

INTRODUCTION

GUSTAV FREYTAG was born in 1816 at Kreuzburg in the Prussian province of Silesia. His family was an old one, pointing with pride to a long line of sturdy ancestors extending from 1578 to the present. According to their inherited tradition they were independent farmers, cultivating their own estates. But in each generation some of the sons received a university education and attained creditable rank in one or another of the learned professions. So Gustav Freytag's father was a highly esteemed physician. He also held for a long time the difficult office of mayor of Kreuzburg.

In this town near the Polish frontier the boy early learned to admire the character of his Prussian fellow countrymen, who in this turbulent period often came into serious conflict with their neighbors, the half civilized Poles. Ardent patriotism became a well marked element in Freytag's character.

After thirteen years of preliminary training according to the thorough system of the Germans, he entered the University of Breslau as a student of Germanic philology, and subsequently took his doctor's degree at the University of Berlin. The subject of his thesis was *Concerning the Beginnings of Dramatic Poetry among the Germans.*

Soon after taking his degree he was accepted by his native university at Breslau as privat-dozent for the