

**GERMAN
LITERATURE,
VOLL. II**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649593156

German Literature, Voll. II by Wolfgang Menzel & Thomas Gordon

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WOLFGANG MENZEL & THOMAS GORDON

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Edward Winsor

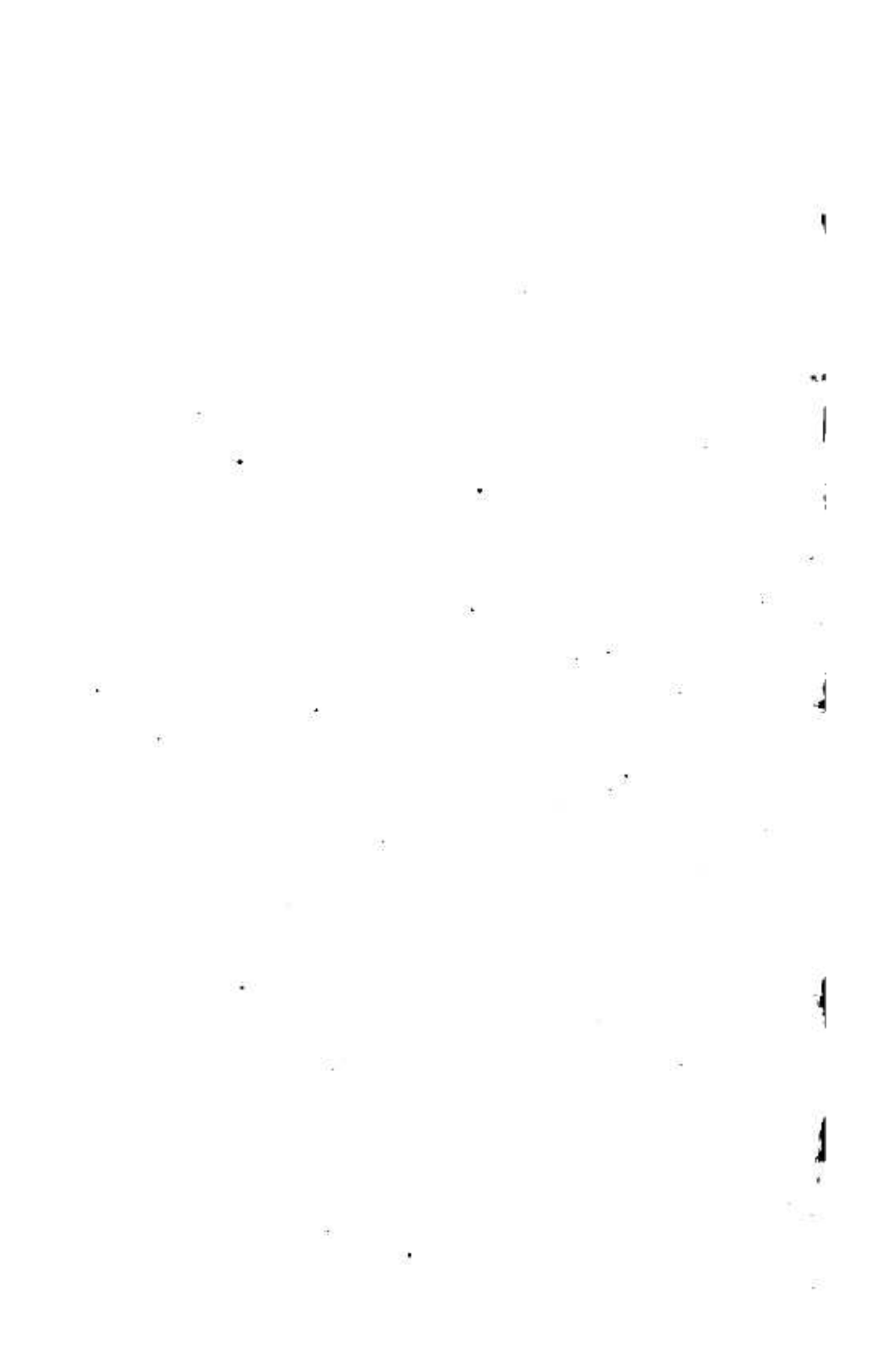
Wash. College

October 4th 1843.

HISTORY OF
GERMAN LITERATURE.

BY
WOLFGANG MENZEL.

VOL. II.



German Literature

By

Wolfgang Menzel.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN, WITH NOTES
BY THOMAS GORDON.

VOL. II.



OXFORD: D. A. TALBOYS,
AND 113, FLEET STREET, LONDON.

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GERMAN LITERATURE.

EDUCATION¹.

OUR present system of education comprehends within it three different principles; that of habit, that of political expediency, and that of philosophical optimism. Its organs are, therefore, likewise threefold: old established habit prevails in families; the public schools and universities now serve a political end, while in former times they were of more service to the church; lastly, optimism has produced seminaries for private education; at present each asserts its own claims, without caring for the rights of others. As in our age everything is chaotic, as all religious creeds, all philosophical and political opinions

¹ *Pädagogik*, the science of education.

On the subject of this chapter I would refer my reader for further information to Victor Cousin's Rapport,

Report on the state of Public Instruction in Prussia (English, by Mrs. Austin, 1834); and also to the Review of the original work in the *Edin. Rev.* vol. 57; and in the *Foreign Quart. Rev.* vol. 12.

swim here intermingled in that great jelly² which the ancients prophetically foresaw in the north, so in education all elements are now confusedly fermenting among one another. The historical progress, however, followed a more consistent path. At first education was entirely conducted by families; then it came into the hands of the church; at a later period, all the monastic schools became state institutions; and, at last, these conservative institutions have, again, in the reforming spirit of modern times, been supplanted by private schools.

The family life has ever been accounted sacred by us Germans. From it, in all ages, has proceeded the better spirit, which restored the value of whatever had been corrupted by means of more extensive social, ecclesiastical, and political institutions, or by the imitation of foreigners. The family life has from the earliest period been the guardian of German freedom, defending it from the licentious retinues of the nobles and the servile feelings produced by their conduct. The encroachments of the papacy in the departments of education, morals, and inclinations, were, even when it had become nearly all-powerful, successfully opposed by the love of the Germans for the house. Though the Romish church claimed a part of the population as its exclusive servants, it permitted the others to take their own way. That school-learning which extended its influence even among the

² *Lebermeer*. That dead stagnant sea, of a thick consistency, which the ancients supposed surrounded the north pole, and lay beyond the Pillars of Hercules.

laity, and enthralled the whole body of the young, did not arise until after, and in consequence of, the Reformation. Since that time, the family, and along with it, the general education of the whole man, has been put into the back-ground, while its place has been occupied by the school, accompanied by instruction, the onesided training of the intellect, in which heart and body are quite neglected.

The full effects of this unnatural onesidedness, against which a reaction already powerful has commenced, were soon unfolded; but it has caused the present age to feel its tortures, and it probably will not quite spare the next.

In opposition to the scholastics, who ignorantly, tastelessly, and shamelessly perverted and choked with additions simple Christianity, almost in the same way as the jurists did the law, all bold and elevated spirits devoted themselves shortly before the Reformation to *humanism*; that is, to humane, universally human (not merely theological) studies, and in particular to the study of the Greek language, with the double view, partly of re-establishing, by means of philological investigations into the Greek Testament, the simplicity of the Christian doctrine, and thus freeing it from the admixtures of the scholastics; partly of extracting from the classic Greek authors the lost acquaintance with that highly-cultivated people, and an immense quantity of useful information: this was very praiseworthy. The reformation commenced by these humanists was victorious; the humanists were no longer the opponents of the church,