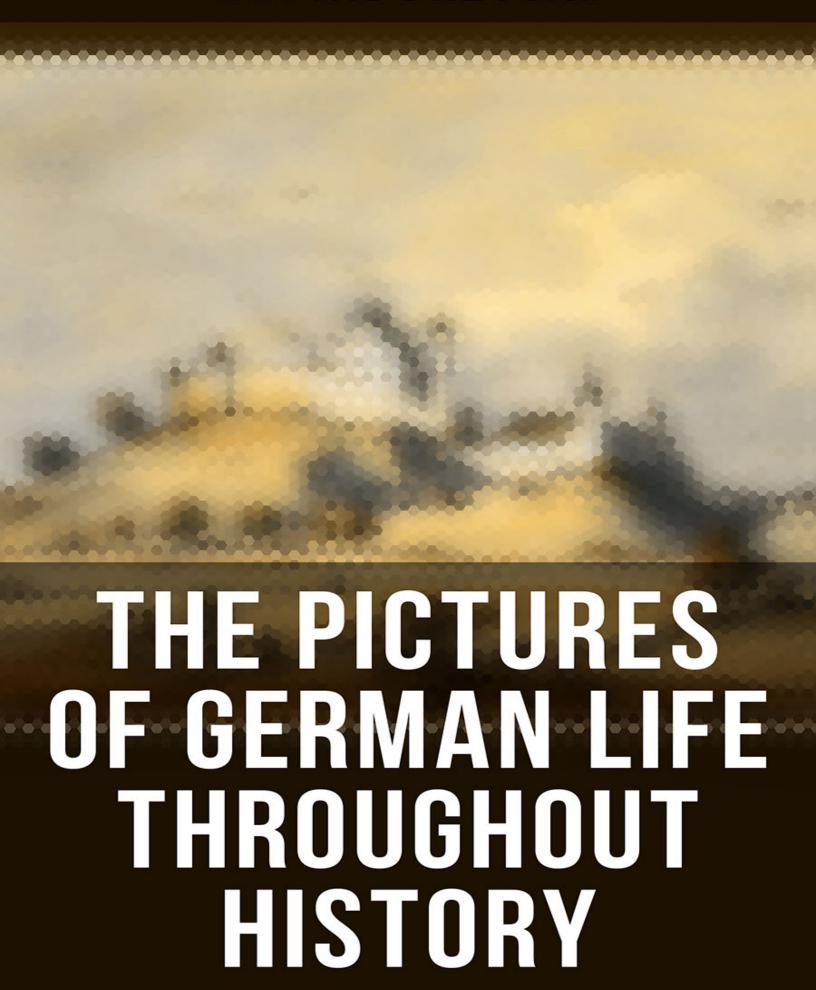
# **GUSTAV FREYTAG**



### **Gustav Freytag**

## The Pictures of German Life Throughout History

**18th and 19th Century** 

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### **Table of Contents**

Volume 1 Volume 2

### Volume 1

Table of Contents

#### **Table of Contents**

INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER I. THE LIFE OF THE GERMAN PEASANT. CHAPTER II. THE LIFE OF THE LOWER NOBILITY.

CHAPTER III. THE CITIZEN AND HIS SHOOTING

FESTIVALS.

CHAPTER IV. STATE POLICY AND THE INDIVIDUAL.

CHAPTER V. "DIE STILLEN IM LANDE," OR PIETISTS.

CHAPTER VI. THE DAWNING OF LIGHT.

**FOOTNOTES:** 

#### INTRODUCTION.

Table of Contents

The Man and the Nation! The course of life of a nation consists in the ceaseless working of the individual on the collective people, and the people on the individual. The greater the vigour, diversity, and originality with which individuals develop their human power, the more capable they are of conducing to the benefit of the whole body; and the more powerful the influence which the life of the nation exercises on the individual, the more secure is the basis for the free development of the man. The productive power of man expresses itself in endless directions, but the perfection of all powers is the political development of the individual, and of the nation through the State. The mind, the spirit, and the character are influenced and directed by the political life of the State, and the share which the individual has in the State is to him the highest source of honour and manly happiness.

If in the time of our fathers and grandfathers the German contemplated his own position among other men, he might well question whether his life was poor or rich, whether hope or sorrow predominated; for his earthly position was in every way peculiar. Whilst he felt with pleasure that he was in the enjoyment of a free and refined cultivation, he was daily oppressed by the harsh despotism, or the weak insignificance of his State, in which he lived as a stranger without the protection of the law; he looked with pride on the gigantic workings of German science, but he perceived,

with bitter sorrow, that millions of his countrymen were separated by a deep chasm from the highest results of scientific labour. He found himself amidst the working of a popular energy, which ventured with heroic courage on the boldest conclusions in the realm of mind; and, on the other hand, saw around him narrow-hearted obstinacy, where simple and close results ought to have been the aim. He felt with thousands an eager desire for an object of life which would exalt and animate him, and again he found himself surrounded and shackled by narrow-mindedness and by provincial and local exclusiveness. Whoever should thus feel, may well inquire whether we Germans are old or young, whether it is destined by fate that the German nature should only find expression in the individual virtuosoship of art and science, or whether an harmonious development of the nation in its practical and ideal tendencies, in labour and enjoyment. State, church, science, art, and industry, lies before us in the future: whether we shall ever again, as members of a great State, play the part of masters in Europe, which old records inform us our ancestors, in remote ages, won by their swords and the energy of their natures. There is still a time in our memory when hope was so faint, that one may be excused for giving a doubtful answer to such questions.

After the War of Freedom, the decay of the old method of culture became the characteristic of the time; but we now approach, with youthful vigour, new ideas and an energetic will, to a new and higher climax. In the characters of that past time we find, only too frequently, isolation, hopelessness, and deficiency in political morality; in the new

time we have a sharper vision, a higher interest for the nation as a whole, and a power of viewing things in a practical light which makes us feel the need of close union between all of like mind. The realism, which is called, either in praise or blame, the stamp of the present time, is in art, science, and faith, as in the State, nothing but the first step in the cultivation of the rising generation, which endeavours to spiritualise the details of present life in all directions, in order to give a new tendency to the spirit.

But, though it may be no longer necessary to cheer the soul with hope, yet it is a pleasing task to demonstrate the point to which we have attained in comparison with the past, and in comparison with other civilised nations; why we were obliged to remain behind in many things which our neighbours possess in abundance, and why we have made other acquisitions in advance of them. It is instructive for us to make such inquiries, and the answer that we shall find may be instructive to other nations. No individual can give a satisfactory solution to each single question; even the strongest mind can but imperfectly comprehend the great life of his nation: the clearest eye and the most ingenuous judgment is contracted in comparison with the great unity of the people. But, however imperfect may be the portrait given by individuals of the life of their nation, yet each contemporary will discover some main features of the picture lying in his own soul, more especially he who stands in the same grade of cultivation with the delineator.

This kind of delineation of the period of the Reformation and the Thirty Years' War, was the object of the former series of pictures of the past life of Germany; the following will be a sketch of some of the phases of development of German character during the last century up to the present day. Again shall the narratives of those who are gone, as well as the living, portray the times in which they figure; but the nearer we approach the present, the less do the records of individuals give an impression of the nature of the general community. First, because from the greater proximity we are able more accurately to distinguish the individual from the community, and also, because the diversity of character and the difference of culture become ever greater the further the German mind advances in profound investigation; therefore these examples will probably lose for the reader some of the charm afforded by those of former centuries. And in addition to this, the records of these latter times are far more known and realised by our popular writers. Lastly, the political history, as well as the development of the German mind, since the time of Frederick the Great, has, through copious works, become the property of the nation. It is not therefore intended here to enter upon a representation of the scientific mind, or of the political condition of the nation; but only to represent those phases of the spirit and social circumstances, which more especially define the character of a people. By these the continuity and many peculiarities of our present cultivation will be illustrated.

The new time began in Germany, after the invention of printing, by a struggle in which Germans broke the fetters of the Papal Church of the Middle Ages, and passed from submissive belief in authority, to an energetic, independent search after truth. But they did not at the same time

succeed in building up a compact monarchy out of the unsymmetrical feudalism of the Middle Ages. The Imperial House of Hapsburg became the zealous opponent of the national development. Owing to this opposition arose the power of separate territorial princes, and the political weakness of Germany became the more perceptible, the more the rising vigour of the nation demanded an answering development of political energy. From this the German character suffered much. Ecclesiastical disputes were for a long period the only national interest; there was but too great a deficiency in Germans of that pride and pleasure in a fatherland, and of that whole circle of moral feelings, to which political independence gives life, even in the most obscure individual.

After the Reformation it became the fate of the German nation to develope its character under conditions which were materially different from those of the other civilised people of Europe. In France, the Protestant party was struck down with bloody zeal by the crown under the despotic government of Louis XIV.; and the Revolution was the growth of this victory. In England, the Protestant party gained the dominion under the Tudors; the struggle against the Stuarts and the completion of the English constitution was the result. In Germany, the opposition of parties was not followed either by victory or conciliation; the result was the Thirty Years' War, and the political paralysis of Germany, from which it is only now beginning to recover.

This Thirty Years' War, the worst desolation of a populous nation since the national exodus, is the second period of German history which gave a peculiar tendency to the character of the people. The war shattered into ruins the popular strength, but it also certainly removed the dangers which threatened German cultivation, by the alliance of the Imperial House with the Roman Hierarchy. It also separated the Imperial State, politically, from the rest of Germany; what was lost to France in the west by the Hapsburgers, was gradually regained to Germany in the east by another Royal House. The great destruction caused by the war, changed the State life of Germany to a hollow form; it threw the Germans almost two centuries back, in comparison with their English kinsmen, in wealth, population, and political condition. It must again be repeated that it destroyed at least two thirds, probably three fourths of the population, and a still greater portion of their goods and cattle, and deteriorated the morals, arts, education, and energies of the survivors. Out of these remains of German life, the modern character of Germans was slowly and feebly developed-individual life under despotic government.

It is this period, in which our popular strength was slowly raised from the deepest degradation, which will be here portrayed by the narratives of contemporaries. Again a great time, but a period of German development of which the last and highest results have not yet become history.

The way in which the people raised themselves from this abyss is peculiar to the Germans. Marvellous as was the destruction, so also was the revival. More than one nation has been overpowered by outward enemies or cast down under political oppression, each of which has had to undergo special trials which have given them from time to time a hopeless aspect, but through the whole course of

history a renovation has been effected, so that the strengthening of the State has gone hand-in-hand with intellectual progress. When the Greeks during the Persian war felt their own political worth, their science and art blossomed almost simultaneously; when Augustus had given a new support and constitution to the declining Roman republic, there began forthwith a new Imperial culture in enjoyment-seeking Rome: the intellectual life, from Horace and Virgil to Tacitus, followed the destiny of the State; the increased expansive power of the Empire ever gave a wider stretch and stronger independence to individual minds. And again in England,--when the war of the Red and White Roses was ended, when the people peacefully danced round the maypole, and a brilliant court life enforced courtly manners upon the wild Barons, when daring merchants and adventurers waylaid the Spanish galleons, and conveyed the spices of India up the Thames,-then the popular energies found expression in the greatest poetic soul of modern nations. Even in France the splendid despotism of Louis XIV., after the wars of the Huguenots and the Fronde, gave suddenly to the tranquillised country a brilliant courtly bloom of art and literature. It was quite otherwise in Germany. Whilst everywhere else the State might be compared to the body whose abundant energy calls forth the creative development of the nation, in Germany, since the Thirty Years' War, owing to the awakening popular energy, a new national civilisation has gradually arisen in a shattered, decaying government, under corrupting and humiliating political influences of every kind,--first dependent upon strangers; then independent and free;

finally, a shining pattern for other people, producing blossoms of poetry, and blossoms of science of the greatest beauty, of the highest nobility, and the greatest inward freedom: it was developed by individuals who were deficient in just that discipline of the mind and character, which is only given to them when they are members of a great State. The German culture of the eighteenth century was indeed the wonderful creation of a soul with out a body.

It is still more remarkable that this new national cultivation helped, in an indirect way, to turn the Germans into political men. From it the enthusiasm and struggle for an endangered German State, passions, parties, and at last political institutions were developed. Never did literature play such a part or solve such great problems, as the German, from 1750 to the present day. For it is thoroughly unlike the modern endeavours of other nations, who from patriotism, that is to say, from the need of political progress, mature an objective literature. In these cases art and poetry serve, from the beginning, as handmaids to politics; they are perhaps artificially fostered, and the artistic and scientific worth is probably less than the patriotic aim. In Germany, science, literature, and art only existed for their own sake: the highest creative power and the warmest interests of the educated classes were engrossed with them alone; they were always German and patriotic, in opposition to the overpowering French taste; but, with the exception of a few outbreaks of political anger or popular enthusiasm, they had no other aim than to serve truth and beauty. Nay, the greatest poets and scholars considered the political condition under which they lived, as a common reality out of which art alone could elevate mankind.

As therefore in Germany art and science desired nothing but honourable exertion within their own sphere, their pure flames refined the sensitive disposition of Germans till it was hardened for a great political struggle.

Before giving pictures of the German character during the last two centuries, we will endeavour to portray the peculiarities which are developed in the family relations of the different classes of ancient Germany, both the peasantry, the nobility, and the citizens. But the aim of the book is to show how, by means of the Hohenzollern State, Germans changed gradually from private to public men; how dramatic power and interest entered into lyrical individual life; how the Burgher class was strengthened by increasing education, and the nobility and peasantry submitted to its influence; finally, how it cast aside the specialities of classes, and began to form characters according to its own needs and points of view.

### CHAPTER I.

### THE LIFE OF THE GERMAN PEASANT.

**Table of Contents** 

(1240-1790.)

In seven hundred years the independent life of the Greeks terminated; about a thousand embraces the growth, dominion, and decline of the Roman power; but the German Empire had lasted fifteen hundred years from the fight in the Teutoburg Forest, [1] before it began to emerge from its epic time. So entirely different was the duration of the life of the ancient world to that of the modern: so slow and artificial are our transformations. How rich were the blossoms which Greek life had matured in the five centuries from Homer to Aristotle! How powerful were the changes which the Roman State had undergone, from the rise of the free peasantry on the hills of the Tiber to the subjection of the Italian husbandmen under German landlords! But the Germans worked for fifteen centuries with an intellectual inheritance from the Romans and the East, and are now only in the beginning of a development which we consider as peculiar to the German mind, in contradistinction to the Roman, of the new time, to the ancient. It is indeed no longer an isolated people which has to emerge from barbarism by its own creations; it is a family of nations more painstaking and more enduring, which has risen, at long and laborious intervals, from the ruins of the Roman Empire, and

from the intellectual treasures of antiquity: one nation reciprocally acting on the other, under the law of the same faith.

The Romans from free peasants had become farmers, and they were ruined because they could not overcome the social evil of slavery. The German warriors also, in the time of Tacitus, took little pleasure in cultivating their own fields, and were glad to make use of dependents. It was only shortly before the year 1500, that the German cities arrived at the conviction that the labour of freemen is the foundation of prosperity, opulence, and civilisation. But in the country, even after the Thirty Years' War, the mass of the labourers--more than half of the whole German nation-were in a state of servitude, which in many provinces differed little from slavery. It is only in the time of our fathers that the peasant has become an independent man, a free citizen of the State: so slowly has the groundwork of German civilisation and of the modern State developed.

All earthly progress does not take the straight course which men expect when improvement begins; thus the position of the German husbandman in 1700 was worse in many respects than a hundred years before; nay, even in our time it is not comparatively so good as it was 600 years earlier, in the time of the Hohenstaufen.

The German peasant for centuries lost much that was valuable in order to attain a higher condition; his freedom and elevation to citizenship in our State was effected in an apparently indirect way. At the time of the Carlovingians more than half the peasants were free and armed, and the

pith of the popular strength; at the time of Frederick the Great, almost all the country people were under strict bondage,--the beasts of burden of the new State, weak and languishing, without political object or interest in the State. Somewhat of the old weakness still clings to them.

We shall therefore first take a short review of an earlier period, comparing it with the peasant life of the last two centuries.

What the Romans mention of the condition of the German agricultural districts, is only sufficient to give us a glimpse of ancient peasant life. According to their accounts, the Germans were long considered to be a wild warrior race, who lived in transition from a wandering life to an uncertain settlement, and it was seldom inquired how it was possible that such hordes should for centuries carry on a victorious resistance to the disciplined armies of the greatest power on earth. When Cheruskers, Chattens, Bructerers, Batavers, and other people of less geographical note, occasioned terror, not only to single legions, but to large Roman armies, not once, but in continual wars for more than one generation,--when a Markomannen chief disciplined 70,000 infantry and 4000 cavalry after the fashion of legions; when a Roman, after a century of devastating wars between the Rhine and the Elbe, puts before us with great emphasis the powerful masses of the Germans,--we may conclude that single tribes which, with their allies, could sometimes bring into the field more than 100,000 warriors, must have counted a population of hundreds of thousands. And we equally approach to a second conclusion, that such a multitude in a narrowly limited space, surrounded by warlike

neighbours, could only exist by means of a simple, perhaps, but regular and extensive cultivation of field products. That the agriculture of the Germans should appear meagre to the Romans, after the garden cultivation of Italy and Gaul, is comprehensible; nevertheless they found corn, millet, wheat, and barley; but the common corn of the country was oats, the meal of which they despised, and rye, which Pliny calls an unpalatable growth of the Alpine country, productive of colic. But in the year 301, the corn which made the German black bread, was introduced as the third article of commerce in the corn bourse of Greece and Asia Minor. And from barley the German brewed his home drink, beer; he also brewed from wheat.

Now we know that in the time of the Romans, most of the German races lived in a condition similar to that in which it appears from records they lived shortly after their great exodus, in the early centuries of the Christian era: sometimes on single farms, but generally in enclosed villages, with boundaries marked out by posts. They had a peculiar method of laying out new village districts, and the Romans found it difficult to understand the mode of farming customary to the country. Probably the dwellers in the marshes near the North Sea had, as Pliny writes, made the first simple dykes against the encroachments of the water; already were their dwellings built on small hillocks, which, in high tides, raised them above the water, and their sheep pastured in the summer on the grass of the new alluvial soil; but further from the coast the peasant dwelt in his blockhouse, or within mud walls, which he then loved to whitewash. Herds of swine lay in the shadows of the woods, [3] horses and cattle grazed on the village meadows, and long-woolled sheep on the dry declivities of the hills. Large flocks of geese furnished down for soft pillows; the women wove linen on a simple loom, and dyed it with native plants, the madder and the blue woad; and made coats and mantles of skins, which had already borders of finer fur introduced from foreign parts. Well-trod commercial roads crossed the territory from the Rhine to the Vistula in every direction. The foreign trader, who brought articles of luxury and the gold coins of Rome in his wagon to the house of the countryman, exchanged them with him for the highly-prized feathers of the goose, smoked hams, and sausages, the horns of the ure ox and antlers of the stag, fur skins, and even articles of toilet, such as the blonde hair of slaves, and a fine pomade to colour the hair. He bought German carrots, which had been ordered as a delicacy by his Emperor Tiberius; he beheld with astonishment in the garden of his German host, gigantic radishes, and related to his countrypeople that a German had shown him honeycombs eight feet long.

The warlike householder, it is true, held his weapons in higher esteem than his plough, not because agriculture was unimportant or despised, but because in the free classes there was already an aristocratic development. For, although the warrior did not employ himself in any field labour, he insisted upon his household cultivating his ground, and his bondmen had to pay a tribute in corn and cattle. The bondman dwelt with his wife and child near his master in special huts, which were erected on the land that was allotted to him for cultivation. Freemen were not only

associated in communities, but several races were joined in one confederacy, being by the old constitution knit together by religious memories and public worship. The boundaries of the province were marked out, like those of the village, by casts of the holy hammer, and consecrated by processions of divine cars. Notwithstanding the numerous feuds of individual tribes, there were many points of union which served to reconcile and keep them together,--blood relationship and marriage alliances, similitude in customs and privileges, and, above all, the feeling of the same origin, the same language, and those pious rites which keep alive the memory of ancient communion.

Although the German of Tacitus appears to us as a fierce warrior, who, clothed in skins, watched with spear and wooden shield over the abatis which guarded his village against the assaults of enemies; yet this same German is shown, by the results of new researches, to have been a householder and landlord. He looked with satisfaction on the great brewer's copper which had been wrought by his neighbour, the skilful smith; or he stood in coloured linen smock-frock before the laden harvest wagon, on which his boy was throwing the last sheaf of rye, and his daughter placing the harvest wreath with pious ejaculations.

The German is incomprehensible to us, when, according to the Roman, he worshipped Mercury as the highest god; but we can realise the figure of the Asengott Woden, when we see the connection, of the wild hunter of our traditions and the sleeping Emperor of Kyffhäuser, with German antiquity. Now, we know how lovingly and actively the gods and spirits hovered round the hearths, farms, fields, rivers,

and woods of our forefathers. From this tendency also the old Chatte or Hermundure has been transformed into a Hessian or Thuringian householder, who in the twilight looks wistfully up to his rooftree, on which the little household spirit loves to sit, and who, when the storm rages, carefully covers the window-openings, in order that a spectral horse's head from the train of the wild god who rides on the blast may not look into his hall.

Even from the productions of the Germans in that century that were most full of heart and soul, their songs, which no careful hand transcribed on parchment, we may draw some conclusions. Their oldest kind of poetry is not entirely unknown to us,--the native epic verse, with its alliterations--and in some of the popular songs and proverbs which have been preserved, we still find the ancient love of contests of wit and of enigmas, with which a troubadour delighted his hearers by the hearth of the Saxon chief.

After the great national exodus, written records begin slowly to appear in Germany. They came, together with that irresistible power which changed so much of the whole spirit of the German people,--with Christianity. However energetically religion turned the mind into new paths, and however fearful was the destruction occasioned by popular tumults at that period of immigration, the changes in the Germans arising from both sources were not sufficient to shatter everything ancient into ruins. We are too apt to consider the national exodus as a chaotic process of destruction. It is true that it drove from their homes many of the most powerful German nationalities that were located in and beyond East Germany, and the depopulated domiciles

filled with the Sclavonians who followed. The were Bavarians migrated from Bohemia to the Danube; the Suevi, Allemanni, and Burgundians, southwards to their present localities. The names of old nationalities have disappeared, and new ones have spread themselves far across the Rhine. But nearly half the Germany which was known to the Romans--the wide territory from the North Sea to the Thuringian woods and the Rhone, from the Saal to near the Rhine--retains, on the whole, its old inhabitants; for the Thuringians, the Chattens, and indeed most of the races of Lower Saxony, only came in partial swarms; they probably greatly diminished in marching through foreign lands, and by emigrations of their kinsmen; they were also, as for example the Thuringians, frequently intermingled with foreign hordes, who settled among them. But the nucleus of the old inhabitants remained through all fluctuations, and maintained their own old home traditions, peculiarities of speech, customs, and laws.

About the year 600 the oldest law books and records in the new Franconia, afford us the richest insight into the life of the German countryman. Each had a right to a holding, generally of 30 morgans, on the common land, the morgan being decided according to the nature of the soil. On each holding there was a yard fenced round, closed by a gate, within which was the dwelling-house with stables and barn, and by the side of it a garden; and in the southwest of Germany frequently a vineyard. These homesteads formed villages divided by lanes; it was only in part of Lower Saxony that the inhabitants of the marsh and hilly country lived in separate farms, in the midst of their holdings. But amongst

most Germans the holding is not a connected tract of land. The collective arable land of the village was divided into three portions--winter, summer, and fallow fields; each of these fields, according to soil and situation, again into small parcels; and in each of these parcels in every field each holder had his share. Thus the arable land of every holding consisted of a number of square acres which, lying dispersed through the three principal divisions of the village district, gave, as far as possible, an equal measure of land in each. Besides this, a share of the pastures, meadows, and wood of the community belonged to the holding; for round the arable land lay the meadow land of the community, and its woods, in which were the treasured acorns. Already the boundaries were carefully marked, and on the boundary hills boys received blows on their cheeks and had their ears pulled, and already was it called an old custom to set up a small bundle of straw as a warning on a forbidden footway. Already we find the property not unfrequently divided, where the vassals dwell in the house and farm, the grades of their vassalage and their burdens being various. The households of freemen also contained bondservants, who differed little from Roman slaves; only in the service of God could they be equal with the free; they shared in all the holy usages of the Church; they could become priests and perform marriages with the permission of their masters, but the master had a right over their life.

Among the farms of freemen and vassals might be found the farm of a larger landed proprietor, who had a manor house with a hall, and a great number of huts for domestics and labourers. For as yet, artisans, wheelwrights, potters,

armourers, and goldsmiths were most of them bondmen; as the number of markets and cities were small, their influence in the country was still unimportant. All kinds of grain were cultivated in the fields, which are now used in our succession of crops, and in the gardens, almost all the vegetables of our markets, also gherkins, pumpkins, and melons; the laws were vigilant for the protection of the orchards. The clergy brought from Italy costly grafts, and peaches and apricots were to be found in the gardens of the wealthy. Already the old Bavarian house began to appear, formed of beams, with galleries outside, and its flat projecting roof; and it may be assumed also, that the old Saxon house with its heathen horses' heads on the gable ends, its thatched roof over the porch, its hearth, sleeping cells, and cattle stalls, spread widely over the country, and that the Thuringians, even then, as in a century later, lived in the unfloored hall, in the background of which a raised daïs--the most distinguished part of the house--separated from the hall the women's apartments and the sleepingrooms. Dwellings were seldom without a bathhouse; for their winter work the women descended into their underground chamber, which had already astonished the Romans, where stood the loom; the places for the mistresses and servants were separated. In the court-yard fluttered numerous poultry, amongst them swans and even cranes, which, up to the Thirty Years' War, were treasured as masters of the German poultry yard. The greatest pleasure of the countryman was the training of his horse, and the steeds which were used in war were of great value. They pastured with their feet hobbled; any one was severely punished who stole them from their pasture; the impositions of horse dealers also were well known, and the laws endeavoured to afford protection against them. All the South Germans fastened bells round the necks of their cattle, and the Franconians round the swine in the woods.

Every means of ascertaining the relative number of bond and freemen in the time of Charles V. is deficient, even in that part of the country which had for a long time been won over to Christianity; yet we see distinctly that the whole strength of the nation lay in the masses of free yeomen. But even in his time, larger landed proprietors, tyrannical officials, and the not less domineering Church, eagerly endeavoured to diminish the number of the free by obtruding upon them their protection, and thus placing them under a gentle servitude. The position of the free peasant must have been frequently insupportable; the burdens laid upon him by the monarchy were very great, such as the tithes, the military service, and the supply of horses and vehicles for the journeys of the king and his officials. There was no law to protect him against the powerful, and he was especially tormented by robber hordes and the violence of his neighbours. Therefore he found safety by giving up his freedom, surrendering his house and farm into the hands of a powerful noble, and receiving it back again from him. Then he delivered to his new master as a symbol of his service, a fowl from his farm yard, and a portion of the produce of his field or of his labour as a yearly tax. In return for this, his new master undertook to defend him, and to perform his military service for him by means of his own followers.

Thus began the diminution of the national strength of Germany, the oppression of the peasants, the deterioration of the infantry, and the origin of the feudal lords, and of their vassal-followers, from which arose in the next century the higher and lower German nobility. Every internal war, every invasion of foreign enemies,--of Normans, of Hungarians, or of Sclaves,--drove numerous freemen into servitude, and without ceasing did the Church work to recommend itself or its saints as feudal lords to repentant sinners.<sup>[4]</sup>

Yet about the year 1000, under the great Saxon emperors, the free peasant had still some consciousness of strength. The bondman, indeed, was still under severe oppression; he was slightly esteemed, and obliged to give outward proof of the difference between himself and the freeman, by bad dress and short hair. The free peasant then wore the long linen or cloth dress of a similar cut to the Emperor himself; with his sword by his side he went to the assembly under the tree, or to the judgment stone of his village. And if he descended from four free ancestors, and possessed three free hides, he was, according to Saxon law, higher in rank than some of the noble courtiers who had serf blood in their veins, and whoever injured him had to make atonement as to one of princely blood. It was then he began to cultivate his fields more carefully; it appears to have been about this time that the practice arose of ploughing a second time before sowing the summer seed. In the neighbourhood of rich cloisters, fine garden-culture progressed, vineyards were carefully cultivated, and in the low countries of the Rhine, in Holland and Flanders, there was a husbandry of moor and marsh grounds, which in the next century was carried by numerous colonists of these races, into the Elbe country, and far into the east.

The peasant in the time of Otto the Great, had become a good Christian, but the old customs of the heathen faith still surrounded him in his house and fields, his phantasy filled nature, beasts, and plants with warm life. Whatever flew or bounded over his fields, whether hare, wolf, fox, or raven, were to him familiar forms, to whose character and fate he gave a human turn, and of whom with cheerful spirit he used to sing in heroic terms, or tell beautiful tales. In his house were numerous trained birds; and those were valued the highest which could comport themselves most like men. The starling repeated in a comic way the paternoster; the jackdaw welcomed him on his return home; and he rejoiced in the dance of the trained bear. He loved his cattle with all his heart, he honoured his horses, oxen, cows, and dogs with the names of the ancient gods, to whom he still continued to attach ideas of dignity and sanctity. This craving for familiar intercourse with all that surrounded him was the peculiar characteristic of the German peasant in the olden time. This great love of beasts, tame birds, dogs and horses continued long, as late as Luther's time, a few years before the great peasant war. A true-hearted peasant having in the fullness of his joy kissed his decorated foal upon the neck, a lurking monk who happened to see it, cited him before the ecclesiastical court, and inflicted a heavy fine upon him, because it was unseemly. On this account Karsthans clenched his fists at the priests. [5] In the eleventh century, the countryman still sang by his hearth the stirring heroic songs, the subject-matter of which is in part older than the great exodus,--those of Siegfried and the Virgin of Battle Brunhild, of the treachery of the Burgundian King, Gunthar; of the struggle of the strong Walthar with Hagen, and of the downfall of the Nibelungen. Though his language was clumsy in writing, it flowed from his lips solemn and sonorous, with full terminations and rich in alternations of the vowels. Still had the solemnly spoken word in prayer, in forms of law, and in invocations, a mysterious power of magic effect: not only is the meaning of the speech, but also its sound full of significance. A wise saw was the source of great good fortune to him who possessed it; it could be bought and sold, and the buyer could return it again if it was useless to him.

About the beginning of the twelfth century there was a change in the life and position of the peasant. The disquiets and passions of the Crusades reached him also by degrees. To the serf, who lived in an insecure possession of his hut, from which the landed proprietor could eject him and his children, it was very attractive to obtain, by a sign affixed to his shoulder by the hand of a priest, freedom for himself, exemption from rent and other burdens, and the protection of the Church for his family left at home. From this the Lord Manor was himself in danger of losing husbandmen, and becoming a beggar by the departure of his serfs; in order therefore to avert this danger bondmen had often the inheritance of their possessions given to them, and greater personal freedom, thus the position of serfs became more favourable. Besides this, the distinction between the old freemen and bondmen, both in the

agricultural districts and the cities, was obliterated by the new societies of citizens and officials. In the cities bond and free-men were under the same law; in the palaces of princes, freemen claimed the same privileges which were originally for the advantage of the vassal retinue of territorial lords, and both bond and free-men bore, as serving men, the knightly shield.

We can obtain an insight into the spirit of the countrypeople of this period, and many details of their life. Since the middle of the twelfth century, the manuscripts of the Hohenstaufen time have handed down to us many invaluable features of the life of the lower orders. We discover, with astonishment, from these sources, that the countryman of that time formed a portion of the national strength, very different from what he did some centuries later. The thriving peasant lived on his farm; the young gambolled about, blythesome and people enjoyment, on the village green and in the lanes; the countryman passed through life in the calm consciousness the of old strength, preserver customs. contradistinction to the nobleman, with his new-fangled modes, who adorned himself with foreign discourse and language, and with great pretentions set up distinguished court usages in opposition to country manners. Great was the pleasure of the country people in the awakening of nature: impatiently did the maidens await the breaking forth of the first catkins on the willow and hazel; they look for the leaves that burst from the buds, and search the ground for the first flowers. The earliest summer game is with the ball, in the village streets or on the tender grass of the green,--it

is thrown by old and young, men and women. Whoever has a coloured feather ball to throw sends it with a greeting to her he loves. The agile movements, the powerful throw, the short cheer to friends and opponents, are the pleasures both of players and spectators. When sunny May comes, then the maidens get their holiday attire from the press, and twine wreaths for their own hair and that of their friends. Thus they go, crowned with garlands and adorned with ribbons, the hand-glass as an ornament by their sides, with their playfellows to the green; full a hundred maidens and women are there assembled for the dance. Thither also hasten the men, smart also is their dress, the waistcoat trimmed with coloured buttons, perhaps even with bells, which for a long time had been the most choice attire of persons of distinction; there is no want of silk, nor in winter of fur trimmings. The belt is well inlaid with shining metal, the coat of mail is guilted in the dress, and the point of the sword, in walking, clinks against the heel. The proud youths are defiant, take great pleasure in fight, and are jealous of their own importance. Vehement is the energy displayed in the great dances, they are venturesome in their springs, jubilant in their joy; everywhere there is the poetry of enjoyment of the senses. The chorus of bystanders sing loudly to the dance, and the maidens join softly in the melody. Still greater becomes our astonishment when we examine closer the rhythm and words of these old national dances, there is a grace not only in the language but in its social relation, which reminds us much more of the ancient of the feelings of our country people. than Introductory strophes, which extol in countless variations