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THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

THE TECHNIQUE OF SPIELHAGEN'S "NOVELLEN"

A Thesis

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THE TECHNIQUE OF SPIELHAGEN'S SHORT STORIES.

1. Introduction.

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(A). Spielhagen's life and Works.

For twenty years Friedrich Spielhagen was the most popular novelist in Germany. The Sixtieth anniversary of his birth was hailed and celebrated throughout the whole German Empire, and he was regarded as the greatest living author of the day. Then followed a decline in his popularity. Born in 1829, his first literary triumphs date back to the sixties of the last century. His decline in popularity was not due to a failure of his poetic powers, nor did he lack adaptability, or fail to understand the new born age. His last novel "Freigeboeren" (1901), though not of the most fashionable cut, devoid of naturalistic mannerisms and symbolic vagueness, was nevertheless correct enough in dress to be admitted as a modern novel, and when measured by absolute standards, must be accounted one of the best books of the year.

There were, however, principally two causes that preyed upon the reputation of Friedrich Spielhagen. The first was the literary revolution begun about 1885 by men unknown to fame, who promised to create German literature anew. Their watchword was "Die Moderne," and they, the young, at once put themselves in opposition to the old guard in letters, whose authority they were determined

(1) Short Story is not exactly the equivalent of the German "Novelle", but I shall use the terms short story, story, and "Novelle" interchangeably.

to undermine. Spielhagen was among those who bore the brunt of of the attack of the brothers Hart in their "Kritische Waffengänge." The new storm and stress movement succeeded in attracting and holding public attention. Many of the privileged class in letters were led to execution, but the promise to create a new German literature was left unfulfilled.

A second cause operated against Spielhagen's receiving his merited share of appreciation in his later days. He was above all a satirist, a critic of the society and conduct of the modern age. While he felt a degree of patriotic pride in the industrial progress of his native land, still he would not shut his eyes against the evil that came with it, the advent of materialism, threatening to obscure the old idealism. The glitter of unprecedented success could not obscure his vision, and he remained true to himself, to his old ideals. He belonged in early manhood to the revolutionary period of 1848, and was himself an ardent "achtundvierziger", who dreamed the dream of republican freedom for his native land. He was not one of the turbulent spirits, who took their leave of home, or received it gratuitously. He was not lost to the home land. No matter whether they staid at home, or sought freedom in a foreign land, that generation remained idealists, rarely did they become the horders of material wealth, or captains of industry, but in civil life were more commonly scholars of professional men, - as a class, men of integrity, of principle, lovers of liberty, thinkers upon the deepest problems of human life. It is this type which appears prominently in Spielhagen's works, they are bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. A national liberal, Spielhagen was

not pleased with the rising greatness of Bismarck, whom he hated as a representative of Prussian "Junkertum," the staunch support of autocracy. The dream of a freer constitutional government had been a sweet one, and the duty remained of emphasizing to a younger generation the dangers of bigness and the absurdities of spread-eagalism.

Maintaining this critical attitude Spielhagen has incurred the reproach of being old-fashioned, of viewing the present through the spectacles of the past. An age well satisfied with its own accomplishments is not willing to be rebuked. A later day, however, will recognize Spielhagen, the authors' high aims, his keen insight and extraordinary achievement. Extending over a period of more than forty years, and being closely linked with contemporary events, Spielhagen's vast literary product becomes a history of social Germany during the last half of the nineteenth century.

Friedrich Spielhagen was born in Magdeburg 1829, and died in Berlin 1911. He was a boy of six when his parents moved to Stralsund in Pomerania. Fifteen years of life spent in Stralsund and the surrounding territory made him thoroughly acquainted with the north German land and its people, and we are not surprised to find that Pomerania and the Baltic furnish the scenes for a large number of his novels. Thuringia, which Spielhagen called his second home, shares this distinction with Pomerania.

As a young man, Spielhagen studied for four years at the universities of Berlin, Bonn and Greifswald, first devoting himself to law, then to philosophy and literature. At the close of his university studies, he became private tutor to the young son