

SCHILLER

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GERMAN ORIGINAL*

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION

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IN TWO VOLUMES

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INTRODUCTION

I PERFORM a duty, and enjoy a privilege, when I offer a few words intended to aid in introducing Professor Kühnemann's "Schiller" to American readers. These volumes must speak for themselves. But it is not out of place to point out the general sense in which they fill a place heretofore vacant in our own literature.

Frequently as Schiller's person and work have been discussed in English, we have, I believe, no recent book, written in our own language, which so adequately deals with the literary, the critical, the philosophical, the æsthetic, and the ethical aspects of Schiller's person and lifework, and which also, while dealing with all these topics together, treats them from so distinctively modern and so distinctively philosophical a point of view. Professor Kühnemann's "Schiller" is, in the best sense, contemporary in its spirit and in the range of its scholarship. The view of Schiller which is here presented is no mere repetition of conventional opinion about him; but is equally no effort to estimate him in terms of the passing fashions of the day. What features are most characteristic of Professor

Kühnemann's treatment of Schiller may be indicated by mentioning: (1) The prominence here given to Schiller's place in the Comparative History of Literature; (2) The stress laid upon a decidedly new and independent estimate of Schiller's ethical and spiritual significance, based upon a careful study of the evolution of his philosophy of life; (3) An interpretation of Schiller's poetical genius and of his works in the light of these comparative studies, and of these ethical and æsthetic doctrines and processes. In brief, it is the *method* of Professor Kühnemann's whole treatment of his topic, it is this *synthesis* of the study of comparative literature with a reëxamination of the spirit of Schiller's time, and with a new view of the tendency of Schiller's own philosophy of life and of art, — it is this synthesis, I repeat, which makes this detailed account of the poetical creations of Schiller's genius not only minute, appreciative, and enlightening, but such as to give us a new view of the poet's total meaning in the life of his age and of ours. Professor Kühnemann writes with a strong sense of the artistic, the moral, and the social problems of our own time. The careful reader of these pages will meet with numerous references to the issues and interests of our day. Recent poetical art, recent ethical teachings such as those of Nietzsche, recent social movements, — such things are often made topics either of mere allusion or of more explicit criticism and comparison. But such

contemporary interests are here used merely as means of throwing light upon the real topic, which is always, first, Schiller himself — his genius, his personality, his work — and, secondly, the permanent significance of that view of life and of its ideals which inspired the great leaders of the German classical literature, and especially Schiller.

One who merely wants to become better acquainted with Schiller's person and fortunes will find in this book ample material, carefully and independently studied. But the student who wishes to view Schiller in the largest perspective, to see him in his comparative place in modern literature, to know what he contributed both to the philosophy and to the art of human life, will find in this work what in the English language was not previously accessible to him in any single book or in any so connected portrayal. As critic, as historical student of comparative literature, and as philosopher, Professor Kühnemann gives us what is not only a book upon Schiller, but a decidedly new mode of estimating the significance of the poet's lifework. I venture to commend Professor Kühnemann's "Schiller" to the attention of all who love the deeper problems of literature and of life.

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