

HEINRICH VON KLEIST

(1777-1811)

It would be paradoxical but perhaps not altogether false to call Heinrich von Kleist the archetypal German writer. To those of us expecting German abstraction and vagueness, he writes German with a clarity and precision which makes it seem a language within the German language, if not a foreign tongue. But so do Novalis, Brentano, Stifter, von Hofmannsthal, Benn and Kafka. In his writing Kleist combines discipline and intellectual toughness with tenderness and distress bordering on neurasthenia. His life parallels lives of other German writers; it is torn between a military tradition, a lost childhood, hopeless-seeming loves, and mysterious neurasthenic illness. His education was divided between the Prussian guard at Potsdam and the philosophy course at Frankfurt.

Earlier critics thought of Kleist as a classicist, but today we place him among the German romantics—Büchner, Hölderlin, Brentano, Novalis, the German literature which represents the suppressed or overcome side of Goethe.

Kleist is most famous as a playwright, his masterpiece being the *Prince of Homburg* which paints the black-and-white of the young hero and winner of victories for the Prussian army, who is also a wanderer in the dark night of his own soul. But his stories, of which "The Earthquake in Chile" is an outstanding example, also show his strange and penetrating vision, contained within an extraordinary discipline of form and language.

The Earthquake in Chile

In Santiago, the capital of the kingdom of Chile, at the moment of the great earthquake of the year 1647 in which many thousands lost their lives, a young Spaniard called Jeronimo Rugera, who had been accused of a crime, was standing beneath one of the pilasters of his prison cell and was about to hang himself. A year or so previously Don Henrico Asteron, one of the richest noblemen of the city, had expelled him from his house where he had been employed as a tutor, because he had been intimate with Donna Josepha, his employer's only daughter. After an explicit warning, a secret appointment, revealed to the old man by his proud son whose malice made him watchful, aroused his indignation to such an extent that he placed her in the Carmelite convent of Our Lady of the Mountain. A happy chance had enabled Jeronimo to resume the liaison in this very place; and on a silent night he had made the convent garden the scene of his complete happiness.

It was the feast of Corpus Christi and the solemn procession of nuns, followed by the novices, was just beginning when the unfortunate Josepha, now in the pangs of childbirth, collapsed on the Cathedral steps amidst the pealing of bells. This occurrence had considerable repercussions. Without consideration for her condition, the young sinner was at once taken to prison; and she had hardly entered her confinement when, at the bishop's command, a most rigorous trial was opened.

The scandal was discussed with such bitterness in the city, and the whole convent in which it had taken place was at-

tacked by so many sharp tongues that neither the appeal of the Asteron family, nor even the wish of the abbess, who had taken a liking to the young girl on account of her otherwise irreproachable conduct, could soften the severity with which she was threatened by monastic law. All that could be done—and this to the great resentment of the matrons and virgins of Santiago—was to induce the Viceroy to commute the sentence of death by burning into one of decapitation. Windows were hired out in the street through which the culprit was due to pass to her execution, the roofs of houses were pulled down, and the pious daughters of the city invited their girl friends to attend the spectacle offered to divine vengeance at their sisterly sides.

Jeronimo, who meanwhile had also been put in prison, almost lost consciousness when informed of this monstrous turn of events. In vain he pondered how he might rescue her; everywhere, though borne on the pinions of reckless thought, he ran into bolts and walls, and an attempt to file through the prison bars only ended in discovery and even closer confinement. He fell on his knees in front of an image of the Holy Mother of God, who alone could offer salvation now, and prayed to her with boundless fervor. Yet the fearful day appeared and with it the conviction of the utter hopelessness of his position. The bells, which accompanied Josepha's passage to the place of execution with their ringing, could be heard clearly in the cell, and despair seized his soul. Life began to be odious to him and he resolved to kill himself with a rope that had been left by chance in his cell.

At this moment, as was already mentioned, he was standing beneath a pilaster fastening the rope, which was to take him out of the clutches of this wretched world, to an iron bracket attached to the cornice, when suddenly the greater part of the city caved in with a crack, as if the firmament itself had collapsed, and buried all the living under its rubble. Jeronimo Rugera was stiff with horror and, as if deprived of consciousness, he now clung to the pilaster on

which he had intended to die to keep himself from falling. The ground swayed under his feet. The prison walls cracked, and the whole building leaned as if it were about to crash down into the street. Only the fall of the house opposite prevented total collapse of the prison by partly supporting it.

Trembling, his hair on end, his knees threatening to give way, Jeronimo slipped down the steeply inclined floor toward the opening made in the prison's front by the collision of the two buildings. He was scarcely outside when a second tremor completely demolished the buildings still remaining on the shaken street. Without thinking how he might save himself from the general doom, he hurried on over debris and beams to the nearest city gate, while death launched attacks against him from all directions. Here another house caved in and, hurling rubble about, drove him into a side street. There the flame, flashing in clouds of smoke, curled out of every gable and drove him, terrified, into another street. Here, the Mapocho River, lifted out of its banks, rolled toward him with a roar and swept him into a third. Here lay a heap of corpses; there a voice still groaned under the debris; here people shouted on burning roof-tops; there men and animals struggled with the waves; here a brave rescuer endeavored to help; there stood another man pale as death, and silently extended his trembling hands to heaven.

When Jeronimo had reached the gate and climbed a hill beyond it, he fainted. He had lain there, completely unconscious, for a quarter of an hour or so when he recovered and half raised himself up, his back turned to the city. He touched his forehead and chest, not knowing what to make of his situation, and an unspeakable feeling of bliss came over him when the west wind from the sea fanned his returning life and his eyes wandered in all directions over the fertile environs of Santiago. Only the crowds of bewildered people, now visible everywhere, oppressed him; he could not understand what had brought them and him to this

place, and only when he turned round and saw the city razed behind him did he remember the most horrible moment of his life. He bowed so low that his forehead touched the ground as he thanked God for his escape and, just as if the impression of his one horrible experience had removed all traces of the earlier ones, he wept with joy at the thought that life and all its various delights had not been taken from him.

But a ring on his finger recalled Josepha and, together with her, his prison, the bells he had heard there and the moments which preceded the collapse of the building. Deep sorrow filled him again; he began to regret his prayer and thought that it was a terrible being who ruled above the clouds. He joined the people occupied with the salvaging of their property, who poured out of the gates. Not without timidity, he ventured to ask them about Asteron's daughter and whether the execution had taken place; but no one gave him detailed information. A woman who carried an incredible load of household goods on her back, bent almost to the ground, with two small children clinging to her waist, said in passing, as though she herself had witnessed it, that Josepha had been beheaded. Jeronimo turned back; and since, when he calculated the time, he himself could not doubt the execution of the sentence, he sat down in a deserted wood and abandoned himself entirely to his grief.

He wished that the destructive violence of nature might overwhelm him once more. He could not grasp why he had escaped that death which his afflicted soul desired, at the very moment when it had offered him refuge on all sides. He firmly resolved not to hesitate if even now the oaks were uprooted and their crests came crashing down upon him.

Later, when he had wept long enough, and hope had returned in the midst of his tears, he got up and searched the fields. He visited every hill-top on which people were assembled. He went to meet those who fled on every road along which they swept. Wherever a woman's dress flapped in the wind, his trembling legs carried him; but

none covered the beloved daughter of Asteron. The sun was going down, and with it his hope, when he stepped on to the edge of a rock and the view into a wide valley opened out to him. Few people were to be seen. Not sure what he should do next, he let his eyes stray over the isolated groups and was about to turn away when suddenly he observed a young woman near the stream which irrigates the valley; she was washing a child. His heart leapt at the sight. Filled with presentiments, he jumped down over the rocks, calling out, "Most holy Mother of God!" and recognized Josepha when, shyly, she looked round at his noise. How blissfully they embraced, these wretches saved by a heavenly miracle!

Josepha's fatal procession had taken her quite close to the place of execution, when the whole assembly was violently scattered by the crashing buildings. Her first fearful footsteps impelled her toward the nearest gate; but she soon regained control of her senses and turned back to the convent, where she had left her helpless little son. She found the whole convent already in flames and the abbess, who had promised to take care of the infant during those minutes which were to be Josepha's last, was at the entrance, crying out for help to save him. Fearlessly, Josepha rushed into the smoke which gushed out at her, into the collapsing building and, just as if all the angels of heaven were protecting her, appeared again at the portal with the child. She was about to embrace the abbess, whose clasped hands were raised above her head when this lady was struck and killed by a falling gable, together with nearly all her nuns. Josepha retreated trembling at this sight; she hastily closed the abbess's eyes and fled, utterly terrified, to deliver the precious child whom heaven had restored to her from the present danger. She had taken only a few paces when she ran into the Archbishop's crushed body which had just been pulled out of the debris of the Cathedral. The Viceroy's Palace had collapsed, the law courts in which sentence had been passed on her were in flames and in the place where her father's house had stood there was a lake which emitted

reddish vapors. Josepha summoned all her strength to sustain her. She hardened herself against all this wretchedness, bravely walked on from street to street with her booty and was already near the gate when she saw the nearly demolished prison in which Jeronimo had languished. The sight of this made her reel and she would have fallen down in a swoon in some corner, had not the collapse of a building weakened by the tremors driven her on again and strengthened her resistance. She kissed the child, wiped the tears out of her eyes and, no longer aware of the surrounding horrors, reached the gate.

When she found herself in the open country, she soon gathered that not everyone who had been inside a demolished building had necessarily been crushed beneath it. At the next cross roads she paused and waited to see whether perhaps another, dearest to her after little Philip, would appear. Since he did not come, and the pushing mob grew in size, she went on, turned back again, waited again and, shedding many tears, crept into a dark, pine-shaded valley to pray for his soul, since she believed him to be dead. But here in the valley she found her lover, and such joy that it might have been Eden.

In a voice filled with emotion, she told all this to Jeronimo and when she had finished, gave him the boy to kiss. Jeronimo took him, fondled him with a father's unspeakable joy, and when his stranger's face made the infant cry, caressed him till he was silent.

Meanwhile the loveliest of nights had descended on them, full of marvelously gentle fragrance, silvery and still as only a poet might dream of it. Everywhere along the banks of the stream people had sat down in the glittering moonlight and were preparing soft beds of moss and foliage to rest upon after the terrors of that day. And since the poor creatures were still lamenting, one the loss of his house, another that of his wife and child, and a third of everything, Jeronimo and Josepha crept away to a denser thicket so that the secret exultation of their souls would not give

offense to anyone. They found a splendid pomegranate tree with outspread branches full of scented fruit, and the nightingale piped his voluptuous song on the tree's crest. Here Jeronimo seated himself, leaning against its trunk; Josepha on his lap and Philip on hers, they sat and rested.

The tree's shadow passed over them with its scattered lights and the moon was already fading as the dawn grew red before they went to sleep. For they had endless matter for gossip, about the convent garden and the prisons, and what they had suffered for the other's sake, and they were deeply moved at the thought of how much misery had to be brought into the world so that they might be happy! They planned to go to Concepción as soon as the tremors had ceased, for an intimate friend of Josepha's, from whom they hoped to obtain a small loan, lived there. With this sum they would embark for Spain, where Jeronimo's relatives on his mother's side were living, there to conclude their happy lives. Thereupon, amidst many kisses, they went to sleep.

When they awoke the sun was high in the sky, and they found several families busily preparing a small breakfast at the fire. Jeronimo was just wondering how to obtain food for his own, when a well-dressed young man with a child in his arms approached Josepha and asked her modestly whether she would feed at her breast this poor little wretch whose mother lay injured under those trees. Josepha was a little confused when she recognized him to be an acquaintance; but since, misinterpreting her uneasiness, he continued, "It will only be for a few minutes, Donna Josepha, and this child has not been fed since that hour which made us all unhappy," she said, "The reason for my silence—was a different one, Don Fernando; in these terrible times no one refuses to let others share whatever he may possess." She handed her own child to the father, took the little stranger and gave suck to him.

Don Fernando was very grateful for this kindness and

asked her to come with him to his own party who were preparing breakfast. Josepha answered that she would accept the offer with pleasure. Since Jeronimo made no objection, she followed him to his family, where she was received in the most tender and affectionate manner by Don Fernando's two sisters-in-law whom she knew to be very worthy young ladies. Donna Elvira, Don Fernando's wife, who was lying down with serious injuries to her feet, drew Josepha down toward her in a most friendly way when she saw her own sickly boy at her breast. Don Pedro too, his father-in-law, who was wounded in the shoulder, nodded to her affably.

In the minds of Jeronimo and Josepha strange thoughts began to stir. They found themselves treated with so much candor and kindness, that they did not know what to think of their past. The scaffold, the prison and the bells—had they only dreamed of these? It seemed as if the minds of these people, after the terrible blow which had shaken them to their foundations, were ready for reconciliation. Their memories could not penetrate beyond it. Only Donna Elizabeth, who had been invited by a friend to yesterday's performance, but had refused the invitation, sometimes directed a dreamy and lingering look at Josepha; but new reports of some gruesome misfortune soon recalled her to the present.

They heard how, immediately after the first main tremor, the city was full of women who were delivered in the sight of all the men; how the monks had run about with crucifixes in their hands, shouting that the end of the world had come; how a guard, who at the Viceroy's order had demanded that a church be cleared of people, had received the reply that there was no longer a Viceroy of Chile! How, at the most frightful moments, the Viceroy had been obliged to erect gallows to end the outbreak of thieving, and an innocent man who was leaving a burning house by the back door had been seized by the owner in excessive haste and immediately strung up.

Donna Elvira, with whose injuries Josepha was much occupied, had chosen the moment when these stories were

being bandied in the most lively fashion to ask Josepha how she had fared on this most fearful day. And when Josepha told her some of the main features of her story with terror in her voice, she had the supreme satisfaction of seeing tears in this lady's eyes. Donna Elvira grasped her hand, pressed it and intimated that she should be silent. Josepha felt as if she were among the blessed. A feeling which she could not repress gave to the preceding day, however much misery it had brought into the world, the appearance of a blessing such as heaven had never yet bestowed on her. And indeed, in the midst of this catastrophe in which all the earthly possessions of men had perished and the whole of nature was threatened with burial, the human spirit seemed to unfold like a lovely flower. In the fields, as far as the eye could reach, men and women of all classes could be seen lying about together, princes and beggars, noble matrons and peasant women, government officials and day laborers, friars and nuns, pitying one another, helping one another, gladly giving away anything they had saved for the preservation of life, as if the general calamity had welded all those who had escaped it into one family. Instead of the meaningless conversations, for which at other times the world of tea tables had provided the subject matter, they now discussed examples of tremendous deeds: men who formerly had received little attention from society had shown a Roman greatness of character. There were innumerable instances of fearlessness, of joyful contempt for danger, of self-denial and divine self-sacrifice, even of life itself as though it were the most trivial of possessions and could be replaced without difficulty. Indeed, since there was no one who on that day had not experienced some stirring incident or had not himself performed some generous action, the pain in every human heart was mingled with so much sweetness and delight that, she thought, it was difficult to say whether the sum of general well-being had not increased on the one hand by as much as it had lost on the other.

Jeronimo took Josepha's arm after they had silently exhausted themselves in making these observations, and inexpressibly at peace, he walked with her under the shady leaves of the pomegranate trees. He told her that in view of the general state of mind and the total upheaval of the social order, he was giving up his intention of embarking for Europe; that, should the Viceroy still be alive, he would risk a personal appeal to him. The Viceroy had always been favorably disposed toward his cause. He hoped (at this moment he kissed her) to remain with her in Chile.

Josepha replied that similar thoughts had occurred to her; that she too did not doubt her father's readiness to forgive her, if he was still alive; but that she advised him to go to Concepción and to address a written appeal to the Viceroy, rather than throw himself at his feet, since in any case they would then be near the harbor and at best, if their business achieved the desired results, could easily return to Santiago. After brief consideration, Jeronimo expressed his approval of this prudent precaution, walked on a little through avenues of trees, anticipating the happy moments of their future, and returned with her to the company.

Meanwhile the afternoon had come. Since the tremors were now less violent, the minds of the swarming fugitives had at last been somewhat calmed, when it was reported that in the Dominican Church, the only one which the earthquake had spared, a solemn mass would be read by none other than the prior of the monastery with the purpose of imploring heaven to prevent further misfortunes. Already everywhere the groups were breaking up and people were streaming toward the city. In Don Fernando's party someone raised the question whether they too should not participate in this solemnity and join the general rush? Donna Elizabeth, with some embarrassment, recalled the mischief which had been done in the church only yesterday, that such services of thanksgiving would certainly be re-

peated and that then, with the danger less fresh in their minds, they would be able to respond more gladly and more easily to the mood of thankfulness. Josepha, getting up at once, remarked with some enthusiasm that she had never felt a stronger urge to lay her face in the dust before her Maker than at this very time, when His incomprehensible and sublime power was so clearly revealed. Donna Elvira vigorously seconded Josepha's opinion. She insisted that they should hear the mass and called upon Don Fernando to lead the party, whereupon all of them, even Donna Elizabeth, rose from their seats. However, the latter was seen to hesitate. Her breast was working violently as she made her little preparations for departure. To the question, what was wrong with her, she replied that she could not tell what unhappy presentiment oppressed her. Donna Elvira thereupon calmed her and suggested that she remain behind with her and with her sick father.

Josepha said, "In that case, Donna Elizabeth, you will perhaps relieve me of this little darling who, as you see, has again found his way to me."

"Gladly," Donna Elizabeth replied, and reached out for him; but when he cried piteously at this injustice and would not consent to it on any terms, Josepha said with a smile that she would keep him, and kissed him till he was silent.

Then Don Fernando, who was pleased with her dignified and graceful bearing, offered her his arm. Jeronimo, who was carrying little Philip, escorted Donna Constanza. The remaining members who had joined the party followed behind, and in this order they proceeded to the city.

They had scarcely walked fifty paces when they heard Donna Elizabeth, who meanwhile had talked excitedly and secretly with Donna Elvira, shouting, "Don Fernando!" and saw her running after them as if troubled in some way. Don Fernando stopped and turned round, waited for her without releasing Josepha and, when she remained standing some distance away, as if waiting for him to meet her, asked her what she wanted. Donna Elizabeth approached him,

though, it seemed, with reluctance, and whispered some words in his ear in such a way that Josepha could not hear them.

"Well," Don Fernando asked, "and what harm can come of that?"

Donna Elizabeth continued to hiss into his ear, her face distorted with anxiety; Don Fernando's flushed with irritation. He replied, "That's enough!", asked Donna Elizabeth to calm herself, and proceeded with his lady.

When they arrived in the Dominican Church, the organ's musical splendor met them, and an immeasurable crowd surged inside the church. The throng extended far beyond the portal into the square outside and on the walls, high up on the picture frames, boys were clinging, their caps in their hands, and an expectant look on their faces. All the chandeliers burnt brightly, the columns cast mysterious shadows in the gathering dusk, the large rose window in the extreme back of the church, with its stained glass, glowed like the very evening sun that lit it up and, now that the organ was silent, stillness reigned in the whole assembly as if no one were capable of making a sound. Never did such a flame of zeal rise to heaven from a Christian cathedral as on that day, in the Dominican Church at Santiago, and no human breast contributed a warmer glow than those of Jeronimo and Josepha.

The service began with a sermon delivered from the pulpit by one of the oldest canons, in full ceremonial array. Raising his trembling arms high up to heaven with the wide folds of his surplice flowing around them he began at once with praise, glorification and thanksgiving. Still, even in this part of the world that had crumbled to ruins, there were men able to raise up their faltering voices to God. He described what had happened at a sign given by the Almighty. Judgment Day could not be more terrible. And when, pointing at a fissure in one of the Cathedral walls, he called the earthquake a mere presage of doom, a shudder passed through the whole flock. From this point the current of

priestly eloquence bore him on to the subject of the city's moral depravity; abominations such as Sodom and Gomorrah had never witnessed had been punished here, and only God's infinite, long-suffering patience had preserved the city from total destruction. But the hearts of our two unfortunates, already quite rent by the sermon, were pierced as by a sword when the canon dwelled in detail on the offense committed in the convent garden of the Carmelites, called the indulgence with which it had been treated by the world a godless one, and in a digression filled with imprecations, delivered the souls of the culprits, whom he mentioned by name, to all the princes of hell! Plucking at Jeronimo's sleeve, Donna Constanza called out, "Don Fernando!" The latter, however, replied as emphatically and, at the same time, as secretively as possible, "You will be silent, Donna, you will not stir, not even the pupil of your eye, and will pretend that you are about to faint, whereupon we shall leave the church."

But before Donna Constanza could execute this artful stratagem, devised to secure their escape, a voice interrupted the canon's sermon, crying out, "Keep well away, citizens of Santiago, here are the godless creatures!" and when another terrified voice asked, "Where?" while a wide circle of horror formed around them, a third replied, "Here!" and, filled with holy fanaticism, pulled Josepha by the hair so that she would have fallen down with Don Fernando's son if Don Fernando had not supported her.

"Are you mad?" the young man cried out and put his arm around Josepha. "I am Don Fernando Ormez, son of the Town Commandant whom you all know."

"Don Fernando Ormez?" cried a near-by cobbler, who had worked for Josepha and knew her as well at least as he knew her small feet. "Who is this child's father?" he asked, turning to Asteron's daughter with scornful insolence.

Don Fernando went pale at this question. Now he glanced shyly at Jeronimo, now he scanned the congregation to see if there was no one who knew him.

Josepha, compelled by the horrible situation, called out, "This is not my child, Master Pedrillo, as you think," and, looking at Don Fernando with infinite terror in her soul, "This young gentleman is Don Fernando Ormez, son of the Town Commandant, whom you all know."

The cobbler asked, "Which of you, citizens, knows this young man?" And several of the bystanders repeated, "Who knows Jeronimo Rugera? Let him step forward?"

Now it so happened that at this very moment little Juan, frightened by the uproar, showed his desire to leave Josepha's breast and take refuge in Don Fernando's arms. At once a voice yelled out, "He is the father!" and another, "He is Jeronimo Rugera," and a third, "These are the blasphemers!" and "Stone them! Stone them!" cried all the Christians assembled in that temple of Jesus.

Then Jeronimo intervened, "Stop, you inhuman creatures! If you are looking for Jeronimo Rugera: here he is. Set free that man, who is innocent."

The furious mob, confused by Jeronimo's words, hesitated. Several hands let go of Don Fernando. At that moment a naval officer of high rank approached hurriedly. Pushing his way through the crowd, he asked, "Don Fernando Ormez! What have they done to you?" Now quite free, Don Fernando replied with truly heroic presence of mind, "Yes, look at the murderous villains, Don Alonzol I should have been lost if this worthy man hadn't given himself out to be Jeronimo Rugera in order to calm the raging mob. Be so kind as to take him into protective custody, as well as the young lady; and as for this good-for-nothing—taking hold of Master Pedrillo—"who started this uproar, arrest him!"

The cobbler exclaimed, "Don Alonzo Onoreja, I ask you on your conscience, is not this girl Josepha Asteron?"

When Don Alonzo, who knew Josepha well, withheld his reply, and several voices, fanned by this into a new blaze of fury, called out, "It is, it is she!" and, "Kill her!" Josepha placed little Philip, whom Jeronimo had been car-

rying, in Don Fernando's arms, together with little Juan, and said, "Go now, Don Fernando, save your two children and leave us to our fate!"

Don Fernando took the two children and said he would sooner perish than allow anyone in his company to suffer harm. He offered Josepha his arm, after asking the naval officer for his sword, and told the other couple to follow him. They did in fact get out of the church since under these circumstances the people made way for them with an adequate show of respect, and thought themselves saved. But they had hardly reached the equally crowded square when a voice, one of the furious mob who had pursued them, cried, "This is Jeronimo Rugera, citizens, for I am his own father!" and struck him down at Constanza's side with a powerful blow of his club.

"Jesus Maria!" Donna Constanza cried out, and fled to her brother-in-law. But already, "Convent whore!" rang out, and with it the second blow of a club from the other side which left her stretched out lifeless beside Jeronimo.

"Monster!" a stranger called out, "this was Donna Constanza Xares!"

"Why did they lie to us?" the cobbler replied.

"Look for the right one, then, and kill her too!"

Seeing Constanza's corpse, Don Fernando glowed with rage; he drew his sword and aimed such a blow at the fanatical, murderous villain who was the cause of these atrocities that he would have split him in two if the cobbler had not avoided the furious blow with a quick movement. He could not overpower the surging mass that advanced against him. "Farewell, Fernando! Farewell, children!" Josepha called out. "Here, murder me, you bloodthirsty tigers!" and she voluntarily hurled herself amongst them to put an end to the fight.

Master Pedrillo struck her down with his club. Then, spattered with her blood, he shouted, "Send the bastard after her to hell!" and thrust himself forward once more, his lust for murder not yet sated. Don Fernando, this godlike hero,

now stood with his back to the church. With his left hand he held the children, with his right the sword. With every blow he struck one of them down, his sword flashing like lightning; a lion could not have defended himself better. Seven bloodhounds lay dead in front of him, the prince of the satanic rabble himself was wounded. But Master Pedrillo would not rest till he had snatched one of the children from Don Fernando's breast, seized it by one leg, swung it around over his head and dashed it against the edge of a church buttress.

Now everything was silent and everyone moved away. Don Fernando, seeing his little Juan lying in front of him with his brains gushing out, raised his eyes to heaven, his grief beyond description. The naval officer rejoined him, tried to console him and assured him that his own inaction during those unhappy moments, though justified by several circumstances, was causing him remorse. But Don Fernando said that he was beyond reproach and only asked him to help now with the removal of the corpses. They were all carried to Don Alonzo's house in the obscurity of dusk, and Don Fernando followed, weeping copiously over the face of little Philip. He spent the night at Don Alonzo's and for a long time failed to inform his wife of the full extent of the calamity. He deliberately falsified the facts, firstly, because his wife was ill, and secondly, because he did not know how she would judge his conduct in this matter. But soon after this, having been accidentally informed by a visitor of all that had occurred, this excellent lady silently wept away her maternal grief, and one morning put her arms round his neck, with the remnant of a shining tear in her eye, and kissed him. Don Fernando and Donna Elvira decided to adopt the little stranger; and when Don Fernando compared Philip with Juan, and the ways in which he had acquired each of them, it almost seemed to him that he had reason to be glad.

GOTTFRIED KELLER

(1819-1890)

Gottfried Keller was born and lived much of his life in Zurich. However, he spent the most formative years of his youth in Munich, Berlin and other towns at a time when Germany was a country of reaction confronted by revolution, seething with romantic, idealistic and socialist ideas.

Keller represents a significant and particularly healthy branch of German literature, the German-speaking Swiss. One might describe him as an example of one Goethean tendency: that of literature as living, educative, persistently optimistic philosophy. It is a tendency which in Keller owes much to the fact that he based his writing on simple forms such as the fable and thinly disguised narrative autobiography (his most famous novel *Der Grüne Heinrich* is autobiography, romance and *Erziehungsroman*, on the pattern of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*). His stories, which sometimes resemble folk tales for adults, have qualities in common with Hans Christian Andersen and the fairy tales of the brothers Grimm. At the core of his work there is the rock of the Alps, and also the resistant fiber of the Swiss dialect. Despite his optimism and pervasive humor, he is as objective and detached and un-egocentric as Flaubert. His friend Friedrich Theodor Bischer characterized Keller's work as a penetration of high ideals into a view of life as solid and incontrovertible as granite.