

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF GOETHE. By Herman Grimm.
Translated by Sarah Willand Adams.

The charm of this book will be most fully felt by those who thirty years ago shared in the great intellectual and æsthetic revival caused by the introduction of the study of German literature. Then Goethe illumined the heavens and the earth, and all science, religion, philosophy, and art "were the colors of his spirit."

It has seemed an almost inexplicable phenomenon that the books then the daily companions of life should have remained for days or months unopened, during all the crowded years which have followed; and yet the spirit and the wisdom of this great master went with us through them all, and now the new interpreter comes to bring us to his feet again, and he recognizes the necessity of the seeming departure.

"We live in a new era, which must create anew its own image of him: it overthrows the old one, but does not touch *him*. To-day, more than ever, it is important that our attention should be turned to him; but another stand-point must be accepted."

If this be true,—and many indications show that it is as true of New England thought and culture as of German,—we must be profoundly grateful to Professor Grimm for having given us these lectures, which present to us not the old picture of Goethe cracked and faded by time, but a new and vivid portrait as he looks to the young German of to-day, who understands his life and work by the new light of German freedom and unity.

The book is dedicated by the translator to Ralph Waldo Emerson; and most fitly is this done, since the writer acknowledges his large debt to one whom he styles "the greatest of living authors," and since we find the fruit of Emerson's influence in his own work. How like Emerson are many passages, in his description of Goethe's personal power! Speaking of private letters from Weimar in Goethe's time, he says: "If the people have nothing else to say, they announce at least whether Goethe is at home or on a journey; mentioning the last as an abnormal circumstance, as if they had a right to his presence among them. . . . Every one who comes in contact with him by the instant surrender of himself makes the highest demands upon Goethe, and he fulfils them all."

It is impossible now to give an analysis of Professor Grimm's work. Enough to say that it is a rare intellectual delight to come again into Goethe's atmosphere, introduced by one of such rare poetic imagination and critical insight.

But we also owe a great debt to the translator, who by her patient labor and by her loving perception has made of her translation a work as fresh and beautiful as an original. Herself deeply imbued with that early reverence for Goethe, and with rare literary culture which eminently fitted her for her welcome task, she has taken us with her to listen to the words of the Professor. We are not conscious that we are not hearing his own words, and yet not a trace of the German idiom mars her pure and fluent English. It reminds one of the translation by Bettina Brentano of her own letters into English, when her intense search for the exactly fitting word banished sleep from her pillow.

We are proud that an American woman abroad has done herself such honor and her country such service, and we trust that this will not be the last work of her pen. The reader will find in this book a rich mine of instruction and enjoyment, and the expressed satisfaction of the author will assure him that he has the advantage of getting his thought as truly as he could in the original.

E. D. C.