

**THÉOPHILE
GAUTIER**

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Théophile Gautier by Maxime Du Camp & J. E. Gordon

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MAXIME DU CAMP & J. E. GORDON

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THÉOPHILE GAUTIER.

From a photograph by Nadar, of Paris.

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

BY

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TRANSLATED BY J. E. GORDON

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WITH PORTRAIT

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PREFACE.

THE life of Théophile Gautier is of peculiar interest to men of letters, especially to that large proportion of them who, like Théophile, are "polygraphes." Our ancestors more briefly termed them "hacks," and, since Dr. Johnson, or, at least, since Southey, there has been no hack so distinguished as Théophile. His Pegasus was early broken into harness, and his biographer, M. Maxime du Camp, like himself, is constantly regretting this bondage. Perhaps too many laments are uttered over this misfortune; like other men, Théophile Gautier did what he could, and what it was in him to do. He was a poet, indeed, and we are asked to believe that, had the State aided him with an adequate pension, his place as a poet would have been higher, his poetic work greater in bulk, and nobler in quality. But this may well be doubted. The man of letters in Gautier was stronger than the poet; had it not

been so, probably he would have given himself more freely and with a stricter loyalty to the Muse. A writer in whom the poet is supreme, a writer like Wordsworth, or Tennyson, will take poverty for his bride, disdaining the seductions of labour which is easier and better paid. To both of these Englishmen fortune proved kind, after years of self-denial. As a rule, at least in England, the poet has been a man of leisure, or if, like Burns, he lived by the labour of his hands, he wrote poetry in his hours of freedom, without hope of practical reward. The circumstances of his life and his necessities made Gautier a journalist; very probably (or rather, certainly) he did not even possess the pittance on which Wordsworth and Tennyson cultivated verse with an exclusive devotion. But we feel a conviction that, if Gautier had been more ardently and essentially a poet, he, too, would have found or made a way by which he might devote himself to this art.

The truth is that he was not a poet of the highest, the creative order. His mind was not inhabited and possessed by airy beings, who insisted on being clothed in words and sent forth to live with Hamlet and Esmeralda, with Faust and d'Artagnan, Fantine and Di Vernon. Still less had Gautier the moral enthusiasm of Wordsworth, the natural magic of Keats, the ardent spirit of Burns, and his passionate interest