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Minnesota, and recommend that it be accepted in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts

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SOME ASPECTS OF HUMOR IN THE GERMAN NOVELLE

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A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Minnesota

by

Arnold W. Shutter

In partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts

June
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PREFACE

This thesis deals with Humor as it is found in the German Novelle of the nineteenth century. It confines itself to no one author or group of authors. It does not treat Humor as a psychological study, an aesthetic quality, or a philosophical abstraction. What it does do is to limit the word to the bounds of its strictest usage, to call attention to its prominence in the Novelle of the nineteenth century, and to demonstrate that, as it is used in this field, its most striking attribute is sympathy. In bringing this point clearly before the reader, no attempt has been made to exhaust this comparatively new field. Humor is here considered, not so much in its objective, subjective, or aesthetic aspects, as in a few of the more striking forms which give rise to Humor and support it; the external forms rather than the internal causes.

HUMOR: ITS DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

Humor is a quaint odd thought or expression, inclining rather to the droll or jocose in its manner of presentation. Its thought and the way in which it is expressed should have a tendency to excite amusement. That should be its first function: to induce laughter. Its second should be to inspire thought. The ludicrous must be the predominating element, but this should not be carried to such an extent as to obliterate the second function of Humor.¹

The word Humor has had a growth in Germany which corresponds very closely to its history in England. Not until toward the close of the eighteenth century did it attain much significance in literature as the general expression of the highest form of the comic element. The word has come down to us both in England and Germany through the French from the Latin and in both these countries its use in literature has been a matter of growth and transition.

The word itself is used very carelessly in modern parlance, and is roughly applied to anything written, spoken or portrayed, which acts upon the risibility of the observer. Wit, for example, is often mistaken for Humor. There should be a fine distinction drawn between these two words. Commonly they are used interchangeably. This is a serious error against the best usage.² Wit is distinguished from Humor by its superior subtlety and finer thought; by its appeal to the intellect. It is reasoning raised to a higher power. Humor, on the other hand-- the

1. Century Dictionary (See Humor).

2. Emerson: Essay on Scott. "What an ornament and safeguard is Humor! Far better than wit for a poet or writer."

kind of Humor which is characteristic of the Germans-- is to be distinguished in their literature by its humane quality, its sympathetic bent, by virtue of which it often blends the pathetic with the ludicrous,³ or moves one to laughter and to tears with the same stroke. It is of earlier growth than wit, a fact which is borne out when one considers that coarse or cruel Humor no longer exists in the German literature of the last century.² It has outgrown that primitive stage. But coarse and cruel wit is not lacking in modern writing. Then again, Humor draws its materials from situations and characteristics; wit, from unexpected and complex relations. It is allied to quick and active reasoning, whereas Humor, in accordance with its earlier growth, tends constantly to pass into poetry.¹

The Ancients did not possess that comic quality that we understand as Humor.⁴ They had their wit, their jokes, their fun, quite often very brutal in nature, though not necessarily so, but there was altogether lacking that quality of sympathy which is above everything else the distinguishing mark of Humor, as the Germans use the word, and as the English-speaking people understand it. Classic antiquity had its Humor, as has been said, but it was never developed as an art, as a mode of expression

¹ Thackeray: Brown the Younger. "I should call Humor, Bob, a mixture of love and wit."

² George Eliot: German Wit, p. 64, Vol.9.

³ Deutsches Sachwörterbuch (Humor)

⁴ I. D'Israeli: Lit.Char., p. 434. "The Ancients, indeed, appear not to have possessed that comic quality which we understand as Humor, nor can I discover a word which exactly corresponds with our term Humor in any language, ancient or modern."

apart from the general body of literature. Coming down to the Middle Ages with the biting satire or the coarse pranks which characterized dramatic presentation, which was just then being rediscovered in Europe, one still fails to find many examples of pure Humor, though coarse Humor and horse play was a prominent element in the Fastnachtspiel and the Volksbücher of early German literature. Hans Sachs began to have an inkling of its possibilities, though he did not use it as a "Kunstart" by itself. The word "humor" still conveyed the idea of "Gemüt" or "Stimmung" rather than anything comic.

In the eighteenth century Humor was almost entirely lacking, so far as the drama of Germany was concerned. But in England there had begun to appear humorous novels and romances of the type produced by Sterne, Fielding, and Smollet. By the end of that century the English influence on German literature was tremendous, and Hippel, Thummel, Jean Paul, and others began to follow along the lines laid down by the English Humorists.

Then just at the close of the eighteenth and the opening of the nineteenth century, when the English influence was at its height, Cervantes and Boccaccio were very much read, as well as stories from the French of the "Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles" type and the "Contes Moraux". To these

* cf. Hans Sachs: Kraemerskorb; Narrenschneiden; Fahrender Schuler; Braunschweig; Susanna. Gryphius: Peter Squenz.

** cf. Ben Johnson: Every man in his Humor.

*** Robertson: Literature of Germany; Chapt. on Age of Classic Achievement.

stories from the literature of the Latin nations the term "Novelle" was applied. Such leaders of thought as Goethe, the Schlegels, Tieck, began to discuss this new literary form, to define it, and at last the word

Novelle was applied to a German production in 1805. Here was a new type, with great possibilities as a vehicle for Humor. This short story form has been very popular during the past century, and most of the literary men of Germany have given expression to their thought at some time or other, through this medium. Some have specialized in the Novelle; a number have confined themselves to it.

In an age when Humor is being cultivated as an art, in an age when writers show especial partiality to the Novelle form, the two must necessarily come together to a greater or lesser degree. It does not follow, however, that either one is confined to the other.

Sympathetic Quality of Humor.

The outstanding quality essential to German Humor is sympathy. By the word sympathy is meant the word with its original force, its pure meaning. It comes from the Greek σύν (with) παθεῖν (I feel) or πάθος (feeling), meaning to feel with a person, to share his view point, to understand his ideals. "Mitgefühl" is the German equivalent. There is nothing of the maudlin sentimentality about the word that has come to be associated with it in modern times. The man who sympathizes puts himself in the other fellow's position, he feels as the other fellow feels; but he has come to that realization by a process of reasoning. He knows why he feels as the

**** McBurney Mitchell: P.M.L.A. Vol.23 #2. Theory of the Novelle.

* Goethe: die Novelle

other man does. With him it is not a matter of emotion.

That quality of sympathy which we are made to feel for the victim of Humor, sympathy which the author himself feels for the victim, is very well illustrated in the Novelle, "Mozart auf der Reise nach Prag", by Möricke. In this story Mozart has wandered into the garden of one Mme. de Sevigne', and in a spirit of absentmindedness which was quite characteristic, he plucked an orange from her favorite tree; a tree which was under most careful observation and the exact number of whose fruit was a known quantity. In the same Geistesabwesendheit he drew his pocket knife and was about to prepare the orange for its final journey when he was apprehended by the large and powerful head-gardener. In the days of Mozart a theft, no matter how petty, was a matter which was apt to be severely punished, and being caught was, therefore, no small matter. But in a delightful vein of Humor he wrote the following note to the lady of the castle:

" Most Gracious Madame!

Here I sit, miserable offender, in the midst of your paradise, like quondam Adam after he has tasted the apple. The damage is done and I cannot even lay the blame off on a good Eve, who at this moment is enjoying her innocent sleep at the inn, surrounded by the Graces and Cupids of a canopy bed. Do but command, and I will hold speech with your Grace personally over my offense, the exact reason for which is scarcely clear even to me.

Your most humble servant,

W. A. Mozart, on his way to Prag."

Humor seeks to turn the reader's attention, when he is considering a mirthful circumstance, to the serious side of it, and vice versa, it would put in prominence the comic side of a serious situation. Which of these two considerations stands out the more prominently in the

above case it would be hard to decide. If one considers first the legal side of Mozart's position, he was in grave danger of suffering from an ungentle law. And in diplomatic style he pictured himself as in a veritable Eden, where he had sinned the sin of Adam by tasting forbidden fruit, yet with this difference: he could not lay the blame on a guilty Eve. His Eve was innocent and could prove an alibi. Or, taking the comic side first; there is always something amusing in a villain caught red-handed; the very diplomacy with which he addressed the owner of the estate shows that he was not insensible to the seriousness of his predicament. Yet he never attempted to free himself by using his own great name, by saying that he was really the great Mozart. Such a course would have brought him instant recognition, but he made no bid for favor that he could not win as any other man.

This is the dual nature of Humor, fun and earnest, comedy and sympathy. Its effect is not simply to call forth a fleeting excitement of the laugh muscles, as is the case with wit; it gives food for thought, it appeals to the emotions. Intentionally or unintentionally it gives a turn to the comedy of a situation which affords added support for a given idea.

The Humorist.

The Humorist himself must be a man of large sympathy. He can belong to no one school of literary expression, he can follow no fixed type; he must be universal. He must be a realist in his portrayal of everyday life and of the everyday world. He must be an idealist in interpreting its inner being and relationships; and he must at the same time understand how to melt together the full pathos of the sympathizing spirit with the tragi-comedy of human life.

The non-humorous story teller, the serious one or the out and out jester, can satisfy himself with straightforward presentation, letting his production speak for itself. How much of whim or pathos he would put in is a matter which may be left to his own judgment. For be the story tragic or comic, or anything that lies between these poles, it depends on situation and impresses itself on the reader by its own inherent qualities. But Humor, on the other hand, is not carried by the subject matter necessarily; it comes to light only through the manner in which it is told; from the illumination it has received from the subjectivity of the teller. So the Humorist cannot stand behind his subject with his personality, he must give himself up freely, must put himself into his work. Nor is it sufficient that at the beginning of the story, or perchance at the end or maybe at the climax, he step forth like a god from the clouds and deliver an oracle that shall wipe away all mysteries; not for a moment may the reader miss his guiding presence from his side, for to miss the presence of the author would be to run the chance of missing the track of the humor itself. The reader is as one who walks a difficult path through beautiful scenery. He is so intent on seeing that his feet do not stumble, that he could walk this path from one end to the other and never see the beauties through which he has passed. This, then, is part of the Humorist's task: to call a short halt now and then and point out those things which might otherwise pass unseen; to suggest analogies, to point out the ludicrous or incongruous, or where the

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W. Brandes: William Raabe.

reader would see only those things, to hint at the serious or pathetic.

The Audience

Humorous writing demands not a little from the reader, and for this reason the audience of the Humorist is select rather than large. An appreciation of the latent Humor of a situation or a personality requires the practiced eye of one who is himself a Humorist. On the audience of such alone the writer cannot count, and only under the most favorable circumstances can he depend on readers who have the type of intelligence to become Humorists; that is, people who can assume, with sympathy and on short notice, any required point of view. The author must, therefore, lead his readers to the same point of view which he himself has, he must make them see things through his eyes, as he sees them, and that is possible only insofar as he projects his own personality, his own point of view, into the story.

Tieck was giving voice to just these principles when he wrote of himself: "The opposition of fun and earnest in my nature is a necessity. Owing to the deep melancholy and the dejection which has fallen on me, this has been a happy circumstance. The sense of fun has often recalled me and preserved me from complete prostration. Even in my youth many could not properly comprehend this double nature and therefore wrongly held me for foolish."^{*}

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Alex. Japp: German Life and Literature, p. 434.

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cf. Emerson: Essay on Scott. "What an ornament and safeguard is Humor! Far better than wit for a poet or writer. It is a genius in itself and so defends from the insanities."

Koepke: Ludwig Tieck. II. p.14. II. p. 150.

This double viewpoint is quite characteristic both of Humor and the Humorist. To consider Tieck further as an example of the humorist, for he was one of the first to discuss Humor and the Novelle, - Tieck looked at the world of men with the eye of a Humorist, yet in his case, when it came to putting his observations into writing he projected so much of the contemplative side of his nature into his work, introduced such an overwhelming abundance of subjectivity, that his Novellen have become overloaded with digressions. A second, even a third, reading becomes necessary to extract all the Humor which will be found to abound. The modern reader rarely has the patience to reread; still less does he care to obtain his Humor as the result of laborious study. When he finds himself in such a mood he is in danger of forgetting the second function of Humor; to make him think. He is forgetting, too, that he must have the sympathizing spirit and see things as the author sees them. Tieck lived in a world of fantasy and contemplation. He who reads Tieck for his Humor must also, for the time being, live in such a world. Tieck had lived what he wrote. Like all great individual natures he was at once too peculiarly conformed and too many-sided to be pinned down to any of the common views of the day. His Novellen were the pure expression of his inner life.

General Classification of Humor.

Fr. Th. Vischer groups Humor into three divisions: Naive, Broken, and Free. Th. Lipps also has a general three-fold division with numerous subdivisions. Both of these schemes are based on aesthetic appreciation and the psychological effect of Humor. They are learned, scholarly, and

of great depth and scientific accuracy. They go into the subject of Humor of all ages, in all types of literature, and select from the literature of all lands. For the purpose of discussing the Humor of the Nouvelle, a specific type of literature, of one people, limited to one century, the following grouping has been found convenient: the Humor of Situation, of Dialogue, of Burlesque, of Character, of Description, and of Detail. These divisions are not mathematically accurate. No literary classifications can be so. There is always a shading off from one into the other, or a combination of two or more of them occupying the same story, paragraph, or even sentence. But in the selections chosen for illustrations that type which predominates shall give the name to the whole selection.

The Humor of Situation

By the Humor of situation is meant that type of Humor which arises from the fact that the characters find themselves in startling or unusual circumstances. The way in which they master the situation or in which the situation overpowers them affords the element of fun. It will be noted in the examples given that there must be, according to definition, a quality of sympathy existing between the author and his character; the author must also arouse in the reader a like feeling for his character, as well as an appreciation of and for the situation.

Sometimes it may be that the situation has the upper hand, or wields the controlling force, and one laughs because of the helpless way in which the characters are whirled along like straws on a stream. There may come a time, a turning point in the Novelle, when the straw finds something to cling to, attains strength, and at last offers successful resistance to the current which has so long been hurrying it forward. It may even be able, when it has come to a realization of its possibilities, not only to resist, but to divert to some extent the force which has been driving it. It frequently happens that the straw never does find itself, but is floated along down stream and out of sight.

Most subtle of all situations is such a one as is offered by Keller in "Kleider machen Leute". Here the tailor, the straw-- to pursue the figure further--, finds itself suddenly in the current of events, where prospects of finding successful existence, either where the current is swiftest or in a quiet back eddy, are equally dismal. At first the straw, as is natural, offers resistance at being so rudely hustled along.

It is feeble resistance, to be sure, but at any rate it is resistance. It is the nature of some straws to keep on resisting no matter how useless such proceeding may be, but it does not take this particular straw very long to discover that it wants to go the same way the stream is going. All it now has to do is to steer between the rocks, and the way in which it avoids the boulders and snags affords the greater part of the Humor. But the snags are envious and snatch at the straw and at last one of them halts its mad career. It is caught fairly in the middle and swings lengthwise across the stream, where it seems the force of the current must very soon break it in two. By this time, however, it no longer floats alone. Another straw has joined it and their combined weight is sufficient, at last, to swing them around the snag and on down life's stream.

On such a skeleton as this can be hung almost any Novelle that is dependent for its Humor on situation.* The differences will come along the line already indicated: the straw will resist the stream, and, still resisting, sink; or it will find sufficient support to successfully resist; or, finally, to make the stream serve its own purposes. In Keller's story, "Kleider machen Leute", the way in which the "straw" fell into the stream and got the first inkling of which way the current was going, is characteristic both of the author and of that type of Humor which depends on the situation. To go into the story more in detail:

The author has pictured a gray November day, with an occasional snowflake in the air, a country road winding toward a small town, and on this road a hungry tailor with nothing in his pocket but a thimble and

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cf. by the same author: "Die Drei Gerechten Kammacher"
"Das Fahnelein der Sieben Aufrechten"

nothing in his stomach but a snowflake or two, and no prospect for a noon-day meal. Begging was not only against his nature, but was rendered impossible by the fact that he wore a rather elegant, fur trimmed mantle, and a Polish fur cap, which set off his pale, regular features and his trim moustache, and gave him a rather distingue' appearance. At the top of a rise in the road he was overtaken by a fine coach, unoccupied save for the driver, who, seeing the tired condition of the wayfarer, and taking into consideration the fact that it was beginning to rain, invited the tailor to step into the coach.

The tailor accepted the offer with modest thanks, whereupon the coach rolled rapidly away, and in a short hour passed, stately and thundering, under the archway of the old wall at Goldach. Before the first inn, at the Sign of the Scales, so called, the distinguished looking conveyance came suddenly to a halt, and immediately the houseboy pulled so violently on the house bell that he nearly broke the wire in two. Then mine host and his people rushed out, and tore open the door of the coach; children and neighbors crowded around, curious to see "what sort of a kernel this unusual nut shell would produce", and when the embarrassed tailor at last jumped out in his mantle, pale and fair, and looking in a bored way at the ground, he appeared to them to be, at the least, a mysterious prince or the son of some count. The space between the coach and the door of the inn was narrow, and was, moreover, pretty well hedged in by spectators. Whether because he lacked presence of mind, or courage to break through the crowd and go on his way,-- at all events he did nothing, but allowed himself to be led, willy-nilly, into the house, and did not come to a realization of his strange situation until he saw himself put into a private dining room and saw his honorable mantle removed by willing hands.

"His Lordship wishes to dine?", he was asked. "He will be served at once. The meal has just been prepared." Powerless to correct the original false impression, the circumstances bore him along on a resistless tide till he was finally forced to act the part that had been thrust upon him. That was the point when the straw began to make use of the stream. But throughout the story, through good fortune and ill, the humor arises from the original situation.

Keller has sympathy for his own character; he refers to him as a "Schneiderlein",- the diminutive ending having here not the force of indicating size, but rather affection. He works on our sympathies by the graphic description of the outward splendor and elegance and contrasting this with the actual poverty of the hero. He knew himself what it was to be hungry and to lack friends; his life in Berlin had taught him that. He too had breakfasted on the snowflakes and wondered if he would fare better at noon time. He too had thrust his chilled fingers into empty pockets as he walked along, turning over some worthless object, like the thimble of the tailor, his hands numbed with the cold. So the reader's inclination is all in favor of the tailor by the time he has stepped from the coach at the door of the inn, and there is no overcoming an inward wish that he will at least be able to dispose of the meal the landlord serves, before people find out who he really is. After that the reader's only fear is that the pseudo count will get caught; but there is never anything like a hope that he will be.

"Des Lebens Ueberfluss", by Tieck, is a humorous illustration of the principle that the "difference between civilized and uncivilized

men is not specific." ¹ Tieck here humorously inquires what, of the many encumbrances of civilization, man can do without. He finds first that this and the other thing can be well done without table napkins, and at last reaches the conclusion that many men still eat without a table, with a glance at civilized Eastern life! The Humor of des Lebens Ueberfluss is in the assumed situation of a couple who have stripped life down to a little bit less than the bare necessities and manage, nevertheless, to philosophize themselves into conditions of positive luxury. "What need of stairs", they reason, "to people who never leave the house? And anyhow the landlord might come around for the rent! And these unnecessary impedimenta make wonderful substance for a much needed fire."

The dual character of Humor is well brought out in the above story, the counterplay of fun and earnest, the contrast of reality and imagination. The reality carries the pathos; the wretched quarters of the poor couple, that unfortunate pair who cannot work and who have nothing to live on; this is a background sufficiently matter-of-fact to satisfy any realist. But this couple have come to the conclusion that the way to avoid a difficulty is to ignore it, and the amount of actual success they have in putting this impossibility into practice is phenomenal. They give themselves over to their imagination, and in the realm of fancy, at least, they are monarchs of all they survey. ² The goal of Humor is to free the soul from the oppression of life in its joys

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Alex. Japp: German Life and Literature, p. 455.

2

Brandes: Wm. Raabe, p. 94.

vgl. Chamisso, Peter Schlemihl; Gotthelf, der Notar; Arnim, der tolle Invalide; Immermann, der Karnival; Raabe, Horacker.

and in its sorrows. It works unmistakably toward that goal here. The actual life which Heinrich and Clara live is a life more oppressive than most people could or would endure. They are reduced to the last extremity. Yet they do manage to lift themselves out of their surroundings, in spirit at least, they do find means to free their souls from their apportionment of sorrow, and in the way in which they can bring these things about, lies the Humor of this Novelle.

The Humor of Dialog

The Humor of dialog presents a type of Humor in which the fun is carried by the conversation of two or more characters. The speakers may direct their words wholly or in part at each other. Such conversation is usually informal in character, and although it may grow out of a given situation, such outward circumstances are not necessarily essential to its success. That is to say, taken out of its surroundings, with no additional explanation, or at least with only enough for the reader to learn the general drift of the thought, the dialog is still not robbed of its element of fun. It is also to be noted that methods of handling dialog differ apparently as much according to date as according to the writers. It was the style, for example, in the earlier part of the nineteenth century, for dialogs to be extremely verbose: in the latter part of the same century conversation between two or more characters consists not in long, well worded, rather artificial sentences, but in short, crisp repartee.

The following selection from die Freiherren v. Gemperlein¹ is an instance of modern dialog between two brothers. Says brother Ludwig:

"Ten years! Yes, yes, yes,-- ten years. Had I but married then, at that time when I had so good an opportunity. . . when I was loved so -----"

"When you were loved!" repeated Friedrich, forcing himself to keep a straight face.

-----" I might at this moment be the father of nine children."

"Of eighteen if your wife had presented you with twins each time. Of many more, perhaps, for Appleblossoms have a way of coming in- to the world by the bushel", said Friedrich, and laughed.

1

Ebner-Eschenbach: die Freiherren v. Gemperlein (Novallenschatz)

With this modern instance it is interesting to contrast the method of one of the older masters of the Novelle, Tieck. Tieck has created in *Die Gemaelde* a character, Eulenböck, who is a man not unlike Falstaff. The resemblance would be even more marked if the German character were less wordy. Eulenböck, like Falstaff, is a man whose finer qualities are hidden under an irresistible desire for drink. Yet Eulenböck has the ability to imitate the great master painters so skilfully that his copies deceive even experts. He has just succeeded in disposing of one of his imitations to a connoisseur, and is celebrating the event in his customary way when his young friend, Eduard, the Prince Hal of this pair, for the first time deeply and sincerely in love, finds that he must lead a different life from the one he has been following. Eulenböck, whose fund of Humor is as unquenchable as his thirst, is taken aback by this unusual turn in his friend's attitude. He does not know what sort of face to put on, much less what to say; for in such a mood, and with such ideas, he has never seen his young friend before. But on second thought he is happy that his friend does not notice him, while he empties his stein in silence.

"So you want to be virtuous, my son", he began at last. "Good enough! truly there are few men so well formed for virtue as myself, for it takes a really keen eye to see what does constitute virtue. Hoarding, extortion, lying to one's self and to God, certainly this is none. But whoever has the real talent for it will find it. Whenever I help a respectable man to a good Salvator, or a Julia Romano of my own make, and he takes pleasure in it, I have done better than if I sold some simple regular Raphael, which the boob wouldn't know enough to appreciate. I ***** suppose I've got to go and sell my great Julio Romano myself now, for you have neither the gift nor the good luck."

"The wretched Sophistries", said Eduard, "have no effect on me any more. That time is past and you want to look out that they don't catch you. You may succeed with the laity, but not with connoisseurs like old Walther."

"Don't worry about that, my child", said the old painter, "these

connoisseurs are the easiest to catch. I'd hate to try it with an ignoramus. And as for this man Walther-- have you seen the beautiful 'Hollenbreughel' which hangs between the sketch of Reubens and the portrait by Van Dyck? That's one of mine. * * * * * He took it and now he shows it to people as a proof of his many sided taste."

Eduard said: " But don't you want to be a respectable man, too? It's about time!"

"My young companion", cried the old man, " I have been one for a long time. You don't understand this business and you are not even through with your running start. If you should stand at last at the goal, having passed all rocks, obstacles, and false beacons, then beckon to me and perhaps I will steer in the same direction. But until that time don't bother me."

"Then our paths part," said Eduard, looking at him with a smile. "I have dissipated much but not everything. Some of my means are still available. I have my house yet. Here I will live in simplicity, and from the Prince, who is shortly to be here, I will seek the post of secretary or librarian; perhaps to travel with him; perchance to seek my fortune elsewhere-- or if not that, then I will confine myself here and seek employment in my native city."

"And when are you going to uncork this life of virtue?" inquired the old man with a grinning laugh.

"At once", said the youth, "tomorrow, today, this very hour!"

"Poppycock", said the painter and shook his gray head. "All good things require time, need preparation, must have a proper start, as it were, to end the old period with solemnity and begin in like manner the new. That was a splendid custom that our ancestors had in many neighborhoods of winding up the carnival with regular abandon, that they might afterwards be good and pious without fear or scruples of conscience. Let us emulate this honored custom. See, little brother? I am so fond of you! Give us and your whims just one more wine dinner, a regular one, a sort of vale' farewell hymn that we, and especially I, may hold you in remembrance. Let us carouse far into the night with the best of wine, then do you take the path to the right, to virtue and temperance, while we others remain to the left where we are."

"You old rascal," said Eduard with a smile, "if you can only find a pretext to get drunk you're perfectly satisfied. Well, then, let's call it Twelfthnight."

"And it's four whole days to Twelfthnight," sighed the old man, as he drained the last drop and then silently withdrew.

A rather unusual bit of dialog occurs in *Der Carnival und die Somnambule*,¹ in which there is introduced an amusing mixture of languages. The hero of the story has been bound to a tree and left there in the glowing heat of the sun, and a long time has gone by before anybody passed that way:

"Endlich kam ein Engländer, der auf seinem einsamen Abendspaziergang laut aus einem Buche die Verse las:

To sit on rocks, to muse o'er flood and fell,
To slowly trace the forests shadowy scene,
Where things that own not man's dominion dwell
And mortal foot hath ne'er or rarely been,
To climb the trackless mountain all unseen,
With the wild flock that never needs a fold,
Alone o'er steps and foaming falls to lean;
This is not solitude; 'tis but to hold
Converse with nature's charms, and view her stores unrolled!

Pray, sir, rief ich dem Gentleman an, untie me!

-- Er nahte sich mir ohne Zeichen des Erstaunens, er prüfte hinten den Knoten und sagte ruhig: 'Tis impossible, Sir, and I got no knife. Ich bat ihn in der nächsten menschlichen Wohnung Laerm zu machen! Er entfernte sich indem er, ohne sich weiter stören zu lassen, seine gefühllose und melancholische Lektüre in *Childe Harold* fortsetzte."

One of the characteristics of Humor is that one word or phrase may be used so as to be susceptible of more than one interpretation, or, at least, convey more than one shade of meaning. The reader will think naturally first of the more conventional use, whereas the writer wishes the word to convey the unusual sense as well. The reader, in other words, has one idea, the writer another, and it is the mutual discovery of ideas, the final complete understanding, the sympathy, that brings out the Humor.

1

Novellenschatz: Vol. V, p. 185.
Immermann

Or in dialog, when this mutual discovery is made by the two characters or more who are talking, the reader feels himself to be simply a delighted spectator of an interplay of intellect. In this latter case the writer has succeeded in giving his public the double view point on which the Humor depends. The reader, intent on watching the effect of one speaker's words upon the other, forgets that the same effect is being produced in him. It is precisely the same mental process that goes on when one watches a play.

Heyse found the difference between the Roman and the Novelle to consist in this: the former is a series of more or less connected events; the latter is a single episode, complete in itself. It should have a climax or turning point from which the story moves rapidly to its close, but in a manner and direction which could not have been foreseen from the start. A good Novelle must from the nature of things, therefore, be dramatic; that is, easily susceptible of dramatization.¹ Dramatic presentation must rely, in the main, on situation and dialog. This is particularly true of comedy. The dramatist who would excite mirth in his audience must drop his characters into novel circumstances and unexpected situations, or he must rely on dialog. There are other ways of getting the desired effect on the stage: by action, for example; but situation and dialog must ever be the main stays.

This is true on the stage; it is much more so in the Novelle, for here there is no actor to interpret the part, no action to convey an

1

McBurney Mitchel: Heyse and his Predecessors in the Theory of the Novelle.

idea which is not expressed in so many words, no stage directions. So the dialog becomes increasingly important and increasingly difficult to handle without reducing the Novelle to a play.

In the first example quoted,¹ the mutual discovery of different ideas conveyed by the same word depends on the word "Aepelblüh". To the one brother it suggests simply the name of the girl in whom he was interested; to the other not only that, but also its literal meaning. The incongruity of attributing to human beings the functions and mode of life of the flora of Germany grows on the reader the more he considers this passage.

In the second case, Eduard, with pretty distinct ideas of what virtue really is and ought to mean, has arrived at the ennobling decision that he should reform. Eulenböck knows perfectly well what idea is in the young man's head; at least he does as soon as he recovers from his first surprise at finding any such idea there at all. Yet he proceeds to make his own definition of the word "virtue", and in his expounding the "true virtue" to the young unbeliever is the Humor of this dialog. He uses a great many words to make his meaning absolutely clear; he philosophizes a great deal about what constitutes virtue and what does not; he never once delicately suggests an analogy, but painstakingly points out all possible ones, with reasons, and quotes examples to make it all clear. But with all this mass of verbiage, the Humor cannot be smothered. In the end even Eduard has to smile at his friend's conception of virtue.

¹
cf. p. 18 under Dialog.

It is a discussion not unlike Falstaff's soliloquy on honor.

This makes another point of departure between this and the first example. Analogies are simply hinted at in the former. There is nothing like the expounding of a theory such as there is in the latter. In the first instance a new line of thought is simply hinted at. A possible double meaning is just suggested. The few words, and the fact that the reader's mind has to bridge a little gap, offers a mental exercise which the wordier style does not afford.

In the last example quoted the "mutual discovery" is not so apparent. The comic effect is something in the nature of a shock or surprise at finding English words introduced into the midst of a German sentence, suddenly and without warning. The "discovery" in this case is pretty much the reader's own and the "mutual" side of the definition lacks support. The "mutual" side is more patent in the last line but one quoted, where the lines from Childe Harold are called "gefühllos" and "melancholisch". They are just the reverse of that. They are full of feeling and show an appreciation of the wilds of nature unspoiled by the hand of man. The first thought of the reader is: "Why such a verdict on these lines?", and the second thought, which follows at once, is that the verdict of a man who had been tied half a day to a tree would be "feelingless" and "melancholy" no matter what the evidence.

1

Shakespeare: Henry IV, Act V, Sc. I.

2

cf. p. 21 under Dialog.

Widely as all these three examples differ from one another, there is one feature which they all have in common, one uniting bond which must be present as the touchstone of German Humor, the quality of sympathy. Beneath the surface antagonism of the two brothers, beneath the arguing pro and con of Eduard and Eulenböck, beneath the interchange of courtesies between the unfortunate Eduard and the unemotional Englishman, there runs the characteristic undercurrent of fellow feeling.

The reader laughs at the ready, biting sarcasm of Friedrich, yet wants to console Ludwig for his wasted ten years; he ridicules Eduard's helpless appeal for assistance, yet feels he is more than justified in his resentment of the cold-blooded Englishman; he is amused at the clever sophistries of Eulenböck, yet finds the old reprobate a most likeable character. Like Prince Hal, he would heap scurrilous abuse on this German Falstaff, not because he dislikes him, but to draw him out. And although he cannot resist calling Ludwig quarrelsome and self-centered, though with reason he calls Eulenböck a reprobate and Eduard (in the Karnival) a fool, he feels the author looking at him with the eyes of Owen Wister's Virginian, and saying: "When you call me that name---- smile!"

The Humor of Burlesque

Whenever the dramatist goes beyond the limits of recognized convention in putting his characters into novel and extraordinary situations and confronting them with unexpected circumstances, he runs into what is known as burlesque. In other words, burlesque is a possible situation exaggerated, overplayed, for the sake of the humorous effect. This definition applies with equal strength to the Novelle. The turns that it takes are various. It may treat a grave situation with levity; or a humorous one with mock gravity. Almost any circumstance which is capable of being emphasized by travesty is subject for burlesque. Above all two ideas are continually held before the mind in perpetual contrast: one of reserve and dignity, the other of abandon and frivolity.

The following is an illustration from Die Freiherren v. Gemperlein:¹

Manager Kurzmichel was about to climb into his matrimonial bed where his wife had already taken her place, when he was interrupted in this process by a violent knocking at the door of his house. Hurried steps ascended the stairs, a quick exchange of words-- Frau Kurzmichel was already sitting bolt upright in bed-- each looked at the other: he a picture of despair, she a picture of alertness. Now there came a knocking at the door of the room.

"Manager", called the maid, "you are to come to the castle at once!"

"For Heaven's sake, is it burning?" groaned Kurzmichel, staggering to the door. But fortunately his wife was there first.

"Kurzmichel-- you don't mean to say-- you aren't going-- not until you get some clothes on!"

"True, true," answered Kurzmichel, with teeth chattering, and he hurried back to the dressing table where he clothed himself with all haste in a pair of spectacles and made desperate efforts to cram his tobacco pouch into a pocket that was sadly lacking.

¹ Die Freiherren v. Gemperlein. P. 214 Novellenschatz (Ebner-Eschenbach)

"Calmness, Kurzmichel! In every situation in life be calm," warned his wife * * * * * you don't go out a night like this without your flannel shirt." * *

* - - - -

All that there is to the situation, as a situation, is this: The manager of an estate is about to go to bed when he receives an unexpected summons to appear at the castle immediately. Owing to his nervous nature he becomes unduly excited. It is the enlarging upon this last fact, the showing what a nervous man may do when confronted by the unexpected, the exaggeration of his nervousness and apprehension, that make of this situation a burlesque. It is a perfectly serious situation, of which the reader is made to see the humorous side.

Precisely the opposite turn is given in the following sketch. In das Fahnlein der sieben Aufrechten¹, there is a scene at the barracks, where Karl, the hero, is undergoing military training with others of his companions. He plans a trick, of which two of his comrades are to be the victims. The game is carried off as follows: As much liquor as possible is smuggled into the quarters, and at night, when lights are supposed to be out, they institute a regular "Kneipe". All manner of stunts were attempted, and those who failed had some ludicrous form of punishment visited on them. The climax came when the two unsuspecting victims had to perform. The task allotted to them was to balance each a glass of liquor on the blade of his bayonet, and holding each the glass to the mouth of the other, empty them without spilling a drop. They started out boastfully enough. But the blades trembled so that the glasses tumbled off before they could drink a drop. As a result of their failure they were sentenced to stand guard for a quarter of an hour outside the door

¹
Keller: Das Fahnlein der Sieben Aufrechten

of the dormitory in a uniform consisting of undershirt, leggings, shackos, and most of their accoutrements. No sooner were they on duty than their companions shot the bolt of the door, put the room in order-- clearing away all signs of the revel-- and laid themselves in bed as though they had been asleep for hours. In the meantime the two marched with bold step up and down in the light of the corridor lantern. Spörri, who, on account of his free jag, was in the happiest of moods, began to sing, which only served to hasten the step of the officer in charge, who was already on the way. At his approach they tried to escape into the room, but the door refused to open and before they could help themselves the enemy was there. In their confusion their military instincts got the better of them, and they placed themselves before the door, and called out: "Who goes!"

"Was Kreuzsakerment soll das heissen?" "What are you doing there?" called the watch, but without receiving a satisfactory reply from the two boiled owls. The officer opened the door in haste and looked into the room; for Karl, who had pricked up his ears, had slid out of bed, shoved back the bolt and dived back under the covers again. When the officer saw that everything was dark and quiet and heard nothing save heavy breathing and snoring, he called: "Halloa there, people!"

"Go to the devil!" called Karl, "lie down and sleep, you drunken bums!" The others, too, pretended that they had just been waked up and called: "Aren't those beasts in bed yet? Throw them out. Call the watch!"

"The watch is here, I'm the watch," said the officer, "some one of you hurry and light a light."

It is rare to find a story which one may classify on the whole as burlesque. Burlesque is difficult to sustain without wearying the reader. Gotthelf has, however, given us, in *der Notar in der Falle* a Dorfnovelle in which the burlesque elements are prominent throughout.

It is possible to sustain the burlesque because Gotthelf had a definite purpose in telling this story. He wished to hold up to good-natured ridicule certain conditions which he knew from his own personal experiences existed in the villages and small towns with which he had such intimate acquaintance. So strong was this purpose that he has only just escaped giving a "Tendenz" tone to the entire story. The final reconciliation and good-natured conclusion has avoided that difficulty. But here is the point that is so paradoxical: Gotthelf has given us a picture which is perfectly true to life, yet a picture which appears throughout so overdrawn that one may call the whole story a burlesque. The explanation of this is that to the ordinary reader everything seems exaggerated. There is nothing in the life of the ordinary reader to form a basis for comparison of such extraordinary figures as the young men of the village, or the Notar, or Louise. Gotthelf, though, had lived a useful life among just such people, he knew their petty ambitions, their miserable little faults, and in spite of it all he loved them. And because of this love, he wanted to hold up a mirror before them in which they could see themselves as they were. If they could see the picture, he thought, as it appeared to others, they too would understand better some of the crudities which they could do very well to cast aside. He appeals to the sympathy of the reader in the same paragraph in which he ridicules the too early marriages and the excessive drinking, for, in spite of these faults, the audience is assured, these people are "allerliebste."

" Most charming are the people of these little towns,- they are not all cast in the same mold, but each has his own individual stamp; all they have in common is that the girls are for the most part tender and kind hearted, the young gentlemen somewhat wooden and not very neatly dressed, but they have a terrible amount of love in their bodies,so they marry very young; if they don't they have to pour from morning till night an undue amount of liquid into their systems so that they won't burn up. Sometimes the married men pour in a double quantity, apparently ¹ in order not to burn up their wives with the ardor of their love."

¹

Gotthelf: der Notar in der Falle.

Humor of Character

There are two types of people to take into account in discussing the Humor of Character: people whose personality is essentially humorous, who have themselves a sense of Humor, who do and say things which call forth amusement, and who do so consciously; and people whose personality is essentially serious, who possess only a limited sense of Humor, and who do and say things that call forth amusement, but do so unconsciously. The distinction is that between a man who makes a "bon mot" and the man who makes a "faux pas".

People of the first class, who are themselves essentially Humorous, stand out from the mass of characters in the Novelle as distinct personalities, as definite, well defined human beings, with traits which the reader can understand and with which he sympathizes as he does with the peculiarities of a friend. Such characters are to be numbered on one's list of personal acquaintances.

In the realm of tragedy any literature will produce a number of great characters. Germany is no exception to this rule. Faust, Torquato Tasso, Werther, Wallenstein, Emilia Galloti, Michael Kolhaas, are names that rank high in the annals of tragedy. There is a quality to tragedy in real life which tries men's souls, which strengthens their moral fibre, which brings out the strong qualities of men and women. And as it is the function of all writers, not alone that of the dramatist, to hold the mirror up to nature, it follows naturally that great characters stand out prominently in drama, in verse, and in romance. This is true of the Novelle, and although this particular form has less interest

in character, as such, than in the telling a story for its own sake, still among tragic Novellen will be found the most striking characters.

Even Shakespeare, if we omit his fools, has produced only one great comic character, Falstaff, as against a perfect array of great tragic characters.

When, therefore, we come across a well characterized personage in the Novelle, who leans to the comic side, the circumstance is worth special consideration.

Well characterized persons who are essentially humorous are not to be found among the works of every writer of Novellen. But Tieck, Raabe, Keller, Seidel, have presented such to the world. Tieck's Eul**1**böck is such a man. Tieck has contributed to German literature a novel character with the invention of that man. His similarity to Falstaff has already been suggested.

The parallel between characters of tragedy and Humor will not hold if carried too far. The implication is not that the Humorous characters stand out as prominently as do the tragic ones. Any one familiar with German literature recognizes, at mere mention of the name, such figures as Götz, or Egmont. Very few would locate immediately the names of Hediger or Eugen Kniller. But these men are, notwithstanding, well characterized, they are the friends of those who know them, as much so as Götz or Egmont. More so, perhaps, for not every one numbers the majority of his friends among the prominent and famous.

1

Wm. Raabe-- Horacker-- title character
Keller-- Die drei Gerechten-- Zusi Bunzli
Das Fähnlein-- Hediger
Tieck-- Der Gelehrte-- Der Professor
Seidel-- Leberecht Hühnchen-- title character

The second class, people whose personality is essentially serious, are usually the butt of jests, or playthings in the hands of fate. They react as they do under given conditions because they lack definite personal qualities. They tend to become conventionalized and to run to type rather than to exhibit an individuality that ripens into a personal acquaintanceship between themselves and the reader. Yet they may be perfectly true to life; just as much as the more carefully drawn characters.

Of this latter type the hero of Der Karnival is a good exemplification. Good natured, kind hearted, yet a colorless being withal,¹ he is turned this way and that by every wind that blows.² This hero, always an admirer of artistic greatness, had learned that Esslair, the great literary artist of his time, was to deliver a lecture on Wallenstein, and remembering, along about four o'clock in the afternoon, that Tieck in his works on Dramaturgie had something to say of Esslair, he decided to sit down and read up on the subject. He reached for the book in its accustomed place on the shelf; it was not there! Ah yes! he remembered having lent it the week before to his friend Emil, and sent the servant after it. In three quarters of an hour the servant came back with a note in which Emil begged to remind his friend that he had returned the book three days before. Well, if he couldn't find that book he

1

Immermann: Der Karnival und die Somnambule

2

Gotthelf: Der Notar in the der Falle

(a) Description of der Notar

(b) Description of Louise

Eichendorff: Aus dem Leben eines Tangemichts.

would do the next best thing and read another author who had written along similar lines. While reading this other author, his hand slipped into his pocket and there came in contact with the long lost Tieck. It was now too late to read, so he hurried out to the theatre where he arrived in time to meet the crowd as it was coming out.

On another occasion he had saved up all his money with intent to take a trip to Italy. He went around to the house of a friend who had recently returned from that country, and he made repeated visits to this friend's house to get information on his proposed journey. His friend, who was considerably older, had a charming daughter. The daughter became his wife, the trip to Italy was indefinitely postponed, and the money saved for that purpose was turned into other and more immediate channels.

There was another time, before he had met his wife, when a friend had obtained for him an interview with a man prominent in the government service. With this man, it was most likely, the here could get employment as private secretary. The introduction was to have taken place at Frankfort, and on the way it was necessary to spend the night at Ems. On the stop-over he became acquainted with a young lady, spent three days instead of one night; when he got to Frankfort both the official and the chance of employment were gone, and his friend received him with marked coolness.

In this way the reader has been made familiar with the type of man with which the story deals. He knows he is to read about a man easily influenced by the whim of the moment, yet a man with great

kindness of heart, (this kindness and wish to help is the cause of most of his troubles), a man little acquainted with the ways of the world. But that bond of sympathy between the author and his subject, which is characteristic of humor, is never lacking.

Die drei Gerechten Kammacher are of this stamp. They have no sense of Humor themselves at all. They do funny things because they have their minds fixed firmly on one idea only: to gain for themselves the combmaker's business. Looking neither to the right nor to the left, they pursue this object with a devotion worthy of a better cause. They fail utterly to see themselves as others see them. Much of this is implied in the one adjective that Keller uses to describe them.¹ It is very necessary to understand the significance of the word "gerecht" as Keller uses it, especially in the story of "Die drei gerechten Kammacher". It is a favorite word of his, for in his various writings it occurs no less than twelve times. But when he uses it in connection with humans it has none of the usual connotation of praise, but has rather a colorless sense which is not unlike blame; much like the prudish work "korrekt". "Gerechte" are to Keller people who indeed cause no harm; who do not come into conflict with law and order; but who, on the other hand, have in their make-up a mixture of heroic wisdom and endurance, together with an absolute lack of the finer sensibilities. They never get anywhere, never accomplish anything: they have not a single redeeming vice. Keller reminds us at the very outset of this

¹
A. Koster: G. Keller. Chapt. VI.

Novelle die drei Gerechten that, as Pierre Bayles has put it, no state can exist consisting of just men only. Just so in Seldwyla hundreds of "ungerechte" can get along in pretty fair accord, but not so three "gerechte Kammacher." As Keller himself expresses it, with an untranslatable play on words:

1

"Die Leute von Seldwyla haben bewiesen, dass eine ganze Stadt von Ungerechten oder Leichtsinnigen zur Not fortbestehen kann, im Wechsel der Zeiten und des Verkehrs; die drei Kammacher aber, dass nicht drei Gerechte lang unter einem Dache leben können ohne sich in die Haare zu geraten. Es ist hier aber nicht die himmlische Gerechtigkeit gemeint oder die natürliche Gerechtigkeit des menschlichen Gewissens, sondern jene Blutlose Gerechtigkeit welche aus dem Vaterunser die Bitte gestrichen hat: Und vergib uns unsere Schulden wie auch wir vergeben unseren Schuldnern! Weil sie keine Schulden macht und auch keine ausstehen hat."

As illustrative of the other type of Humorous character, the man who has a sense of Humor himself, no better example can be found than that of Leberecht Hühnchen. This is one of the best known Humorous characters of the Novelle, an inimitable fellow, a creation of Seidel's that is a genuine contribution to literature. The Romantic and the real, the Humor and the pathos, of life are continually brought to the reader's attention. Enjoyment he must have, yet with thirty Pfennig, with less, with nothing, he could live like a Prince.

2

Seidel was an admirer of Hoffmann, and in some respects he has worked along similar lines. But whereas the Romantic element in Hoffman frequently becomes actually morbid, there is no trace of morbidity in any of the fantastic humor which crops out from time to time in Seidel's writings. Whatever incongruous hallucinations he may have had, his feet never left the solid earth and the intellect can follow him

1

G. Keller: Die drei Gerechten Kammacher.

2

Francke: Modern German Culture, p. 166 ff.

wherever he may lead. His character Leberecht Hühnchen was modeled after a college acquaintance of his, who really possessed many of the qualities with which he has endowed Leberecht. From the description which he gives of this fellow student in "Aus meinem Leben" one feels in reading the Leberecht stories that he was simply recording the actual impressions of his own life. He says:

1

"Being of extremely slender means he had to peg along through all sorts of difficulties. But all the time something very like sunshine proceeded from him, and he could find a bright side to everything. He could take infinite glee in grotesque inventions and imaginings. Once I found him sitting at his window and looking out upon the square with an expression of intense amusement. I asked him what entertained him so much. 'Oh,' he said, 'I am only imagining that I could suddenly dart out my nose, way off into the square, and quickly draw it in again, so that I could tap the people over yonder on the shoulder with it; and then when they looked around, frightened and surprised, nobody would be there.'"

Hediger, the sturdy old line Swiss Republican, is characterized by a few bold strokes of the pen. In a few words the reader is made acquainted with the appearance and contents of his room. Just those essential things are pointed out which indicate the personality of the old patriot:

2

"Of this paper (the Swiss Republican) there stood at least twenty-five folio volumes, well bound, in a small walnut case, and they contained practically nothing that Hediger had not himself experienced and fought through during the last twenty-five years. Besides these there stood a "Rotteck" in the case, a History of Switzerland by Johannes Müller, and a fistful of political handbills, et cetera. A geographical atlas, a map, and pamphlets, the memorials of bitter passionate days, lay on the lower shelf. The walls of the room were decorated with pictures of Columbus, Zwingli, v. Hutten, Washington, and Robespierre; for he understood no jest and rather approved the reign of Terror."

1

Seidel: Aus meinem Leben.

2

Keller: das Fähnlein der Sieben Aufrechten.

Humor of Description

Description may be defined as a word painting of a person, an occurrence, a place, or other object which presents to the reader the external appearance of the matter under consideration. In painting such a word picture the artist may invoke the aid of Humor as he may in any other form of literary expression. The difficulty to be met with under the head of description is that, in depicting a person, description tends to shade off into characterization, or in depicting an occurrence it tends to run into a situation. Description of place avoids both these perplexities, but has this drawback, that descriptions of place alone, which contain an element of Humor, are exceptionally hard to find.

Keller, in *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*, describes two farmers at work plowing in the field, one making a turn at one end of the field as the other turns at the opposite extremity of his plot of ground.

¹
"They resembled each other almost exactly at a little distance; for they presented the original variety of this neighborhood, and at the first glance one might only have been able to distinguish them by the fact that the tip of one man's cap hung down in front, whereas the other had his hanging down his back. But that feature took turn about between them, whenever they turned to plow in the other direction; for when they came together on the elevation and passed each other, he who was plowing against the east wind let his cap blow over toward the rear, whereas the cap of him who had the wind on his back flew over toward the front. There was each time also a middle point when the shining caps trembled straight up in the air, and the two white flames flickered toward Heaven."

¹

Keller: *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*.

1

"Hühnchen lived in the garret of a squat, comical little house, which was located in a garden just as small. In his living room there was just enough room for two ordinary men to stretch their legs out. Along next to this was a dormer room which was almost completely filled by his bed, so completely in fact, that when he sat on his bed and wanted to pull off his shoes he had to open the door first. But this little bird cage had something peculiarly comfortable about it; something of the sunny spirit of the owner had become a part of it.

"'First of all a fire in the stove', said Hühnchen. 'Just sit down on the sofa, but hunt out a valley first. The sofa is somewhat mountainous, and you have to be sure that you sit down in a valley.'"

2

"There was a damaged place on the wall which looked like a bird's-eye view of a country with lakes and cities and a little heap of coarse grains of sand which represented a group of islands. Further along there was a long pig's bristle which had fallen from the brush and remained sticking in the paint. For Jobst had come across a little bit of such paint on the previous fall, and in order not to have it go to waste he had painted about a quarter of one of the walls with it, as far as it had lasted,- that part of the wall, indeed, which happened to be right next the spot where he lay in bed. But on the farther side of the pig's bristle there arose a slight elevation like a tiny blue mountain range, which threw a gentle shadow over the bristle toward the blessed isles. He had worried all winter over this mountain range because it seemed to him that it had not been there before. Now as he searched for it with troubled gaze and suddenly failed to find it he could scarcely trust his senses when he saw in its place a little bare spot on the wall, and opposite this he noticed how the tiny blue mountain was moving not far away, apparently migrating. In astonishment he went straight into the air as though he had seen a blue mouse, and he saw that it was a bug which he had carelessly painted over the previous fall while it was hibernating. But now it had been reanimated by the warmth of the spring, had got up, and at this very moment was moving undisturbed along the wall with its blue colored back."

But the Humor of description does not necessarily have to be a long affair of several lines. It may very well be suggested by a happy simile, an expression which will suggest some striking analogy and let

1

Seidel: Leberecht Hühnchen.

2

Keller: Die drei gerechten Kammacher.

the mind of the reader draw the picture to suit himself. Very often the reader is able to get a much better idea of an object or circumstance with which he is not familiar, by a comparison of that object or circumstance with something with which he is familiar than could be obtained by many pages of accurate analytical description.

For instance, Dietrich is said to open his mouth like a
smiling carp. Louise's heart, when she is expecting to meet the man
with whom she is infatuated, beats like a two hundred cook going down
stairs. The bowl of Leberecht's pipe is somewhat too small for a sponge
holder, and the stove in his room stands in the same proportion to a
regular stove as the Dachshund does to the Newfoundland dog.

¹
Keller: die drei Gerechten Kammacher

²
Gotthelf: der Notar in der Falle

³
Seidel: Leberecht Hühnchen

The Humor of Detail

Heinrich Seidel has created a type of humor which can be best characterized as the Humor of detail. He has succeeded in combining the feeling of Nietzsche, that we should live life to the utmost, with a humorous negation of all the Superman philosophy, with a rejection of all titanic longings. With him the way to enjoy life to its capacity is to make of every rose a garden, of every meal a feast; to get great reactions from the most ordinary occurrences of every day life. Nor was this philosophy the idle dream of an impractical literateur. Seidel was a constructing engineer, the one who planned the enormous glass arch of the Anhalter Station at Berlin.

¹
"The swallow builds its little nest high up among the iron ribs of the monster glass dome; below, the mighty trains puff, the commerce of the world crowds; goods from the ends of the world are piled. Up aloft the swallow plasters its nest with a little straw and sings its happy song. So Seidel, like one in a dream, has flown in from his ² little country seat into the metropolis, and yet, in spirit, he has remained in his little nest. So in the noisy, groaning, fighting commercial hall of our most modern literature he has built his tiny home and sings his song, bright and golden even in its very tragic element."

His philosophy of life Goethe put into words long before this man's time.

"Willst du immer weiter schweifen? Sieh, das Gute liegt so nah'
Lerne nur das Glück ergreifen, denn das Glück ist immer da."

He would not say it that way himself; but the same idea is in these words

of his : "Wo ist die Sonne? Die Sonne soll noch einmal kommen, sie hat noch niemals einen so glücklichen Esel gesehen." Seidel's contribution

to literature is not so much a creation as a recreation. He has re-

¹

Richard M. Meyer. Deutsche Literatur Geschichte des 19 Jahr hunderts

²

Heinrich Seidel: Von Berlin nach Berlin: Aus meinen Leben.

discovered the old fashioned secret of happiness; he has time. Like his own character, Leberecht Hühnchen, who slices every pleasure into twenty pieces to be able to chew the longer thereon, he divides every minute into sixty seconds, thus finding time to squeeze in one happy second between every two serious or tragic ones, and making the tragic one so small that it seems to lose its power to distract. This is the secret of his humor.

In Leberecht Hühnchen he presents himself as a college friend of the hero's, who, during student days, found himself on a particular occasion nearly without funds. With thirty Pfennig in his pocket he set out to look up Leberecht, with the intention of negotiating a loan. He met his friend on the way.

"Famous!" said the friend. "So you still have the thirty Pfennig? If we both bank together we won't have any more. I have just had to give my last cent to Braun who had to take part in a big Stiftungs commers and had to have the money, of course. So, you still have thirty Pfennig! For that amount we can have a wonderful evening."

I looked at him in astonishment.

"Just give me the money," he said, "I will do the buying-- and I've got all sorts of things at home-- we will live like Lucullus tonight, like Lucullus, I tell you."

Having made the purchases and retired to Leberecht's little room they settled themselves to their "schlampampen" and Leberecht delivered himself as follows: "There is something magnificent about it all when one considers, that in order for me to drink my tea here in all peace and quiet and for you to be able to smoke your pipe, the diligent Chinaman in yoh far land has planted for us and the negro has toiled for us beneath the tropic sun. Yes, and not only that, but the big steamers rush across the ocean in storm and gale for us, and the caravans wind their way over the desert. The haughty millionaire merchant who lives in his palace in Hamburg and calls a princely country seat on the banks of the Elbe his, must turn to our account some portion of his care, and if affairs of business cause him sleepless nights, we at least lie stretched out at our ease and dream of lovely things, and let him torture himself that we may get our tea and tobacco. Things taste twice as good to me when I think of these things."

Alas, he failed to consider that probably the greater part of the tea had grown on a native willow on the banks of some meandering stream and that at the very best this tobacco was at home in the Uckermark, if indeed it had not grown in the fertile fields of Magdeburg on the same beet which was the parent of the very sugar with which we had sweetened our tea.

After this we engrossed ourselves in the eternal Don Quixote, and in this way the festive evening went peacefully to its close.

In his own field Seidel stands alone. No other writer has attempted the things which he has. Keller has come as near to them as any author, and Raabe has approached this field. But although Keller had an inexhaustible fund of Humor, which enlivened and rendered new every subject he touched, and graced it with the stamp of his originality, yet he followed in a certain sense where others had led. He took subjects which others had used and turned his attention to things which others had pictured.

Raabe, when he wrote, carried the world of every day events with him into his Humor. His is a deeper, more philosophical Humor and less of the surface type. Where Seidel causes a laugh he causes a smile. That is largely because Seidel took refuge from the world in his Humor. To him it was as a place to which he might escape and relax.¹ Raabe had none of Seidel's faith in human nature. Too frequently his humor, his apparent sympathy, is used only as a veil to soften stinging irony.² He says one thing and means the opposite; he calls good, that which he would have us avoid as evil; he flatters where he means to censure.

1

Robertson: Literature of Germany, p. 569

2

Wernaer: Romanticism and the Romantic School.

Nothing was too commonplace, no person was too insignificant, for Seidel to consider; no calling was too strange and weird to fail of interest for him. The dogs on the street, sparrows that build their nests in the awnings, poor people of the great metropolis who outwardly seem to offer no single interesting phase, the country, the city, and all types of people in whichever place they live,-all these have an interest for him. "Der Leichenmaler", "Eine Sperlingsgeschichte", "Eugen Kniller", "Jorinde", "Hundegeschichten", "Hedwig",- are titles which attest the variety of his writings. The very universality of his materials, the scope of his subjects, give the key to his largeness of heart. He finds that about every person, no matter what external impression he may give, there is something unique, something peculiarly his own, which can be got at and brought to light, if only one will take the trouble to look for it. This is the very essence of sympathy; it is the quality with which the reader of Seidel finds himself in contact first, last, and all the time.

Conclusion

The key note struck by the Humor of the Novelle in the German literature of the nineteenth century is Sympathy. If the reader is in search of boisterous merriment, or of the "loud laugh that speaks the vacant mind" he will find that, too, in this field, though not so abundantly. In that case, however, he must bring himself to realize that he is in search of comedy, wit, horse-play, but not Humor. Humor implies two things: amusement and thought. Thought and understanding are the essentials of Sympathy. Sympathy must be inclusive, embracing the author, his creation, and the audience.

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