

over the result of this preliminary disquisition in something like the following sentence.

Universal as the mission of the German Folk is seen to have been, since its entrance into history, equally universal are the German spirit's aptitudes for Art ; the Rebirth of the German spirit, which happened in the second half of the preceding century, has shewn us an example of the activation of this universality in the weightiest domains of art : the example of that Rebirth's evaluation to the end of ennobling the public spiritual life of the German Folk, as also to the end of founding a new and truly German civilisation, extending its blessings e'en beyond our frontiers, must be set by those in whose hands repose the political fortunes of the German people : for this it needs nothing but that the German Princes should themselves be given that right example from their own midst.

V.

It is encouraging, to be able to draw our invoked example of a German Prince's understanding and furtherance of the German Art-spirit from the midst of the Bavarian land. Here was this high example already first, nay only, set ; and as we have not accustomed ourselves to building mere speculations in the air, we will confess at once that the idea of that invocation itself would probably never have come to us, had the lesson of just this already-given example and its effect not lain before us. Do we need to name King Ludwig I. of Bavaria, to afford a clue to our meaning ? Is it first necessary for us to designate the uncommon energy of initiative wherewith this prince, aflame with the true fire of German zeal, despite the prejudices of inertia and stupidity, proved far and wide to German princes through his own example, and through the example incited by him, that there was in very truth a German art, that it was a beauteous and a worthy thing to cherish it ? He proved that this art was

first cousin to the noblest archetype of Art, the Grecian : Goethe's marriage of Helena to Faust he had celebrated for him in works of plastic art, and thus disclosed the loftiest calling of the German spirit, distinct to sight and seizable to touch. Nor did the virtue of example stay wanting in effect : thenceforward other German princes, as if ashamed, took thought for the adornment of their capitals with noble German works ; from Munich they summoned the masters, and gave them tasks that erst had not been dreamt at all, or merely in the sense of a corrupting luxury, to be indulged through nothing but the appropriately frivolous media of abroad.

What here could be done from one sole point and in one direction, was brought to pass ; and the example, as the deeds, of Ludwig I. may be accounted thoroughly, entirely fulfilled. Nevertheless the question which necessarily obtrudes itself, why the German plastic art, after so incomparably energetic a stimulus, merely made a start at blossoming but never fully flowered, in a higher sense,—nay, why this start itself at last so dwindled down in force, that to-day the time of flowering stands farther off than at the commencement of the royal renaissance, and we no longer can shut our eyes against the witness of a manifest decay,—this question would be but poorly answered, did we not begin with an attempt at answering it in accordance with the broader purpose of our present inquiries.

Our answer will be much facilitated, if we set in its proper light the uncommonly suggestive action of the exalted son of the awakener of German plastic art, the dearly loved and unforgettably lamented Maximilian II.* A thorough German in his meditative nature, his country's deep need of political upraising seems to have filled him with consuming care, since it could only be achieved in union with the political re-shaping of the whole great German Fatherland, and for this he could not find the leverage within his special power.) To look

* Succeeded his father, Ludwig I., in 1848; died 1864; and was succeeded by his son, Ludwig II. —Tr.

for any success, he must account his only possible task the raising of the intellectual standard of his personal sphere of power, the furtherance of the German spirit in every region thitherto neglected by the policy of German princes. Here, then, he began by seeking to supplement the action of his illustrious father. In the matter of the plastic arts he addressed his chief regard to Architecture, but already in the practical sense of preparing adequate houseroom for his people's spiritual culture. His notable aim in this direction is shewn by his greatest undertaking, alas left unachieved, the building and destination of the Maximilianeum. In this magnificently situated edifice, commanding all the city, an institute of quite new and individual kind was to be established: everything worth knowing in art and science was here to be collected and arranged in such an aimful fashion, and so intelligent and many-sided a professional instruction was to be provided, that the pupils of this unique school should be given the opportunity of acquiring a comprehensive culture, such as the judgment of this enlightened prince deemed needful, in particular, for all the higher servants of his State. In the idea of this foundation there lies a sublimely sorrowful confession, that conscious Want (*Noth*) had for the first time truly entered a monarch's breast. King Ludwig I. could satisfy his eagerness for visible and tangible deeds of Art with all success, so soon as ever he found the fitting artists; for the unhindered prosecution of their tasks he needed but the material which, as king and lord, he very well could come by. But, to make a people's mind receptive toward Art's beauteous deeds, it needed an education such as could not be attained by storm, and still less after so long a period of desolation in this quarter, but only through a careful nursing; which, again, must be presided over by officials who above all needed culture for themselves—and comprehensive human culture, not mere professional specialism. King Maximilian II might say to himself with a sigh: what boots us these fair works of art, if they seem wellnigh hostile to the people's spirit, if they cannot be called to

life with the will of it, but rather against its will?—Was he to turn his face about, or march straight onward?—To be sure, his whole State-paid-officialdom advised him candidly to do the first. He held his tongue: but sagely set his hand to work to fashion for himself right truly-cultured officers. Do we correctly understand the Maximilianeum?

Wellnigh he meant nothing but a making good, a filling up the chasms left necessarily by the gallant art-deeds of his ardent father, the almost terrifying gulf betwixt his art-creations and the spirit of his Folk, when the good King Maximilian II bestirred himself with tireless strain for German Literature and Learning. But, beyond the veritable inner bent towards these branches of spiritual life, which alone could give him his unexampled energy in that direction, the exalted prince was haply guided by a feeling of the intrinsic unsuccess, each day more obvious, of the artistic labours of his illustrious father: no more than any man of mind, could it escape him that the well-nigh opened flower of German plastic art had never really come to full unfolding, and was already falling into premature decay; he could not but recognise that the cause was to be sought, as in the isolation of a whole art-tendency that touched not yet the people's life, so, too, in the one-sidedness of a nurture theretofore bestowed upon no branch but that of plastic art.

Now, if the works of plastic art had left the Folk unmoved and coldly passive, it is extremely apposite to the issue of our inquiries to remark that, despite his earnest forethought for his people's welfare, King Maximilian II approached in doubt, perchance mistrust, the one art-branch capable of embracing all the others, and the branch which comes in contact with the people's life as ne'er another, the art of *drama*. Benevolently wistful for each and every, he sought indeed to give to Culture a voice in the administration of the Theatre: but for him this merely took the light of literary culture; and, as his was simply a benevolent regard for dramatic art, but no desire to raise from out the Theatre's unknown mine the incom-

parable riches of a truly national art, so the fostering of literary culture pure and simple remained the chief endeavour of a prince who yet was bent on elevating the Folk-spirit as none before him. How impotent are Literature and Learning, when not already borne upon a genuinely art-productive spirit in the Folk itself, when they want instead to summon that Folk-spirit into life—this was manifested here; and the admirable prince, true father of his Folk, whose aim was no indulgence of a personal taste for literature and science, but, as the founding of the Maximilianeum shews us, the elevation of his people's spirit, must assuredly have felt the lesson's sharpest sting.

Insofar as the many and ample institutes wherewith he endowed the sciences, as no other monarch and in the noblest national sense, must conduce to their great and undeniable furtherance—in so far his fostering of his people's spiritual welfare is certainly not to be made light of; for if the gain herefrom is like that of a capital whose interest must be sunk for the eventual use of later days, it still remains a fund whose amassing proves that its founder's thoughts were not confined to a mere hand-to-mouth existence. Nevertheless we cannot put aside the fear that, if this immediate existence continues turning more and more away from an evolution of the *beauties* of the spirit, those heaped-up treasures may some-day sink to valueless and useless chattels. Nor has the special fostering of Science—which, the higher its conception, the less can it directly operate upon the Folk-spirit—any culture-historical meaning unless it crowns a Folk-culture already at its prime of beauty; and Art is the only cultivatrix of the Folk. Accordingly, with obvious wish to build this necessary bridge, the highly-cultured King Maximilian endeavoured withal to further the cause of belles lettres and literary poetry; and it was here that the failure of his great-hearted efforts came to plainest show. His noble example, the example longed for, was given just too late; the

vibrant earnestness that still had illumined the national mind at the beginning of the century, had lately flickered out. Even the chain of gifted epigones who, from Kleist to Platen, still manfully made known the exhaustless dowry of the German spirit, had come to end: it was only the other day, that collections were made at home for the erection of a worthy monument above the Syracusan grave of the last of German poets, long since departed. Another era had dawned: the "now-time," large as life. From Paris, the homeland of his choice, the vanquisher of Platen was sending us his witty couplets in German-versified prose; and Heine's spirit now became the father of a literature whose intrinsic character consisted in its mocking at every kind of earnest literature. Just as Dantan's caricatures at like time cheered the heart of the Parisian grocer by shewing him, right plain for any eye to see, that all greatness and earnestness was really sent into the world for nothing but a laughing-stock: so Heine's witticisms relieved the feelings of the German public, which now might console itself for the falling-off of German spiritual beauty with the thought, made almost visible, that after all 'twas no great loss. This joyful consolation, received with special welcome by our poetic literati, has become the keynote of all the newest poetical literature. One strikes the pose of beginning all over again, lets oneself be misled by no appeal to our great masters, and claims the true poetic right to "harmless" shuffle on as best one can.* Heine having provided the wit, bold grasps into the epic realm are expedited by a heed to Byron's poems; what Britons, French and Russians have already copied, is copied once again in valiant German; and if the publisher is clever enough to push matters to the semblance of a twelfth edition, there stands a new celebrity in the German poet's-grove of some *allgemeine Zeitung*, and behold! the thing is done.

* An allusion to W. H. Riehl, the apostle of "harmlessness" (i.e. mild, unsophisticated innocence), to whom Wagner devotes a critique in the later pages of this volume.—TR.

Unhappy noble Prince, who here believed he could, he must, protect and further something! What could his generous will lay bare, but just the final palsy-stroke of German poetical literature?—

As we now have seen two examples set by German Princes, and have been forced to recognise them as each at bottom unsuccessful, what may justify us in nevertheless awaiting succour from the renewed example of a German Prince?

VI.

Certainly the high-souled patron of German intellectual efforts, whose noble example we last adduced, looked also with kindly expectation on the attempts at last addressed to the Theatre by literary poets of his favour: himself he prompted those attempts, by offering prizes. Here, too, an example; but with what a deterrent result!—In course of our inquiries we hope to shew the reason why, not merely mediocre, but even talented literati can never rightly prosper in their dealings with the stage until, through an entire new-shaping of the German Theatre, they reach a proper insight into the nature of this artistic organism that stands beyond comparison with any other. The true pity of the present failure, however, consisted in the effort's having been engaged-in as a last attempt to help this incomprehensible Theatre. But the theatre itself remains just what it was before, does much what always has been done by like establishments elsewhere; the same old order reigns, and it occurs to no one that in this quite derelict institute *there lies the spiritual seed and kernel of all national-poetic and national-ethical culture, that no other art-branch can ever truly flourish, or ever aid in cultivating the Folk, until the Theatre's all-powerful assistance has been completely recognised and guaranteed.*

If we enter a theatre with any power of insight, we look straight into a dæmonic abyss of possibilities, the lowest as