

**RUNIC ROCKS: A
NORTH-SEA
IDYL, PP. 1-267**

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Runic Rocks: A North-Sea Idyl, pp. 1-267 by Wilhelm Jensen

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WILHELM JENSEN

**RUNIC ROCKS: A
NORTH-SEA
IDYL, PP. 1-267**

RUNIC ROCKS

A NORTH-SEA IDYL

BY
WILHELM JENSEN

TRANSLATED BY
Marianne E. Surkling

WITH A PREFACE BY PROFESSOR G. FIEDLER

LONDON :
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1895.

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Dedicated

TO A DEAR AND VALUED FRIEND,

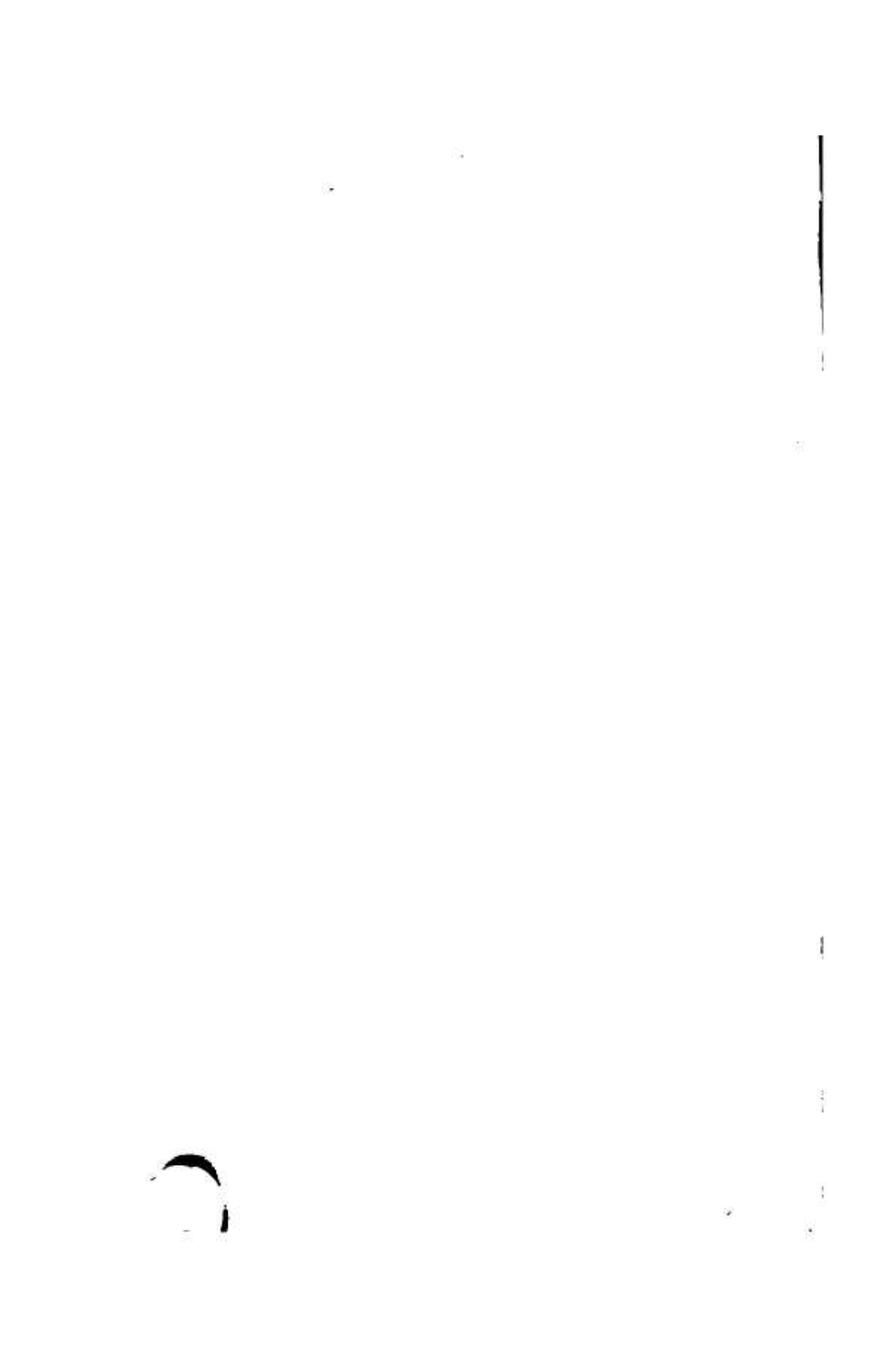
E. H.,

WHO, IN LOVE OF GERMAN LITERATURE,

HAS EVER WARMLY SYMPATHIZED

WITH THE

TRANSLATOR.



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P R E F A C E.

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WILHELM JENSEN, of whose many works this is the first to appear in an English translation, has been one of the most popular writers in Germany for more than twenty years. Since 1866 a number of works from his pen have appeared almost every year: poems, epics, short stories, novels, and dramas. In all these branches of literature he has shown himself to be an author of signal culture and great power, but he is at his best as a novelist and writer of lyric poetry.

Jensen is a son of that branch of the Teutonic family which is most closely akin to the Anglo-Saxon race—he is a Frisian. His father, who was Landvogt—*i. e.*, governor—in the island of Sylt, died before Wilhelm Jensen's birth. The widow went to live at Heiligenhafen, near Kiel, and there our author was born on February 15, 1837. The mother, too, died early, and the boy was brought up by comparative strangers in a strange house, that of a Lutheran pastor. Very probably it was there that the boy conceived the aversion for narrow-minded dogmatic theology which is so clearly marked in all his writings.

He studied medicine at various German universities, but found little satisfaction in the study, and turned to

that of literature, history, and philosophy, and in 1860 took his degree as Doctor of Philosophy.

Through Geibel's influence he went to Munich, where, at that time, a choice set of poets, men of letters, and artists were gathered round King Maximilian, whose ambition it was to make his capital a second Weimar.

After a while Jensen entered the journalistic profession, was editor of several important papers, first at Stuttgart, then at Flensburg, Kiel, and Freiburg in the Black Forest, and finally settled again at Munich, where he still lives in the winter, while during the summer months he occupies a charming villa on the banks of the Chiemsee, in Upper Bavaria. One of his daughters is married to a prince of the Bavarian royal family. No official duties fetter his literary activity, and he is able to devote his whole time and energies to his writings.

Jensen's poems are characterized by deep feeling, a fine appreciation of nature, enthusiastic admiration for all that is high and beautiful, a ceaseless seeking after truth, and courage to declare it when found, healthy pleasure in life, and sympathy with every living thing, combined with a rare gift of language. Never is he weary of celebrating the beauties of earth, but through the hymn of praise there sounds an undertone of regret for the fleeting nature of all things earthly.

The desire for knowledge which possesses his soul, the craving for a transcendental world, is clearly expressed in many of his poems, but, at the same time, it is equally clear to us that the sure and certain hope of a future life does not exist for him. It must not,