ВИЛЬГЕЛЬМ ГАУФ

THE WINE-GHOSTS OF BREMEN

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Содержание

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PREFACE

When Mr. Carlyle endeavoured to introduce Jean Paul Richter to the English public, it seems to us that he was more than usually unsuccessful. The literary publics of the England and the Germany of those days were very different, and perhaps the errors of taste, which each professed to find in the other, were not in truth wholly upon the side of John Bull. We feel, (with much deprecation of our own impudence in challenging such a comparison,) in a somewhat similar position, and dread in our more diffident moments a far colder reception and far greater depth of oblivion for our present attempt to render into English a good German story about STRONG DRINK. German humour is often more rollicking than that of our own countrymen; it is also occasionally more subtle. But it has always been a matter of some wonder to us that Hauff's acknowledged masterpiece should be unknown to English readers, and we have therefore made the following attempt; praying the courteous reader only that he will not throw the story down in disgust till he gets to the best part: of the location of which we allow him to be the best judge.

Wilhelm Hauff was born on the 29th November, 1802, at Stuttgart, where his father held various high posts, with various high-sounding double and treble official names, under the paternal government of the Elector Frederick, the first of his name and house who attained 'serenity.' It was this same ruler who three years later, after refusing a passage to Napoleon's troops for some time with great show of patriotism, allowed himself to be 'convinced,' as soon as the Emperor himself appeared and offered him a considerable extension of territory and a Royal Crown; and who confessed with some *naïveté* 'that since Frederick the Great he had never met any one so good at talking a man over as Napoleon; that the latter had in fact the same "tournure de l'esprit" as Frederick.' But His Serene Highness was, in common with many of his contemporaries, in the habit of allowing himself to be talked over by any one with a good strong army at his back. 'C'était leur nature de complaire aux plus forts.' Therefore he now openly joined, in 1805, as he had practically done in '95 and '99, the row of princely traitors to the cause of Germany, and began to dance with his fellows on the fast-closing grave of the Holy Roman Empire. It must however be remembered that his country was one of the few German principalities that still possessed an active 'Landstände' or system of Estates: this was indeed of the most rudimentary order, and consisted chiefly of representatives of the nobles, craft gilds, and ecclesiastical corporations; but it is worthy of note that, as in the Tyrol, there was a Peasants' Estate in Württemberg, and that these Estates did possess, though they rarely made good, the right of voting or withholding supplies from His Serenity. On the occasion referred to, when he expressed some doubts as to whether his Estates would agree to the proposed treaty, Napoleon, who had methods of his own for dealing with refractory representatives, answered that 'he would settle all that.' The Elector then got his crown from Napoleon; but in November, 1813, a very similar scene was enacted at Stuttgart, (with Alexander in place of Napoleon,) when the confederation of the Rhine was dissolved, and Bavaria had already made her peace with the allies by the treaty of Ried. Then the magnanimous King Frederick threw in his lot with the winning side again, in return for that fatal guarantee of absolute sovereignty and territorial indemnification for his losses, (for he was obliged to disgorge some of the spoils of his neighbours,) which proved such an obstacle in the way of the long-deferred restoration of Germany.

Growing up under influences like these, it is wonderful that young Hauff and his brother Hermann (his senior by two years) should ever have discovered that they were Germans at all; but they lost their father in 1809 and do not afterwards appear to have had any political connection with

the government: and by 1815, when Wilhelm was only thirteen, the worst was over and the people of Stuttgart were left face to face with their amiable monarch; who surprised them and all the world by granting them of his own grace and favour an absolutely free constitution. This, however, on the principle of 'Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes,' was too much for the Württembergers, who profoundly mistrusted him: but before the matter could be settled King Frederick died, and King Wilhelm I, the husband of a Russian princess, and a brave soldier and able diplomatist, who had stood up for the rights of Germany in the deferred Elsass question, gave to his people, after much preparation, a very respectably constitutional form of government with two chambers, which included a representation both of clergy and old-imperial nobility, backed up by a strong Executive. This was in 1822, and the remaining five years of W. Hauff's life were passed in a happy country that had no history. It is usual of course to account for the excessively fertile development of literary culture in Germany at this time by the fact that the system of repression was so strong and effective as to drive all the moderate minds away from politics; but this will hardly hold good in Württemberg. Yet the educated classes there seem to have been completely indifferent to such politics as there were. But there were very few.

Those who want to discover the conditions under which Hauff's earlier life passed should read (1) Goethe's Autobiography in Wahrheit and Dichtung, and (2) Histoire d'un Conscrit; and, by mixing the two well together, may arrive at some sort of idea what life was like in a small German state, on which were grafted the new horrors of a military despotism. It is not a pleasant picture, but if it bred a good many souls as dead to patriotism as Goethe's and Heine's, it also bred not a few Müllers and Uhlands and Arndts; and it bred Wilhelm Hauff. That Hauff, in his later years at least (if a man can be said to have later years who died at twenty-five), had caught much of the spirit of the heroes of the War of Liberation, is best seen from the few soul-stirring lyrics which he has left, especially the two odes which he wrote in 1823-4 on the anniversary of the battle of Waterloo; even more perhaps it is seen in his admiration for W. Müller, and in the affecting story that when on his deathbed he heard the news of the battle of Navarino, he cried, 'What news! I must go hence and tell it to Müller,' who preceded him to the grave by a few weeks.

Hauff and his brother were voracious readers. Their maternal grandfather, 'a learned jurist,' (one trembles to think what a learned German jurist must have been like in the first decade of this century,) had a good library, consisting chiefly of old Law and History books, but including also a considerable number of romances; 'Smollett, Fielding, and Goldsmith were there,' says his biographer, Gustav Schwab, in the life which he prefixed to the 1837 (first collected) edition of Hauff's works. Schwab relates, not without humour, how the boys would play at fortress building and sieges with some of the more ponderous of the volumes, and the delight which they took in battering down a breastwork composed of the 'Acta Pacis Westphalicæ,' perhaps at the very time at which the Congress of Vienna was engaged upon the same job. But in the way of reading, they battened chiefly upon the old German historical romances, Hardleder's 'Ursache des Deutschen Krieges' especially, and it was from works like these that Wilhelm caught that old-imperial swing and flow of ideas which carries us so powerfully through Lichtenstein and the 'Phantasien.' The plan of turning a boy loose in a library is sometimes justified by results, although not always in the way expected. But although Wilhelm got a certain amount of classics drilled into him at the cloister school of Blaubeuern, and afterwards studied 'Philology, Philosophy, and Theology,' from 1820-1824, at the University of Tübingen, 'more,' says Schwab, 'to please his mother than from any leaning of his own to those subjects,' he never could write Greek or Latin verses like his brother, or pass for anything but an essentially poor scholar. But several other people who have afforded some pleasure to the world at large have been essentially poor scholars.

This deficiency did not affect him much; his mother, though apparently not wealthy, had good interest, and procured for him, when he left the University, the position of private tutor in the family of 'the at that time War's-council's-President, later War's-minister von Hügel' at Stuttgart, where he remained two years, with apparently abundant leisure for exercising his talent for writing poetical

romances and fairy tales, of which during the last two years of his life he poured forth an incessant stream. It is worth while noting that in one of these–the first part of the 'Memoirs of Satan' (not the completed edition of these memoirs as they now stand)–is a passage in which the author falls foul of the great Autocrat of German Literature apropos of some lines in Faust; which was a more daring thing for a young fellow of four-and-twenty to do than it is possible for a man living in a free country to imagine. The rash youth afterwards repented, and expunged the obnoxious passage when he finished the memoirs of his black Majesty.

Perhaps it would have been as well if there had been no expunging, at least we may dare to say so on this side of the water, where less and less divinity hedges the person of the great man-god of letters every day. Hauff, however, had a tender heart, and did not like to see what a big hole he had made by casting a stone at the man-god; and with the modesty of twenty-four he begged pardon. History does not say whether the man-god took any notice of him.

It is not, however, with the Memoirs of Satan, or with any but one of Hauff's works that we are now concerned. The 'Man in the Moon' was a scathing satire upon a school of story-book makers, popular at the time, and headed by one H. von Clauren, whose works we have not perused. 'Lichtenstein,' which has been dramatised, is not inferior to an inferior Waverley novel. These and many more are well known to English readers, but the 'Phantasien im Bremer Rathskeller' has never been translated, no doubt because of its dreadfully Rabelaisian morality in the matter of strong drink. What can you think of a man who dedicates his book to the 'lovers of wine,' and takes for his motto the passage from Othello which appears at the head of the story? We do not intend to defend him; we ourselves are by no means the pair of ultra-Pickwickian topers, that a cursory perusal of the motto and dedication would lead the reader to believe: and we are quite aware that there *are* to be no more cakes and ale in this world; we are a little sorry for it, that is all. As for Hauff we will let him speak for himself; we have no reason whatever to believe that he had more than a poetical and literary affection for the juice of the grape.

Hauff had grown tired of being a private tutor in 1826, and spent the profits of Lichtenstein in a journey to the North of Germany and to Paris in the latter half of that year. It was upon that occasion that he visited Bremen, although not upon the errand imagined in the text. On his return to the South in 1827 he became Editor of the 'Morning News for the Educated Classes,' to which his brother, who succeeded him in the editorship, was already a contributor. This paper survived till 1865, when it expired a few months after the death of Hermann Hauff, whom from all we know of him we imagine to have been a much more business-like editor than Wilhelm. Contemporarily with this responsible post Wilhelm took to himself a wife, one of his own cousins, who bore him a daughter but a few days before his death. He died of fever on the 18th November, 1827. Prefixed to the edition of 1853 is a very pretty little poem of L. Uhland's on the occasion, and also a funeral oration by Mr. Court Chaplain Grüneisen, who was his cousin, both of which were recited over his grave in true German fashion. If we could believe all that this worthy priest said–and we have not a scrap of evidence to the contrary–Wilhelm Hauff's life must indeed have been a bright and happy one; 'Wonnezeit voll holder Träume,' as he himself called the season of youth. Apparently he made no enemies, and he made every one whom he chose his friend; his tender affection for his mother seems to have been the mainspring of his existence; to his bride he had been long attached in a half playful spirit, that wanted only the shadow of a difficulty to withdraw their love into those regions of romance in which his mind delighted to dwell. It was about a month before his death that he produced, as a reminiscence of his northern journey, the following story, entitled–

'The Wine-Ghosts of Bremen.'

NOTE (*written before the late incorporation of the Hanse towns with the Empire*).

It may seem a little superfluous here to attempt to describe the Rathskeller at Bremen, for it is well known to many travellers. But from the method by which travellers are usually conducted through the vaults, in which Hauff spent his grandfather's *Schalttag* in that bygone October, little acquaintance with the object of his story is to be derived. The Rathhaus at Bremen, then, is by far the most conspicuous object in the town. It contains some of the most beautiful of the German efforts, both in stone and wood carving, of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Whether there is any connection between the fact that the fifteenth century preferred stone, the sixteenth wood, and the other fact that the former of these centuries was to the Hanse towns the epoch of glory, the latter the epoch of decay, we must leave for Mr. Ruskin to decide. Anyhow, the men who embellished that Rathhaus inside were as little conscious of the decay of their city as those who built it and decorated it outside. So far as Germany is concerned, even in the best examples of Lübeck, Augsburg, or Nuremberg, the force of Art could no further go. But descend the steps on the left of the building, and you will find a very different state of things. The cellar is built as a cellar should be, strictly with a view to the practical–that is, to the comfort of its inhabitants, the mighty spirits imprisoned in the mighty casks. For the comfort of those who came to commune with those mighty spirits, a broad oak settle with strong arms would and did suffice; and the steps were made strictly with a view to be *easy of ascent*. Since Hauff's time, and partly in consequence of his story, the internal arrangements appear to have been much altered. Some of the cellar chambers have been painted in the true modern German style, about which we should prefer not to say too much. Some of the mural paintings profess to be representations of scenes in the story. There is no longer a passage straight through from the Apostle cellar to the boudoir of Frau Rosa herself, and of the other vaults the cellar of Bacchus is alone unaltered. Bacchus, indeed, is the hero of the place. No better description could possibly be given of him than that which Hauff gives, and therefore we will not attempt to amplify it. But the same Bacchus does not actually 'in the wood,' so to speak, sit there. He was taken down ten years ago, and a new one put up in his place–why, I failed to discover. His cask is, however, like all the other casks except Frau Rosa (who has disappeared altogether), the old one, a veritable Thirty Years War cask, beautifully carved with fantastic figures in relief. In the Apostle cellar all the wine is Hochheimer or Rüdesheimer, and the names are still graven on each cask, and 'Herr Judas, 1729,' is said to contain the best wine. But from a somewhat limited experience it is difficult cordially to endorse the reported opinion of the late King Ludwig of Bavaria, that the finest Rhine wines would keep for ever. Let the man who wishes to know what wine *can be*, by all means go daily for a few weeks to the Rathskeller in Bremen. Let him pay due homage to the worthies of old time there by tasting them, one glass of each per diem; but let him not fail to wash them down speedily with a bottle of twenty-year old Niersteiner or Rüdesheimer. If you ask, thirsty reader, why these things are to be found at their best in Bremen, we can only say that North Germany is a right conservative country; and because the Burgomasters of Bremen thought it their duty in the seventeenth century to lay down cask upon cask of the best vintages, their successors think it is their duty likewise; which is a very practical and righteous feeling. Bacchus, however, and the two mighty casks which guard his right hand and his left (like those trusty comrades who stand up in the halls of the Colleges of our Universities on each side of the drinker, when the loving cup is passed round, to prevent his being stabbed in the back), are now empty. The right hand cask was broken open and drained by the French soldiers in 1806, after the defeat of Prussia at Auerstädt; a loss which one can well imagine that the Town Council of Bremen bore less philosophically than many another act of power of those merciless freebooters. Bacchus himself, who dates from 1624, has been empty for 100 years. But what has become of the Rose herself? There are many old casks in the cellar called after her, but none that I could identify with the heroine of the story. She is still painted on the ceiling–a sufficiently ugly specimen (of the variety known as 'La France,' she appears to be)–very fat and round, with very dirty green foliage, and round her the following inscription:–

'Cur Rosa Flos Veneris Bacchi depingitur antro,
Causa quod absque mero frigiat ipsa Venus.'

Other bad hexameters follow in other parts of the vault known as the Rose cellar; as for instance:

'Haec Rosa Luminibus Veneres Nectarque Palato
Objicit, exhalans pocula grata cadis:
Vina vetusta tenet, grandævi munera Bacchi;
Sint procul hinc juvenes; vos decet iste senes.'

They are in fact the sort of verses that the traditional Eton boy, who wrote verses for the whole of his Dame's house, could turn out at the rate of a couplet a minute, adding a few false quantities and concords by desire of the accomplice for whom they were written, 'because if you don't, you know, my tutor will never believe they're my own composition.' Finally, over the entrance door, on the other side of which is a medallion of Hauff, erected in 1876, comes the following:–

'Was Magen, Leib und Herz, Saft, Kraft, und Geist kann geben,
Betrübte trösten mag, halbtodte kann beleben,
Theilt diese Rose mit, sie hat von hundert Jahren
Den Preis ein edles Oel mit Sorgfalt zu bewahren.'

More could be quoted, but this breathes the spirit of the eighteenth century quite sufficiently for our purpose.

As for Roland, he is still in the marketplace, a wonderful fourteenth-century stone figure, nearly twenty feet high, not standing on a pillar, but simply on a pedestal about two feet from the ground. He would certainly find it remarkably difficult to sit down, even on a cask, for he has iron spikes to his knees, which would make him extremely uncomfortable if he bent them. He did not bow his head to me as I went away as he did to Hauff, which I felt deeply. It is generally believed that he only bows his head to those departing visitors who have had enough Nierstein to appreciate the compliment.

C. R. L. F.

THE WINE-GHOSTS OF BREMEN

'Come, come, good wine is a good familiar creature if it be well used.'–*Othello*, ii. 3.

'There's nothing to be done with the fellow,' I heard them say, as they stumped down the stairs; 'nine o'clock and he is going to doze away his evening like a dormouse. He wouldn't have been like that four years ago.' They were not far wrong from their point of view, good fellows; for this evening there was to be a most brilliant musical tea and muffin fight with dancing and recitation, and these gentlemen had come to invite me (who was a stranger to the High Life of Bremen) to go with them. But I did not feel up to it. Some one, whom I had come to Bremen on purpose to visit, was not to be there, and what's the use of going anywhere where Some one isn't? Besides, I knew I should have to sing if I went, and I didn't choose to sing if she wasn't to be there to hear me. I should only spoil all their fun by looking sulky. I preferred to let them curse me for a dull dog for a few minutes on the steps, rather than let them bore themselves from nine to one in talking to my body only, while my soul would be whole streets off wandering about in the neighbourhood of the Frauenkirche.

It wasn't sleepiness though. I am not a habitual dormouse, and don't like being called one. No, I meant to be thoroughly awake that night, and one of my friends–it was you, Hermann–said as much when he got outside. 'He didn't look sleepy,' I heard him say, 'with those bright eyes of his. But he looked like a man who had been drinking either too much or too little, which probably means that he is going to make a night of it with the bottle, and alone.'

Prophetic soul! Did you know that my eyes were sparkling yet proleptically with the thought of old Rhenish? You didn't know that I had a permit from their High Mightinesses to greet my Lady Rose and the Twelve Apostles. And you certainly didn't know that it was my 'Retreat.'[1]

In my opinion the habit which I inherit from my grandfather of blazing, so to speak, the tree of life here and there with a notch, and spending a quiet day of meditation over each notch, is not a bad one. To keep the ordinary festivals of the Church only is hardly sufficient; one becomes commonplace, and one's thoughts are too apt to become commonplace on such days. But let the soul that keeps an anniversary of its own making keep it alone; look inwards for a few hours in the year instead of always outwards; sit down at the long table d'hôte of memory, people it with the shadows of the past, and then set to and make out the bill conscientiously. Such days as these my grandfather always kept, and called his 'retreats.' He didn't prepare a banquet for his friends, or pass the time in festivity at all; he simply sat down and feasted his own soul and talked to her in that inner chamber which she had occupied for five-and-seventy years. Even now I can trace, long as it is since the dear old man was laid in the churchyard, the marked passages in his Elzevir Horace which he always read on such days; and as I read, I can see his large blue eyes wandering thoughtfully over the yellow leaves of memory's book. He takes up his pen. Slowly and hesitatingly he draws the black cross beneath the name of some dear departed friend. 'The master is keeping his Retreat,' whispered the servants to us, as we grandchildren were running gaily and noisily up the stairs; and we repeated the words to each other, and imagined that he was making himself Christmas presents, and wondered how he managed to light up his own Christmas tree. And we were not far wrong. They were the tapers of affection that he was kindling upon the tree of Unforgetfulness, each taper the symbol of happy hours of a long life. And when his hours of solitude were passed, and we were admitted in the evening, he sat still and quiet in his chair as if he rejoiced like a child in the Heaven-sent Christmas gifts of the past.

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[1] Schalttag, lit. 'intercalary day'–used of the 29th of February in leap years–impossible to translate except by a circumbendibus. Hence we have borrowed from ecclesiastical phraseology a word which, to a certain extent, possesses the same meaning in English. So far as we are aware Hauff is peculiar in using Schalttag in this sense.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.