

**GEORG BRANDES IN
LIFE AND LETTERS;
PP. 1-151**

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Georg Brandes in Life and Letters; pp. 1-151 by Julius Moritzen

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BY
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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
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**To the memory of my wife,
this book is lovingly dedicated.**

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INTRODUCTION

SOME years ago, Georg Brandes declared of himself: "I am not a philosopher; for that I am too small. I am not a critic; for that I am too big."

It is certain that to call the great Danish writer merely a critic would be to limit too narrowly the position which he holds in the culture of Europe. To give an accurate definition of Brandes we should have to invent a new word; but it is not probable that we should need the word again, as it is not likely that the world will ever have another Brandes.

We associate the critic with literature, but Georg Brandes is bigger than literature. We expect the critic to sweep away the old and outworn and to adjust us to the new and practical. That has been Brandes' work, but only a part of it. We demand of the critic that he shall interpret for us what is real and lasting in works of art, thus revealing to the passing age the invisible spirit of itself and anticipating the verdict of posterity on the poet and artist of to-day.

All that Brandes has done, but something

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more besides. He has drawn together in himself all the streams of culture of the later nineteenth and earlier twentieth century as expressed in European letters and esthetics. He has not consciously created an esthetic or philosophical system. He has, however, fused together the million fragments of European culture and thrown over them the light of his own bright realism. What he has wrought and represents is not a brilliant mosaic of ideas, but a genuinely unique picture of the best in European culture during two and a half generations.

When Brandes finished his studies in Copenhagen sixty years ago, Danish life and literature were still tied by the bonds of a narrow orthodoxy. Conservatism still ruled the university and intellectual circles, and the heavy mysticism of Kierkegaard hung over souls of the younger men. Into this atmosphere young Brandes brought a fresh spirit of freedom, lifting the heavy curtains of literary convention and letting in a light of realism from the land of Saint Beuve and Renan. He went to France and learned from Taine that literature must be the expression of the collective spirit of a people. He went to England and learned from John Stuart Mill the explosive doctrine of the political eman-