

34 GERMANY AND THE GERMANS

movements mean? I am wofully wrong in my ethnographical calculations if these things do not mean, that the people of whom Tacitus wrote, "No man dietates to the assembly; he may persuade but cannot command," were shaping and moulding the life of Europe, with their passionate love of individual liberty, with their sturdy insistence upon the right of men to think and work without arbitrary interference. Out of this furnace came constitutional government in England, and republican government in America. We owe the origins of our political life to the influence of these German tribes, with their love of individual freedom and their stern hatred of meddlesome rulers, or a meddlesome state or legislature.

Germany had no literature at this time. When Froissart was writing French history, and Joinville his delightful chronicles; when Chaucer and Wycliffe were gayly and gravely making play with the monks and priests, the only names known in Germany were those of the mystics, Eekhart and Tauler. When the time came, however, Germany was defiantly individualist in Luther, and Protestantism was thoroughly German. It was not from tales of the great, not from knighthood, chivalry, or their roving singer champions, that German literature came; but