

Heinrich Heine

Germany: A Winter's Tale (*Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen*, 1844)



‘Winter Twilight in the Rhine Valley’ Ernesto Strigelly (German, 19th century)
[Artee](#)

Part I: Chapters I-VII

Part II: Chapters VIII-XVII

Part III: Chapters XVIII-XXVII

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Part I: Chapters I-VII

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Translator's Introduction



'Portrait of Heinrich Heine' - Adolf Neumann (German, 1825-1884)
[The Rijksmuseum](#)

Christian Johann Heinrich Heine; born Harry Heine (1797–1856) was a leading poet, author, and literary critic, of the German Romantic Movement. Known for his early lyric poems, frequently set to music in the form of *Lieder* by composers such as Schumann and Schubert, his later verse and prose were notable for their satirical wit and irony. Regarded as a member of the 'Young Germany' movement, his radical political views led to the banning of many of his works, and he spent the last twenty-five years of his life in Paris.

'Germany: A Winter's Tale' (*Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen*, 1844) his satirical verse 'epic' describes a journey from Paris to Hamburg in the winter of 1843. The title '*A Winter's Tale*' refers to Shakespeare's late play, and the work forms a counterpart to Heine's earlier verse epic '*Atta Troll: A Midsummer Night's Dream*'.

Heine had emigrated to France, in 1831, due to the political conditions in Germany during the post-Napoleonic German Restoration period and, in 1835, his works were banned with those of the other poets of 'Young Germany'. On the return journey from a brief visit to Germany in 1843, he wrote the first draft of '*Germany: A Winter's Tale*,' later turning it into

satirical travel epic with political overtones. In October 1844, the book was banned in Prussia, while, in December, a royal arrest warrant was issued against Heine. Subsequently, the work was repeatedly banned by the censor. Though available in other parts of Germany in a separate edition, Heine was forced to shorten and rewrite it.

This enhanced edition has been designed to offer maximum compatibility with current search engines. Among other modifications, the proper names of people and places, and the titles given to works of art, have been fully researched, modernised, and expanded; comments in parentheses have been added here and there to provide a reference, or clarify meaning; and minor typographic or factual errors, for example incorrect attributions and dates, in the original text, have been eliminated from this new translation.

Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen

Chapter I: The Franco-German Border

In the sad month of November, it was,
The days were growing darker,
The wind was tearing the leaves from the trees,
When, to Germany, I crossed over.

And as I approached the border,
I felt my heart pounding harder,
Deep in my chest; I even think
My eyes had begun to water.

And when I heard German spoken,
I felt something strange inside,
As if my heart was bleeding,
Or, most pleasantly, liquified.

A maid, to a harp, was singing,
She sang with feeling; it's true,
In a high-pitched voice, but her playing
Moved me most deeply, anew.

She sang of love and heartache,
Of sacrifice, and renewal,
Up there, in a better world,
Where none suffer, and none are cruel.

She sang of our earthly vale of tears,
Of pleasures enjoyed in vain,
Of the afterlife, where souls in bliss,
Transfiguration, attain.

She sang of renunciation,
Of a heaven, above the steeple,
With which they lull it, when it moans,
That rascally thing, the People.

I know the tune, I know the text,
I also know the authors,
I know, in secret, they drank wine,
In public, drank the waters.

A new song, and a better song,
My friends, I'll pen for you!
The kingdom of heaven we'll have
On Earth; it's overdue.

It's here we want to be happy,
And suffer pain no more.
Idle mouths shall not consume
What busy hands ensure:

Enough bread for everyone,
To feed all humankind,
Roses, myrtle, beauty, joy,
And sugar-snaps spring to mind.

Yes, sugar-snaps for everyone,
As soon as the pods are ripe!
Leave heaven to the angels,
‘And the sparrows’, they pipe.

And if we grow wings when we die,
We’ll come and visit you,
Up there, above, and eat a cake,
And a blissful pie or two.

A new song, and a better song,
Set for flutes and violins!
Misery and woe are over,
Death is ended, life begins.

Europa, the maiden, is betrothed
To freedom; O joy and bliss,
They lie close, in each other’s arms,
And revel in their first kiss.

And though a priest is lacking,
The marriage is valid no less –
Long live the bride and groom,
And the children they will bless!

An epithalamion is my song,
Of a new, a purer gestation.
In my soul, the stars ascend,
Of a nobler consecration.

Ardent stars, they wildly blaze
Melting to streams of fire –
I feel a wondrous strength,
I could shatter oaks entire!

Now I'm here on German soil,
A magic elixir fills my veins –
The giant touches mother earth,
And his powers he regains.

Chapter II: The Franco-German Border – Continued

While the little girl, from heavenly joy,
Trilled and harped away,
The Prussian Customs officers
With my luggage made hay.

They sniffed around, and rummaged about,
Exchanging doubtful looks,
Searching for lace or jewellery,
Or even – forbidden books.

Fools, searching through my suitcase,
Go look elsewhere, instead!
The contraband I'm carrying
Is here, inside my head,

Where I've lace and pins finer
Than in Brussels or Mechelen,
I'll unpack my pins later,
And prick and tease you, then.

In my brain I bear Crown jewels,
Gems of the future scene,
The new god's temple jewels,
The unknown god's, I mean.

And there I carry many a book,
More than I bear in hand,

My head's a nest, atwitter,
With books that have been banned.

Trust me, there are none worse
In any library known to Satan,
More dangerous than any penned
By Hoffmann von Fallersleben! –

A traveller, standing by my side,
Remarked to me, that I
Had the Prussian Customs Union,
In full glory, before my eye.

'The Customs Union' he remarked,
'Will establish our great nation,
Join the fragmented fatherland,
In a single administration.

It will grant us external unity,
A material whole, so-called,
And censorship, a single will;
That's the true ideal of all –

It will grant us inner unity
Linking sense and thought.
We need a united Germany,
Inside and out, in short.'

***Note:** The poet August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben (1798-1874), is best known for writing 'Das Lied der Deutschen', whose third stanza is now the German national anthem, as well as a number of popular children's songs.*

Chapter III: Aachen



‘Aachen’ (page 391 of ‘The Kingdom of Prussia in picturesque original views...’ engraved by J. Poppel, 1852)
[The British Library](#)

In Aachen, Charlemagne lies,
In the old Cathedral there.
(Don’t confuse him with Karl Mayer,
Who in Swabia has his lair.)

I’d dislike being dead and buried,
In Aachen Cathedral, as emperor;
I’d rather be the least of poets,
Alive, in Stuttgart am Neckar.



‘Aachen Cathedral’ (page 385 of ‘The Kingdom of Prussia in picturesque original views...’ engraved by J. Poppel, 1852) - [The British Library](#)

In Aachen the dogs are bored,
And humbly beg in the street:
‘Grant us a kick, O stranger,
And make our day complete!’

I strolled around the tedious town,
For an hour, it must have been,
Seeing Prussian soldiers there;
Twas the old familiar scene.

They still wore their coats of grey,
Those with the high red collar,
(Red, for the blood of the French,
So sang the poet Körner).

Still that wooden, pedantic crew,
With angular arms and feet
When marching, faces frozen
With that self-same conceit.

They still march as stiffly,
Still as perfect on parade,
As if they'd swallowed the cane,
That on their backs was laid.

Yes, the rod never wholly vanishes,
They just bear it secretly.
The familiar and informal 'You',
Recalls the old impersonal 'He'.

While the broad moustache,
Is just the latest style of braid,
What used to hang behind
Now beneath the nose arrayed.



‘Prussian Soldier (c. 1919)’ - Jean-Louis Forain (French, 1852-1931)
[Artvee](#)

I rather liked the costume
Of the knights; I must praise,
The Pickelhaube especially,
That spiked helm, borne always.

It's so chivalrous, reminding us,
Of the lost romance folk seek,
Of 'Johanna von Montfaucon',
Of Baron Fouqué, Uhland, Tieck.

It recalls the Middle Ages,
Its lords and squires, I find,
Who bore loyalty in their hearts,
And a coat-of-arms behind;

Of crusades and tourneys,
Love, the duties of a knight;
Of the unprinted age of faith,
Not a newspaper in sight.

Yes, I like that helm, a testament
To the exercise of wit!
It was a noble, royal idea!
With an edge, a point to it!

Yet I fear, when a storm arises.
Its shaft will deal a jolt,
To the Romantic head, drawing down
A modern lightning bolt! –

At the Post Office, in Aachen,
I saw that bird, once more,
I hate so! Full of venom
It gazed down, as before,

You ugly bird, if you ever
Fall to my vengeful hand,
I'll pluck out those feathers,
And those talons, where you stand.

Then I'll perch you on a pole
High up, beneath the sun,
And summon Rhenish hunters,
To shoot at you for fun.

And on whoever brings you down,
A sceptre and crown, I'll bestow,
And calling out 'Long live the King',
A fanfare we will blow.

Notes: Karl Friedrich Hartmann Mayer (1786-1870) was a German jurist, and a poet of the Swabian school. Carl Theodor Körner (1791-1813) was a German soldier-poet, who died fighting the French, see his 'Lied der schwarzen Jäger'. 'Johanna von Montfaucon' is a play, written in 1800, by August von Kotzebue (1761-1819), set in the fourteenth century. The author, Friedrich Heinrich Karl de la Motte, Baron Fouqué (1777-1843) romanticised and sentimentalised Germanic history. Johann Ludwig Uhland (1787-1862) was a poet, philologist, literary historian, lawyer and politician who found material for his literary works in the history of the Middle Ages. Johann Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853) was a poet, novelist, translator, and critic, and a founding father of the German Romantic Movement. The ugly bird is, of course, the Prussian eagle.

Chapter IV: Cologne

Late one eve, I reached Cologne,
The Rhine's flow I could sense;
The German air, it fanned me,
I felt its influence –

On my appetite! And so, I ate
Pancakes, with ham sliced fine,
And since the ham was salty,
A flask of Rhenish wine.

The Rhine wine still shone like gold
Behind the rummer's green glass.
Drink a few too many,
And up your nose, it'll pass.

What can one feel but bliss,
The nasal tingling's so sweet!
It drove me into the twilight,
Out into the echoing street.

The houses gazed, stonily,
As if they'd a tale to tell me,
Some legend from ancient times.
Of Cologne's holy city.

Yes, here the clergy, once,
Practised their pious rites,
And the Dunkelmänner ruled,
Of whom Ulrich von Hutten writes.

Here the can-can of the Middle Ages,
Was danced by monks and nuns,
And Hoogstraaten, Cologne's Menzel,
Denounced its errant sons.

Here the flames of the pyre
Devoured both books and people,
And *Kyrie Eleison* was sung,
To the bells in the steeple.

Here in the streets Stupidity
And Malice, like dogs, mated,
Their progeny still known today
For their religious hatred.

But see there, in the moonlight!
The building is colossal!
Its towers devilishly black,
That's Cologne Cathedral.

Built to be the mind's Bastille,
The cunning Papists' fondest wish
Was that in that giant prison,
German thought would languish!

Then Luther came along,
And, at his cry of: 'Halt',
Construction was suspended,
Somewhere above the vault.

It's incomplete – which is fine;
In its very incompleteness
It's an emblem of German strength,
And of Protestant success.



‘Cologne Cathedral’ (page 457 of ‘The Cathedral of Cologne (Der Dom In Cöln)’ engraved by J. Poppel, 1852)
- [The British Library](#)

You rascals, friends of the place,
With feeble hands, and nervous,
Desire to complete the work,
And top off the old fortress!

O foolish folk! All in vain
With a silver plate you sidle
To beg from heretics and Jews:
A fruitless task, and idle.

All in vain, the great Franz Liszt
Performs his benefit,
A king, with eloquence, declaims;
In vain, both do their bit.

The work will not be finished,
Though the Swabian fools have sent
A shipload, complete, of stone,
Merely lacking the cement.

The work will not be finished,
Despite the owl's and raven's cry,
Who, old-fashioned in their ways,
Like to nest in spires, on high.

Yes, the day may even come,
When instead of its completion,
The space inside will stable
Many a mare and stallion.

'And if it becomes a stable,
What shall we do then,
With the relics that rest therein,
Tis said, of the Three Wise Men?'

That's what I hear you ask.
But why, indeed, should we care?
The Three Kings from the Orient,
Must simply rest elsewhere.

Take my advice, and stick them
In those three iron cages,
High on the tower, in Münster,
Of St. Lambert's, there for ages.

The tailor-king, he sat in one,
His councillors in the others,
But now let's use the baskets
For these three royal brothers.

On the left can sit King Melchior,
On the right, King Balthasar,
In the midst King Gaspar, God knows,
What lives they lived afar!

The Holy Alliance of the East,
Which is now canonised,
Perhaps was not, in action,
Always so good and wise.

Balthasar and Melchior
Were two dolts maybe,
Who promised a constitution
For the kingdom, foolishly.

And later failed to keep their word –
While Gaspar, King of the Moors,
Repaid, with rank ingratitude,
His people's loud applause.

Notes: The Dunkelmänner were Christian humanists of the Reformation, authors of the 'Epistolae obscurorum virorum' a collection of satirical Latin letters which appeared between 1515 and 1519 in Hagenau. Ulrich von Hutten (1488-1523) was a German knight, scholar, poet and satirist, and later a Protestant reformer. Jakob van Hoogstraaten (1460-1527), a Brabantian Dominican theologian, supported Johannes Pfefferkorn, a Jewish convert to Christianity, who sought to ban and destroy Hebrew books, against Johann Reuchlin (1455-1522), a Catholic humanist and scholar who defended them. Wolfgang Menzel (1798-1873) was a poet, critic and literary historian, and a strident opponent of Heine. The three iron cages hanging from the tower of St. Lambert's in Münster held the corpses of three Protestant Anabaptists, executed in 1536 for fomenting rebellion. Their leader John of Leiden was a tailor's apprentice.

Chapter V: Cologne – Continued

When I came to the Rhine Bridge,
From the bridgehead, I could see,
Father Rhine, there, flowing by,
In the moonlight, quietly.



‘Cologne (1824)’ - J.M.W. Turner RA (British, 1775–1851)
[Wikimedia Commons](#)

‘Greetings, dear Father Rhine,
How have you fared, old sire,
I’ve often thought of you
With longing and desire.’

Then I heard, deep in the water,
In a strange and gloomy tone,

Much like an old man coughing,
A softly-murmured groan:

‘Welcome, my boy, I’m glad
You’ve not forgotten me,
I’ve not seen you for thirteen years,
And I’ve been ill, you see.

At Biebrich I swallowed stones,
Truly, I’ve tasted better,
But heavier on my stomach lies,
The verse of Nikolaus Becker.

He sang of me as if I was
The purest maiden ever,
Who would deny every thief
That sought to steal her honour.

When I hear that stupid song,
I long to pluck my beard,
(Before I go drown myself),
And swallow it when it’s sheared.

That I’m certainly no virgin
The French have discovered,
Having mixed their waters
With mine, when they’re uncovered.

That stupid song, that foolish man,
Embarrassed me, shamefully,
And in a certain sense he has
Politically compromised me.

For if the French return now,
I can only blush anew,

I who've waited, tearfully
Praying that's what they'll do.

I've always liked them greatly,
The French, the little darlings,
Do they still wear white breeches,
And leap about while singing?

That street-urchin, De Musset,
Will lead them here, maybe
Beating out, on his drum,
Those sad jokes aimed at me.'

So, Father Rhine lamented,
Oozing discontent,
I spoke awhile, to lift his spirits,
Such, at least, was my intent:

'Oh, fear not, Father Rhine,
The Frenchman's mockery,
Their breeches gone, instead
New trousers you would see.

Not white they are, but red,
The buttons have changed too,
No longer do they sing or leap,
They're thoughtful, just like you.

They philosophise, and speak
Of Fichte, Kant and Hegel,
Smoke tobacco, and drink beer,
And even play bowls a little.

They'll soon be Philistines like us,
Or, worse, they'll go farther,

Followers of Voltaire no more,
With Hengstenburg their master.

While De Musset, to be sure,
That 'urchin', should be hung,
We'll be sure to still
His shameless, mocking tongue.

And if he drums up some bad joke
Or other, we'll pipe worse,
We'll shrill what he gets up to
With fair women, and lame verse.

Flow softly then, Father Rhine,
Don't fret at one poor tune,
You'll soon hear a better song.
Farewell, I'll see you soon.'

Notes: The 'Rhine Bridge', at that time the only one spanning the river there, was the Deutzer Schiffbrücke (the Ship Bridge) a pontoon bridge connecting Deutz and Cologne, opened in 1822. Biebrich (Biberich) Palace, beside the Rhine, upriver from Cologne, was the main residence of the Princes and Dukes of Nassau. Nikolaus Becker (1809-1845) was a German lawyer, and poet. His sole work, of note was his patriotic 'Rheinlied' ('Rhine Song', 1840) many times set to music. Ernst Hengstenberg (1802-1869) was a German Protestant theologian and Old Testament scholar.

Chapter VI: Cologne – Continued

Paganini, always had, at his side,
A familiar spirit, sometimes
It appeared in the form of a dog;
Georg Harrys, at other times.

Napoleon saw a man in red,
When great events were in train.
Socrates had his daemon,

No slight product of his brain.

I myself, at my desk, at night,
Have sometimes seen, behind me,
A sinister guest, standing there,
Masked, and out to find me.

Under his cloak he held
(I simply give the facts),
Something that gleamed, in the light,
Like an executioner's axe.

He seemed of solid stature,
Each eye shone like a star,
He let me write, untroubled,
Watching, quietly, from afar.

I hadn't seen him for a while,
Twas a great relief, I own,
But suddenly I saw him there,
In the moonlight, in Cologne.

I strolled, musing, down the street,
He followed me, at will,
Like a shadow, and when I stopped,
He stopped too, and stood still.

He stopped there, as if waiting,
I sped on like a hare,
Yet he pursued me, till
I reached the Cathedral square.

It was unbearable, I turned
And said: 'Tell me, aright,
Why follow me where'er I go,

In the middle of the night?

I always meet you at a time
When base feelings elevate,
And inspiration fills my brain,
Although the hour be late.

Fixed and firm is your gaze,
Speak: what's that gleam, unstill,
You hide beneath your cloak?
Who are you, what's your will?

He merely answered, drily,
Even phlegmatically,
'Don't seek to exorcise me, pray,
Quite so emphatically!

I'm no ghost from the past,
No scarecrow from the grave,
I'm no friend of rhetoric,
It's philosophy I crave.

I'm practical by nature,
I'm calm, and silent too,
But know: whatever you conceive
In mind, that, I will do.

And even if long years go by,
I'll not rest till I enact
Your thoughts as true realities;
You think, and I will act.

You are the judge, the bailiff, I,
Who'll play the servant's part,
I'll execute the sentence,

Though unjust, that you impart.

In ancient Rome, they bore an axe
Before the Consul; you'll find
You too will have your lictor,
But the axe will go behind.

I'll be your lictor; and will walk
Behind you, as I ought –
Carrying the gleaming blade,
And acting out your thought.'

Chapter VII: Cologne – Concluded

I returned to the inn, and slept
As if the angels rocked me.
One sleeps so sound in German beds,
The feathers plump so softly.

How oft I've missed the pleasure
Of my own native pillow,
Exiled, in the sleepless night,
A hard mattress there below!

One sleeps so well, and dreams so deep,
On one of our featherbeds;
There the German soul feels free
Of the earthly chains it dreads.

The soul feels free, and soars on high
Midst Heaven's furthest gleams,
O German soul, how proud your flight,
In your nocturnal dreams!

The gods grow pale, when you draw near!
You have kindled, on your way,
Many a star as you passed by,
With your wingbeats, so they say!

The French and Russians hold the land,
While Britain rule the waves,
But the airy realm of dreams,
Is the realm our being craves.

There is our hegemony,
There we are united,
Let other kingdoms remain
With their flat earth, delighted...

And as I fell asleep, I dreamed
I strolled, though not alone,
In moonlight, through the echoing streets,
That form ancient Cologne.

There, behind me, walked, once more,
My dark, hooded, shadow,
I so weary my knees gave way,
Yet onwards we did go.

Onwards we went, although my heart
Showed in my gaping chest,
And all about the red drops fell,
From the wound at my breast.

Now and then, my fingers dipped
Within, and now and then,
I smeared the doorposts with blood,
As I passed them, one in ten.

And every time I marked a house
With my fingers, as I say,
Softly and sadly a passing bell,
It seemed, tolled far away;

While, in the sky, the moon,
Grew ever darker and dimmer,
Wild clouds like black stallions
Obscuring her pale glimmer.

And always there behind me, he
Gripped his hidden weapon,
That dark figure – thus, we two
Kept wandering on and on.

On and on, till, once again,
In the Cathedral square,
The doors stood open wide,
And we two entered there.

Within that vast space, only
Death, night, and silence reigned,
While lamps burned here and there,
Thus, light the darkness framed.

I walked amongst the pillars,
And nothing more I heard
Than my companion's footsteps,
For he uttered not a word.

We reached a place that shone
With gold and jewels bright,
The Chapel of the Three Kings,
Glowed in the candlelight.

Those three wise men, however,
Who silent once did lie,
A miracle, sat upright
On their sarcophagi!

Three skeletons, in fancy dress,
With crowns upon their heads,
And sceptres in their bony hands,
They'd risen from their beds.

Like jumping-jacks, they twitched
Their long-dried yellow bones;
They smelt of ancient mould,
With resinous overtones.

One even worked his jaws,
And gave a lengthy speech,
Explaining why respect was due
To all of them, and each.

First, because they were all dead,
And secondly, were kings,
And thirdly they were holy,
With the cachet that it brings.

Unmoved, and smiling bravely,
'In vain, your rod you cast!'
I cried: 'In every way, I see
You're rooted in the past.

Off with you! Deep in the grave,
Is your proper place,
The treasures of this chapel
Life's coffers now will grace.

The merry cavalry's fine steeds
Will dwell within these walls
And if you don't go willingly,
You'll dislike what befalls.'

So, I spoke, and turned my head,
And saw the dread blade shine.
Twas my companion's dreadful axe.
He understood my sign,

Drew near, and with his axe-blade,
The bones of superstition,
He shattered all to pieces,
With merciless precision.

The echo of those blows rang forth
From every vault; there broke
From out my chest great streams of blood –
And, suddenly, I awoke!

***Note:** Johann Georg Carl Harrys (1780-1838) was a German journalist and author, who accompanied the violinist and composer Paganini on a concert tour, in 1830, and published in that same year a memoir entitled 'Paganini in his Travelling Carriage.'*

End of Part I of Heinrich Heine's 'Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen'

Part II: Chapters VIII-XVII

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Chapter VIII: Westphalia: Mülheim

The cost from Cologne to Hagen, by coach,
Is five Prussian thalers, six groschen,
Unfortunately, the coach was full,
So, I rode in a chaise, in the open.

A late autumn morning, damp and grey;
The carriage ploughed through the mud,
But despite the road and the weather,
I felt sweetly content, neath the hood.

I breathed the air of my homeland!
I felt my cheeks were burning!
And the dirt of that country road,
Twas my fatherland I was churning!

The horses swished their tails
As warmly as old friends do,
And their dung seemed as beautiful
As the apples Hippomenes threw!

We drove through Mühlheim, a pretty place,
The people work hard, each one.
I was last there in the month of May
In eighteen thirty-one.



‘Ice floe in Mülheim on the Rhine (1784)’ - H. Goblé
[The Rijksmuseum](https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collectie/AK-MAK-1784-01)

Back then, all was decked with flowers,
And the sun was smiling on high,
The birds sang out their longing,
And people thought, with a sigh:

‘These lanky knights, these noblemen,
Will soon be gone from here,
We’ll serve them all a farewell draught,
From our steel barrels, and cheer!

Freedom means games and dancing,
And the tricolour, red, white and blue,
And perhaps it will raise, from the grave
The ten-years-dead Bonaparte too!’

Dear God! The knights are still here,
And many a goose we see

That was lean on its arrival,
Is as fat as ever could be!

Those pale rascals who talked
Of love, faith, hope, at the time,
Have rendered their noses red,
Drinking the best of Mülheim,

While Freedom has sprained her ankle,
And no longer leaps about madly,
And, in Paris, the tricolour
Looks down from the turrets, sadly.

Their emperor rose once more,
But the English worms, his bane,
They rendered the great man silent,
By burying him again.

I myself saw his funeral,
Saw the gilded carriage go by,
With its goddesses of victory,
Bearing the coffin on high.

Along the Champs Élysées,
Midst the fog, o'er the snow,
Through the Arc de Triomphe,
I watched the procession go,

The music eerie, discordant,
The musicians frozen with cold,
The eagles on the standards,
That greeted me, wistfully old.

The people looked like ghosts,
Lost in their memories; all in vain,

The imperial fairytale, the dream
Was conjured to life again.

I wept that day. I felt the tears
Rising to my eyes,
On hearing 'Vive l'Empereur!',
Those lost ones loving cries.

Chapter IX: Hagen

I left Cologne at a quarter to eight,
Quite early, the weather was fine,
And arrived in Hagen at about three,
Where we sat down to dine.

The table was set. There I found
The true Germanic cuisine.
'Greetings to you, dear Sauerkraut;
Fragrant one, how have you been?'

Braised chestnuts on green cabbage,
Just as she did them, my mother!
Greeting to you too, native Cod,
Skilfully swimming in butter!

The fatherland is eternally dear
To every heart that can feel –
I also love poached eggs, and kippers
Braised quite brown, for a meal.

How the sizzling sausages squeaked!
While the fieldfares, roasted angelically,
And served with apple sauce,
Chirped their 'Welcome!' to me.

‘Welcome, countryman,’ they chirped,
‘You’ve been away too long,
Flitting about with strange birds,
In foreign lands too; it’s wrong.’

There was a goose on the table,
Who’d loved me perhaps, when young,
That quiet, gentle creature,
Whom many a poet has sung.

She looked at me, with meaning,
So deeply, truly, woefully!
Surely her soul was beautiful,
Though her flesh seemed tough to me.

They also offered a pig’s head
Served on a pewter plate;
We still adorn a pig’s snout
With bay leaves, and its pate.

Chapter X: Unna

Beyond Hagen, it was night.
I was strangely chilled within,
And only grew warm again,
On reaching Unna, at the inn.

There I found a pretty girl,
Who served a glass of punch outright,
Her hair shone like yellow silk,
Gentle her eyes as moonlight.

I heard once more with pleasure

The Westphalian accent, too.
The punch steamed, sweet memories,
I thought of my 'brothers' anew,

Those many fine Westphalians
Whom I drank with in Göttingen,
Until our very hearts were moved,
And beneath the table I sank again!

Those dear, good Westphalians;
I've always loved them so,
So steadfast, and sure, and true,
And modest, though sometimes slow.

How nobly they stood to fence,
Those lion-hearts, I found!
With tierce and quarte, in defence,
How well they held their ground.

They drink well, they fight well,
And offering you their hand,
From pure friendship, they will weep;
Like mighty oaks they stand.

May Heaven, then, defend the brave,
And bless your harvests all,
Protecting you from glory, war,
And heroes, lest you fall;

And grant that you see your sons
Pass their exams, like honest men,
Find suitors for your daughters,
And marry them off – Amen!

Chapter XI: The Teutoberg Forest

Here's the Teutoberg Forest
Which Tacitus, no liar,
Described, where Varus came to grief,
Stuck in the classic mire.



‘Furor Teutonicus’ - Battle of the Teutoburg Forest’ - Paja Jovanović (Serbian, 1859-1957)
[Wikimedia Commons](#)

Here the Cheruscan prince,
Arminius, brought him low;
The Germanic race, and Hermann,
In the mud there, dealt a blow.

If he had failed to win the fight,
There'd be no German freedom;
Were it not for his blonde horde,

Our land would yet be Roman.

And, in our fatherland, today,
Rome's customs would prevail,
Vestal Virgins dwell in Munich,
Swabian 'Quirites' quaff their ale.

And Hengstenberg, as a *haruspex*,
Would be deep in the entrails,
And Neander would be an *augur*,
Watching the flight of quails.

Birch-Pfeiffer would drink turpentine
As Roman ladies used to do.
(It's said it made their urine
Smell sweeter – if it's true.)

Raumer would be a Roman rogue
Not one in the German fold,
And Freiligrath's poems would fail to rhyme,
Like Horace's of old.

That rude boorish, Father Jahn,
Would, in Latin, be Boorianus.
By Hercules! Massman would be
Marcus Tullius Massmanus!

The friends of truth would be wrestling
Lions, jackals and hyenas,
Not curs in lesser journals,
As in our modern arenas.

And we would have *one* Nero, and not
Three dozen Fathers of the Nation.
And be slicing at our veins,

Scorning slavery's prostration.

Schelling would be our Seneca,
And perish the same way;
'*Cacatum non est pictum*,'
To Cornelius, we'd say.

Thank God, that Hermann won the fight,
And so drove out the Romans!
Varus and his legions fell,
And we are still the Germans!

Germans we are, German we speak,
As we spoke it, and ever will.
An ass is an ass, not an *asinus*,
Swabians are Swabians still.

Raumer remains a German rogue
In our northern Germany;
Freiligrath, whose poems rhyme,
Was never a Horace to be.

Massman speaks no Latin, thank God!
Birch-Pfieffer simply writes plays,
And never drinks vile turpentine,
As they did in ancient days.

O Hermann, we have you to thank!
Thus, they've raised, and inscribed,
A monument, near Detmold, to you.
Indeed, I myself subscribed.

Notes: *The silver groschen equal to twelve pfennigs was worth a thirtieth of a silver thaler, (the thaler was equivalent to an English crown, therefore the groschen was equivalent to two pence). In the Greek myth Atalanta was thwarted in a footrace by her suitor Hippomenes, who threw three golden apples in turn to divert her attention. Varus, the Roman general, famously*

committed suicide after the defeat of his three legions by Arminius (Hermann) at the Battle of the Teutoberg Forest in 9AD. Quirites were citizens of Rome. A haruspex interpreted omens by inspecting animal entrails, an augur by examining the flight of birds. Joachim Neander (1650-1680) was a Calvinist teacher, theologian and hymnwriter. Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer (1800-1868) was an actress, writer, director of the Stadttheater in Zürich, and the author of many plays and librettos. Friedrich von Raumer (1781-1873) was a historian who popularised the writing of history in German. Ferdinand Freiligrath (1810-1876) was a poet, translator and liberal agitator. Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852), a gymnastics educator and nationalist, gained the epithet 'The Father of Gymnastics'. Hans Massmann (1797-1874) was a philologist, also known for his work introducing gymnastics to Prussian schools. Friedrich Schelling (1775-1854), was an idealist philosopher. Peter von Cornelius (1783-1867), was a painter belonging to the Nazarene movement. 'Cacatum non est pictum' means 'shit should not be painted.' The memorial to Hermann, the 'Hermannsdenkmal' is located southwest of Detmold, on a hill in the Teutoburger Wald.

Chapter XII: The Teutoberg Forest - Continued

Through the dark forest rumbled
The chaise. We crashed in an instant,
A wheel had come adrift; we halted,
Our state was less than pleasant.

The postilion leapt to the ground,
To the village, swiftly hastening;
Alone, in the forest, at midnight,
Around me rose a howling,

The wolves were calling, loudly.
Their hunger was most dire;
Like lamps in the darkness
Their eyes were full of fire.

They had heard of our coming,
The pack showed honour to us,
By kindling the forest,
And howling out in chorus.

Twas a serenade, I realised;

It was myself they celebrated.
So, instantly, I struck a pose,
An oration was indicated:

‘Fellow wolves, I’m most pleased
To be here with you this eve,
With so many noble souls
Howling their love, I believe.

What I feel at this moment is
Profound, and quite immeasurable,
This hour, in its beauty, will prove
I know, wholly unforgettable.

I thank you for your trust in me,
Which is greatly to your honour,
And of which, in times of trial,
The clearest proof you offer.

Fellow wolves, you’ve never doubted me,
You were ever undeceived
By the slanderers who said I’d gone
To the dogs, which you ne’er believed;

Nor that I, a renegade, midst the sheep
A councillor soon would be.
To contradict their lies was quite
Beneath my dignity.

The sheepskin that, for warmth,
That, occasionally, I’ve worn,
Trust me, has never made me,
One of the sheep I scorn.

Neither a sheep, nor a hound am I,

Nor a councillor, nor a dogfish,
I've ever remained a wolf at heart,
And my teeth are still as wolfish.

I am a wolf, and will always howl
With the wolves, when midnight's due.
So, count on me, and help yourselves,
Then God will help you too!'

That was the speech I gave them,
On every last word, they hung.
Kolb has printed it, mutilated
In the 'Allgemeine Zeitung.'

***Note:** The 'Allgemeine Zeitung' ('Public Newspaper') founded in 1798, was the leading political daily journal in Germany in the first part of the 19th century. Heine was a major contributor, and from 1831 reported on music and art, becoming its Paris correspondent. Gustav Eduard Kolb (1798-1865) was its editor from 1828 onwards, often publishing in defiance of the censors.*

Chapter XIII: Paderborn

The Sun arose, at Paderborn,
With a gloomy expression.
Lighting the stupid Earth
Is indeed a gloomy mission!

When, in the planet's course,
One side has seen the light,
The sun shines on the other,
The first plunges into night.

The Danaid's jars are never filled;
The stone rolls down again
Once Sisyphus has reached the top;

The Sun lights Earth in vain.

And as the morning mist dissolved,
And cleared from the wayside,
I saw the image of a man,
Of the one who was crucified.

I'm filled with sadness, every time
I behold you, my poor cousin,
A fool who sought to save the world,
And Humanity therein!

They played a nasty trick on you,
Those members of the Sanhedrin.
What possessed you to speak recklessly,
Of the state, religion, and sin!

Sadly, for you, the printing press
Was absent in those days.
You might have issued a book
Explaining God's celestial ways.

The censor would have expunged
Whatever he deemed no loss,
And thereby saved you, kindly,
From dying on the Cross.

If only you'd chosen another text
For your Sermon on the Mount,
You'd enough wit and talent
To have made mere piety count!

But you drove the money-changers
From the Temple, and with zest –
Unhappy extremist, now you hang

On the Cross, to warn the rest!

Notes: In Greek myth, the Danaids (the 'daughters of Danaos') were punished for killing their husbands by being forced to endlessly fill their leaking jars with water. Sisyphus revealed Zeus' abduction of Aegina to the river god Asopus, thereby incurring Zeus' wrath. After death, his eternal punishment was to roll an immense boulder up a hill, only for it to roll back down again, each time it neared the summit.

Chapter XIV: Barbarossa

A damp breeze, a bare landscape,
The chaise, the mud the same,
While in my soul a voice was singing,
'Oh, Sun, your mournful flame!'

Twas the last line of an old song,
One my nurse sang many a day;
'Oh, Sun, your mournful flame!'
Like a hunting-horn, far away,

The tale had a murderer in it,
Who lived most pleasurably,
Yet was found hanging in the woods,
From a grey willow tree.

The Feme Court's sentence was nailed
To the trunk of the tree, below,
'Oh, Sun, your mournful flame!'
Vengeance was taken so.

The Sun had accused, and caused, him,
To be condemned to death.
'Oh, Sun, your mournful flame!'
His victim cried, with her last breath.

And whenever I think of the song
I think of my dear old nurse,
I see her weathered face again,
All wrinkles, and folds, and worse.

She had been born in Münsterland
And knew how to regale
The listener with some ghost-story,
Folk song, or fairy-tale.

How my heart beat when she told
Of that princess, young and fair,
Who sat alone, by the hearth,
Combing her golden hair.

She had to look after the geese,
As a goose-girl, and when she
Drove the geese to the yard at eve,
She stood gazing, sorrowfully,

For nailed over the gateway,
There hung a horse's head,
That of the unfortunate steed,
Who to exile, with her, had sped.

The princess sighed deeply:
'O Falada, that you hang so!'
And the horse's head replied:
'Oh, that you must live in woe!'

The princess sighed deeply:
'Oh, if my mother knew!'
And the horse's head replied:
'Her heart would break in two!'

With bated breath I listened
As her voice she lowered once more;
And spoke of Barbarossa,
Our secret emperor.

She swore he wasn't dead
As the scholars claimed, one and all,
But, with his comrades-in-arms,
Still lived, in a cavernous hall.



‘The discovery of the body of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa in the Kalykadnus River (c. 1828-1834)’ - Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (German, 1794 - 1872)

[Artvee](#)

Neath a mountain, named Kyffhäuser,
Is the cave, where he lives in state,

In a ghostly high-vaulted hall
That bright lamps illuminate.

The first of four great chambers,
Holds a stable, where many a steed,
In full harness, beside its manger,
Stands, awaiting some epic deed.

All are saddled and bridled
And yet not a single steed
Neighs or stamps, all are silent,
As if cast in iron, indeed.

In the second chamber, on straw,
Thousands of soldiers are lying,
Bearded, with warlike features
For none are afraid of dying.

They're armed from head to toe,
But no watch those brave men keep;
They neither wake, nor move,
Merely lie there, deep in sleep.

In the third chamber stacked high,
Are weapons, as if under seal,
Swords, axes, Frankish firearms, armour,
Spears and helms, of silver and steel;

And a few cannon, sufficient to form
A triumphant pile; overhead,
A banner is raised, its colours
Are black, and gold, and red.

In the fourth hall, sits the emperor,
As he has for centuries,

On a stone chair, at a stone table,
His head on his arms, at ease.

His beard, which touches the ground,
Is as red as a glowing fire,
And now he blinks his eyes,
And now he frowns with ire.

Is he asleep, or thinking?
It's impossible to say,
But he'll shake himself and rise
On the appointed day.

For, then he'll seize his banner,
'To horse, to horse!' he'll call,
His mighty host will awake
And rise noisily, one and all;

Then mount their snorting steeds,
And behind his banner, unfurled,
As the trumpets raise their cry,
They'll ride forth into the world.

He rides well, he'll fight well,
He's slept well, in short.
Now, to punish the murderers,
He'll hold his imperial court.

Those murderers who slew
The precious, the wondrous dame,
The golden-haired maid, Germania –
'Oh, Sun, your mournful flame!'

Many a lord in his castle, thinking:
'I'm secure against loss, sir!'

Will not escape the hangman's rope –
Nor the wrath of Barbarossa!

How lovely and sweet they sound
The tales, of those heroes known to fame,
Bringing joy to my superstitious heart,
'Oh, Sun, your mournful flame!'

Notes: The medieval German 'Feme' Courts, for example those in Westphalia, had the power to issue death sentences. Frederick Barbarossa (1122-1190), also known as Frederick I was the Holy Roman Emperor from 1155 until his death. His coat of arms was a black eagle, with red beak and claws, on a field of gold. Legend claims him to be asleep, with his knights, in a cave in the Kyffhäuser mountains in Thuringia, and that when the ravens cease to fly around the mountain, he will awake and restore Germany to its ancient greatness.

Chapter XV: Barbarossa – Continued

A fine rain drizzled down,
Ice-cold, like a needle's tip;
The horses swished their tails, sadly,
And shivered at every drip.

The postilion sounded his horn
Summoning the ancient tune:
'Three riders are riding forth from the gate!'
I felt languid, as if in a swoon.

I finally fell asleep, and dreamed,
And behold, there was I,
With the emperor Barbarossa,
Neath that mountain, broad and high,

He no longer sat in his chair of stone,
A stone statue, at a stone table,
Nor did he look quite as venerable
As one imagines, if one's able.

He waddled about the four halls,
Holding intimate conversation,
Showing me, like an antiquarian,
The past treasures of the nation.

In the hall of weapons, he demonstrated
How a club should be employed,
And with his ermine rubbed the rust
From a sword with which he toyed.

With a peacock's feather in hand,
From many a suit of armour,
And many a helm, he cleaned the dust,
And from many a Pickelhaube.

He dusted off the banner too,
And said: 'It fills me with pride,
That moths have never eaten the silk,
While woodworm, the shaft's defied.'

And when we came to the hall,
Where the warriors slept, on the ground,
In those many thousands, waiting for war,
Great pleasure, the old man found:

'Walk quietly, and speak low,' he said,
Or you'll waken them, I'm afraid.
A hundred years have passed,
And today is the day they're paid.'

And, behold, he approached, softly,
And secretly placed a ducat,
Owed to every warrior there,
Into the man's deep pocket.

He said, with a smile on his face,
As I stared at him: 'You see,
I pay a good wage to every man,
A ducat per century.'

In the first hall where the steeds,
Stand in long rows, in silence,
The emperor rubbed his hands,
Strangely pleased by their presence.

He counted them, one by one,
He patted their flanks, and then,
His lips moving anxiously,
As he counted them all again.

'The number's not complete,' he said,
With a frown, when he was done,
'I've weapons and warriors enough,
But of steeds lack many a one.

I've sent men all over the world,
To buy the best steeds for me,
And already have quite a few,
Of the finest, as you can see.

I'll wait till the number's complete,
Then I'll strike, and freedom I'll win
For my Fatherland, and my people
Who trust that, one day, I'll begin.'

So, spoke the emperor, but I cried:
'Strike, then, old fellow, strike now,
And if you lack a few horses,
There are asses enough, I vow!'

Old Redbeard, replied, with a smile:
‘Come, Rome wasn’t built in a day,
Good things take time to develop,
Folk can cope with a little delay.

If it can’t be today, then tomorrow;
Great oaks grow slowly, as well;
Chi va piano, va sano,
They say, where the Romans dwell.’

Note: ‘Chi va piano, va sano’, is an Italian phrase, meaning ‘Those who go slowly, go safely.’

Chapter XVI: Barbarossa – Continued

A jolt of the carriage awoke me,
But my eyelids soon closed, and then,
I fell asleep, and I dreamed
Of Barbarossa again.

I chatted with him, once more,
As we circled the echoing hall,
He asked about this and that,
Demanding I tell him all:

‘I’ve not had a word from outside,
For many and many a year,
Not since the Seven Years War
Has anyone new been here.’

He asked about Moses Mendelssohn,
And ‘Die Karschin’ no less,
And asked after the Countess Dubarry,
Who was Louis XV’s mistress.

‘O emperor’, I cried, ‘how dated you are,
That Moses died long ago,
As did Abraham and Rebecca,
And their son’s with the worms below.

There’s an Abraham who with Lea
Had a boy named Felix, who later
Made great progress in Christianity,
And is now a fine choirmaster.

Old Anna Karsch, too, is dead,
And Caroline von Klencke, her daughter,
Though Helmina von Chézy’s alive, I think
Who is ‘Die Karschin’s grand-daughter.

While Louis XV reigned,
Madame Dubarry was on the scene,
And she was already old
When she went to the guillotine.

Louis XV, he died peacefully
In his bed, but who can forget
That the sixteenth was guillotined,
With Queen Marie Antoinette?

The latter showed great courage,
As was fitting for a queen,
But Dubarry wept and howled,
As she went to the guillotine.’



‘Jeanne Bécu, Countess Du Barry’ - Jean Baptiste André Gautier d'Agoty
[Raw Pixel](#)

The emperor halted, suddenly,
Gazed at me with his staring eyes,
‘What, in God’s name, is this guillotine?’
He asked, showing some surprise.

‘The guillotine’, I explained to him,
‘Is a new method devised, alas,
To hasten folk from life to death,
Fit for people of every class.

Proposed by Monsieur Guillotin,
The method employs a new machine,
Which is why the thing is named
After its sponsor, the guillotine.

You're strapped to a board, like so.
It lowers; you're strapped in tight;
There's a slanted blade, you're below;
One can struggle, with all one's might,

But they pull a rope, the blade descends,
To vast merriment, and cheers,
And your head falls into a sack,
Full of a number of your peers.'

The emperor interrupted me:
'Silence! Who wants to know?
God forbid I should use it,
Or deal any head such a blow!

A king and queen indeed,
Strapped to a board thus set,
It shows a lack of respect,
And flouts the rules of etiquette!

And who are you, that dare,
To address me familiarly,
Just wait, you cheeky rascal
And I'll clip your wings; you'll see!

It stirs my bile, the manner
In which you speak to me,
Your every word is high treason,
A crime against majesty!'

The old fellow was so enraged,
And sneered so, no longer quaint,
That my most secret thoughts,
Burst forth, without restraint:

‘Herr Redbeard,’ I cried, ‘you are
A merely mythical old creature,
Go back to sleep, we’ll save ourselves,
Without your needing to feature.

The Republicans simply laugh
When they see that we have, as leader,
As if in some form of bad joke,
A ghost with a crown and sceptre.

Nor do I like your banner, the fools
In my old fraternity
Spoiled my enthusiasm,
For red, gold, and black, you see.

It’s best if you stay at home,
In the old Kyffhäuser, here.
On reflection, we’ve no need
Of an emperor, that’s clear.’

Notes: Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) was a German-Jewish philosopher and theologian, whose writings on Jewish religion and identity were central to the Haskalah, the ‘Jewish Enlightenment’ of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Anna Louisa Karsch (1722-1791) was an autodidact and poet from Silesia, known to her contemporaries as ‘Die Karschin’ and ‘the German Sappho’. Jeanne Bécu, Comtesse du Barry (1744-1793) was the last ‘maîtresse-en-titre’ of Louis XV of France. She was guillotined during the French Revolution. ‘Felix’, is Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847), the composer, the son of Abraham Mendelssohn and Lea Salomon. Joseph-Ignace Guillotin (1738-1814) a French physician, politician, and freemason, proposed in 1789 the use of the device, known by his name but invented by Antoine Louis, as a less painful method of execution.

Chapter XVII: Barbarossa – Concluded

I was forthright with the emperor;
In dream, of course, in dream –
When one's awake, with princes
One's approach is less extreme.

A German only dares to give
In idealistic dreams,
The true opinions he holds
About reality, it seems.

Awake, passing by the forest,
Seeing all those ranks of trees,
In bare, wooden actuality,
My dream fled with the breeze.

Oak-trees shook their branches gravely,
Birches bowed, and furthermore,
Waved a warning: 'Oh,' I cried,
'Forgive me, my dear emperor!

Forgive my speaking hastily,
Indee, you're wiser far than I,
Who have but little patience;
Yet, come now, not by and by!

And if the guillotine's not fitting,
Let the ancient means suffice,
The sword for the noblemen,
The rope, though less precise,

For the peasants, and at times,
Let the lords hang and behead

The citizens, and the masses;
We're God's creatures, live or dead.

Restore that court of justice,
Charles the Fifth's *audiencia*;
Sort all by class, guild, and trade,
And divide the people more.

Give us back again, complete,
Your Holy Roman Empire, all
Its ancient mouldy rubbish;
All its frills and furs, recall.

For, in fact, the Middle Ages,
In their true reality,
I could endure, but save us
From this hybrid mockery,

This Order of the Garter,
A disgusting mix, most foul,
Of the Gothic and the modern,
That is neither fish nor fowl.

Chase away the pack of clowns,
Close the theatres, all this lie
That merely parodies the past;
Yet come now, not by and by!

End of Part II of Heinrich Heine's 'Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen'

Part III: Chapters XVIII-XXVII

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Chapter XVIII: Minden

Minden is a stronghold
With fine walls and weaponry,
However, Prussian forts
Are not my speciality.

We arrived in the evening,
The drawbridge groaned a warning,
Eerily, as we rolled across,
The dark ditches yawning.

The sullen bastions looked down,
Threateningly, from on high;
The gate rattled open,
And closed, once we'd gone by.

My soul, alas, was troubled,
Like that of Ulysses,
When Polyphemus sealed the cave,
With a boulder, if you please.

A guard approached the carriage,
And asked me for my name.
'I'm Nobody, an oculist,
Cataracts are my game.'

At the inn, I felt no easier.
As for taste, the food had none;
I went to bed, but tossed and turned;
The blankets weighed a ton.

The feather-bed was wide,
The damask curtains red,
The canopy was faded gold,
A soiled tassel overhead.

That cursed tassel robbed me
Of my rest all blessed night!
Like the sword of Damocles
It hung there, in full sight.

Sometimes like a snake it seemed,
I heard its quiet hiss,
'You're in a fortress now,
So, try escaping this!'

'Oh, that I was at home,
In Paris, and lying there,
Beside my wife 'Mathilde',
In the Faubourg Poissonnière!

I felt as if something, at times,
Was stroked across my brow,
Like the censor's chilly hand,
Erasing my thoughts, somehow.

Policemen wrapped in shrouds,
In ghostly white confusion.
Haunted my bed, while I heard
Chains clanking in collusion.

The ghosts bore me away, alas,
And I found myself outside,
Pressed against a steep rock face,
To which my limbs were tied.

That soiled tassel was there too,
Though I was now outdoors,
But took a vulture's shape
With black plumage and red claws,

Much like the Prussian eagle.
It clutched me to its breast,
Before plucking at my liver,
While I moaned and groaned with zest.

I lamented, till the cock crowed,
When my dream fled the castle,
And I lay in bed in Minden,
With the eagle just a tassel.

I departed on the express coach,
And first drew breath again,
On the soil of Bückeburg,
In the fresh air, in the rain.

Notes: In Homer's 'Odyssey', Ulysses/Odysseus and his men were trapped in a cave by the one-eyed Cyclops, Polyphemus. Ulysses when asked his name, answered 'Nobody'. Damocles, according to a Greek tale quoted by Cicero, was a courtier at the court of Dionysius I of Syracuse. The king allowed him to take his place for a day, but set a sword above Damocles' head, symbolic of the ever-present threats a king faced. Heine's wife was Crescence Eugénie Mirat, whom he nicknamed 'Mathilde', and they lived at 72 Rue du Faubourg-Poissonnière, in Paris, from September 1841 to April 1846.

Chapter XIX: Bückeburg and Hanover

Danton, you were in error,
And for that you had to pay!
One can take one's country with one,
On one's boot-soles, any day.

The principality of Bückeburg,
Half, at least, stuck to my feet
I doubt I've seen a muddier road,
None elsewhere could compete.

I halted at Bückeburg, from whence
My grandfather Chaim came,
His family seat; to Hamburg
Grandmother Eva laid claim.

I reached Hanover about noon,
And went off to view the city,
Having had my boots polished,
Seeking to travel profitably.

By God, the streets are clean there,
There wasn't a speck of mud!
And many a fine building I saw;
Impressive, that neighbourhood.

I greatly liked a spacious square,
By stately mansions bounded;
There the king dwells, in his palace,
By beautiful sights surrounded.

Before the palace gates
There's a sentry-box each side,
Redcoats with rifles stand there,
Fierce and threatening; my guide

Said: 'Here lives Ernst Augustus,
Who's still a British nobleman,
And a Tory lord, and very spry,
Though he's quite an aged man.

He lives idyllically, here, secure;
Better than all his bodyguards,
Our dear friends' lack of courage
Protects him and the palace yards.

I see him sometimes, he complains
About the tedium of his role,
The royal office that condemns him
To Hanover, poor soul.

Used to the British way of life,
He finds it confining here;
Plagued by spleen, someday
He'll hang himself, I fear.

Yesterday I found him bowed
Over the hearth, at dawn,
Cooking up an enema,
For a hound, ill that morn.'

***Notes:** When urged to flee when threatened with the guillotine, Georges Danton (1759-1794), the revolutionary politician, replied, 'One cannot take one's country with one on the soles of one's boots.' Ernst Augustus (1771-1851) was King of Hanover from 1837 until his death. He was the fifth son of George III of Britain and Hanover, and an active member of the British House of Lords.*

Chapter XX: Hamburg

From Harburg, I rode to Hamburg,
In an hour; twas already evening,
The stars in the sky greeted me,
The air was mild and refreshing.



‘Hamburg’ - S. Davenport
[Raw Pixel](#)

When I reached my mother’s house,
She well-nigh shrieked with joy,
She clapped her hands together,
And cried: ‘My darling boy!’

‘My darling boy, thirteen years
Have swiftly passed us by,
You must be simply starving,
What will you take now? I

Have goose, and fish for you to eat,
And the oranges taste fine.’
‘Then give me goose, and fish to eat,
And those oranges shall be mine.’

And, as I quenched my appetite,
My mother, cheerful and happy,
Asked me this, and asked me that,

The questions sometimes tricky.

‘My dear child, in that foreign land,
Are you cared for properly?
Is your wife a good housekeeper,
Mending shirts and stockings neatly?’

‘Mother dear, this fish is good,
But should be eaten in silence,
Or one may get a bone in one’s throat,
And choke to death, mid-sentence.’

And when I’d finished the tasty fish,
The goose was served, large portions,
And she asked of this and that again,
Sometimes posing tricky questions.

‘My dear child, in which country
Do you find that life holds zest,
Here or in France, and which folk
Do you prefer? Who’s best?’

‘Mother dear, this goose is good,
But the French, dear mother,
Stuff their geese better than us,
And their sauces, too, are better.’

And when the goose made its farewell,
The oranges came on station,
Which tasted very sweet indeed,
Beyond all expectation.

But then my mother began again
To ask her difficult questions,
About a thousand things, and some,

Prompted further digressions.

‘My dear child, what are your views?
Are politics still your inclination?
To which party, do you now belong,
And is it by chance, or conviction?’

‘The oranges, dear mother, are good,
And to eat them is a pleasure;
I leave the bitter peel behind,
And swallow the juice at leisure.’

***Note:** Heine’s mother, Peira van Geldern (1771-1859), known as Betty, came from a family of considerable standing in the Jewish community. Her father, Gottschalk van Geldern (1727-1795), was a prominent physician. She was known for her intelligence and rationalism, and played a significant role in her son’s life.*

Chapter XXI: Hamburg - Continued

Hamburg, which was half burned down
Is being rebuilt, though slowly.
Looking like a half-shaven poodle,
The city is somewhat gloomy.



‘The Eimbeck House in Hamburg with the former Ratskeller during the Great Fire on the night of May 6th to 7th, 1842’ - Peter Suhr 1842

[Wikimedia Commons](#)

Many the vanished streets I miss,
And I grudge their disappearance.
Where’s the house where my first kiss
Was won? Marked down for clearance.

Where is the printshop where I
Printed my ‘Travel Pictures’
Where now the cellar in which
I swallowed my first oysters?

And the Dreckwall, where’s the Dreckwall gone?
I searched for it in vain.
Where’s the Pavillon, where I ate
All those cakes, for little gain?

Where’s the town hall, where the Senate
And citizens sat in state?

Prey to the flames! The holy of holies,
Has met with the common fate.

The people, full of fear still, sigh,
And, with melancholy gaze,
Tell me the dreadful tale
Of that vast and ruinous blaze.

‘The Great Fire flared in every corner,
Every church tower was a pyre,
Nothing but smoke and flames seen,
Till they fell with a crash; twas dire.

The old Stock Exchange has gone,
The Börse where our fathers stood,
Talked, and traded for centuries
There, as honestly as they could.

The Bank, the city’s soul of silver,
The books, in which, written plain,
Each man’s account’s recorded –
God be thanked, they still remain!

God be thanked, money was sent,
From even the furthest nations –
A fine thing – they collected
Seven million marks, in donations!

Funds from every country,
Into our hands were paid,
We accepted food and clothing too,
And never refused their aid.

They sent us bedding and beds,
As well as the bread and soup,

The King of Prussia even wanted
To send us a body of troops.

For the material loss, we received
Its full value, as estimated,
But for all one's fear, one's terror,
How can one be compensated!'

I said, sympathetically: 'Dear friends,
You must help each other, in turn,
Troy was an even greater city,
And yet Troy, too, had to burn.

Dry the puddles of water,
Rebuild your houses once more,
Improve your fire-engines,
And revise the relevant law;

And don't add too much cayenne pepper
To your mock-turtle soup, at that;
And a carp will damage your health,
Cooked, with the scales on, in fat;

While a turkey will do you no harm,
All the better, if it's good and big;
Yet beware the treacherous bird,
That lays its egg in the mayor's wig –

There's no need, I think, to repeat
That fatal bird's true name,
But I'm always sick to my stomach,
Whenever I think of that same.

Notes: The great fire of Hamburg in May 1842, destroyed about a third of the buildings in the Old Town. Heine's 'Reisebilder' ('Travel Pictures') was published in 1826. The volume, covering four journeys, included 'Die Harzreise', which marked a new style in German travel-

writing, mixing Romantic descriptions of nature with satire. The Dreckwall, now the Alter Wall, is a historic street in Hamburg's Altstadt (Old Town), which was originally part of the city's medieval fortifications, and where a community of Sephardic Jews settled. The treacherous and fatal bird is the Prussian eagle.

Chapter XXII: Hamburg - Continued

But even more than the city,
The people seem changed to me,
Going about, sad and broken,
A ruinous sight to see.

The lean ones are even leaner,
The fat ones seem fatter, even
The children seem old, the old
Have almost become children.

Many I left behind as calves
Have grown to be oxen too,
Many a little gosling it seems
Is a goose, and white of hue.

Old Gudel was wearing make-up,
I found, quite the Siren-like sight,
Having acquired curly black hair,
And teeth of a dazzling white.

While my friend the stationer
Was the best-preserved of all,
His hair, turned yellow, encircling his face,
Like John the Baptist, or Saul.

I caught only a glimpse of ***
As he passed, the former wit.
I heard his brain was scorched,

And twas Bieber had insured it.

And I saw my old Censor again,
Stumbling about with the rest,
In the Gänsemarkt, in the fog,
And seemingly very depressed.

We shook hands, and a tear
Welled up in the fellow's eye.
How happy he was to see me again!
He was touched and so was I.

There were some I failed to find;
A number have passed away.
Oh, even my 'Gumpelino'
Is gone, just the other day.

The noble fellow has breathed his last;
His great soul, free of flesh and bone,
Transfigured, as one of the seraphim,
Now flits round Jehovah's throne.

And I searched for the crooked Adonis
Who sold items in porcelain,
And chamber pots, in the Hamburg streets,
But looked for him in vain.

Sarras, the faithful poodle, is dead,
A great loss! Campe would grieve
For the loss of a host of his authors
Less than that creature, I believe.

The State of Hamburg's population
Since time immemorial, I'd say,
Has been part Jewish, part Christian;

Even the latter give little away.

The Christians are all virtuous,
They eat lunch heartily too,
And they pay their bill's promptly,
Even before the date they're due.

The Jews are once more divided,
Their denominations two;
The old attend the synagogue,
To the Temple, go the new.

The new eat pork, and are rebels,
Their instincts democratic,
The old are quite the opposite,
Their manners aristocratic.

I like the old, I like the new –
But, by the Lord God, I swear,
I like those little fish more,
Smoked sprats, eaten everywhere.

Notes: Georg Ehlert Bieber (1761–1845) founded the private Fire Insurance Association in 1795, which went bankrupt after the 1842 fire. Heine, and his publisher Julius Campe (1792-1867) who took over the Hoffmann and Campe publishing house in Hamburg in 1823, had frequent problems with the censor. The Gänsemarkt (Goose Market) is a public square in Hamburg's Neustadt district. Lazarus Gumpel (1770-1843), Heine's 'Gumpelino', was a merchant and founder of an association to provide housing for impoverished Jews.

Chapter XXIII: Hamburg - Continued

As a Republic, Hamburg was never
As great as was Venice, or Florence,
But Hamburg has better oysters; try
The cellar-bar owned by Lorenz.

It was a lovely evening when I
And Campe dined there together,
We wished to gorge ourselves,
On Rhine wine, and many an oyster.

There, we met with good company,
And amidst a host of others,
Old comrades, like Chauffepié,
And a handful of new brothers.

There was Wille, whose face
Is a record of all the blows
Legibly inscribed there
By his academic foes.

And there was Fuchs, a blind heathen,
An enemy of Jehovah,
Who only believes in Hegel,
And the Venus, perhaps, of Canova.

Campe was my Amphytrion;
Glowing, in deep delight,
Like a transfigured Madonna;
With bliss his eyes shone bright.

I ate and drank with appetite,
And truly felt, at that hour:
'Campe's a great man indeed,
Of publishers, he's the flower.

Another publisher might
Have let me starve to death,
While he fills up my glass,
And toasts me, in a breath.

So, I thank the Lord, on high,
Who gave us the fruit of the vine,
And Joseph Campe, the publisher,
Who fills my glass with wine!

I thank the Lord, on high,
Who, thanks to his Creation,
Granted oysters to the sea,
And Rhine wine to our nation!

He also made lemons grow,
Of that there is no question,
To add flavour to the oysters.
Father, now spare me indigestion!

Rhine wine mollifies me,
Every hatred can remove
From my heart, kindling therein,
The need for human love.

It drives me out of the room,
Sets me wandering the street;
Soul needs soul, and seeks
Petticoats white as a sheet.

At such moments I well-nigh melt,
From wistfulness and yearning;
All the cats seem grey to me,
Every woman a Helen, burning.

When I came to the Drehbahn,
I saw in the moonlight there,
A noble woman, high-breasted,
A woman wondrously fair.

Her face was round, and blooming,
Her eyes were turquoise blue,
Her cheeks like roses, her lips like cherries,
Her nose of a reddish hue.

A cap of white starched linen
Was seated atop her hair,
Pleated like a mural crown
With turrets and towers to spare.

She wore a tunic, all white;
Down to her calves, its border.
And what calves! Those legs,
Were gems of the Doric order.

A most worldly naturalness
Could be seen in her features,
But her profile from the rear,
Set her above God's creatures.

'Welcome to the Elbe,' she said,
Drawing near, and speaking my name,
'After thirteen years away,
I can see you're still the same!



‘Hamburg from the Elbe’
[*Picryl*](#)

You seek the beautiful souls, perhaps,
That you often met, face to face,
And passed the night away with,
In this beautiful place.

Life has devoured the monster,
The hundred-headed Hydra,
You’ll not recover the old days,
Nor those you once chased after!

You’ll find those lovely flowers no more,
That your heart adored when young,
They bloomed – now, they’re withered,
The storm stripped the petals you sung.

Withered, and stripped, and trampled
Beneath the harsh feet of fate –

My friend, that is ever the lot,
Of the fair and sweet, soon and late!’

‘Who are you,’ I cried, ‘that gaze at me,
As if in an ancient dream made new.
Splendid woman, where do you dwell,
And may I accompany you?’

The woman smiled, and replied:
‘You’re in error, I’m refined,
A decent, and moral person.
You’re in error, I’m not that kind!

No, I’m no little mademoiselle.
No Parisian ‘lorette’,
I’m Hammonia, and a goddess,
And Hamburg’s protectress yet.

You seem startled now, and fearful,
You, the brave singer elsewhere.
Still wish to accompany me?
Well don’t stand wavering there.’

But I laughed aloud, and said to her:
‘Yes, I’ll follow you even so –
Go on, then, and I’ll follow.
Though it’s off to Hell we go!’

Notes: Heine, a Freemason, speaks of his ‘Brothers’. From Molière’s line ‘Le véritable Amphitryon est l’Amphitryon où l’on dîne,’ the name Amphitryon came to mean a generous host. The street, Drehbahn, in Hamburg, was named after the rope makers’ yards once located there. A ‘lorette’ was a 19th-century French prostitute, her status somewhere between the kept woman or courtesan, and the common grisette.

Chapter XXIV: Hamburg - Continued

How I mounted the narrow
Staircase, I hardly know;
Perhaps invisible spirits
Raised me up from below.

Once in Hammonia's chamber,
The hours passed swiftly, she
Confessed a profound sympathy,
She had always felt for me.

'You see,' she said, 'in former days,
To me that poet was dear
Who sang of the Messiah,
To his lyre; twas sweet and clear.

The bust of my dear Klopstock,
Is there on the dresser still,
Though its role is as a hatstand,
Not one it was meant to fulfil.

But you're my darling now, your portrait
Hangs at the head of my bed,
And, as you see, a fresh laurel wreath,
Frames the picture, and your head.

But the way you scold my 'sons',
Sometime hurts me, I confess,
It must never happen again,
Or I'll surely admire you less.

Hopefully time has cured you
Of that bad habit of yours,

And given you greater tolerance,
Even for fools, and boors.

But, given the wintry weather,
What, on earth, inspired the idea
Of a journey so far north
At the coldest time of year?’

‘O goddess mine,’ I replied,
‘In the human heart, lie deep
Those thoughts that, at the fatal hour,
Waken from silent sleep.

Outwardly, I seemed fine,
Yet I was troubled inside,
And the feeling grew daily,
A homesickness I’d denied.

The air in France, I thought so light,
Nonetheless, weighed heavy on me,
And I felt that to breathe more freely,
I needed to visit Germany.

I longed for the scent of peat,
And of German tobacco burning.
Once more, to tread German soil,
The soles of my feet were yearning.

At night, I sighed with longing,
To see that old woman again,
Who lives on Dammtorstrasse;
‘Lottchen’ lives near that same.

I even directed many a sigh
At that noble gentleman, he

Who was forever scolding,
Yet defended me, regally.

I wanted to hear the words:
'Stupid youth,' from his lips, once more.
They ever sounded like music,
Here, in my heart's deep core.

I longed for the blue smoke rising
From German chimney-pots,
For Lower Saxony nightingales,
For the beech-groves' quiet spots.

I even longed for those stations,
Sites of suffering and loss,
Where I wore my crown of thorns,
In my youth, and bore my cross.

I longed to weep, where I
Once wept the bitterest tears –
Such foolish longings are called
True patriotism, it appears.

I don't like to speak of it;
It's a kind of heart-sickness
I hide from the public gaze,
Ashamed of my weakness.

I dread the mindless rabble
Who to win hearts to their cause,
Display their patriotism
With all its running sores.

Those wretched shameless beggars,
Seeking to win alms

For Menzel, and his Swabians,
And nationalism's charms!

My goddess, oh, you find me
In a softened mood today;
I'm somewhat ill; I'll pause,
To recover if I may.

Yes, I'm ill, yet you might
Refresh my soul, in sum,
With a strong cup of tea –
And, perhaps, a drop of rum.'

Chapter XXV: Hamburg - Continued

She made some tea, and added rum,
To the cup she poured for me,
While she herself enjoyed the rum,
Dispensing with the tea.

She leant against my shoulder,
(Her cap, like a mural crown,
Thus, was slightly crumpled)
And said gently, with a frown:

'I sometimes think with horror,
Of the life that, unsupervised,
You lead in less than moral Paris,
Midst those French; it's ill-advised.

You wander there, without
Your publisher at your side,
A loyal German, who could act
As a mentor, and a guide.

The temptations there are great,
All those sylphs, and you'll find
It's unhealthy, all too easily,
One can lose one's peace of mind.

Don't go; remain with us, for here
Custom and discipline reign,
And many quiet pleasures,
In peace, and calm, obtain.

Remain with us, in Germany;
You'll enjoy the life here more
Than you did; we're making progress,
You'll have noticed it, I'm sure.

The censorship is less severe,
Hoffman's older now and milder,
And no longer seeks to mutilate
'Travel Pictures', in his anger.

You yourself are older, milder,
More adaptable, I'm sure,
And may even see the past
Far more clearly than before.

Yes, to claim that things were dreadful
Here is mere exaggeration;
As in Rome, by embracing suicide,
One could escape subjugation.

Freedom of thought was enjoyed;
Censorship only touched, if any,
Those young writers, few in number,
Who were published, not the many.

The law was never arbitrary
In pursuing what was vile;
The worst demagogue never lost
His citizenship without a trial.

It was not so bad, in Germany,
Despite the hardship seen at times,
In prison no one starved to death
Believe me, for their crimes.

In the past, there were so many
Shows of faith, midst the devout,
And sweet consolation flourished,
Not denial, as now, and doubt.

Freedom, in practice, will one day
Destroy the ideal, that we all bore
Within our hearts, which was as pure
As the lilies that, in dreams, we saw.

While even our loveliest poetry,
Is faded somewhat, and failing,
Freiligrath's 'Moorish Prince', dies,
With every other prince and king.

Their grandsons will eat and drink
But not in quiet contemplation,
The spectacle goes rumbling by,
The idyll nears its termination.

If you could hold your tongue, I would
Unseal the book of fate for you,
And, in my magic mirror, show
All that will follow, clear and true.

What I've ne'er shown to mortal man,
To you would be rendered plain,
The future of our fatherland,
Could you silence but maintain!'

'Dear God, O Goddess, my delight,
You can judge from my expression;
Show me the future Germany,
For I'll be the soul of discretion.

I'll swear, by anything you wish,
Any oath, my heart laid bare,
That will guarantee my silence;
So, tell me, how shall I swear?'

She replied: 'Then swear to me
As Abraham made Eliezer swear,
When the latter, before his journey,
Swore, to guarantee the affair.

Lift my robe and place your hand
In that manner, beneath my thigh,
And swear that in speech or writing
You'll keep silence till you die!'

A solemn moment! I felt the breath
Of antiquity; the air grew cold,
As I swore the oath she requested,
Like some patriarch of old.

I raised her robe, and placed my hand
In that manner, beneath her thigh,
And swore that in speech or writing
I'd keep silence; and shall, till I die!

Notes: Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724-1803) is best known for the poems 'Der Messias' ('The Messiah') and Die Auferstehung ('The Resurrection'). Heine's mother lived on Dammtorstrasse; his sister Charlotte ('Lottchen', 1800-1899) was married to a merchant, Moritz Embden. Heine's uncle, Salomon Heine, was the 'noble gentleman' who helped him so generously. Wolfgang Menzel (1798-1873) the German poet, critic and literary historian was a proponent of German nationalism, and one of Heine's greatest literary enemies. Friedrich Lorenz Hoffmann (1790-1871), as well as acting as censor, was also a jurist, attorney, and librarian. Ferdinand Freiligrath's poem 'Der Mohrenfürst' ('The Moorish Prince') was published in 1838. Eliezer was the head of Abraham's household who was sent to find a bride for Abraham, and on his behalf obtained the hand of Rebecca. In Genesis 24:2, Abraham instructs Eliezer to place his hand under his, Abraham's, thigh to seal his oath.

Chapter XXVI: Hamburg - Concluded

The rum had risen to her crown,
I think, her cheeks glowed red;
Quietly, the goddess spoke to me,
In a melancholy tone, and said:

'I'm growing old, I was born
When Hamburg came to be;
My mother was the Haddock Queen,
Where the Elbe joins the sea.

My father was an emperor,
Charlemagne was his name,
Greater than Frederick the Great
Of Prussia, and wiser I'd claim.

In Aachen is the chair he used,
At his coronation, no other;
While the one he used at night
The king left to his mother.

And she, in turn, left it to me,
A plain chair on which to sit,

But if Rothschild offered all his wealth,
I'd be disinclined to sell it.

It's that old armchair in the corner,
Behold it, standing there;
The leather at the back is torn,
Moths laid the cushion bare.

But go and lift it from the seat,
And underneath the cushion,
You'll see a round opening
For beneath it lies a cauldron.

It's an enchanted pot, wherein
Magical potions brew;
If you stick your head in the hole,
The future's revealed to you.

The future Germany you'll see,
Phantasms will surge and rise,
And try not to shudder, when
Vile vapours sting your eyes!'

She said this, and laughed, strangely,
But, intrigued, I showed no fear,
And stuck my head in the dreadful hole,
Unsure what might appear.

What I saw I'll not reveal,
I've sworn not to say a word,
I'm barely allowed to describe, my God,
The smell therein interred! –

I still think with deep disgust,
Of that first foul, accursed stink,

Like a vile mixture of muskrat
And old cabbage, I would think.

More dreadful was the smell, my God,
That rose next, to addle my wits,
Like that of the dung being drained
From thirty-six foul dung pits.

I recall when Saint-Just addressed
The Committee of Public Safety,
He said: 'You can't cure a cancer
With musk and with rose-oil, only.'

But the scent of the German future,
May have surpassed every smell
That my nose has ever sensed.
I could bear it no longer; I fell

Into a swoon, lost consciousness,
And when half-recovered at best,
Still sat by my goddess' side,
My head leaning against her breast.

Her eyes glittered, her mouth glowed,
Her nostrils twitched; bacchanalianly,
She embraced her poet and sang
In a wild paroxysm of ecstasy:

'Stay in Hamburg, for I love you;
We may drink and eat, as yet,
The wine and oysters of the present;
The dark future we'll forget.

Replace that cushion, so the smell
Spoils not our joy while we're together;

I love you, as much as any woman
Has loved her German poet, ever!

When I kiss you, I feel the thrill
Of your genius beside me;
A wondrous intoxication
Has gripped my soul entirely.

The night watch, now, I seem to hear
Singing in the street,
There are hymns, wedding music,
Dear companion, soft and sweet!

Now the mounted escort comes
Their torches shining bravely;
They jump, hop and wobble,
As they dance the torch-dance gravely.

The all-wise senators arrive,
And the elders, each by each;
The mayor clears his throat,
And desires to make a speech.

The diplomatic corps appear,
Offering their congratulations,
In the name of neighbouring states
With the usual reservations.

Here come the clerics too,
The rabbis and the pastors –
But, alas, there's the censor;
It's Hoffman with his scissors!

They're clinking in his hand,
He moves around your body –

He snips away your flesh –
‘But that’s the best bit, surely!’

Notes: Charlemagne built a fortress, the Hammaburg, in 810AD, the precursor to the city of Hamburg. Louis Antoine Léon de Saint-Just 1767-1794), sometimes called the ‘Archangel of Terror’, was a French revolutionary, political philosopher, and president of the French National Convention.

Chapter XXVII: Epilogue

What other things occurred
Upon that wondrous night,
I’ll tell you some other day
When summer skies shine bright.

The former, hypocritical
Generation’s disappearing,
Thank God, its lies have killed it;
Into the grave it’s sinking.

A new generation’s rising,
Free of artifice and sin,
With free thoughts, free passions;
I’ll tell them everything.

Already there are youngsters
Who embrace the poet’s diction,
His kindness, pride, warm heart,
And sunny disposition.

My heart is kindly as the light,
And chaste and pure as fire,
The noble Graces have tuned
The seven strings of my lyre.

The same my 'master' played
Thrice-blessed Aristophanes,
The darling of the Muses,
Who divined the mysteries.

It is the very lyre on which
He sang of Pisthetaerus,
Who courted Basileia,
And soared so high above us,

In the previous chapter, I tried
To imitate, in many ways,
The ending of 'The Birds',
The best of my master's plays.

'The Frogs' is also excellent,
Played, in German, every night,
On the Berlin stage, it seems
To the King's great delight.

His Majesty loves the play,
His artistic leanings showing;
His father was more amused
By modern 'frogs' a-croaking.

If Aristophanes were here,
He'd be in a plight, poor man,
A whole choir of police,
Would soon enforce a ban.

The mob would be encouraged
To curse him, not applaud
And the officers commanded
To send him back abroad.

O king, I do mean well by you,
So, here's some good advice,
If you honour the dead poets,
Spare the living, and think twice!

Don't insult those now alive,
We've better weapons than you,
More dreadful than Jove's lightning,
Which the poets created too.

Insult the gods, new and old;
Scorn Olympus, next the sky,
But don't scorn the poets, save it
For Jehovah, up on high!

The gods punish humans harshly,
For our sins, since that's our lot;
In Hell one roasts and stews,
Since Hellfire is quite hot.

But there are saints who pray,
For the sinners in the fire;
Through donations, shrines, and masses,
One salvation may acquire.

And then, at the end of days,
Christ will break the gates of Hell,
And though his Judgement's strict,
He'll free many a soul, as well.

Yet there are hells from whose depths
There is no liberation,
Prayer's vain, and the Redeemer
Has no power to save the nation.

Do you know Dante's Inferno,
Those dread circles of dead souls?
Those whom the poet set there,
Can't escape its burning coals.

No saviour can deliver them,
No god, from scorching flame!
Beware, then, lest some poet,
Condemns you to that same!

Notes: The Latin Camenae (in Heine's text) were identified with the Greek Muses. The standard classical lyre had seven strings. In Aristophanes play 'The Birds', Zeus gives Basileia, who is his universal agent, in marriage to the main protagonist Pisthetaerus. Berlin was the Prussian capital. The King of Prussia at the time was Frederick William IV (1795-1861), his father Frederick William III, born in 1770, had died in 1840.

End of Part III, and of Heinrich Heine's 'Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen'