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FREYTAG

DIE JOURNALISTEN.

EDITED BY

H. W EVE, M.A.

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Cambridge University Press
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Edited by H. W. Eve
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

PREFACE.

FREYTAG'S play *Die Journalisten*, though written nearly 50 years ago, is still popular. For school reading it is singularly well adapted; the dramatic construction is perfect, the characters well drawn, and the dialogue bright. There is, moreover, not a trace, either in the subject-matter or in the allusions, of that vulgar tendency to harp incessantly on questionable topics which is the bane of the modern drama, and that not in France alone. In the notes I have endeavoured to explain words and constructions that a learner would not easily find for himself in an ordinary dictionary or hunt up in his grammar without help; general grammatical rules and etymology I have introduced only occasionally. I desire to convey my best thanks to my friends Mr J. W. Cartmell and Mr F. de Baudiss for very useful suggestions and for valuable help in revising the proofs, and to the readers of the University Press for their most careful reading.

H. W. EVE.

November, 1900.

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-107-61994-4 - Freytag: Die Journalisten
 Edited by H. W. Eve
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION. LIFE OF FREYTAG—ESTIMATE OF DIE JOURNALISTEN.	
Birth and Education	vii
Professorial Life at Breslau	viii
Germany in 1848	ix
Freytag as Journalist	x
Literary activity from 1848 to 1869	xi
Politics from 1860 to 1870	xiv
Literary work 1870—1895	xv
Die Journalisten.—The Plot	xvi
The Characters	xvii
TEXT	1—128
NOTES	129—180
INDEX TO THE NOTES	181

INTRODUCTION.

LIFE OF FREYTAG—ESTIMATE OF *DIE JOURNALISTEN.*

Birth and Education.

GUSTAV FREYTAG was born in 1816 at Kreuzburg in Silesia, a small town east of Breslau, and close to the Polish frontier. His father was a medical man, and for a long time Burgomaster of the town. His school-days were passed at the Gymnasium of Oels, another Silesian town in the neighbourhood. There he lived in the house of his uncle, a lawyer, who was a considerable scholar and well-read in modern literature, but singularly uncommunicative. The boy was therefore thrown very much on his own resources, he read a good deal, and grew enthusiastic over Scott and Fenimore Cooper. Eventually he reached the head of the school, and remained there, apparently doing excellent work, for more than two years.

In 1835 he entered the University of Breslau. His studies at that time had no definite aim, but he began to take considerable interest in what eventually became his chief pursuit, the study, under Hoffmann von Fallersleben, of German antiquities and of early German literature, a branch of learning then in its infancy. The next year he migrated to Berlin, where he came under the influence of Karl Lachmann, best known to English scholars by his revolutionary Homeric criticism and by his epoch-making edition of Lucretius, but no less distinguished by

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-107-61994-4 - Freytag: Die Journalisten
 Edited by H. W. Eve
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

viii

DIE JOURNALISTEN.

his profound knowledge of medieval German literature. At the same time he made many friends and cultivated his taste for the theatre. The title of his dissertation for the Doctor's degree *De initiis scenicae poeseos apud Germanos* gives a forecast of two of the chief lines of his many-sided activity.

Professorial Life at Breslau.

Within a year of his Doctor's degree, Freytag returned to Breslau as a lecturer (Privatdocent) on German language and literature. There he remained for eight years (1839—1847). The professorial staff of the University were, for the most part, dull and old-fashioned, both in their ideas and in their habits, and he had few intimate friends among them except his old tutor Hoffmann, who was not only a scholar, but a poet and an advanced Liberal. But his time was very pleasantly spent. His lectures included not only the more learned parts of his subject, but expositions of poems of Goethe and Schiller; he published a volume of poems, and wrote his first play, *die Brautfahrt oder Kunz von der Rosen*, which gained a prize at Berlin but was not very successful on the stage. His literary successes and his personal qualities made him very popular in general society. Among his intimate friends were the Countess Dyhyrn, whom he afterwards married, and the head of the great commercial house of Molinari, whose business plays so important a part in his novel *Soll und Haben*. Nor was he without an opportunity of gaining an insight into the life and needs of his humbler countrymen; he took a keen interest in the measures adopted for the relief of the distressed weavers thrown out of work by the introduction of machinery. His connexion with Breslau and professorial work were, however, not destined to be permanent. The comparative failure of his first play led him to the closer study of the conditions of dramatic success. He mixed much in such theatrical society as Breslau afforded, studied the French drama, and spent the winter of 1846 at Leipzig, where, by constant intercourse with actors and managers, he gained a complete insight into the grammar of play-writing. To his last years at Breslau belong the first act

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-107-61994-4 - Freytag: Die Journalisten
 Edited by H. W. Eve
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

ix

of der Gelehrte, an unfinished drama in verse, and *die Valentine*, long considered one of the best specimens of German high comedy, which went the round of the German and some foreign theatres, and was even translated into Norwegian and acted under Ibsen's management. The play turns on the rescue of an aristocratic lady from a life of frivolity by the influence of a masterful *bourgeois* suitor, and thus embodies the idea, destined so often to reappear in the author's works, of a closer approximation of the nobility and the middle classes. It is full of action, and shows the beneficial effect of his study of the French stage, but it belongs to a comparatively immature type which both he and the cultivated public eventually outgrew. George Saalfeld, the hero, has become a household word.

In 1847 Freytag resigned his lectureship, married the Countess Dyhyrn, and settled in Dresden. Here he wrote *Graf Waldemar*, the story of a *blasé* and dissipated, but really noble-minded aristocrat, who is saved from unworthy tastes and associations by his love for a peasant maiden. His life for the next few years is closely mixed up with German politics, about which it may be well to say a few words.

Germany in 1848.

The year 1848 was a year of revolution throughout Europe, and Germany was no exception to the rule. Indeed everything was ripe for a crisis. The settlement of 1815, made at the Congress of Vienna, had consolidated the various independent states of Germany into the *Bund* or confederation, with a Diet meeting at the free town of Frankfort. It had practically done nothing to secure constitutional government. The real head of the confederation was Austria. This arrangement, which gave the hegemony of Germany to a Catholic and reactionary power, encumbered with vast territories that were not German at all, was acceptable enough to the sovereigns, but proved more and more distasteful to the people, and especially to the educated classes. It was indeed a lame and impotent conclusion to the splendid outburst of patriotism that had shaken off the yoke of Napoleon. In Prussia especially there was much discontent.

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-107-61994-4 - Freytag: Die Journalisten
 Edited by H. W. Eve
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

x

DIE JOURNALISTEN.

Frederick William III, the hero of the national uprising, had died in 1840; his successor Frederick William IV was becoming more and more unpopular. Immediately after the French Revolution of February, which displaced Louis Philippe, riots broke out in Berlin, Vienna and other German capitals. The general upheaval gave an opportunity to the more liberal-minded statesmen of Germany. An assembly, known as the Frankfort Parliament, was convened, which after long deliberations decided to offer the Imperial crown of Germany, excluding Austria, to the king of Prussia. Frederick William refused the offer, and things returned to the *status quo*. It was only after the Franco-German war that the same offer was made to his brother and successor under very different conditions and was accepted. Meanwhile something was gained, as constitutions of a somewhat more liberal character were granted in various states. The Prussian constitution of 1850 included the system of indirect election, which plays an important part in *die Journalisten*.

Freytag as Journalist.

The events of 1848 called Freytag from his literary pursuits to politics. As a resident in Dresden he had comparatively little scope for political activity; he refused an offer from a Bohemian constituency to become their representative in the Frankfort Parliament, and confined himself at first to the management of a workmen's club in the town. He soon found further employment in a direction for which he was admirably qualified. A Liberal newspaper, *die Grenzboten*, was for sale; he joined his friend Julian Schmidt in purchasing it, with the firm resolution to make it an organ of sound and temperate Liberalism. It steadily advocated a united Germany under the leadership of Prussia, and constitutional government based on the due participation of the middle classes. No extreme views were advocated, but compromise between conflicting interests and a good understanding between the government and the governed were the watchwords of the journal. Freytag, who removed to Leipzig on assuming the direction of the paper,

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-107-61994-4 - Freytag: Die Journalisten
 Edited by H. W. Eve
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

xi

remained one of the acting editors till 1861 and continued in close connection with it till 1870. When the intense political strain of 1848 and the following years was somewhat relaxed, the literary side of the paper assumed more importance. A higher style of criticism and occasional articles of considerable merit raised it to a high position in the literary as well as in the political world; some of Freytag's own *Bilder aus der deutschen Vergangenheit* appeared in it as feuilletons. It can claim, too, the distinction of having been one of the first journals to recognize the merits of Richard Wagner, and to advocate the excavations at Olympia. In literature it strongly opposed the romantic school, whose love of medievalism was closely associated with reactionary principles. On the other hand it showed warm appreciation of the English novelists, especially of Dickens, as well as of Fritz Reuter, and later of Turgenieff. In a word the journal was during some of the darkest years of modern German history the champion of constitutional progress in politics and of sane development in literature.

Literary activity from 1848 to 1869.

Freytag had not been long engaged in journalism when his health required him to spend part of the year in the country. He bought for his summer quarters an old-fashioned house, once a favourite resort of Karl August and Goethe, at Siebleben, near Gotha. His residence there brought him into pleasant contact with the reigning duke, Ernst II of Saxe Coburg and Gotha, elder brother of the Prince Consort and the most liberal German sovereign of his epoch. The advent of quieter times left him leisure for general literary work, but even as early as 1852 he wrote *die Journalisten*, which was represented for the first time at Breslau, and subsequently at many other theatres. It is by far the best of his comedies. He was still young enough to enjoy all the humours of journalism, and his close association with the grave problems of three eventful years had left him less anxious to seek sensational incidents. But he never returned to comedy. In his *Erinnerungen* he gives us the reason. "I had become,"

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-107-61994-4 - Freytag: Die Journalisten
 Edited by H. W. Eve
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

he says, "a different man; it was not possible for me to bring what I wanted to say within the compass of a single evening's entertainment, or express it adequately by terse dialogue and the transient effects of the stage. I had been too intimately mixed up in the great drama of history, I had realized too completely what the great tide of human life meant, to acquiesce any longer in such limitations." His great object was to idealize for his countrymen the steady, sober industry of the middle classes, to which his statesmanlike intellect looked for the regeneration of Germany. For that purpose the novel, in which it is possible to trace the slow growth of character, seemed to him a better vehicle than the drama, which deals, so to speak, with character ready made. *Soll und Haben*, his first novel, appeared in 1855. It tells the history of three families, representing respectively aristocratic *laissez-faire* and inefficiency, well-regulated commercial enterprise and industry, and unscrupulous greed of gain. The *mise en scène* and many of the characters are due to reminiscences of Breslau and the Polish frontier. The motto, taken from the writings of his colleague Julian Schmidt, "Der Roman soll das deutsche Volk da suchen, wo es in seiner Tüchtigkeit zu finden ist, nämlich bei seiner Arbeit," gives the keynote of the story. Moreover he was keenly alive to the practical, self-controlled character of all good work, and just as Goethe insisted on "entbehren sollst du, sollst entbehren," so Freytag tells us in his *Erinnerungen* that the moral he intended to be drawn was that we must not allow the ideas and the wishes called up by our imagination to dominate our lives too completely. He next proceeded to collect and work up the sketches of old German life which had appeared in *die Grenzboten* into two volumes, entitled *Bilder aus der deutschen Vergangenheit*, published in 1859. The book, which was the natural outcome of his early studies, is arranged in a most interesting way. It is not a systematic treatise on what is called in German Kulturgeschichte, written in 'Dryasdust' fashion. Far from confining himself to the ordinary materials of history, he ransacked, as Macaulay did in writing his history of England, forgotten pamphlets, diaries and the like, many of

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-107-61994-4 - Freytag: Die Journalisten
 Edited by H. W. Eve
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

xiii

them existing only in manuscript, and by means of judicious extracts, strung together by a thread of lucid narrative, he made all sorts and conditions of men tell their own story. Details of dress, manners and customs, and so on are judiciously brought in, and we have thus life-like pictures of all classes of society from the earliest times, from kings and nobles down to petty burghers and wandering students of theology. The first two volumes carried the history to the close of the Reformation period; three other volumes which appeared later continued it to modern times. In 1859 Freytag also published a tragedy in verse, *die Fabier*, taken from Roman history, and dealing with the events leading to the annihilation of the great house at the Cremera. Here, as in so many of his works, the love of a plebeian for a patrician lady plays an important part. The drama was partly inspired by his friendship for Mommsen, and his study of his works, partly by a patriotic desire to raise the general standard of play-writing and play-acting. It gained little more than a *succès d'estime*, and the author, always quick to recognize and account for his own shortcomings, set to work to think out more elaborately the conditions of dramatic success. The result was the treatise entitled *die Technik des Dramas* (1863), which is recognized as a standard work on the subject. No one was better qualified to write such a treatise; not only had he his own studies and experience to draw upon, but he had, ever since the publication of *Graf Waldemar* in *die Grenzboten*, been constantly appealed to by young authors for a judgment on their plays, appeals to which he responded with his usual good nature and conscientiousness. One more novel of modern life, *die verlorene Handschrift*, appeared in 1864. In it his reminiscences of professorial and court life are happily combined with the half comic experiences of a middle-class Romeo and Juliet. But before these last works a great crisis had occurred in German history, and it will be necessary to retrace our steps a little.

The last years of Frederick William IV were a period of depression in Germany; the hopes of 1848 had been bitterly disappointed and the party of German unity and constitutional progress was nearly broken up. The Italian war of 1859 revived the spirits of those who still clung to those hopes, and the National Union (Nationalverein), a society of Liberals of all shades from all parts of Germany, was formed under the leadership of Rudolf von Bennigsen. Its headquarters were at Coburg, in the dominions of Duke Ernst. Freytag took from the first a keen interest in its proceedings. Not only did he see in it a powerful machinery for realizing the aspirations of the Frankfort Parliament, but he felt that it was an excellent school of temperate statesmanship for the more ardent spirits of the party. In 1861 William I, who had for some time been regent, succeeded his brother, and in 1862 Bismarck became his prime minister. The Danish war of 1864, in which Austria and Prussia acted together, proved to be the first step towards the revival of Germany so long waited for, but no advance was as yet made towards constitutional government. The military activity of the early sixties led Freytag, who had served for a short time as a reservist in his youth, to take up energetically the study of military science both in books and in the society of cultivated officers, a study which he afterwards had an opportunity of utilizing. Events now moved rapidly. The 'Seven Weeks' War' of 1866 and the consequent exclusion of Austria from German politics opened the way for the formation of the North German Confederation. A diet or parliament was convoked to settle its constitution, and Freytag was elected for Erfurt in the National Liberal interest. Parliamentary life was not to his taste, and he retired at the end of the first session. His last appearance in public life was in the great war of 1870, when he was invited by the Crown Prince, afterwards the Emperor Frederick, to accompany his headquarters as war correspondent. Many letters from him appeared in *die Grenzboten* and in a new journal called *Im neuen Reich*. One of these

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-107-61994-4 - Freytag: Die Journalisten
 Edited by H. W. Eve
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

xv

excited for a time much feeling against him. He had noticed a tendency to pillage on the part of some of the troops, in spite of strict prohibitions on the part of the authorities. He concluded one of his letters with an earnest appeal to officers and men to return from the war with clean hands and with unsullied consciences. When the siege of Paris was about to begin, he begged to be released from his duties, and returned to his quiet home at Siebleben.

Literary work 1870—1895.

Just before joining the Crown Prince's staff he published a life of his friend Karl Mathy, a champion of Liberal principles in Baden from 1830 onwards, a member of the Frankfurt Parliament, and finally a minister of state in his native Grand Duchy, who died two or three years before his hopes for German unity were fully realized. In the same year 1870 Freytag's long connection with *die Grenzboten* came to an end. The religious prejudices of the chief proprietor led to the breach. A new journal *Im neuen Reich* was founded by Hirzel, Freytag's publisher, to which he and other members of the staff of *die Grenzboten* contributed. It was in this journal that his later letters from headquarters appeared. But the great work of his later years was *die Ahnen*, a series of eight short novels illustrating German life and history. The idea occurred to him as he watched the advance of the German armies into France. His thoughts, he tells us, travelled back to the days when the Franks and Alemanni crossed the Rhine on their rafts and wooden shields, and led him to work out in a new form his favourite theme, the persistence of German character and the continuity of German history. Thus grew up a series of stories in which the exhibition of the life of bygone days goes hand in hand with illustrations of the doctrine of heredity, and that in a very different spirit to Horace's

Aetas parentum, pejor avis, tulit
 Nos nequiores, mox daturos
 Progeniem vitiosiore.

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-107-61994-4 - Freytag: Die Journalisten
 Edited by H. W. Eve
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

xvi

DIE JOURNALISTEN.

The leading characters of each story are the lineal descendants of one or other of the personages in the preceding ones, and thus the stories form, as it were, extracts from the history of two or three families from the Vandal king Ingo at his Thuringian castle in the 4th century down to the journalist König in the 19th. The last volume of *die Ahnen* appeared in 1880. In 1887 Freytag was persuaded to put down his reminiscences in a volume entitled *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben*, which throws much light on the filiation of his literary works. During his last years he lived a very retired life. Above all, as one of his biographers says, "er liess sich von keinem Ecker Männchen oder Ecker Weibchen katechisieren," thus offering a striking contrast to Goethe. He died in 1895.

Die Journalisten.—The Plot.

The play, as mentioned above, was written at a time when Freytag's own energies were completely absorbed in politics and journalism. He had fully realized what a power the press had become in modern society, and he was still in the thick of a party conflict with a full conviction that the right was on his side. But no ordinary party journalist could have written it, nor perhaps could Freytag have written it himself, when the charm of comparative novelty and the 'delight of battle' had somewhat abated. It needed too his intimate knowledge of all classes of society, his unflinching sense of humour, and what goes with it, his power of appreciating the point of view of an honest opponent, to give a living interest to the play. The plot is simple. Professor Oldendorf, coeditor of the *Union*, a Liberal journal, and a candidate for the representation of the town in which he lives, is in love with Ida, the daughter of a retired Colonel of opposite politics, who, in spite of his personal liking for the Professor, is annoyed by the tone of his journal, and still more by his aspirations to parliamentary honours. At the same time Oldendorf's colleague, Konrad Bolz, the moving spirit of the drama, cherishes a boyish passion for his old playfellow, Adelheid Runeck, the heiress of the squire of the village where

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-107-61994-4 - Freytag: Die Journalisten
 Edited by H. W. Eve
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

xvii

he had been brought up, but which he had been forced to quit early in life through the influence of her father, who was determined to separate them. A rival aspirant to the hand of Adelheid, named Senden, a landowner whose property adjoins hers, and proprietor of the Conservative newspaper the *Coriolanus*, contrives, partly from political and partly from personal motives, to induce the Colonel to write for his journal, and eventually to come forward as Oldendorf's opponent in the election. Not content with this, he and his editor Blumenberg, who is the brains of the combination, are engaged in a darker intrigue to buy up the *Union*. The contest is decided in Oldendorf's favour, thanks to the electioneering skill of Bolz, who captures the most influential of the doubtful voters under the very eyes of his opponents, but it leaves the Professor's chance of winning Ida's hand almost desperate. Adelheid now comes in as the *deus ex machina*; she defeats the purchase scheme, convinces the Colonel of the bad faith of his political allies, and gives Bolz the opportunity he has long desired, but failed to make for himself, of completing his happiness and her own.

The Characters.

Oldendorf, the nominal hero of the play, is a scholar and a gentleman, a man of sound judgment and high principle, with just a dash of the unpractical character of the professor turned politician which was conspicuous in the Germany of that time, and which came out in a marked way in the Frankfort Parliament. His part in the working out of the drama, though he bears himself with dignity and good sense in all his difficulties, is like that of Waverley in Sir Walter Scott's novel, passive rather than active. Still more so is this the case with Ida, who leans entirely on her friend Adelheid.

Bolz is one of the best-drawn and most popular characters on the German stage. Like several of Freytag's heroes, he is a man of infinite resource, who 'has a way with him,' and is capable of carrying his point in face of any opposition. He has, however, an advantage over others of his type, such as George

Saalfeld, inasmuch as he is fighting for a cause and not for his own hand. With this resourcefulness on behalf of his cause is associated a certain timidity and helplessness when his own interests are involved, so that he appeals to our sympathy more than masterful heroes generally do. He would gladly ask Adelheid to be his wife, but cannot summon up courage to do so till it is absolutely forced upon him. He is a most loyal friend, genial and hearty with his subordinates. In company he seems to have an inexhaustible fund of good spirits, and to be always talking at least half in jest; it is only by scattered hints that we gather how much deep feeling underlies his light treatment of every subject. His habit of laughing at himself from time to time (*Selbstironie*) should also be noticed.

Adelheid Runeck has an even lighter touch than her lover; she has the same power of managing and carrying her point; her delicate irony makes her a match for Oldendorf and the Colonel, and even for Bolz. Her wit too, like Bolz's, does not always spare herself. In quickness of decision and resourcefulness she is not unworthy to be classed with Shakespeare's Portia.

The Colonel is an excellent specimen of an amiable type of retired officer; he is devotedly attached to the existing order of things, a leader in all good works in the town where he lives, and quite without what is vulgarly called 'side,' but withal somewhat irascible, and at the same time easily imposed upon. His sense of honour is most delicate, and he endears himself to us by his readiness to question the justice of hasty steps prompted by his impulsive nature, a readiness which, in the hands of his good genius Adelheid, eventually leads to a happy solution of the difficulties of the situation. He is emphatically a man 'whose heart is in the right place.'

Of the minor personages, Schmock, the penny-a-liner of the *Coriolanus*, is the most telling on the stage. His sensibility to kindness and his desire to leave the lower ranks of journalism for a quiet and respectable business relieve the comic side of his character, and set him in a favourable light as compared with the vulgar intriguers with whom he is associated. Senden is a *Junker* who neglects his estates to dabble in politics. He is

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-61994-4 - Freytag: Die Journalisten
Edited by H. W. Eve
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

xix

neither stupid nor ill-bred, but he is easily led by the subtle Blumenberg, and his good manners are not backed up by the loftiness of purpose that characterizes Oldendorf, or the depth of conviction that commands our respect in the Colonel. Blumenberg is the villain of the piece; he is simply an unprincipled intriguer, whose cringing attitude towards his betters is accompanied by harshness to his subordinates, a harshness which eventually leads to the defeat of his schemes. The Piepenbrink family and their friends contribute much of the comic element of the play; they are a typical group of 'Philistines,' good-humouredly drawn, with kind hearts, limited views, and a good deal of surly independence, but easily led by any one who knows how to handle them judiciously. Lastly Korb, Adelheid's steward and Bolz's old friend, possesses both loyalty and humour. Both his conversation and his asides contribute, like the utterances of the Chorus in a Greek play, to form our conception of the principal characters.