

REINHOLD SOLGER

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Reinhold Ernst Friedrich Karl Solger was born July 17, 1817, in Stettin, Pomerania, Prussia, the son of Regierungsrat (later Oberregierungsrat) Friedrich Ludwig Wilhelm Solger and his wife Auguste Amalie, née Jungnickel. Reinhold was the first of five children in his father's second marriage. At his baptism his godfather was a Hofrat Jungnickel from Schwedt a/O., the native town of both of his parents.

A long tradition of civil service and of culture prevailed in the family. Solger's father was a member of the Prussian Diet and afterward his two brothers, Carl and Allernitz, likewise represented in this body their respective districts of Danzig and Posen. The member of the family who has made the name most widely known was Reinhold's uncle, the Berlin professor, Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand Solger (1768-1819), writer on metaphysics and aesthetics, and a close personal friend of Ludwig Tieck.

When Solger was but nine years old his father died, leaving Solger's mother in straitened circumstances and dependent on her relatives. Perhaps it was due to this fact that Reinhold was sent to the military academy of Züllichau, a small town east of Berlin. In a Byronic epic which Reinhold Solger wrote many years afterward called *Hanns von Katzenfingen und seine Tante, geb. F. v. K.*, he tells how the hero at the age of twelve was sent to a military school, referring to the institution as a "jail." While this work is by no means entirely autobiographical there are enough references in it to experiences similar to Solger's so that we may justifiably consider it as a source for the flavor, at least, of his life as a boy. In addition to this it presents Solger's wit and satire, characteristic traits of the man, to such a degree that I shall quote a number of stanzas.

Es sind bekanntlich die von Katzenfingen,
Gutkernaltpreussisch seit dem alten Fritz,
Wenn nicht besonders licht in andern Dingen,

So doch in Namen reich an "Witz" und
"Blitz."

Die alle jährlich frische Fährdrich's bringen,
Umkränzend ihres Königs Herrschersitz
Wie—um mich hier homerisch auszu-
drücken—

Die Borste zielt des Erimanthiers Rücken.

Hanns hatte mit der Muttermilch daher
Schon eingesogen krieg'rische Talente:
Er zählte bald euch an den Fingern her
Den Kommandör von jedem Regimente.
"Mit Leib und Seele wird er Militär,
"Der Junge! Sternkreuzhagelsappermente,
"Verfluchter Schockschwernothmillionen-
hund!"

Rief oft sein Vater zärtlich schmunzelnd, und
Hob ihn empor, und küsst' ihn, tief gerührt.
Zwar, Mutter wünschte mehr, er möcht'
studieren:

"Was, so ein Federfuchser? He! Marschirt
"Mich mit das Zeug!—Das sollt' mich
konveniren!"

Schrie dann der biedre Mann. "Dekorrampirt
"Mich nicht den Hanns; er soll mich
Kommandiren;

"Hanns, willst was lernen?" "Näh!"

"Na, sieh en Mal,
"Frau: sagt' ich's nicht? Da steckt ein
General!"

Als Hanns demnach das zwölfte Jahr erreicht,
Erschien der Tag, den er ersehnt so lange;
Die Mutter, hang, von Thränen ganz erweicht,
Mehr als ihr Stand erlaubt, küsst' ihm die
Wange:

Doch unserm Hannsen war's im Herzen
leicht,

Ihn rief mit ahnungsvollem Zauberklange
Das mächtige Gefühl, das uns von Haus
Ins ungewisse Weite treibt hinaus.

Du armer Hanns! von einem Käfig 'raus
Flogst du in ein Gefängnisz ein mit Mauern;
Du armer Hanns! in ein Kadettenhaus:
Decorum est pro patria—versauern.
Die Arme streckt der bunte Moloch aus
Und macht das Land um seine Kinder trauern,
Tränirt, noch eh' sie von sich selber wissen,
Ein Götzenbild für's Vaterland zu küssen.

Indessen, Hanns war Philosoph genug,
Nicht Krieg mit der Nothwendigkeit zu
führen,

Und, wenn sein Muth ihn 'mal ins Weite trug,
S'giebt Mittel, solch ein Bürschchen zu
kuriren

Von allem Geist, und hätt' er dess genug,
Um selbst—'nen Deutschen hinter's Licht zu
führen,

Was, wie man weiss, so äusserst Schwierig
ist,

Dass es sogar—Sr. Maiestät dem Hochseligen
König, der doch aufrichtig gestanden, das
Pulver nicht erfunden hatte.

The last line, comical especially because its length breaks the meter, was the tribute of a Forty-Eighter laid at the door of Frederic William IV who in 1849 had declined the crown of the German Empire, and who in 1857 was declared insane. Solger's droll choice of rhymes can be illustrated by the following stanza, at the end of which the implied rhyme is omitted with humorous restraint.

Virtus negata tentat her via—

"Ein braver Kerl geht auf verbot'nen Wegen"

Und giebt zuweilen Poesie, wie die da, Frei, wie die Preuss'sche Presse! und verwegen

Traktirend, wie das Bayrische Genie da, Wenn nicht Priscian, doch Adelung mit Schlägen;

Brav ist der Kerl, ich sag's, aus diesem Grund,

Wenn auch im Uebrigen-- -- --

The innocent young recruit falls in love with an equally innocent young *Ladenmädchen* and shyly makes a confidant of one of the older cadets. The comments of this more experienced future officer are deliciously expressed—just before the bell calls them to chapel exercises. Even Schnitzler's *Leutnant Gustl* is not worthy of unloosing the latchet of the shoes of this man of the world:

"Sie ist nicht übel—nein—sie macht sich so—:

"Die Augen und die Haare—sind brilliant;

"Ihr Busen—wird gewiss 'mal nicht von Stroh—;

"Die Füsschen und die Waden—ganz

scharmant—

"Figüre—mannifik! Süperb—Popo!

"Ensemble—tout parfait!—S'ist anerkannt.

"Zwar wird sie stark pussirt: doch allgemein

"Behauptet man, sie soll noch Jungfer sein.

"Auf diesen letzten Punkt—du weisst,

Kamrad,

"Geb'ich aus Grundsatz niemals die Parole.

"Wenn du der Erste wärst—: s'wär delikat!

"Es wäre gross! dass mich der Deibel hole!

"Parblö! Hanns, reüssirst du in der That—:

"Auf Ehre, Hanns, ponir' ich eine Bowle!"

—Hier kommandirte sie der Glocke klingen,

Dem Herrn ein Herz voll Rührung

darzubringen.

As a final quotation I cannot resist the description of the hero's aunt, a vignette done so maliciously that one is tempted to suspect the author of settling a score with one of his own female relatives:

Doch anders dachte Hannsens liebe Tante, G'heimrätin Ruf (Neid hiess sie:

Selberlieb),

Die völlig überlebt den Adel nannte,

Doch stets "geborne F. v. K." sich schrieb.

Ihr Herz, das ganz allein für Jesum brannte

Und dieses Brennen *con amore* trieb,

War zu beschäftigt mit der Menschheit

Sünden,

Um seine kleinen Makel aufzufinden.

In ihrer Jugend las sie viel von Göthe,

Und nach der Zeit noch immer manch'

Journal:

Ihr Bruder blies als Kind die Pickelflöte,

Ihr Urgroszvater war ein General;

Und ihres Mannes Vetter schrieb Pamphlete

Im Fach der philosophischen Moral:

Sie war mit zweien Dichtern selbst bekannt

(Den einz'gen ihrer Zeit, wie sie gestand).

Unfortunately only two cantos of this work, originally planned on the model of Byron's *Don Juan*, were finished. Its purpose was to picture the development of a young officer who had grown up under the influence of blasé pseudo-culture, military training, and Pietism into an independent personality, true to itself, taking his part in the advancement of humanity toward freedom. Friedrich Kapp, in his essay on Solger, quotes the latter as saying that a jovial lieutenant with whom he had during his stay in Potsdam watched daily from the window of their room the parade of the first regiment of the royal guard served as the model for the hero. When this poem appeared anonymously in 1845 and 1846 in *Deutsches Taschenbuch aus der Schweiz* it aroused considerable discussion, and was attributed by some to Robert Prutz; the latter replied that he would be only too proud if he could have written it.

By quoting from Solger's later works I have anticipated a bit. In the fall of 1837, at the age of twenty he matriculated at the University of Halle. In the epic quoted above the hero comes under the influence of his pietistic aunt—perhaps this is a biographical touch that accounts for the fact that during his first semester Solger enrolled as a student of theology. But already in his second semester Solger turned to the study of the two branches that remained his chief interests during the rest of his life, namely, history and philosophy. He joined the circle of Arnold Ruge who

was editing the *Hallischen Jahrbücher*, a politically radical publication that advocated political freedom and a united Germany. Ruge, later also an exile after the revolution, published in 1840 some lyrics by Solger in his *Musen Almanach*. While Solger took part in political agitation and also in the gay, carefree social life of the German students, yet his chief interest centered in his studies by means of which he laid the foundation for his thorough, almost encyclopaedic education. In 1840 he transferred to the University of Greifswald where he took his doctorate in 1842 with a dissertation on the Sicambri, an ancient German division of the Teutons mentioned by Tacitus. Solger had the intention of entering upon an academic career for which, it seems, he was best fitted by temperament and training.

But at this point a benefactor entered his life, a friend of his father's, Eichhorn by name, who at that time was *Kultusminister* of Prussia. He secured for the gifted young man a post in the government at Potsdam where Solger worked for one year as *Referendar*. However, finding little to interest him in the life of a bureaucrat, he devoted most of his time to gay social activity in Potsdam and in Berlin, contracted considerable debts, and decided after one year that it would be best for him to emigrate to America. This Potsdam interlude gave Solger his profound scorn for *Junker* and bureaucrats which one finds in all his writings. But he got only as far as Liverpool, for a fraudulent ticket broker had sold him a forged worthless ticket and thus, without any further funds, he was obliged to slay in England. But here, in 1843, luck came to his assistance, for he was offered the post of tutor in the family of a country gentleman, a sinecure which he held for four years. In this comfortable, quite congenial position he had sufficient leisure not only to master the English language completely, but also to take up once more his historical and philosophical studies. In calm retrospect and in the free atmosphere of England he wrote his *Hanns von Katzenfingen*, the satire on Prussianism. He

wrote likewise another poem, the product of the conditions of his life and the pessimistic spirit of the times, called *Der Untergang*. He might have called it with Spengler *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, for the gist of the whole is contained in the last lines:

Hier gehst du unter, Licht, auf steigst du da:
Europa stirbt—Heil dir, Amerika.

Aside from the "europamüde" mood of the whole, engendered by the political reaction of the period of Metternich, this poem also contains a number of passages that are biographical. From the following lines one can readily reconstruct the life in his widowed mother's home where an uncle evidently came to the aid of the impoverished family:

Wo ist das Haus mit seinen Lindenbäumen,
Mit jenem dunklen, traulichen Gemach,
Wo in die Dämmerung von Kinderträumen,
Ein liebeglänzend Mutterauge brach?"
Wo ist der Herd, an dem in Abendstunden
Ein heimisch Feuer die Geschwister fand
Wenn oft das Leiden früher Lebenswunden
Sich thränenvoll aus ihrem Busen wand,
Und doch, wo Gram und Sorg' und Noth
verbunden,
Verlassenheit, der Armuth Druckerhand,
Am warmen Thau'n aus eines Bruders
Blicken
Zusammenschmolz in inniges Entzücken?"

Other lines recall his ardent, hopeful student days in Halle, likewise in very pessimistic vein, in the spirit of the immortal student song, "*Wir hatten gebauet ein stattliches Haus*":

Wo bist du, Jüngling, mit den Purpurwangen,
Aus dessen Auge brennend Leben fuhr,
Wenn wir uns ernst und fest und wild
umschlangen
Und Tag und Nacht, und Gott und die
Natur
In unsern Bund ihr himmlisch Zeugnis
klang,
Wenn du mir, ich dir ew'ge Freundschaft
schwur?
Freundschaft,—o heil'ger Wahnsinn!—über'm
Grabe!
Weiss noch der Mann, was er gelobt als
Knabe?
Seht, wie sie sinkt! und diese Welt wird
Nacht,
Dort über'm Meer beginnt der Tag zu
scheinen,
Und was ich einst geträumt, gehofft,
gedacht,—
Sei's drum—auf immer sei's, und ohne
Weinen—

Wer weint, wenn eine Welt in Trümmer
kracht,
Vor seines Glücks, geborst'nem Haus, dem
kleinen?

Hier gehst du unter, Licht, auf steigst du da:
Europa stirbt ----- Heil dir, Amerika!

In addition to his studies and his poetry Solger also gave some public lectures, an activity that was to form his chief means of gaining a livelihood during his American years. Through the lectures he made the acquaintance of Dickens, Carlyle, and Lord Lytton, who became his friends and sponsors during his first as well as his later stay in England. But despite the prestige of their patronage Solger's lectures in England do not seem to have been very successful financially.

In the spring of 1847 Solger left England for the continent and at first spent some months in Paris where he moved in the circle of political refugees —Bakunin, Herzen, Herwegh, Bernays, and others. When during the summer he came to Heidelberg he met a kindred spirit in Friedrich Kapp, another Forty-Eighter and later, in New York, one of the most successful German-American politicians and journalists. The enthusiastic description which Kapp wrote in 1866, after Solger's death, of their idyllic stay in Heidelberg is a fine testimonial to both men. They lived together in common lodgings, enjoyed the beautiful scenery of the Neckar valley, read poetry together, and argued at length on political systems. Solger felt great admiration for the freedom of the Britishers, as well as for their energy and courage, but he was far from considering England ideal. Kapp's article cites two stanzas from Solger's *Untergang* as giving the reverse side of the shield:

England! Du hast gehammert und
geschmiedet,
Gestrickt, gewalkt, gewirkt, geappretir't,
Gebohrt, geschärft, gekocht, gedampft,
gesiedet,
Geschachert, prachert, wuchert, spekulirt,
Gelogen und betrogen unermüdet,
Geknechtet, blutgesogen, massakrirt,
Verrathen, wo sich nur Profit dabei fand,
Der Völker frommstes unter Gottes Beistand.
Schling! schling!—Du stachelst nur des
Hungers Qualen,
Und reizest nur zu heissrer Gier den
Rachen,

Dich sätt'gen nicht Minister, nicht die Skalen,
Nicht freies Korn, noch andre freie
Sachen.

Schling! schling Dich fort bis zu der Grenze
Malen,

Wo des Barbaren Doppeladler wachen.
Und da?—da heisst's die Schwerter aus der
Scheide;
"Die Welt hat keinen Raum mehr für uns
beide."

From Heidelberg Solger went briefly to Bruckberg to pay his respects to Ludwig Feuerbach. An attempt on Solger's part to establish himself as a literary man in Berlin during the same year failed, and he returned once more to Paris. One day as he was walking along the street he saw a young French girl with whom he fell in love at first sight. He followed her at a discreet distance and noticed that she entered a certain convent school. He secured an introduction to the young lady and soon won her heart. On February 19, 1848, Reinhold Solger, aged 30, married Adèle Marie Bémère, aged 18. It was an exceedingly happy marriage; throughout his later numerous changes of residence she was his constant companion and she became the mother of his four children. A few days after his wedding he became an eyewitness of the February Revolution, concerning which he wrote a vivid account for *Wigands Konversations-Lexikon*.

In April, 1848, he returned to Berlin where he became an enthusiastic member of a democratic club; in August he moved to Frankfurt am Main where he worked and wrote for the extreme Left until the outbreak of the revolution in Baden. Kapp regrets that his friend was not appointed to the ministry of foreign affairs in Carlsruhe where he might have done valuable work; instead, because of his knowledge of languages, Solger served as translator and interpreter of General Mieroslawski. After the disastrous conclusion of the revolution Solger took refuge with the rest of the army in Switzerland where he lectured on English literature in Zürich and wrote for radical journals. During this time he wrote a farce in one act, *Der Reichstagsprofessor*; the setting is in Berlin and the satire is directed against

the servility before constituted authority of the opponents of the revolution. It was read with great glee by the exiles in Switzerland, but of all the works of Solger this piece of exaggerated persiflage is least enjoyable for the present-day reader.*

During the summer of 1852 Solger left Zürich for London where his old literary friends received him very cordially. Yet his course of lectures, though sponsored by Dickens and other prominent authors, proved a failure. Therefore he decided to emigrate to the United States, landing in Philadelphia in the spring of 1853, and then settling in Roxbury, a suburb of Boston. As he had done in Switzerland and in England, he supported himself by his pen and by public lectures on history and modern German philosophy; both in 1857 and 1859 he delivered a series of twelve lectures at the Lowell Institute of Harvard University, where James Russell Lowell and Louis Agassiz were among his appreciative hearers.

As quickly as possible Solger became an American citizen and interested himself in the political questions of the day. Like most of the Forty-Eighters he became an enthusiastic member of the new Republican Party. He "stumped" for Fremont in 1856 and for Lincoln in 1860 in New York State, as well as in the Middle West. Some letters written to his wife (in French) which Mr. Frederic R. Solger of Washington, D. C., our author's grandson, graciously allowed me to read, give a vivid picture of what hardships in hotels, in travelling and in the association with the "natives" he had to surfer. Several of the letters give itineraries—one night each at 24 little Ohio towns, for example. "You have no idea how utterly stupid the people here are—my only amusement is furnished me by bed-bugs with whom I carry on great hunts." This good humor is characteristic of Solger's letters; he

intersperses it between descriptions of daily happenings and of the political personages of this very exciting period in American history.

A letter preserved in the Library of Congress among the papers of John Sherman, then senator from Ohio, written by John A. Andrew, Governor of Massachusetts, ranks Solger with Carl Schurz in his influence in bringing about the election of Abraham Lincoln.

"No public man need be reminded of the invaluable services rendered by Dr. Solger to the Republican cause, both in the campaigns of 1856 and 1860.

"It is enough to say that, through his public addresses to large assemblages of Germans and Americans, in several states, and especially in the principal towns in the interior of New York in the fall of 1860, he may be considered as having done as much to secure the support of the Eastern Germans to the Administration, as his friend and fellow patriot General Carl Schurz did for the Western."

Lincoln appointed Solger Assistant Register of the Treasury and on January 22, 1863, this was confirmed by the Senate. Friedrich Kapp, who visited Solger repeatedly in his office, speaks of the irony of the situation in which Solger, who all his life had had to struggle to keep the wolf away from the door was signing day in and day out government obligations totalling 100 million dollars. During this purely mechanical labor he recited to his visitor from Homer, Sophocles, Shakespeare, Goethe, and Schiller, or told droll happenings about the treasury department where he seems to have been regarded as an authority on all subjects. It had been Lincoln's intention to advance Solger shortly from assistant register to register of the treasury, but in April, 1864, the latter suffered a paralytic stroke which turned his last days into suffering. He died January 11, 1866, at the age of 49, and was buried in the Congressional Cemetery in Washington. It is an interesting, but of

*In a famous critical work, Hermann Hettner, *Das moderne Drama* (1851), republished 1924 by Behrs Verlag, Berlin, I note on page 161 praise of this work, not necessarily in disagreement with what I have said. Hettner holds that the *form* of Aristophanes' plays is impractical for modern comedies, but his *spirit* should animate them: "Und in diesem Sinne stehe ich nicht an, die in Kolatscheks deutscher Monatschrift 1850 (Oktoberheft) mitgeteilte Posse, der 'Reichstagsprofessor,' von Reinhold Solger, als einen überaus glücklichen und erfreulichen Anfang unserer politischen Komödie zu bezeichnen. Die anderen Parteien mögen es ihrerseits ebensowenig fehlen lassen an Geisselung der Demokratie. Immer zu, immer zu! Je toller, desto besser."

course idle speculation, what Solger might have accomplished in public life in his adopted country had he reached the proverbial three score and ten.

Of much greater interest to us naturally is his life as an author, in the course of which he was twice awarded a prize. In 1859 the committee in charge of the New York celebration of the Schiller centennial awarded to Solger's *Erinnerung* the gold medal. The general tone in this work is far different from his *Untergang*; quite evidently Solger had found in the new world ideals worth fighting for. Though he does not allude to them directly the great questions of American public life of the day have their answer in these ringing stanzas. Solger eulogizes Schiller as a fighter for freedom from every kind of slavery, an author whose works still are full of meaning for the contemporary generation. I shall quote the last three stanzas; in the first two of these the spirit of Schiller is addressing posterity and in the concluding one Solger answers for his generation:

"Als ich des neuen Bundes Tafelstein
Errichtet an des Saekulums Portalen,
Da, meint' ich, solltet Ihr Apostel sein
In aller Welt, im Dienst des Idealen:
Und wo Ihr immer falsche Götter fändet,
Da sollten Eure Scheiterhaufen prasseln,
Und wo Ihr hörtet Sklavenketten rasseln,
Da solltet rächen Ihr die Menschheit, die
geschändet.

"Und wo sich Pöbelwahn all mächtig fühlt,
Euch hüllen in den Ernst der Ueberzeugung;
Und wo der Mensch im Schlamm der
Erde wühlt,
Aufrichten ihn von schnöder Nackenbeugung;
Und wo die Wechsler schachern in dem
Tempel,
Der Schoenheit keusches Götterbild
errichten,
Und all in Eurem Trachten, Eurem Dichten,
Dasteh'n des freien Geists lebendiges
Exempel."

"Wer fühlt sich rein? Wer von uns darf
sich sagen:
Ich liess mir nicht das hohe Ziel verrücken?
O! zürne dennoch nicht, wenn wir es
wagen,
Den hundertjährigen Kranz Dir aufzudrücken:
Der Zukunft Pfand, nicht der Vergangenheit:
Für was wir hofften, nicht, was wir verloren,
Für den Geburstag, der uns mitgeboren
Zum neuen Geisteskampf, in einer neuen
Zeit."

At the same time, November 10, 1859, Solger delivered the chief address at the Boston commemoration of Schiller's birth. This was a ringing speech in which the speaker pointed out how applicable was Marquis Posa's, "Geben Sie Gedankenfreiheit!" to his contemporary America where the free thoughts of great leaders were so very likely to be stifled by bigoted puritanism on the one hand or by the levelling influence of the democratic mob on the other. In this respect, one might say parenthetically, —Schiller even today can teach us something.

The second time a prize was awarded to Solger occurred in 1862 when the *Belletristische Journal* of New York, in a competition conducted by this weekly for the best German-American novel, selected his *Anton in Amerika* over more than twenty competitors. The Anton of Solger's novel is the son of Anton and Sabine, hero and heroine respectively, of Gustav Freytag's very famous and popular novel *Soll und Haben*, which had just been published a few years previously, in 1854. From what has already been told of Reinhold Solger one can readily guess how he would react to Freytag's moralizing novel in which all of the hero's middle-class virtues are not only praised but also rewarded in the final chapter by great wealth in the coffee and sugar business and a rich, if slightly dull, wife into the bargain. This book could not but incite him to write a witty satire.

If we bear in mind Solger's keen mentality, his lifelong industry, his continued devotion to high ideals, his repeated sacrifices for the sake of principle—and on the other hand the annoying poverty that dogged him up to within a few years before his death, then we can understand fully the introduction which is, so to speak, a review of Freytag's book. Solger states that this biography of the merchant Anton Wohlfahrt of Breslau very properly has earned its author a lot of money. The reader is shown at the hand of this man of honor, who started out without a shirt on his back, very clearly that if anyone is decent and industrious, at all

times shows proper respect for his superior, gets on a good footing with the latter's family, and in general conducts himself politely and kindly toward everyone, as it is fitting for a young man to do, then he need not worry; he will get on in the world. The hero followed his motto, "Honesty is the best policy" or "The straight road is always the best," turned a deaf ear to all temptation, refused to have anything to do with the nobility, much less with the Jews, and in all things followed the golden mean and became a rich man.

This hero of Freytag's novel is about to be married in the last chapter to the sister of his boss. In Solger's first chapter we read of the birth of a son, who, alas, had none of his father's good bourgeois qualities except that occasionally he enjoyed a good glass of punch. Perhaps he took more after his mother, from whom he had inherited his beautiful eyes and his liking for fine table linen, especially if fine dishes were served on it. We need not pity the parents on this account, for at first at least, they seemed to like it; they did not start him out as an apprentice in the business but sent him to Berlin to the best preparatory schools and later to the university where he passed brilliant examinations. The poetry of coffee and syrup which had meant so much to his father left Anton, Junior, rather cold; the only time he showed any interest in the business was when one day during his holidays a barrel of molasses from the West Indies refused to run properly and it was discovered that the impediment was a dead pickaninny! But this interest was too ephemeral to make a business man out of him; the eternal drinking bouts (*Commentreiterei*) of the Prussian bureaucracy bored him just as much. That left him only the desperate choice of *Privatdozent* or emigrant. His industrious study of history and ethnology had already seemed to lead him to the university career, when his enthusiasm for the Revolution of '48 forced him to the other alternative: emigration to America. This he did after he had risked his life for a free and united Germany, had fought at Wag-

häusel, escaped the bloody claws of the military courts by adventurous flight to Switzerland, spent some years in Paris and London, and finally landed in New York—*europamiide*.

All of this reminds of Solger's life and indeed we shall find numerous autobiographical touches in Anton's further career in these United States; the majority of our hero's adventures are of course lively fiction, as they ought to be in a novel. But before I pass on to a brief summary and discussion of the book I must quote one delicious and untranslatable sentence giving the attitude of Anton's father toward the revolution of '48 which had brought about the break between father and son. The metaphors are chosen so neatly from the bourgeois ideology, the tragedy of the Revolution of '48 is so succinctly satirized, and the reason why the Germans at all times enjoy the kind of government they have is so clearly set forth, that this one sentence by Solger is well worth pondering:

"Sein Vater ging als Politiker eben nicht weiter vor, denn wie er es als Commis mit so grossem Erfolg und zu so grossem Lobe getan: Man sollte sich beim Könige lieb Kind machen, ihn durch ein exemplarisches Benehmen rühren und ihn durch fromme Miene dahin zu bewegen suchen, dass er Einen als Compagnon in die Regierung nehme."

It is impossible to follow in detail the plot of the novel. Anton arrives with \$10,000, the last he will ever get from his wealthy father, tries his hand at business, at lecturing, and at rescuing women in distress. The last-named occupation leads to his being falsely accused of murder and condemned to death on very convincing circumstantial evidence. An American girl of Irish descent with whom the hero has fallen in love effects his rescue at the very moment when the sheriff is placing the noose about his neck. At the end of the story Anton, following his true bent, is setting out on a scientific expedition into the interior of Asia. Mary elects to join the expedition.

The present-day reader may object

that the story is very melodramatic and full of happy coincidences, but if one considers it with a bit of historic perspective, one must admit that in these respects it follows the fashion of its day and does not differ from the manner of Freytag, Dickens, or the younger Dumas. The author achieves his purpose in giving a picture of the American scene in many classes of society as well as in many states of the Union. We meet the typical Yankee, the Irish, the German-Americans, the negro, rich and poor, educated and ignorant, the gilded youth and the youth who rises to capitalist from newsboy, the country girl seduced by the city slicker and the independent American schoolmarm, the farmer and the Reverend. The story introduces the reader to New York, Chicago, the White Mountains, and Niagara Falls. The South and the Far West, which Solger never visited, do not occur in the novel.

In this novel the characterization of different types or situations is done very succinctly and wittily, but the chief characters of the story are not very convincingly drawn, they are flat rather than shown in the round. However, one must bear in mind that the novel is chiefly satirical, and from that point of view it must be judged; his style recalls Sinclair Lewis rather than Hawthorne. There is splendid satire on American business methods of rapid bankruptcy or get-rich-quick schemes; of the prudery that allows the statue of the nude Greek slave girl to be admired if the pastors declare her "pure"; of sensationalism; of the David Harum manner of driving bargains; of the wickedness of travelling on Sunday; of the reforming zeal of women's clubs, or of the ease with which a man's character can be assassinated before a jury if it can be shown that he does not go to church. While Solger sees all of these foibles of American life the frequent comparisons with German conditions show that he is by no means blind to the weakness of his native land; he never grows sentimental over "mein Vaterland."

When Anton is urged to give a lecture

course in New York or to go on tour in small towns in one-night stands the author is no doubt describing his own adventures. The hero gathers a great deal of experience in regard to the flagging interest of his auditors and the uncertainty of the emolument. Is Solger describing himself, with satirical exaggeration, when the hero confesses that the one thing he is fit for is to be a philosophical vagrant or vagrant philosopher who in Ancient Greece might have been a peripatetic, for strolling (Flaniren) is his real calling, together with opposition to traditional authorities? Numerous shrewd and bitter observations scattered through the two volumes are no doubt Solger's own thoughts, as when he compares the manner in which Fate deals with us to a child that has caught a box full of grasshoppers to feed honey to one, to let another fly attached to a string, to tear off the legs of a third, or to run a pin through a fourth. At another point he remarks, "Criminal trials are the gladiatorial games of the modern world." One feels that the whole work comes directly out of the author's experience; in fact, many details are also found in Solger's letters to his wife.

Solger's sense of humor, of which we have already met many examples, shows itself also in his language. In conformity with the usage among novel writers of his day he gives his characters names of satirical connotation; thus an ambitious young wooer has the name Snobbs, an ever-insolvent business man that of Scraper, and a social climber whose husband started in life as *Kloakenfeger* is called Mrs. Sewerage—not too different from that of a famous statesman in Lincoln's cabinet. He secures local color by using English words in his German text: "Er hat Geld im Safe liegen." Or he translates American idioms for droll effect: "Alt wie die Berge," "Er ist süß auf die Lady," "Eine verdammte Sicht besser," "Altes Ross," or "Ich will mich einen Spruch setzen." ("I'll set a spell.")

Solger's *Anton in Amerika* was published in 1862 both in New York (seri-

ally) and in Germany. In 1928 Erich Ebermayer, a present-day novelist in Berlin, republished the novel, "frei bearbeitet." I shall say of Ebermayer's work merely that it is both good and original, only whatever is good is not original and whatever is original is, alas, not good! Nevertheless it is a fine testimonial for the vitality of the story that a reprint of it can be sold in contemporary Berlin.

I have spoken at considerable length of this novel largely because previous writers on Solger have condemned or slighted it, whereas I think it the finest, most vital thing Solger has done. When one views Solger's career in two continents, in the Revolution, in his friendships with many great men, and in political activity in this country one wishes that he had left us his memoirs, for there are many things we should like to know. But Carl Schurz, Karl Heinzen, and others have done that; it was

much better for Reinhold Solger to leave us this novel. Compared with Freytag's *Soll und Haben*, one of the standard novels in German literature, Solger's work has all the advantage when it comes to interest, philosophy of life, or humor. Professor Josef Nadler in his history of German literature calls it the best German-American novel, which is of course, not very high praise.

If style is the man himself, *Anton in Amerika* from the point of view of style must be conceded vigor and greatness, for into it Solger put himself. He was tall in stature, had sandy hair, a full beard, and a high forehead—altogether a very distinguished appearance—just as he was intellectually distinguished, full of goodly human juices, a keen observer of life, free from prejudices, prudery, or sentimentality, and a man who could not but act with honesty and decency, for these qualities had become second nature to him.

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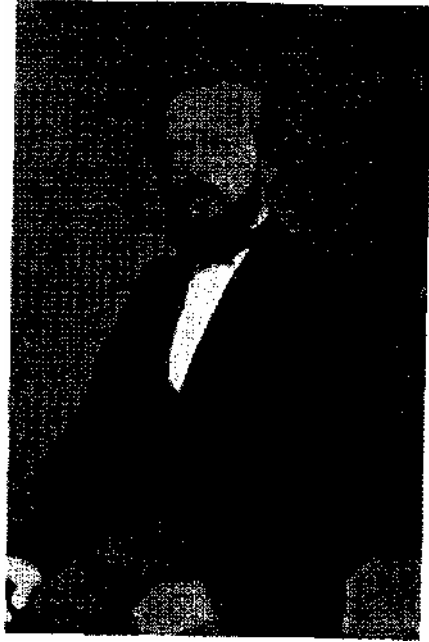
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REINHOLD SOLGER