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## FRÄULEIN AMBROSIOUS.

A literary criticism of Fräulein Ambrosius' Gedichte is not the aim of this article; rather is it an attempt to awaken an interest in her poetry, among those who have not as yet opened her volume. Certainly in the student's sanctum no verse could be brighter and more cheering; tending at the same time to foster a purer and more sympathetic appreciation of the beauties of nature, and a kinder feeling towards the lowly.

The most striking feature of her poetry is the cultured tone pervading every line, and this in spite of the fact that she has grown up in almost complete ignorance of the world of literature. Perhaps no better conception of the workings of true poetical inspiration can be gained than by a comparative study of her life and writings. Without any training in the technique of poetry, she has nevertheless succeeded in writing musically. However, lest she may have broken some literary canons, she takes the precaution in her introduction to forestall the critic:

“Richtet nicht nach Form und Rhythmen  
Davon hab' ich nichts gelernt,  
Denkt, es sind bescheid'ne Blüten,  
Hie und da vom Tau besternt;  
Hie und da vom Sturm zerbissen,  
Wie sie bieten Feld und Flur,  
Meinem Herzen all' entrissen  
Gleich der Mutterbrust Natur.”

Frederick the Great was wont to treat German poets and poetry very sarcastically: of the latter he once remarked that it was “Kein Schusz Pulver wert;” with regard to the former, he was often heard to say: “Die Deutschen sind nur gut für Draufschlagen.” Since then, however, the works of Göthe and Schiller have become classics, and the high rank of Germany in world literature is undisputed. Nevertheless, we look to the German of to-day not for Schwärmereien, but rather for profound thesis, embodying the results of patient research. No wonder then that the literary world was not a little taken aback, when four years ago Germany proclaimed Fräulein Ambrosius as the Burns of her own fireside. Critics were reassured, however, upon the announcement that this gifted woman was the daughter of a poor artisan, living in the extreme east of Prussia—geographically as far from the cold methodical universities as she could possibly be.

“Staub' ich, was all' für tolles Zeug  
Die Menschen müssen kennen.”

Referring in another poem more directly to her songs, she says:

“Kein Meister hat es mich gelehrt,  
Bin sitzen nie geblieben,  
Die Noten hat der liebe Gott,  
Den Text Natur geschrieben.”

Johanna Ambrosius (Frau Johanna Voigt, née Ambrosius) was born in 1854. Her sole schooling was concluded with her eleventh year. Then began hard work, for her mother was ill many years, and so required of Johanna and her sister Martha the most arduous and varied labor. She toiled, as is the custom in Germany, in field and stable. Her father read a good deal, and allowed the girls the German family magazine, “Die Gartenlaube.” This was a never failing friend for the minds and souls of both. Johanna tells us, whenever they had spun till their fingers bled, or knitted the required amount, they would always turn over their beloved “Gartenlaube.” At twenty Johanna married a poor peasant, lived in a wretched hut, and for twelve years had nothing that could refresh and educate—no newspaper, no bible, no hymn book. Better days came at last, and they were enabled to buy a little property in Grosz Wersmeninken. She was exhausted, however, physically and mentally, and in 1880 fell critically ill. At last she reached the time when “she must give vent to the beautiful thoughts within her,” and so in 1884 she published her first poem in a small family journal. Some years later the Empress of Germany, pleased with some verses which had accidentally come to her notice, sent messengers to her to provide for her material well-being. In 1894 Fräulein Ambrosius published her first collection of verse; within four years more than thirty-five editions have appeared. Many of her songs have been set to music, and the words of Germany's peasant poetess are on the lips of all—more especially, it is said, in the country districts.

Johanna's leisure time until recently has been on Sunday. Wherever it may be, she composes at her work. This may explain, in part, the sincerity so characteristic of her descriptions of the sufferings of her fellow peasants. Her sister Martha describes her as “Pegasus im Joche.”

This bit is a snatch from one of nature's singers:

### SOMMERNACHT.

Mit ausgespannten Ärmen  
Kommt leis' die Nacht,  
Drückt Feld und Wald und Fluren  
Aus Herze facht.

Schlägt ihren weichen Mantel  
Um Strauch und Baum,  
Und summt mit Glockentönen  
Die Welt in Traum.

Vergessen hat die Erde  
Des Tages Weh,  
Ich hebe meine Augen  
Hinauf zur Höh'.

Ein Vöglein seh' ich tauchen  
Ins Abendgold,  
Ach, wenn's auch meine Seele  
Mitnehmen wollt'!”