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ITALIAN TRAVEL
SKETCHES, &C.**

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THÉOPHILE GAUTIER & HEINRICH HEINE & ELIZABETH A. SHARP

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TRAVEL SKETCHES, &c.

ITALIAN TRAVEL SKETCHES, &C.,
BY HEINRICH HEINE. TRANS-
LATED BY ELIZABETH A. SHARP.

From the Original
With Prefatory Note from the French of
Théophile Gautier.

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NOTE.

IT has been thought advisable to omit from this volume the second part of the *Italienische Reisebilder*; and, as of more general interest, to add the hitherto untranslated *The French Stage: Confidential Letters addressed to M. August Lewald*.

PREFATORY STUDY ON HEINRICH HEINE.

BY THEOPHILE GAUTIER.

THE last time that I saw Heinrich Heine was a few weeks before his death; I had to write a short notice for the re-issue of his works. He lay on the bed where, according to the doctors, a slight indisposition first held him, but whence he had not been able to rise therefrom for eight years. One was always sure of finding him, as he himself used to say; yet, little by little, solitude encompassed him more and more; hence his exclamation to Berlioz, on the occasion of an unexpected visit: "You come to see me! you are as original as ever!"

It was not that he was less loved or less admired, but life entices away with it the most faithful hearts, in spite of themselves: only a mother or a wife would never abandon so persistent a death-agony. Human eyes cannot, without turning aside, contemplate the sight of suffering for too long a time. Goddesses themselves grow weary of it, and the three thousand Oceanides who went to console Prometheus on his Caucasian cross returned therefrom in the evening.

When my sight had accustomed itself to the penumbra which surrounded him, for a very bright daylight would

have hurt his almost faded sight, I perceived and sat down in an arm-chair by the side of his bedridden couch. The poet, with obvious effort, stretched to me a soft little hand, thin, nerveless, and white as a wafer, the hand of an invalid, sheltered from the influence of the open air, that has touched nothing, not even a pen, for years; never were the hardest ossicles of death gloved with a skin more suave, more unctuous, more satin-like, more polished. Fever, in default of life, infused some warmth into it, yet at his touch I experienced a slight shiver as though I had come in contact with the hand of a being who no longer pertained to earth.

With his other hand, in order to see me, he had raised the paralysed lid of the eye which still afforded him a confused perception of objects and enabled him to discern a ray of sunlight as through black gauze. After a few exchanged sentences, when he knew the motive of my coming, he said to me, "Do not pity me too much; the vignette of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, in which I am represented emaciated and with hanging head like a Christ of Morales, has already moved the sensibilities of good people too much in my favour. I do not like portraits that are too faithful; I want to be beautified, as pretty women are painted. You knew me when I was young and flourishing; substitute my old self for this piteous effigy."

In truth, the Heinrich Heine to whom I had been presented in 183-, a short time after his arrival in Paris, in no wise resembled him who now was stretched before my eyes, moveless as a corpse which awaits its consignment to the coffin.

He was a fine man of thirty-five or thirty-six years,

with every appearance of robust health ; one would have said a German Apollo, to see his high white forehead, pure as a marble table, which was shadowed with great masses of brown hair. His blue eyes sparkled with light and inspiration ; his round full cheeks, graceful in contour, were not of the tottering romantic lividness so fashionable at that date. On the contrary, ruddy roses bloomed classically on them ; a slight Hebraic curve interfered, without altering its purity, with the intention which his nose had had of being Greek ; his harmonious lips, "paired like two fine rhymes," to use one of his phrases, had a charming expression when in repose ; but when he spoke their red bow shot out sharp and barbed arrows, sarcastic darts which never failed in their aim ; for no one was ever more cruel to stupidity. To the divine smile of Apollo succeeded the leer of the satyr.

A slight pagan *embonpoint*, which was expiated later on by a truly Christian emaciation, rounded the lines of his form ; he wore neither beard, nor moustache, nor whiskers ; he did not smoke nor drink beer, and, like Goethe, even had a horror of these things. He was then in the midst of his Hegelian ardour. If it was repugnant to him to believe that God makes himself man, he had no difficulty in admitting that man had made himself god ; and he conducted himself accordingly. Let him speak himself concerning this splendid intellectual intoxication : "I myself was the living law of morals, I was impeccable, I was purity incarnate ; the most compromised of Magdalens were purified by the flames of my ardour, and became virgins in my arms : these restorations to virginity went well-nigh at times, it is true, towards exhausting