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Heine's English Admirers, Critics and Antagonists. Heine in England. By
Stanton L. Wormley.

Mann, Klaus

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Heine's English Admirers, Critics and Antagonists

Reviewed by
Klaus Mann

HEINE IN ENGLAND. By Stanton L. Wormley. U. of North Carolina Press. 310 pp. \$4.

THE history of world literature is a history of influences—a complex, continuous chronicle of affinities from country to country, from generation to generation. Not all great men are fully recognized at all times and everywhere; only the greatest among the great attain truly universal authority. The fame of Dante, Shakespeare and Goethe is worldwide and stable—not affected by the vicissitudes of history and fashion. But even such illustrious names as those of Voltaire and Nietzsche, Marx and Ibsen, Tolstoy and Balzac, are not always, and not in every part of the world, of equally vital significance and attraction.

The influence exercised by, say, Whitman and Dostoevski in the realm of German literature is of an unquestionably vital nature; but the same is not necessarily true of the role these writers play in Spain and Italy. In France, the genius of Heine is more widely recognized than it ever has been in his homeland. To write about Heinrich Heine in France is tantamount to writing a vital chapter of French literary history. But to discuss Heine's position in English literature means to deal with a subject of minor importance—rather irrelevant to the main currents and developments of international letters in general and of English poetry in particular.

Wormley's study is, according to his own account, "an extensive outgrowth of a dissertation undertaken a few years ago at Cornell University in partial fulfillment of the doctor's degree." And this

is exactly the impression conveyed by the book: it's a scholarly piece of work—meticulously thorough, crammed with factual and critical material. The author enumerates, quotes and appraises, with painstaking conscientiousness, Heine's major and minor English critics, translations, admirers and antagonists. He discerns the influence of Heine's poetic idiom in the verses of a host of Victorian poets—Mary Elizabeth Coleridge, Owen Mere-



HEINRICH HEINE

dith, William Sharp, William Ernest Henley, James Thomson, Arthur Symonds and others.

Thomas Carlyle—"the Mogul of German culture in 19th-century England"—became infuriated and "tore up" Matthew Arnold for regarding Heine as the natural continuation of the great Goethe. Yet, Arnold's admiration for Heine—formulated in an extensive and brilliant essay—is not without critical reservation. First the English poet was irritated by what he termed the "affected Byronism" of his German colleague. And years later he addressed him, in his fine poem "Heine's Grave":

"But was it thou—I think
Surely it was—that bard
Unnamed, who, Goethe said,
Had every other gift, but wanted
love;
Love, without which the tongue
Even of angels sounds amiss?"

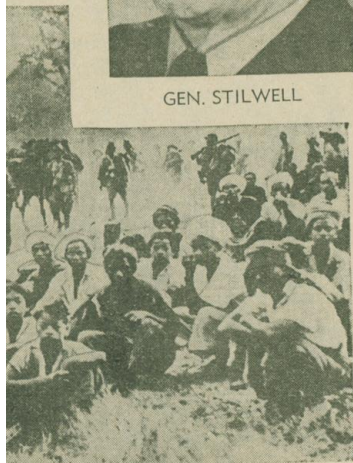
(The "unnamed bard," incidentally, to whom Goethe referred was not Heine but Count August von Platen—Heine's most implacable foe.)

"But whatever else he may be," George Eliot said, "Heine is one of the most remarkable men of this age; no echo, but a real voice, and therefore, like all genuine things in the world, worth studying..." Elizabeth Barrett Browning spoke admiringly of "that brilliant, witty, true poet, Heine," while Charles Kingsley, in answer to the question "who is Heine?" had nothing to say but, "A bad man, my dear, a bad man!"

Heine was read, translated, discussed, and sometimes even understood in England; but he was not loved. The English failed to respond to his particular appeal—just as he, in his turn, was impervious to the charm and to the grandeur of the English way of life. In short, things did not quite click between the great German poet and his fellow writers on the other side of the channel. Wormley has invested a lot of labor and intelligence in a comparatively barren and extraneous matter.



GEN. STILWELL



From "War in Our Time." (Doubleday, Doran.)
g through a Burma village.