

**DIE BRAUNE
ERICA: NOVELLE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649450008

Die Braune Erica: Novelle by Wilhelm Jensen & Edward S. Joynes

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Cover @ 2017

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WILHELM JENSEN & EDWARD S. JOYNES

**DIE BRAUNE
ERICA: NOVELLE**

Heath's Modern Language Series

Die braune Erica

Novelle

von Wilhelm Jensen

EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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BOSTON, U. S. A.

D. C. HEATH & CO., PUBLISHERS

1899

Edw T 1842.615.442
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LIBRARY
OF
GINN & COMPANY
MARCH 17, 1907

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*Typography by James Cooper & Son, Boston, U.S.A.
Presswork by The Heintzemann Press, Boston, U.S.A.*

INTRODUCTION.

AMONG the comparatively few novelists of Germany who have raised themselves above the dead level of everyday fiction and achieved something more than momentary notoriety, WILHELM JENSEN holds a distinguished place. He is not only an extremely prolific as well as graceful writer, but on every page he exhibits the characteristics of a true artist and poet.

WILHELM JENSEN was born on the 15th February, 1837, at the little town of Heiligenhafen, in Holstein. After having gone through the usual preparatory course of studies at the Gymnasium at Kiel, he entered the University of the same town with a view of studying medicine, which he relinquished, however, in order to devote himself to the study of philosophy at the universities of Würzburg, Breslau, and ultimately at Munich. Feeling that abstract philosophic studies would not satisfy him, he soon entered the field of literature, and while yet a student became the author of several short stories, or *Novellen*. His first productions having met with remarkable success, he resolved to become a man of letters in earnest. In 1868 he accepted the post of editor-in-chief of the *Schwäbische Volkszeitung*, at Stuttgart, which position he surrendered in the following year in order to take charge of the *Norddeutsche Zeitung*, at Flensburg. From 1872 to 1876 he resided in Kiel, when he removed to Freiburg, in Breisgau, where he is still living, exclusively occupied with literary work.

If thus the outward course of the author's life is strikingly quiet and uneventful, his works are far from exhibiting those characteristics. On the contrary, there are few authors of the present day in Germany whose works show such striking originality of conception and vivid glow of description, as well as lively characterization and skillful dramatic handling. He combines in a very high degree great power of imagination, and most passionate and tender love for nature, with a keenly realistic and philosophical acumen. Whether he traces a great political event, a tremendous social upheaval, or an individual tragedy, he invariably, even in his defects, shows himself a consummate master of his art. By turns touching and pathetic, ironical and scathing, playful and humorous, or sombre and gloomy, his novels bear on every page the impress of an intellect deeply versed in the innermost secrets of the human soul, imbued with a clear understanding of the philosophic and social undercurrents of history, and intimately familiar with the mysteries of nature and of life. As a historian he never loses sight, in the midst of the most minute details of archæology and chronology, of that supreme factor — human nature. As an artist, he possesses the secret of clear and almost faultless delineation, combined with deep and delicate yet bright coloring.

Yet while in power of imaginative conception and description Jensen may be said to be well nigh unrivalled among his contemporaries, his language shows an excessive and regrettable predilection for French and other foreign or fanciful words. This is the more surprising in an author so thoroughly German in mind and feeling, whose power of word-painting in his mother-tongue is also so

remarkable. Examples occur, and are occasionally noted, in the following text. A still graver defect is found in the pessimistic — socialistic and other — tendencies of some of the writings of Jensen's middle period; from which, however, in his latest works, he has shown a happy reaction towards the simpler and purer style of his earlier days. (See Wells's "Modern German Literature.")

Jensen's productivity has been enormous, covering every field of fiction and — almost — of poetry. His verse is probably destined to be short-lived; indeed, it has added but little to his actual reputation. His fame rests chiefly on his *Romane* (novels), historical and romantic, but especially on his *Novellen* (short stories), in which his finest powers are most conspicuously displayed. Among these, one of the most popular, and certainly one of the most charming, is our present story, *Die braune Erica*. In addition to great fullness, accuracy and beauty of natural description, it combines a happy blending of popular superstition and mysticism with the simple and realistic surroundings of a remote and rustic scene. The characters are drawn with a loving care, and are throughout true to life. A tender sympathy with nature, animate and inanimate, is the prevailing sentiment. The heroine, who bears the name of a flower, or of a bird, or of a witch, according to the point of view, — who combines in her movements "*etwas von allen Tieren, von den Vögeln, von den Amphibien, ja, von den Insekten*" (p. 26), typifies the inmost sympathy of the poetic soul with all forms of natural life or beauty, and yet is so humanly drawn as to win our easy faith in her perfect womanhood, when once, like Undine, she feels the soul-giving power of love

in her heart. The contrast of this weird child of nature with the precise yet manly young professor; the action and reaction of each upon the other, with the unconscious growth of their mutual love; the admirably contrasted figure of the practical old housekeeper, and the almost human *Schwarzkopf* with his "evil eye;" the picture of rustic manners on the remote heath, and the wonderful description both of natural scenery and of personal action, character and sentiment, — these features constitute a story of rare poetic as well as realistic beauty. It has been well called a "prose-idyll" — prose, indeed, only in outward form, yet, in spirit, a true and charming poem.

In preparing this entirely new edition of this favorite text, — which was undertaken under somewhat narrow limitation of time, — I have had the kind assistance of my good friend, Dr. W. Bernhardt, of Washington, D. C., and also especially of Dr. Emil Seytter, of New York. This accomplished scholar kindly contributed the translation of the introductory poem, as well as translations of other verses in the text, which I regret to have been unable to use, for want of space; also much of the material for the Introduction, and, in the Notes, valuable aid on points of natural history, local customs, etc., where my own knowledge was defective. He is entitled to my special thanks; and I am grateful for the opportunity of publicly acknowledging my indebtedness to his varied and accurate scholarship, and his genial and cultivated taste.

E. S. J.

SOUTH CAROLINA COLLEGE, January, 1898.

Im Dufte das Meer und der Wald im Duft,
Vom murrenden Ufer ein Mövenlaut:
Ein Falkenschrei hoch aus der schimmernden Luft,
Und rings hochwogendes Heidekraut.

Da fand ich ein braunes Menschenkind, 5
Ob Knab' oder Mädchen, wer hätt' es gekonnt?
Das bläuliche Haar flog gelöst im Wind
Und deckte die sorglos entblößte Brust.

Kaum reichte zum Knie das zerriffne Gewand, 10
Ein Flechtwerk daneben aus Binsen und Ried:
Eine Rose darauf in verbrannter Hand,
Und ein süßer Traum auf dem Augenlid —

Der Wald im Duft und im Dufte das Meer,
Ein Falkenschrei und ein Mövenlaut,
Und ein Schlaf, wie Tod — und der Wind kam daher 15
Und begrub es im wogenden Heidekraut.