

been unknown to us, though at our very hand. For this wall, what is the worst property in such walls, is to most of us an invisible one ; and our eye rests contentedly on Vacancy, or distorted *Fatamorganas*, where a great and true-minded people have been living and labouring, in the light of Science and Art, for many ages.

In such an undertaking as the present, fragmentary in its very nature, it is not absolute, but only relative completeness, that can be looked for. German Novelwriters are easily come at ; but *the* German Novelwriters are a class of persons whom no prudent editor will hope to exhibit, and no reader will engage to examine, even in the briefest mode of specimen. To say nothing of what has been accumulated in past generations, the number of Novelists at present alive and active is to be reckoned not in units, but in thousands. No Leipzig Fair is unattended by its mob of gentlemen that write with ease ; each duly offering his new novel, among the other fancy-goods and fustians of that great emporium. Lafontaine, for example, has already

passed his hundredth volume. The inspirations of the Artist are rare and transient, but the hunger of the Manufacturer is universal and incessant. The novel, too, is among the simplest forms of composition ; a free arena for all sorts and degrees of talent, and may be worked in equally by a Henry Fielding and a Doctor Polydore. In Germany, accordingly, as in other countries, the Novelists are a mixed, innumerable, and most productive race. Interspersed with a few Poets, we behold whole legions and hosts of Poetasters, in all stages of worthlessness ; here languishing in the transports of Sentimentality, there dancing the St Vitus' dance of hard-studied Wit and Humour ; some soaring on bold pinion into the thundery regions of *Atala ou les Amours de deux Sauvages* ; some diving, on as bold fin, into the gory profundities of *Frankenstein* and *The Vampyre* ; and very many travelling, contented in spirit, the ancient beaten highway of Commonplace.

To discover the grain of truth among this mass of falsehood, especially where Time had

not yet exercised its separating influence, was no plain problem ; nor can I flatter myself either that I have exhausted the search, or in no case been deceived in my selection. The strength of German Literature does not lie in its Novel-writers ; few of its greatest minds have put forth their full power in this department ; many of them, of course, have not attempted it at all. In the seventeenth century, and prior, there was nothing whatever to be gleaned ; though Anton Ulrich, Duke of Brunswick Wolfenbittel, had laid aside his sceptre, to write a novel,* in six thousand eight hundred and twen-

* *Die Durchlauchtigste Syrerin Aramena* (Her Most Serene Majesty Aramena of Syria), 1669. On the whole, it is simple enough of our Magazines to inform us, that the literature, nay sometimes it is also the language, of Germany, began to be cultivated in the time of Frederick II. If the names of Hutten, Opitz, Lohenstein, &c. &c. are naturally unknown to us, we ought really to have heard of Luther. Nay, was not *Jacob Böhme* rendered into huge folios, with incomparable diagrams, in the time of James I. ? And is not Hans Sachs known (by name at least) to all barbers ?

ty-two pages. Klopstock, Herder, Lessing, in the eighteenth century, wrote no novels: the same might almost be said of Schiller; for his fragment of the *Geisterseher* (Ghost-seer), and his Magazine-story of the *Verbrecher aus Verlorener Ehre* (Criminal from Loss of Honour), youthful attempts, and both I believe already in English, scarcely form an exception. The elder Jacobi's *Woldemar* and *Allwill* I was forced, not without consciousness of their merits, to pass over as too abstruse and didactic; for a like reason of didacticness, though in a far different sense, Wieland could afford me nothing which seemed worthy of himself and our present idea of him; and Klinger's *Faust*, the product evidently of a rugged, vehement, substantial mind, seemed much too harsh, infernal, and unpoetical for English readers. Of Novalis and his wondrous fragments, I could not hope that their depth and wizard beauty would be seen across their mysticism. Other meritorious names I may have omitted, from ignorance. Maler Müller's I was obliged to omit, because

none of his fictions were, properly speaking, novels; and unwillingly obliged, for his plays and idyls bespeak a true artist; and the English reader would do well, by the earliest opportunity, to substitute the warm and vigorous *Adam's Awakening* of Müller, for Gessner's rather faint and washy *Death of Abel*, in forming a judgment of the German Idyl.

A graver objection than that of omissions, is that, in my selections, I have not always fixed upon the best performance of my author; and to this I have unhappily no contradiction to give, nor any answer to make, except that it lay not in the nature of my task to avoid it; and that often not the excellence of a work, but the humble considerations of its size, its subject, and its being untranslated, had to determine my choice. In justice to our strangers, the reader will be pleased to bear this fact in mind: with regard to two of them, to Fouqué and Richter, it is especially necessary.

By a secondary arrangement, in surveying what seemed the chief names among the Ger-

man Novelwriters, we have also obtained a view of the chief modes of German Novelwriting. The *Mährchen* (Popular Tale), a favourite, almost tritcal topic among the Germans, is here twice handled ; in what may be called the prosaic manner (by Musæus), and in the poetical (by Tieck). Of the *Ritterroman* (Chivalry Romance) there is also a specimen (by Fouqué) ; a short one, yet I fear, in many judgments, too long. Hoffmann's *Golden Pot* belongs to a strange sort (the Fantasy-piece), of which he himself was the originator, and which its sedulous cultivation, by minds more willing than able, bids fair, in no great length of time, to explode. Richter's two works correspond to our common English notion of the Novel ; and Goethe's is a *Kunstroman* (Art-novel), a species highly prized by the Germans, and of which *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, the first in date, is also in their mind greatly the first in excellence.

If the reader will impress himself with a clear view of these six kinds ; and then conceive some hundreds of persons incessantly occupied in

imitating, compounding, separating, distorting, exaggerating, diluting them, he may have formed as correct an idea of the actual state of German Novelwriting, as it seemed easy with such means to afford him. On the general merits and characteristics of these works, it is for the reader and not me to pass judgment. One thing it will behove him not to lose sight of: They are German Novelists, not English ones; and their Germanhood I have all along regarded as a quality, not as a fault. To expect, therefore, that the style of them shall accord in all points with our English taste, were to expect that it should be a false and hollow style. Every nation has its own form of character and life; and the mind which gathers no nourishment from the everyday circumstances of its existence, will in general be but scantily nourished. Of writers that hover on the confines of faultless vacuity, that write not by vision but by hearsay, and so belong to all nations, or, more properly speaking, to none, there is no want in Germany more than in any other country. It would be easy to fill,

not four, but four hundred volumes with German Novelists of this unblameable description ; thereby to refresh the reader with long processions of spotless romances, bright and stately, like so many frontispieces in *La Belle Assemblée*, with cheeks of the fairest carnation, lips of the gentlest curvature, and most perfect Grecian noses, and no shade of character or meaning to mar their pure idealness. But so long as our Minerva Press and its many branch-establishments do their duty, to import ware of that sort into these Islands seems unnecessary.

On the whole, as the light of a very small taper may be useful in total darkness, I have sometimes hoped that this little enterprise might assist, in its degree, to forward an acquaintance with the Germans and their literature ; a literature and a people both well worthy of our study. Translations, in this point of view, can be of little avail, except in so far as they excite us to a much more general study of the language. The difficulties of German are little more than a bugbear : they can only be compared to those

of Greek by persons claiming praise or pudding for having mastered them. Three months of moderate diligence will carry any man, almost without assistance of a master, over its prime obstacles ; and the rest is play rather than labour.

To judge from the signs of the times, this general diffusion of German among us seems a consummation not far distant. As an individual, I cannot but anticipate from it some little evil and much good ; and look forward with pleasure to the time when a people who have listened with the most friendly placidity to criticisms* of the slenderest nature from us, may be more fitly judged of ; and thirty millions of men, speaking in the same old Saxon tongue, and

* Voltaire's patronising letter to Ramler, in which he condescends to grant the Germans some privileges of literary citizenship, on the strength of " Monsieur Gottched" (Gottsched, long ago acknowledged as the true German Antichrist of Wit), is still held in remembrance ; so likewise is the Père Bouhours' extremely satirical inquiry, *Si les Allemands peuvent avoir de l'esprit ?*

thinking in the same old Saxon spirit with ourselves, may be admitted to the rights of brotherhood which they have long deserved, and which it is we chiefly that suffer by withholding.