

**GERMAN
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HALM'S GRISELDIS**

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C. A. BUCHHEIM

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GERMAN CLASSICS

EDITED

WITH ENGLISH NOTES, ETC.

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VOLUME XI

HALM'S GRISELDIS

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PREFACE

THE merits of Halm's *Griseldis*, as a Dramatic Poem, have been so fully, and it is hoped conclusively, shown in the Critical Analysis that only a few words remain to be said on the *raison d'être* of the present edition for educational purposes, and on the way in which I have carried it out. About the first point there can hardly be any doubt. The play furnishes highly interesting and attractive reading, such as may be safely placed in the hands of the young; moreover the language is admirably fitted to serve as a medium of instruction. It is pure, elegant, and melodious, and it is just this kind of language which indelibly engraves itself on the memory of the student. It is an error to assume that commonplace readings on everyday subjects are pre-eminently adapted to impart a knowledge of foreign languages. Readings which are not in themselves very attractive, both as regards style and contents, are *not* calculated to excite any interest in, or fondness for, the language to be learned, and thus they fail to fulfil the primary condition for the acquisition of a foreign tongue. The impressions of the mind and the imagination are the best helps for memory, and readings

which do not afford pleasant reminiscences at a subsequent period will never fulfil their object. A general interest for a foreign language should therefore be aroused at an early stage, and when this has been done the readings may vary in accordance with the particular requirements of the student.

Another very common error is to suppose that the books, specially written for the young of one country, are also suitable as mediums of instruction for the young of other countries. By far the greater number of them, in Germany at least, are written either in an insipid or hard and stilted style; which is owing to the fact that the authors of the so-called *Jugendschriften* are not, as a rule, eminent writers, and those who are generally fail to hit upon the right tone for the young. These facts will explain the reason why so extremely few books written by professional *Jugendschriftsteller* have achieved a permanent success in countries outside Germany.

Guided by the above considerations, I determined to prepare an edition of Halm's *Griseldis* for English readers, more especially after the suitability of the drama for a Text-book in classes had been practically and successfully tried by myself and a number of my colleagues. The play rivetted the attention of the readers from the very beginning, and the interest in it never flagged for a moment. Indeed it was generally admitted that more impressive reading could hardly be found. The play has also successfully stood the test as a Text-book for examination purposes. At the time when special Text-books were recommended in modern languages by the University of London, Halm's *Griseldis* was selected, at my suggestion, with most gratifying results. The example was

followed, I believe, by some other examining bodies, and the choice met with general approval.

There is another advantage connected with the study of Halm's drama. It affords an excellent preparation for the reading of modern, more especially of lyrical German poetry, which greatly differs in point of diction and conception from the poetry of Goethe and Schiller; and it is perhaps a failure to understand the poetry of recent times, which has led even some eminent critics to the erroneous assumption that German classical literature ceased with the Goethean era. Bearing in mind this circumstance, I have limited my annotations chiefly to the translation of unusual expressions and poetical figures of speech. In thus deviating from the mode I adopted in editing the other volumes in the present series, I have simply followed the sound maxim that every book should be annotated in strict accordance with its form and subject-matter. Some works require elucidations and explanations for nearly every line, whilst others offer no difficulty whatever except in point of language. This is the case with the present drama; for although there is not a single obscure or involved passage in it, there occur a number of expressions and phrases which require a special rendering, and these have been, as I said above, fully supplied.

The matter of the play itself certainly requires no running commentary. The subject has been so freely treated by the poet and the incidents of the old tradition have been so completely altered, that he may be said to have engrafted a new legend upon an old one. He did still more. For the sole purpose of investing the play with an element of picturesqueness, the author has used imaginary personages and localities, and alluded to