

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?

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## 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

the loftiest.—In the Theatre the Roman solemnised his gladiator-games, the Greek his tragedies; the Spaniard, here his bull-fights, there his autos; the Englishman the coarse buffooneries of his clowns, as the searching dramas of his Shakespeare; the Frenchman his cancan-dance, and eke his prudish alexandrine buskin; the Italian his operatic arias,—the German? What might the German solemnise within his theatre?—This we will try to make clear to ourselves. At present he celebrates the whole symposium—naturally in his own fashion!—but, for sake of either completeness or effect, he adds to it Schiller and Goethe, and lately Offenbach. And all this goes on amid circumstances of communion and publicity such as are repeated nowhere else in life: in Folk-assemblies questions passionately-debated may kindle rancour, in Church the higher self collect its thoughts to rapt devotion, but here in the Theatre the whole man, with his lowest and his highest passions, is placed in terrifying nakedness before himself, and by himself is driven to quivering joy, to surging sorrow, to hell and heaven. What lies beyond all possibility of the ordinary man's experiencing in his own life, he lives it here; and lives it in himself, in his sympathy deep-harrowed by the wondrous duping. One may weaken this effect through the senseless abuse of a daily repetition (which, again, draws after it a great perversion of the receptive powers), but never suppress the possibility of its fullest outburst; and finally, that outburst may be played on, according to the ruling interest of the day, for any manner of corruptive end. In awe and shuddering, have the greatest poets of all nations and all times approached this terrible abyss; 'twas they devised the aimful laws, the sacred conjurations, to bann the demon lurking there, by aid of the good genius; and Æschylus with priestly rites led e'en the chained Erinnyes, as divine and reverend Eumenides, to the seat of their redemption from a baneful curse. 'Twas this abyss great Calderon arched over with the heavenly rainbow, conducting to the country of the saints; from out its depths stupendous Shakespeare con-

jured up the demon's self, to set it plainly, fettered by his giant force, before the astonished world as its own essence, alike to be subdued; upon its wisely measured, calmly trodden verge, did Goethe build the temple of his *Iphigenia*, did Schiller plant the passion-flower\* of his *Jungfrau von Orleans*. To this abyss have fared the wizards of the art of Tone, and shed the balm of heaven's melody into the gaping wounds of man; here Mozart shaped his master-works, and hither yearned Beethoven's dreams of proving finally his utmost strength. But, once the great, the hallowed sorcerers yield place, the Furies of vulgarity, of lowest ribaldry, of vilest passions, the sottish Gnomes of most dishonouring delights, lead high their revels round its brink. Banish hence the kindly spirits—(and little trouble will it cost you: ye merely need to not invoke them trustfully!)—and ye leave the field, where Gods had wandered, to the filthiest spawn of Hell; and these will come uncalled, for there have they ever had a home whence naught could scare them but the advent of the Gods.

And this prodigy, this pandæmonium, this awesome Theatre, ye thoughtless leave its traffic to mechanical routine, to the censorship of ruined students, to the bidding of amusement-hunting panders, to the management of used-up bureaucrats?—This Theatre, which the Protestant clerics of last century denounced, with much discernment, as a gin of the Devil; from which to-day ye turn your right hand in disdain, while with your left ye load its walls with pomp and glitter, and—when any grand occasion comes—can think of nothing better than a “performance at the theatre,” to shew yourselves in all your finery?—

And ye wonder that plastic art, poetic literature, and all that makes for beauty and significance in a nation's spiritual life, will not march forward; that retrogression follows on the heels of each advance? How can ye so

\* “Den Gotteswunderbaum” — literally “God's wonder-tree.” The “wonder-” or “miracle-tree” is the *palma Christi*; but, as no translation could possibly convey the beauty of the compound word invented by our author, I have preferred a mere *suggestion* of its meaning.—Tr.

much as dream of true artistic influence on the Folk, when ye pass this Theatre by with shrugging shoulders, or—worse still—sit therein with leering eyes?—

A truce to questions! The goal of our inquiries must now be clear to every reader. While proposing to prove the unparalleled importance of the Theatre, through a demonstration of its illimitably ruinous, as of its illimitably helpful influence; while, for the insurance of its loftiest, most beneficial agency, we invoke a royal example like to those already set so finely and so hopefully, in plastic art and science, by two enlightened princes of Bavaria: we own that it is not without a shudder, that we approach a field of public discussion from which all truly-cultured Germans have long congratulated themselves on being able to keep aloof! It says enough to stamp the downfall of the German Theatre, when no one can dispute the fact that the last remnant of truly German-cultured men in each profession have abandoned every hope thereof, and scarcely treat it as still existing. This verdict, moreover, is endorsed in silence by all the literature-poets who of late have wooed the theatre again; for the surprising feebleness of their dramatic concoctions, as compared with their doings in other walks—whereas great poets have erewhile done their greatest in the Drama—is only explicable on the hypothesis that they have held so low an opinion of the Theatre, as to believe they could place themselves on a footing with its present demands by nothing but sinking their own productive powers to much the level which Goethe deemed compulsory when writing operatic texts. Hence such forces alone are left in energetic action, for the Theatre, with whom a mere contact on the part of any earnest-minded man must forthwith lead to the grossest, most ridiculous misunderstandings. Yet, despite this danger, let us venture the attempt; for without it we can never acquaint ourselves with those who nowadays, outside the hubbub of publicity, nurse quietly a grief and memory as mournful as our own. To these mostly unknown, yet, as we may conclude from

many a cheering experience, forthcoming friends of a nobler fashion of our public art-life—to them we turn. For if, to supplement and bring to fruit the unique and generous efforts once begun in Munich for German Art and Learning, to crown the work through raising the German Theatre to the importance once assigned it by our great spirits, we now invoke the stirring example of the august heir of those two great benefactors of the German Spirit,—we plant a banner from whose shade the Vulgar has to hide its head in awe.

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## VII.

For the more searching inquiries which we now propose to address to the *German Theatre* we shall still retain the general heading of these articles: "German Art and German Policy." Our reason might well coincide with the very cause of many people's presumable surprise that this parasite of an irrational state of culture—as which the theatre appears—should be held to have aught to do with Politics, since it is hard enough to imagine what the theatre may have in common with Art itself. To such persons, whom the evil character of the German Theatre has plunged into the most total confusion as to the Theatre's significance in general, it is our desire to shew that precisely Plastic-art—which alone means "Art" for them, as one may read in all our books and journals—has been so strongly influenced by the Theatre that her present increasingly hideous mannerism, as also, wherever she has withdrawn from its influence with painful purpose, her dullest unproductiveness, are only explicable through this ill condition of the Theatre itself.

Two main and characteristic stages present themselves in European Art: its birth among the Greeks, its re-birth among the modern nations. The re-birth will never wholly round itself to an ideal, before it reaches once again the birth's departure-point. The Renaissance lived upon the