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The Nature and Growth of Schiller's Ideal of Culture.

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A SIXTY—for the third time during the last half century—a Schiller anniversary gives the German nation occasion to do grateful homage to the genius of its poet. Two of these Schiller celebrations, that of 1859 and that of 1905, revealed most clearly how in different aspects, a genial nature may be of significance to changing generations: they indicate at the same time, climaxes and turning points of the effect of Schiller, they are an end and a beginning.

The centenary of 1859, born of the irresistible impulse of the nation towards political unity and freedom, was a political, national celebration; it was the expression of a longing which constrained the minds of all. Whilst all the members of a nation scattered about in space and vexed with dissensions felt themselves united in the name of the poet, as citizens of an ideal estate, his position was sealed as that of the national poet. That was the culmination of a development which had commenced as early as the thirties with the aspirations of the German citizen class. But so powerful was the impression made by that celebration that, as late as 1872, it could be described by Wilhelm Raabe in his "Dräumling," as the birth-hour of German unity. A new era had begun: of that men were certain. But with the fulfilment it brought, a new generation grew up, filled with new ideas, needs and aspirations. The ideals, of which Schiller had once been regarded as the champion and herald, had grown old; sentimental attachment to these ideals and the poet who proclaimed them were alike discredited. Thus the enthusiasm with which a former generation had greeted the name and moralisings of Schiller became the main cause that their sons turned away from him, that the leading spirits of a new view of the world and life compared his aphorisms to an out-of-date currency. This dislike and contempt now made it the vital question: whether the poet had other and weightier matter to offer than had been mainly demanded of him in the times of political distress and longing—matter which men were no longer compelled to demand of him in the same manner and in the same measure as before. In other words: Schiller had to maintain, in the face of one-sided admirers and superficial critics, his vitality for another generation, living under completely altered circumstances; this generation, again, had to be attracted to him and made sensible of his worth.

This is not the place to explain how it happened, how the poet who had been so long despised and misunderstood was delivered from the spell of false idealism,