

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Byron Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Hall
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman
Darwin Thoreau Twain
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte
London Descartes Cervantes Wells Hesse
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Chambers Irving
Bunner Richter Chekhov da Shaw Wodehouse
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Peter Schlemihl

Adelbert von Chamisso

Imprint

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PETER SCHLEMIHL:

FROM THE GERMAN
of
ADELBERT VON CHAMISSO:

translated

BY SIR JOHN BOWRING, LL.D., &c.

WITH PLATES BY GEORGE CRUIKSHANK.

“There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.” — Shakspeare.



NOTICE.

Adelung said to me one day at Petersburg — “Have you read Peter Schlemihl?” — “No.” — “If you read it, you will translate it.” — I have translated it.

The story is a moral one. I leave its development to my readers. It would be little flattering to them to suspect they required my assistance, in order to discover the obvious lessons it conveys.

I have not scrupled to introduce a few verbal alterations; but the deviations from the original are very trifling.

The Translator.

To my Friend Wangner

Come to the land of shadows for awhile,
And seek for truth and wisdom! Here below,
In the dark misty paths of fear and woe,
We weary out our souls and waste our toil;
But if we harvest in the richer soil
Of towering thoughts – where holy breezes blow,
And everlasting flowers in beauty smile –
No disappointment shall the labourer know.
Methought I saw a fair and sparkling gem
In this rude casket – but thy shrewder eye,
Wangner! a jewell'd coronet could descry.
Take, then, the bright, unreal diadem!
Worldlings may doubt and smile insultingly,
The hidden stores of truth are not for *them*.

J. B.

To the Same, from Fouqui

We must, dear Edward, protect the history of poor Schlemihl— and so protect it that it may be concealed from the eyes that are not to look into it. This is a disagreeable business; for of such eyes there is a multitude, and what mortal can decide what shall be the fate of a MS. which is more hard to guard than even an uttered word. In truth, I feel as if my head were turning round, and in my anguish jump into the abyss—let the whole affair be printed!

But, Edward! there are really stronger and better grounds for this decision. Unless I am wholly deceived, there beat in our beloved Germany many hearts which are able and worthy to understand poor Schlemihl, and a tranquil smile will light upon the countenance of many an honest countryman of ours at the p. 10 bitter sport in which life with him—and the simple sport in which he with himself is engaged. And you, Edward, you, looking into this so sincerely-grounded book, and thinking how many unknown hearts this may learn with us to love it—you will let a drop of balsam fall into the deep wound, which death hath inflicted upon you and all that love you.

And to conclude: there is—I know there is, from manifold experience—a genius that takes charge of every printed book and delivers it into the appropriate hands, and if not always, yet very often keeps at home the undeserving: that genius holds the key to every true production of heart and soul, and opens and closes it with never-failing dexterity.

To this genius, my much beloved Schlemihl! I confide thy smiles and thy tears, and thus to God commend them.

FOUQUI.

Neunhausen, May 31, 1814.

To Fouqui, from Hitzig

We have done, then, the desperate deed: there is Schlemihl's story which we were to preserve to ourselves as our own secret, and lo! not only Frenchmen and Englishmen, Dutchmen and Spaniards have translated it, and Americans have reprinted it from the English text, as I announced to my own erudite Berlin, but now in our beloved Germany a new edition appears with the English etchings, which the illustrious Cruikshank sketched from the life, and wider still will the story be told. Not a word didst thou mutter to me in 1814, of the publication of the MS., and did I not deem thy reckless enterprise suitably punished by the complaints of our Chamisso, in his Voyage round the World from 1815 to 1818—complaints urged in Chili and Kamtschatka, and uttered even to his departed friend Tameramaia p. 12 of Owahee, I should even now demand of you crowning retribution.

However—this by the by—by-gones are by-gones—and you are right in this—that many, many friendly ones have looked upon the little book with affection during the thirteen eventful years since it saw the world's light. I shall never forget the hour when I first read it to Hoffmann. He was beside himself with delight and eagerness, and hung upon my lips till I got to the end. He could not wait, not he, to make the personal acquaintance of the poet;—but though he hates all imitation, he could not withstand the temptation to copy—though not very felicitously—the idea of the lost shadow in the lost mirror picture of Crasinus Spekhn, in his tale of the “Last Night of the Year.” Yes, even among children has our marvellous history found its way, for on a bright winter evening, as I was going up the Borough-street with its narrator, a boy busied with his sledge laughed at him, upon which he tucked the boy under his bear-skin mantle—you know it well—and while he carried him he remained perfectly quiet until he was set down on the footway—and then—having p. 13 made off to a distance, where he felt safe as if nothing had happened, he shouted aloud to his captor—“Nay, stop, Peter Schlemihl!”

Methinks, the honourable scarecrow, clad now in trist and fashionable attire, may be welcome to those who never saw him in his

modest kurtka of 1814. These and those will be surprised in the botanizing, circumnavigating—the once well-appointed Royal Prussian officer, in the historiographer of the illustrious Peter Schlemihl, to discover a lyric whose poetical heart is rightly fixed, whether he sing in Malayan or Lithuanian.

Thanks, then, dear Fouqui, heartfelt thanks, for the launching of the first edition, and with our friends, receive my wishes for the prosperity of the second.

Edward Hitzig.

Berlin, January, 1827.

* * * * *

With the second edition of Schlemihl, appeared Chamisso's Songs and Ballads. His Travels round the World, have also been published. Among his poetry are translations from various languages.

PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION.

More than twenty years ago I translated "Peter Schlemihl." I had the advantage of the pen and genius of George Cruikshank, to make the work popular, and two editions were rapidly sold.

At that time the real author was unknown. Everybody attributed it to Lamotte Fouqui, on whose literary shoulders, indeed, Adelbert von Chamisso placed the burden of its responsibilities.

The appearance of the English edition, I have reason to know—thanks to the merit of Cruikshank's original and felicitous sketches—excited the greatest delight in the mind of Chamisso. In his autobiography he says that "Peter" had been kindly received in Germany, but in England had been renowned (*volksthumlich*).

p. 16Several English translations have since occupied the field. Mine, as the first-born, naturally claims its own heritage, though it has been long out of print, and in the shape of a third edition, commends itself anew to public patronage.

John Bowring.

January, 1861.

To my old Friend, Peter Schlemihl.

Well! years and years have pass'd, — and lo! thy writing
Comes to my hands again, — and, strange to say,
I think of times when the world's school, inviting
Our early friendship, new before us lay; —
Now I can laugh at foolish shame — delighting
In thee, for I am old — my hair is grey, —
And I will call thee friend, as then — not coldly,
But proudly to the world — and claim thee boldly.

My dear, dear Friend! the cunning air hath led me
Through paths less dark and less perplexed than thine,
Struggling for blue, bright dawns, have I sped me,
But little, little glory has been mine.
Yet can the Grey Man boast not that he had me
Fast by *my* shadow! Nay! he must resign
His claims on me, — my shadow's mine. I boast it, —
I had it from the first, and never lost it.

On me — though guiltless as a child — the throng
Flung all their mockery of thy naked being, —
And is the likeness then so very strong?
They shouted for *my* shadow — which, though seeing,
They swore they saw not — and, still bent on wrong,
Said they were blind; and then put forth their glee in
Peals upon peals of laughter! Well — we bear
With patience — aye, with joy — the conscience clear.

p. 18 And what — what is the Shadow? may I ask ye,
Who am myself so wearily asked.
Is it too high a problem, then, to task ye?
And shall not the malignant world be tasked?
The flights of nineteen thousand days unmask ye,
They have brought wisdom — in whose trains I basked,
And while I gave to shadows, being — saw
Being, as shadows, from life's scene withdraw.

Give me thy hand, Schlemihl — take mine, my friend:
On, on, — we leave the future to the Grey Man,

Careless about the world, — our hearts shall blend
In firmer, stronger union — come away, man!
We shall glide fast and faster towards life's end.
Aye! let them smile or scorn, for all they say, man,
The tempests will be still'd that shake the deep,
And we in part sleep our untroubled sleep.

ADELBERT VON CHAMISSO.

Berlin, August, 1834.

To Julius Edward Hitzig, from Adelbert von Chamisso.

You forget nobody, and surely you must remember one Peter Schlemihl, whom you now and then met at my house in former days; a long-shanked fellow, who had the credit of awkwardness because he was unpolished, and whose negligence gave him an air of habitual laziness. I loved him—you cannot have forgotten, Edward, how often, in the spring-time of our youth, he was the subject of our rhymes. Once I recollect introducing him to a poetical tea-party, where he fell asleep while I was writing, even without waiting to hear anything read. And that brings to my mind a witty thing you said about him; you had often seen him, heaven knows where and when, in an old p. 20black *kurtka*, [20] which in fact he always wore, and you declared “he would be a lucky fellow if his soul were half as immortal as his *kurtka*!” So little did you value him. I loved him, I repeat; and to this Schlemihl, whom I had not seen for many a year, we owe the following sheets. To you, Edward, to you only, my nearest, dearest friend—my better self, from whom I can hide no secret,—to you I commit them; to you only, and of course to Fouqui, who, like yourself, is rooted in my soul—but to him as a friend alone, and not as a poet. You can easily imagine, how unpleasant it would be to me, if the secret reposed by an honourable man, confiding in my esteem and sincerity, should be exposed in the pillory of an *ipopie*, or in any way distorted, as if some miserable witling had engendered unnatural and impossible things. Indeed, I must frankly own it is a very shame that a history, which another and cleverer hand might have exhibited in all its comic force, has been reduced to mere insipidity p. 21by our good man’s pen. What would not John Paul Richter have made of it! In a word, my dear friend, many who are yet alive may be named, but—

One word more on the way in which these leaves came into my hands. Yesterday morning early—as soon as I was up—they were presented to me. A strange man with a long grey beard, wearing a black, worn-out *kurtka*, with a botanical case suspended at his side, and slippers over his boots, on account of the damp rainy weather,

inquired after me, and left these papers behind him. He pretended he came from Berlin.

Adelbert von Chamisso.

Kunersdorf, 27 Sept., 1813.