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Early Interest in Folksong
and Folklore in America

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EARLY INTEREST IN FOLKSONG AND FOLKLORE IN AMERICA

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I. INTRODUCTION.

THE FOLKSONG MOVEMENT IN ENGLAND AND GERMANY.

The evolution of interest in folklore may be called an undercurrent in the literature of the eighteenth century, first, brought to the surface by the attention which Addison gave to popular poetry. Its deepest and most significant expression is found in Percy's "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry", published in 1765.

This interest in popular poetry goes hand in hand with the revolt against the superculture of the age and the rise of a new conception of nature as an antidote for the evils developed by this overconscious civilization.

The discovery of new lands and new races in the fifteenth century revealed a natural state of man which seemed in many respects superior to the attainments of civilization. By contrast with this primitive man, it was concluded that through culture and civilization, man had lost all the rude simplicity, naivete, and unaffected naturalness of his original condition. This idealization of primitive man led further to the idea that human nature, however corrupted by education and surroundings, is after all inherently good and that much was to be learned from this wild "nature-man", who seemed the embodiment of all that superculture and training had taken away. Therefore, this lost state was to be regained through a return to a natural state of
existence and unconscious activity.

As society became more artificial and affected in its attempt to acquire culture, as man grew farther and farther away from his original naturalness in his efforts to attain civilization, the tendency to hark back to this "Urmensch" grew apace, until the wild simplicity of this primitive being seemed the best avenue of escape from all the unnaturalness and over-drawn consciousness so prevalent in society.

The first in England to give expression to this new conception of nature were Addison and Steele, prime factors in eighteenth century criticism, the basis of which may be said to be a searching for the beautiful in poetry, that is, naturalness. This conception of criticism was embodied in the literary struggle between neo-classicism and romanticism of this century, the one emphasizing reason and wit, like the French Boileau, - the other imagination and feeling. The services of these men to literary criticism and to literature in general, directed by this new conception, may well be prefaced by a brief survey of the literary age in which they lived and of the literary vices, which they strove to correct.

Seventeenth century poetry had run into extravagances of style and manner known in Spain as Gongorism, in France as Preciosité, in Italy as Marinism, and in England as Euphuism, best exhibited in the "conceited" verse of Donne, Cowley and the rest of the group whose Gothicism of taste Addison ridiculed in
his Spectator papers on true and false wit.\(^1\) To Addison "Gothic" as a term in literary criticism was synonymous with barbarous, lawless and tawdry. He says that the poets, lacking the strength of genius giving a majestic simplicity to nature, so admired in the works of the ancients, are forced to hunt for foreign ornaments and that these writers are Goths in poetry, who, being unable to come up to the beautiful simplicity of old Greece and Rome, have supplied its place with extravagances of an irregular fancy. Addison continues his speculations on this "Gothic taste" in Spectator No. 63, in which he gives account of an allegorical encounter of "True and False Wit".

But in what sense was this stilted Queen Anne literature classical. It was classical in the lack of those elements of mystery and aspiration, which are the essence of romance. It emphasized a literature of this world, high life, society and court. Prose and verse were distinguished by perfect clearness but clearness without subtlety or depth. It was classical in its objectivity, Pope-like rationalism, tame imagination and narrowed sense of beauty, so reminiscent of the stilted splendor of the Dutch gardens of the period. It cared little for outward nature and nothing for the life of remote times and places. Its interest centered on civilization and on the peculiar artificial type of civilization which it found prevailing. Writers disciplined

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1. Spectator, No. 62 and 63.
themselves to follow rules, discovered formulas of correctness and copied models in a most academic spirit, principally Horace, as interpreted by Boileau, in his "Art Poetique". Poverty of the classical period in lyrical verse is quite significant because in song lies the most primitive and spontaneous kind of poetry and the most direct utterance of individual feeling.

The particular literary vice which Addison strove to correct was this "conceited", one might almost say, skaldic, style which infected the poetry of his time. He insisted on the cultivation of simplicity, clearness, naturalness, and moderation, and sought to impress upon his literary public the fundamental antithesis between nature and civilization, or culture, especially the artificial culture of his age. All this he felt would be remedied by disentangling society from the meshes of convention, tradition and "parasitic" fashion but, above all, by seeking first the reason behind the delusive show of things.

In this effort to regenerate literature and society, Steele must also be considered for he ushers in a new era with his conception of genius as a creative and independent spirit, of nature as an immediate, spontaneous feeling, as opposed to the cautious, reflective attitude, - a tone in civilized society entirely new - but a note which was again later sounded by Young in his letter on "Original Composition".

In Spectator No. 38, Steele investigates the difference between affectation and naturalness, the first of which he shows
as consciousness, "Unnatur", the pet aversion of the later German romanticists, as hypocrisy, imaginary feelings on imaginary things, which have crept in and must be eradicated. In Guardian 15, Steele points out the relation of art and naturalness and shows how art becomes artificial when separated from life. The same idea is contained in Spectator No. 468, where he dwells upon the unity of life and art, emphasizing that among the common people there is found much more feeling than among the cultured classes and in Guardian 19, he cites a concrete example of this opinion advanced in the Spectator essay, and takes care to deal the gentry a heavy blow for their stupidity regarding noble sentiments and their indifference toward admiration of virtue. In his essays 1 on Pastoral Poetry and the Life of Shepherds, Steele says that their simplicity of character does not presuppose rude and uncultured minds and that their simplicity of manners is only characteristic of a life where nature is not much depraved.

After this distinction between affectation and naturalness had been made, attention was turned to the common people, in whom is found the true expression of this striving for simplicity and naturalness. This inevitably led them nearer a consideration of popular poetry, first called to attention by Addison in the Spectator.

It is not to be wondered at that the old English ballad

should not have been appreciated in this age, for there could be no greater contrast in style and sentiment than between the freshness, spontaneity, and wild music of the old songs of love and war, and the polished, artificial, monotonous strains of the Queen Anne didactic and satiric poetry, written in hyde-bound, heroic couplets. There were a few exceptions to the general taste but the common attitude toward ballads was contempt or idle curiosity. The selfsatisfied Augustans looked upon them as barbarous and unworthy of the serious attention of men who had learned the true art of poetry from Waller, and therefore could not appreciate Chaucer, not to speak of the crudities perpetrated on Shakespeare.

Among these Augustans, in spite of the general feeling, there was an occasional good word spoken for the old English ballad. In Nos. 70, 74, and 85 of the Spectator, Addison, for the first, had praised the naturalness and simplicity of popular ballads, selecting for special mention, "Chevy Chase", a favorite ballad of the common people, and the "Two Children in the Wood", one of the "darling songs" of the people, as he says. Again in an essay on the "Loquacity of the Fair Sex"¹ he quotes that excellent old ballad of the "Wanton Wife of Bath". But it is to the essays on "Chevy Chase" and the "Two Children in the Wood" that Addison's special significance in ballad criticism attaches

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¹ Spectator No. 247.
itself and in which he establishes his most important critical praise, viz., that the ultimate test of poetry is its simplicity and truth to nature rather than conformity to the fashion of the day.

In opening the subject of ballads, Addison says it is impossible that the universal approval of a multitude, though it is only the rabble of a nation, should fasten itself to anything which does not have some peculiar aptness to please and gratify the mind of man, since human nature is the same in all reasonable creatures. He relates how Moliere always prejudged the success of his plays in the theatre by the reception it met when read to his old housekeeper at his fireside and concludes with the statement that an ordinary ballad or song that is the delight of the common people, cannot fail to reach all such readers as are not "unqualified for the entertainment by their affectation or ignorance".

At a time when stilted poetic dection, which one associates with Pope, had become the supreme standard, when poetry was being written largely by cultivated Londoners for cultivated Londoners, it was surely a matter of no slight importance to happen upon this belief that the approval of the "rabble of the nation" constituted in itself one of the ultimate tests of good poetry. Bitter attacks against this idea and the burlesques on

1. Spectator, Nos. 70 and 74.
Addison's essays show how alien to the spirit of his day were his choice and treatment.

Addison did not confine his study and investigation to old English poetry for in Spectator No. 366, he reveals the charm of northern poetry and song and quotes one of the Lapland love songs, "Orra Moor", in which a lover urges his reindeer to "hasten nimbly on" and which he had translated from Scheffer's "Lapponia". He says: "I was greatly and agreeably surprised to find a spirit of tenderness and poetry in a region which I never suspected for delicacy. In hotter climates, though altogether uncivilized, I had not wondered if I had found some sweet, wild notes among the natives where they live in groves of oranges and hear the melody of birds about them. But a Lapland lyric, breathing sentiments of love and poetry not unworthy old Greece or Rome; a regular ode from a climate pinched with frost and cursed with darkness so great a part of the year .... This, I confess, was a greater miracle to me than the famous stories of their drums, winds, and enchantments".

Here was society in its original and natural state and a concrete illustration of primitive man, long-looked for, the Laplander, unadorned and unspoiled by civilization, still preserving the simplicity of his native haunts, with poetry "not at all barbarous but perfectly anacreontic".

But in spite of these Spectator essays, these northern songs created no general or widespread interest in such poetry,
until the "changing fashion" of half a century gave it an unexpected significance. Nevertheless, the Spectator versions themselves became very popular because they were in all probability the only specimens of Lapland literature in existence and because of the sentiment in them and the romantic suggestiveness of the background, reflecting Lapland as an extension of Odin's domain, where the Scandanavian gods had been worshipped and magic practiced for centuries. This land had long been a subject of "vague and sporadic allusion" in the polite literature of England and looked upon as an uncanny tract whose barbarous inhabitants were reputed skillful in the practice of the black act. Hence, Shakespeare's "Lapland Sorceress", (Comedy of Errors, IV, 3, 11) Marlowe's "Lapland Giants", (Faustus, sc. 1, l. 137) Milton's "Lapland Witches", (Paradise Lost, 11, 665).

Though these lovesongs referred neither to heathen gods nor to witches' cauldron, yet the ice, reindeer and bleak moors all had an enticingly romantic sound and appealed strongly to the imagination.¹

Two years after the Spectator essays, Nikolas Rowe declared his approval of the work of those "venerable ancient song-inditers". But more explicit evidence is contained in the collection of ballads in 1723, in which the author observes the majestic simplicity and true poetic genius in "Chevy-Chase".

Equally indicative of the encouragement given by these Spectator essays to lovers of popular poetry is the preface to Ramsay's "Evergreen", in which he says that the most discerning readers would gladly exchange the "studied refinement and delicacies of modern writings for that natural strength and simplicity of style, practiced by their forefathers". Yet in spite of these scattered evidences of friendliness toward old poetry, by the middle of the century, the attempt to revive old ballad literature had all the appearance of being abortive for no steady public interest had been excited. But only ten years later are found signs of an interest, which soon becomes a passion.

The further study of this movement in England for the regeneration of popular poetry involves the parallel development of romanticism in that century, which began with the imitation of Spenser and Milton, and, gradually only, arrived at the revival of Chaucer, medieval poetry and translations of bardic and scaldic remains.

England:

The starting point of this new current, undermining the foundation of Auguston classicism and tending toward romance was a reaction against the purely intellectual outlook of the Queen Anne poets, giving vent to long stifled emotions and urging a return to nature and the medieval past. The germ of the whole movement is found in the sense of a living bond between man and external nature, in the revolt of the emotions against the
tyranny of cold-reasoning intellects.¹

Of the various elements in this revival, the poetry of external nature beginning with Thomson and Dyer, exerted a powerful reactionary influence. It was only natural when the tide began to turn against the spurious classicism of the Augustans that men should seek their inspiration in the life and poetry of the middle ages, with their wealth of all the elements of romanticism, adventure, mystery, (passion) in a form promising and captivating for those just escaped from the tyranny of Boileau.

The first step in this direction was the revival of Spenser, whose "Faerie Queen", full of chivalrous ideas, was "treasure-trove" for those moving from the artificial to the real. A powerful agency was felt through the imitation of Milton, which was followed by the revival of medieval taste in the rage for Gothic art, the love of chivalry, ballad literature, northern mythology, and Welsh poetry, the final blow to Augustan taste.

Had the revival of the medieval past ended with this admiration of Spenser, it would have meant little in England and nothing on the continent. But Gray's crucial advance opened a fresh field of poetic exploration in the remains of Scandinavian mythology and the land of national tradition with his "Descent of Odin", 1767 and his "Bard", 1757.

But between these dates there appeared two works,

¹ Cambridge Modern History. V. 6, p. 822.
destined to have a far deeper influence on the imaginative life of Europe and these were Macpherson's "Ossian", 1760, and Percy's "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry", 1765. The first exercised a deep and formative influence on the growing interest in popular poetry but with the second, dates the beginning of a new attitude toward the literature of half civilized races, resulting in a strong influx of ballad literature, which, with numerous friends through the century, leaped into marvellous popularity through Percy. What scholars and men of letters had sought to do by their imitation of Spenser and Milton, by their "domestication of the Gothic and Celtic Muse", was done much more effectively by Percy in his efforts to recall British poetry to the realm of the imagination and to older and better models than Dryden and Pope, and to anxiously cultivate wildness and simplicity.

Round these two collections all in the romantic movement that belongs to the medieval love of adventure, tragic passion, mystery and the supernatural may be said to gather. Precisely what these two collections contributed to the romantic movement, says Mr. Beers, was the individual appeal of each, - "Ossian", to the feeling for wilder nature and mystery, to the sense of old, unhappy, far-off things, the tragedy of the "last struggle of a doomed race". The appeal of the "Reliques" was simpler and more direct. The love of action and adventure, the

1. cf. Phelps, "English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century".
joy of battle and freedom, instincts of courage and loyalty, a
note of tragedy, strong and simple passions all found expression
in the "Reliques" and despite Percy's alterations and
adornments, they did so in a style strikingly simple, rapid and
direct. ¹

Can we wonder that to ears jaded by a century of
Augustan reason and conventionality, these two collections alike
in form and matter, should have come as an inspiration? Percy's
collection revived his nation's interest in popular poetry and
from its appearance dates the revival of natural poetry in
England, - the age was tired of polish, wit, over-civilization
and was groping toward the rude, primitive, and heroic, the
admiration for "mountain solitudes and the hoary past".

The rapid succession of the same kind of publications
speaks for the impetus given to the collecting of English ballads
by the appearance of the "Reliques" but it is not with the
contributions of these ballads to English letters that we are
here concerned, rather with their direct influence on Germany,
where they gave impulse to Herder and the romantic movement.

Germany:

The change in Germany was quite similar to the steps
just followed in England. About the time Thomson published his
"Seasons", Jakob Bodmer, under Milton's banner, began a national

¹. cf. Beers "Romantic Movement in England in Eighteenth Century!"
movement against classical influence of the Gottsched school. Deutchheit, Poesie, the old Germanic past and the Teutonic hero age came soon into fashion; Lessing, Moser, Gleim and Bürger turned their attention to the older poets and Klopstock in one of his "Odes" imitated the meter of the "Chevy Chase", known through the Spectator.

This great movement, led by Herder and Goethe was a revulsion from the spirit of Voltaire to that of Rousseau, from artificiality of social conventions to the simplicity of nature, from hard and fast aesthetic rules to the freedom of genius. From this outline, the course of the German romantic movement in the eighteenth century proceeded parallel to the English most of the way. In both it was a reaction against the "Enlightenment" or rational, prosaic, skeptical commonsense spirit of the age, in the effort to "hark back to the ages of faith and to recover the point of view which created mythology, fairylore, and popular superstition."¹

The effect of the entrance of the Reliques on the literary stage of the day can be best measured by the condition of the spiritual world in Germany in 1767, which Carlyle in his essays on Goethe's works characterizes as full of disorder and dilettantism. - Luther, Hutten, Opitz, and Fleming were forgotten while Klopstock and Gleim ruled the poetic world with their

¹. cf. "The Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement" by Phelps.
artificial verse and exotic spirit. Nevertheless they were the forerunners of a new era beginning with the "Reliques" in Germany, for one of Gleim's most important ideals was the rebirth of the ballad genre of poetry and Klopstock's, the revival of spirit and life in his native literature. Thus have they their place in the revival of the ballad in Germany.

Although Opitz, Lessing, Klopstock, Haller and Hagedorn had given some attention to popular poetry, the study was yet by no means scientific nor even recognized. But this investigation, in spite of its seeming insignificance and fruitlessness, had been quietly and unconsciously creating a formative atmosphere, into which Percy's "Reliques" and "Ossian" came at the crucial time and, falling in with this new and slowly gathering interest, precipitated the revival of ballad poetry under the leadership of Herder, prompting his famous essay on "Ossian und die Lieder alter Völker" in 1773 and his epoch-making work, "Volkslieder" in 1778. The foundation of this work he had laid in the early seventies by his English and Oriental studies but its real starting point, he says, was the "Reliques", the "kernel of his whole undertaking": "Der Anblick dieser Sammlung sieht offenbar dass ich eigentlich von Englischen Volksliedern ausging und auf sie zurückkomme. Als vor zehn und mehr Jahren die 'Reliques of Ancient English Poetry' mir in die Hände fielen, freuten mich einzelne Stücke so sehr dass ich sie zu übersetzen
versuchte". Herder's essay on "Ossian" called forth the translation of many ballads of the "Reliques" and gave a great stimulus to the growing interest in such poetry.

But none of these publications would compare with Herder's "Volkslieder", an eternal monument to his genius and enthusiasm, but best of all, a work of inestimable value in bringing popular poetry to its rightful place of honor. These simple songs of the people seemed a source of almost divine inspiration to Herder and under the firm conviction that popular poetry was the true voice of the people, he gathered songs from the various languages in a collection in which this vein of thought comes spontaneous to the surface.

Herder became interested in English literature while he was a student at Königsberg, where he studied with Hamann such English masters as Shakespeare, Milton, Hume, Shaftesburg, and Bacon. Here he became interested in popular literature as the "natural untrained utterance of the common people". He adopted Hamann's creed that "poetry is the mother-tongue of the human race". Herder conceived the idea of a German collection of ballads like the "Reliques" and reiterated Raspes and Gerstenberg's desire for a German Percy in his essay, "Über Ossian und die Lieder Alter Völker". In this he tells of the existence of folk-songs in numerous provinces not inferior to the songs of other

1. Vorrede zu den Volksliedern, Herder's Sämtliche Werke, Achter Theil, s. 89.  
2. cf. "Briefe über die Merkwürdigkeiten der Literatur."
nations in energy, rhythm, naiveté and vigor of language but feels that no one would bother about the songs of common people and the glees of country-folk.

Herder did not become a German Percy. A wider idea came to him and he made a collection of folksongs from all languages, the most remarkable collection ever made in European literature, not only in its width of embrace and critical insight with which the poems are selected, but also in the beauty of the translations from so many languages, revealing his intimate knowledge of them all.

Herder had had the spell of primitive poetry from the first, - "poetry which is the creation of the race rather than of individuals". As years went on, it was round this creed that all the deepest elements in his nature came more and more to concentrate. The very language of such poetry came to him "charged with the smell of the fields whence it sprang, laden with echoes of the subterranean music of the soil". None excepting Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm were so keenly alive to all this as Herder. No less did he recognize in the primitive poetry of Homer, Ossian and Shakespeare the echo of popular melody to his own great delight.

His collection of songs, gathered from the Lapps, Finns, Lithuanians, Servians, the Border Ballads and infinite other

sources, the "Voice of the Nations in Song", is entirely without precedent for not only are the translations extraordinarily skillful but also is the design of the work, says Mr. Vaughn, an universal "Corpus Poeticum" of primitive races and an attempt to weave the results of Macpherson and Percy and a score of forgotten scholars into one. This collection also contains sections devoted to old Norse songs, Spanish romances and the new field of oriental poetry. In poetry as in all fields of human activity, it is toward the primeval and elemental that his heart went out and in this his masters were Rousseau and the band of writers grouping themselves round Percy and his deep vein of sentiment.¹ To Herder we owe the words Volksseele and Volkslied. Through him, Volk lost its meaning of "rabble" and was reinvested with the significance of all that was new, original and vital. In his zeal for primitive poetry, Herder opened a new spring of feeling, a debt which the poetry of his own land and that of Goethe, especially, cannot overrate.

The noblest of Herder's literary children is Goethe, that "colossus of the world of German thought". From Herder Goethe caught his enthusiasm for popular literature but this is only a small part of his debt to the first of modern thinkers. At Strasburg, where these two discussed the value of song as shown in the "Reliques", Goethe became a poet by his daily contact with

¹. Vaughn: "Romantic Revolt" p. 211.
Herder's master mind. Goethe's poetic horizon was immensely widened by Herder's ideals and in the tenth book of "Dichtung und Wahrheit" he says that he came to see poetry as an "endowment of the world of nations, and not as the private inheritance of a few refined, educated people".

The outcome of this intercourse was Goethe's collection of twelve Alsatian songs, included in Herder's "Volkslieder" 1778. Herder's influence, and through him, the influence of the "Reliques" was deeper than merely to entice Goethe to collect ballads for his own private or even Herder's collection and impelled him to write original ones in real ballad poetry spirit and to work popular motives into poetry that would appeal to the popular imagination by its native style and lifelike truthfulness. Several of Goethe's earlier poems and songs, especially "Heidenröselin", are adaptations of pieces in Herder's collection and it is plainly evident that in his later works, Goethe derived his ballad-impulse directly from Herder.

Bürger, whose ballads are enduring landmarks in the history of European romance, was a poet who may be said to have been made by English ballad literature, of which we was an ardent student. His Göttingen friends and the Musenalmanac awoke in him the desire to arouse greater interest in the ballad by translations of Percy and by producing original ones. "Lenore" is the first evidence of this influence. The inspiration which Percy gave to him for writing ballads with popular motives was supplemen-
ted by the influence of his great contemporary, Herder, and his critical works, for the poets of the "Reinbund", no less than Herder and Goethe, had discovered the secret of lyric power in the simple songs of the people. They neither neglected nor dispised the "Volk" for they were too loyal disciples of Herder for that. Besides many of its members had sprung from the peasant class and their poetry never lost touch with the soil nor became so influenced by bookish traditions.

The romanticists of Germany, though their works show a deep impress of indirect influence of the "Reliques", have not left many reproductions of Percy motifs. Only among the minor romanticists are found ballads based on Percy.

The next group after this shortlived romantic school, in which romantic ideas found concentrated expression, focused on such men as Arim, Brentano, Corres and the brothers, Grimm. There was no talk of a school. They were not even pupils of the earlier romanticists, nor continued their work. They purposely ignored the high poetic ideals of the first romanticists and went back to an earlier, more primitive stage of the movement, found in pioneers like Herder, from whom these romanticists derived the most valuable in their literary criticism, namely, "that universal receptivity, which finds expression in the impulse to translate and explain". From Herder came also the first stimulus

1. Brandes: "Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature", Chapter I.
to a scientific study of both European and Asiatic languages, and from him, the love for what is national both in native and in foreign literature.

Tieck loved the "Volksbuch" for what it could suggest to him and not for what it was, while the poets of the younger generation proclaimed the worth of popular literature in its original form. They preferred it as seen in Gorres', "Teutsche Volkspoesic" of 1807 and in the "Kinder und Hausmarchen" of the brothers Grimm, deprived of all the magic light and music, with which Tieck and Novallis had surrounded it.

The same contrast is seen in a comparison of their sparing lyrics with "Des Knaben Wunderhorn", published by Arnim and Brentano, 1805 - 8, that magnificent collection of folksongs with which the Heidelberg poets enriched German literature and the world, and which even Herder did not realize were in existence, only sleeping and waiting to have their vast treasures discovered. In this masterpiece, the spiritual idealism of the first school descends to earth and the commonplaces of every day life and a poetry of simple realism takes the place of purely imaginative flights.¹ It is of the greatest historical interest and an epochmaker in German lyric poetry and in literature in general. It struck that national note which for many years gave freshness and life to both romantic and ante-romantic lyric poetry and

paved the way for Ludwig Uhland's great work, "Alte hoch und niederdutsche Volkslieder", published in 1844-5, which, as a literal reproduction of popular tradition, may be said to stand superior to "Des Knaben Wunderhorn".

The latter collection is one of the positive achievements of German romanticism. What Herder had effected in a cosmopolitan spirit, these Heidelberg poets carried out upon a national basis. Their aim was a songbook for the people and their unquestioned success has made "Des Knaben Wunderhorn" the accepted standard for the German "Volkslied". The immediate and widespread popularity of the book awakened a deeper interest in the national past and left all subsequent lyric poetry deep in its debt.

The folksong movement, with all its tributary streams, thus rests on anhistorical and scientific basis. As seen above, even in the sixteenth century, an interest was awakened in the life and poetry of distant peoples. Then, as also two centuries later, this interest was the outgrowth of overcivilization, for which a remedy was sought in nature, where life was free and unconscious, simple, wild and little depraved.

At that time Montaigne found this lost state among the uncivilized Brazilian tribes of South America. From here the interest spread in the early eighteenth century to the half civilized races of Northern Europe, under Addison's study. Thus was the circle closing in, until the interest finally focused,
through Herder, on tribes in his more immediate surroundings. In England, the same movement took place, finally centering on Scotland through the Reliques, for Percy had caught Montaigne's ideas and their regenerating qualities. But with Herder, the movement first assumed great significance as a movement and left its traces not on individual scholars and their masterly productions alone, but on the whole mass of the people, whom his spirit pervaded and caught in an universal response.
CHAPTER II.

THE BEGINNINGS OF AMERICAN INTEREST IN FOLKSONG: TALVJ.

Though American intellectual life was decidedly under English influence in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, I have found no trace of this interest being reflected in America which we have just traced in England.

Whence comes the inspiration if not from parent English sources? Investigation seems to point to Germany and the movement there as the original source of American efforts to promote and foster the same kind of interest. If this then be true, the question naturally arises, through what channel or channels came this impetus, was it through Herder, the pioneer in Germany's activity in this evolution, or was the expression of American appreciation of such literature the result of other stimulating forces?

If one may safely trust periodicals as reliable indication of intellectual tendencies of the popular mind, it has been found that Herder and his works occupy very little space in their pages. There is found in the North American Review, 1825, Vol. XI, an article on "Writings of Herder" while an occasional mention may be found in a few other contemporary magazines.

In commenting on Herder's idea of collecting the beautiful and popular songs of all nations in which he compared
the national feelings of different races to exhibit distinctly the common features of human nature, the Review says:

"The noblest bards were to be assembled and each was to express the spirit of his own native people so that from the most varied national tones, the harmony of all with one common nature might be apparent. It was a noble idea to assemble representatives of popular feeling from all parts of the world that they might unite in hearing testimony to humanity, the affections and moral rectitude." (I)

This brief review in the North American, accompanied by the above comment and a few of Herder's songs seems to be all that was said concerning Herder's work in the sphere of popular poetry. Certainly this dearth of interested criticism and material is selfexplanatory in regard to Herder's part in the true initiation of interest in popular poetry in America. Whatever else may be said of American interest in other phases of German culture and literature, as reflected in contemporary periodicals, it can not with justness be claimed that these same organs of popular expression, exhibited any perceptible interest in folk poetry and this side of literature before the third decade of the nineteenth century.

Looking further for the genetic stimulus and primary source of inspiration to American writers, we find the interesting fact that it was a woman who came to America filled with the beauty and wild graces of popular poetry and songs of the common
people, Mrs. Theresa Robinson, better known under the acrostic pseudonym of Talvj.

To establish the claim of this woman to the honor of first arousing and fostering American sympathetic, active appreciation for popular poetry, it may be of advantage to proceed from the general to the particular to arrive at the proper conclusion in this matter of examining the character of German influence in general in American before Talvj came in 1830.

The first channel through which German influence became known in America was that of English magazines - the second and more important through American scholars studying in Germany and returning, filled with the spirit of culture and things German.¹

After 1790 in England, books of translations were published and magazines contained many "fugitive pieces" from the German. It is chiefly a reflex of this interest that we find in American periodicals to the end of 1810. The publication of translations of German poetry in American magazines indicated a two-fold activity, - first, it shows an active interest by individuals able to read and appreciate German and translate it for their countrymen; secondly, it indicates a growing acquaintance with German literature at large. In this way American

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¹ cf. Goodnight: "German Literature in American Magazines Prior to 1846."
magazines accomplished much for German in this country.\footnote{1}

In paving the way for Talvij, this foreign influence from Germany, coming through England, was further aided by direct contact with Europe.

From 1820 - 30 studies of American scholars abroad, became an important factor in our intellectual development. In 1819 Edward Everett returned from the University of Gottingen to become professor at Harvard, enthusiastic for the methods of German scholarship. At this time W. E. Channing was advocating the study of German to attain literary independence from England. A little later in 1825 Karl Follen entered upon his duties at Harvard as instructor in German and imparted his ardent enthusiasm for German letters to such men as Everett, Ticknor and Bancroft, already imbued with the spirit of German culture and education.

Even before Edward Everett went abroad to study, American scholars had begun to seek wider, cultural advantages at centers of learning in Europe, though chiefly theological students or those in diplomatic service, as J. Q. Adams, whose translation of Wieland's "Oberon" is a good indication of his interest in German literature. Later in 1809, A. H. Everett spent several years on the continent studying, while George Ticknor visited Germany (1815) to prepare for his duties as professor

\footnote{1. cf. Davis: Translations of German Poetry in American Magazines, 1741-1810.}
of modern languages at Harvard. Bancroft studied at the University of Göttingen, Heidelberg and Berlin about the time that James Fenimore Cooper began his European travels.¹

Thus American scholars had been acquiring German thought and culture at first hand long before Talvij came to America and before Longfellow went abroad for the first time with whom the German influence in American literature reached its height.² Though the interest in German literature received a fresh and lasting impulse from these first American students of German and their successors, though there were as yet no contributions to nor enthusiasm for popular literature, this very attitude toward things German was creating an atmosphere for the coming exponents of the folksong movement.

Theresa Albertine Louise von Jakob was born January 26, 1797 at Halle, where her father was professor of philosophy at the University. In 1806 during the Napoleonic upheaval, he went to the University of Charkow in southern Russia where he remained for five years. While there his daughter, denied the advantages of a regular education, laid the foundation of that acquaintance with Slavic languages and literature which she later so profitably and honorably cultivated. During this time she wrote her first poems, songs full of the child's longing for her German home, which the "strange, half-Asiatic environment of

Southern Russia rendered, by contrast, only dearer and more attractive.

After her father's transfer to St. Petersburg in 1811, her studies were naturally confined to modern languages. Incessantly and intensely industrious, she devoted much time to historical readings and privately cultivated her poetic talent. After her return to Halle (1816) she wrote several tales and made translations of Scott. At this time Jakob Grimm's review of Servian Popular Songs, published by Wuk Stephanowich, fell into her hands and increased her interest in that language to such a degree that she determined to learn it. Thus arose her translation of popular songs of Servia (1825-6), in which she did for Servia what Herder in his Volkslieder wished might yet be accomplished for the poetry of less civilized, older peoples.\(^1\)

That such a wealth and depth of feeling could exist in a nation commonly looked upon as barbarous was indeed a new thought and a great surprise to Germans.

Talvj was married to Edward Robinson in 1828 and came to make her home in America in 1830. Here, for a while she was engaged in the study of aboriginal languages and prepared a translation in German of Pickering's work on Indian Tongues of North America, completed in 1834. In 1833 she had helped her husband publish "Lexicon of Greek Testament" after which she

\(^1\) Cf. The Life and Works of Mrs. Theresa Robinson by Irma Voigt. 1913, p. 30.
devoted herself to a renewed philological study which furnished a long-wished-for aid and inspiration to work already considered by Follen, viz., an introduction of German folklore in America. Though he had succeeded in interesting J. Q. Adams, Ticknor, Bancroft and others, he did not complete his task. This was left for Talvj. This she accomplished by her repeated contributions to the standard periodicals of the day, chiefly the North American Review, highly deserving articles on the folksong of the various nations and by her later more complete works on popular poetry and folksong. In 1834 there appeared in the Biblical Repository an article by Talvj on the "Historical View of Slavic Literature" which brought her recognition and a lasting place among American scholars. In Vol. 42 of the North American Review, 1836, she discussed "Popular Poetry of Teutonic Nations"; to Vol. 43, she contributed a comprehensive treatment of "Slavic Popular Poetry". In 1842 a paper on "Spanish Popular Poetry" appeared in the same periodical, while just two years before, 1840, her epoch-making "Charakteristik der Volkslieder" was published. In 1853, in Putnam's, she contributed an article on "French Poetry", in 1869, a short sketch "Die Kosaken und Ihre Historischen Lieder" appeared in Westman's Monatshefte. Most of these articles were included, in a revised form, in her literary accomplishments marking the years 1840 and 1852.

An examination of Talvj's two largest and most important works, viz., "Literature of the Slavic Nations" and "Charakteristik der Volkaliede", will indicate her part in initiating American interest in popular poetry. Her "Literature of the Slavic Nations" is treated in four parts, prefaced by an historical sketch of the origin, mythology and early Slavic language and its branches. In part one, Talvj deals with the history of the old or church Slavic language and literature in a very pleasing and intelligible manner. The second part considers in turn the different divisions of the Eastern Slavs, viz., Russians, Illryico-Servians, Bulgarians. The third division deals with the other of the two general divisions, the Western Slavs, embracing Bohemians, Slovaks, Poles, and Venedes in Lusatia. These chapters present a learned characterization of the different dialects and an historical sketch of their literature from the earliest period.

After establishing the Russian, Bohemian and Polish as the chief elements of Slavic literature, Talvj passes on to the fourth and most important, and in this connection probably the most interesting part, "Popular Poetry of the Slavic Nations". Here she first treats Slavic folklore as a whole and then in turn the Eastern and the Western Slavs, each with its divisions.

In opening the subject of Slavic popular poetry as a whole, Talvj defines popular poetry as "that general productivity which pervades the mass of men as it pervades nature and not that divine gift, the dowry of a few blessed individuals".¹ She

¹ Talvj "Literature of the Slavic Nations". p. 316.
found that among all the nations of Europe, such poetry was only a "dying plant" and that among the nations alone is the "living flower" still to be found, "growing in its native luxuriance and here only, among the Servians and Dalmatrans in its full bloom and pristive beauty. She accounts for its unrivalled purity and warmth of feeling by the ignorance of the common people and the barrenness of their literature.¹

There is no trace of romance in Slavic songs, - "that beautiful blossom of Christianity among Teutonic races". Talvıl characterizes the love in Slavic songs as that natural, heartfelt, overpowering sensation of the human breast in all its shades from tender affection to glowing sensuality - never elevated but always natural, unsophisticated, unrestrained. Slavic popular poetry savors of the Orient, she says, and to enjoy it one must transport himself into a foreign clime where east, west, north and south blend as one - "the suppleness of Asia, the energy of Europe, the passive fatalism of the Greek, the active religion of the Christian, the revengeful spirit of the oppressed and the childlike resignation of him who cheerfully submits - all these seeming contradictions find an expressive organ in Slavic popular poetry".²

Slavic poems seldom represent wild passions or complicated actions but scenes of rest, chiefly those of domestic

². Ibid. p. 320.
joy and grief. To show the plastic character of Slavic songs, Talv jury inserts a Servian love song of "Jov and Maria". In speaking of the moral character of Slavic popular poetry, she cites the printed collections as evidences of their purity of manners and unpollutedness of imagination. She makes the distinction that though they may at times be coarse, they are never vulgar. Love and heroism, the principal subjects in all poetry, are also most popular among the Slavs, though the two are more separated than among other nations. Slavic love is seldom a motive of a hero's action.  

Talv jury pauses briefly with Russian popular poetry, those erotic songs full of peculiar tenderness. Music and melancholy, deep and pensive feeling pervade the entire Russian popular poetry. Next she concerned herself with Servian popular poetry, whose fundamental element she found to be cheerfulness and whose grand and prevailing theme, love. Their poetry is the picture of their thoughts, feelings, actions, sufferings "the mental reproduction of the respective conditions of the mass of individuals who compose the nation". The Servian lives his poetry. The pictures are always fresh, tangible, striking, sometimes sublime, and tragically pathetic through their simplicity. Talv jury places the chief merit of Servian lyric in the composition of the whole and in the distinct graphic, plastic mode of

1. Ibid. Part IV. Chap. I.
objective representation, as well as in the beauty of the lyric.¹

Talvj closes with showing how inferior is the field of popular poetry of the Slavic nations of the western stem from that of the above branches and that, of these, the Poles had most neglected their popular poetry. Only in Russian and Servian ballads can the genius of Slavic, popular poetry be said to yet live in its original purity.

Talvj discovers the common thread running unbroken through this poetry, viz., unrivalled simplicity and naturalness without polish or elegance and says: "All that the other Slavic nations, or Germans, or Scotch or Spaniards possess of popular poetry can at the utmost be compared with the lyrical part of Servian songs. These are called female songs, because they are sung only by females and youths. The long extemporized epic composition in which a peasant bard, seated in a large circle of other peasants, in unpremeditated but perfect verse, celebrates heroic deeds of their ancestors or contemporaries, has no parallel in the whole history of literature since the days of Homer."²

This section of the book seems to have become the most attractive and valuable, chiefly because of the freshness and force of thought given to the specimens of poetry. The New York Evening Post says: "The peculiar genius of this literature is

1. Ibid. p. 366-383.
2. Ibid. p. 114.
delineated in a skillful analysis and samples of the poems are given in English preserving the peculiar rhythm and, as far as may be, the verbal characteristics of the original. In these we seem to have a sort of key to the character of the race and we rise from a perusal of these delightful pages with a feeling of closer acquaintance with the nations of the Slavic race."

Miss Voigt adds her appreciation of Talvj's work and speaks of the author's quick adaptation to the strange English idioms, her intellectual keenness and wonderful power of intellectual assimilation.¹

The North American Review calls this part of her book a "precious gem which gives brilliancy and animation to the whole".² It bears a deep impress of its author's own personality and is constructed from the standpoint of a sympathetic, interested and scholarly investigator, traits which captivated Goethe's heart and won his admiration.

Harper's magazine, volume 1, speaks of this sketch of the popular poetry of the Slavic nations as the most attractive feature of the whole work, illustrated, as it is, with many specimens of songs and ballads, marked with strong natural pathos and tenderness, a certain rustic simplicity, pleasing and seldom offensive. This warm appreciation is not at all exaggerated for the discussion contains the results of profound study and wide

¹ Cf. Miss Voigt: Life and Works of Mrs. Theresa Robinson, p. 79.
² North American Review. V. 71.
research on quite an unexplored field and displays a very "delicate and correct taste".

The North American Review\(^1\) speaks of this subject, so peculiar, novel and poetic, as being touched with a loving and tender hand, appreciated not according to the rules of art, but, far better, "with higher aesthetics by a woman's heart".

At that time, it seemed to be generally admitted that there was not in any language so complete and attractive an epitome of literature and various idioms of the great Slavic nations. Further evidence of the attention this volume was attracting in the American literary world is found in the International Magazine, which characterizes the volume as a most comprehensive work, filling up a deficiency, which was constantly becoming more apparent, in the direction opened by Herder. It evinces, continues this review, an unprejudiced and catholic mind, a just, poetic, sensible, clear and sure understanding as well as the most extensive and thorough literary acquirements.\(^2\)

The recasting of her paper in the Biblical Repository (1834) into book form (1852) entitled "The Literature of Slavic Nations" was doubtless precipitated by the poverty of such material at that time and by the eagerness of the literary world for such a representation of Slavic literature in its entirety. Though

\(^{1}\) North American Review. V. 71, p. 320 ff.

\(^{2}\) International Magazine. V. 2, p. 306.
previous devotion to investigations of Slavic literature had savored of scholarly and scientific interest, Talvj's book was the first exhaustive treatment of the subject as a whole. The Independent for July 11, 1850, says: "It introduces the reader to a field of literary research which has long lain in comparative obscurity, but to which recent political struggles have given a melancholy interest. .... All are eager to learn more of races, some of which, hitherto unknown almost in public affairs, have burst like a torrent upon the field of political strife, shaking Europe to its center, performing prodigies of valor almost unparalleled in the history of modern warfare".

Though her husband called her work merely an outline, the North American Review speaks more appreciatively: "The outline is not only drawn with correctness and precision but the filling up is very thorough and satisfactory, with full information concerning the literary character and pursuits of the Slavic nation".¹

Talvj's thorough understanding of her subject speaks for itself in the careful and accurate treatment of even the most minute details, as she arranges the chief factors in the development of the race. In her description of the peculiarities of Slavic poetry, Talvj sketched carefully the most prominent features of the character of the people, whose simplicity is

¹ North American Review. V. 71, p. 329.
reflected in their songs and whose poems express the quiet homeliness of Slavic popular life. In this connection, Harper's Magazine says: "Rarely is such a subject treated with the profound investigation, vigorous analysis and intelligent comprehensiveness exhibited in this discussion of Slavic popular poetry."¹ This magazine continues its admiration of Talvj and its praise for her scholarly and ingenious piece of critical research and remarks: "The volume is characterized by the extent and thoroughness of its investigation, its acute and judicious criticisms, warmhearted recognition of true poetry, even in humble garb, and the force and facility of style." The North American Review again speaks of Talvj's intimate understanding of her subject: "The philology of the Slavic tongue and its several dialects, - the characteristic features of the originality of this language and its independence of others acknowledged to be primitive languages, - all are pointed out with a perfect knowledge of the subject."

From these various testimonials it may readily be inferred what a stir this volume created in literary circles and how delighted scholars were to receive this unprecedented information on primary sources. The criticisms and reviews, found and noted above, are appreciative and at the same time expressive of the newness of the subject of popular poetry to the American cultural world. One of the greatest values of the work and one

¹ Harper's Magazine. V. 1.
which places it among the literary achievements of American letters is its presentation of so many races and so much information, based on original sources, so important to the study of history and ethnography.

No previous study of Slavic literature with its critical ingenuity and thoroughness of research had yet explored the whole field and given the results of its investigation to the public in such an intelligible manner. Thus is the work one of unquestionable merit, treated even, in its details, with great learning and acumen, a volume so full of information and such a valuable accession to American literature.

Talvij's work is the first of its kind and for that reason alone, it merits consideration. It stands alone, in first bringing the wealth of popular poetry to the attention of the American literary public. Thus is Talvij the splendid initiator of such study in this country.

From her initial study of the popular poetry of the Servians, Talvij had extended her investigation to the whole of the Slavic nation, in the volume just reviewed. In her "Charakteristik der Volkslieder" she embraced in her research all of the European nations. In the introduction, she expresses the wish to have the volume, however, insignificant, considered as a contribution to cultural history and not as a collection of folksongs, for which it was too incomplete. Nor did she wish it to be regarded as an historical text, because the "background of
many parts of the picture must remain in the shadow”.

The first part devotes four chapters to a description of the folksongs of the peoples of Asia, Africa and the original Americans, chiefly. The second division deals with the songs of European peoples, prefaced by a brief account of Germanic folklore in its main features. The author emphasizes the family likenesses existing among the traditional songs of all European peoples as the probable cause of the repeated use of certain stereotyped expressions and forms of speech, as the riddle, refrain, question, and answer. This claim she substantiates by quoting numerous examples. Other similarities, such as love, hero worship, belief in divine Providence and its retributive justice, are pointed out as common to the thoughts of the various nations.

Talvj makes three divisions of Germanic peoples, viz., Scandanavian, German, and English. The first is considered under the heads of Icelandic, Faröish, Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish; the second, under German and Dutch; the last, under English and Scotch. Each division has an introductory discussion of the main factors in its development. In treating the poetry of the various races by way of comparison, Talvj furnishes numerous and splendid examples of the most characteristic songs, which, with her general plan of treatment, is highly conducive to a realization of her greatest wish that the book be a contribution to cultural history.
In the introduction, Talvj first seeks to establish the correct conception of poetry. From here, she proceeds to a discussion of folkpoetry, differentiating between this and national poetry. Hamann and Herder called poetry the natural inborn speech of the human race. Talvj saw that the expression of primitive people was necessarily highly creative, figurative and imitative. She likened poetry in its earliest childhood to the faltering speech of a child, like whom primitive people burst into unrestrained joy over temporary and sensual pleasures and pour forth pain and grief in uncontrolled lamentations. But as man comes more in contact with the big, outer world and its civilization, the farther is his life removed from poetry, his speech in the process of development becomes less imaginative, figurative and subjective. Yet Talvj explains that this very poetic and figurative origin of human language runs through all languages of the world in spite of "refinement of thought and expression in old and new times".¹

A theory advanced by several philosophers makes poetry, an expression of feeling, originally identical with song. Even Herder insisted that singing and speaking were long one and the same among the old races. This view necessitates a conception of song as a certain rhythmic raising and lowering of the voice, similar to what we call recitative, like the artless singsong of a child.

The oldest survivals of poetry are epic in character. From these relics it is known that the first poetic productions were lyric, for the natureman lives only for the present, while occupation with the past or future presupposes a certain degree of culture. Lyric expression of feeling whether pain or joy, is by nature of momentary character. For this reason it embodies the present, while the epic naturally, embodies the past. Each new situation gives rise to its own expression. This variety of theme helps explain why these songs live in the hearts of the people instead of being preserved in writing.¹

Talvj shows how logically the epic developed out of the lyric. As the progress of time left victories and heroic achievements farther back in the past, the celebration of these events necessitated clearer and more numerous references and explanations in order for the hearer to understand. Thus was the lyric pushed more and more to the background and the epic took its place.

It is interesting to note Chamisso's discovery of song and poetry among all the primitive races, though this poetry might vary from wild shrieks to certain rhythmic measures, according to their needs and desires. Talvj assigns both nature and folk to poetry/the same source, though they are different in character, and considers both the result of the satisfaction of inborn needs.

¹. Ibid. p. 5. ff.
In this connection she gives a splendid distinction between national and folk poetry, so often confused. She writes that while the whole poetic literature of a people is national in a broad sense, in a narrower sense only that is national which deals with the qualities and conditions of the nations to which these poets belong. David, Shakespeare, and Goethe are national poets. Not all poetry, read and sung by the common people can be called folk poetry nor even a part of it which has exercised a great influence on them, for in so doing the Bible, its psalms and poetic expressions would be folk poetry. Likewise would many hymns, and operas, Italian and German have to be named here.¹

Talvj characterizes it best: "Popular poetry, whether song, ballad or drama, means those productions existing now or formerly, which proceed from the common people and are blossoms of popular life, born and nurtured under the care of the people, cherished by their joys, watered by their tears; and as such, eminently characteristic of the great mass of the nation and its condition."²

Such a definition of popular poetry had not been brought to the attention of scholars, nor even conceived of, before Talvj. Hers is the honor of having first shown the American intellectual world the lifegiving qualities of this "untrained" speech of man.

Talvj closes her introductory remarks on popular poetry with a few reflections on previous collectors of folklore, most of

¹. Ibid. p. 9.
². Ibid. p. 10.
whom had had a perverted and confused idea concerning folk and popular songs. Even Herder included many songs which were not German folksongs. Arnim and Brentano and many others followed his example. Though "Des Knaben Wunderhorn" deserves great merit, its antique poems did not all issue from the people. But Talvij drew a distinction between folk and national songs, and arranged in her collections those newly written down literally from the mouths of the people. Thus did she make a valuable addition to the study of the cultured development of primitive peoples.

It is the section devoted to the Germanic group which next interests us. This part receives a very comprehensive treatment of German literature in its various phases from the earliest times, down to the present. The author lays special emphasis on the development of the poetry, its ups and downs through the centuries, the rise of the folksong in opposition to the meistersong, its depression under the weight of the Reformation literature and subsequent schools and ages. Talvij also treats the old folksongs, Minnesong, and Heldensage previous to the golden age of the folksong, on to its decline and after a time the rise of German songs, under which she discusses ballads, historical folksongs and German songs. The author is of the opinion that ancient popular poetry has survived in Germany in

the regions where the inhabitants are a singing people and has decayed where they are a reading people. 1

In pointing out the chief characteristics of German popular poetry as a product of so many centuries, composed of so many elements, Talvj names its universality as the principal feature. In the poetry of no other nation is there found such variety of theme and subject matter. In German folk poetry she discovered no trace of the tragedy of the old Scandanavian. On the contrary, it is much brighter, more gentle and conciliatory, without the romanticism and melancholy of the Scotch and North English. It alone has the strength of simplicity found in old folk poetry, which an abrupt elliptical style gives. With the British it has in common the deep, joyous feeling for nature. As in the Scotch, the expression of love is warmer and no less glowing than in the Spanish, much deeper than that of the Slavic nations, though more sensual and unrefined than the latter.

The popular poetry of Holland is easily disposed of by the author since such poetry no longer exists there. The other sections of the volume, Scandanavian and British, receive an equally searching investigation and exhaustive treatment, similar to that of the Germanic group.

With this volume, Talvj lays first and last claim to having first imparted inspiration to the American public for a

1. Talvj: Charakteristik der Volkslieder.
study of the folksong of Germany and to having first given to the American literary world a scholarly study of the popular poetry of her native land, as yet unknown in this country.

"The simplicity of the ballads which Mrs. Robinson has so copiously translated", says Graham's Magazine, "will win many readers who take but little interest in intellectual history." This attractive and valuable part of the volume and the author's method of treatment of the various races by way of comparison rounded out her task of introducing Germanic folklore to America.

Critics have seen in this book a revival of Herder's thoughts, "extended and elevated, however, to fit the measure of an advanced knowledge." Again it has seemed to others like a new "Wunderhorn", embracing all folksong, instead of only German. Next to its greatest worth of opening up the vast field of rich popular literature to an "uninformed public", is the unbiased and deeply sympathetic and welltempered reason, no less than the wide knowledge of the author; a knowledge, largely based on experience from a residence in Russia at a very impressionable age and in America at more settled and mature age, which led her into such a noble work and afforded her advantages of inestimable value for her splendid undertaking.

3. Ibid. Chapter 4.
CHAPTER III.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN INTEREST IN FOLKSONG: LONGFELLOW.

The next outstanding exponent of this interest in popular poetry in America is Longfellow. He is next not because of any apparent influence direct from his predecessor, Talvij, but next because of his own personal inclination toward such literature. He was caught in the whirl of a contemporary movement that carried him into a conscientious study which gave expression to his deep reverence for the old poetic utterances of primitive peoples and to his love for old medieval past with all its mystic beauties and charming old legends.

In the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century, French was the ruling spirit in American circles of culture. A French book published in 1913 became a revolutionizing force in Europe. This book, Madame de Stael's "De l'Allemagne" opened up an entirely new world. It portrayed Germany, - obscure, downtrodden Germany - as the "heart of Europe and fatherland of thought". The author dwells not only on Germany's activity and creative movements in every phase of intellectual life, but also on her own firm conviction that in this German intellect lay a new youth and the promise for the regeneration of all mankind.

Scholars have estimated the influence of Madame de Stael's work in America as one of the greatest of any book in the early nineteenth
19th century. It fell on most fertile soil in New England, whose center of culture was then Harvard University. It found appreciative expression in the North American Review, the most important and most authentic archive of the trend of the public mind in those days. Contributions of men like E. Everett, Bancroft, Felton, and others are suffused with their joy of finding this fertile field of German intellect. To them it was a model for the construction of a higher intellectual life. This first influx of German ideas and inspiration in the intellectual life of America was followed by a second impulse, that of the so-called transcendental movement.

R. W. Emerson, its most important champion, tells how in Boston a circle of gifted and truthseeking men and women, who had caught Carlyle's spirit of enthusiasm for German literature and philosophy met together to investigate this new field. From their study they hoped to enrich their minds and widen their intellectual horizon. The outgrowth of these new ideas was the founding of the "Dial". Its volumes are a living witness of the mental processes and confusion of these intellects concerning themselves with German thoughts and battling against ignorance and inveterate prejudices in the moral and theological world.1

Into this movement, aiming at a conscious production of a higher, intellectual life, modelled on the German, came

Longfellow, with whom, says Mr. Davis, the influence of German literature in America reached its height. He saw most clearly the American need for the refining and cultural influences of the Old World, so full of magic, charming old legends and beautiful old poetry, which was so lacking in new America and its slowly forming literature.

After graduating from Bowdoin College, Longfellow went abroad to acquire training in modern languages, chiefly French, Spanish and Italian. He visited Germany for only a short time. It was upon his second journey, 1835, to prepare himself for a professorship at Harvard that he became fully imbued with the German spirit. It was this residence in Heidelberg that worked the transformation in the poet's life regarding German and brought him solace in his grief over the loss of his beloved wife. The same romantic atmosphere in which the Heidelberg romanticists had lived and written was still to be felt. Here was peace and quiet undisturbed by the stormy outside. There still lived here the whole traditional spirit and philosophy of the romanticists; unity of poetry, philosophy, religion, enthusiasm for the middle ages, old German poetry and folksong.

Lonely hours in Heidelberg were spent by Longfellow with books to relieve his aching heart. "a year, that began with new hopes and bright prospects, had shut down over a sorrow that

1. "Translations of German Poetry in American Magazines, 1741-1810" by E. Z. Davis, p. 3.
wellnigh broke the springs of action but which he bore with courage and with a silent, tender, religious faith." His devotion to books was his salvation and his comfort in his sorrow, which at times seemed bound to absorb him and lead him into brooding idleness.

With the new year, he began a careful study of German literature from its origin and, as he says of Paul Flemming, into whose experiences he wove much of his own, he buried himself in old dusty books, worked his way diligently through the ancient poetic lore of Germany, "into the bright sunny land where walk the modern bards and sing".

Longfellow did not confine himself to poetry but read also the prose of Goethe, Tieck, and Hoffmann. He found Fichte's lectures and philosophy very interesting. But most of all did he take delight in Richter, attracted by his wild imagination and bold figures, abrupt; fantastic and often startling. In his Journal for 1846, he calls Heine a "delicious poet", a number of whose poems he translated. His wounded heart had found a balm in the "love for what is intellectual and beautiful, the love of literature, the love of high converse with the minds of the great and good".¹

Again Flemming becomes Longfellow's organ of expression for voicing the poet's delight over "Des Knaben Wunderhorn", which he had almost entirely memorized and which he said appealed to

¹ Cf. Life and Letters by Samuel Longfellow. V. 2.
his fancy most of all German books and produced upon his imagination the "most wild and magic influence". He had a veritable passion for these ballads, the "gypsy-children of song, born under green hedgerows in the leafy lanes and bypaths of literature, - in the genial summer-time".  

From Herder he grasped the idea of a world literature, for which he gave American people the best of European literature in his "Poets and Poetry of Europe", published in 1845. This volume contained specimens in translation of nearly four hundred poets of the European continent. 

Mr. Prescott calls this elegant volume a "delightful bouquet of wild flowers, picked off from old tumbledown ruins and out of the way nooks and bypaths where the foot of the common traveler seldom treads".  

In a letter of 1846, William Cullen Bryant expresses his admiration for this anthology of poems, their beauty and exquisite music, no less than the depth of feeling and creative power with which they set forth passages from the great drama of life. 

The whole is conceived in an elevated spirit and its pages are filled with melodies of fine poetic specimens, which are the author's selection of the best English translations from the

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1. Hyperion, p. 83.
2. Life and Letters by Samuel Longfellow. V. 2, p. 22.
3. Ibid. V. 2, p. 31.
Anglo-Saxon, Icelandic, Dutch, German, Swedish, Danish, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese.

Longfellow plunged himself into an appreciative study of Goethe, whose influence is noticeably reflected in his writings, particularly in his "Voices of the Night". He translated faithfully and musically many of the songs of Wilhelm Müller and Uhland, both of whom were deeply imbued with the spirit of the He folksong. Considered Uhland among the best of living German poets and through him to a new and more genuine conception of his calling as a poet. ¹

From Longfellow's letters and studies, it is quite evident that translation was an early sign of his appropriation of the art and beauty in foreign poetry. Such intercourse with other poets was no less a plain indication of what he liked best in this poetry and of his desire then to endow his own people with a knowledge of these beautiful old songs and legends of the common people. It was this nobler and wider conception of translation that pervaded Longfellow's whole spirit and passion for the old popular poetry of Germany, whose rich stores and treasures he opened up to American readers.

The winter of 1836, spent by Longfellow in Germany, appears to have been the time when most of his translations from

¹. Ibid. V. 2, and Goebel: "Der Kampf um Deutsche Kultur in Amerika, p. 83, ff.
German poetry were made. A number of these were included in Hyperion, largely from the German of Uhland and Wilhelm Müller. Two pretty songs by Müller, "Wohin" and "Hütdu Dich", are rendered by Longfellow in flexible and musical English that all but surpasses the native spirit and freshness of the original verse. Uhland's "Das Schloss am Meere" and "Der Schwarze Ritter" dispute the "palm of superiority" with the other translations. "The Black Night," a striking ballad, loses in the process of translation none of the dominant melancholy note running through the whole poem. "The Castle by the Sea", different though still melancholy, is reproduced in English that is simple, graceful, and pretty, that well preserves the exquisite beauty of the original. All the fluctuating feelings of joy and reverence, in sadness and wonder that find expression in the "Song of the Bell" are felt by Longfellow and are faithfully carried over into the English. But best of all is his translation of "O Tannenbaum", by which he transferred the popularity of this German favorite to America. "Oh, Hemlock Tree" is the delight of the hearts of American school children and is one of the favorite selections found in their songbooks. His translations from the German of Heine and Goethe interest us here only as they are further testimony of his consummate power as a translator.

To all the poetry and ballads he reproduced, Longfellow gave a quality and tone distinctly his own and still left them faithful transcripts of the originals. One of his biographers
writes of him: "To tell over again old tales, to reproduce in forms of delicate fitness the scenes and narratives, which others had invented, - this was his delight for in doing this, he was conscious of his power and he worked with ease".

The publication of his "Ballads and Other Poems" hints at the direction his mind was taking. He writes to Mr. Greene, January 2, 1840, that he had broken ground in a new field, viz., ballads, which was a "virgin soil" there in New England, full of great materials. His European travel and study thus bore other fruit than translations of the songs of the people. The collection of ballads that he gave to American literature included such as "The Skeleton in Armor" and "The Wreck of the Hesperus" besides translations of several German ballads.

But Hyperion, published 1839, shows best how thoroughly Longfellow was imbued with the German spirit and in what direction his enthusiasm led him. Out of the wealth of materials which his study abroad gave him and the impressions crowding upon him after his foreign residence, he created this romance, "an interfusion of lyric and romantic sentiment".

The romantic school may claim unquestioned the romance of "Hyperion". The whole is saturated with romantic sentiment, the language savors strongly of old Gothic forms and even the scenes are laid in the heart of all that is romantic, amid the ruins of the middle ages. The author's illustrations and
comparisons likewise belong to the dim, romantic past. In tenderness and depth of feeling and in the wealth of beautiful imagery, this work may well rank with the best of English romantic fiction.

The North American Review for 1850, in speaking of Hyperion, adds: "The luxuriance of language and the brocaded aspect remind one that nature is limited to no age or country; that art may select from the whole range of nature those objects which suit her purposes, provided she do not transcend the limits of morality on one side nor sink to the region of the common place on the other."

The literary style of the work is splendidly adapted to the description of such thoroughly romantic scenery and succeeds admirably in awakening romantic associations and arousing romantic feelings. "Such picturesque and expressive language is one of the relics of old Saxon," says the North American Review, "which voice the desires of the popular and national heart, which embody the imagery and rude simplicity that envelope the nation's infancy; which recall associations that hark back to departed days and the romantic manners of the Middle Ages."

It is the predominance of this old Saxon element, so suitable to a romance whose scenes are laid in Germany, that makes the style of Hyperion so picturesque. It would be difficult to find anything more picturesque than the author's description of the

1. Vol. 50.
scenery along the Rhine, of the old castle ruins, standing out in living reality and peopled with mysterious forms conjured up from the remote past. Equally suggestive is his use of old romantic tales and legends, old catholic customs and Gothic architecture, reinvested with all its sacred memories.

The literary criticisms in the book, which the author puts in Flemming's mouth, are Longfellow's own, profound, eloquent and sympathetic. The love for German literature gives a German tinge to the whole book, quite in harmony with its general aim and scope.

The story introduces its hero on the Rhine and in the following chapters is described the journey on the banks of this river and some legends of that romantic region. At Heidelberg, Flemming, the hero, meets a young German baron, with whom he passes the winter. Here the author pauses to describe this beautiful old castle of Heidelberg, one of the most magnificent ruins of the middle ages. After a most beautiful portrayal of the setting and surroundings of this old castle, Flemming gives in a very touching manner its effect on him, as he viewed it from his window. The beauty and fascination of this picture are almost beyond comment. The whole scene is striking evidence of the author's passionate love for the old picturesque remains of the Goethic past. The whole passage bespeaks his delight in the old legends, customs, and mystic figures belonging to Germany's past ages, but still clustering about these old landmarks of time.
In addition to such intellectual and profoundly learned conversations as are found in the chapters on "The Lives of Scholars"\textsuperscript{1} and on "Literary Fame",\textsuperscript{2} Flemming and the baron discuss many other questions of literary criticism, which further testify to the author's intimate acquaintance with German poetry and the sympathy and appreciation with which he had studied it.

Flemming and the baron visit Goethe's birthplace, Frankfort, where they continue to revel in conversations over the character and merit of poetry. These discussions impress one as being more sensible and impartial, perhaps, than most of such disputations from "lovers of the German muse".

The beginning chapters in part two unfold in brilliant descriptions the beautiful Swiss scenery. In this background of the most exquisite scenes in nature, is told the simple story of Flemming's love for Mary Ashburton, - an all-consuming, high-wrought passion and unrequited love. The whole scene is delineated with great feeling and invested with a sublime, poetic spirit.

This part of the romance contains a number of valuable criticisms on some minor German poets. These comments reveal the author's intimate knowledge of this part of Germany's literature and are accompanied by musical translations of some of Uhland's most famous ballads and many of the old songs and refrains that live on the lips of the people. Here we find some ancient songs,

\begin{itemize}
  \item 1. Hyperion, p. 48, ff.
  \item 2. Ibid, p. 61, ff.
\end{itemize}
and sweet carols, such as the Rhodian children sang of old in spring to the swallow, as herald of the season or those which the Hungarian boys on the islands of the Danube, sang to the returning stork in spring.

In this section Longfellow dwells upon the treasures of "Des Knaben Wunderhorn", emphasizing his passion for these old ballads with great fervour. There is no end to the allusions and references made to the popular beliefs, tales and songs of the middle ages in connection with the story, literary discussions and illustrations. The most delightful ballad of Goethe's, "The Youth and the Mill Brook", Müller's little song, where the maiden bids the moon good evening, and his "Wohin" seem to Longfellow to suggest quite the same scenery as his hero beheld. These pages, as those of the rest of the volume, are filled with specimens of old popular poetry, legends and national traditions that have sprung up spontaneously in the popular mind.

The scenes of Flemming's journey from Interlachen to Innsbruch with the Englishman, Berkley, in part 3, are vividly sketched and delicately retouched with the beautiful "Song of the Bell". The author writes: The evening sun was setting when I first beheld thee. The sun of life will set ere I forget thee. Surely it was a scene like this that inspired the soul of the Swiss poet in his "Song of the Bell."

1. Ibid. p. 77.
2. Ibid. p. 77
3. Ibid. p. 138.
During Flemming's recovery from illness in Salzburg, he is cheered by edifying discussions, with his friend Berkley, on literary topics and the character of Hoffmann. The fourth part of the book likewise sustains the dreamy, romantic nature of the whole to the end and is conceived in the same poetic and spirit/in the same atmosphere of the remote past.

In thought, content, feeling, setting and illustrations, the whole has been dipped in the dye of romanticism and moulded under the influence of old romantic poetry. The hero, too, is steeped in the same spirit and at all times conceived of as under the spell of this romantic atmosphere. The author makes him still more impressionable and susceptible to his surroundings by conceiving of him as a person of a dreamy, poetic nature, of a nervous temperament and highly sensitive to the beauties of nature. Ruled by his imagination he is deeply impressed by the old folklore, legends and poetry of the long ago. Further, the author sets him in the heart of the old romantic region, echoing with the voices of former ages and still alive with the spirit that bore and believed in the countless old beautiful tales, songs, superstitions and legends belonging to days past but still living and reechoing in the hearts of the people.

Besides, he is a passionate lover of the middle ages, and more responsive to their spell because he comes from a land where the prosaic mind is as yet untouched by the remains of a romantic past. Through travel and study his mind was filled with
the tales and the legends of the Rhine. He saw the poetry, the charm and the beauty in the ruins of the middle ages to the great joy of his heart. All this finds its significance in the fact that Flemming, in many respects, is the reflection of Longfellow's inner self. The author's whole mind and heart and soul were so held under the spell of his passionate fondness for popular poetry that he made a study of it to acquaint his own people with what he had found so beautiful and so rich in thought and spirit.

Thus from beginning to end is this romance a continuous interfusion of narrative and legend, national tradition, superstitious belief and the poetry of far away times. The whole reverberates with the sound of Gothic church bells, the clanking of chains in old towers and dungeons. Gothic architecture, castle ruins, Catholic customs, weird figures and spirits of long-forgotten creatures carry us back to rude old times when these relics were living and real.

Longfellow characterizes his book as a record of the life of one, "who in his feelings and purposes, is a son of Heaven and Earth; who, though obscured by clouds, yet moves on high". Further he says it contains all the various aspirations of a man's soul and shows the passage of morbid mind into a purer and healthier state. The North American Review (V. 50) calls this romance a book for minds of tender sentiments, of an imaginative turn, interested in reveries and delicate perceptions of art and poetry, and keenly alive to the beautiful.
With this book, so full of profound thought, richness of imagery and deep, tender feeling, Longfellow introduced German literature to the American scholarly world. He writes in his Journal at this time that it contained all his cherished thoughts for three years. This romance, because of its sincerity, its wealth of the literature and poetry of a different world, has from the first presented an universal appeal and charm and stands as the revelation of a new world.

Thus it may readily be seen how Longfellow furthered the introduction of Germanic folklore to the American literary public, a work which Talvį had initiated and launched well on its way. Longfellow's contributions to this task revealed a new world, opened up new avenues of thought and new sources of learning to his own people. The popular side of German literature was now beginning to assume a place of some significance in American study, largely due to Longfellow's efforts to bring the rich stores of poetic lore and song to the serious and sympathetic attention of the American intellectual world.
CHAPTER IV.

LASTING IMPRESSIONS IN AMERICA.

At the time when Talvj came to America, practically nothing was known here of the vast treasures of folklore or folksong of the nations of Europe. Almost nothing had been done in this field in the way of investigation. No effort had been made to promote such study or to awaken an interest in such literature. But Talvj came on the scene at the proper moment, well-grounded in her linguistic knowledge and with an unusual keenness of critical insight. Still under the spell of popular poetry, as inspired by Herder and her previous study of the old songs of the people, she gave to the American public the results of her vast research and personal experiences among the primitive races of Europe. This initial effort of Talvj was ably supplemented by the expression which Longfellow, her most immediate successor, gave to his passion for the popular literature of Germany.

Considering the field at this time, the work of American scholars seem to have been in its most primary stages of growth and development. Round these two scholars, the early American interest in ballad poetry seems to concentrate. Only these two, up to 1850, were actively engaged in introducing the folklore and folksong of Germany to their own people. But may this limited, though profoundly significant beginning be rightly called a movement? It certainly cannot, if, by movement, one means an
universal spirit taking hold of the whole people and calling an universal response. In Germany it was so. There it did not end with mere individual efforts of different scholars but became a living conception among the people.

In England, one finds almost the same unrelated interest as in America. There the whole category of the disciples of such literature represent the successive contributions and activity of a century, separated in time often by several decades of years. The wave of interest rose and fell periodically, crested by such names as Addison, Ramsay, Macpherson and Percy.

Not so in Germany. Once the spark was set to the tinder, the flame spread until it fired not only the souls of those giving active expression to their inspiration but also the spirit of the whole people to whom these exponents gave their interest - generating and epoch-making productions. The love of this old poetry cannot be limited to such index figures as Herder, Goethe, Bürger, and the later lovers of the old Germanic past. The spirit of the people walked in the midst of these enthusiasts and marched forward with the procession.

Considered in this light the work in America cannot be said to represent a movement of scientific study and investigation in Talvij's and Longfellow's time. Not until the later 19th century does popular poetry receive such attention. With Professor Child dates the first scientific and scholarly research in ballad poetry in this country. As a pupil of Longfellow, he felt his
professor's love and appreciation for popular literature. From him came much of the inspiration for the work which in his later years became an all-absorbing passion and ruling element in his life. Moreover he had been deeply interested in and acquainted with European literature and European interest in folklore since the eighteenth century. His period of study in Germany greatly increased this interest and may be said to have played a significant part in his later ballad activity. However, his own personal, temperamental interest in the subject was so pronounced that it almost challenges the claim of any influence from antecedent scholarly activities in this line.

He is then the splendid initiator of the first real scientific study of ballads in America. His magnificent collection likewise bears the distinction of being the first scholarly edition of ballad poetry here. Since his recent death, his work is being nobly carried on by his pupils and disciples, Mr. Gummere and Mr. Kittredge. The services of Mr. Newell are likewise not to be forgotten in this connection. There have been founded the Journal of American Folk Lore and various state folklore societies, now actively engaged in the study of negro and southern ballads, the Jesse James cycle and the like. Thus the great field of study in popular poetry is only beginning to be well broken. The religious efforts of such scholars as Professor Child and his devoted followers are presenting a strong appeal to the lovers of ballad poetry and are surely to be the means of
acquainting the American people not only with the folklore and song of other nations but also of unearthing such similar treasures belonging to their own nation. Their diligent and uniring study give great promise of calling forth even more scientific and more scholarly methods of research than their own, for the cause of the oldest, most beautiful and most national part of the literature of any people.
CHAPTER V.

CONCLUSION.

In point of time, the beginning of the folksong movement is the sixteenth century. From a literary and scientific standpoint, it starts with Michel Montaigne. His occupation with the songs of the half-civilized natives of South America led him to believe that popular poetry was in many ways not inferior to the beauty of artistic poetry. This discovery of poets and poetry among the South American Indians was indeed a revelation of a new world.

Just two centuries later, Addison in England first called attention to the old ballads of his own people and to the poetry of the northern Laplanders. His passion for popular poetry gave the initial impetus in England to subsequent critical studies and collections of such poetry.

The appearance of Macpherson’s "Ossian," 1761, made by far the most rapid stride forward, up to this time, in the effort to unearth and appreciate popular poetry and perpetuate its lasting qualities. But ballad poetry really "came to its own" first in 1765 with Percy's "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry". This monumental work was also the instigator and initiator of the first productive interest in popular poetry in Germany, which was now called back to new life and strength by the publication of Herder's "Volkslieder", 1778.
Only a few decades later, "Des Knaben Wunderhorn" (1805-8), came as a great and astounding discovery of untold treasures of song that had for centuries lain dormant and concealed from the literary world.

This movement for the regeneration of popular poetry, finding expression in first one country of Europe then another, was in turn initiated in America by the scholarly efforts of Talvj. Through her, not only the world of German popular poetry but also that of all Europe, was first opened up to the American literary public. Her works on the folksong of the various nations, chiefly, "Charakteristik der Volkslieder" and "History of the Slavic Language" is the first of its kind and as such stands at the head of all subsequent research and study in this field.

A few years later Longfellow gave expression to his passion for the folklore of Germany. Through European study and travel, largely, he had come under the spell of popular poetry. In such productions as "Hyperion" and his translations of German ballads he imparted his love for this part of German literature to his American readers.

Such has been the historical evolution of the folksong movement. Such has been the extent of early American interest in popular poetry. Though this interest found significant expression through only a few American scholars before 1850, their study and literary contributions on the subject have done their part in
keeping alive this interest until the movement should later gain more friends and disciples.
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