

THE GERMAN LANGUAGE.

Germany is that tract of country in Europe bounded on the north by the Baltic Sea; on the west by Holland, Belgium, and France; on the south by Switzerland and the Austrian territories in Italy; on the east by Hungary, Galicia, Poland, and Prussia. It comprises thirty-five states and four free cities. These cities and states compose what is called the *Germanic Confederation*. Frankfort-on-the-Main is the central point of this confederation. The kingdoms forming this league are independent sovereignties, but are joined together for protection against a common enemy, and for other purposes.

Germany, as known to the Romans, was of much greater extent than the country which we now designate by that name. It extended from the Danube on the south to the German Ocean and the Baltic on the north, including Denmark and the adjacent islands; and from the Rhine on the east to the confines of the Russian empire on the west. This country was inhabited by numerous tribes, under different names, but alike in their appearance and habits, and speaking the same language.

The early history of the Germans is enveloped in obscurity. From the affinity of their language to the Sanscrit and Zend, they are supposed to have originally been one of the tribes which emigrated from Central Asia, and overran Europe; but under what name, or at what period is unknown. The era from which we date our positive knowledge of them is 113 B.C. At this time a wild and unknown horde of barbarians appeared on the Alps and attacked the Roman army, which was stationed there to guard the entrance to the empire. They called themselves Cimbri and Teutoni; and it is by these names that they are spoken of by the Roman historians of that period. The name Germani was given to them by Cæsar. It is derived from two Gothic words, signifying Lords of the spear. At a later period, they were called Goths, but this name was applied generally to all the northern tribes which assisted in the overthrow of the Roman empire.

The German language, called also the Teutonic has three great divisions; these again are subdivided into dialects. The three divisions are the *Mæso-Gothic*, the language of the conquerors of Rome, and the language in which are preserved the oldest specimens of any Gothic dialect; the *High Germanic*, the language of Southern Germany; and the *Low Germanic*, the language of the northern part of that country. The *Low Germanic* is much the same with the *Anglo-Saxon*

and the modern English. The *High Germanic* is the language from which is derived the modern German.

The translation of the Bible by Luther in the early part of the sixteenth century into this dialect, gave it the preeminence over the other dialects of Germany; and from that time it became the language of the educated.

As Germany is divided into many separate kingdoms, so the spoken language has numerous dialects. The principal of these are the *Swiss*, the *Rhenish*, and the *Danubian*; these, however are much alike, and the written language is understood throughout the country. This is the language which we still study.

Although the Germans were an ancient people, yet their literature is comparatively modern. This is owing to two facts. They had no written language for a long time, and they were devoted entirely to warlike pursuits.

Prior to the eighth century, there are but few monuments of German literature; and from the accession of Charlemagne at the close of that century, the literature of Germany may be said to date. The awakening of a literary spirit among the Germans at that time, is due to Charlemagne himself. He introduced the German names of the months, ordered translations of many Latin works to be made into German, and did everything in his power for the improvement of his native language.

The "*Lay of Hildebrand and Hadubrand*," and the "*Prayer of Weizenbrun*," belong to this century, and are the most ancient German Poems.

In the ninth century, the separation of the Germanic empire from the French, to which it had long been united, by establishing an independency of language, promoted the literature of Germany. A metrical paraphrase of the Gospels by Otfried, a monk, was the most celebrated production of that period.

From the ninth to the sixteenth century, the literature of Germany was chiefly poetry. That was the age of the *Minnesingers*, the *Troubadors* of Germany, the golden age of German chivalrous poetry.

The Reformation of Luther, in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, gave an impulse to the German literature which was never lost; and from that time to the present, Germany has been renowned for illustrious names. In poetry we have Brinkman, Schiller, and Goethe; among philosophers, Leibnitz and Kepler; and in the department of criticism, especially upon the classics, no people have surpassed the Germans.

PAPER.—About 1822 an ingenious English manufacturer of this material, in experimenting for the purpose of producing a superior bank-bill paper, eventually succeeded in forming from the stalks of the nettle a paper fabric nearly as tough as parchment and difficult to tare. The piece shown to the writer of this, though too thick for banknote purposes, evidently proved that a valuable paper might be produced from this abundant source; and successful operations would doubtless eventually be affording the manufacturer almost any degree of fineness it might require. This hint may be of service to our manufacturers, and is, at least, worth a trial.—*Tribune*