

HEINE.

There is no modern poet whose work lends itself less readily to critical analysis than Heine. The fabric of his genius was wrought of such diverse elements and the phenomena of his mind so varied in character and characterized by such exceptional mobility in expression that it is impossible to determine his literary status by establishing his intellectual affinity to any one school of thought or expression. He was one of those few authors who can claim a mental relationship with all moods of thought and whose genius is sufficiently versatile in its expression of diverse conceptions to justify romanticist and realist, pessimist and optimist, doubter and believer, sentimentalist and cynic alike to call him brother. He was a curious combination of malice, mirth and music. His poems are a perpetual revelation of conflicting moods, of swift mental alterations, pathos and merriment, smiles and sighs, sneers and sobs, reverence and mockery, love and hate, throughout all superbly eloquent and beneath all profoundly ironical. He passed through life with a sneer on his lip, a tear in his eye, a frown on his brow, laughter in his voice. A German by birth and a Jew by ancestry he had all the poetry of Isaiah, but none of the patience of Job. In his nature the fierce energy of a hot-blooded people was directed to the service of desires unknown to those that bequeathed it. He was a David up to date, a child of Israel adapted to the times.

It has been said "Life is a tragedy to those that feel, a comedy to those that think." Heine felt and Goethe thought. One is restless, passionate, emotional; the other is quiet, majestic, calm. Goethe stood apart, enjoying, in the midst of continental tribulation, a superb repose. Heine responded to every touch of his age, shared its sorrows, sympathized with its aspirations, enjoyed its humour, mourned for its misery, and with satire—with more than satire—with bitter irony, with almost voiceless scorn he scourged the fools and folly of his age.

Heine was no literary amateur, no poet of the mob. He was an exquisite artist of verse, a delicate artificer of ideas, a subtle builder of poems. In his verse, light and shade, shadow and sunlight are beautifully blended, and the finest, and most subtle tints and colors of thought are linked together in exquisite harmony. His lyrics are like the chimes of silver bells; silvery, subtle and sweet. His verses are like crystals; like delicate china finely finished, tenderly tinted, perfectly polished, delicately, lovingly wrought, light as a star beam, radiant as a rainbow, rare as a precious pearl from the depths of ancient ocean. He clothes his ideas in a drapery of loveliness, seemingly woven from the beams of suns and stars, the essence of clouds and mists.

Such is the architecture of his verse. Through the fine framework of form there flows a swift tide of passion, turbulent, emotional and fiery; sparkling, glowing, glittering, flashing and flaming as it surges turbulently up from the depths of a heart of fire. The crystal palaces of verse are illuminated with the light of thought, the golden harp is flooded with music, the perfect voice is freighted with eloquence. But in his thought there is no stability, no crystallization, no uniformity, no system, no repose. All is unquiet and disturbance. He was filled with unrest and was never at peace with men. In his mind was a vision of beauty, and in the world was deformity; in his soul was a yearning for peace, and

in the world was war; in his heart was a passion for freedom, and in the world was law. And he knew that the world was wrong. He was a caged bird who sometimes sang, and in the ecstasy of song attempted to soar, and fluttering in helpless agony against the bars that shut him from the skies, ceased singing to complain.

Heine was born at the dawn of the present century and lived in the midst of perpetual transition sharing in the fullest degree the restlessness of this unquiet age. His earliest work, the famous book of songs, contains some reflections on the despotic, social and political restrictions of his country which aroused the anger of the ruling powers and he was forced to fly. He went to Paris where his fame and genius won him admittance to the choicest intellectual and social circles, as well as into the councils of extreme democrats who welcomed him as one of themselves. In Paris he spent considerable time studying human nature as revealed in that wonderful city and occasionally seeing a wider experience by trips over the continent. He strove to experience every possible emotion and satisfy every passion of his nature. There was certainly no city so well qualified to minister to an ambition of this kind as the gay capital of France, and yet after many years residence there we find him still a dissatisfied man. There were evidently some aspirations in his nature which even Paris could not satisfy. He had literary success, social success, fame and comparative wealth, but yet he was a disappointed man. The age could satisfy his body, but it could not satisfy his soul. After such a man as this has taken his meals he is still hungry. He feels an intellectual appetite, a craving for mental delicacies. He likes to sit down and listen to the cadence of ideas, to hearken for the sounds of unseen but sublime choirs, to catch the melody of astral music. He longs for things earth cannot give. He wishes to dwell in a palace of art, to breathe the breath of perpetual beauty, to listen to the harmonies of spheres.

There seem to be some who think that a poet to be true to nature must creep in the dust; that his verse should be homely; that he should cover his palaces with mud; cling close to the earth, and forget the stars; sprinkle the pathways of thought with straw and set apart the choicest part of his mind for cattle stalls. This is a great mistake, or at best only a partial truth. The poets should not descend to the people, but the people should rise to the poets. The mountains should not be levelled to the plains. The great need not cease to be great because the small are small. The lofty should not become lowly because the low are low. Souls that have wings should spread them and soar nor cease to soar because the worm must creep. It should be the aim of the poets not to adapt their verse to the masses, but to adapt the masses to their music; to teach them the loftier harmonies of life; to lift them up, and by the light of genius illuminate the pathway that leads to the pinnacles of thought. All nature is not of the earth. All things are natural though all may not be visible. The supernatural is only that part of nature which has not yet been explored. It is true that dust and tree and stones and bricks and hills and plains are part of nature, but it is equally true that they are an insignificant part. There is also the nature manifested in stars and clouds, tides and waves and ether; in men, women and children, and their ideas, hopes and aspira-

tions. Thoughts are natural products. The poet is most true to nature who tells in music the loftiest feelings that stir his soul, the divine cravings, the infinite yearnings, the pathos, joy and music of the mind.

It is said that Heine was cynical, satirical, caustic, cold, because he lashed with merciless satire the conventional customs and creeds of his age. Should he have left them alone? Were they worthy of anything better than contempt, and if they were contemptible should they not have been visited with contempt? Believing them bad, knowing them to be useless, should he not in the interests of the society they afflicted expose their frailties. If he, seeing in his mind a more perfect beauty, and feeling in his heart a higher wisdom, felt that the social world was evil, could he do anything less than scorn it, and if he scorned it at all, was it not fitting that he should scorn it well? The presence of an element of sarcasm in the writings of an author does not necessarily indicate that his nature is evil, or his heart unkind. Cynicism may have its origin in two causes. It may originate in an evil nature and be caused by pure and unprovoked malice; or it may originate in the genuine, honest scorn of a noble mind at the ignoble things it contemplates. Among cynics of this last and exalted class may be mentioned Pascal, Thackeray, Voltaire and Heine. These were all men of lofty nature, capable of unlimited love. Indeed their very scorn itself was born of love. It was because they loved the noble that they scorned the base; because they saw the true, they smote the false; because they loved the light they warred with darkness. So it was with Heine. He was filled with a passion for truth, and in the interests of truth, he called into service every weapon in the armoury of his intellect. He entered upon an intellectual crusade against everything less than that perfect ideal which dwelt in his mind. The keen eye of genius saw that what lesser minds worshipped as realities were nothing better than shams. In the light of his mind the deformity of the world was revealed as a fact, but not as a necessity. The greatness and beauty with which it dwarfed to the mental eye the littleness and deformity without.

A contented man is a curse to the world. All progress has originated in discontent. Civilization itself was due to this. To be satisfied with anything less than the perfect is treason to progress. The man who is satisfied with what he has will ask for nothing better, but sleep the sleep of mediocrity, live a life of nothingness, and die the death of a dog. The man who is dissatisfied will demand something better, and get it. He will differ, he will dissent, he will deviate, he will rise, he will reign, and when he dies he will become an angel and aspire to be a God. Discontent is the root of progress, the source of civilization; it indicates a lofty nature. The man who is satisfied with the law, is low. The man who aspires, complains and revolts does so because he has something better in him than the things he sees without, and he seeks to make the world as perfect as his thought. He strives to make the lowly within out conform to the lofty without. He measures the world by his soul and finds it exceedingly small. When old earth was ushered out of the midnight of chaos into the dawning of cosmos and passed from the agony of growth into the bliss of completion, the spirit of unrest must surely have passed from the element into the