

spirit every where breathing through it. A deep and all-pervading enjoyment of nature breathes through the manners and social arrangements of the Germanic races, and through the very spirit of freedom by which they are characterized.* Although moving and often born in courtly circles, the wandering Minnesingers never relinquished the habit of communing with nature. It was thus that their productions were often marked by a fresh, idyllic, and even elegiac tone of feeling. In order to form a just appreciation of the result of such a disposition of mind, I avail myself of the labors of my valued friends Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, who have so profoundly investigated the literature of our German middle ages. "Our national poets during that age," writes the latter of the two brother inquirers, "have never devoted themselves to a description of nature, having no object but that of conveying to the imagination a glowing picture of the scene. A love of nature was assuredly not wanting to the ancient German Minnesingers, although they have left us no other expression of the feeling than what was evolved in lyric poems from their connection with historical events, or from the sentiments appertaining to the subject of which they treated. If we begin with the oldest and most remarkable monuments of the popular Epos, we shall find that neither the *Nibelungen* nor *Gudrun*† contain any description of natural scenery, even where the occasion seems specially to prompt its introduction. In the otherwise circumstantial description of the hunt, during which Siegfried was murdered, the flowering heath and the cool spring under the linden are only casually touched upon. In *Gudrun*, which evinces to a certain extent a more delicate finish, the feeling for nature is somewhat more apparent. When the king's daughter and her attendants, reduced to a condition of slavery, are carrying the garments of their cruel masters to the sea-shore, the time is indicated, when the winter is just melting away, and the song of rival birds has already begun. Snow and rain are falling, and the hair of the

* Fried. Schlegel, *Ueber nordische Dichtkunst*, in his *Sämmtliche Werke*, bd. x., s. 71 and 90. I may further cite, from the very early times of Charlemagne, the poetic description of the *Thiergarten* at Aix, inclosing both woods and meadows, and which occurs in the life of the great emperor, by Angilbertus, abbot of St. Riques. (See Pertz, *Monum.*, vol. i., p. 393-403.)

† See the comparison of the two epics, the poem of the *Nibelungen* (describing the vengeance of Chriemhild, the wife of Siegfried), and that of *Gudrun*, the daughter of King Hetel, in Gervinus, *Geschichte der Deutschen Litt.*, bd. i., s. 354-381.