SCHILLER, THE DRAMATIST.*

BY THE EDITOR.

In our sketch of Schiller we have outlined mainly the philosophical trend of his poetry, a feature which in spite of its importance has been unduly neglected. Schiller is great as a philosophical poet though he is best known as a composer of ballads; but he is also distinguished as a prose writer, and the influence which he exercised

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upon his contemporaries is mainly due to his dramas. So a sketch of Schiller would be incomplete without at least characterizing the nature of his prose and indicating the scope of his dramatic work.

Schiller's influence upon the German people has been strongest in his dramas. From the stage he addresses the genius of the nation and has become a mighty preacher setting up ideals that served his countrymen as guiding stars in their national growth as well as in the formation of their private lives in the family circle.

Incidentally we will mention here that for the sake of the development of the poet's mind his marriage to Charlotte von Lengefeld was of paramount significance. The desire for independence
PORTRAIT OF SCHILLER BY SIMANOWITZ.
was inborn in the poet. It was an inheritance from his Swabian ancestry, and Schiller himself recognized it as a legitimate aspiration common to all living beings. Love of liberty was the cradle-gift of his Muse. But the extravagances and crudities of the young Schiller which cropped out in his early poetry, his immature love songs, and his erratic notions of licensing violence and lawlessness to redress political wrongs, became modified and chastened under the influence of his wife's more stable and pure-minded spirit. With the foundation of a family the poet became more conservative without surrendering his adhesion to liberty. Only the wild shoots of license were pruned.

A study of Schiller as a dramatist will be of especial interest to American authors because they will learn from him more than from any other (not even Shakespeare excepted) the need of a dramatist who at the same time would be an educator of the nation.

DRAMATIC IN HIS PROSE.

It is noticeable that Schiller's prose exhibits many evidences of his dramatic talent. His power in characterizing persons through their actions is remarkable, and the diction of his narratives is so vivid that we see the story before our eyes as if it were performed on the stage.

Among the prose writings of the poet we must first mention two historical books, "The History of the Secession of the Nether-
lands from the Spanish Government" and "The History of the Thirty Years War." Both are brilliant in diction and vivid in the characterization of the leading figures. They are not written in the fashion of histories based on research work and critical analysis as is customary among professional historians, yet this deficiency, if it is to be considered as such, is richly made up for by a deep comprehension of the decisive events and of the motives which dominated their actors. Both books have retained their value while many other accounts of the same subjects written by professional historians have been superseded or forgotten.

Even as a scholar Schiller remains the poet who endows the characters of history with life, and he makes his readers see them in dramatic clearness. As an instance we will here refer to an episode described by Schiller in a little essay "On Duke Alba’s Lunch at the Castle of Rudolstadt in 1547." In that year after his victory at Mühlberg this cruel and ruthless general had reached the height of his renown and was marching with the Imperial army, consisting mainly of Spaniards, through the little duchy which at the time was governed by the Countess Catherine, widow of the late Count of Schwarzberg. The story goes that she had offered to supply Alba’s men with victuals and other necessities on the condition of a letter of sauve garde in which the Duke promised that the lives and property of her subjects should be protected. The Duke had invited himself to lunch at the castle, but while he was being entertained by the Countess, news came that the Spanish soldiers were robbing the peasants of their cattle. Catherine had the castle gate shut at once, and all her servants heavily armed. After this prepa-
ration she presented her complaint to the Duke and requested him to redress the wrongs of her people, and send strict orders at once to his officers to have the cattle returned to their owners or paid for. But the Duke laughed, saying, "Such is war," and flatly refused to respect his own promise. The Countess, however, would not be refused and with flashing eye that betrayed her determination she exclaimed, "My poor subjects must have redress, or by God, blood of princes will pay for blood of oxen!" At this critical moment the dining hall was filled with armed men awaiting the command of their mistress. Duke Alba turned pale, for he saw that thus cut off from his army he was helplessly in her power. For the first time in his life he trembled, and he trembled before a woman. Henry of Brunswick, who was in the suite of the Duke, came to the assistance of his general by treating the threat of the Countess as a joke. He began to laugh and praised the motherly care of their hostess for her subjects and added that the Duke would assuredly make all the restoration necessary. The Duke accepted the condition and sent out orders to abstain from further pillage and redress at once the wrong inflicted on the peasants. The grateful subjects of the
Countess, however, honored their noble ruler by calling her "Catherine the Heroic," a name of honor which she bears in history.

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**SCHILLER'S DRAMAS.**

Schiller's first drama, "The Robbers," was conceived and written while the poet was still a youth attending school. A critical review of it will at once reveal the immaturity of the poet, of which indeed Schiller himself was well aware, for in a preface which he wrote in the spring of 1781 he admits that he himself would hesitate to have his play acted on the stage. He looks upon it more as a dramatic poem than as a drama, yet he is confident that the moral tendency of the book will be recognized by all those who would read it with a desire to understand the author, and, while fearing that it might be suppressed, he adds that fire should not be condemned because it burns, nor water because it drowns. The truth is that Schiller's first drama in spite of its crudities exhibits a marvelous dramatic force unrivaled among the productions of the age of storm and stress to which it properly belongs. The age of storm and stress was a period of transition in Germany in which the leading spirits were in a state of fermentation and showed an extraordinary anxiety to rebel against every established authority, and so in Schiller's "Robbers" the hero, Karl Moor, is a robber chief, a man who for the sake of the wrongs which he has suffered would upset the whole moral order of existing institutions and wage a war against society itself. The real villains pretend respectability and represent the social order, but they perish in their own snares.

Karl visits his home after years of absence and is not recognized by his people, not even by Amalia, who, however, is reminded of her unfortunate lover by the personality of the mysterious stranger whose features she compares with a miniature of Karl which she always carries about her.
The robber hero finally atones for his wrongs. Hearing that a price has been set upon his head he surrenders himself to the father of a starving family and thus ends his career with an act of charity.

Among Schiller's dramas perhaps none other is so interesting from a psychological standpoint, for in "The Robbers" his senti-
ments still predominate and take his reasoning faculties captive. Here we find in an unmitigated form and expressed with uncompromising vigor, the impulsive factor in Schiller’s nature, his love of freedom, his hatred of tyranny, his zeal for justice, his contempt for corruption and greed. He never surrenders his ideals, but in later dramas they become more matured as the poet’s mind is deepened and broadened.

Schiller’s second drama, “Cabal and Love,” makes war on another vice of his age, which marked the reckless pleasure-seeking aristocracy of the German courts. His hero is Ferdinand, a major in the army and son of a minister of state. He loves a poor girl while his father wishes him to marry a lady equal in rank with himself. The intrigues by which the father tries to alienate his son’s affection for the simple and pure-minded Louise leads to a catastrophe in which the desperate lover offers her a glass of poisoned lemonade and partakes of it himself. The main idea of the tragedy contains nothing unusual, but the details of the play and the nobility of heart which the two lovers preserve in the midst of corrupt surroundings, are very effective and never fail to touch the audience.

In “Fiesco” Schiller has dramatized the political ambition of a Napoleon,—a man of great and noble impulses, who, however, is allured by the fatal glamor of power. To gain a crown is great; to throw it away divine; but Fiesco, seeing his opportunity, grabs at the crown, yet fails in the last critical moment. His friend Verrina, the stern republican, on his knees begs the new duke to cast away the purple, and when the latter refuses he pushes the usurper into the water and drowns him.

Next in order is “Don Carlos,” a tragedy of Philip the Second’s son, who in his youthful idealism antagonizes the tyrannical disposition of his father, and is attracted by the enthusiastic Marquis Posa, a spokesman for liberty of thought and political liberalism.

The original plan of “Don Carlos” is based on the historical fact that the prince and the king were rivals for the affections of Elizabeth, a beautiful princess who had been engaged to the prince, but whom later the king himself married. But Schiller did not cling to the historical part of his theme for the real Don Carlos was hunchbacked and can scarcely have been the ideal youth that Schiller pictures in his drama, yet we have reason to believe that his fate was the same as that of the dramatic Don Carlos, for it appears that he was executed at the request of the king, his father.

While Schiller was writing his drama the plot changed under his hand, and he incorporated in it more and more his ideals of
political liberty. The love affair of Don Carlos was eclipsed by the high aims of Marquis Posa, who thereby became the real hero of the play.

"Wallenstein" is a trilogy based in many details upon historical facts, for at the time when Schiller worked at it he already held a professorship in history at the university of Jena. The trilogy, though not an exact or slavish reproduction of history, is a faithful picture of the age. Some of his characters are fictitious, and the main hero Wallenstein himself has been made more dramatic and more modern, yet the general tenor of this great work is true to life. The historical Wallenstein was as great and picturesque a figure as Schiller represents him, but he was also bigoted and super-
stitious. He believed firmly in astrology, a feature which has been happily and characteristically brought out in Schiller's drama, but

he did not possess the breadth of religious faith attributed to him in the drama. On the other hand he was more ideal, for he actually
remained faithful in his allegiance to the emperor; at least so far as historical inquiry goes no indication can be found that he intended treason of any kind. He fell a victim to the intrigues of his enemies at the court of Vienna, and so an impartial judge in deciding his case would have to bring in the verdict of "Not guilty." Yet Schiller makes Wallenstein more human by representing him as guilty. The dramatic interest is intensified when the great general plays with the idea of treason and then is forced into it almost against his will by the circumstances of the situation.

The main heroine of the trilogy, a daughter of Wallenstein, named Thecla, and the main hero, Max Piccolomini, the son of Octavio Piccolomini, the chief intriguer of the play, are inventions of the poet's imagination; yet they are real living personalities who embody Schiller's love of the true, the good, and the beautiful.

The "Maid of Orleans" celebrates a high-spirited patriotism and the struggle of a nation for liberty against foreign invaders. The historical background is laid in the wars between France and England, yet the drama touched the Germans to the quick in the time of the French invasion under Napoléon. Schiller has idealized the heroine and modified the historical facts. While the real Joan of Arc was burned as a heretic after she had been condemned by the English bishops as a witch, he makes her fall in battle and die surrounded by her own people. We will add that Schiller's drama has done not a little to restore to the half historical and half legendary character of this French heroine a well-deserved dignity which had not been recognized in France, for the French poets have never been able to work out the historical materials of this national heroine into a noble poetical form. It is well known that Voltaire's La Pucelle is a satire which vilifies and scandalizes the liberator of Orleans.

We call special attention to Schiller's poetic tact in treating the romantic element of the story without falling a prey to romanticism. The visions of the shepherdess and her marvelous success on the field of battle are presented on the stage without the introduction of miracles, as lately an American poet of less comprehension with an inclination to mysticism has actually done. Schiller makes everything happen according to the natural order of things, and yet the development of the play exhibits the power of belief, the efficacy of the ideal, and finally the tragedy of heroism, a series of remarkable incidents in which the psychological factor always plays the most prominent part.

A very powerful drama is "Mary Stuart," in which Schiller
idealizes the beautiful queen of Scotland, and makes her appear as a victim rather of the personal vanity of her rival Elizabeth than of the religious struggle between Protestantism and Romanism,

which at that time, soon after the massacre of St. Bartholomew, had reached its highest point. Schiller introduces an unhistorical incident in which, however, the drama reaches its climax. Lord
SIGNING THE DEATH WARRANT.
Leicester, the favorite of Elizabeth, is assumed to be secretly devoted to the royal prisoner, and in order to save her life, he manages a personal meeting of the two queens which, however, only serves to bring out the contrast between the two characters and thus seals the doom of Mary.

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]