in print, at the time of writing, declares, there was no such thing in it, but the strongest passage was this; "*Was it not he, who reconciled the unbelievers with God, inasmuch as he taught us truly to understand Jesus Christ?*" *

But enough on this subject. Let us say a word respecting the chapter on Religion, more particularly on that part relating to theology. Here the learned author's abhorrence of book-learning is more conspicuous than elsewhere, though obvious enough in all parts of the book. We pass over the first part of the chapter, — which contains some very good things, that will come to light in spite of the smart declamations in which they are floatiug, — and proceed to his account of Catholicism in Germany. (Vol. I. p. 114–139.) Here, in a work on German literature, we naturally expect a picture of the Catholic theology, at least a reference to the chief Catholic writers in this department. But we are disappointed again. We find declamations and anecdotes well fitted for the Penny Magazine, as a German critic says, to whom we are indebted for some hints on this topic. † He throws together such remarks as would make excellent and smart paragraphs in a newspaper; but gives no calm, philosophical view of the subject. He can enlarge on the Jesuits, or Jansenists, on the influence of Kant's and Schelling's philosophy, and the reaction in favor of Catholicism,

* Strauss, ubi sup. p. 212, 213.

† A writer in Rheinwald's Repertorium, Vol. XV., p. 14, seq.

for these subjects are in all mouths; but he scarce looks at the great philosophical question, on which the whole matter hinges. His acquaintance with modern Catholic writers seems to be as narrow as his philosophy is superficial. Gunther, Pabst, Möhler, Singler, Staudenmaier, Klee, and Hermes, have escaped the sharp glance of our author.* In the portion of the chapter which relates to Protestantism, we find the same defects. The sketch of the history of theology since Luther is hasty and inaccurate. It does not give the reader a clear conception of the progress of ideas. He makes some amusing misrepresentations on pages 159 and 173, to which we will only refer. Among the most celebrated of German preachers, since the middle of the last century, he forgets to mention Teller, Löffler, Zollikofer, Lavater, Herder, Tzschirner, Schmalz, Rohr, Zimmermann, De Wette, Marheineke, Nitzsch, Tholuck, Ehrenberg, Strauss, Reinhard, Therimin, Couard, Lisco, and many others of equal fame. Mosheim is mentioned as a distinguished writer on morals, Ammon and Bretschneider are dispatched in a word. Wetstein is mentioned among the followers of Ernesti and Semler, and is put after Eichhorn, though he died only two years after the latter was born. But it is an ungrateful task to point out these defects. Certainly we should but name them, if there were great and shining excellencies beside. But they are not to be found. The chapter gives a confused jumble of ideas, and not a true picture. True, it contains passages of great force and beauty, but throughout the whole section, order and method, accurate knowledge and an impartial spirit, are grievously wanting. Who would guess what great things had been done in Biblical criticism, from Mr. Menzel's words? Who would know that De Wette had written profound works in each of the four great departments of theology; indeed, that he wrote anything but a couple of romances? But we are weary with this fault-finding. However, one word must be said, by way of criticism upon his standing point itself. German literature is not to be surveyed by an amateur merely. The dilettante has no rule and compasses in his pocket, by which he can measure all the objects in this German ocean of books. No doubt his

* See Rheinwald, ubi sup. 16.

ories of literature have hitherto been too often "written in the special interest of scholastic learning," and are antiquarian lists of books and not living histories. It is certainly well to write a history of literature so that all men may read. But it would require a most uncommon head to treat ably of all departments of literature and science. In one word, it is quite impossible to judge all by one rule. The writer, therefore, must change his position as often as he changes his subject. He must write of matters pertaining to religion, with the knowledge of a theologian; on philosophical subjects, like a philosopher, and so of the rest. Any attempt to describe them all from one point of sight seems as absurd as to reckon pounds, shillings, and pence, and drachms, ounces, quarters, and tons in the same column. A sketch of German theological literature ought to tell what had been done, and what was now doing by Protestants and Catholics, in the four great departments of exegetical, historical, systematic, and practical theology. It should put us in possession of the idea, which lies at the bottom of Catholicism and Protestantism, and tell what form this idea assumes, and why it takes this form, and no other. But to this Mr. Menzel makes no pretension. He has not the requisite knowledge for this. His learning seems gathered from reviews, newspapers, the conversations lexicon, literary gossip, and a very perfunctory perusal of many books. The whole work lacks in plan. There is no unity to the book. It seems a compilation of articles, written hastily in the newspapers, and designed for immediate effect. So the spirit of the partisan appears everywhere. We have declamation instead of matter-of-fact and cool judgment. Still the work is quite entertaining. Its author, no doubt, passes for a man of genius; but as a friend says, who rarely judges wrong, "he has more show than sinew, and makes up in smartness, what he wants in depth." We are glad to welcome the book in its English dress, but we hope it will be read with caution, as a guide not to be trusted. Its piquant style, and withering sarcasm, remind us often of Henry Heine, and the young Germans, with whom the author would not wish to be classed. We think it will not give a true idea of the German mind and its workings, to the mere English, or aid powerfully the student of German to find his way amid

that labyrinthian literature. The book is very suggestive, if one will but follow out the author's hints, and avoid his partialities and extravagance.

Professor Felton seems to have performed the work of translation with singular fidelity. His version is uncommonly idiomatic and fresh. It reads like original English. But here and there we notice a slight verbal inaccuracy in translating, which scarce any human diligence could avoid.* We regard the version as a monument of diligence and skill. The metrical translations are fresh and spirited.

P.