

WILLIBALD ALEXIS

CHAPTER ONE

PARENTAGE AND EARLIEST YEARS

IT is most convenient to refer to our author as Willibald Alexis, the literary pseudonym under which most of his works were published. His real name, however, was Georg Wilhelm Haering (in print Häring) and, though not of Silesian stock, he was born in the *Sandgasse* in Breslau on June 29, 1798.¹ Little is known of his antecedents, for Alexis rarely mentions his family in his work and few documents relating to this period have been preserved. In various biographical sketches published during the author's lifetime, either from notes supplied by him or with his approval, it is stated that his father belonged to a refugee family from Brittany which was admitted to the *Neumark* in Brandenburg-Prussia after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV (1685). In the article published in Brockhaus's *Conversations-Lexikon* (1833),² probably written by Alexis himself, it is recorded that the last of his line in France was a lawyer in Rennes named Hareng (or Harenc). Béringuier³ first cast doubt upon Alexis's claim to be of Breton stock, when he pointed out that he could find no trace of the name Hareng or Haering in the lists of French immigrants for these years. However, this negative evidence does not prove Alexis's claim to be false. It is just possible that Alexis, in making this claim, is indulging in the kind of mystification which made his early novel *Walladmor* famous; in any case there is insufficient evidence to give definite proof of either part Breton or full German ancestry. In *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des réfugiés françois dans les états du Roi* by Erman and Reclam (Berlin, 9 vols., 1782-99), a work almost certainly known to Alexis and possibly used by him as a source for some historical details in his novels, the authors include the Hering family among those which had Germanized their names and mention several branches of the family, including a well-known Breslau clergyman who wrote a history of the Reformed Churches in Prussia.⁴ Perhaps Alexis's claim was based on the information in these volumes; clearly, he either believed that he was of Breton stock

or wished his readers to believe it, for he wrote in *Herbstreise durch Skandinavien* (*Autumn Journey through Scandinavia*, 1828):⁵

My two French neighbours insisted that I had the face of a Breton, just as though I haven't become German since the time of my greatgreat-grandfather, who was, to be sure, chased out of Brittany by the dragoons of Louis XIV.

Alexis exaggerates the ancestral touch, but his comment may be linked with one by Karl Julius Schröer:⁶

Alexis . . . was descended from a Breton family which had exchanged its Breton name for the German Haering. He himself attributed his romantic inclinations to this circumstance. He told me that in France the shape of his face had been called Breton (the high cheek-bones).

The grandfather of our author has been identified as a man named Hering (possibly a Germanized form of Harenc) who made a living in Soldin, a small town in Silesia, by working as an excise officer (*Königlicher Accise Controlleur*) and by growing fruit and vegetables. On June 8, 1744, his wife, *née* Bergin, died, having given birth to a son the day before. The child was baptized Georg Wilhelm and the father married its godmother, Henriette Sophie von Mellentin, on August 27 of the same year.⁷

Unpublished official documents,⁸ hitherto unnoticed by researchers, indicate the steady progress of Georg Wilhelm in the Civil Service. Appointed an assistant clerk (*Registraturgehilfe*) in the department in Breslau concerned with war and crownlands (*Königliche Krieges- und Domainenkammer*) in 1773, he became a secretary (*Kammersekretär*) in 1777 and a senior official (*Dritte Kanzlei-Direktor*) in 1797, his promotions and increases in salary being granted on merit. His diligence and strong sense of duty won him the respect and trust of his superiors, including the viceroy of Silesia, Karl Georg Heinrich (Graf) Hoym (1739-1807). Alexis mentions a visit to a nunnery on official business by Graf Hoym and his father and also refers to his father's connections with Gustav (Graf) Schlabendorf (1750-1824), a philanthropic eccentric, scholar and politician who later settled in Paris.⁹

In 1801 King Frederick William III showed his appreciation of the services of Georg Wilhelm *père* to Prussia by awarding him a bonus and sending him an official letter of recognition. Meanwhile, in 1796 or 1797, Haering had married Henriette Rellstab, about whom full details are to be found in Ewert's article 'Henriette Haering'. Alexis's cousin Ludwig Rellstab (1799-1860), who became well known as a writer and music critic, was a close friend and associate

of our author for many years, although he sometimes disagreed with his political views. In his reminiscences¹⁰ he records that Henriette's grandfathers had been the respected Swiss priests Rellstab and Sprüngli who had been summoned to Berlin to introduce reforms in the Protestant Church. Rellstab had two sons, of whom the elder, Karl Friedrich (1728-88), became a printer and married Sprüngli's daughter Marie Charlotte; two children were born of this union, Johann Karl Friedrich (b. 1759), the father of Ludwig Rellstab, and Henriette (b. December 9, 1761), Alexis's mother. Both children were probably brought up in an atmosphere of religious piety. When Henriette was eighteen years old, her father's health was undermined by a stroke (perhaps a hereditary weakness from which Alexis too was to suffer) so that he found it impossible to continue with his work. His son, then still a young man, had to renounce an ambition to study music in order to take over the family music business, known since 1778 as the 'Rellstab'sche Musikhandlung'. In 1788 Johann Karl Friedrich married Henriette's friend Karoline Richter, the daughter of a factory owner; she bore him eleven children of whom six died in infancy. Henriette appears to have received a sound education for a girl of that time, although there is no evidence that she interested herself in cultural pursuits after her marriage. Ludwig Rellstab wrote of her:¹¹

My aunt was so remarkably cultured and pleasant-natured that in her youth she was chosen as governess to the royal princes, because Madame Bock was ill. While she considered whether her circumstances would permit her to accept the appointment, Madame Bock recovered and the old arrangement was continued.

When Haering proposed marriage to her, he was already in his fifties, she in her mid thirties. He had married earlier in life, but his first wife had died some years before, leaving a daughter Florentine (known in the family as Florchen) who was already twenty and for whom Henriette conceived an affection which was sisterly rather than maternal. After the wedding Henriette left Berlin, where she had grown up, and went to live with her husband in Breslau. Our author was her first child and two years later she gave birth to a daughter, who, however, only lived to the age of seven. Alexis scarcely knew his father, who died on February 15, 1802, but it is likely that Henriette kept his memory alive in her son and suggested to him that service to Prussia, like that performed by his father, was a noble ideal. After her husband's death Henriette continued to live in Breslau with Florchen and the children. She

had sufficient income from a state pension and Florchen had a little money of her own. In these years Breslau was already one of the major towns of Prussia with a population of 60,000 and some fine buildings, including the ancient town hall; by 1811 it also possessed a full university.¹²

At this time political events brought to Alexis an experience which was to exert a lasting influence over his work and character. From December 6, 1806 to January 7, 1807 Breslau was besieged by the French and their allies. Many years later Alexis set down in his reminiscences¹³ impressions of the chaos and terror which surrounded him at the time. On one occasion he was taken outside the gates of the city to witness the preparations for defence, the felling of trees and erection of palisades; on another he was almost crushed against the pillars of a narrow bridge by a passing drove of oxen under military escort. Since the family home of the Haerings was a somewhat flimsily constructed building and situated in an area exposed to the dangers of bombardment, Florchen sought and obtained through the good offices of a friendly nun permission for the family to take refuge in the nunnery of St. Catherine in the *Katterngasse*. Members of both monasteries and nunneries in the city expected their establishments to be secularized in a short time and therefore sought contact with the outside world; thus the author as a child had been allowed to visit the nunnery earlier, where he had been given confectionery (*Zuckerbrezel*) and pictures of the saints. With the coming of the siege, the regulations of the order were relaxed still further. On a stormy November night the family left in a coach with some of their possessions and struggled through the crowded streets to the nunnery to be admitted secretly through a side-door (the main gate was barred to prevent the military authorities from sheltering a herd of cattle in the forecourt!). Despite the greater sense of security which the thick walls of the old building conveyed, the Haerings and other refugees often trembled for the safety of the little community, in which, during a period of real hardship and danger, humanity overcame social barriers. According to Alexis, the Prussian commander defended the town vigorously with his inadequate forces, surrendering only when the last cow had been slaughtered. Then followed plundering by the Bavarians and Württembergers who committed the worst excesses, the demolition of the fortress by the French and the setting up of a court there by Napoleon's pleasure-seeking brother Jerome.¹⁴

Alexis declared that his dormant inclination for the most horrific aspects of romanticism was nourished by these experiences which must have been terrifying to a child. Henriette's sense of security was naturally shaken and she felt keenly the need for some male relative close at hand whom she could consult for advice and guidance in the education and upbringing of her children, one of whom was not long to survive. She therefore turned for help to her brother in Berlin whose family bookshop and music store were now thriving. He bought a large house in the *Jägerstrasse* and probably invited Henriette and her family to live with him there; they moved to the Prussian capital shortly after the capitulation and lived for many years with the Rellstab family. Rellstab, a cultured man of wide interests and the centre of an established musical circle, must have inspired his nephew with an appreciation of the arts at an early age, taken care over his education and awakened his enthusiasm for natural beauty during excursions into the countryside outside Berlin and summer holidays which the two families shared in a villa in the still wild and unspoilt *Tiergarten*.¹⁵

Unlike his cousin Ludwig Rellstab, who became a music critic, Alexis was unmusical and probably uninterested in music. This view is borne out by his comment in his reminiscences that, as a soldier, he had difficulty in distinguishing between the various trumpet calls,¹⁶ while, in a letter to Gustav Kolb (1798-1865) dated February 11, 1853,¹⁷ he refers to himself as 'amüsivissimus' in musical affairs, one who does not go to operas or concerts.

Ludwig Rellstab, his constant playmate and companion at this time, wrote of the schoolboy Alexis:¹⁸

My cousin, who had been brought up by women, was not half as wild, rough or bold as I was; for this reason I often thought that I was much better than he and poked fun at him. However, he was my superior in a much more important sphere; he was industrious, popular with the teachers, got only good reports and even prizes; I got none of these, in fact just the opposite! He was continually held up to me as an example, and in my innermost being I too thought of him as such.

The pranks of Rellstab, Alexis and their friends in the streets of Berlin later inspired our author to some of his finest writing, the adventures of the hero Etienne as a child in the first book of *Cabanis* (1832). When Rellstab was a pupil at the *Messowsche Privatschule*, Alexis probably joined him there for a time before entering the famous *Friedrich-Werdersche Gymnasium* in 1810. This school, founded in 1681, had close connections with the French Colony of Berlin.¹⁹ The first headmaster, Gabriel Zollikofer, was a Swiss, but

the children of many Protestant refugees from France were educated there. The headmaster in Alexis's time, August Ferdinand Bernhardt (1769-1820), was a friend and co-worker of the early Romantics (he was married to Ludwig Tieck's sister Sophie until their divorce in 1804), edited the literary magazine *Kynosarges* (1802) and contributed to the better-known *Athenaeum* (1798-1800). Another teacher at the school was August Gottlieb Spillecke (1778-1841) who, by means of his pedagogic writings, was largely responsible for the founding of the *Realschule*.

In 1859 Alexis published an article, 'Old and New Berlin' ('Das alte und neue Berlin'),²⁰ which throws light on the educational and literary climate of the Prussian capital in those years. Despite the influence of the Romantics (especially the Schlegel brothers, Bernhardt, Tieck, Novalis, Wackenroder) and the founding of the new university in 1809, the *Zopfgeist* (spirit of pedantry) and 'enlightenment' of Friedrich Nicolai (1733-1811) still largely prevailed, even after the War of Liberation. Romanticism only gradually gained a foothold through the teaching in the *Gymnasien* where the works of Sophocles and Aeschylus, Shakespeare and Calderón were upheld as the paragons of beauty and taste. The parents lagged behind their children in literary appreciation and laughed at what they regarded as foolish new fashions; most of them preferred to ignore the recently discovered mystic Jakob Böhme (1575-1624), Goethe or Calderón and were mistrustful of Schiller. The beautiful and relatively cultured Queen Luise of Prussia, who was universally admired, did her best to nourish art and poetry, but her taste did not rise above the sentimentality of August Lafontaine (1758-1831) over whose novels she wept. Although Shakespeare's reputation had been established to some degree by Lessing many years before, a large section of the public still disapproved of the 'wildness' of his genius; the theatre was for instruction, not amusement. Goethe's idyllic epic *Hermann und Dorothea* (1797) was still considered inferior to Voss's *Luise* (1784), while *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (*Poetry and Truth*, 1811) provoked dislike by its very title, for the would-be 'rationalists' regarded the two as incompatible, particularly since *Dichtung* can also be translated as 'fiction'. Alexis writes of a Professor of Aesthetics who quoted as his example of the epic a forgotten work by Alxinger merely because it was 'korrekt und sittenreich' (correct in the formal sense and full of good principles). The suicide of that patriotic dramatic genius Heinrich von Kleist (1771-1811) was interpreted by many of the younger generation as a political

gesture worthy of the ancients, much to the sorrow of the Prussian king who wished his people to trust in divine justice and hope for Napoleon's eventual downfall. At this point Alexis is clearly to be regarded as a member of a virile younger generation bent on the overthrow of traditional old-fashioned values in literature and education. He himself read Goethe's plays *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773), *Egmont* (1788) and the *Faust* fragment (1790) and enthused over them before he knew that they were not yet universally accepted as the products of genius. The lasting influence of Romanticism and the frequent recourse to irony in his later works have their roots in the education of his adolescence. Among his earliest attempts at composition are verses ranging from an epic stanza to a childish puzzle poem on a sheet enigmatically headed 'W. Haering. Deutsche Aufsätze. Berlin' and dated October 11, 1811.²¹ These indicate not only that he has a striking talent for imitation and rhyme-making, but also that he is interested in profound problems like religious faith and the creative forces of nature.

While Alexis was still at school, his interest in drama, and especially in the so-called *Ritterdrama* which was then in vogue, was aroused by the performances of a company of actors, the *Butenop'sche Spieltruppe*. Rellstab reports that Alexis wrote a tragedy, *Herzog Othelrich von Böhmen*, when he was about thirteen years old.²² Alexis confirms the fact in his reminiscences, mentions that he lost the only copy of the play and describes the plot, derived from a *Ritterroman* and recalling features in Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*,²³ in which the Bohemian king Udalricus wrestles for power with his brother Jaromir. According to Alexis, he and Rellstab performed this play several times during their boyhood. He also mentions his part in a competition between a dozen boys to write a play about the ill-starred German prince Conradin.

Alexis never lost his interest in the country and city of his birth, as may be seen from his later willingness to meet and help Silesian writers,²⁴ but it was inevitable that he should come to regard Berlin as his home. Since he lived in the Prussian capital for nearly fifty years, he may justly be regarded as a Prussian and Berliner, at least by adoption. He enjoyed the additional advantage that he was able to view the *Mark* as a sympathetic onlooker who noticed features overlooked by the native. When he arrived in Berlin the population was about 180,000, and by 1860, when he finally lost contact with the city, it had grown to 496,000. Most of the more imposing buildings were erected in the period after the War of Liberation, and

he witnessed remarkable changes and material development, including the advent of the railways.²⁵ In the preface to the first edition of his novel *Die Hosen des Herrn von Bredow* (*The Breeches of Sir Götz von Bredow*), 1846,²⁶ he remarked:

As a boy I liked to roam in the neighbourhood of one of the gates of Berlin where heather and fields of sand, scarcely broken by sad clumps of pine and a few pools of water, stretched into the infinite distance. Later I was pleased to see—I still did not know why—that a few settlers had built there, first of all on the moist low ground. The pools became kitchen gardens, lines of bushes which became green hedges divided up the stretches of sand; the planted bushes became trees, the huts houses, the steppe, now fully cultivated, became one large piece of tilled land. Now it grows green and blossoms; the mind has mastered an arid, intimidating form of nature, and hundred-armed industry has already insufficient of this desert, already it has brought under the axe the pine woods which bordered it.

All this guided activity and development was associated by Alexis with the wise and energetic leadership of the Hohenzollerns who had raised Prussia from an obscure province to a great and powerful state. Here lies the origin of our author's admiration for the Prussian royal house.

Alexis passed his schooldays in a city occupied by French troops and this experience undoubtedly stimulated his patriotism and hatred of foreign oppression. Both at school and at home he was encouraged to look upon Napoleon as a tyrant and his French connections (if they existed) would have seemed so remote as to preclude any problem of inner racial conflict. In his reminiscences²⁷ he describes the return to Berlin from Russia of the wretched survivors of the *Grande Armée*, the scorn which their plight evoked among the hostile Berliners, their dread of the Cossacks and withdrawal from the city after a brief engagement. When the Cossacks were known to be approaching, the inhabitants streamed into the streets to watch the battle, the school-children refusing to stay in the classrooms. Later, patriots vied with one another to billet the Cossacks who were welcomed as liberators. Eventually, however, even the most enthusiastic were appalled by the Cossacks' appetite for food and drink and their unclean habits, for the Berliners had created for themselves an ideal picture of the Cossacks before their arrival. Hence they were glad to see them depart, so that their conception of the Cossack as the 'free and unspoilt son of the steppe' would not be marred by cruel reality! Alexis was impressed by the patriotic spirit of the Berliners, though he could not resist poking fun at the

efforts of scholars like his own headmaster Bernhardi, who armed themselves in the Homeric fashion with spears! In the first flush of patriotic fervour Alexis burned to fight the French, but he was still below the age at which recruits were accepted, and with a heavy heart watched his older comrades march out to battle, grieving that he could not accompany them.

The sudden death of the elder Rellstab on August 19, 1813 was a great shock to both families, for he was not only the breadwinner but also the only adult male in the household. From this time onwards Alexis and his cousin had to assume a much greater burden of responsibility in family affairs.

Alexis's school friends included two boys who later became famous. One was the celebrated portrait-painter Eduard Magnus (1799-1872) who shared Alexis's early interest in carpentry and helped him to make a table for his mother's birthday.²⁸ The other was Eduard Ludolff, a lawyer in Stettin who eventually squandered an inherited fortune in helping singers, artists and writers, especially the popular Henriette Sontag (1806-54); he disappeared from Berlin in debt and possibly drowned himself.²⁹ That Ludolff made a strong impression on Alexis is suggested by the fact that he not only kept in touch with him, sending him a copy of his *Wiener Bilder* (*Pictures of Vienna*, 1833), but also, as late as 1851, was reminded by one of the characters in a novel he was reviewing of 'the missing Justizrat Ludolff . . . that amiable materialist and egoist'.³⁰

About 1814 Alexis the young literary enthusiast composed three stories, dedicated to Ludolff and entitled *Der Kynast* (*The Pine Branch*), *Glaubenskampf* (*A Conflict of Faith*) and *Die Vergeltung* (*Retribution*).³¹ The last two stories are of interest in showing the author's development. In the preface to *Glaubenskampf* he expresses his dissatisfaction with his story. He has not been able to concentrate his material as he wished; he has taken pains to avoid using foreign words. The action takes place against a historical background, the Thirty Years' War, shortly after the victory of the Swedes at Lützen (1632). Bernhard, town clerk of Gemünden and a zealous Catholic, is separated by his religious belief from the woman he loves, the Protestant Katharina. The Virgin Mary appears to him in a vision, adjuring him to fight the devil and secure Katharina's salvation (presumably through her conversion to Catholicism). Bernhard is prepared for his task by a hermit. After a bitter struggle with innumerable evil spirits, who have perhaps some symbolical significance, he is finally defeated. As he lies dying, Gottschalk,

Katharina's brother and a soldier in the Swedish army, appears on the scene. Bernhard accuses him of being Katharina's murderer, in the sense that he opposes her conversion to Catholicism which would save her soul. There is a return to reality in the description of a skirmish between the opposing factions in which Gottschalk accidentally kills his sister. He then seeks death in battle as atonement for his guilt.

Die Vergeltung, sub-titled 'a legend of olden times', was written in a very short space of time. It has a framework story in which a young man, taking a walk with a friend, narrates the legend concerning a strangely-shaped stone which attracts their attention. A cruel and arrogant knight, Ulrich von Bornen, was said to have ill-treated his daughter Adelheid to such an extent that she finally eloped with his servant Veit. In revenge the knight had the young man's aged father beaten to death. The young couple lived like savages in a cave and waylaid passing travellers, robbing and killing them. After murdering an unknown knight who turned out to be Ulrich, they were hunted down, captured, tortured and then left to the mercy of wild animals and birds of prey. The detailed description of Adelheid's dying agonies shows that Alexis's childish imagination had been poisoned by the indiscriminate reading of coarse and sensational novels. In an essay on the education of the young published in 1834 Alexis observes:³²

Nature has scattered poisonous plants among the medicinal herbs and hung up no notice of warning, as the botanizing gardener does. Wishing to educate the human race, she has let it acquire wisdom through instinct and experience. As a boy I had poisoned my imagination with the most horrific novels, and why? Because they were forbidden me. Later, when I was allowed to read what I liked, I did not look at them again.

In the same year he refers to his voracious youthful appetite for sensational stories and remarks, in a review of *Adolar der Weiber-verächter* (*Adolar, Scorned of Woman*), that an exciting plot still fascinates him:³³

I, an old reader, who was born with Rinaldo and reared with the twelve sleeping virgins, I, who shed tears with Rudolf von Werdenberg and the Knights of the Lion Order, and grew up with the writers Spiess, Cramer, Kratter, Kruse and Hildebrand, I, who thought I knew of all that could happen in this world, i.e. the world of the novel, was so gripped by this *Adolar* that I did not sleep for a night and, what is even more remarkable, even forgot my midday nap on one of the dog-days!

The two stories, although immature and unattractive as reading matter, throw light on his literary development in revealing that the taste for the fantastic and horrible existed in his nature before he encountered E. T. A. Hoffmann's works. His early interest in historical portrayal is reflected in *Glaubenskampf*, in which an attempt is made to suggest the atmosphere of religious fanaticism of the period. Landscape description is already employed to induce a certain mood or *Stimmung*, here grotesque and wild scenery to evoke terror.

Alexis's literary activities while at school included the editing of a school newspaper, to which he probably contributed himself. That he had other, perhaps healthier, interests than the reading of sensational stories can be seen from the description of some early drawings by him exhibited in 1912.³⁴ These belong mostly to his last years at school. Many of them are in Indian ink, but some in bright colours. As subjects he showed a marked preference for knights and battle scenes or illustrations of the works of Goethe or Schiller.

REFERENCES

(W.A. = Willibald Alexis)

¹ See Max Ewert, 'Henriette Haering' (*Willibald-Alexis-Bund. 2 Jahresbericht. 1927*, pp. 1-12) which I have followed for several details in the chapter.

² II, pp. 335-7.

³ Béringuier, *Die französische Colonie*, Jg. 16, 1902, pp. 89-90.

⁴ Daniel H. Hering, *Nachrichten vom Anfange der evangelischen reformierten Kirche in Brandenburg*, Halle, 1778. For other members of the Hering family, see *Mémoires* . . . II, p. 43; IV, pp. 340-41.

⁵ I, p. 26. Meine beiden französischen Nachbarn wollten haben, ich hätte das Gesicht eines Breton; als ob ich seit meinem Ururgroßvater, den freilich Ludwig XIV Dragoner aus der Bretagne verjagt, kein Deutscher geworden bin.

⁶ Karl Julius Schröder, *Die deutsche Dichtung des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Leipzig, 1885, p. 318. Alexis . . . stammte aus einer bretagnischen Familie, die den bretagnischen Namen mit dem deutschen Haering vertauscht hatte. Er schrieb selbst die romantischen Neigungen seiner Natur diesem Umstande zu. Er erzählte mir, daß man seine Gesichtsbildung in Frankreich für bretagnisch erklärt habe (die starken Backenknochen).

⁷ Béringuier, *ibid.*

⁸ In Brandenburgische Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek, Potsdam.

⁹ *Erinnerungen*, ed. Ewert, Berlin, 1900, pp. 13-14, 178-9.

¹⁰ Ludwig Rellstab, *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben*, Berlin, 1861, I, pp. 3 ff.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10. Die Bildung und Liebenswürdigkeit meiner Tante war so seltner Art, daß sie in ihrer Jugend zur Erzieherin der königlichen Prinzen bestimmt wurde, da Madame Bock erkrankt war. Während sie sich überlegte, ob ihre Verhältnisse ihr gestatten würden, den Antrag anzunehmen, erholte sich indessen Madame Bock und das alte Verhältnis blieb.

¹² See article in *Conversations-Lexikon*, 1833, II, pp. 210-11 ('Breslau').

¹³ *Erinnerungen*, ed. Ewert, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-28.

¹⁴ For another view of these events, see Karl von Holtei, *Vierzig Jahre*, Breslau, 1862, I, pp. 2 ff., 50 ff.

¹⁵ Rellstab, *op. cit.*, pp. 18 ff.

¹⁶ *Erinnerungen*, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

¹⁷ In Wrocław (Breslau) University Library.

¹⁸ Rellstab, op. cit., pp. 245 f. Mein Vetter, der unter einer weiblichen Erziehung aufgewachsen, war lange nicht so wild, roh, aber auch nicht so keck als ich; deshalb dünkte ich mich oft weit über ihn und machte ihn zum Ziel meines Spottes. Er dagegen siegte auf viel bedeutenderem Felde über mich; er war fleißig, von den Lehrern geliebt, brachte nur gute Zeugnisse, Prämien sogar, ich von alledem nichts, sogar das Gegenteil! Er wurde mir stets als Vorbild hingestellt, und ich hielt ihn auch in meinem Innern dafür.

¹⁹ Erman and Reclam, *Mémoires* . . . op. cit., III, p. 290.

²⁰ *Morgenblatt*, nos. 15 and 16, reprinted in *Willibald-Alexis-Bund Festgabe*, 1935, pp. 11 ff.

²¹ In Brandenburgische Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek, Potsdam.

²² Rellstab, op. cit., pp. 136-40.

²³ *Erinnerungen*, op. cit., p. 324.

²⁴ e.g. Eduard Arnd (1802-74), student at Breslau, who later published a history of French literature (1856).

²⁵ Berlin. See *Conversations-Lexikon*, 1832, I, pp. 803-9 ('Berlin').

²⁶ p. xvi. Als Knabe streifte ich gerne vor einem der Tore Berlins, wo sich in unendlicher Weite Haidenkraut und Sandfelder hinzogen, kaum durch trauriges Kiefergestrüpp und einige Tümpel unterbrochen. Später sah ich gern — ich wußte noch nicht weshalb — wie einzelne Ansiedler sich hier anbauten, zuerst an den feuchten Niederungen; aus den Tümpeln wurden Kohlgärten, Strauchzäune schieden die Sandfelder, sie wurden grünende Hecken; aus den angepflanzten Büschen Bäume, Gebüsche, aus den Hütten Häuser, die Steppe, jetzt ganz in Kultur gelegt, ward ein großes Ackerfeld. Jetzt grünt es und blüht es; der Geist wird Herr über die dürre, abschreckende Natur, und die Industrie mit hundert Armen hat schon nicht mehr genug an dieser Wüste; sie hat schon das Beil angelegt an die Kieferwäldungen, welche sie begrenzen.

²⁷ *Erinnerungen*, op. cit., pp. 29-53.

²⁸ Ewert, 'Henriette Haering', op. cit., p. 5.

²⁹ Karoline Bauer, *Posthumous Memoirs*, London, 1884, pp. 175 ff., 185.

³⁰ H. H. Houben, *Gutzkow-Funde*, Berlin, 1901, p. 503.

³¹ The first published in *Der Kynast*, 1898, Heft I, Oppeln/Leipzig (described by Alexis as 'ein Gemälde aus dem frühen Mittelalter'), the last two published with comment by Max Ewert in *Nord und Süd*, October, 1901, pp. 104-21. A fourth story, *Abu*, probably older than the others, is less important.

³² 'Erziehung und Lektüre' in *Der Freimütige*, February 25, 1834. Die Natur streute Giftpflanzen neben den Heilpflanzen und hing keine Warnungstafel hin, wie der botanische Gärtner. Sie ließ das Menschengeschlecht, das sie erziehen wollte, durch Instinkt und Erfahrung klug werden. Ich hatte als Knabe meine Phantasie mit den schauderhaftesten Romanen vergiftet, und woher? — Weil sie mir verboten waren. Nachher, als mir alles erlaubt war, habe ich sie nicht mehr angerührt.

³³ *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, no. 44, February 13, 1834. Hat mich alten Leser, der mit dem Rinaldo geboren und mit den zwölf schlafenden Jungfrauen erzogen ist, der noch mit Rudolf von Werdenberg und den Löwenrittern Tränen vergoß und mit Spieß, Cramer, Kratter, Kruse, Hildebrand groß wurde, der aber nun auch meinte, alles zu wissen, was in der Welt, nämlich der Romanenwelt passieren kann . . . hat mich doch selbst, sage ich, dieser Adolar so gefaßt, daß ich eine Nacht nicht schlief und, was noch mehr sagen will, auch an einem Hundstage das Nachmittagsschläfen vergaß!

³⁴ *Monatsblätter des Touristenklubs für die Mark Brandenburg*, 'Unsere W.A. Ausstellung im Märkischen Museum' (R. Barthel), XXI, 1912, pp. 57-60.

CHAPTER TWO

FULLY FLEDGED

ALEXIS had his chance to fight the French after all. By the time Napoleon escaped from Elba, he was old enough to be accepted as a volunteer in the famous Colberg regiment. His account of this experience, which he later regarded as the most formative in his whole life, appeared in 1844 as part of his reminiscences in the annual *Penelope* edited by Theodor Hell.¹ It seems to be based on his letters home and a diary which he kept regularly at this time. Extremely readable, it reflects both his powers of graphic description and his gift for portraying personal vicissitudes humorously. His attitude to political events is similar to that adopted in his historical novels, patriotic without being chauvinistic, as he recalls the spirit of conscious patriotism which inspired German youth in 1813 and 1814:

We revelled in Fouqué's legends of Scandinavia, in his thorough hatred for the modern French. The ideas of Jahn [the founder of German gymnastics] were powerful, even outside the *Hasenheide* [the traditional meeting place of the movement]. The knotted kerchief, with which everyone who desecrated the German language by using a foreign word was struck three times, also exerted a moral influence among young people. Jahn's Teutonism was no delusive vision for us, but a reality and we still hoped confidently for the realization of our ideas for a German nationality, even if we were not agreed either with others or amongst ourselves as to how they should be realized.²

When Alexis the schoolboy enlisted from the most idealistic motives, it came as a shock to him to discover very soon that many of his fellow volunteers were attracted less by the thought of serving their country than by the opportunity of encountering adventure and evading responsibility. The wildness and hardship of the soldier's life was a sobering experience for a youth who had been brought up by a somewhat doting mother in a middle-class environment. In May 1815 he set out with his comrades on the long march which was to prove a trial of endurance to a greenhorn slight in build and unaccustomed to walking long distances. At first he suffered from the weight of his equipment and the fact that he strapped himself too tightly, but eventually he enjoyed the experience and, as a result, later made long walking tours for pleasure and

was always eager to visit foreign countries. He was accompanied by his cousin Rellstab as far as Brandenburg, from whence he marched via Magdeburg, Brunswick, Hildesheim, Hamelin, Lemgo, through the Teutoburg Forest to Paderborn, through Soest and Unna to the first sight of the Rhine at Cologne, pushing on with speed via Aachen to Namur. On his seventeenth birthday he stood on the battlefield of Waterloo, ten days after Napoleon's defeat. The terrible conditions he encountered in the hospitals and the sight of war's legacy of suffering and destruction staggered and horrified him. His own hardships included the loss of his spectacles (he was short-sighted) and his hunting knife. Then followed several months of boring operations, besieging small towns and forts which were still holding out in an area roughly equivalent to the present Franco-Belgian frontier. Food was short, quarters were poor and repeated spells of rain added to the unpleasantness. Yet he was never ill and even believed in later years that these hardships had strengthened his resistance to disease.

In his account Alexis does not attempt to invest war with a romantic halo and obviously feels that the great days of the War of Liberation had already passed into history before his enlistment; he stresses the trials of the forced marches, the boredom of the long, futile sieges, his distaste for *Kamaschendienst* ('spit and polish') into which the campaign finally degenerated. The somewhat ridiculous activities of that unsuccessful private society, the *Hermannsbund*, show that the spirit of Romanticism was not lacking in Alexis and other comrades with an enthusiasm for patriotic verse. Our author himself was deeply affected by the sight of historical landmarks in the parts of Germany through which he passed:³

My heart beat with delight when I saw before me the towers of Magdeburg, grey with age . . . the cathedral, the sacred graves of the Emperors. . . . I naturally saw as much of the sights of Hildesheim as I could, especially the cathedral, rich in legend and art. . . . We were approaching Westphalia. Once more the land looked different; in every chain of hills, on every ancient track my eye was already seeking out Roman roads and the footprints of Cherusicans and Saxons.

He records his delight at the sight of the statue of Roland in the town of Brandenburg; this may well have been the first stimulus for one of his major works, *Der Roland von Berlin* (1840). His patriotic idealism is reflected in his choice of reading material for the campaign—a copy of the *Nibelungenlied* which, however, according to his own account, he brought home again unread! This detail is symbolical of the development which Alexis later traced in himself

at this time, a sobering of Romantic ideals which found expression in self-mockery.

Like most of his comrades Alexis was heartily sick of army life by the time he was finally discharged in France in November. His discharge papers record that he had served seven months 'und sich während dieser Zeit als ein braver Soldat bei allen Vorfällen bewiesen und vorzugsweise geführt hat', in other words, the military authorities were satisfied with his conduct.⁴ Returning to his studies at the *Werdersche Gymnasium*, he worked for his matriculation examination which he passed in Easter, 1817, offering an essay on the theme which showed his literary and linguistic interests—'In what ways can the culture and character of a race be deduced from its language?'

It is probable that Alexis first began to practise regular self-discipline and to develop the ability to work long hours during his student years. First he entered the University of Berlin, where he studied law and history for two semesters under the distinguished professors Friedrich Karl von Savigny (1779-1861), who already had a number of disciples in legal studies, and Friedrich von Raumer (1781-1873), the eminent historian and later a close friend. The university, although recently founded, had already attracted scholars of reputation, but the hastily-improvised accommodation, the former palace of Prince Henry, was crammed to overflowing. Unlike older foundations such as Bonn or Heidelberg, student society did not flourish here and the university was already acquiring a reputation for the remarkable industry and sobriety of its students. Alexis continued to live with his relatives, although he moved about 1819 to lodgings in *Luisenstrasse* and a few years later to *Kochstrasse*. In 1818 he left Berlin for a short time to study at his birthplace Breslau, for at that time as now German students were expected to attend lectures at more than one university. Although it must have been a moving experience for him to return to the scenes of his childhood and to a city which he always remembered with affection, he has left no record of his stay. It is likely that he made new student friends and that his interest in Silesia and its inhabitants was enlivened by first-hand knowledge of Breslau (from the adult's point of view) and of the *Riesengebirge* (Giant Mountains), where he made a walking tour with student friends in the autumn of 1818. It was on this tour that he met the Silesian writer and dramatist Karl von Holtei (1798-1880). Holtei, unconventional and nomadic in his way of life, was to be his friend till his death. Holtei has described how he was also walking with student friends in the same area, when they

met Alexis's party while crossing a river. One of Holtei's companions, Friedrich Scholz (or Scholtz), knew Alexis and introduced Holtei to him. From remarks by Holtei we can learn a little about Scholz, Alexis's student friend; he came from Bernstadt and was later a senior magistrate (*Stadtgerichtsdirektor*) at Oels. Holtei was attracted by his intense interest in all the arts, in particular literature, and by the fact that he accepted the good or bad qualities in his friends as part of them. Although Scholz did not write himself, he must have been of especial value to Alexis as an unselfish and unbiassed critic.⁵

Before returning to his studies in Berlin, Alexis indulged once more his passion for travel by visiting, in the spring of 1819, Heidelberg, Bonn and Strassburg, parts of Swabia and Dresden, even Weimar, though he was disappointed in his hope of catching a glimpse of Goethe. He was in Berlin once more by the autumn and passed his first law examination in the spring of 1820. While at the university he attended additional lectures on literature and philosophy and made a close study of aspects of German and English literature.

These subjects formed a basis for the various sides of his later work, law in his preoccupation with legal procedure and criminal psychology, history for the historical novel founded on a careful study of chronicles, documents and memoirs, English literature for his knowledge and understanding of Scott, Byron and other British writers, German literature for his work as a reviewer and critic of contemporary publications. At the same time he probably pursued linguistic studies which brought him a reading knowledge of foreign languages, including English, Spanish and French. He was already translating from English (his version of Scott's *Lady of the Lake* was begun in 1818), composing poems and ballads, idylls and fairy-tales. As may be seen from an unpublished poem written in March 1818, he sought refuge from personal unhappiness in poetry.⁶ Passages in letters from his friends written in these years indicate that he was liable to fits of depression and hypochondria during which he even withdrew from contact with intimates. Scholz writes (October 5, 1821): 'And when I think of you . . . and how everything around you all too easily assumes in your eyes an alien, repellent appearance, how you then, intimidated and almost offended, withdraw into your shell and the realm of your own ideas and emotions, then I am afraid that you may regret having been so frank with me.' On January 28 of the same year, Holtei had remarked: 'By the way,

from your last letter I have deduced that the devil of hypochondria sometimes teases you. I beg you above all to drive him away somehow, either by walks or by dancing, by writing verse or by love affairs. . . .'⁷

Alexis's first published work, printed at his own expense, was the long poem *Die Treibjagd* (*The Shoot*), described by him as 'an amusingly idyllic epic in four cantos' ('ein scherzhaft idyllisches Epos in vier Gesängen'), perhaps to distinguish it from the serious idyllic epics, such as Voss's *Luise* (1784) and Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea* (1797). The slim volume appeared in 1820, with a preface in verse dated June 1819. The hero of this tale in verse (written in rather wooden hexameters) is clearly the melancholy young author, while the influence of the writings of Jean Paul Richter (1763-1825) is almost painfully apparent, both in characterization and in the ironic approach. Alexis sent a copy to Jean Paul and his accompanying letter reflects his profound admiration for a writer whose work was then immensely popular among the younger intellectuals. Alexis describes how in the summer of 1819 he had made an extensive tour of both North and South Germany on foot and wanted to pay his respects to Jean Paul by visiting him at his home near Bayreuth. Unfortunately, Jean Paul was away, but he was able to talk to his landlady, Frau Rollwenzel, about his idol and even to see his room and sit in his chair.⁸ It is clear that he is now a little ashamed of his first attempt at publication, but he nevertheless asks Jean Paul for an opinion. Jean Paul's reply was friendly but without any detailed reference to the work itself.⁹ The satirical fairy-tale *Drei Tage im Riesengebirge* (*Three Days in the Giant Mountains*) was also written during Alexis's student years, although not published until 1821 (in the *Gesellschafter*); in some ways it foreshadows Heine's travel-books (e.g. *Harzreise*, or *Journey in the Harz Mountains*, 1826), for although greater use is made of the bizarre and fantastic, the element of social criticism is already prominent (e.g. mockery at fashions in literature and student dress).

After leaving the university in 1820, Alexis began his legal career as a junior barrister (*Auskultator*); some years later he was promoted to a higher rank (*Referendar*) and service in the criminal section of the Superior Court of Justice (*Kriminalschat des Kammergerichts*). A senior colleague here, the writer and friend of E. T. A. Hoffmann, Julius Eduard Hitzig (1780-1849), later wrote warmly of Alexis's brilliance as a lawyer, when he collaborated with him in editing accounts of famous legal cases in *Der neue Pitaval*. Other friends

made at this time were the writer and musician Adolf Bernhard Marx (1795–1866) and the literary critic Georg Wilhelm von Lüdemann (1796–1863), both of whom were embarking on a legal career in these years.

Towards the end of 1819 or at the beginning of 1820 Alexis made the acquaintance of the Romantic poet Friedrich Baron de la Motte Fouqué (1777–1843) whose influence on contemporary literary was already waning, although he was still a revered figure among men of letters. Alexis may have met Fouqué through Hitzig. Certainly Fouqué encouraged his literary ambitions, introduced him to other writers, including E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776–1822), and arranged through his publisher, Leonhard Schrag of Nuremberg, for the publication of some of Alexis's poems and ballads in the *Frauentaschenbuch* (a women's annual, of which Fouqué was editor at the time). It was in these years that Alexis secured entry to the most brilliant literary salon in Berlin, that of Rahel Varnhagen (1771–1833) where he probably met for the first time her brother, the dramatist Ludwig Robert (1780–1832), her husband Varnhagen von Ense (1785–1858) and the poet Heinrich Heine (1797–1856).

One of Alexis's student friends was Ernst Dronke (1797–1849)¹⁰ to whom he is known to have sent at least six letters between 1819 and 1822. On April 8, 1821 Alexis wrote to Dronke: 'I have got to know someone—you won't believe it—whose acquaintance I have come to value and who has been a considerable influence on my intellectual life—I am speaking of Fouqué. I have got to know him well, he has taken me up with the greatest friendliness imaginable and I have learnt to respect and love him, even though I don't altogether agree with his ideas.'¹¹ Fouqué seems to have been drawn to Alexis and recommends him to Hitzig (who almost certainly knew him already) on April 18, 1822 with the words: 'Alexis-Häring—that's our sort—a pure youth with a noble ring like precious metal. As gentle and open-hearted as the flowers of spring!' (As the translation seeks to impart, Fouqué's vocabulary is strongly emotional.)¹²

Alexis describes how he met E. T. A. Hoffmann at Fouqué's Berlin home, probably late in 1819. He heard Hoffmann defend the organization of 'Vater' Jahn, which some people then regarded as a danger to public security, and attack the prevalent witch-hunt of demagogues. In a conversation with Fouqué's wife Caroline,¹³ Hoffmann talked about the sources he had used in writing his story *Das Fräulein von Scuderi*, then only recently published; he declared

that he had taken features like the casket and the verse addressed to the heroine from Wagenseil's chronicle, but that the plot itself was 'invented and fabricated' ('erfunden und erlogen'). Alexis continues:

I looked up the chronicle; and the passage in Wagenseil from which Hoffmann drew his story is not only interesting because it shows us how a genuine writer can strike the brightest sparks from an unassuming stone, but also because it teaches us the uses of poetry.

In his penchant for fantastic and grotesque features which destroyed the illusion of reality, Alexis was dominated by Hoffmann's style in his early work, and even in his mature historical novels he was unable to liberate himself wholly from the older writer's influence. In this connection the passage quoted above is important, for it suggests that Alexis found in *Das Fräulein von Scuderi* a treatment of historical theme in which the demands of historical truth were reconciled with those of imaginative fiction, an aspect of Hoffmann's influence which has been overlooked.

Fouqué's influence was confined to Alexis's early poems and ballads, some of which were published as a result of his patronage. At a later date Alexis criticized Fouqué's presentation of history in his novels as romantic and unreal. The two writers remained on friendly terms and in correspondence until at least 1831, by which time Fouqué was claiming to have renounced literature and Alexis was the respected editor of the Berlin literary journal *Der Freimütige* (*The Man of Candour*). Alexis reviewed Fouqué's works on six different occasions and also wrote an obituary notice in 1843, where he refers to the Romantic's idealism and failure to progress with the age:

We others have awakened, but Fouqué, though completely sincere, kept his illusions. Till his death he saw around him the same phantasmagoria which had delighted him as a youth, everywhere the lofty piles of castles and cathedrals, the tournaments, the different classes. . . . As a result he rejected and did away with all progress, condemning it as the devil's work. The whole of the modern age together with all its trends, endeavours and results he regarded as a hellish illusion.¹⁴

Fouqué furthered young Alexis's ambitions both as literary critic and dramatist, introducing him to Matthäus von Collin (1779-1823), editor of the influential Viennese journal *Jahrbücher der Literatur*, to which Alexis contributed a number of reviews and articles from 1820 onwards, thereby winning recognition in this field. Fouqué also secured him an interview with the director of the Royal Theatre (*Königliches Theater*) in Berlin, Karl, Graf von Brühl (1772-1837). By 1820 he was also acquainted with two literary figures

who dabbled successfully in popular literature (*Unterhaltungsliteratur*), Friedrich Kind (1768–1843), who was partly responsible for the libretto of Weber's opera *Der Freischütz* and Theodor Hell (pseudonym for Karl Gottfried Theodor Winkler, 1775–1856, best known as the editor of the *Abendzeitung* in Dresden). Alexis suffered the customary set-backs experienced by young writers in placing his early poems and seems to have taken offence at the off-hand treatment accorded him by the Romantic poet Friedrich Rückert (1788–1866) who was for a time editor of the *Frauentaschenbuch* (women's annual); in a letter dated December 31, 1821 his complaints culminate in the outburst: 'I repeat that if you, Sir, have considered it necessary to suppress my works as belonging to those which deserve hostility, I shall be very willing to withdraw from further participation in the *Frauentaschenbuch* in order not to intrude.'¹⁵

Although he had won his first success as a literary critic, he still hesitated to devote himself primarily to this sphere. In a letter to Theodor Hell dated October 17, 1821 he mentions an invitation by the famous Leipzig publisher Friedrich Arnold Brockhaus (1772–1823) to contribute to the magazine *Hermes* and remarks: 'But I am more suited on the whole to the expression of lyric inspiration and fervour than to be a critical judge.'¹⁶ Here he is obviously mistaken about his own ability, for it was in the fields of narrative prose and literary criticism that he was to make his most serious contribution to literature. Apparently he decided to undertake reviewing in spite of his own opinion, and it was probably his main source of income when he gave up his legal work; he contributed to *Hermes* from 1821 to 1826, to the *Gesellschafter* from 1821 to 1833, to *Abendzeitung* from 1821 to 1825. Even more important and numerous were his contributions to the Leipzig *Literarisches Conversationsblatt* (re-named *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung* from July 1826) which continued without long pauses from 1822 till 1859. His reviews and articles reflect the extraordinary variety of his interests. In general, however, his attention appears to have been focused on current German publications and those of foreign literatures, especially English. He showed his critical powers in reviews of the works of Heine, Karl Immermann (1796–1840) and the popular historical novelist Karl Franz van der Velde (1779–1824), in articles concerning Scott and reviews of his works and in an essay on ballad poetry.¹⁷ Alexis first became acquainted with Scott's work at the university and later made a special study of it, which partly explains the success of his translations of *The Lady of the Lake* and *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*.¹⁸

Die Schlacht bei Torgau, a story published in 1823, is often regarded as Alexis's first attempt to emulate Scott the historical novelist in the sphere of Prussian history and a step towards *Cabanis* (1832). A romantically-inclined young theologian is pressed into service in the army of Frederick the Great and comes into direct, and sometimes painful, contact with military life. The superstition and hedonism of the soldiers are well portrayed and Frederick himself, whom the hero saves from death without apparently winning his gratitude, appears in characteristic guise:

The fallen man, an officer, but very poorly dressed and almost without decorations, concealed himself carefully in his cloak. . . . The pointed nose, the large, bright eyes, the furrowed cheeks, the distinctive face. . . .¹⁹

When E. T. A. Hoffmann died in 1822, his friend Hitzig, who was acquainted with Alexis, undertook the task of composing a biography and enlisted Alexis's aid in the project. Heine greatly admired the essay which Alexis contributed, claiming (in the second preface to *Die Romantische Schule*, dated June 30, 1833) that it was the only serious attempt to assess Hoffmann's work; in actual fact it is one of Alexis's weakest literary essays.²⁰ Alexis was primarily interested in the treatment of history in Hoffmann's stories, but, in order to embark on his task, he must have read all Hoffmann's better-known stories, if he did not already know them intimately by this time. The fact that he studied Hoffmann's work in detail would explain why he found it so difficult to rid even his mature work of Hoffmannesque characteristics.

Alexis seems to have been acquainted with Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853) from about 1820 onwards²¹ and met him during a visit to Dresden which also brought him into personal contact with Theodor Hell and the painter Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840). Tieck was not so helpful as Fouqué had been in furthering his literary ambitions, partly because Alexis sought assistance from him in getting his somewhat trivial early dramas performed, but Tieck's own work undoubtedly inspired Alexis, who continued to regard him as one of the greatest writers, worthy of a place beside Goethe. Despite considerable opposition from some of the senior members of the literary society, the *Mittwochsgesellschaft*, Alexis organized a festival to celebrate Tieck's sixtieth birthday in 1833. He particularly admired his story of religious intolerance *Der Aufruhr in den Cevennen* (*The Rising in the Cevennes*), portraying the struggle of the Camisards against the authority of Louis XIV (first two parts published in

1826). At the celebrations Alexis presided at one of the tables, opened the champagne and proposed a toast to the continuation of this work, which was never completed. He also arranged for an account of the proceedings to be published in a Berlin journal. When Tieck returned to Berlin in 1841 to spend the rest of his life in or near his native city, our author wrote up the celebrations in his honour and, after his death, published a lengthy obituary, praising above all Tieck's fascinating personality.

The story *Der Schatz des Tempelherrn* (*The Treasure of the Knight Templar*), which appeared with *Die Schlacht bei Torgau* in 1823, is closely modelled in characterization and situation on Tieck's story *Die Gemälde* (*The Pictures*, 1821). Two further stories also appeared in 1823, *Iblou* and *Der Schleichhändler* (*The Smuggler*). Not only is the main idea for *Iblou* taken from the author's own experiences during the French campaign—certain episodes also bear a clear resemblance to those related in *Mein Marsch nach Frankreich*.²² An atmosphere of Hoffmannesque mystery and fantasy is evoked, and the device of romantic irony, in which the reader's curiosity is aroused and left half satisfied, when the most unlikely developments are shown to have a rational explanation, is employed to excess. The author, a German soldier billeted on a French household, becomes involved in a gloomy tale of family intrigue. During the siege of Givat in 1815 Martin Iblou, Mayor of St. A . . . , has murdered his wealthy brother. The French officer Captain Barbaroux knows of his crime and attempts to blackmail him. Iblou is living in a castle occupied by the Prussians, but steals into the French camp every night to negotiate with his tormentor. The sentries are seized with terror, for his appearance in the misty twilight is ghostlike and awe-inspiring. At last Iblou is driven to murder Barbaroux also. He plans to send his niece Adelaide, the daughter of his dead brother, to a nunnery, but her lover Delabelle prevents this and avenges Adelaide and her father by killing Iblou himself. It is obvious that the imaginative terrors of the youthful, short-sighted Alexis on sentry duty during the siege of a French fort played a major role in the story.

Der Schleichhändler is centred on the conflict between the customs officer Hallwyn, an impoverished aristocrat and former officer in Frederick's army, and the smuggler Uriel, who is one of the many eccentrics among Alexis's characters. Uriel has taken to a life of crime because of his hatred for Hallwyn who had treated him harshly as his superior officer; his misfortunes and character prepare

the way for those of Gottlieb in *Cabanis*. A 'happy ending' is engineered through Uriel's love for Hallwyn's daughter. The historical background, a period shortly after the Seven Years' War, and the location, the frontier between Mecklenburg and Brandenburg, make this story, like *Die Schlacht bei Torgau*, an early experiment in the portrayal of the Friderician age and the landscape of Brandenburg—hence in a restricted sense a preliminary study (one of several) for the historical novel *Cabanis*.

Walladmor, a novel published under Scott's name, was composed at high speed in the summer of 1823, and all three volumes of the work had appeared by 1824. This clever parody and its reception in Germany and England (where De Quincey translated it) have been examined in detail elsewhere—suffice it to say that, once it became known that Alexis was its author, he rose to fame almost overnight. Such fame was, however, a form of literary notoriety, originating from the success of a bold hoax and merely demonstrating his ability to write in the fashionable style and genre of the moment. The witty prank overshadowed his later, more mature work and prevented it from being judged seriously and impartially. Above all it was Alexis's youthful devotion to romantic irony which brought him early and shallow success; he wrote about this to Theodor Hell in 1820:²³

It is my principle that one may also poke fun at what is most sacred, even if one is oneself most sincerely convinced of its truth, and that everything, poetry above all, must have two sides, the tragic and the comic, and I consider it wrong to separate harshly these two sides.

Encouraged by the apparent success of *Walladmor*, Alexis decided that it was now time for him to abandon his legal career and devote all his energies to literary writing. He had long been troubled by his inability to give himself wholeheartedly to either law or literature, as a number of remarks in his correspondence indicate, including this passage in a letter to Theodor Hell, dated April 20, 1824:²⁴

Your kind invitation [to contribute to Hell's publications] was very flattering, but unfortunately I don't know at all whether I can manage it. The lawyer in me is now engaged in lively conflict with the poet and critic and it is almost like a battle for life and death. There are limited prospects everywhere, and then good friends are encouraging a fight between the allies literary criticism and poetry; and within me one often shouts of the other: 'Strike him dead!'

Thus we see the author torn between a variety of interests, even within the literary field itself. It was to his disadvantage as a creative

artist not only that he attempted too much (political and literary journalism, editing, reviewing, the composition of poetry, dramas, historical novels and stories, translations, the writing up of famous trials and lawsuits) but also that he decided to depend on literature as a means of livelihood. As a result, the principal motive for writing almost everything except his historical novels was a financial one. In devoting all his time to literature he undoubtedly acquired a vast and varied store of literary knowledge and experience, but he thereby forfeited the secure and more harmonious existence of a writer or poet who composes at leisure, supporting himself by other employment, e.g. the Swiss writers Jeremias Gotthelf (1797-1854) and Gottfried Keller (1819-90), the Austrian Adalbert Stifter (1805-68) and the Swabian poet Eduard Mörike (1804-75). Alexis's decisive step was taken by August 1824, but not without the most careful consideration, as may be seen from remarks in a letter to his mother written in that month.²⁵ In some ways he was driven like Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-81) by inclination and temperament to make literature his livelihood. Alexis greatly admired Lessing, about whom he wrote an essay in 1831,²⁶ and was inspired by his example both as a writer and as a man. In some of Alexis's stories and early novels there are situations and relationships between characters reminiscent of those in the comedy *Minna von Barnhelm* (1767). There are similarities between the two men in their diligent, forthright and sincere approach to their chosen craft, despite the fact that the ages in which they lived and by which they were so strongly influenced are dissimilar.

Alexis now assumed greater literary burdens by contributing from 1824 onwards both to Cotta's *Morgenblatt*, the most important literary periodical in Southern Germany and probably in Germany as a whole, and to the *Vossische Zeitung* of which he soon became theatre critic. He also translated *Highways and By-ways* by Thomas Colley Grattan (1792-1864) and thus introduced this Irish author's work to the German reading public.

The year 1824, also the date of the founding of the *Mittwochsgesellschaft* (described in the next chapter), marks a great step forward in Alexis's literary career. *Walladmor* had given him a reputation of sorts as a novelist, and his standing as a literary critic was already assured. Now he was no longer entirely dependent on the assistance and guidance of older writers like Fouqué and Tieck. Henceforth he was to stand in the literary arena not as a disciple, but in his own right. His activities in the *Mittwochsgesellschaft* were to bring him

into contact with many important men of letters and he himself was soon to become a familiar figure in the salons and literary circles of Berlin.

REFERENCES

- ¹ Reprinted in *Erinnerungen*, op. cit., pp. 54–265.
- ² *Ibid.*, pp. 55–6. Wir schwelgten in Fouqués Nordlandssagen, in seinem gründlichen Neufanzosenhaß. Die Ideen des Turnertums waren mächtig, auch außerhalb der Hasenheide. Der Plumpsack, der dort jedem, welcher durch ein Fremdwort die deutsche Sprache entweihte, drei Streiche versetzte, ging auch moralisch in der jungen Gesellschaft um. Jahns Deutschmüchlichkeit war uns kein Phantom, sondern eine Wahrheit, und wir hofften noch zuversichtlich auf die Realisierung unserer Ideen von einem deutschen Volkstume, wenn wir auch über das Wie? weder mit Anderen noch mit uns im Reinen waren.
- ³ *Ibid.*, pp. 80, 91. Mein Herz schlug vor Wonne, als ich die altersgrauen Türme von Magdeburg vor mir sah . . . den Dom, die heiligen Gräber der Kaiser. . . . So viel ich konnte, besah ich natürlich Hildesheims Merkwürdigkeiten, und vor allem seinen durch die Legende und die Kunst reich ausgestatteten Dom. . . . Wir näherten uns Westphalen. Die Physiognomie des Landes ward eine andere; in jeder Hügelkette, jedem alten Wege suchte mein Auge schon nach Römerstraßen und nach Cherusker- und Sachsenfußstapfen.
- ⁴ *Abschiedspañ* exhibited in 1912. See *Monatsblätter des Touristenklubs für die Mark Brandenburg*, Jg. 21, 1912, pp. 57–60.
- ⁵ For Scholz and Holtei's meeting with Alexis see Holtei, *Vierzig Jahre*, Breslau, 1862, II, pp. 306, 329, also Holtei, *Simmelsammelsurium*, Breslau, 1872, II, pp. 17–18 (in contradiction *Holteis Bergreise*, ed. A. Hoffmann, 1898, pp. 26–8), and Goedeke's *Grundriß* . . . IX, p. 450, note ee.
- ⁶ 'Gedichte aus einem Bedürfnis zu innerem Troste entstanden im Fluge in der Nacht zum 16 März 1818', in *Brandenburgische Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek*.
- ⁷ Originals in *W.A. Bund Jahresbericht*, 1925–6, pp. 12 f.: From Scholz, 'Und denke ich mir nun noch Dich, . . . wie alles um Dich nur zu leicht ein fremdes, abstoßendes Ansehn für Dich gewinnt, wie Du eingeschüchtert und fast gekränkt Dich dann in Dich selbst und in das Reich Deiner Ideen und Gefühle zurückziehst; — dann muß ich wohl fürchten, es möge Dich gereuen, daß Du offen an mich getreten bist!' From Holtei, 'Aus deinem letzten Briefe habe ich übrigens ersehen, daß der Teufel der Hypochondrie Dich zuweilen neckt. Ich bitte Dich um alles in der Welt, verscheuche ihn! Sei es durch Spazierengehen, Tanzen, durch Verse machen, durch Liebschaften. . . .'
- ⁸ *Deutsche Revue*, ed. Richard Fleischer, 14. Jg. II, 1889, Breslau, pp. 339 ff.
- ⁹ *Jean Pauls Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Ed. Berend, 3te Abt. Bd. VIII, Berlin, 1957, p. 86.
- ¹⁰ Ernst Friedrich Johann Dronke studied history and languages in Breslau and Berlin and later taught in Coblenz and (from 1841) Fulda; he was respected as a teacher and a scholar and wrote a work in collaboration with Jakob Grimm (1785–1863). His son Ernst Dronke, born 1822, was a socialist who published a book on Berlin to reveal the poverty and misery prevalent there in 1846. This was republished by Rütten und Loening, Berlin, in a shortened form in 1953. The book contains a great deal of interesting information about Berlin in the 1840s. On Alexis Dronke writes (p. 259, 1953 edition) that he may be mentioned as the Berlin correspondent of the *Morgenblatt*; 'Sein Schritt ist wohlbedächtig, sein Ausdruck zehnmal unwickelt und unwunden, um die "gewissen" Verhältnisse nicht zu unsanft zu berühren'.
- ¹¹ Ewert and Hasselberg, 'Aus dem Briefwechsel zwischen Fouqué und W.A.', *W.A. Bund Jahrbuch*, 1928, p. 2. Ich habe eine Bekanntschaft gemacht, von der Du nicht glauben wirst, daß sie mir sehr wert geworden ist und einen bedeutenden Einfluß auf mein geistiges Leben gewonnen hat, das ist Fouqués. Ich habe ihn genau kennen gelernt, er hat mich mit der größten denkbaren Freundschaft aufgenommen, und ich habe ihn achten und lieben gelernt, wenn ich auch durchaus nicht mit seinen Absichten stimme.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 10. Alexis-Häring — *des is unse Sorte!* — Ein Jüngling rein und klangreich, wie edles Metall! Weich und mittelend wie Blumen des Frühlings!
- ¹³ See Hasselberg, 'E. T. A. Hoffmann-Erinnerungen', *Die Zeit*, July 20, 1924, quoting from Alexis's essay 'Zu was die Poesie nutz ist', *Berliner Conversationsblatt*, 1836, nos. 133, 135, 136. Original of quotation below:

Ich schlug die Chronik nach; und die Stelle im Wagenseil, aus der Hoffmann seine Novelle schöpfte, ist nicht allein nur deshalb interessant, weil sie uns zeigt, wie ein echter Dichter aus einem unansehnlichen Stein die hellsten Funken zu schlagen weiß, sondern weil sie uns lehrt, wozu die Poesie nützt.

¹⁴ *Morgenblatt*, 1843, p. 400. Wir Andere sind erwacht, Fouqué blieb in der Täuschung, ehrlich durchaus. Er sah rings um sich her, bis an sein Ende, dieselben Phantasmagorien, welche den Jünglinge entzückt hatten. Überall hochgetürmte Burgen, Münster, Turniere, Stände. . . . Damit war jeder Fortschritt als Teufelswerk abgetan und beseitigt. Die ganze neue Zeit mit allen ihren Richtungen, Bestrebungen und ihren Resultaten war ihm ein Blendwerk der Hölle.

¹⁵ In Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich. Nochmals wiederhole ich daß, wenn Ew. W. vielleicht meine Dichtungen zu denen, welche eine feindliche Ahndung verdienen, hinunterzudrängen für nötig erachteten, ich sehr willig, um nicht zu belästigen, von der ferneren Mitarbeit am *Frauentaschenbuch* ausscheiden würde.

¹⁶ *W.A. Bund. 1. Jahresbericht*, 1925-6, p. 12. Aber mein Geist ist im ganzen mehr zum lyrischen Schwunge und lyrischer Glut geschaffen als zum kritischen Richter.

¹⁷ Heine — *Jahrbücher der Literatur*, Vienna, XXI, 1825, pp. 157-85.

Immermann — *Ibid.* XXXV, 1826, pp. 1-74.

Van der Velde — *Ibid.* XXIX, 1825, pp. 1-34 (anonymous).

Scott — *Ibid.* XII, 1820 (*Ivanhoe*), pp. 124-55.

Scott and Byron — *Ibid.* XV, 1821, pp. 105-45.

Scott (collective review of novels), *ibid.*, XXII, 1823, pp. 1-75.

'Über Balladenpoesie', *Hermes*, 1824, pp. 1-114.

¹⁸ *W. Scotts poetische Werke*, Zwickau, 1821-7: vols. 1, 2 *Die Jungfrau vom See*: vols. 3, 4 *Das Lied des letzten Minstrels*.

¹⁹ *Die Schlacht bei Torgau (Gesammelte Novellen*, I, 1830, pp. 152-3): Der Heruntergefallene, ein Offizier, aber in sehr schlechter Kleidung, und fast ohne Dekoration, verhüllte sich emsig in seinen Mantel. . . . Die spitze Nase, die hellen, großen Augen, die gefurchten Wangen, das charakteristische Gesicht. . . .

²⁰ In *Hoffmanns Leben und Nachlaß*, II, 1823, pp. 323-57; for comment see Friedrich Holtze, 'W.A. als Mitarbeiter an Hitzigs Hoffmann-Biographie', *W.A. Bund Jahrbuch*, 1929-31, pp. 1-5.

²¹ For the following see Hasselberg, 'W.A. über L. Tieck', *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1923, no. 245; P. K. Richter, *W.A. als Literatur- und Theaterkritiker*, Berlin, 1931, p. 98; Holtei, *Vierzig Jahre*, IV, pp. 341 ff.; Alexis's speech 'Eröffnungsrede am Tieckfest', *Der Freimütige*, 1833, no. 12; Holtei (ed.), *Briefe an Ludwig Tieck*, letter dated July 2, 1833, Breslau, 1864, 4 vols.

²² See *Erinnerungen*, op. cit., pp. 228 ff.

²³ Letter to Hell, August 9, 1820. In 'Autographensammlung' of Alexander Meyer-Cohen. See Goedeke, *Grundriß*. . . p. 453. Mein Grundsatz ist, daß man auch das Heiligste bespötteln kann, wenn man selbst innig von demselben durchdrungen ist, und daß jedes Ding, vor allem die Poesie, zwei Seiten, die tragische und die komische haben müsse, welche beide Seiten schroff zu sondern ich für höchst unrecht halte.

²⁴ Letter to Hell, April 20, 1824 (*National-Zeitung*, 1898, no. 388, July 1). Ihre gütige Aufforderung war für mich sehr schmeichelhaft. Leider aber weiß ich in keiner Art, ob ich genügen kann. Der Jurist ist mit dem Poeten und Kritiker jetzt in lebhaften Streit geraten, welcher fast einem Kampfe auf Leben und Tod gleicht. Überall halbe Aussichten, dann reizen gute Freunde zu einem Kampfe der Bundesgenossen: Kritik und Poesie; und eine rufft oft in mir zur andern: Schlage sie tot!

²⁵ See Ewert, 'Henriette Haering', op. cit., pp. 10-11.

²⁶ In *Der Freimütige*, 1831. See Felix Hasselberg, 'Beiträge zu Lessings Gesprächen. Nebst einem verschollenen Lessing-Aufsatz von W.A.', *Mitteilungen des Vereins für die Geschichte Berlins*, XLVI, 1929, pp. 51-67.

A LITERARY CLUB AND THE THEATRE

IN 1824 Hitzig founded in Berlin the literary society *Mittwochsgesellschaft* (*Wednesday Society*)¹ to bring together writers and others with literary interests and as a means of introducing foreign authors to those who wished to meet them in the Prussian capital. At first the meetings were on Wednesdays—hence the name—later on Mondays. The 'Englische Haus' (Mohrenstrasse 49) was used as a centre. Entertainment was markedly frugal and members listened to lectures on literature or readings. In the early years of the society Alexis was an active member and served as secretary for several years. However, he was not able to prevent it developing along paths distasteful to him. Some older members like Chamisso (1781-1838), Fouqué, Ludwig Robert and Varnhagen von Ense had been members of the earlier Berlin society, the *Polarsternbund* (*Polar Star Club*). A few years after its formation the society, as a kind of successor to Rahel Varnhagen's salon, numbered among its members or sympathizers many late Romantic or budding Young German writers, such as Wilhelm Neumann (1784-1834), Wilhelm Contessa (1777-1825), Stägemann (1763-1840), Holtei, Eichendorff, Immermann, Houwald (1778-1845), Wilhelm Müller (1794-1827), Friedrich Wilhelm Gubitz (1786-1870), Ernst Raupach (1784-1852), Karl Streckfuss (1778-1844), Karl Simrock (1802-76), Friedrich von Uechtritz (1800-75) and Heinrich Stieglitz (1803-49), while Achim von Arnim (1781-1831), Wilhelm Wackernagel (1806-69) the literary historian, the famous philosopher Hegel (1770-1831), the poet Friedrich von Matthisson (1761-1831), A. W. Schlegel (1767-1845) and the philologist Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen (1780-1856) also showed interest in some of its activities. The Berlin literary journal *Der Gesellschafter*, edited by Gubitz, became closely associated with the society, and from time to time published a report of its proceedings. The birthdays of Shakespeare, Jean Paul, Schiller and Goethe were regularly celebrated and a small volume on Goethe and a version of Carlyle's book on Schiller were published. In honour of Goethe there also appeared a collection of poems. Sometimes members competed with one another in literary composition,

especially in the production of occasional poems on love and friendship; nevertheless, they were not encouraged to present their own major works or to make a regular contribution, and in this way feuds were avoided for a while. Poetic and, to a lesser extent, political issues were debated. Dissolution was, however, inevitable because of the different interests and views of the members, who were only united in their admiration for Goethe's genius. Shortly after the foundation of the society some of its members who were particularly drawn to foreign literature formed a small group for its study. It is probable that Alexis joined this group (*Gesellschaft für auswärtige Literatur*). He was most active in the *Mittwochgesellschaft* in 1826, when he delivered lectures on the birthdays both of Jean Paul and of Goethe; the text of these was published the same year.² In 1828 the dispute of Alexis and others with the witty but unscrupulous dramaturgist Moritz Gottlieb Saphir (1795-1858) caused a split in the organization, but this was mended a year later, perhaps partly through Alexis's efforts, for he tended to avoid disunion whenever possible. A more serious cleavage occurred concerning political differences after 1830. Although the organization continued to exist under various names (from 1828 as *Gesellschaft für in- und ausländische Literatur*, later as *Literarische Gesellschaft*) until 1856, it is unlikely that Alexis took much interest in its activities after 1838.³ The society was regarded as reactionary in tendency by some of the radical writers of the younger generation like Heine, Heinrich Laube (1806-84) and Christian Grabbe (1801-36); Alexis appears to have later accepted this view in a qualified form, remarking in a letter to Hermann Hauff dated January 9, 1846:⁴

That it is not good to let too thorough a cleavage develop between our aspirations and those of younger men, which at first work against us but which in time can become important or establish themselves in their own right, we can see with regret in our twenty-one year old *Mittwochgesellschaft*, which has shut out all new developments since 1830(?) and is now completely senile.

Alexis introduced several writers into the society, including Wilhelm Hauff (1802-27) and Alexander von Ungern-Sternberg (1806-68) who describes how he first attended meetings about 1832 and subsequently became acquainted with Alexis's friends in the society, Chamisso, Raupach, Gubitz and Franz von Gaudy (1800-40).

Although Alexis came into contact with a large number of writers through his literary connexions and activities in the *Mittwochgesellschaft*, he only became intimate with a few of these. It is now appropriate to consider his literary friendships and his contacts with

well-known writers (it is often possible to draw a distinction between the two). He was now in a position to select his own friends (as distinct from patrons) and he describes them in the section of his reminiscences devoted to his contemporaries.⁵ Here he observes that he has sometimes been censured for not joining a literary clique—by some he was criticized as being too revolutionary in outlook, by others as being too servile towards authority (it is thus clear that he spanned two groups often referred to to-day as 'Biedermeier' and 'Young German' writers). His friends at this time, Alexis writes, stood half-way between established writers and greenhorns still struggling to gain a foothold in literature. He and his friends were bound together by a common hatred of corruption, hypocrisy and prudery, but they did not form a literary phalanx. Most of them died in their prime, leaving Alexis without many close literary friends in his later years. It is probable that he tends to idealize the short-lived friends of his youth in describing them. He writes affectionately of Wilhelm Müller (1794–1827) whom he calls the first lyric poet of his age. In 1824 Müller as a literary critic had proclaimed *Walladmor* to be a genuine novel by Scott, although Alexis warned him of the hoax in an anonymous note;⁶ as a result of this encounter they became firm friends until Müller's premature death. Another younger writer with whom Alexis became acquainted by correspondence and who was soon his trusted friend, although they were never able to meet, was Ludwig Halirsch (1802–32) who lived at first in Vienna and later in Italy, where he died. Halirsch carried on a lively correspondence with other writers also, including Adolf Müllner (1774–1829), Gustav Schwab (1792–1850) and Gubitz. His best known works were a tragedy *Die Demetrier* (1824), *Novellen und Geschichten* (1827) and *Balladen und lyrische Gedichte* (1829).

Alexis also enjoyed the friendship of Wilhelm von Normann (1802–32), a young nobleman and poet employed in the municipal courts in Berlin from 1820 onwards. The two writers probably met in legal circles in the early 1820s, before von Normann set out on his long tour of Southern Europe. Alexis reviewed the collected works of his friend in 1847 and refers favourably to *Die Reise auf dem St. Gotthard* (1826) and *Mosaik oder die erste Liebe Heinrichs IV* (1828) in his reminiscences. The government official and literary critic Wilhelm Neumann (1784–1834) was an experienced and much older friend to whom the writer could turn for guidance. Alexis probably became acquainted with Neumann through Hitzig, Chamisso or

Fouqué, all of whom knew both writers. Neumann wrote a remarkably perceptive and appreciative review of *Cabanis* for *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung* (1833, nos. 79–80, pp. 325–31). Another friend, Wilhelm Albrecht (d. 1836), assisted Alexis for several years in editing *Der Freimütige* and was a foundation member of the *Mittwochsgesellschaft*. Alexis stresses his remarkable ability to write amusingly on a great variety of topics. Holtei describes him as a cool-headed, calculating and thrifty person who never got into debt, worked hard and often spoke sarcastically or mockingly.⁷

No letters or documents remain to fill in the details of Alexis's friendship with these young men, some of whom scarcely lived long enough to make their mark. We know more of his relationship with Wilhelm Hauff (1802–27) who was in a sense a rival in the field of the historical novel. When Hauff visited Berlin in September 1826, he sought out Alexis, provided with a personal note of recommendation from Hitzig, who had met Hauff earlier in Hamburg. Alexis introduced his guest into the *Mittwochsgesellschaft*, where Hauff caused him great embarrassment by reading aloud the *Kontroverspredigt* (a kind of mock sermon debating a point of controversy) which he had composed during his travels; this was directed against the popular but trivial writer Claren (Carl Heun, 1771–1854) who had sued Hauff for publishing his story *Der Mann im Monde* under the name of Claren and who was a member of the *Mittwochsgesellschaft*. Alexis makes it clear that he was not attracted by some aspects of Hauff's personality; he describes him as irascible and refers to his 'calculating timidity' (*berechnende Schüchternheit*). He regrets that he had apparently offended Hauff by remarks in his review of *Lichtenstein* (1826) but maintains that Hauff's undoubted talent for humorous or fantastic description was not adaptable to the requirements of the historical novel—in Alexis's opinion 'the tranquillity of plastic art' (*ruhige Plastik*).⁸

The text of three letters from Alexis to Wilhelm Hauff is still extant.⁹ In December 1826 Alexis sent an announcement concerning the publication of the new literary journal *Berliner Conversationsblatt* of which he was to be editor. He offered special terms to Hauff for a contribution and asked for his opinion on some of his own works which had recently appeared. On January 13, 1827 he congratulates his correspondent on being appointed as an editor of Cotta's *Morgenblatt* and mentions his personal difficulties, including poor health. Alexis published Hauff's *Phantasien im Bremer Ratskeller* in his journal and praises it as his friend's best work in a letter dated May 13–24,

1827. Hauff's ironical preface to his collected *Novellen*, 'An Herrn W. A. Spöttlich', is addressed to Alexis, as is stated in the only letter from Hauff to our author of which the text is known. This letter, dated November 10, 1827, i.e. a few days before his death, was published by Alexis, who devoted space also to an obituary.¹⁰ Hauff, writing from his bed, offered Alexis his *Phantasien* ... and his collected stories for review. The tone of all four letters suggests that the correspondents were on genuinely friendly terms. Perhaps the most important connection between the two writers, however, lies in the discovery by Matthey.¹¹ It was always assumed that Hauff knew Scott's novels well, mainly because of a detailed analysis of Scott's work found among his papers. Matthey has shown that this is only a summary of Alexis's collective review of Scott, so that it is probable that Hauff did not know the British author's work well at first hand.

The scanty information available about Alexis's acquaintance with the Romantic poet and fellow-Silesian Joseph von Eichendorff (1788-1857) suggests that he admired Eichendorff as a man but disagreed violently with his political and religious views. Letters from Eichendorff to Alexis of April 22, 1824 and May 30, 1825¹² show that they corresponded on literary business, e.g. Alexis asked the poet for a contribution to a publication sponsored by the *Mittwochgesellschaft* and Eichendorff thanked Alexis for his review of *Krieg den Philistern!* Later Alexis was also to review *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts* appreciatively.¹³ Eichendorff congratulated Alexis on having escaped from the cage of office life (*Anstellungskäfig*) on giving up his legal career and expressed his approval of *Walladmor*. Both men were friends of Holtei and Hitzig. Eichendorff was a familiar figure at later gatherings of the *Mittwochgesellschaft*, after it had changed its name and the place of meeting became the Café National, Unter den Linden. He behaved with kindness and good humour towards younger writers, most of whom soon fell under the spell of his personality. In 1837¹⁴ we find Alexis recommending, on Eichendorff's behalf, one of his poems for inclusion in an anthology which the bookseller Ferdinand Tolle is thinking of compiling (Alexis cannot remember the first lines of the famous 'Das zerbrochene Ringlein' and misquotes them horribly). By 1849, however, Eichendorff, in writing to his friend the minor poet Leberecht Dreves (1816-70), is numbering Alexis among those critics who, 'with their rough and sometimes dirty hands' will not 'savour the

fragile beauty' of Dreves's poems.¹⁵ Religious and political differences are most clearly reflected in Alexis's review of Eichendorff's *Der deutsche Roman des 18. Jahrhunderts in seinem Verhältnis zum Christentum* (*The German novel of the eighteenth century in relation to Christianity*);¹⁶ here, although he describes Eichendorff as a 'writer of staunch principles, tender-hearted and affectionate' ('ein charakterfester, gemüt- und liebevoller Dichter'), he also regards him as a champion of Catholic reaction at a time when the forces of reaction are in the ascendant and reproaches him for only being interested in 'Christian' literature and distorting the truth because of bias. Alexis admits that he belongs to the opposite political camp.

In 1825 Alexis published *Die Geächteten* (*The Outcasts*), a *Novelle* which was translated into Danish as *Bestörmelse af Stralsund* (Copenhagen, 1830) and which throws light on his development as a story-writer. Here he treats for the first time a period of history from the recent past such as is to be portrayed later in greater detail in the novels *Ruhe ist die erste Bürgerpflicht* (*The citizen's first duty is to keep calm*) and *Isegrimm*. The plot covers the years from Schill's bold revolt in 1809 to the beginning of political reaction after the War of Liberation (1819). The first part is a realistic portrayal of the adventures of Schill's band up to their final defeat at Stralsund. No attempt is made to idealize either the patriot Ferdinand von Schill (1778-1806)—depicted as impetuous and too preoccupied with the enforcement of military regulations to excel as a guerilla leader—or his followers, some of whom are not amenable to discipline and plunder the surrounding countryside. These events are described from the point of view of two young volunteers who gradually lose their patriotic idealism because Schill receives so little popular support for his rising against the French. After Schill's defeat Theodor flees to the lonely island of Rügen to escape capture and finds temporary solace in communion with nature. He is brought back to civilization, some years after Napoleon's fall, by the woman he loves. His friend Julius, yielding to despair, becomes a brigand. The second part of the tale is less effective and contains sensational developments in the plot reminiscent of many an *Abenteuerroman* or novel of adventure. Before completing *Walladmor*, Alexis had visited Rügen, and a small island off the coast, Greifswaldische Oie, was known to him from another excursion; in his account of the latter,¹⁷ places associated with Schill are mentioned several times. Thus the evocative descriptions of the natural scene are based on personal knowledge of the landscape portrayed and Alexis claims in

a postscript that 'the historical facts as well as almost every single incident are taken from reality in as far as the known sources and the information collected by the author correspond to the truth'. Some Prussian critics were offended at the way Schill was presented, and in a poem published as a kind of self-criticism¹⁸ Alexis admitted that he had perhaps treated the patriot somewhat harshly.

The same year another *Novelle*, *Die ehrlichen Leute* (*Honest Characters*) appeared from Alexis's pen. The story, which appeared in the women's annual *Frauentaschenbuch für 1825*, is, as Richter has demonstrated,¹⁹ inspired to some degree by Cervantes's *Rinconete y Cortillado*; it reflects Alexis's experience of the law courts in a portrayal of the criminal's attitude to society. The irony and parody in the story are endless, and at one point sentence is passed, not on the criminals, but on their victims.

For some years Alexis had been struggling to establish himself as a playwright, for the theatre exercised a fascination over him in his youth. In this respect he was typical of his age, for many of his most gifted contemporaries tried to write drama without final success, Annette von Droste-Hülshoff (1797-1848), Karl Immermann, Otto Ludwig (1813-65), Gottfried Keller (1819-90) and Conrad Ferdinand Meyer (1825-98) among them. Alexis's efforts were finally doomed to failure, after a few of the plays surveyed below had been performed occasionally, mainly in the 1820s. Alexis found much in the Berliners to criticize²⁰ and, in an article published in *Der Gesellschafter* for 1826, he asserts that in Berlin nobody is proud of being one of the people and that there is a stupid and affected imitation of what is thought to be smart and 'superior', while so-called Berlin dialect is no more than debased slang. To some extent Alexis blames the theatre for this situation, in particular the 'People's Theatre' (*Volksbühne*) founded by Louis Angely (1787-1835) whose influence on the Berlin stage he deplors. Angely sought popularity and support rather than quality, and succeeded in drawing crowds to vaudeville and trivial French farces. One of the few enduring aspects of Alexis's association with the Berlin theatre was a distaste for the Berlin dialect, which he later satirized in the speech of Madame Braunbiegler in *Ruhe ist die erste Bürgerpflicht*.

Alexis's dramatic works represent one of the least significant portions of his literary production but deserve a brief consideration. From his reminiscences we learn that his first serious dramatic attempt was *Astolf*, a fate tragedy in the manner of the contemporary dramatists Adolf Müllner (1774-1829) and Ernst von Houwald

(1778-1845). The play²¹ is first mentioned by name in a letter to Alexis from Holtei dated July 24, 1821. Although Alexis later poked fun at it, he was most anxious to have it performed at the time of its composition. He had spoken of it to Tieck when he visited him in Dresden and sent him a copy on October 20, 1821. He also approached Holtei, Theodor Hell, the actor and dramatist C. Lebrun (1792-1842) and the director of a Berlin theatre, Graf von Brühl, but the drama was never performed. Tieck dissuaded Alexis from devoting all his literary powers to drama, for he remarked with reference to *Astolf* that its author's talent appeared more suited to the epic than to the drama. Nevertheless, Alexis continued to interest himself in drama and, like his contemporaries, after 1822 turned away from the fate tragedy to another type of play in which Shakespeare was the accepted model. His comedy, *Der Prinz von Pisa*, was performed on October 25, 1825. Written in a mixture of prose and verse (five-foot rhymed iambics), it was inspired by Shakespeare's comedies and was a failure, despite various alterations between performances, because of the author's excessive use of irony, which often obscured the meaning. Its hero is a prince who travels about his country in disguise in order to become more closely acquainted with his people (cf. the Duke of Vienna in *Measure for Measure*); as a result of this subterfuge, he becomes the rival in love of his political enemy and the head of a popular conspiracy against his own person. The revelation of his identity saves him from imprisonment, but not from a most embarrassing situation.

A one-act comedy, *Die Sonette* (*The Sonnets*), written in Alexandrines rhymed in pairs, was offered to Graf von Brühl on May 22, 1825, but never performed. More successful was the adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (*Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor*), performed in the Royal Theatre (*Königliches Theater*) at Berlin on May 25, 1826. In the meantime Alexis had sent Brühl a romantic drama in five acts, *O'Connor*, concerned with the Irish struggle for independence at the time of the French Revolution. A reconciliation between the opposing factions is effected by a marriage between the hero, the son of an Irish nobleman, and the daughter of the colonel in command of the English troops! In both his dramas and his stories Alexis is fond of the 'happy ending', even if it seems somewhat forced. The play was performed in Hamburg on November 27, 1826, but aroused no enthusiasm. Alexis attributed the lukewarm reception to the fact that the actor Eduard Devrient (1801-77), a personal friend for whom the leading part had been written, had

to be replaced at short notice by another who did not interpret the hero's role adequately.²² On February 27, 1827 a farce for carnival (*Fastnachtschwank*), entitled *Der verwunschene Schneidergesell* (*The enchanted journeyman tailor*) and written in five acts in prose, was performed at the Royal City Theatre, Berlin (*Königstädtische Theater*) and enjoyed a modest success;²³ here Alexis pokes fun at the Hegelians whom he regards as his most bitter enemies (cf. a letter to Tieck dated October 14, 1826).²⁴ Another three-act drama in prose, *Ännchen von Tharau*, was performed, without attracting much attention, at the same theatre on January 18, 1828; this was inspired by Alexis's admiration for a young lady painted by his friend Wilhelm Schadow (1788–1862).²⁵ In 1828 he wrote for a competition a one-act farce *Der Himmelsfechter* (never published or performed), another, *Sieben Britten*, performed in 1828, and a melodrama full of atrocities, *Die Rache wartet*, performed on May 21, 1829 and mocked at for weeks in print by the critic Saphir. Apart from his part in two political farces, written jointly with Putlitz in 1848, these were Alexis's principal attempts at writing drama; they were doomed to failure despite his keen interest in the genre.

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¹ For *Mittwochsgesellschaft* see article under that name in *Conversations-Lexikon*, III, 1833, Tschirsch, 'W.A. als vaterländischer Dichter und Patriot', *Forschungen zur Brandenburgischen und Preussischen Geschichte*, XII, 2te Hälfte, 1899, pp. 194–5, F. W. Gubitz, *Erlebnisse*, III, Berlin, 1869, pp. 134–50, L. Geiger, *Berlin 1688–1840*, Berlin, 1895, II, pp. 387, 448, A. v. Ungern-Sternberg, *Erinnerungsblätter*, Berlin, 1855, I, pp. 101 f. and René Riegel, *Adalbert de Chamisso*, Paris, 1934, II, pp. 214 f.

² *Der Gesellschafter*, 1826, nos. 52 f. and 144 f. Five letters to Gubitz from Alexis written in the 1820s are noted by Frels. (See bibliography.)

³ K. G. Nowack, *Schlesisches Schriftsteller-Lexikon*, 2. Heft, Breslau, 1838, p. 59.

⁴ In Schiller-Nationalmuseum, Marbach. Daß es nicht gut ist eine zu zerrissene Klüftung gegen die jüngeren Bestrebungen eintreten zu lassen, die uns anfangs widerstreben, aus denen aber im Zeitverlauf etwas werden kann, oder die eigene Kraft geltend machen, das sehen wir mit Bedauern an unserer alten 21-jährigen Mittwochsgesellschaft, welche sich seit 1830 (?) gegen alle neuen Regungen abgeschlossen hat und jetzt völlig altersschwach geworden ist.

⁵ *Erinnerungen*, op. cit., pp. 297 ff.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 275–6.

⁷ Holtei, *Vierzig Jahre*, Breslau, 1862, III, p. 215.

⁸ *Erinnerungen*, op. cit., pp. 300–304. Review of Lichtenstein in *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, no. 114, 1826, pp. 453 ff.

⁹ In Schiller-Nationalmuseum. Published with omissions by Otto Guntter, 'Briefe, Gedichte und Entwürfe von Wilhelm Hauff', *Schwäbischer Schillerverein*, 31. *Rechenschaftsbericht*, April 1, 1926–7, pp. 125–7.

¹⁰ 'Freundesruf', *Berliner Conversationsblatt*, December 1, 1827.

¹¹ Walther Matthey, *Die historischen Erzählungen des Carl Franz van der Velde*, Stuttgart, 1928, pp. 135–7. (*Tübinger germanistische Arbeiten*, ed. Hermann Schneider, IV.)

¹² Published respectively in Hasselberg, 'Ein Brief E.'s an W.A.', *W.A. Bund Jahrbuch*, 1928, pp. 50–51 and *Aurora. Eichendorff-Almanach*, 1957 (photo-copy of MS).

¹³ *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, 1826, no. 25.

¹⁴ Letter dated March 31, 1837 in Theatermuseum, Munich.

¹⁵ Eichendorff, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. W. Kosch, Regensburg, 1913, XII, p. 108. (Eichendorff's letter to Dreyes dated November 9, 1849.)

¹⁶ *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, 1851, no. 18.

¹⁷ *Der Gesellschafter*, 1825, nos. 152-4.

¹⁸ 'Schill. Eine Vision von W.A.', *Berliner Conversationsblatt*, 1827, pp. 337 f.

¹⁹ Richter, 'Cervantes und W.A.' in *A.-Fontane-Gesellschaft. Jahrbuch*, 1937, pp. 221.

²⁰ For remarks below see *Der Gesellschafter*, 1826, nos. 5-6 ('Ein Urteil über Berlin') and report on Hasselberg's lecture 'W.A. und die Berliner Mundart', *W.A. Bund. 1. Jahresbericht*, 1925-6, p. 16.

²¹ See *Erinnerungen*, op. cit., pp. 323-53, M.E. (Ewert), 'Astolf', *W.A. Bund Jahrbuch*, 1928, pp. 19 ff. and A. B. Marx, *Erinnerungen*, Berlin, 1865, I, p. 158. *Der Prinz von Pisa* was published in *Jahrbuch deutscher Bühnenspiele für 1843*, pp. 113-208, *Die Sonette* ibid. for 1828 and *Der verwunschene Schneidergesell* ibid. for 1841, pp. 149-220.

²² Ewert, 'Graf Karl von Brühl und W.A.', *Zeitschrift des Vereins für die Geschichte Berlins*, 56 Jg., 1939, p. 110.

²³ See Holtei, *Simmelsammelsurium*, Breslau, 1872, p. 27 and *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, 1827, p. 300.

²⁴ Hasselberg, 'Neues von W.A.', *Tägliche Rundschau*, 1921, Unterhaltungsbeilage 298, Jg. 41, p. 986.

²⁵ Holtei, *Simmelsammelsurium*, p. 25.

TRAVEL BOOKS AND STORIES

IN 1826 Alexis visited France and published an account of his travels in *Wanderungen im Süden* (*Wanderings in the South*, 1828, preface dated August). The experiences described are attributed to a friend 'Sternanis', but are obviously his own. He freely admits his weaknesses (vanity, quick temper, a prejudice against English tourists). Moustached and pipe-smoking, he 'betrays' his classical education by the occasional quotation from Latin or Greek. His travels took him to Paris, then Blois and Amboise where he recalls his previous stay as a soldier, later south to Nevers, Lyons, Avignon, Vauclux, Nismes, Montpellier and a view of the Pyrenees, Toulon and Nice, where he found the Sardinian customs officials barbarous and ignorant because they wanted to confiscate and destroy a book in his possession by the then popular Madame de Genlis (1746-1830)!

The following year he set out on a journey to Scandinavia, accompanied by Jean-Jacques Ampère (1800-64), writer, critic and son of the famous French mathematician, André-Marie Ampère (1775-1836). Having made the acquaintance of Ampère in June when he was visiting Berlin, Alexis was persuaded to go at short notice and left without the necessary travelling clothes. His account of the journey (*Herbstreise durch Skandinavien* or *Autumn Journey through Scandinavia*, 1828, preface dated April) may be supplemented by references in Ampère's letters to his father.¹ During his fortnight's stay in Copenhagen, Alexis seems to have visited literary men like Johan Ludvig Heiberg (1791-1860), philosopher, poet, playwright and critic, then at the height of his powers; he inspected Helsingör Castle and later travelled extensively in Norway and Sweden, admiring a variety of scenery and urban architecture. He found the local customs of the Lapps particularly interesting. At one point in his narrative he gives an amusing picture of his companion Ampère declaiming from his French translation of Scott's *Lady of the Lake*, while he reciprocates from his German one! Travel literature of this type was the fashion of the day, established by Heine's *Reisebilder* (*Travel Pictures*, 1826). The works themselves, in addition to informing us about the author, indicate a stage in his literary development.

in that they reveal an advance in the technique of landscape description and in the evocation of regional atmosphere. /

In 1832 Alexis published in Brockhaus's *Conversations-Lexikon* (vol. I) the short biography of Ampère, referring to his thorough study of German, his successful attempts to make German literature known in France and his perceptive article on Goethe in the French journal *Globe*.

Schloss Avalon (*Avalon Castle*, 1827), likewise published as a translation of Scott, was *Walladmor*'s successor, a second (but very transparent) hoax. That Alexis had already thought of composing this novel before May 18, 1826 can be seen from the unpublished Brockhaus-Alexis correspondence.² The sensible publisher had to discourage the over-confident author from trying to bring out an English translation of the novel before the original appeared! On July 5, 1826 Brockhaus wrote:

You seem to attach great importance to an English translation and almost to regard this as the main object; I have no such favourable opinion of the idea. It is certainly true that *Walladmor* has evoked no small interest in England, but we shall have to wait and see whether *Avalon Castle* does likewise.

However, if I know English booksellers aright, I believe that none of them will enter into a contract with me to buy the final proofs. . . . We have no wish to bring out an English translation. . . . we don't know the English market well enough for that and should be exposing ourselves too much to trickery.

Brockhaus also considered that the fee Alexis was demanding was exorbitant and that the work could not hope to achieve the somewhat scandalous success of *Walladmor*. Negotiations continued, Brockhaus refusing to embark on the English translation which, he pointed out, might have to compete with a hack translation from the original. Nevertheless, he was keen to publish the novel and on August 5 expressed his annoyance that Alexis had approached another firm (Duncker und Humblot) with a view to publication. Eventually the contract was signed in September and, after delays in printing, the whole novel appeared by June 1827. At the author's request copies were sent to London, Stockholm and to various French literary acquaintances, including Ampère and Ludovic Vitet (1802-73), historical novelist and dramatist, friend and rival of Prosper Mérimée.

In the same year three stories were also published for the first time. *Meine letzte Nacht in Berlin* (*My Last Night in Berlin*, later entitled *Herr Kritik* or *Mr Criticism*) has such a fantastic plot and is so crammed with incomprehensible topical allusions that it is difficult to trace

any central theme in the work except a satirical intention against popular enthusiasm for the singer Henriette Sontag (1806-54).³ Here and in *Collaborator Liborius* (later entitled *Der Braune* or *The Brown Man*), Alexis is obviously trying to free himself from Hoffmann's influence by parodying and caricaturing his bizarre style. Gutzkow⁴ noted that *Emmerich*, which marks a step backwards to the *Märchen* or fairy-tale of the early Romantics, is a type of production outside its author's usual range. The grim tale of a blood feud between two families is presented against an idyllic natural scene, and the reconciliation of the conflicting parties is the 'happy ending' which Alexis frequently contrives in his stories.

1827 was also an important year for Alexis the literary journalist, for he then started, together with the Hegelian and former editor of the *Vossische Zeitung*, Friedrich Förster,⁵ the *Berliner Conversationsblatt*. Published by Schlesinger, who also brought out most of Alexis's travel books, it appeared five times a week. Alexis edited the original works, Förster the critical section. Well-known writers from all parts of Germany contributed and many of these were personally acquainted with Alexis. Wilhelm Hauff was sent a prospectus and invited by Alexis to write for the journal. From 1830 onwards it was combined with the Berlin organ of 'enlightenment', *Der Freimütige* (*The Man of Candour*, which bore a vignette of the humanist Ulrich von Hutten), taking that title and edited by Alexis alone. Our author wrote many contributions himself and worked hard to make the journal a success, but the number of subscribers gradually decreased and he handed over to another editor with some relief in October 1835.

By 1828 Alexis was corresponding regularly with the Cotta publishing house, but could find little time for contributions to *Morgenblatt*. An interesting letter to the writer and theologian Karl von Grüneisen (1802-78) shows that he was already on friendly terms with him, while one from Brockhaus refusing to publish an anonymous attack on Saphir by Alexis refers to the author's involvement in the famous Saphir dispute.⁶ Two more stories were also published that year. *Die Erscheinung von Anklam* (*The Spectre of Anklam*) is a ghost story with a rational explanation, anticipating tales of the spirit world narrated in the fifth book of *Cabanis*. *Venus in Rom*, based on a story also used by Heine in *Elementargeister* (*Elemental Spirits*, 1834) and Eichendorff in *Das Marmorbild* (*The Marble Statue*, 1819), is chiefly remarkable for its evocation of the spirit of the Italian Renaissance. Hubert, an idealistic German

knight, goes to Rome expecting to find the atmosphere of the great Roman capital of the classical era. Instead he meets a city in which sensuality and hedonism reign. A necromancer casts a spell over him, so that he falls in love with the Italian beauty Faustina, with whom he idles away his life until he is at last persuaded to return to his faithful and forgiving German wife Mathilde. There is also a tragic subsidiary plot which provides a startling contrast to this happy ending. This first attempt to depict the Renaissance and Reformation is inspired by the author's longing for Italy which endured until he visited that country in 1847. This feeling was common among Romantic writers and in Alexis's case was partly inspired by the example of two revered masters, Goethe and Tieck. The story harks back to the Romantic love of the dangerous and unknown, in contrast to the security of domestic life, but it also points forward to a more nationalist interpretation, the unbalanced and faithless Latin in contrast to the steady and loyal German (see the characters in C. F. Meyer's *Die Hochzeit des Mönchs* or *The Monk's Wedding*, 1884). Alexis portrays skilfully and realistically life in Rome, the feuds between great Italian families, the German *Landsknechte* or mercenaries, the Swiss guards and Luther during his visit to the city. The social aspect of the period is treated with greater care than in earlier stories, but the—for Alexis—unhealthy influence of Hoffmann finds expression in eerie or fantastic description and incident.

That Alexis had acquired a considerable reputation as a literary figure by 1829, when he was just over thirty, is shown by the fact that in that year he was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the university of Halle for his services to literature, both at home and abroad.⁷ In the same year he paid his third visit to Weimar in order to meet Goethe. According to his own account he had first come to Weimar during one of his walking tours as a student (in 1819), but did not dare to visit Goethe. On a second visit⁸ which appears to have taken place in 1824 in the company of Grüneisen, Alexis was granted an interview by the great man, but the meeting was stiff and formal, and he only saw the Olympian and *Excellenz* (His Excellency). According to Otto von Güntter's note on an illustration of Wilhelm Hauff's *Memoiren des Satan* (*Memoirs of Satan*) the call on Goethe by Grüneisen and Alexis served as a model for the famous scene in Hauff's story. It was on this third visit that Alexis at last gained a sympathetic understanding for Goethe's personality. Alexis had written to Goethe three times,⁹

in 1824 when he sent him a copy of his essay 'Über Balladenpoesie' ('On Ballad Poetry')¹⁰ but received no reply, in 1826 when he had heard, as secretary of the *Mittwochsgesellschaft*, that Goethe had expressed appreciation of his lecture on 'Goethe the Critic', delivered on the occasion of Goethe's birthday,¹¹ and on July 27, 1827, just before setting out on his tour of Scandinavia. In this last letter he thanked Goethe for having sent him a medallion as a token of personal regard for his work. Alexis's attitude towards Goethe is one of extreme deference and in this respect, as in many others, he stands closer to *Biedermeier* writers and poets who thought of themselves as inheritors of a great literary tradition, rather than to the Young Germans who looked to the future and had far less respect for the sage of German letters. In his lecture Alexis traces a didactic, if not pedagogic, intention underlying Goethe's work, later following this interpretation by introducing the pedagogic element into his own productions. On several occasions he championed Goethe against what he regarded as malevolent attacks by Johann Wilhelm Friedrich Pustkuchen (1793-1834) who published a satirical sequel to *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (*William Meister's Years of Apprenticeship*, 1795-96), Christian Wilhelm von Schütz (1776-1847) and Wolfgang Menzel (1798-1873) who considered Goethe insufficiently patriotic. One of his main criticisms of Menzel's history of German literature (1828) which he reviewed on its appearance¹² was that Goethe's significance and influence in German literature had not been appreciated at its true worth; similarly his review of Heine's *Die romantische Schule*, part I (*Der Freimütige*, 1833, no. 89 f.) is a discussion of Heine's recognition of Goethe's genius and a polemic against Goethe's enemies.

In his lecture Alexis presents Goethe as 'in all his creative writing a great critic of the German nation and one who has found no successor in the path he trod'. Goethe has been the pioneer in many different literary trends which later became popular:

In *Werther* he put into words a need, becoming ever more general—the communication of feelings which were not finding expression in the traditional precepts of *belles-lettres*. In *Götz* he let us hear memories from the distant past which were still living, before they disappeared completely. He tested the nature of the sentimental period in his *Stella*. The short humorous compositions of his earlier years are in every sense criticisms of his own experience. *Faust* grew to become a critical review of the most profound lines of thought of his time; the great sphere of philosophy was absorbed in it. The aspects of observation and criticism

are more clearly expressed in *Wilhelm Meister*, and did he not investigate by his own experiments in *Die Wahlverwandschaften* (*Elective Affinities*) a new miraculous age from which he dissociated himself soon enough?¹³

Alexis continues by observing that, in addition, both Goethe's collected poems and his life bear witness to this continuous critical activity; his judgments are permeated by humanity, always apposite because of his circumspection—he offers hints or suggestions but would scorn to set himself up as a dictator of good taste. Goethe, Alexis continues, is impressive by reason not only of his genius but also of his will-power. Within the context of the age this lecture was an unusually original and perceptive interpretation of Goethe's work and deserved the praise bestowed upon it by Heine and Goethe himself.

Alexis travelled fairly widely in 1829, in the spring to Leipzig and from there by coach and ship to Koblenz in the company of the youthful Robert Schumann (1810–56); an account of this journey is to be found both in a short diary of Alexis handed over to the Schumann biographer Wasielewski but not used by him, and in Schumann's letters.¹⁴ The ironical *Lügennovelle* or 'tall story', *Das Dampfschiff*, was inspired by this trip on the Rhine: it was published in the miscellany *Urania* in 1832. Later he visited Goethe, went to Paris and on the return journey met Karl Immermann for the first time in Düsseldorf, staying with him for a few days. His relations with Immermann, who became the most important of a number of literary friends in Düsseldorf, have been described in some detail elsewhere.¹⁵

The 'Novelle' *Acerbi*, published in *Taschenbuch für Damen* (*Ladies' Magazine*, 1829), is the first of a number of stories concerned with the present and contains several allusions to celebrated personalities of the time. In many ways it anticipates the tone of later Young German literature and is said by Nowack¹⁶ to be partly based on the life of a Baron von Vaerst who was still living when the story was composed. Baron Acerbi, an illegitimate believing himself to be of noble birth and a fanatical champion of the aristocracy, is eventually driven to madness and suicide because he hopelessly loves a noblewoman and seems unable to prove his parentage in order to marry her. The Baron is contrasted with the bourgeois Kessler who holds liberal political views and is not ashamed of his lowly origin. Gutzkow states¹⁷ that in 1836 Alexis regarded the story as his best and it is certainly presented in a concise and disciplined form. After expressing reserved approval of the *Novelle*, Gutzkow criticizes its

ending, in which Acerbi discovers that a nobleman, for whose death he has been indirectly responsible, is his father: it would have been better, Gutzkow writes, if this revelation had not been introduced and if the hero had committed suicide not from unrequited love but from despair at not possessing convincing proof that he is a genuine member of the class he so much esteems. Without doubt Alexis confuses the motives for Acerbi's death and hence this criticism is justified. The tale bears some similarity to Tieck's *Die Ahnenprobe* (*Proof of Ancestry*, 1832) with which it has been compared.

In 1830 and 1831 four volumes of our author's collected stories appeared; many of these had already been published, but *Die Gräfin Helene* (*Countess Helen*), a relapse into the grotesque and horrific style of Hoffmann, was an addition. In the preface Alexis expounded his views on the *Novelle* as a genre, welcoming a stronger realism which he traces in contemporary literature. He censures those he calls 'lyrical critics' who are in a sense pro-Romantic and opposed to the prevailing sobriety of taste, and mentions Menzel by name in this connection. Menzel took offence at these remarks and interpreted them as an attack on his literary theories. He had not forgiven Alexis for his fair but scarcely favourable review of his history of German literature.¹⁸ In a letter sent early in July 1830 he demanded a public apology from Alexis; the latter's reply, dated July 10,¹⁹ indicates surprise at Menzel's indignation, but he finally published the apology. Relations between the two writers grew even worse after Menzel took sides with Ludwig Börne (1786-1837) in a literary dispute with Alexis; this developed as a result of Alexis's review of the first two volumes of Börne's *Briefe aus Paris* (*Letters from Paris*).²⁰ Couched in indignant language, the article reflected Alexis's conviction that Börne's standpoint was blind adherence to the political views of ultra-liberalism, an ignorance of his subject and a vindictive hatred of everything German. Alexis voices his disgust at what he regards as Börne's negative and destructive notion of freedom, particularly with reference to art or beauty. 'It is not my practice', he writes, 'to allude to personalities, but a man who has the insolence to speak about people like Royer-Collard [the French statesman and philosopher, 1763-1845] and Goethe as he does, does not deserve even this consideration, which one normally allows the more depraved writers, namely that one makes no reference to their character'. In reply Börne let fly a storm of abuse in the fourth part of *Briefe aus Paris* (letter 74, February 1832) in which he ridicules his opponent, suggests that he is a social climber moving in court circles

and a timorous Philistine, 'born to rest, stick in one place and write reports' ('zur Ruhe, zum Sitzenbleib und zum Referieren geboren'), then seeks to annihilate his reputation in the scurrilous *Häringssalat* (*Herring Salad*, a pun on Alexis's real name). Alexis described all these abusive remarks as 'shameless lies and witless buffoonery'²¹ and never forgot this feud; early in 1833 he was roused to fury by an article on Börne which had appeared in Brockhaus's *Conversations-Lexikon*. He wrote angrily to the publisher Heinrich Brockhaus (1804-74) protesting that there were contemptuous references to his work in this article and that Bröckhaus 'by this cossetting and over-indulgent article had rushed to the rescue of a scoundrel against whom it is the duty of every man of honour to speak out in anger and in deadly earnest'.²²

Alexis's relations with Gutzkow have been examined by Houben, who has also published letters from their correspondence.²³ While Karl Gutzkow (1811-78) was still at school, Alexis published an early contribution from him in the *Berliner Conversationsblatt*, but in the 1830s they belonged to different and mutually hostile literary camps. Gutzkow collaborated with Menzel in work on the literary supplement of Cotta's *Morgenblatt* and espoused his colleague's cause by unfriendly reviews of Alexis's *Novellen* and *Cabanis*. In 1837 Alexis criticized Gutzkow's *Wally die Zweiflerin* (*Wally in Doubt*, 1835), but later *Briefe aus Paris* (*Letters from Paris*, 1843) by Gutzkow won his respect. After the 1848 Revolution the two writers forgot their earlier differences and united against successful younger writers like Gustav Freytag (1816-91), writing approvingly of one another's work.

Alexis probably met Heine for the first time in Rahel Varnhagen's salon which they both frequented in 1820. Their relations, though not close, were apparently consistently friendly. In 1825 our author had reviewed Heine's collection of poems *Lyrisches Intermezzo* and the tragedies *William Radcliffe* and *Almansor*;²⁴ his remarks, often highly critical, were nevertheless honest and untinged by malice. In particular he showed an understanding of Heine's lyric talent and stressed his depth of thought, striking brevity of expression and preference for the erotic or piquant. Later Hebbel was told by his publisher Julius Campe that this review had helped to establish Heine's reputation. Heine in his turn maintained in the first volume of his *Reisebilder* (*Travel Pictures*, Nordeney, 1826) that Alexis possessed the necessary talent to become a historical novelist by

introducing the public to themes from German history in a series of works.²⁵ He writes:

I am even pleased with the imitation [of Scott's work] . . . as we find it in W. Alexis, Bronikowski and Cooper; the first of these in his ironical *Walladmor* stands closest to his model and has shown us too such a wealth of characters and intellect in a later work [either *Die ehrlichen Leute* or *Die Geächteten*] that he could well present to us, with a poetic originality which merely makes use of Scott's form, the most beloved episodes of German history in a series of historical *Novellen*.

In a letter to his correspondent Merkel (dated January 1, 1827) Heine mentions that he likes Alexis;²⁶ the same year Alexis reviewed his *Reisebilder* in a friendly manner. Later Heine, shortly after returning from a stay in England, writes with admiration of Alexis's ability to conjure up the atmosphere of that country, although he had never visited it.

Although England is often depicted by German storywriters, yet Willibald Alexis is the only one who possesses the ability to present the localities and costumes of that country in true colour and outline. I believe that he has never been in the country himself and knows its physiognomy only through that strange intuitive power which makes the sight of the reality unnecessary to a poet.

Here Heine is speaking of *Walladmor* (1824) and *Schloss Avalon* (1827). In his *Romantische Schule* (1833) Heine concurred in Alexis's views on Goethe and Achim von Arnim (1781-1831), Alexis's obituary notice on Arnim being, in Heine's opinion, the only true evaluation of his talent to come from the pen of a 'late Romantic'. References in Heine's letter to Laube, dated April 8, 1833, suggest that the writers are still on good terms but have lost contact and it seems that they did not meet or correspond further. Alexis sums up the success of their friendship in his reminiscences:

No two people can be more antagonistic in their views than Heine and I. We are a proof that despite completely divergent religious, ethical and political tendencies, an intellectual cohesion, a friendship of culture is possible.²⁷

The long list of Alexis's contributions to *Der Freimütige* from 1830 to 1835 published in Goedeke's bibliography²⁸ indicates that he must have devoted much of his time in these years to work for this periodical, until he handed over the editorship to his friend Wilhelm Albrecht in October 1835. Among the publications in the journal for 1830 there is *Der Vater im Schnee* (*The Father in the Snow*), a *Novelle* on a social theme, the disruption of community and family life as a result of floods on the East Frisian coast. The central idea, the conquest of hardship and suffering by Christian faith, is presented

in a naive and sentimental way, and the tale is only of interest because Alexis first makes use here of sayings and mottoes as they appear later in his novels.

Der Freiherr (*The Baron*), later renamed *Victoire Charpentier*, was first published in the *Taschenbuch für Damen* (*Ladies' Magazine*) of 1830. The action is presented against the historical background of the Vendée revolt of 1793, and once more the atmosphere of a past era is convincingly evoked in a series of excellent *Genrebilder*. After a bitter struggle, a small band of Royalists is at last persuaded to come to terms with the French Republic. It is probable that Alexis partly took the July Revolution in France (1830) as a model and a warning; he may have intended to deter the Germans from a similar revolt by painting the excesses of the French Revolution. As is often the case in Alexis's work, there is an attempt to bring the story to a conciliatory conclusion. Thus Baron Rodenhause, aristocrat and Royalist, finally marries Victoire Charpentier, once a fanatical Republican. The author pleads the cause of tolerance and compromise, of a rational and humane approach to the solution of political and social problems. This attitude, adumbrated in *Acerbi*, is accentuated in *Der Begnadigte* (*The Reprieved Criminal*) published in 1831. Here the author considers the effect on two men sentenced to death of a commutation of their punishment to imprisonment. One of the prisoners is reformed by the examining magistrate Walter and eventually returns to normal life within the community. The other, who has killed the woman he loves in a passionate outburst of jealousy and looks forward to atoning for his guilt by his own death, rebels against the decree that he must continue to live and finally perishes in a condition of insanity during a frenzied attempt to destroy the whole prison and its occupants by firing the powder magazine. Walter represents the forces of reason, and all his arguments smack of materialism and philistinism. Nevertheless, they are partly Alexis's own views, and this is understandable, for *Der Freimütige*, which he was editing, had long been the official organ of 'Enlightenment' and he had become influenced by its outlook in his reaction against Romanticism, from which he was still striving to free himself, moreover, he was himself an experienced lawyer accustomed to contact with criminals and could appreciate the expediency of Walter's standpoint.

Despite his editorial duties, Alexis found time to write contributions for other periodicals, for Cotta's *Morgenblatt* from 1829 to 1838, for the Viennese *Jahrbücher der Literatur* from 1831 to 1843, for

the *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung* from 1831 to 1850 and for his own journal.²⁹ In addition he composed from 1832 onwards a large number of short biographical articles for two editions of Brockhaus's *Conversations-Lexikon*, an encyclopaedia with a literary slant which developed into *Der Grosse Brockhaus* of our day.

The first of his ambitious cycle of novels on the history of Brandenburg-Prussia, *Cabanis*, was published in 1832, but did not achieve the success for which the author hoped. Both Fontane and Ewert³⁰ attribute the somewhat lukewarm reception to the fact that the time was not yet ripe for such a work and this was most probably the decisive factor in the general lack of enthusiasm. For the Prussian, and even for the German reader, the historical setting of the *Mark* of Brandenburg was too prosaic and near at hand to vie with the more exotic or colourful foreign background of Alexandre Dumas and, to a lesser extent, because his reputation was already on the wane, of Sir Walter Scott, who died the same year. Romanticism had almost parodied itself out of coherent existence (although traces of it lingered on in literature) and the Young Germans thought of their work as a reaction against it. The period was a difficult one for literary production, since the authorities were tightening restrictions in an effort to counteract any possible effects of the 1830 July revolution among radical intellectuals in Germany. The historical theme treated in *Cabanis* did not win the approval that one might have expected, for Frederick the Great was not then the popular and legendary figure that he was later to become in history—his reputation had suffered a temporary eclipse. An autocrat of his calibre was not likely to be regarded as an object for admiration in an age of liberal, even revolutionary ideas. At the same time those older readers who still respected Frederick probably failed to appreciate the subtlety of Alexis's episodic treatment of their hero as the all-pervading spirit of the age. The public and most critics received the work coolly, and Gutzkow's remarks were even ungenerous:³¹

For his novel *Cabanis* W. Alexis received a gold medallion and we are not exaggerating if we say that this rare honour excited our expectations to a high degree. This novel is staged completely in the Berlin sphere and in it even [the pronouns] 'mir' and 'mich' are confused, for in the third part the highly educated Countess says to her companion, 'Amelie, du gefällst dich heut mal wieder recht in Paradoxien'. Otherwise the contents of this extensive volume into which the author with true zeal has raked as much as possible, show that he was not interested

in profound and moving characterization. Not without talent he jumbles together a great many situations whose connexion is passable and the entertainment does not fail completely in its purpose. A fair number of these seeds [of ideas] are, however, threadbare and can only be made tolerable by the local colour spread over them.

In 1855 Alexis brought out a new edition of the novel, in which he tried to compress the material. He sent a copy to Gutzkow and in the accompanying letter expressed the hope that his former opponent would approve of the alterations.³²

When the novel first appeared Alexis's literary friends and acquaintances, who were in several cases his teachers and patrons, also disapproved. Their views could not be gainsaid, since they numbered amongst their ranks some of the most important literary figures in Berlin and in Germany at that time, Tieck and Fouqué, Hitzig and Chamisso, Raupach and Ludwig Rellstab, Varnhagen von Ense and A. von Ungern-Sternberg, Eduard Ferrand (Schulz, 1813-42) and Franz von Gaudy (1800-40). The formidable opposition on every side induced Alexis to abandon this particular genre for several years and to devote himself to more ephemeral productions.

Alexis sent a manuscript copy of the first two books of *Cabanis* to King Frederick William III of Prussia on April 14, 1832, together with a letter in which he spoke of the novel as 'the work on which I have laboured for four years, the plan of a lifetime . . . closely connected with the interests of the fatherland and of the glorious dynasty which has created this fatherland and introduced it into the European community of nations'.³³ Alexis also asked if he might be allowed to dedicate the work to the King; this request was refused, but the monarch expressed his willingness to accept a copy of the novel when it was published.

On November 6, 1832, the King had a golden box sent to the author in token of his appreciation of the novel. Although the author had previously sent copies of *Schloss Avalon* and *Herbstreise durch Skandinavien* to the King and received gold medals in his name in token of appreciation, it is clear that the monarch was not seriously interested in Alexis's work and only accorded it formal recognition. Alexis held liberal political views and disapproved of many features in the Prussian government but, because of his respect for the achievements of the Hohenzollerns and his love for his sovereign, he wished to gain recognition from the crown. His obituary of

Frederick William III stresses the monarch's popularity and reflects the author's own affection for his ruler.³⁴

If we compare the death-beds of all his royal predecessors, where do we find anything like this, where such a general affection and deep emotion in the subjects? Whatever dissatisfaction, desire for change, bitter complaint or silent grudge at unfulfilled promises may have existed, these grievances did not touch the gentle, fatherly person of the sovereign.

The Crown Prince, later Frederick William IV, also received a copy of *Cabanis* and sent a gracious acknowledgment.

REFERENCES

¹ André-Marie Ampère et Jean-Jacques Ampère, *Correspondance et Souvenirs de 1805 à 1864*. Recueillis par Madame H.C. 2nd ed., Paris, 1875, I, esp. pp. 459 ff. In his article on J. J. Ampère (*Conversations-Lexikon*, I, 1832) Alexis mentions Ampère's account of the journey, published in *Revue de Paris*.

² In archives of F. A. Brockhaus, Leipzig. Original of quotation below: Sie scheinen auf eine englische Übersetzung großes Gewicht zu legen und diese fast als das Hauptunternehmen zu betrachten: ich habe keine so günstige Meinung davon. Es ist zwar wahr, daß *Walladmor* kein geringes Aufsehen in England erregt hat, ob dies auch für *Schloß Avalon* der Fall sein wird, ist noch zu erwarten. Wie ich aber den englischen Buchhändler kenne, wird kein Einziger auf einen Antrag meinerseits zur Abkaufung der Aushängebogen eingehen. . . . Für Veranstaltung einer englischen Übersetzung von *Schloß Avalon* fehlt es uns ganz an Lust; wir kennen dazu das englische Geschäft nicht genug und man setzt sich Betrügereien zu sehr aus.

³ Called to Berlin Opera House in 1825; her performances were a great success and she was granted a patent of nobility by the King of Prussia, before leaving for Paris in 1827. A portrait of her in her role as 'Donna del Lago' was published as frontispiece in Alexis's translation from Scott, *Die Jungfrau vom See*, 2. Aufl. Zwickau, 1825.

⁴ Gutzkow, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der neueren Literatur*, Stuttgart, 1836, I, p. 233.

⁵ Friedrich Christoph Förster (1791-1868), friend of Theodor Körner and writer, later biographer, e.g. of Körner (1862) and Goethe (1868). Hermann Kletke published his autobiography from literary remains (1873).

⁶ MSS of letters in Schiller-Nationalmuseum, Marbach and archives of F. A. Brockhaus, Leipzig. Moritz Gottlieb Saphir (1795-1858) wrote for various popular publications in Berlin 1826-1829 and made himself many enemies by his satirical pen in this period. Alexis became one of his opponents.

⁷ See *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1829, V, *Intelligenzblätter*, no. 26, pp. 204 ff.

⁸ *Erinnerungen*, op. cit., pp. 282-95. The note on an illustration of Hauff's *Memoiren des Satan* mentioned below is in the Schiller-Nationalmuseum, Marbach.

⁹ See Ewert, 'Drei Briefe von W.A. an Goethe', *W.A. Bund Jahrbuch*, 1929-31, pp. 56-62.

¹⁰ *Hermes*, 1824, pp. 1-114.

¹¹ Published in *Der Gesellschafter*, September 1826, nos. 144-6.

¹² *Berliner Conversationsblatt*, 1828, no. 115, pp. 451-4.

¹³ In *Werther* lieh er Worte einem allgemeiner werdenden Bedürfnis der Mitteilung von Gefühlen, die in den hergebrachten Regeln der schönen Wissenschaften keinen Ausdruck fanden. Im *Goetz* ließ er die noch lebenden Erinnerungen aus der Vorzeit, ehe sie ganz untergingen, sprechen. Er prüfte das Wesen der empfindsamen Periode in seiner *Stella*. Seine kleinen Scherzdichtungen der frühesten Zeit sind durchaus Kritiker des Erlebten. *Faust* wuchs zu einer Recension der allertiefsten Richtungen seiner Zeit; das große Gebiet der Philosophie wurde darin aufgenommen. Deutlicher spricht die beobachtende und urteilende Tätigkeit sich im *Wilhelm Meister* aus, und prüfte er nicht in den *Wahlverwandtschaften* . . . durch eigene Versuche eine neue Wunderzeit, von der er sich bald genug lossagte?

¹⁴ Diary in Landes- und Stadtbibliothek, Düsseldorf. See also *Jugendbriefe von Robert Schumann*, nach den Originalen mitgeteilt von Clara Schumann, 2. Aufl. Leipzig, 1886, pp. 45-57.

¹⁵ See Deetjen, 'Immermann und W.A.', *Zeitschrift für den deutschen Unterricht*, XXVII, 1914, pp. 25-31 and Thomas, 'W.A. und seine Zeitgenossen', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*,

LXXV, 1956, pp. 162-71 (including unpublished letter from Alexis to Immermann dated October 22, 1837).

¹⁶ Nowack, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

¹⁷ Gutzkow, *Beiträge . . .* (*op. cit.*), I, p. 234.

¹⁸ See note 12 above.

¹⁹ *Mitteilungen aus dem Literaturarchiv in Berlin*, 1907. *Sonderveröffentlichte Briefe an Menzel* (1908), pp. 84 f.

²⁰ *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, 1831, nos. 335 f.

²¹ *Der Gesellschafter*, 1833, no. 28, p. 144.

²² In archives of F. A. Brockhaus, Leipzig. . . durch den hätschelnden liebkosenden Artikel einem Schandbuben unter die Arme gesprungen, gegen den in zürnendem Ernst auszusprechen jedes Ehrenmannes Pflicht gewesen.

²³ H. H. Houben, *Gutzkow-Funde*, Berlin, 1901, pp. 498-514. For below see also *Morgenblatt*, 1830, no. 46, and 1833, nos. 18, 26 (Gutzkow's reviews of Alexis's works) and Gutzkow, *Werke*, ed. Houben (*Lebenserinnerungen*), X, p. 222, XI, pp. 58, 87, 193, 217, XII, pp. 108, 120, 177.

²⁴ *Jahrbücher der Literatur*, Vienna, XXXI, pp. 157-85.

²⁵ Heine, *Werke*, ed. Karpeles, III, pp. 100-101. Mich erfreut sogar die Nachahmung . . . wie wir sie bei W. Alexis, Bronikowski und Cooper finden, welcher erstere im ironischen *Walladmor* seinem Vorbild am nächsten steht und uns auch in einer späteren Dichtung so viel Gestalten- und Geistesreichtum gezeigt hat, daß er wohl imstande wäre, mit poetischer Ursprünglichkeit, die sich nur der Scottischen Form bedient, uns die teuersten Momente deutscher Geschichte in einer Reihe historischer Novellen vor die Seele zu führen.

²⁶ For references here and below, see Heine, *Werke* (ed. Karpeles), IX, p. 4 and IV, p. 1 (*Englische Fragmente*, pref. dated November 10, 1830): Obgleich England von deutschen Novellendichtern oft geschildert wird, so ist doch Willibald Alexis der einzige, der die dortigen Lokalitäten und Kostüme mit treuen Farben und Umrissen zu geben wußte. Ich glaube, er ist nicht einmal im Lande selbst gewesen, und er kennt dessen Physiognomie nur durch jene wundersame Intuition, die einem Poeten die Anschauung der Wirklichkeit entbehrlieh macht. Also V, pp. 194, 254 and IX, p. 117. Alexis's review of *Reisebilder* in *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, 1827, no. 10.

²⁷ *Erinnerungen*, *op. cit.*, p. 313. In ihren Ansichten können sich zwei nicht widerstrebender begegnen als Heine und ich. Wir sind uns Beweis dafür, daß bei durchaus divergierenden, religiösen, ethischen und politischen Tendenzen doch ein geistiges Zusammenhalten, eine Freundschaft der Bildung möglich ist. In *Revue des deux mondes*, IV, 1833, p. 224, a French critic describes Alexis as a friend of Heine.

²⁸ Karl Goedeke, *Grundriß zur Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung*, IX, 1910, pp. 464-6.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Fontane, 'W.A.', *Aus dem Nachlaß*, Berlin, 1908, p. 172 and Alexis, *Erinnerungen*, *op. cit.* (Ewert's introduction), p. xxiii.

³¹ Gutzkow, *Beiträge . . .*, I, p. 235. Für seinen Roman *Cabanis* erhielt W. Alexis eine goldene Medaille und wir sagen nicht zu viel, wenn diese seltene Huld unsere Erwartung in hohem Grade gespannt hat. Dieser Roman ist durchaus in Berlinercher Sphäre gehalten, es werden darin sogar mir und mich verwechselt, denn im dritten Theile sagt die hochgebildete Gräfin zu ihrer Gesellschafterin; 'Amelie, du gefällst *dich* heut mal wieder recht in Paradoxien'. Sonst zeigte der Inhalt dieses weitschichtigen Buches, in welches der Verfasser mit wahrer Aengstlichkeit so viel Stoff als möglich hineingerafft hat, daß es ihm um tiefe, seelenvolle Charakteristiken nicht zu thun war. Nicht ohne Talent würfelt er eine Menge von Situationen zusammen deren Zusammenhang leidlicher ist, und den Zweck der Unterhaltung nicht gänzlich verfehlt. Eine ansehnliche Zahl unter diesen Samen ist jedoch abgenutzt, und ließ sich nur durch die darüber gezogenen Lokalfarben erträglich machen.

³² Houben, *Gutzkow-Funde*, *op. cit.*, p. 508.

³³ Original: . . . die vierjährige Arbeit, ein Lebensplan . . . innigst an die Interessen des Vaterlandes und der glorreichen Dynastie, welche dies Vaterland geschaffen und in die Europäische Staatenreihe eingeführt hat, verbunden. For following see Hasselberg, 'W.A. und Friedrich Wilhelm III', *Mitteilungen des Vereins für die Geschichte Berlins*, 41 Jg, 1924, nos. 10-12.

³⁴ *Morgenblatt*, 1840, no. 261, July 7. Vergleichen wir die Sterbebetten aller seiner Königlichen Vorgänger, wo finden wir etwas Ähnliches? wo eine solche allgemeine Liebe und tiefe Rührung bei den Untertanen? Wer auch unzufrieden war, wer vieles wünschte, wer bitter klagte und im Innern grollte, daß Verheißungen nicht in Erfüllung gegangen, die milde, väterliche Person des Königs traf diese Klagen nicht.

VICISSITUDES

IN the early 1830s Alexis's personal life was far from happy. Shortly after the publication of *Cabanis* he had parted from his fiancée Julie Gley, a young actress who later won fame under her married name—Julie Rettich. They had become engaged in 1829, Alexis having met her through his work as theatre critic during her season in Dresden and Berlin. The same year she accepted a permanent engagement at the famous Burgtheater in Vienna, and it grew difficult for them to meet often. As a result of this situation, however, Alexis showed an ever increasing interest in Vienna which culminated in *Wiener Bilder* (*Pictures of Vienna*, 1833) and eventually, after the engagement was broken off during Alexis's visit to the Austrian capital about June 1832, faded because of painful memories. During this visit he called on Johann Ludwig Deinhardstein (1794–1859), the editor of *Jahrbücher der Literatur* and hence one with whom he occasionally corresponded.¹ They had first met in Berlin in 1830 and Deinhardstein, the anti-liberal Austrian censor, cherished hopes after Alexis's skirmish with Börne that Alexis would join the camp of reaction. Alexis was always on his guard in his relations with Deinhardstein because of their different political views, but it suited both writers to work together at the time. Together with Julie and Deinhardstein he met Eduard von Bauernfeld (1802–90), Franz Grillparzer (1791–1872) and Josef Schreyvogel (1768–1832) at a dinner party.² It is unlikely that Grillparzer was particularly attracted to Alexis; his only published reference to him was written down in 1865 where he mentions his name, together with Mörike, Otto Ludwig, Holtei and others, as a beneficiary of the 'Schillerstiftung' (a fund for writers in need) with the general disparaging comment, 'How many of these would Schiller himself have agreed to include in the list?'³

It will help to complete the picture of Alexis's character and appearance in these years if reminiscences by his contemporaries are consulted. Friedrich Brunold (1811–94), a fashionable writer belonging to a group mockingly styled by Gutzkow 'the Pomeranian school of poets',⁴ remembers Alexis as a regular visitor to the widely known Stehely Conditorei on the corner of Jägerstrasse in Berlin,

a confectioner's which provided newspapers and literary magazines. Many writers went there to browse amongst the latest numbers and were familiar with an unpretentious person, 'who used to enter timidly with the upper part of his body somewhat bowed and his little black moustache looking out from under his nose, as though begging pardon for being there at all'.⁵ Despite his obvious ability to remain on friendly terms with his very large number of acquaintances, he was entirely at his ease in the presence of only a few of them. This was perhaps partly the result of his intense preoccupation with reading and writing, to which he devoted so much of his time that he had little over for social intercourse and eventually, after some years of this voluntary self-isolation, felt embarrassed at large gatherings or in public places. Brunold observes that he used to refer to himself jokingly as 'der pensionierte Referendarius' ('the pensioned-off probationary barrister'), a remark which suggests that he still thought of himself as a lawyer rather than a writer, perhaps because his hopes of literary fame had not been fully realized. It is interesting that a description of him by Eduard Beurmann, a minor writer and probably one of Metternich's informers, is so similar to that of Brunold:

In one corner of the room [in Stehly's] I noticed one afternoon a timid-looking man with the upper part of his body somewhat bowed and a black moustache, a man whose appearance was half apprehension, half conciliation, a cross between Berlin candour (*Freimütigkeit*) and the writer's spleen (*Zerrissenheit*). The waiter replied to my question that this man was called H... [Häring] and that he edited the *Freimütige*.⁶

The popular Berlin writer A. von Ungern-Sternberg first met Alexis during a walk in the *Tiergarten* and was later introduced by him into the successor of the *Mittwochsgesellschaft*. 'This small, agile man... with the merry eyes and a fine head of curly brown hair' had an amiable exterior, Sternberg writes, but occasionally revealed traces of sorrow and bitterness:

The truth is that he too found 'all kinds of things wrong' in conditions of that time, but he did not speak out and, like Uhland's muse, 'shut away most of his thought bitterly within the depths of his heart', at any rate this was my impression of him and later years showed that he belonged to the 'dissatisfied' and secret 'fault-finders', from whom the opposition recruited support and who were destined to constitute the germ of the future 'Moderate Left' in the chambers of deputies. . . . As far as I can remember *Cabanis* appeared at that very time and one can already read between the lines of this . . . novel signs of the later political theorist. As everybody knows, Häring has never got as far as a bold brand of liberalism, just as he has never achieved either a frank, bold and independent kind of writing.⁷

This comment, although harsh, contains at least a grain of truth and throws fresh light on the interpretation of Alexis's hero Étienne in *Cabanis* who, besides resembling Scott's 'negative' hero, is not entirely free from the fashionable 'spleen' (*Zerrissenheit*) from which not only Young German writers but also Alexis himself (at this point in his literary development) suffered.

Alexis's trip to Austria, Southern Germany and Switzerland in 1832 bore literary fruit in *Wiener Bilder* (1833). It is typical of the Prussian censorship at the time that these impressions of Vienna should be banned on the strength of a single chapter in which the author attempted to formulate his 'political confession of faith'; here he voiced his conviction that hereditary monarchy is the only expedient form of government for a European state. A self-avowed royalist, Alexis declares that he has never supported republicanism because of his belief that hereditary monarchy offers the most efficient and impartial form of administration with the greatest possible security to property, the maximum freedom of opinion and the largest degree of equality between citizens. Alexis accepts 'Divine Right' only in the sense that all humans need government, not only by law, but also by some personal and paternal authority which can judge their weaknesses at a human level. The next point he makes probably gave offence in certain circles. Alexis rejects an argument sometimes advanced in favour of the monarchy, namely that the artist finds patronage at court; nowadays, he declares, monarchs lag behind their peoples in their cultural standard and offered little support to writers of prominence like Lessing, Schiller, Goethe, Heinrich von Kleist or Tieck. The following passage throws light on Alexis's religious views, particularly with reference to his political beliefs, and deserves to be quoted in full:

I am of the opinion that Man, despite all his claims to strength, is a weak creature and not self-sufficient; and as I believe that an invisible God holds sway over Nature and its laws, which we *can* fathom, with an unfathomable law, I think too that human law is not sufficient to bring right, much less comfort, to Man and that he needs the mediation of grace as long as he is human. In this sense I believe in a divine right of kings and am a Royalist, since I believe that the existence of a patriarchal ruling power side by side with inexorable law is beneficial and necessary.⁸

In order to perform its proper function (Alexis continues) a monarchy must be more than a shadowy figurehead: if it is based on personal affection, it will provide greater unity than a republican form of government. Hence, Alexis points out, France, a monarchy,

is stronger and more united than the republics Italy, Poland or Greece. Both the ideal of absolute equality and that of republicanism are impracticable; the belief in sovereignty of the people (*Volks-souverainität*) is a chimera and illusion, because popular unity can only be achieved of itself at moments of crisis, e.g. the Prussian uprising against the national enemy in 1813. Alexis abhors the absolute monarchy in which government is dependent upon the ruler's caprice, but believes that this form of administration is as rarely encountered as the absolute republic. Alexis is not certain whether he would advocate a constitution for the state (then a favourite point of debate), for he remarks that constitutions are useless without a living spirit behind them. He does, however, champion legitimism, since he believes that rule based on hereditary right is the only expedient which can counter uncertainty as to succession. This uncertainty can be more harmful than the certainty of acquiring a weak or wicked ruler. Alexis admits that a ruling family can degenerate, forfeit its right to govern and be removed. For this reason he claims that the July revolution in France was justified, since it rid the country of a useless king; unfortunately, however, it also fostered hope in the chimera of *Volkssouverainität*. Germany, he declares, has been fortunate in her princes, the houses of Habsburg and Hohenzollern; they are linked to their peoples by a mutual bond of affection, so that attempts since the Congresses of Vienna and Carlsbad to awaken distrust between ruler and ruled have always failed. Liberal objectives can only be attained by evolution, not by violence; on the other hand, Alexis condemns reactionary tendencies which can only lead to retrogression or stagnation. Germany's ideal unity, he remarks, is endangered by the distrust existing between North and South. Hugo Bieber interprets this attitude as a desire to extend the Prussian state all over Germany.⁹ Whether this is true or not, there can be no doubt that Alexis himself did his utmost to bring about a greater understanding between North and South Germany and Austria in the literary, social and political spheres.

Alexis declares that the royalist cause is in decline, not because of strong opponents, but on account of weak monarchs. However, republican ideas have not gained a firm footing—rulers are more afraid of these ideas than the peoples are attached to them. Royalty is not imperilled by propaganda, liberal publicists or a free press, but only by a press which is gagged. He discusses the censorship and the banning of certain publications, concluding that these measures are short-sighted rather than expedient. The people, he

prophesies, will return to the monarchic ideal. In the chapter entitled 'Liberalism' (*Liberalismus*) he claims to be an 'aristocrat', i.e. a champion of the principles of aristocracy, because he believes that no nation can long survive without this class.

This 'confession of faith' reveals that Alexis's political views diverged widely from those of the Young Germans, whose works were also banned by the same censorship. Ludwig Lorenz has likened Alexis's political standpoint to that held by conservatives in Germany in 1914;¹⁰ this is probably an over-simplification and could at the most apply in some respects to his outlook after the disappointment of the 1848 revolution. He may be classed with those National Liberals¹¹ whose patriotism induced them, after the failure of the 1848 revolution, to support Bismarck as the sole hope of achieving the dream of a united Germany. That Alexis usually adheres to a central position in politics but reserves his right to express a viewpoint independent of any political party is suggested in the preface to *Schattenrisse aus Süddeutschland* (*Silhouettes from Southern Germany*, 1834):

All colours would have to be erased from these pictures, if the political ones were not included. They can no longer be separated from the rest. My Confession of Faith is no secret. Neither the most recent events on the one hand nor the calumnies on the other have changed it in the slightest way. I regret the former, but not on my own account—the latter are the inevitable lot of all adopting an independent standpoint. For me, my opponents are only those who regard one single principle, conceived and developed by human agency, exclusively as the eternal truth, and only those challenge me to personal conflict who wish to make it my personal duty to pay homage to such a principle, whether to the right or to the left. I believe nature and life to be so infinitely rich, that thousands can still seek a straight path between both principles without even touching one another.¹²

Alexis's political views have been considered in some detail because they are important for his work as a whole. However, his impressions of Austria, which fill most pages of the volume, are certainly not without interest. He claims to have approached the Austrian frontier with trepidation because of the Austrian government's reputation for brutal repression, but he soon found that such stories were 'mere fairy-tales'. He attended a literary circle which was the successor of the ill-famed 'Ludlamshöhle' ('Ludlam's Cave') with which Grillparzer was connected and he was impressed by the fraternal behaviour towards each other of the 'ex-Ludlamites'. He praises the Burgtheater and shows unusual understanding (for a Prussian) in his remarks on the Viennese popular theatre. Robert F.

Arnold, an expert on the Viennese theatre, stated that nobody of that time from Northern Germany had written on the comedies of Ferdinand Raimund (1790-1836) with such perception.¹³

Alexis was the perfect tourist in that his curiosity about other countries seemed immeasurable without being tactless, while he was devoid of those national and local prejudices which mar many an otherwise attractive travel sketch. Hence he notes that the steps up to houses are of stone (in contrast to the wooden ones of Berlin), he admires the natural behaviour of the aristocracy and the friendliness of the ordinary people, but censures the laxness of morals. One chapter is devoted to the specialities of the Austrian cuisine. In reviewing the book Gutzkow is sarcastic about the detailed descriptions ('it is good that Alexis has seen everything, but inappropriate if he tells us all about it in turn') and then makes an observation calculated to deter the most determined reader: 'but one must not be unfair, there are several passages in this book which can be read without distaste'.¹⁴

By March 1833 Alexis was thinking of another trip south to meet his friends in the Rhineland and Swabia, for he wrote to Hermann Hauff of this intention and hoped that he would be able to meet him. At about the same time he was writing to Deinhardstein mentioning his plan and throwing out dark hints about the persecution he was enduring (with reference to the attack on *Cabanis* by Menzel through his lieutenant Gutzkow). Alexis was obviously anxious to renew friendships which had cooled somewhat as a result of his skirmishes with Menzel and Börne; he also wished to establish a reading public for *Der Freimütige* in the south, where it was not read widely for various reasons, mostly regional or political. Having set out in July, he probably visited his friend Simrock on the Rhine. Later, in the company of the historian Friedrich von Raumer (1781-1873), he called to see the poet Nikolaus Lenau (1802-50) in Stuttgart, for he had a letter of introduction to Lenau from the hospitable Justinus Kerner (1786-1862) whom he had already visited. Lenau describes Alexis as 'an interesting, cultured, intellectual man'.¹⁵ In September and October, perhaps on his way home, Alexis spent some weeks in Düsseldorf with acquaintances, including Immermann, Friedrich von Uechtritz, Wilhelm Schadow and the composer Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-47). Gutzkow gives this information in two letters to Menzel dated September 20 and October 11, 1833 ('Alexis has undertaken a great journey of reconciliation . . . to appear in person before his opponents and to disarm

them by his amiability').¹⁶ Our author knew Schadow from his Berlin days in the Academy of Art (till 1826), he had also met Immermann and Uechtritz earlier. This is the only reference I have found to his acquaintance with Mendelssohn, who was a close friend of Uechtritz, but perhaps they met again when the Mendelssohn family took their holidays at Heringsdorf.¹⁷ This fishing village on the Baltic Coast on the island of Usedom came to be associated with Alexis's name, but he did not found it, as has been claimed. By October 14 he was back in Berlin and reporting to his friend Simrock that he had become a 'Pomeranian landowner' by buying a house in Heringsdorf;¹⁸ later he extended his possessions there and often spent his vacations at the house until about 1847, when he was trying to sell it. In his book *England im Jahre 1835* von Raumer makes a humorous reference to the house¹⁹ as a 'new residence' and it may be that Alexis later built another house for himself there.

Schattenrisse aus Süddeutschland is a readable and probably fairly truthful account of Alexis's journey, his impressions of the people he meets and the places he visits. Interest in the historical and particularly in what is 'kulturgeschichtlich' (i.e. reflecting social or cultural history) dominates his descriptions of such places as Karlsruhe, Heidelberg, Baden-Baden, Besigheim, Cannstatt or Stuttgart. We are given his views on the Salzkammergut, Salzburg and Berchtesgaden. In Dresden he met the painter Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) and reproduces their conversation. Many years before he had first become acquainted with him and mentions him in a letter to Theodor Hell dated October 29, 1823.²⁰ Worms, Speyer and the general character of the Palatinate are all portrayed, Alexis poking fun at the way inhabitants of the area ape French manners. The patriotic author presents with irony a fellow traveller who proclaims that Germany has had her day and that America is now the only land offering a modicum of personal freedom and the opportunity to get rid of prejudice and nationality: Alexis reflects humorously over his own prejudices in this respect:

Then I too thought of the failing for which a witty reviewer in Hamburg had reproached me, how I could possibly be interested in the hero of my *Cabanis* who devoted the whole of his life to a blind loyalty to his royal hero Frederick the Great! I could have answered modestly that my hero was a Prussian officer of 1760, but I had not reflected that it is the duty of a writer to inoculate the characters of the past with the enlightenment of our age.²¹

Admiration for America was often expressed in the works of the Young Germans, Goethe, Lenau and also in Alexis's early stories, e.g. in *Acerbi*, where Countess Arnheim remarks (p.189): 'If only I could go to America, that land where all prejudices cease, where we are all equal, where we can believe what we wish, where everyone only works for what is useful.'

For the student of literary history Alexis's relations with the Swabians, at a time when there was all too precise a cleavage between North and South, are of special interest. Besides describing his visits to Weinsberg to stay with Kerner, his meeting with Lenau and his views on Ludwig Uhland (1787-1862), Karl Mayer (1786-1870) and Gustav Schwab (1792-1850), he also mentions a reunion with one of his closest Swabian acquaintances, Karl von Grüneisen, whom he had met several years before. In his remarks on Switzerland he declares that there is no Swiss writer who gives a truthful picture of Swiss life. He only mentions Mörike anonymously, as the author of the novel *Maler Nolten* (1832). The whole book retains the liberal and sensible qualities typical of the author's travel accounts, and it is disconcerting to find a French critic²² accusing Alexis of pandering to the Prussian crown and holding reactionary views.

In 1834 a French translation of *Cabanis* (in a shortened form) was published anonymously by Gosselin in Paris; this was by Sophie Augustine Leo, wife of the historian and philosopher Heinrich Leo (1799-1878). She wrote under the name of Leontine Romainville and had already published such works as *Die beiden Liberalen. Aus den Papieren eines jungen Pariser* (*The Two Liberals. From the Papers of a Young Parisian*, Leipzig, 1831).²³ In a letter to Theodor Hell dated May 12, 1833²⁴ Alexis had recommended a story by Leontine Romainville for publication, stating that he knew her only slightly through her family and that the story was based on her own experience of the 1830 revolution in Paris. It is not known whether the story was published by Hell, but it is possible that the translation of *Cabanis* was made as a result of their acquaintance. The same year Alexis became involved in a dispute with the painter and writer Alexander Simon who took offence at a criticism of his pictures, published in *Der Freimütige* in October 1834, while Alexis was still editor.²⁵ As we shall see, Alexis eventually resigned from editorial responsibility and this was only one of the many unpleasantnesses which induced him to take the step.

REFERENCES

- ¹ See 'Ungedruckte Briefe von Claren... W.A....', *Deutsche Dichtung*, XXV, 1899, pp. 224 ff.
- ² *Jahrbuch der Grillparzer-Gesellschaft*, V, 1895, p. 61. Bauernfeld's diary, May 30, 1832. See also, for Alexis's relations with Julie Gley, Thomas, 'W.A. und seine Zeitgenossen'.
- ³ Grillparzer, *Werke*, ed. S. Hock (Bong & Co. n.d.), XIII, p. 440.
- ⁴ H. H. Houben, *Jungdeutscher Sturm und Drang*, Leipzig, 1911, p. 443.
- ⁵ F. Brunold, *Literarische Erinnerungen*, 2. Aufl. Zürich/Leipzig, 1881, 2 vols., I, pp. 132 ff. Original: . . . der schüchtern einzutreten pflegte, mit etwas gebücktem Oberkörper, während der kleine schwarze Schnurrbart, wie um Verzeihung bittend, daß er überhaupt da sei, unter der Nase hervorschaute.
- ⁶ E. Beurmann, *Vertraute Briefe über Preußens Hauptstadt* I, Stuttgart/Berlin, 1837, p. 96: In einem Winkel des Zimmers bemerkte ich eines Nachmittags einen schüchternen Menschen mit etwas gebücktem Oberkörper und einem schwarzen Schnurrbart, einen Menschen, der halb wie Angst, halb wie Vermittlung aussah, ein Mittelding zwischen Berliner Freimütigkeit und schriftstellerischer Zerrissenheit. Der Marqueur bedeutete mir auf meine Frage, daß dieser Mann H. . . . (Häring) heiße und den *Freimütigen* redigiere.
- ⁷ Nämlich war es auch ihm [Alexis] 'allerlei nicht recht' in den damaligen Zuständen, doch sprach er sich nicht aus und wie Uhlands Muse 'verschloß er das Meiste bitter in des Busens Grunde', diesen Eindruck wenigstens machte er mir, und die Folgezeit hat gezeigt, daß er zu den 'Mißvergünstigen' und geheimen 'Tadlern' gehörte, aus denen die Opposition rekrutierte und die den Keim der künftigen 'gemäßigten Linken' in den Ständekammern auszumachen bestimmt war. . . . So viel ich mich besinnen kann, erschien damals der *Cabanis* und zwischen den Zeilen dieses . . . Romans kann man den späten Doktrinär herauslesen. Bis zu einem kühnen Liberalismus hat Häring es bekanntlich nie gebracht, so wie er es auch nie zu einer offenen, kühnen und selbständigen Poesie gebracht hat. A. v. Ungern-Sternberg, *Erinnerungsblätter*, Berlin, 1855, I, p. 100 f.
- ⁸ *Wiener Bilder*, p. 428. Ich bin der Meinung, daß der Mensch, trotz aller Stärke, auf die er pocht, ein schwaches Wesen ist und sich selbst nicht genug; und wie ich glaube, daß über der Natur und ihrem Gesetze, das wir erforschen mögen, ein unsichtbarer Gott schwebt mit einem unerforschbaren Gesetz, so meine ich, daß dem Menschen das Gesetz nicht ausreicht zu seinem Recht, wie viel weniger zu seinem Troste, und daß er die Vermittlung der Gnade bedarf, so lange er Mensch ist. In dem Sinne glaube ich an ein göttliches Recht der Könige und bin Royalist, vermeinend, daß neben dem unerbittlichen Gesetze eine väterlich waltende Macht wohl tut und Not ist.
- ⁹ Hugo Bieber, *Der Kampf um die Tradition*, Stuttgart, 1928, p. 215.
- ¹⁰ Ludwig Lorenz, 'W.A. als Politiker', *Konservative Monatsschrift*, Heft 10, 71 Jg. July 1914 pp. 27-30.
- ¹¹ Vollert, quoted by Fontane, op. cit., p. 181, describes Alexis's political standpoint as 'altliberal'.
- ¹² Ohne die politischen mit aufzunehmen müßten alle Farben von diesen Bildern fortbleiben. Es läßt sich nicht mehr trennen. Mein Glaubensbekenntnis ist kein Geheimnis. Weder haben die jüngsten Ereignisse von der einen Seite, noch die Verleumdungen von der andern im geringsten etwas daran geändert. Jenes bedauere ich, nicht um meinetwegen — diese sind das unvermeidliche Los aller unabhängigen Dastehenden. Gegner sind mir nur die, welche ein Prinzip, ein mit menschlichen Organen aufgefaßtes und ausgebildetes für die ewige Wahrheit halten, und zum persönlichen Kampfe fordern mich nur die heraus, welche es mir persönlich zur Pflicht machen wollen, einem solchen zu huldigen, sei es nach rechts oder links. Ich halte Natur und Leben für so unendlich reich, daß noch Tausende zwischen beiden Prinzipien durch sich einen geraden Weg suchen können, ohne sich nur selbst zu berühren.
- ¹³ Robert F. Arnold, 'Schriftsteller der Restaurationszeit über Wien', *Alt-Wien*, ed. Leopold Stiebock, April, 1896, 5 Jg., p. 76.
- ¹⁴ Gutzkow, *Beiträge* . . . , op. cit., I, p. 240. Es ist gut, wenn Alexis alles gesehen hat, aber unpassend, wenn er uns alles wieder erzählt . . . man darf nicht ungerecht sein. Es finden sich mehrere Passagen in diesem Buche, die ohne Widerwillen gelesen werden.
- ¹⁵ *Justinus Kerners Briefwechsel mit seinen Freunden*, ed. Th. Kerner and E. Müller, Stuttgart, 1897, II, p. 54. Ein interessanter, durchgebildeter Mann von Geist.
- ¹⁶ Houben, *Gutzkow-Funde* (op. cit.), pp. 23, 27-8. Alexis hat eine große Versöhnungsreise unternommen . . . um seinen Gegnern persönlich unter die Augen zu treten und sie durch seine Liebenswürdigkeit zu ent Waffen.
- ¹⁷ Mendelssohn's sisters were there in July 1839. See Sebastian Hensel, *The Mendelssohn Family 1729-1847*, London, 1881, II, pp. 49-55.

¹⁸ Letter, October 14, [1834]. In *Literaturarchiv der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Berlin.

¹⁹ Friedrich von Raumer (1781–1873), historian, was a close friend of Alexis and like him stood midway between reaction and liberalism, thereby incurring the enmity of some liberals (see article on him in *Conversations-Lexikon* III, 1833, pp. 703–6). In *England im Jahre 1835*, Leipzig, 1836, p. 324, he addresses his wife (the book is in a series of letters to her) as though she were in Heringsdorf: 'I cannot take it for granted that in Häringsdorf, a remote watering-place, you can already be provided, by Häring's exertions, with maps, though the author of "Walladmor" and of the "Castle of Avalon" ought, above all things, to hang up a map of England in his new residence' (vol. III, p. 131, of translation by Sarah Austin and H. E. Lloyd, *England in 1835*, London, 1836).

²⁰ Letter to Theodor Hell, October 29, 1823. In *Theatermuseum*, Munich.

²¹ *Schattenrisse aus Süddeutschland*, p. 79. Dachte ich doch auch da an die Sünde, die mir ein geistreicher Rezensent in Hamburg vorwarf; wie es denn möglich wäre, sich für den Helden in meinem Romane (*Cabanis*) ganz zu interessiren, der das ganze Leben widme der blinden Devotion für seinen Heldenkönig Friedrich! Bescheiden hätte ich zwar erwiedern können, daß dieser Held ein preußischer Offizier aus dem Jahre 1760 sei; aber ich hatte nicht bedacht, daß es die Pflicht des Poeten ist, die Erleuchtung unserer Zeit auch den Charakteren vergangener Jahre einzuimpfen.

²² A.Sp.'s review in *Revue des deux mondes*, 1 Jg., 1833.

²³ See Quérard, *La France Littéraire*, vol. 8, 1836, under 'Romainville, Mme Leontine': 'Ouvrage très intéressant qui renferme une foule de piquants rapprochements des moeurs politiques de la France et de l'Allemagne. Cette production se recommande aux allemands par les leçons utiles qu'elle contient; les lecteurs français, initiés à l'idiome de l'auteur, seront frappés de la vérité des esquisses qui y sont tracées'.

²⁴ In *Theatermuseum*, Munich.

²⁵ G. Fittbogen, 'A. Simon und W. A.', *Zeitschrift des Vereins für die Geschichte Berlins*, 57 Jg. 1940, pp. 63 f.

CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS IN LITERATURE

IN 1834 Alexis was still remembered as the author of the banned *Wiener Bilder* and was already at work on his first novel of contemporary life, *Das Haus D \ddot{u} sterweg* (*Bleak House* suggests what is meant without being an exact translation). For an impression of him at this time, we must return to the reminiscences of Brunold who visited him at his home—then at Zimmerstrasse 91.¹

Brunold entered his study which was situated to the right of a courtyard and was simple, unadorned and yet comfortably furnished. He found Alexis, then editor of *Der Freim \ddot{u} tige*, arranging for reviews with the literary journalist Hermann Marggraff (1809–64), a close associate at this time (Alexis recommended him to Brockhaus in 1835 and he reviewed Alexis's *Der Roland von Berlin* favourably in 1841). Brunold recorded that Alexis, in giving instructions to Marggraff, did not favour any particular work in a group of books for review; to Alexis the editor the intrinsic worth of the work itself was important, not its author. When Brunold arrived, Alexis was in a state of depression, but he cheered up later and 'when he had overcome the anxiety which he was feeling because I had seated myself on an elegant chair which, he feared, might break from my rocking on it, he became as amiable as one could imagine'. Normally, Brunold declared, Alexis never spoke about the books which he was writing, but now he felt the need to do so, and even read aloud a passage from the unfinished *Das Haus D \ddot{u} sterweg*, which, published in 1835, reflects the author's world-weariness and unstable, if not despairing outlook at the time of its composition. Although Alexis in the preface warns the reader not to take the opinions expressed in the novel as representing those of the author, there can be little doubt that his views in various moods are attributed to several of the characters, especially the poet on the verge of madness, Eberhard, who vents his most pessimistic thoughts, and Baron Landschaden, who provides a mouthpiece for his melancholy reflections on life in his calmer moments. The incoherence of form and the 'spleen' of most of the characters suggest that Alexis is following the fashionable Young German productions of those years, but the patriotic and positive call for

German unity in the writings of the idealist Prince Guido shows how different the author's political views were from those of the Young Germans; this partly explains why representatives of the new movement like Gutzkow derided the novel.² The finely-worded allegory of the conflict between the giants (the nobility) and the dwarfs (the bourgeoisie) which has laid the country at the mercy of her enemies and reduced her to ruin, concludes with the vision of a knight in glittering silver armour with the crest of the double-headed eagle shining on his helmet; this blonde, blue-eyed youth, who is to lead the German people to victory and unity, probably embodies the hopes of Alexis and some of his contemporaries in a future when the popular and still romantic Crown Prince, later Frederick William IV, would succeed to the throne of Prussia and possibly further the cause of German unity.

The action of the novel is crowded with improbabilities. A wealthy but cynical nobleman plays a malicious practical joke on his hopeful heirs, and, in accordance with instructions left by him, his will passes from one relative to another, until it reaches Baron Landschaden. The latter, who has meanwhile won a reputation as an author, is also duped, for ten days before his wedding he has to open a codicil which disinherits him if he chooses a wife with less than sixteen noble ancestors and replaces him by an unknown elder brother, who, at his father's caprice, has been brought up in a bourgeois home in order to discover whether he will be led back to the nobility by instinct. At the end of the story the Baron is unknowingly responsible for the death, during a popular revolt, of his brother, with whom he never actually becomes acquainted in that relationship. However, he eventually conquers his despair, attains a resigned attitude to life and is able to give his existence meaning and purpose by caring for a woman whom he had loved in the past but who had later been seduced by a scoundrel.

The work is built up from letters by the various characters, newspaper reports and extracts from diaries, and this technique inevitably makes the form fragmentary and the plot difficult to unravel. Since the characters and situations are often described from the point of view of several people at different times, it is not surprising that the atmosphere of the whole is hazy and ambiguous. Eberhard's gradual loss of sanity is reflected in his letters and the reader is first given an unbalanced interpretation of events from his point of view. Later, however, in the greater proportion of the work, characters and situations are presented as seen by Baron Landschaden and as

described by him in his letters to Canoness Sophie, the only person unaffected by 'ragged nerves' or *Zerrissenheit*. She maintains her solidity and integrity of character by living in solitude and is thus able to offer impartial advice to the young Baron who depends on her spiritual and moral guidance.

The conversation between a bookseller and a young writer (a common theme, treated, for example, by the Russian poet Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837) in a poem in dialogue written in 1824) reflects Alexis's bitterness against the reading public for always assessing an author's worth from his first book and for refusing to admit that he can later improve or change his style:

How often it is trumpeted abroad that some young writer or other is a new Goethe or Shakespeare in the making and then, if his second more solid work has not the piquant and fresh taste of the first, the reader wrinkles his nose and in a few years the writer is forgotten because he will not keep in step with fashion. . . . This public, which only nibbles, is extremely annoyed if a later work attracts more attention and is generally acclaimed as more perfect, inherently fresh and powerful, because it has to take some trouble over the author again.³

Alexis is obviously contrasting the enthusiastic welcome accorded to *Walladmor* with the relatively cool reception of *Schloss Avalon* and *Cabanis*, both greater works than the earlier novel. The bookseller suggests to the young writer that he should do his utmost to please the public; the writer is astonished at this advice which, as he remarks, is the opposite of what the bookseller had given previously. His protest reflects Alexis's contempt for the fickleness and mutability of public taste.

But how often you have told me . . . that it is impossible to get through to the reader to-day without liberalism and that a bookseller can shut up shop if he doesn't do homage to the present age! You reject historical novels because Scott's style is out of date; witty, reflective pictures of everyday life like Irving's and Heine's travel sketches have also gained as much admiration as they can expect; the lengthy American novels about seas and deserts don't sell in sufficient numbers because they are only bought by lending libraries. You encouraged me to write in Spindler's style and then referred to his talent in ambiguous terms because his most recent novel didn't have the success of his earlier ones. Now I am supposed to compose 'Poetic Walks' [presumably in the style of Anastasius Grün's *Spaziergänge eines Wiener Poeten* or 'Walks of a Viennese Poet', 1831] and then you say that after all these would only be poems and the public is tired of poetry. So I am supposed to convey my thoughts in bitterly pungent, terse prose and now you don't even want the thoughts.⁴

The bookseller excuses himself on the grounds that public taste is continually changing. Customers rarely want Goethe's *Über Kunst*

und Altertum (*On Art and Antiquity*, 6 vols., 1816-32) or the stories of Tieck, but the ephemeral productions of the day sell in large numbers. Above all the bookseller would advise concentration on piquant or sensational literature. Baron Landschaden also voices Alexis's censure of the works of many of his contemporaries, when he observes that patriotic characters are no longer portrayed in literature; his assertion that the right to govern claimed by the Habsburgs and Hohenzollerns is based on the link of family affection which binds them to their peoples supplements Alexis's remarks in *Wiener Bilder* and provides the key to his outlook in the patriotic historical novels:

The purely human relationship which, documented step by step in history, explains how Habsburgs and Hohenzollerns gradually became what they are, rising from our midst, never separated from us, but raised over us by their will-power, the purity of their intentions, the profound morality of their innermost being, not destroying in a vain thirst for conquest, but actively moving forward with the spirit of the people and the urge of higher necessity, creating the states that they rule; *this* is their legitimacy which lives, grows green, blossoms. Anything else is corruption.⁵

On the one hand Alexis castigates the foolish, futile restrictions intended to ensure Germany's security, e.g. in the scene where an official refuses to admit into the country a man whom he knows well but whose papers are not in order, while a French spy with forged credentials, who boasts of the ease with which he tricks the authorities, is allowed to move about in freedom. On the other hand the slogans of the Young Germans and the prophecy of the 'Peoples' Spring' (*Frühling der Völker*) seem to our author, as to Landschaden, mere empty noise (*Schall und Hall*), and no solution in an age favourable to the rise to power of a shallow youth like Fritz Wenig (his surname means 'little' or 'not much') who follows the principle 'don't let them put you off' (*man muss sich nur nicht abweisen lassen*). Alexis's conviction that the government has no understanding for the liberals finds expression in the attitude of the Minister of State who declares that he prefers to deal with radicals or royalists—with them he knows where he is! This point of view is familiar to us in the attitude of the Soviet leaders towards the British Labour Party. The Minister speaks of liberals as 'sheepheads who still think that all men can become good. They don't know what they want', he says, 'and neither do we'.

The novel has been examined in some detail because it reflects in an interesting way its author's views, his disillusionment about the

taste of the reading public, his dislike of contemporary literature, his dissatisfaction with political developments and his loyalty to the monarchy. Although he realized the weaknesses of the novel as a work of art, he regarded it as his most significant publication up to that time.⁶ Despite its many faults, it is still readable to-day, and the dramatic technique employed in shaping the plot and creating suspense may be condoned, for the reader's attention is thereby held throughout the course of the action.

These years were difficult ones for writers in Prussia, and particularly for journalists, because of the repressions of censorship culminating in the ban on the works of the Young Germans and others in November 1835. In the face of this official reaction certain dramatists and composers formed a committee to secure their rights through a petition to the *Bundestag* or Federal Diet. Alexis seems to have held some kind of official position on this committee and wrote in 1835 to both Immermann and Eduard von Schenk (1788-1841)⁷ asking for their support. Nothing seems to have come of this attempt at self-defence by the more moderate elements among writers and composers.

Nowack⁸ asserts that the chief reason for Alexis's resignation from the editorship of *Der Freimütige* was his belief that it was impossible at that time to maintain an independent outlook and mode of expression amidst the bitter political disputes which had invaded the literary field. It is clear from his letter to Theodor Hell dated September 3, 1835⁹ that he had long been pondering this step, especially because of his dislike of the intrigue and scandal in which his necessary connexions with the theatre involved him. He now turned away from his time-consuming journalistic activities for a period and devoted himself to financial speculation and business interests. Like his contemporary, the French novelist Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850), he required some outlet for his enormous mental energy and the habit of unremitting industry. When he wearied of the literary scene temporarily, he devoted himself to 'building', extending his possessions in Heringsdorf and having a house erected for himself in the Wilhelmstrasse in Berlin, where he lived with his mother and stepsister. His letters¹⁰ show that this activity gave him great satisfaction at first, although he was annoyed that friends like Simrock thought that he had made large sums while editor of *Der Freimütige*; later he expressed concern at building costs. It was less a desire for material possessions than a gambling instinct in Alexis which drove him to take even greater risks. He built several houses

in Berlin in the next ten years and, in February 1839, he entered the bookselling and library business by buying the *Berliner Lesekabinett* (at Behrenstrasse 32) which had then recently been started by the young Jewish writer Aaron Bernstein (1812–84)¹¹ who continued as a partner in the enterprise, to which a publishing house called 'Buchhandlung des Berliner Lesekabinetts' was soon added. A more stable successor of this publishing house was 'W. Adolf and Co', founded in 1846 and enduring until the 1870s. Alexis published several of his works, including the historical novels *Der falsche Woldemar* (*Waldemar the Impostor*, 1842), *Die Hosen des Herrn von Bredow* (*The Breeches of Sir Götz von Bredow*, 1846) and *Der Werwolf* (*The Werewolf*, 1848) with one or other of these presses. There is no doubt that he had long had a hankering after publishing and believed that now was the time to make a fortune by it (he always dismissed his publishers' hard-luck stories as inspired fiction!). Unfortunately, the publishing trade was entering a recession in the case of serious books, partly because of the growth of libraries which made it unnecessary for those with an interest in recently published literature to buy the books for themselves. Again like Balzac, Alexis proved to be anything but a financial wizard and by the summer of 1841 he was complaining of his financial difficulties with the *Lesekabinett* and seeking Brockhaus's advice, mentioning the problem of partnership with Bernstein. Brockhaus deals with this last point brusquely—'it's never advisable to enter into a business association with someone who doesn't own anything'—and urges Alexis to sell out:

At the time when you made the purchase I did not approve of your plan in as far as you intended to make a business out of it; the German public only read at home or in cafés where they can eat at the same time. And your efforts to furnish the institute completely have done you harm. The best should have been sufficient and the costs would then have been easier to meet. I understand your present difficulties all too well—you have a considerable capital invested in an enterprise in whose success you no longer have confidence. If an exact reckoning indicates that in the future you are not likely to at least cover your expenses completely, I would strongly advise you not to fight shy of a loss at first, an uncertain investment is a doubtful business. If you are determined not to carry on with the business, offer good terms to a buyer, make a sacrifice and get rid of it.¹²

It seems that Alexis was either unwilling or unable to follow this advice, for he was still associated with the *Lesekabinett* in 1845. In his essay on Alexis, Theodor Fontane (1819–98) quotes an unnamed source as stating, 'the desire to speculate pulsed in Alexis's veins like

a drop of alien blood. He was enticed by financial adventures and he usually had to pay dearly for them.¹³ Holtei¹⁴ mentions that Alexis was very generous in advancing him loans (Holtei led an unsettled and financially unstable life), but this was because they were close friends, for in general his good nature did not extend to financial risks of this kind.

Alexis showed much interest in the development of industry and the extension of the railways. This is evident from his entertaining essays about the line from Berlin to Potsdam, written in 1837 and 1838.¹⁵ He also wrote several articles about August Borsig (1804-57), the locomotive builder from Breslau who competed successfully with the then all-powerful British engineers. In the *Morgenblatt* Alexis publicly urged readers to buy railway shares and expressed the hope that the Prussian government would assume responsibility for laying out a network of main lines.

Meanwhile, in 1835, two stories had appeared from Alexis's pen, *Die Grossmutter* (*The Grandmother*) and *Eine Parlamentswahl* (*A Parliamentary Election*). *Die Grossmutter* reflects the more profound impact of contemporary Young German literature in the portrayal of an apparently respectable social circle in which, however, almost every character is hypocritically concealing some disreputable feature in his (or her) life. Alexis here relapses into the fantastic Hoffmann style in such details as the mysterious reappearance of characters believed dead and the role assigned to telepathy or 'second sight'.

Eine Parlamentswahl purports to treat the problems of an English election during a period of the recent past. The Tories, Whigs and Reformers portrayed are, however, thinly disguised Conservatives, Liberals and Radicals as they might appear in contemporary Germany. Eventually the opposing factions are partly reconciled by the marriage of leading members of two different parties, Sir Edward Bramfield and Lady Judith Beedle Bowdle, and by a united national stand against the Pope. In this tale, as in *Walladmor*, the portrayal of disorderly popular assemblies is employed to suggest the democratic spirit of the English.

In 1836 a further collection of Alexis's stories was published in two volumes as *Neue Novellen*. In addition to works already discussed, this contains *Es weiss niemand, woher der Wind kommt* (*Nobody knows where the wind comes from*). This tale is also coloured by the influence of Young German literature in the views of the heroine Celestine concerning the equality of the sexes and in the isolation of the hero Philibert amidst the pompous and conventional circle of

the legal profession. Yet the author also introduces a note of irony towards the end of the story in sketching his hero's development, after his marriage, from a rebel against society to a man of distinction who has found his place in life.

The same year witnessed the publication of a small collection of poems entitled *Balladen*. These are not all composed in ballad form, as the title would suggest, although the tendency is towards epic rather than lyric treatment; there are *Volkslieder*, imitations of Spanish verse forms and other poems, some of which had previously appeared in stories already published or were concerned with some theme or situation depicted earlier in a story, e.g. 'Walladmor', 'Der Geächtete 1809 ('The Outcast')', 'Englisches Radicalenlied 1820' (*Walladmor*), 'Torylied', 'Hochtorylied 1835' (*Eine Parlamentswahl*).

Alexis began writing lyric poetry at an early age, but was never able to avoid stilted or extravagant imitation of late Romantic poets in this genre because he always sought to remove the 'personal' element from composition, regarding it as vitally important that the writer should succeed in escaping from subjective presentation. It is therefore understandable that his ballads are far more effective than his lyric poems. His intense interest in the ballad form led him to write a treatise on the genre, as has already been mentioned.¹⁶ The slim volume *Balladen* offers a variety of forms, in which ballad and *Volkslied* reign supreme, particularly two which had appeared in *Cabanis*, 'Friedericus Rex' and 'General Schwerin' (lament on the death of a beloved general). Fontane¹⁷ wrote of these two poems with enthusiasm, claiming that they alone were sufficient to render Alexis immortal to Prussians.

From the information provided by Felix Hasselberg and E. S(chwarz)¹⁸ it is clear that Alexis composed 'Friedericus Rex' before he had written a line of *Cabanis*, and it is probable that the poem was the result of discussions during summer walks in Heringsdorf between the composer Karl Loewe (1796-1869), a Dr. Maximilian Runze and Alexis. One day they were speaking of folksongs and agreed that unfortunately there were no genuine Prussian soldiers' songs, not even with reference to the exploits of Frederick the Great. Loewe mentioned a certain old folk tune which could be adapted, and Alexis later wrote 'Friedericus Rex' in the rhythm of this old tune, using the poem as a very moving *leitmotif* in *Cabanis*. Loewe composed his setting to it in 1837, and it was also set to music by other composers like G. W. Fink, L. Kindscher and F. A. Reissiger. The old folk tune, to which Karl Loewe's setting is close, is printed

in the editions of *Cabanis* illustrated by W. Camphausen (2nd edition 1857 and later ones). Holtei¹⁹ relates that Alexis subsequently became famous as the composer of the words of this song, which people sang when he appeared in the streets. Karl Loewe also composed settings of 'General Schwerin', 'Der späte Gast' ('The Tardy Guest') and 'Walpurgisnacht', the latter printed as early as 1826 by Schlesinger.²⁰ Another poem 'Drei Larven' was translated into English as 'The Three Masks' by the American, Charles Timothy Brooks (published 1853).²¹

Gustav Schwab reviewed *Balladen* in 1836²² and although he welcomed its publication as proof of Alexis's ability to concentrate his material in the way that poetry demanded, he noted that in some poems the rhyming was poor and in others the theme was not clearly presented. Writing to the bookseller Ferdinand Tolle the following year, Alexis (March 31, 1837)²³ replied to a suggestion that he should choose two of his poems for inclusion in an anthology. His selection shows a lack of appreciation for his best work, as he chooses the early 'Das heilige Grab' ('The sacred tomb'), 'Stubbenkammer' and, as a reserve, 'Kindesmörderin' ('The child murderer') which had appeared in *Schloss Avalon* (1827).

Alexis appears to have made another trip to Southern Germany in the late summer of 1836, probably visiting Uhland, Kerner and other acquaintances.²⁴ Despite his many non-literary activities, he maintained his interest in all forms of criticism, reviewing such widely different works as the poetry of the Austrian Anastasius Grün (1806-76) which he admired and a German version of *Pan Tadeusz* (1834) by the famous Polish writer Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855).²⁵ The latter is of considerable importance as the first review of an outstanding Polish work by a German critic. Alexis admires Mickiewicz for being 'involved' in his tale and yet impartial in the treatment of his Polish characters, he does not feel that his nationalist bias against Prussia and Russia is excessive and he praises his skilful presentation of the rather dull landscape of Lithuania (Alexis had himself had practice at this in presenting Brandenburg-Prussia!). Above all he revels in the inventive form in which, he says, the old epic is fused with the novel.²⁶

REFERENCES

¹ Brunold, op. cit., pp. 138-9.

² Gutzkow, *Beiträge*, op. cit., I, pp. 241-4, where he also censures its formlessness.

³ *Das Haus Dusterweg*, II, pp. 129-30. Wie oft, bei einem jungen Schriftsteller, werden nicht die Alarmstangen ausgesteckt, daß ein neuer Göthe oder Shakespeare im Werden ist

und wenn sein zweites gediegeneres Werk nicht mehr nach der ersten pikanten Fraischeur schmeckt, rümpft man die Nase und nach ein paar Jahren ist er vergessen, wenn er sich nicht bequemt mit dem Geschmack zu marschieren. . . . Dieses Publicum, das nur kostet, ist außerordentlich ärgerlich, wenn ein späteres Werk mehr Aufsehen macht, und die allgemeine Stimme es für vollkommener und innerlich frisch und kräftig erklärt und sie sich wieder damit bemühen müssen.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 127–8. Aber wie oft wiederholten Sie . . . daß es heutzutage unmöglich sei, ohne Liberalismus durchzudringen, daß ein Buchhändler seinen Laden zuschließen könne, wenn er nicht der Zeit huldige. Sie weisen die historischen Romane von sich, weil Scott's Manier sich überlebt; witzig reflectirende Genrestücke wie Irving's und Heine's Reisebilder haben auch das Ziel der Bewunderung erreicht; die breiten amerikanischen Wasser- und Wüstenromane werfen Ihnen zu wenig ab, weil nur die Leihbibliotheken kaufen. Sie munterten mich auf in Spindler's Weise zu schreiben und sprechen selbst jetzt zweideutig von seinem Talent, weil sein letzter Roman nicht das Glück der vorigen machte. Poetische Spaziergänge sollte ich dichten; und nun sagten Sie doch, es wären nur Gedichte, und der Gedichte wäre das Publicum müde. In bitterbeißende kurze Prosa sollte ich die Gedanken übersetzen und nun wollen Sie selbst die Gedanken nicht. For remarks below, see also pp. 133, 125.

⁵ Ibid., I, p. 225. Das reinmenschliche Verhältniß, das historisch documentirt ist von Schritt zu Schritt, wie Habsburger und Hohenzollern das allmählig geworden sind, daß sie aus unserer Mitte hervorgingen, nie sich von uns trennten, aber sich über uns erhoben durch die Kraft ihres Willens, die Reinheit ihrer Absichten, die tiefe Sitte ihres innersten Seins; daß sie nicht zerstörend in eitler Eroberungssucht, sondern schaffend, mit dem Geiste des Volks und dem Drange höherer Nothwendigkeit voransritten und die Staaten *erschufen*, die sie regieren; *das* ist ihre Legitimität, die lebende, grünende, blühende. Die andere ist Verwesung. For remarks below, see also pp. 238, 377, 374.

⁶ *Der Freimütige*, 1835, no. 173, p. 676.

⁷ Letters to Immermann dated September 12, 1835 (Goethe- und Schillerarchiv, Weimar) and to E. v. Schenk dated December 23, 1835 (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich).

⁸ Nowack, op. cit., p. 58.

⁹ In Theatermuseum, Munich.

¹⁰ Letters to Simrock (February 24, 1836) in Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, Weimar, and to Theodor Hell (February 26, 1836) in Theatermuseum, Munich.

¹¹ Bernstein, Aaron (1812–84), pseudonym A. Rebenstein, writer, e.g. *Novellen und Lebensbilder* (1838), came to Berlin in 1832; his best work portrayed life among the Jewish lower middle class. In the 1830s he wrote for *Der Freimütige*, opposed the Young Germans.

¹² In archives of F. A. Brockhaus, Leipzig. Ich bin gleich damals nicht für die Ausführung Ihres Planes gewesen, insofern beabsichtigt wurde ein *Geschäft* daraus zu machen; das deutsche Publ[ic]um liest nur einmal entweder zu Hause oder in Conditoreien etc., wo sich zugleich leibliche Nahrung findet. Auch Ihr Streben, das Institut zu vollständig auszustatten, hat Ihnen geschadet. Das Beste hätte genügen müssen und die Kosten dafür wären leichter aufzubringen gewesen. Ich begreife nur zu gut das Widrige Ihrer jetzigen Lage, wo Sie ein bedeutendes Capital in ein Geschäft stecken haben, zu dessen Erfolg Ihnen das rechte Vertrauen verloren ist. Zeigt Ihnen wirklich eine genaue Aufstellung daß die Chancen für die Zukunft nicht von der Art sind, um mindestens vollständig gedeckt zu sein, so würde ich Ihnen sehr rathen, einen ersten Verlust nicht zu scheuen, aufs Ungewisse hin immer nur Fonds in etwas zu stecken ist bedenklich. Sind Sie ernstlich gemeint, das Unternehmen nicht fortzuführen, so machen Sie irgend einem Käufer billige Bedingungen, *opfern Sie etwas* und schaffen sich die Sache vom Halse.

¹³ Fontane, op. cit., p. 182. Wie ein Tropfen fremden Blutes pulste ihm etwas von Speculationsgeist in den Adern. Unternehmungen reizten ihn; er hat meist teuer dafür bezahlen müssen.

¹⁴ Holtei, *Simmelsammelsurium*, op. cit., pp. 21–2.

¹⁵ See essays collected by Hasselberg in 'W.A. über die Berlin-Potsdamer Eisenbahn', *Zeitschrift des Vereins für die Geschichte Berlins*, 1938, 55 Jg., pp. 115–18; for Borsig see especially Alexis's obituary in *Morgenblatt*, 1854, no. 30, July 23, pp. 713 f.

¹⁶ 'Über Balladenposie', *Hermes*, 1824, pp. 1–114.

¹⁷ Fontane, op. cit., p. 176.

¹⁸ Felix Hasselberg, 'Hundert Jahre "Friedericus Rex" mit einem unbekanntem Briefe von W.A.', *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, no. 3, January 3, 1930, p. 8; E. S(chwarz), 'Die Entstehung

der Loeweschen Komposition von "Friedericus Rex", *Monatsblätter des Touristenklubs für die Mark Brandenburg*, Jg. 21, 1912, pp. 63-4.

¹⁹ Holtei, *Simmelsammelsurium*, op. cit., p. 21.

²⁰ C. Löwe, *Drei Balladen von Th. Körner*, Herder und W. Alexis für eine Singstimme, 3te Sammlung, Op. 3, Schlesinger, Berlin, 1826.

²¹ See *German Lyrics*, translated by C. T. Brooks, Boston, U.S.A., 1853, and Camillo von Klenze, *Charles Timothy Brooks*, Boston, U.S.A./London/Oxford University Press, 1937, p. 71.

²² *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, 1836, pp. 451-2.

²³ Letter in Theatermuseum, Munich.

²⁴ *Justinus Kerners Briefwechsel . . .*, op. cit., II, letter 463.

²⁵ In *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, 1836, nos. 137 f. and 289 f. respectively.

²⁶ Cf. Introduction, p. ix to *Pan Tadeusz*, London, 1930 ('Everyman') in which the editor, G. R. Noyes, quotes from a letter of Krasinski: 'No European nation of our day has such an epic as *Pan Tadeusz*. In it *Don Quixote* has been fused with the *Iliad*. The poet stood on the border-line between a vanishing generation and our own. Before they died, he had seen them: now they are no more. That is precisely the epic point of view'.

LAETITIA

EIGHTEEN THIRTY-SEVEN was an important year in Alexis's life and literary development, for it was the year in which he first met Laetitia Perceval, an Englishwoman with whom he became acquainted in the salon of Frau Sophie Bloch. In her reminiscences Fanny Lewald,¹ who was a distant relative of Frau Bloch and knew her well from 1839 onwards, describes Sophie Bloch as a woman of sixty, once a great beauty and still handsome, whose impressive appearance derived not only from her good looks and noble bearing, but also from her intelligence and education. Her family was wealthy, but she had come alone to Berlin with limited means to be independent and there she had met and married, about 1818, the financier Bloch, a self-made man of humble parentage, but sharp judgment and keen insight. They had long moved in the best society and known Rahel von Varnhagen (whose own literary salon of the 1820s was famous), Eduard Gans (1798-1839), Heine, Hegel, Henriette Sontag and the Humboldt brothers.² Alexis, who had visited Rahel's salon and was a friend of Bloch, knew most of these important figures of the day; at a time when the literary salon was declining as an institution of significance, they were pleased to come to the home of this wealthy but unostentatious and well-read couple to discuss literature with the wife and politics with the husband. The Blochs lived in a spacious flat on the first floor at Unter den Linden 5 and, since they were childless, they liked to invite young nephews and nieces to stay with them. Frau Bloch also chose a young woman to be her companion; this was a younger sister of Laetitia, whose family had recently come to Germany after the sudden death of the father, John Lothian Perceval, once an affluent London merchant, had impoverished them. Laetitia had been born on December 4, 1807 (she was thus nine years younger than Alexis) and had probably been living in wealthy circumstances in 1835 in London, when Heinrich Brockhaus (1804-74), in the company of the historian Friedrich von Raumer, had met her at the house of a Mr. Tuke.³ It is possible that the family had to leave England because of debt or that the mother thought that her three daughters might more easily find suitable employment in Germany,

where English governesses and companions were in fashion. We know nothing about Laetitia's education, but it must have been adequate, for she seems to have had no difficulty in taking a place in society, e.g. in the salon of Frau Bloch, who was the sister of the Prussian Minister of War Leopold Hermann Ludwig von Boyen (1771-1848). As a result of his marriage to Laetitia, Alexis began to associate more with members of the aristocracy. He recovered from his sorrow at losing Julie Gley and gained a wife whose affection and comradeship were to inspire him in his work and comfort him in his later years of ill-health.

There are interesting references to the early stages in their relationship in Geibel's correspondence with his mother.⁴ Emanuel Geibel (1815-84), later one of the leading poets of the Munich circle, came to Berlin as a young student in 1835, writing on August 9 that he had become acquainted with Dr. Häring, 'a little, middle-aged man with a moustache, intelligent eyes and a benevolent twitch of the lips'. Then Alexis invited him to his home, 'his new house in good taste, from the tower of which one has an unusually fine view over the city and the treetops of the *Tiergarten* park'. Later they strolled together in the *Tiergarten* and Alexis described to the young poet the plot of his latest *Novelle* (*Herr von Sacken?*). At the end of November Geibel met Alexis again at a meeting of what had formerly been the *Mittwochgesellschaft*. It is not known whether Alexis actually introduced him into the society, but it is certain that all Geibel's close literary associates at this time were Alexis's friends, Hitzig, Chamisso, Franz Kugler (1808-58), Bettina von Arnim (1785-1859). By New Year's Day 1837, Geibel had taken walks with Alexis several times and come to know him better. In November 1837 he moved into a room in the tower of Alexis's house and comments enthusiastically on his host's efforts to make him comfortable. He also refers to Alexis's engagement as taking place late in December (letter dated January 1, 1838):

Häring is the most amiable host imaginable; he satisfies every little wish for my comfort, almost without me having to express it. We meet every day, sometimes at seven, when Mantels, who is reading Thucydides with me every afternoon, takes his leave, or late at night, when one of us comes home and sees a light in the other's room. The day before yesterday Häring came up to my room late; usually so placid, he was violently excited; he tried in vain to start a conversation about generalities, but it didn't go well. I asked him what was the matter and then he couldn't contain himself any longer; three hours before he had—got

engaged. His fiancée is English, Miss Laetitia Perceval, beautiful and lovable, although without a fortune. This evening I am supposed to go to the Rellstabs and meet the happy pair—to-morrow there will be an official announcement.

On January 3 he describes how he met Laetitia for the first time:

When I went to the Rellstabs that evening I became acquainted with Rellstab's wife and Häring's fiancée. The latter is most pleasant in appearance, very beautiful and delicate, tall and slim, with fine dark eyes and a slightly curved nose. When she is silent, she has that strange pallor which I have only seen on Englishwomen, when she talks with animation her face is lightly tinged with a sudden blush. By the way, she speaks perfect German and seems to be as lively in intellect as she is pleasant in appearance. Häring met her at several social gatherings outside the house and the affair came to a head in a few weeks. His mother and sister are very happy about his decision to marry and his choice.

By February 12 he is able to give more details of Laetitia's family background:

All I know about Häring's fiancée is that she came with her sisters and mother to Germany after the death of her father, when it came to light that large sums of money had been lost, to live here in reduced circumstances. She was just about to accept a post as lady companion when Häring met her. They will get married at Easter and then, I suppose, Häring's mother and sister will move into the other wing of the house.

Geibel left for Greece in March 1838 and was consequently not present at the wedding which took place on May 21 at the Parish Church (*Parochialkirche*) in Berlin, after the bans had been read three times by a 'Prediger Arndt'. It seems that Alexis and Geibel did not become close friends (they would presumably have little in common, for Geibel was influenced by fashion in a way repulsive to Alexis and grew increasingly sentimental with age). Four letters to Geibel from Alexis have been recorded, two from 1837, one from 1843 and one from 1856.⁵

Ewert⁶ has published an undated letter written by Alexis to Laetitia early in December 1837, about the time when he proposed marriage. This letter, anticipating in tone the epistle sent by Salomon Landolt to one of his sweethearts in Gottfried Keller's *Landvogt von Greifensee* with such a conclusive result—the girl's refusal—did not scare Laetitia. Alexis hopes that he will be a good husband, but fears that he will cut a poor figure as a fiancé because of his inability to play the gallant. He honestly attempts to analyse his character and to examine his weaknesses, stressing his hatred of empty show and his determination not to be dominated by the tyranny of fashion. Here

we see a hitherto unnoticed and unsuspected side to Alexis's character, the rebel against convention—in strange contrast to his reserved character.

The aim of my whole life was to achieve independence; but, of all the tyrannies, I hate fashion the most. Nothing I encountered among my friends could annoy me more than when they willingly did or did not do something, merely because it has to be thus, because propriety, custom etc. demands it. . . . Thus I am almost too great an enemy of outer glitter and luxury, if they are not associated with art and comfort. To adorn oneself in a certain way, to wear certain clothes, to acquire this or that furniture *because* it is the fashion, whether it is comfortable and in good taste or not, is an intolerable idea to me.

Alexis suggests that he has not been able to make friends with young women because his own nature impels him to express every emotion ironically; this in turn has prevented him from gaining popularity and has led to many misunderstandings. He craves Laetitia's indulgence and sympathy for this weakness and also admits that he is moody and liable to fits of depression:

I am often troubled by anxious thoughts, but don't worry too much about fits of ill temper. In this respect, a writer is not an ordinary person. The smallest circumstance affects him, a happy occurrence can raise him to the skies, an unhappy one smash him to the ground. If only the man's soul is healthy, a tender-hearted, loving wife knows how to restore calm in him.

Laetitia's influence was destined to lessen the disharmony, irony and pessimism in his character. Although there is no evidence that she had a remarkable understanding for literature, she seems to have brought a stability to the writer's life which enabled him to concentrate his powers in the composition of some of his best historical novels. He had warned her in his letter that what he could offer her would compare unfavourably with her past affluence. Perhaps he was influenced here by the legend of the 'rich English' which seems to have persisted among Germans who have not been abroad, even to the present. After his marriage, Alexis travelled less and then, whenever possible, accompanied by Laetitia. Gradually his large house in Berlin became in its turn the meeting-place of a literary salon. Most of the visitors seem, however, to have been Alexis's contemporaries or older, Hitzig, Fouqué, Eichendorff, Tieck: only Franz Kugler, poet, writer and art historian, was a member of the new literary society in Berlin, *Der Tunnel über der Spree* (*The Tunnel over the River Spree*), which existed under that name from 1840. Other members were Fontane, Heyse, Strachwitz, Scherenberg, Geibel and Louis Schneider.⁷ Alexis never moved in this literary

circle, which had originally been founded by his arch-enemy Saphir, but he must have been acquainted with some of its members. It is usually the young writer who is most conspicuous in such literary groups and Alexis was now middle-aged.

The last traces of the influence of the Young Germans on Alexis's work are to be found in the full-length novel, *Zwölf Nächte* (*Twelve Nights*), published in 1838. Although somewhat better planned and presented than *Das Haus Dusterweg*, the work is crammed with fantastic developments in the plot and presents some of the characters in a most unfavourable light. The plot is centred upon a dilapidated building in which live most of the characters introduced. The house is in imminent danger of collapse, and a mysterious contractor has commissioned the construction of another building, apparently to rehouse its inhabitants. He is constantly dismissing architects and hiring new ones, so that the strange edifice grows up in a grotesque mixture of different styles and is eventually completed, as the contractor desires, in the twelve nights of Christmas. Although the motivation is often obscure, the theme is frequently presented in a manner which is both humorous and poetic. The most sympathetically portrayed characters belong to the working class, and Alexis infuses some degree of life into figures like the washerwoman Frau Martin and her daughter Marie, thus anticipating Theodor Fontane's characterization of such people, e.g. in his *Irrungen, Wirrungen* (*Trials and Tribulations*, 1888). The novel lacks the bitter and despairing note of its predecessor, particularly towards the conclusion, when the hero Werner rises above thoughts of suicide and finds, like his creator, personal happiness in marriage with the woman he loves. Moreover, the unscrupulous and selfish characters are punished and the good-hearted or innocent rewarded. In many ways the work is a plea for tolerance and kindness towards the poor and defenceless; satirical observations concerning social conditions are to be found, but politics are kept in the background. On one occasion the author attacks the prudery of the reading public, a subject to which he later alludes in the original preface to *Die Hosen des Herrn von Bredow* (*The Breeches of Sir Götz von Bredow*, 1846).

In June 1838 Alexis sent a copy of *Zwölf Nächte* to Frederick William III, together with a letter explaining that he has not ventured to send copies of his other recent works (probably *Wiener Bilder* and *Das Haus Dusterweg*) because they are 'products of dismal years and unhappy moods' and 'exhaled just what a writer has to

say, but would not wish to obtrude on those he loves and respects—complaints about the present!’ He received a short letter of thanks in August.⁸

Alexis’s failure to treat contemporary problems with complete success derives from his inability to vie with the popular writers of the day, particularly the Young Germans, and from his ambition to write for all epochs, not merely his own. He may well have believed that such work could find its most worthy expression in a treatment of historical themes and during these years he turned once more to the past in composing two stories, *Herr von Sacken* (1837) and *Hans Preller von Lauffen* (1839). Both of these tales, but more especially the latter, show Alexis’s gifts as a humorist.

Herr von Sacken is one of the few *Novellen* by Alexis which attains the literary merit of his patriotic historical novels in the cycle called *Vaterländische Romane*. It is concerned with events in the Duchy of Courland between 1710 and 1740 when, after the death of the young Duke Frederick William shortly after his marriage, his widow Anna Joanowna raised to power her favourite Ernst Johann Bühren (or Biron), a man of obscure origin. When Anna later became Empress of Russia, Biron became the reigning Duke of Courland. The story describes the relations with Biron, both before and after his rise to power, of an obstinate, gruff but kind-hearted nobleman, Theosophus von Sacken, who studied at Königsberg at the same time as the man who was to become an empress’s favourite. When Biron is involved in a serious scrape and liable to arrest, Sacken helps him to escape by allowing him to ride in his coach, but Biron makes himself so objectionable by his arrogant and impudent behaviour that Sacken stops the coach and requests him to walk. Shortly afterwards Sacken grows anxious as to whether Biron is safe in the wild district in which he has abandoned him and goes back to look for him. His coachman tires of waiting and continues the journey, later giving Biron another ride when he meets him on the road. Sacken’s generous nature is soured by this experience, and a misanthropic streak in his character develops when his fiancée becomes a lady-in-waiting at the court against his wishes and his nephew desires to marry a commoner. Biron, now Duke of Courland, supports the nephew’s marriage and has Sacken kidnapped. He is taken on a long journey to Siberia and back to Courland, during which time he is scarcely permitted to speak to another human being and is once nearly devoured by ravenous wolves! He returns unharmed, just in time to attend the christening of his nephew’s first

child. In this way Biron repays Sacken for his former haughty behaviour and cures him of his misanthropy. Sacken's character and reaction to his experiences, his kindheartedness beneath a gruff exterior and his concern for his family's nobility reveal him to be the type of aristocrat later given more detailed treatment in the hero of *Isegrimm* (1854). The original figure of the coachman, who has his own ideas and is not afraid of practising them, bears a resemblance to Lamprecht, likewise in *Isegrimm*. Alexis, like Gottfried Keller, has often a preference for eccentrics and for a strongly didactic flavour in his stories, although the cure for Sacken's misanthropy is not as drastic as the meeting with the lion which robs Pankraz of sulkiness (Keller's *Pankraz der Schmoller* or *Pancras the Sulker*, 1856).

The story is also of interest for the contrast in portrayal, in the student scenes, of Poles and Germans. Alexis here touches on the German-Slav problem, to which he later alludes with reference to the Wends in his historical novels and which was taken up in Freytag's *Soll und Haben* (*Debit and Credit*, 1855), Fontane's *Vor dem Sturm* (*Before the Storm*, 1878), Wichert's *Heinrich von Plauen* (1881) and many other works. That Alexis was preoccupied with this subject at the time is clear from his essay *Das Slaventum in der Mark* (*The Slav element in the March of Brandenburg*) published in the periodical *Ost und West* (1838).

Hans Preller von Lauffen, as is stated in its epilogue, dates from Alexis's visit to Switzerland in 1833. A gentle satire against the commercialization of Switzerland's natural beauty by her inhabitants, it purports to relate how the tourist trade developed there. A brave but poverty-stricken knight is instructed by the spirit of the Rhine as to how to extort money from passing travellers by showing them the falls at Schaffhausen in return for a small fee. He has to use force to persuade his first victim, Peter der Holzschuher, a merchant from Nuremberg, to enjoy the beauties of nature, but after a short term of imprisonment, Peter's obstinacy is broken and he pays heavily in cash for his sightseeing tour and Hans Preller's hospitality. Incidentally, one of the meanings of 'Preller' is swindler or cheat! Alexis has here found a theme suited to his ironical style. The two *Novellen* discussed above are among the most readable of his shorter works and deserve to be better known and more widely read.⁹

From 1837 to 1846 Alexis published his reminiscences in *Penelope*, an annual edited by his old friend Theodor Hell. There is a note of

bitterness in his remarks about young writers whose literary ambitions he has furthered but who have now turned against him or forgotten him:

How many younger friends I have introduced into literature and described as talented. They have become emancipated, they praise one another and prove to me that I have no talent. [First published 1839.]¹⁰

Here Alexis is probably thinking of Young German writers like Gutzkow, whose poems in the manner of Novalis's 'Hymnen an die Nacht' he accepted for publication in the *Berliner Conversationsblatt* while Gutzkow was still at school, or Gustav Kühne (1806-88) who seems to have disappointed his hopes.

In 1839 he published the translation of an English novel by Robert Folkestone Williams, *Shakespeare and his Friends*; this crowded and colourful novel, with its dialogue suitably tinged with archaisms, exercised a greater influence over Alexis than any work by Scott when he came to compose his next Prussian historical novel *Der Roland von Berlin* (1840); the same may be said of Thomas Colley Grattan's *The Heiress of Bruges* (1831), a translation of which Alexis had reviewed in the year it appeared.¹¹ Other work of this period includes his contributions to the *Conversations-Lexikon der Gegenwart* from 1838 to 1841. Alexis wrote a large number of informative articles on writers or aspects of life or literature, often on those of which he had intimate first-hand knowledge, for two editions of the Brockhaus *Conversations-Lexikon* and also for this publication, in which one of the most interesting is his article on Berlin, 'Berlin in seiner neuen Gestaltung'.¹² After reviewing the building of Berlin in the past and the old structures which still remain, he turns to the new buildings which have given the city an entirely different appearance since the War of Liberation. He writes that a big part has been played by the architect Schinkel¹³ with his new theatre (Schauspielhaus) and museum, while Rauch has contributed statues of Bülow, Scharnhorst and Blücher. There are other new buildings also which invite admiration. Alexis then considers changes of which he disapproves, including the taming of the *Tiergarten* which was formerly a wooded area, but has now become a decorative kind of English park with 'Keep off the grass' notices and broad gravel paths. The citizens of Berlin, he declares, seem to hate trees which, they maintain, shut off the sun and make the walls of buildings damp; Alexis believes, however, that trees should be planted where the streets are wide enough. His chief complaint is the lack

of sanitation. There are no public lavatories and, as a result, stinking gutters, much befouling of the streets and adjoining walls. Although the public droshkies have improved in efficiency, there are no omnibus services connecting the various parts of the city, and the watering of streets during the dusty summer should not be left to private initiative. This article brings home to the reader the primitive conditions prevailing in Berlin at this time.

For writers the constant struggle with the censorship with which they were faced in the 1830s still prevailed in 1840 and Alexis's request in January of that year to be allowed to found a new monthly magazine to be entitled 'Märkische Provinzialblätter' was refused outright.¹⁴ Nevertheless, he persevered with his bookselling and now set up his publishing house in addition, first known as 'Buchhandlung des Berliner Lesekabinetts', later, from 1846, as 'W. Adolf und Comp.', a firm which survived till the 1870s, although Alexis parted company with it after his heavy financial losses through the 1848 revolution.

Meanwhile Alexis's old circle of friends was breaking up. Varnhagen had withdrawn from social intercourse, Tieck and Fouqué were growing older and less active, Chamisso died in 1838, Gaudy in 1840, Ferrand in 1842.¹⁵ Whatever personal loss these circumstances may have been for Alexis, they can only be registered as a gain from the literary point of view, for there was now no opposition to his interest in the historical novel and he was able to resume work in the late 1830s on his cycle of works concerned with Prussian history of which *Cabanis* had been the first. His review in 1838 of volumes of documents relating to Berlin history and edited by Fidicin¹⁶ was an important step towards the creation of novels treating mediaeval Berlin, for in these volumes Alexis found the sources, sparse as they were, which provided a suitable basis and could be supplemented by his own invention. The language in which these documents were written inspired him to re-create the linguistic atmosphere of the period by using a chronicle style with various archaic forms. The two 'chronicle' novels were *Der Roland von Berlin* (1840) and *Der falsche Woldemar* (1842). Of these the first is by far the finer work, though neither of them was concerned with a period of history sufficiently familiar to the modern reader for it to achieve great popularity. It is true that the 1840s was an unprofitable time for those selling books and periodicals (Schücking asserts that even the most influential periodical, Cotta's *Morgenblatt*, had only 2,000 subscribers)¹⁷ but Brockhaus's report to Alexis that

only 550 copies of *Der Roland von Berlin* had been sold from August 1840 to December 1842¹⁸ indicates that the sales of this work were low, even for the years in which they were sold. For *Der falsche Woldemar* and the next two novels of the cycle Alexis attempted to increase the profit to himself by publishing them in his own press, but there is no evidence that he succeeded.

The story *Der Prätendent* (*The Pretender*, 1841) exhibits the author's dislike of a sentimental or romantic interpretation of history in a work of fiction. It may be regarded as Alexis's proclamation that he had abandoned Scott's technique which he had described as outdated in an obituary some years before. Henceforth he shows greater independence of his former model. In her story of Bonnie Prince Charlie, the romantic young writer Clotilde is at first ready to sacrifice the heroine's brave but somewhat mundane admirer to the interests of the gallant prince, but after she herself has been imposed upon by a swindler who claims to be Don Carlos, heir to the throne of Spain, she is able to view her own love affairs and those treated in her story more rationally and objectively.

From March 1841, arrangements for the publication of *Der neue Pitaval* have a prominent place in the Brockhaus-Alexis correspondence. Alexis accepted an invitation from Hitzig to collaborate with him in editing this series of true events, most of which provoked a court action; they were presented as case history, not literature.¹⁹ Hitzig was not an active partner in the editorship and died after a few years of publication. Alexis undertook exhaustive research into material for the series which had extended to sixty volumes by 1890. Before retiring from the editorship in 1860 Alexis edited twenty-eight volumes. The cases he selects are drawn from the legal files and annals of many different countries, and represent a major contribution to social and legal history. The influence of the series on literature is immeasurable, especially on the *Kriminalroman* or detective story, e.g. Fontane's *Unterm Birnbaum* (1885). We know that Hebbel was fascinated by the volumes and read them eagerly,²⁰ while Reuter refers to the series²¹ and Luise von François²² even mentions it as part of the material used for the pictures of famous crimes which once drew crowds at fairs.

Constant attention to the series for many years undoubtedly played its part in influencing Alexis's literary writing. As a result he tended to introduce abnormal, often criminal characters into his novels like Gräfin von Nordheim (*Der falsche Woldemar*), Kurfürst Joachim (*Der Werwolf*), Fürstin Gargazin, Geheimrätin Lupinus and

Legationsrat von Wandel (*Ruhe ist die erste Bürgerpflicht*) or Kurfürstin Dorothe (*Dorothe*). At the same time he developed towards greater realism of portrayal under the influence of this non-literary research and writing.²³ *Der neue Pitaval* is probably Alexis's most lasting achievement, a valuable contribution to the creation and popularization of the modern detective story.

REFERENCES

¹ Fanny Lewald, *Meine Lebensgeschichte*, Berlin, II, pp. 180-90, also (on Alexis) p. 178.

² Gans was Professor of Law and Political Science in Berlin, a follower of Hegel and editor of his works. His lectures on politics and history in Berlin were forbidden in 1834. Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), writer and friend of Goethe, largely responsible for founding of Berlin University. Acquainted with Alexis. Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), mainly scientific writings.

³ See unpublished letter to Alexis dated September 15, 1851 in archives of F. A. Brockhaus, Leipzig.

⁴ For remarks and quotations below see *Emanuel Geibels Jugendbriefe*, pp. 66-7, 104, 110, 116 (originals of quotations given in order of text). Häring ist der liebenswürdigste Wirth, den ich mir denken kann; jeden kleinen Wunsch in Bezug auf meine Einrichtung weiß er zu befriedigen, fast ohne daß ich ihn auszusprechen brauche. Wir sehen uns täglich, entweder um sieben Uhr, wenn Mantels, der jeden Nachmittag Thucydides mit mir liest, von mir geht, oder des Abends spät, wenn Einer von uns nach Hause kommt, und auf dem Zimmer des Andern noch Licht sieht. Auch vorgestern kam Häring noch spät zu mir herauf, der sonst so ruhige Mann war in heftiger Bewegung, er versuchte umsonst ein gleichgültiges Gespräch anzuknüpfen; es ging nicht. Ich fragte was ihm sei, und da konnte sein Herz sich nicht länger verschließen; er war seit drei Stunden — Bräutigam. Seine Braut ist eine Engländerin, Miss Lätitia Perceval, schön und liebenswürdig, wenn auch ohne Vermögen. Heute abend sollte ich bei Rellstabs sein; dort werde ich das Brautpaar treffen — morgen wird die Sache öffentlich.

An jenem Abend bei Rellstab lernte ich Rellstabs Gattin und Häring's Braut kennen. Die letztere ist eine außerordentlich angenehme Erscheinung, sehr fein und zart, groß und schlank, mit schönen dunklen Augen und sanftgebogener Nase, wenn sie schweigt, von jener eigenthümlichen Blässe, die ich nur an Engländerinnen bemerkt, im lebhaften Gespräch von fliegender Röthe leise überhaucht. Uebrigens spricht sie fertig deutsch, und scheint eben so innerlich lebendig, wie äußerlich liebenswürdig zu sein. Häring lernte sie in verschiedenen Gesellschaften außer dem Hause kennen, und die Sache machte sich in wenigen Wochen. Seine Mutter und Schwester sind über seinen Entschluß wie über seine Wahl äußerst glücklich.

Ueber Häring's Braut weiß ich nichts Näheres, als daß sie nach dem Tode ihres Vaters, bei welcher Gelegenheit sich große Summen als verloren auswiesen, mit ihren Schwestern und ihrer Mutter nach Deutschland ging, um hier eingezogen zu leben. Sie war eben im Begriff ein Engagement als Gesellschafterin anzunehmen, als Häring sie kennen lernte. Ostern werden sie Hochzeit machen; Häring's Mutter und Schwester werden dann wohl in den anderen Flügel des Hauses hinüberziehen.

⁵ Frels (see bibliography).

⁶ See Max Ewert, 'Laetitia Haering', *Jahrbuch der Alexis-Fontane-Gesellschaft*, Berlin, 1937, pp. 2-5. Originals of extracts from letter: Mein ganzes Lebensziel war: mich unabhängig zu stellen. Aber von allen Tyrannen ist mir die der Mode (*fashion*) am meisten verhaßt. Mich konnte unter meinen Freunden nichts mehr verdrießen, als wenn sie mit freiem Willen etwas thaten und ließen, aus keinem andern Grunde, als weil es so sein muß, weil es der Anstand, die Sitte u.s.w. fordert. . . . So bin ich fast ein zu großer Feind des äußeren Glanzes und Luxus, wenn er nicht mit Kunst und *comfort* verbunden ist. Sich so zu putzen, so zu tragen, die und die Möbel sich anzuschaffen, weil es Mode ist, gleichviel ob geschmackvoll und bequem, ist mir ein unerträglicher Gedanke.

Von Grillen werde ich oft geplagt, doch fürchten Sie sich nicht zu sehr vor bösen Launen. Ein Dichter ist einmal darin ein anderer Mensch. Der geringste Umstand afficirt ihn, ein glückliches Ereignis kann ihn in den Himmel erheben, ein unglückliches ihn zu Boden schmettern. Eine gemüthvolle, liebe Frau versteht es die Ruhe wieder herzustellen, wenn die Seele des Mannes nur gesund ist.

⁷ Heyse, Paul (1830–1914), writer of *Novellen*, popular during his lifetime. Strachwitz, Moritz Graf (1822–47), poet. Scherenberg, Christian Friedrich (1798–1881), patriotic epics and ballads. Schneider, Louis (1805–78), writer and poet: became known as ‘the King’s man’—official reader to Kaiser Wilhelm I.

⁸ See Hasselberg, ‘W.A. und Friedrich Wilhelm III’, op. cit.

⁹ *Herr von Sacken* has been republished several times, e.g. in *Wiesbadener Volksbücher* (no. 236). *Hans Preller von Lauffen* was republished in *Rheinische Hausbücherei* and translated into English by C. L. Lewes (*Blackwood’s Magazine*, July–December, 1880 and *Tales from Blackwood*, 3rd series, V, 3, 1889, pp. 90–116).

¹⁰ *Erinnerungen*, op. cit., p. 312. Wie viel jüngere Freunde führte ich in die Literatur ein und machte auf ihr Talent aufmerksam. Sie haben sich emancipirt, loben sich untereinander und beweisen mir, daß ich keines habe.

¹¹ In *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, 1831, pp. 657–9.

¹² 1838, pp. 453–63.

¹³ Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781–1841), architect and painter; see also Alexis’s obituary, *Morgenblatt*, 1841, nos. 262–4. Christian Daniel Rauch (1777–1857), sculptor, in Berlin from 1811, is mentioned below.

¹⁴ See H. H. Houben, *Verbotene Literatur*, Dessau, 1925 (2te Aufl.), p. 16.

¹⁵ The Romantic poet Chamisso was a friend of Alexis from about 1819. Eduard Ferrand (pseudonym for Schulz 1813–42) was a co-worker of *Der Freimütige*.

¹⁶ *Historisch-diplomatische Beyträge zur Geschichte der Stadt Berlin* reviewed by Alexis in *Jahrbücher der Literatur*, Vienna, April–May, 1838, LXXXII, pp. 181 f. In *The Life and Work of W.A.*, Ph.D. thesis, Leeds, 1952, pp. 566–77, I have considered Alexis’s indebtedness in *Der Roland von Berlin*, both factually and linguistically, to the volumes published by Fidicin.

¹⁷ Levin Schücking, *Lebenserinnerungen*, Breslau, 1856, I, pp. 151 f.

¹⁸ Letter dated June 10, 1843 in archives of F. A. Brockhaus, Leipzig.

¹⁹ For a closer examination of *Der neue Pitaval* see Thomas, ‘Der neue Pitaval’, *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, LXXV, 1956, pp. 362–74.

²⁰ See Thomas, ‘Friedrich Hebbel and W.A.’, *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical Society (Literary and Historical Section)*, VIII, Part II, 1956, pp. 152–3 and note 29.

²¹ Fritz Reuter, *Ut mine Festungstid*, ch. 4, p. 125. ‘en düstres Lock, wo de Röver und Mürder Exner, von dem Pitaval vertellt. . . . *Sämtliche Werke*, 8 vols., Berlin/Leipzig, n.d., IV, p. 27.

²² *Judith die Kluswirtin (Ausgewählte Novellen)*, Leipzig, 1918, I, pp. 112–13).

²³ See Ernst Alker, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von Goethes Tod . . .* Stuttgart, 1950, p. 288.

THE MATURE WRITER

IN 1841 the Breslau-born portrait painter Albert Korneck (1813-1905), who was staying in a house owned by Alexis, made a drawing of him which appeared, together with a note about the author by Theodor Hell, in *Penelope* (1842). In a letter to Theodor Hell Alexis expressed the view that the portrait (see the frontispiece) was a good likeness. He is dressed in the loose coat and cravate which were then fashionable and has a full moustache and a tiny beard below his lower lip. His hair, brushed back at the sides and with the usual curls over the forehead, is greying, but he looks young for his years. This is the portrait of him which is justifiably the most popular because it shows him in what was probably his best creative period, the 1840s.

At this point we must take up once more the story of his contact with the royal house of Prussia. In 1840 Frederick William IV ascended the throne, and when Alexis sent him copies of *Der Roland von Berlin* and *Der falsche Woldemar* as these works appeared, he received a friendly note of thanks, at least for the second of these novels.¹ These amicable, if somewhat formal, relations with the ruling prince were finally and irrevocably destroyed in March 1843.

In his outlook Alexis was strongly and consciously Prussian and Protestant,² a ready champion of his country's past and present greatness, with a fervent desire to see her as the leader-state in Germany. Despite the letters of acknowledgment when he sent his works to Frederick William IV and the medals received from Frederick William III, he must have felt that official encouragement for his patriotic endeavours was sadly lacking and that he had the right to expect a much warmer reception for them in court circles.

Like other contemporary writers and poets, Alexis had suffered in the recent past from the interference of the censors, and he greeted with jubilation the alleviation of censorship restrictions by Frederick William IV in the decree of December 24, 1841. As was to be expected, an opposition press rapidly sprang into existence, but the king seems not to have foreseen this development and expressed in harsh terms his disappointment at what he chose to regard as abuses of his concessions. When his relations with the political poet Georg

Herwegh (1817-75) suddenly worsened, after a distorted account of the interview he had granted to Herwegh in November 1842 was published in the *Leipziger Allgemeine Zeitung*, he finally decided to reimpose censorship;³ the offending publication was banned on December 28, 1842; the *Rheinische Zeitung* and Arnold Ruge's *Deutsche Jahrbücher* soon suffered the same fate. In 1842 the *Vossische Zeitung* had begun to publish leading articles on topical political themes, some of which Alexis agreed to compose. A series of articles on the freedom of the press appeared from his pen in January and February 1843. Alexis admits that there have been abuses of the concessions granted.

The press has transgressed since it was able to breathe rather more freely, that cannot be denied. We have heard foolishness, one-sided or exasperating views, ugly invective, malicious insinuations, mendacious denunciations.

However, Alexis remarks, this development should not impel the authorities to re-apply the muzzle; it should be remembered, on the other hand, that not all opponents of a free press are villains and persecutors, many of them being men of principle who fear the effect of liberating the press from all restraint.

Alexis does not approve of the type of press freedom prevailing in France, which gives freedom to parties but not to individuals. In any case, he asserts, the Germans have already more spiritual freedom than the French, and since they are (in his opinion) less mendacious, conditions in the French press should not be taken as a standard of comparison for the conditions which would prevail in a German liberated press. In England, where there is the greatest freedom of the press, lies and falsehood have the smallest effect. Thus a liberation of the press would not bring lawlessness and anarchy for, as in other countries like England, Sweden and Holland, a new voluntary censorship of moral practice and adherence to the *comme il faut* would replace the former restrictions. In Germany, where censorship does not permit scandalous and immoral literature to be brought into the open to its authors' public shame, this type of production is even more dangerous than in these other countries. The restrictions imposed only embarrass the honest men and not the rogues, for whom they are created.

Further articles in the series were senselessly mutilated by the censor and did not appear in print. In one of them Alexis stresses the necessity, in the national interest, for a free opposition press and asserts that a monarchy as strong as that of the Hohenzollerns will

have nothing to fear from it. The Prussian monarchy has become strong because of the bond of family unity between prince and people. In Prussia there is no life and death struggle between opposing factions, Alexis declares, and under the Hohenzollerns the nation will progress steadily.

In the conflicts of the present some see the two principles in a life and death struggle; they call them the old and the new and they think that one of them must suffer defeat; therefore it is no wonder that each of them defends itself with all its might. We cannot see such a conflict in Prussia. Since the Hohenzollerns created the state of Prussia, our history has been a going forward towards free intellectual development as it should be embodied in the idea of a perfect state. Errors only arose from the fact that while some hurried forwards too quickly, others, who had grown timid, took a step backwards. Where is a life and death struggle to be found in this?

The whole gist of the article reflects Alexis's loyalty to the Crown and demonstrates the futility of the system of censorship then enforced. Indignant at the mutilation of a further article, Alexis wrote a letter to Frederick William IV (dated February 24 or 25) giving details of the article and the passages erased by the censor. He assumes that the king cannot have known of this abuse by the censorship of its powers and observes that he is writing to the country's ruler not in his own but in the common interest. He received a reply, dated March 26, 1843 and possibly drafted by a government official, in which his complaint is rejected. The letter then continues in the harshest terms:

I was disgusted to find a man of your education and literary reputation associating himself, by writing the article in question, with a class which makes a business of disparaging the administration of the country to a large number of people, who are mostly without judgment of their own, by a hollow criticism of its actions and by making rash insinuations about the spirit in which it acts—something not understood by them—and thus wilfully making its heavy task even more difficult. I had expected something different from your intelligence and talent, and am sorry that I have been disappointed.

As a result of his protest against the censorship Alexis was listed as politically unreliable. The king's letter was published in the *Hamburger Correspondent* and the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, but it is unlikely that Alexis was responsible. The incident evoked some interest at the time; Varnhagen mentions it in his diary for March 29, 1843,⁴ Heine writes in his poem *Die verkehrte Welt* (*The World Upside Down*) 'Der Häring wird ein Sanskulott' ('Herring's becoming a sans-culotte') and Herwegh composed his famous epigram,

published in the second volume of *Gedichte eines Lebendigen* (*Poems of a Living Man*, 1844):

Unser gnädigster Herr, seht, welch ein Freund des Pikanten, Mit Höchsteigener
Hand salzt er die Häringe ein.
(What a friend of a piquant dish our gracious lord is; with his own royal hand he
pickles the herrings.)

It is a sign of Alexis's strength of character and of his steadfast loyalty to the Crown that he was not deterred from continuing work at his series of historical novels. He made no public reference to this cruel rebuff, although a reply to the letter, which he drafted but never sent, indicates the writer's pain and distress. The draft begins: 'With the pain which only a Prussian can feel whose hereditary affection for his royal house is something different and much more alive than mere servility, the undersigned received the ungracious communication from Your Majesty.'⁵ The significance of the incident for Alexis is shown by the fact that he kept a file containing all the documents of the case. He felt that he had been treated with ingratitude by the king and expressed this conviction in guarded terms in the preface to the first edition of *Die Hosen des Herrn von Bredow* (1846), where he refers to difficulties which confronted him as an historical novelist.

I have much to contend with, the coy reserve of the better reader, which is more discouraging than the inflexible, crude subject-matter, and scarcely a word of encouragement or thanks, even from the quarter which, in other lands, so richly showers with honours poets who are called patriotic (p. xii).⁶

As a result of Alexis's favourable review of Hebbel's poems,⁷ Hebbel wrote to Alexis to thank him, but Alexis's reply only came early in 1844 and the relationship between the two writers did not ripen into friendship, although Hebbel visited Alexis in Berlin in 1847 and had a genuine interest in some of his work, notably *Der falsche Woldemar*, which he read in Copenhagen, and volumes of *Der neue Pitaval*. It is possible to trace certain points of similarity between the two writers in their approach to creative writing. They seem to have remained well disposed towards one another, but lost contact.

On May 5, 1843 Alexis's mother died from heart failure in her eighty-second year. Henriette, who had watched over her son's education and early development with such care and devotion, had been now for some time little more than a relic of a past age, although still sound in mind. Alexis's respect and affection for her

finds expression in the obituary notice, published in the *Vossische Zeitung* on May 7, which he wrote on behalf of himself, his step-sister Florentine and his wife. He writes of his mother as 'exemplary in her pious trust in God and meek humility, yet full of charity, love and benevolence towards every man, even those with views different from her own'.⁸ Alexis was a loyal family man who lived with his relatives and cared for them when they were too old or infirm to maintain their independence.

The same year he published another historical novel, *Urban Grandier*, the tale of a priest of the age of Louis XIII who was accused of having caused devils to enter various women so that they became possessed; Grandier was convicted and, after undergoing the cruellest tortures, burnt at the stake in Loudun in 1634. The theme had already been treated in French by Hippolyte Bonnelier (*Urbain Grandier*, Paris, 1825), but the modern reader will be more interested in a version by Mr. Aldous Huxley, *The Devils of Loudun* (London, 1952). Mr. Huxley's book shares the disadvantage of Alexis's for the average reader in treating a gruesome and terrifying theme, but both books press home their message effectively. The similarity in approach and conclusion must derive from a utilization of common sources or from intelligent reasoning by both writers. In his preface Alexis remarks that for some time he has planned to write a novel concerned with the Reformation in Mark Brandenburg, but that he is awaiting a more tranquil period in order to develop his theme and prepare the work for publication. *Urban Grandier*, on whose theme he chanced during his researches for *Der neue Pitaval* (for which series it was later written up) is a tale of delusion (*Wahn*) according to Alexis's statement in the preface; as such it may have suited his mood of bewilderment at the way he had been treated by the Prussian king. In his unhappier moods Alexis was more closely aware of human ignorance, cruelty and irrational behaviour, particularly at times when he felt himself to be wronged either by the Young German writers in the mid-1830s or by the Prussian king in the early 1840s. Brunold⁹ maintains that Alexis's belief in the uncertainty of human values, as compared with eternal values, is epitomized in a poem which ends: Drüben ist das Land der Wahrheit/Hier ist nur der Dämmerung Reich. (Yonder lies the land of truth, here is only the realm of twilight.)

In his preface Alexis denies that *Urban Grandier* is a novel; on the contrary, he protests, it is a true account of an event, based on the evidence of history, legal archives and innumerable manuscripts.

The whole persecution of Grandier is probably the result of silly tricks by some young girls in a nunnery who pretend that they see apparitions; this so scares some of the nuns that their nerves are excited and they fall into fits of cramp or epilepsy. Grandier's enemies, who are jealous of his popularity and good looks and angered by his arrogance, make use of the nuns' condition and spread the rumour that he has introduced devils into them. One example of the sickness calls up another by auto-suggestion, and the plotters against Grandier have the nuns dosed with medicines which stimulate rather than calm their fantasies. This is the way in which Alexis attempts to explain the situation which is presented within the framework of the historical period, necessitating the introduction of characters like Cinq Mars, Hugo Grotius, Madame de Lafayette, the queen and the enigmatic Père Joseph ('Éminence Grise'). The historical episodes, although of subsidiary interest here, are among the best features of the book; it belongs to the period of publication which witnessed a sudden flaring of interest in witchcraft and demonology. Thus Joseph Görres (1776-1848) had published his four volumes of *Christliche Mystik* by 1842 and Frederick William IV insisted on the publication in 1843 of *Maria Schweidler die Bernsteinhexe* which was thought to be a newly-discovered text from the seventeenth century but was actually written in an archaic style by Wilhelm Meinhold (1797-1851).

Laetitia's health seems never to have been robust, and in 1843 she was so seriously ill that a course of treatment was considered imperative. Hence Alexis accompanied her to Kreuznach, where they remained seven months while Laetitia underwent the treatment prescribed. Here, away from the business entanglements and distractions of Berlin, Alexis began writing *Die Hosen des Herrn von Bredow*.¹⁰ They returned home in September, breaking their journey for two short visits to Ferdinand Freiligrath (1810-76) at Rolandseck and Geibel at St. Goar.¹¹

At the time when Alexis visited Freiligrath, this fashionable poet was an unhappy man because of a pension of 300 Talers a year which he had been receiving from Frederick William IV since 1841. This pension, though small, had given him security but had also provoked attacks from political poets who felt that he had sold himself to the forces of reaction. At the end of 1843 he gave up his pension and joined the ranks of the political poets. Alexis sensed his unhappiness during the visit: 'Something oppressed him; he could not compose in freedom, he was translating. The pressure on him

was too hard, he could no longer endure the ill-humour and scorn which was voiced aloud.' Alexis wrote thus in a collective review of poetry published in 1847.¹² Here he writes frankly of Freiligrath as one preaching destruction and revolution who is driven from country to country by his political beliefs but has now found a home in London, where he has won new friends by his serene, friendly personality. Chamisso, Alexis reveals, had in his last years enthused over Freiligrath's early poetry and been indignant that the public had not recognized its qualities more readily. Alexis approves of Freiligrath earning a living as a clerk, for a poet, he declares, needs an occupation as long as it does not prevent him from expressing his genius. Interruption in regular composition may even be beneficial for a lyric poet. 'A poem is the child of the moment, the magic magnet which suddenly concentrates and crystallizes the fluid of the emotions; it is true that the filing process in a poem requires days, weeks, months perhaps, but one should not chew the pen over it from morning to night.' Every lyric poet, Alexis declares, has a spongy nature and must imbibe and absorb the fluid of emotions around him; this partly explains Freiligrath's change to political poetry of which Alexis obviously does not approve, although he acknowledges the poet's sincerity.

In a number of the *Jahrbücher der Literatur* (Vienna) for 1843 there appeared a long review¹³ by Alexis of folksongs from Brittany, which, like his earlier essay on 'Balladenpoesie' (1824), reflects his extensive knowledge of the whole field; there are references to the folk poetry of several countries and a short account of the Bretons themselves from whom Alexis thought himself to be descended. The review must have been prepared for by a period of study. These were the years when Celtic studies were beginning to develop in German-speaking lands (in the same volume of *Jahrbücher der Literatur* there is the first part of Karl Meyer's article 'Celtische Sprachen') and Alexis's review is partly a contribution to this new branch of learning.

On March 9, 1844 Alexis delivered a lecture on the subject of Warren Hastings to a society (*Wissenschaftlicher Verein*) in Berlin.¹⁴ It is true, as Richter¹⁵ has shown, that this lecture is largely a translation of Macaulay's famous essay¹⁶ on the subject, but it is harsh to accuse him of plagiarism and deliberately withholding details of his source, since he acknowledges his debt in an article on Warren Hastings published in the same year in *Der neue Pitaval*. In his speech Alexis appears to have summarized Macaulay's account, written his

own introduction and finally tabulated the achievements of Hastings and the most significant traits in his character. The work reveals that Alexis was still well informed concerning contemporary English publications and that he probably had a good reading knowledge of English, perhaps supplemented by Laetitia's perfect command of the language.¹⁷

In August of the same year Alexis and his wife took a long holiday in the eastern provinces of Prussia, staying at a *Forsthaus* near Bütow for several weeks (an area which formed a rough linguistic boundary for German and Polish) and then visiting Danzig, Königsberg and a number of the resorts on the coast in East and West Prussia. His impressions were published in the *Vossische Zeitung*, 1844-45.¹⁸ The trip took some time and, since Alexis was also occupied with the composition of *Die Hosen des Herrn von Bredow* in these years, it is not surprising that his only other major publications in 1844 and 1845 were reviews and articles for the *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, one article in the *Hannoversche Morgenzeitung*,¹⁹ the years' volumes of *Der neue Pitaval* and some contributions to *Penelope*.

From at least 1831 Alexis had known Varnhagen von Ense (1785-1858) and Frels²⁰ has recorded fifteen letters from Alexis to Varnhagen in the years 1831 to 1847. As has been noted, Alexis is also mentioned in Varnhagen's famous diary and his entry for June 15, 1845 suggests that the author was still regarded with suspicion by the authorities and was possibly in danger of being expelled from Berlin for his protests against censorship. In January 1846 Alexis gave a public lecture on C. P. Moritz's novel *Anton Reiser* (1785-90)²¹ and was probably the first literary critic of the century to appreciate the significance of the work, which he discusses skilfully and knowledgeably, occasionally introducing references to less well-known aspects of Moritz; in remarking upon Moritz's interest in the dialect of Mark Brandenburg, he mentions the tendency for the Berliners to confuse the dative and accusative personal pronouns 'mir' and 'mich', a tendency for which Alexis himself had been castigated by Gutzkow in his review of *Cabanis*.

In the summer of 1846 Alexis visited Bolzano in the Tyrol and made a number of excursions on foot into the surrounding mountains. He describes this experience in a letter to Laetitia dated August 7-8,²² in which he describes the people he meets, including a friendly Catholic priest who had read his work. Alexis delighted in rambles of this kind, but Laetitia, who in any case did not enjoy

physical health and strength, did not share his taste. It was on the return journey that Holtei met Alexis at Graz,²³ 'his head full of plans for welcome new books, his satchel full of papers and material for future use'. With Alexis and other companions Holtei climbed, walked and talked of art and life. This kind of holiday gave Alexis the relaxation he needed from the journalistic bustle of Berlin. In September *Die Hosen des Herrn von Bredow* was published. Varnhagen was disappointed by it and, after having read a few pages, he felt that his earlier views were confirmed, namely, that 'it is absolutely amazing and most annoying that one with so much talent achieves so little'.²⁴ This is perhaps an unfair criticism of Alexis's masterpiece, which will always retain its place not only as one of the greatest humorous works in German literature but also as one of its very few historical novels of lasting significance. The criticism can, however, be directed against Alexis's work in general; undoubtedly he does not fulfil in his total achievement those expectations which his vast knowledge and the outstanding talent evinced in isolated passages might suggest; in his struggles to gain a living by his pen and to win early literary recognition, he wrote too much and had too large a number of varied interests for sustained concentration on style and formal perfection.

It has been suggested that Alexis may have composed the novel *Die Blume der Aischach* (*The Flower of Aischach*), which was published anonymously by his firm, the *Berliner Lesekabinett*, in 1846. The unusual perfection of form of *Die Hosen des Herrn von Bredow* would suggest that Alexis devoted much of his time in 1844 and 1845 to its composition and it seems unlikely that, in view of his other commitments, he would have been able to write a further novel in three volumes during these years. Moreover, the work is written in an extravagantly sentimental vein, in that very style at which Alexis had poked fun in *Der Prätendent*. The plot is incredibly naive and this is not one of Alexis's weaknesses. From a comparison of the novel with Alexis's work, the difference in style, content and literary method is at once apparent. *Die Blume der Aischach* shows an immaturity which would suggest that it was composed by some young novelist, possibly a woman, whom Alexis was assisting by its publication. Alexis had often shown a readiness to help young and comparatively unknown writers and to publish their works in his press or introduce them to publishers of influence like Brockhaus. As late as 1860 he wrote a preface to a collection of poems by the obscure writer Clara Ernst.²⁵

In a letter to Theodor Hell dated February 13, 1847²⁶ Alexis declined an invitation to send further reminiscences to *Penelope* on the grounds that he is preoccupied with 'serious and urgent historical studies and business affairs'. Hasselberg has pointed out that these would include the consultation of historical sources for *Der Werwolf*, published in 1848, the sequel to *Die Hosen des Herrn von Bredow*. The business affairs would be domestic problems and contributions to Brockhaus's *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung* which for 1847 included reviews of Gottfried Keller's poems²⁷ and of a German edition of Hans Andersen's works.²⁸

Alexis reviewed Keller's *Zeitgedichte* (*Poems of the Age*, 1846) in a survey of eleven volumes of poetry, mainly political. He considered that the majority of the poems would survive their time, for they have a 'full, fresh ring' about them; despite the expression of hate and bitterness in some of them, the main impression is one of affection and enthusiasm and the driving force behind the composition is creative rather than destructive, only aggressive against established resistance like that of Jesuits, Philistines, Pietists, truly patriotic, recalling the best of Anastasius Grün as political poetry and the work of Schiller for clarity of thought and expression. In particular he admires 'An die Natur' and 'Feueridylle' and quotes at length from 'Ein Apfelbaum in voller Blüte . . .'

Hans Christian Andersen (1805-75) visited Berlin for the first time in 1831 and in his autobiography he mentions Alexis as one of the literary circle in which he moved;²⁹ his other friends included Tieck, Brockhaus and, for Berlin, Chamisso. He came to Berlin again in 1844, but Alexis does not seem to have met him on this occasion. In reviewing his work Alexis expresses admiration for his biography and is non-committal about his other work; his conclusions are that Andersen's work is too cold in tone and that the author should have been able to achieve more with his talent.

In August 1847, while Laetitia was taking a cure at Bad Liebenstein, Alexis was visited in Berlin by the poet Anastasius Grün; this period was not a happy one, for our author did not enjoy being a grass widower, separated from his beloved wife, and an undated letter³⁰ to her reveals him in an irritated mood, tormented by a heat-wave, business difficulties and domestic problems, e.g. an opportunity to sell his villa at Heringsdorf has not materialized and he has had to call in workmen to repair the smoking kitchen stove

of one of his tenants. However, he is cheered by the prospect, looming ever larger, of a trip to Italy so that Laetitia can continue to convalesce and he can realize a cherished dream.

REFERENCES

¹ See Alexis's letter to the king dated December 6, 1842, in Hasselberg, 'Neues von Willibald Alexis', *Tägliche Rundschau*, 41 Jg., 1922, Unterhaltungsbeilage no. 298, p. 986.

² Anti-Catholic bias e.g. in 'General Schwerin' first published in *Cabanis* (1832).

³ For account given below see Hasselberg, 'W.A. und Friedrich Wilhelm IV', *Mitteilungen des Vereins für die Geschichte Berlins*, nos. 2-3, 1922, pp. 9-15, esp. p. 10 f.; also Ewert, 'W.A.' Kampf um die Preßfreiheit im Jahre 1843', *W.A. Bund-Jahrbuch*, 1929-31, pp. 6-38. Passages (originals given below) are quoted in the article: Die Presse hat sich veründigt, seit sie etwas freier athmete, das ist nicht zu leugnen. Wir hörten Thöriges, Einseitiges, Erbitterndes, gehässige Invectiven, hämische Insinuationen, lügenhafte Denunciationen.

Einige sehen in den Kämpfen der Gegenwart das Ringen zweier Principe auf Tod und Leben, sie nennen sie das Alte und das Neue, und sie meinen, Eines müsse unterliegen; darum sei es nicht zu verwundern, wenn sich das andere mit allen Kräften dagegen wahre. Wir können solchen Kampf, was Preußen betrifft, nicht erblicken. Unsere Geschichte, seit die Hohenzollern den Staat Preußen schufen, ist ein Gang nach Vorwärts, nach freier geistiger Entwicklung, wie sie in der Idee eines vollkommenen Staates sich verkörpern soll. Nur darin traten Irrungen ein, daß, wo Einige zu schnell vorwärts eilten, andere scheu geworden, einen Fußtritt zurück thaten. Wo liegt da ein Kampf auf Tod und Leben?

Mit Widerwillen habe Ich aber einen Mann von Ihrer Bildung und literarischen Bekanntheit durch jenen Artikel [the article concerning which Alexis lodged his complaint] unter der Klasse derer gefunden, die es sich zum Geschäft machen, die Verwaltung des Landes durch hohle Beurtheilung ihres Thuns, durch unüberlegte Verdächtigung ihres nicht von ihnen begriffenen Geistes, vor der großen meist urtheilslosen Menge herabzusetzen, und dadurch ihren schweren Beruf geflissentlich noch schwerer zu machen. Von Ihrer Einsicht wie von Ihrem Talent hatte Ich Anderes erwartet, und sehe Mich ungeru enttäuscht.

⁴ Varnhagen von Ense, *Tagebücher*, 1861-8, II, p. 167. There are also references in the entries for April 1, 4 and 14.

⁵ Ewert, op. cit. (note 3), p. 37. Original: Mit dem Schmerze, welchen nur ein Preuße mitfühlen kann, dem die angestammte Liebe für sein Königshaus etwas anderes und Lebendigeres ist, als der Servilismus sie versteht, empfang der Unterzeichnete Euer Königlichen Majestät ungnädiges Cabinetsschreiben.

⁶ Original: Es ist vieles, was ich zu überwinden habe, die spröde Scheu der Besseren, entmuthigender als der spröde, rohe Stoff, und kaum eine Aufmunterung, kaum ein Dank, auch nicht von der Seite, welche in andern Ländern so reich mit Ehren Dichter überschüttet, die man patriotisch nennt. (p. xii.)

⁷ For fuller examination of relationship between two writers see Thomas, 'Friedrich Hebbel and W.A.', op. cit.

⁸ See Ewert, 'Henriette Haering', op. cit., p. 7, where obituary notice is reproduced in full. ⁹ Brunold, op. cit., I, p. 143.

¹⁰ Preface to first edition of *Die Hosen des Herrn von Bredow* (1846), p. v.

¹¹ See Wilhelm Buchner, *Ferdinand Freiligrath*, Lahr/Mor/Schauenburg, 1881-2, II, p. 78, and Karl Goedeke, *Emanuel Geibel*, Stuttgart, 1869, p. 263. Alexis in his remarks on Freiligrath (below) claimed to have met him at St. Goar.

¹² *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, 1847, pp. 449 f. Original of passages quoted above and below: Es drückte ihn Etwas; er konnte nicht frei dichten, er übersetzte. Der Druck ward ihm zu hart, er konnte die Mißstimmung, den Hohn, den man laut aussprach, nicht länger aushalten.

Ein Gedicht ist das Kind des Moments, der Zaubermagnet, der die Fluide der Empfindungen plötzlich concentrirt, krystallisirt; zwar zur Feile bedarf es vielleicht der Tage, Wochen, Monate, aber nicht, daß man von Morgen bis Abend darüber die Feder kaut.

¹³ *Jahrbücher der Literatur*, Vienna, CIII, 1843, pp. 86-118 ('Volkslieder aus der Bretagne').

¹⁴ Published as *Warren Hastings*, Buchhandlung des Berliner Lesekabinetts, 1844.

¹⁵ Richter, p. 32.

¹⁶ First published in the *Edinburgh Review*, October 1841.

¹⁷ See Thomas, 'W.A.'s Knowledge of English', *Modern Language Review*, XLIX, 1954, pp. 216-18.

¹⁸ 1844, nos. 240, 248, 254, 276, 302; 1845, no. 1. Republished by Hasselberg in 'W.A. über den deutschen Osten', *Sonderdruck aus den Berlinischen Blättern für Geschichte und Heimatkunde*, Berlin, 1935.

¹⁹ See correspondence with Georg Harrys (1780-?) and Hermann Harrys (died 1891) in Kestner Museum, Hanover, where the MS. (often illegible) of the article 'Protestantische Fußstapfen in den Alpen' is also to be found. Alexis had difficulty in publishing the article; it was refused for Brockhaus's and Cotta's publications, perhaps because of an anti-Catholic bias, and was finally published in the *Hannoversche Morgenzeitung*, 1845, nos. 4-10, 12-16, 18-20, 21-22, 26-7, 31, 33-4, 39-40, 45-6, 50-51, 53-4, 58-9, 61-2, ed. Hermann Harrys.

²⁰ See bibliography.

²¹ Published in *Literarhistorisches Taschenbuch*, ed. R. E. Prutz, 5 Jg., 1847, pp. 1-71.

²² 'Aus einer Tiroler Sommerfrische anno dazumal', *Vossische Zeitung*, 1917, June, no. 329 (mainly text of letter).

²³ Holtei, *Vierzig Jahre*, op. cit., VI, pp. 46-7.

²⁴ Varnhagen von Ense, *Tagebücher*, III, p. 440. Original: Man kann sich nicht genug wundern und ärgern, daß mit so vielem Talent immer so wenig geleistet wird.

²⁵ See Goedeke, *Grundriß* . . . IX, p. 483, no. 136.

²⁶ Published in Hasselberg, 'Neues von W.A.', op. cit.

²⁷ *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, 1847, p. 442.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 1289 ff.

²⁹ Hans Andersen, *The True Story of my Life*, transl. Mary Howitt, London, 1926, p. 270.

³⁰ Ewert, 'Laetitia Haering', op. cit., pp. 9-10, for extracts from letter.

ITALY AND THE REVOLUTION

ALEXIS had long desired to visit Italy. His genuine interest in Italian history and culture had made it possible for him to evoke the atmosphere of the Italian Renaissance in *Venus in Rom* (1828) with such success that his friend Ludwig Halirsch, who knew Italy well, had praised it. In 1832 Alexis, on a visit to Vienna, left a note for Deinhardstein, who was away when he called at his home, together with a book, probably on Italy. Deinhardstein had also visited Italy and Alexis obviously regretted that he had not had this experience, for the note read: 'Knowst thou the land, where . . . [a quotation from Goethe's poem] A souvenir for a connoisseur who knows what blooms between, with and under the lemon-trees, from one who has not yet seen St. Peter's by lamplight.'¹ In 1834 Brockhaus visited Italy and recorded his enthusiasm in a letter to Alexis on his return: the same year Alexis composed a series of essays on Venice which appeared to have been composed by a visitor watching from the 'Café Nuove': these, published in the magazine *Kosmorama*, edited by Louis Hanewald, Quedlinburg, are incredibly graphic and accurate. Not until 1847 was Alexis able to fulfil his long-cherished ambition. A pass, written in French and dated October 4, 1847, was exhibited at an Alexis exhibition in 1912;² here Alexis is referred to as 'vice député de la municipalité de Berlin' (the only reference we possess to any participation in municipal government by Alexis, who only secured the 'Bürgerbrief' or full rights of Berlin citizenship in 1835). Alexis was accompanied by his wife and the route stated on the pass lay through the states of the German Confederation (Deutscher Bund) to Frankfurt-on-Main, then to Milan and via Turin, Florence and Rome to Naples, returning via Vienna to Berlin. Before leaving Berlin Alexis had cleared off all arrears of work for Brockhaus and made arrangements to send from Italy articles about that country, both for the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* and for Cotta's *Morgenblatt* in which the best accounts are to be found.³ The sending of reports to the Brockhaus periodical necessitated correspondence with the editor, Gustav Kolb.

Alexis's friends were doubtful about the advisability of travelling at that particular time because of civil war in Switzerland, but

Alexis and his wife, nevertheless, had no difficulties. They took the stage-coach to Luzern, then from Rapperswil they went by mail-coach through Weesen, Ragatz, Kloster Pfäfers and Chur, emerging from the vehicle for a short rest and a little sightseeing at Felsberg. They noted the floods around the village of Splügel, and immediately they crossed the frontier into Italy they were pestered by children begging. Nevertheless, Alexis's sincere joy at entering Italy is fully expressed in the account of his travels. They stayed for at least a week on Lake Como and then explored the area. By November 2 they were in Varenna, they visited Milan, Turin (where, Alexis writes, they would like to have stayed longer but had no letters of recommendation to make interesting acquaintances), Genoa, where they lived both in the Hotel Feder and in the house where the Irish patriot Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847) died, and Florence. However, Alexis's greatest desire was to reach Rome, so that they did not spend a long period of time at any of the many interesting places *en route*. They arrived in Rome late on Christmas Day and immediately had trouble with two prospective guides who were fighting for the honour of serving them: later, Alexis records, the guide he chose died and his master was saddled with his family and his debts. The Romans are described in far from flattering terms as dirty and thieving. Alexis was distressed to discover how much destruction to ancient monuments had been caused by the followers of Garibaldi and Mazzini and, in reporting the unrest in Italy at the time, the violent tone of public speakers, the fickleness of the crowd, is not able to hide his disappointment at the turn of events, through which demagogy rather than democracy or any liberal form of government seemed to prevail. Alexis saw the Pope in St. Peter's and made an extensive sightseeing tour; he also visited the 'Café Greco' where many German and foreign artists foregathered. Gradually he and his wife became the centre of a pleasant circle of German men of letters. Friedrich Bodenstedt (1819-92), whom they had accidentally encountered while staying at the 'Hotel Reichmann' in Milan, joined them in Rome in January 1848 and in the middle of February they met the writer Gustav zu Putlitz (1821-90) there also. Other members of the group were the newly-married Levin Schücking (1814-83) and his wife, formerly Luise von Gall, Julius von Unger and Hauptmann von Seydlitz and his wife (sister of the historian Heinrich von Sybel, 1817-95).

Alexis had met Bodenstedt earlier in Munich for a short time, but now the two writers had an opportunity to become better

acquainted. In his reminiscences⁴ Bodenstedt gives a detailed, graphic account of Alexis's character, appearance and behaviour at this time:

He was of a profound and ruminative disposition, open to impressions and with a keen power of observation, yet more inclined to reproduce his reactions and observations on paper than through the spoken word. Thus in a larger social gathering his silence usually attracted attention and even amidst a smaller circle he preferred to hear others speak rather than himself, yet his silence was by no means to be always taken for assent. Anyone who knew him intimately could read in his eyes what he was thinking; his face reflected faithfully his innermost being which was absolutely sincere. But his build, thick-set, powerful, spreading rather than rising, was in striking contrast to the gentle spirit which inhabited it: from behind, he looked as though, with his broad shoulders and massive head, he could put the world out of joint, while his intellectual facial expression revealed the most pacific nature, and this had a mellowing effect upon his whole appearance.

Bodenstedt continues by observing that the youthful enthusiasm in Alexis's nature which had made him volunteer for service against Napoleon still remained and was reflected in his interest in the political revival in Italy. Laetitia is described as still possessing youthful beauty of the English type and as one whose opinion her husband valued highly. The approach of Alexis and his wife to any given problem was however, very different; Bodenstedt declares:

She just let ideas influence her without allowing conventional judgments to sway her, while he made such thorough preliminary studies and thereby became so much identified with the views of others that he found it more difficult to observe things impartially.

In the course of a discussion, Bodenstedt relates, Laetitia usually succeeded in converting her husband to her own point of view.

During February and March of that year Alexis visited the Campagna and also the catacombs. Revolution broke out in February, and many foreign visitors felt that it might not be safe to leave Rome at the time, but Putlitz, Alexis and Laetitia were determined to see Naples; they moved on to Naples, probably late in February, where they became guests of the German colony there. In March the revolution broke out in Germany and the tourists were worried by the lack of definite news from home and by exaggerated rumours. The unrest spread to Naples by April. The people there seemed to have no clear idea what their political aims were and behaved like children during public gatherings; they were noisy but good-humoured. Meanwhile Alexis, Laetitia and Putlitz felt that they had seen enough museums and ancient monuments; above all

they desired quiet amidst natural beauty. They therefore decided to withdraw to the tranquillity of Sorrento to await news from home. In Sorrento the company consisted of two rich spinsters who owned estates in Magdeburg, the novelist Countess Ida Hahn-Hahn (1805-80) and her companion, a Herr von Bistram. At this time Countess Hahn-Hahn had not yet been converted to Roman Catholicism. Although remarkably ugly, she was a very intelligent conversationalist and Putlitz⁵ writes with approval of the discussions among the group on politics, art and literature.

In these months we find Alexis and his wife enjoying the society of members of the nobility of whom Putlitz was one; they quickly felt at home in such company and, as Alexis's political views hardened against revolution after the excesses of these years, they were soon able to understand the viewpoint of the aristocrat. The weeks spent at Sorrento must have been a strange experience for this group of literary-minded tourists whose future was made so insecure by political events in their homeland. Thrown together partly by accident, Putlitz and Alexis formed a friendship which endured until Alexis's death. Putlitz has described how members of the group chose separate quarters not too far from one another, worked, read or took solitary walks in the morning, met for lunch and then arranged some kind of excursion, by carriage, horse or boat, for the afternoon. In this way they visited Amalfi, Salerno, Paestum, Capri and Pompeii. Alexis was working hard on a strange work inspired by his immediate experience, *Der Zauberer Virgilius* (*Virgil the Magician*), sub-titled 'a fairy-tale of the present'. In the evenings there were often readings, and Putlitz, partly because he was home-sick, read from his unpublished story *Was sich der Wald erzählt* (*What the Forest tells itself*) in a room from whose windows Vesuvius could be seen.

Alexis and his wife were later to regard their stay in Italy as the happiest period in their married life. They found congenial company, made new friends, gained much spiritual refreshment from their experiences. Yet their happiness must sometimes have been marred by the uncertainty about conditions in Germany. When they set out for home, probably late in April 1848, they were accompanied by their new friend Gustav zu Putlitz, then barely twenty-seven years old and unknown as a writer. His *Was sich der Wald erzählt* (1851), a lyrical prose work in the style of the fairy-tale, was to be very popular for a limited period. Putlitz describes

Alexis and his wife as follows, shortly after meeting them for the first time:

Häring is thoroughly honest and German by nature, sincere and capable of deep feeling, perhaps too much of an optimist for the political movement of the present time, perhaps too much the Romantic in his approach to art, rather too German for this life in Italy. He can never achieve the serenity which is required to understand life here, which one must have to excuse many things. . . . His wife, a beautiful and amiable Englishwoman . . . has become German, even to the extent that she has scarcely a trace of accent. She is intelligent, with a precise, natural insight and a cultured, receptive mind, and she was very pleasant company on my tour of the galleries.⁶

Julius von Unger offers in his reminiscences⁷ an amusing and graphic description of an evening spent in Rome and a visit to Tivoli, when he was accompanied (among others) by Alexis; 'this stout little middle-aged man, looking like a plain-spoken gentleman-farmer, bespectacled and with hair which seriously reminds one of a wig, . . . who could tell such delightful stories'.

Levin Schücking's portrait of Alexis⁸ is of interest as originating from a younger literary contemporary (he was then thirty-four):

Dr. Häring was more sharply analytic by nature [than Putlitz], a quiet man who did not believe that speech was only given to famous men to prevent others saying anything. He was of medium height and strongly built. For all his works he followed the maxim 'Think before you act'. It was remarkable how slowly he put the final touches to those buildings of his, the novels; whether the planning and erection of the scaffolding went along more quickly, I do not know. In any case by his method of work he created those excellent historical novels which took so long to conquer territory beyond the Elbe and the Oder.

All these accounts of Alexis at this time, when taken together, give us a reasonably complete and coherent impression of his character and appearance at a period when his masterpiece had recently been published, i.e. at the height of his literary powers and perhaps at the climax of his career.

Alexis and his wife were naturally anxious to reach Berlin as soon as possible, for they were worried about the damage to their property which might have occurred during the revolution; they probably set out from Italy when they thought that it would be safe and sensible to travel. Before the laying of a network of railways travelling was slow and uncertain, and the total journey to Berlin must have taken a long time. In Frankfurt-on-Main Alexis was able to attend a sitting of the ill-starred Frankfurt Parliament in St. Paul's Church. The president, Heinrich von Gagern, who curbed by his strength of character the more undisciplined elements in the

assembly, won Alexis's confidence and approval, but the petty squabbles of the numerous different factions and the discouraging unpopularity of the Prussian king must have depressed him.

Instead of going straight to Berlin, Alexis and his wife, because of unrest in the capital, spent some time with Putlitz on the estate of his parents at Retzin. During this visit Alexis and Putlitz collaborated in the composition of two farces which were intended to castigate certain features of the political situation in Germany: these were *Excellenz (His Excellency)* and *Der Salzdirektor (The Director of the Salt Works)*. Neither scored a hit, although they were both conscientious efforts. The first was never performed, the second presented only in isolated performances which attracted little attention. Alexis and his wife also paid a short visit to their brother-in-law Scheffler at Lehnin, a forestry official who had married Laetitia's sister. He urged them to stay longer rather than return to Berlin where street fighting was still in progress and a republic had been proclaimed by revolutionaries. However, Alexis must have been anxious about the safety of his various possessions in Berlin and concerned to know the extent of any financial losses. Hence he and Laetitia soon left for the Prussian capital, reporting their safe arrival on June 17, shortly after the storming of the arsenal and while anarchy still reigned;⁹ in this letter he describes the chaos in the city and laments that he has suffered heavy financial losses as the result of the revolution and is once more entirely dependent on his pen to support Laetitia and himself. He faces up bravely to these misfortunes, unselfishly observing that they have also befallen many other people and expressing his gratitude that he had been able to visit Italy before his financial resources were so drastically reduced. A letter to Levin Schücking dated June 23¹⁰ has much the same tone; Alexis mentions that he is sending, at Schücking's invitation, an article on Berlin for the *Kölnische Zeitung* for which Schücking was working as political correspondent in Italy.

Varnhagen von Ense recorded in his diary¹¹ that Alexis came to see him on July 20 and seemed in his opinion to be trying to steer a middle course in politics:

As far as German affairs are concerned, he shows good intentions, but doesn't venture on to the high seas of freedom in his little boat, only making trips along the coast—he believes that there is more safety in a position which is actually more dangerous. Finally I opposed him in vigorously defending the Democratic Club against the arrogance of a municipal authority which wanted to put the Volunteer Civic Guard under arrest.

Alexis had intended to pay a further visit to Retzin in October, but Putlitz wrote mentioning a serious illness in his family and Alexis answered the letter from Lehnin, where he was staying in November. His experiences during the revolution dispelled the last traces of sympathy for radical liberalism; henceforth he was more attached to the Crown than to any single political party. In January 1849, however, he entered the political arena by undertaking the duties of political editor for the *Vossische Zeitung*. After some months he resigned this post but continued work for the newspaper by writing about sixteen articles which were published from January 24 to December 30, 1849.¹² The *Vossische Zeitung* at this time reflected the views of the conservatives and Alexis soon came into conflict with another editor, his cousin Ludwig Rellstab, because of his assertion that the time had now come for the Hohenzollerns to take the lead in Germany. All other political interests disappeared behind his overwhelming desire to see a single German state united under the Prussian king, who would become its hereditary emperor. Alexis's reactions to events in the early months of 1849 are clearly reflected in his letters to Putlitz.¹³ On February 21, 1849 he expresses his disappointment at the lack of progress towards the national unity for which he longs and observes that Gagern appears to be weakening and yielding to the Austrian diplomat Schmerling:

Once again the clouds are heavy and gloomy, especially in Frankfurt and soon in Vienna. Have you seen in your paper dying Germany portrayed as Gretchen lying in prison, Faust is Heinrich von Gagern, Schmerling is Mephisto and Gretchen cries, 'Heinrich, I shudder at your sight'. [Reference to Goethe's *Faust*.]

The following day he reports with much bitterness a senseless attack by a mob of revolutionaries on the home of his brother-in-law, Scheffler:

My poor brother-in-law has had his house burnt down. Some scoundrel threw a fire-brand on to the thatched roof of the barn, all his provisions, buildings and some of the cattle were burnt and none of it is insured. His own life is in danger. And what a gang of rascals, acting from revenge, desire for gain, communism, after they had been scared away by resolution and threats. 'Schnaps, schnaps, brother Scheffler, we are all equal', they argued. The state must rebuild the buildings, that makes work, bravo, so only a fool would interfere with the fire.

A letter dated April 19 reveals his difficulties as editor of the *Vossische Zeitung*. He desperately needs the remuneration which the

work brings but finds the task so exhausting as to be almost intolerable. He laments that he, who has always championed Prussianism, must now combat its reactionary tendencies and be misunderstood:

Since the German question has become a serious and sacred one, I am on the point of being decried as a red republican and in my own paper I am on such terms with my cousin Rellstab that we are like hostile brothers. . . . What a strange combination of circumstances that I, who hitherto have lived as a poet fully convinced with all my being of the idea of Prussianism, of the mission of the Hohenzollerns, feel myself impelled to combat this specific Prussianism with all the strength I still possess. Politics are moving at a snail's pace, while the world storms forward.

Putlitz's reply throws light on the relationship between Alexis and his much younger friend. Putlitz understands that Alexis has been forced to devote himself to political journalism at this time, but laments the loss that literature has suffered as a result:

You have gone completely over to politics, you write, because of an inner need. I was almost pained to hear that, for what we are losing in the creative writer cannot for me (with my firm belief in the privilege of poetry) now be compensated for in the politician.

Alexis's disappointment at the turn of events in Germany, after the refusal of Frederick William IV to accept the crown offered him by the Frankfurt Parliament on April 3, 1849, finds poignant expression in his political articles.¹⁴ The king of Prussia had refused to accept the imperial crown because it had been offered him by the people, but his actual reply was phrased in vague terms to the effect that he could not accept responsibility before the 'King of Kings' for making a decision without being assured of the consent of the imperial princes. After this reply from Frederick William which was tantamount to a refusal, an article reflecting Alexis's indignation appeared from his pen in the next issue of the *Vossische Zeitung*.

With reference to the wording of the king's answer, Alexis writes that the King of Kings can destroy temporal princes and the most sacred oil of anointment cannot protect them from His wrath. The spirit of the King of Kings is to be found, not in those rulers who jealously preserve old customs, but in those who recognize the needs of their age and provide the necessary protection against excesses, bringing order to chaos. These rulers bring salvation to the whole people, and this is a far more significant achievement than the preservation of ancestral rights. Later, when the majority of the second chamber of the Prussian Assembly wished to recognize the validity of the new imperial constitution as the expression of public

opinion and the Prime Minister, Graf von Brandenburg, opposed the proposal in the king's name with his famous 'Niemals!' ('Never!'), Alexis voices the protest of many a patriot and warns the king that this attitude represents a betrayal, not of the hopes of revolutionaries but of those who would have helped to stem the tide of rebellion against authority.

After this outburst of anger and disillusionment, published on April 24, further articles are couched in less outspoken language, but the tone is one of resigned bitterness rather than acquiescence. The words in his last contribution to the series, published on December 30, 'dass nur eiserner Wille und kräftige Tat Deutschland aus seiner Fäulnis und Erstarrung reissen könne' ('that only an iron will and a mighty deed can tear Germany from her corruption and torpor'), foreshadow a later acceptance of Bismarck and his policy. Soon afterwards Alexis withdrew from political journalism, upon which he had embarked, partly because of financial difficulties, partly also from a sense of duty. He must have known that he was unsuited by nature for topical journalism, not only because he could not produce copy promptly and easily enough, but also because he was too easily provoked and vexed by the attacks or innuendoes of rival journalists.

REFERENCES

¹ Note to Deinhardstein dated June 1832 in Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna. Original: 'Kennst du das Land wo ---. Zur Erinnerung für einen Kenner, der da weiß, was zwischen, mit und unter den Citronen blüht, von Einem, der den Sankt Peter noch nicht bei Laternenschein gesehen.'

² *Monatsblätter des Touristenklubs für die Mark Brandenburg*, XXI, 1912, pp. 57-60.

³ *Morgenblatt*, 1847, nos. 276-9 and 295-302 ('Der Splügen' and 'Der Comer See') and 1849, nos. 188-247 ('Bilder aus Rom'). These have sometimes been followed for the account of Alexis's travels given below.

⁴ F. Bodenstedt, *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben*, 2. Aufl., Berlin, 1890, II, pp. 111-12.

Er war eine tief angelegte, grübelnde Natur, voll frischer Empfänglichkeit und feiner Beobachtungsgabe, jedoch mehr geneigt, seine Eindrücke und Betrachtungen durch die Feder als durch das gesprochene Wort wiederzugeben. So geschah es, daß er sich in größerer Gesellschaft meist auffallend still verhielt und auch in kleinerem Kreise lieber andere als sich selbst sprechen hörte, wobei sein Schweigen keineswegs immer als Zustimmung zu nehmen war. Wer ihn genauer kannte, vermochte ihm leicht an den Augen abzusehen, was in ihm vorging; sein Gesicht war der treue Spiegel seines Innern und in seinem Innern war kein Falsch. Allein der gedrungene, kräftige, mehr in die Breite als in die Höhe gehende Körperbau stand in auffallendem Gegensatz zu dem milden Geiste, der ihn bewohnte: im Rücken sah er aus, als ob er mit seinen breiten Schultern und dem mächtigen Kopfe die Welt aus den Angeln heben könnte, während in dem durchgeistigten Gesichte der friedfertigste Charakter zum Ausdruck kam, der sänftigend auf die ganze Erscheinung wirkte.

Original of the quotation below:

Sie ließ die Dinge rein auf sich wirken, ohne durch hergebrachte Urtheile darüber verwirrt zu werden, während er so gründliche Vorstudien gemacht und sich dabei dergestalt in fremde Anschauungen hineingelebt hatte, daß er schwerer zu unbefangener Betrachtung gelangte.

⁵ Gustav zu Putlitz, 'Was sich der Wald erzählt', *Deutsche Rundschau*, XL, 1884, pp. 200-19, and *Gustav zu Putlitz*. Ein Lebensbild aus Briefen zusammengestellt und ergänzt von Elizabeth zu Putlitz, Berlin, 1894, I, pp. 68 f.

⁶ *Gustav zu Putlitz*, *ibid.*, letter dated March 14. Original: H. [Häring] ist eine durch und durch ehrliche deutsche Natur, aufrichtig und gemütsvoll, für die jetzige politische Bewegung vielleicht etwas zu sehr Optimist, für die Kunst vielleicht etwas zu viel Romantiker, für dieses italienische Leben etwas zu deutsch. Er kann sich nie zu der Heiterkeit erheben, die zum Verständnis nötig ist, die man haben muß, um manches zu entschuldigen. . . . Die Frau, eine Engländerin, . . . ist schön und liebenswürdig, und bis auf kaum merkbaren Accent ganz deutsch geworden. Sie ist klug; mit richtigem, natürlichem Urteil, mit gebildetem, empfänglichem Sinn, ist sie mir in den Galerien eine sehr angenehme Begleiterin gewesen.

⁷ Julius von Unger, *Aus meinem Feld- und Reiseleben*. Erinnerungen eines norddeutschen Offiziers, Leipzig, 1878, pp. 1–44. Original of quotation: ' . . . der kleine behäbige, einem biedern deutschen Gutsbesitzer gleichende ältere Mann, mit der Brille und dem sehr bedenklich an eine Perrücke erinnernden Haupthaar, der so köstliche Anekdoten zu erzählen wußte. . . . '

⁸ Levin Schücking, *Lebenserinnerungen*, Breslau, 1886, II, p. 341. Original of quotation: Doktor Häring war eine schärfer analysierende Natur [than Gustav zu Putlitz], schweigsam und nicht der Überzeugung, daß einem berühmten Manne die Sprache nur gegeben sei, um zu verhindern, daß auch ein anderer zu Worte komme. Er war ein mittelgroßer, festgebauter Mann; bei seinen Arbeiten hielt er sich an den Spruch: 'Erst wäg's, dann wag's', es war merkwürdig, wie langsam er an der Wandbekleidung seiner Romanbauten zimmerte; ob der Plan und die Gebäukaufriechung ihm rascher von der Hand gingen, weiß ich nicht. Jedenfalls hat er mit seiner Arbeitsmethode jene vorzüglichen historischen Romane geschaffen, die sich über Elbe und Oder hinaus so langsam ihr Terrain zu erobern hatten.

⁹ *Gustav zu Putlitz*, *ibid.*, pp. 68 ff.

¹⁰ Letter in Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin.

¹¹ Varnhagen von Ense, *Tagebücher*, V (1862), p. 123: In Betreff der deutschen Sache zeigt er gute Ansichten, wagt aber doch mit seinem Schiffchen sich nicht auf's hohe Meer der Freiheit, sondern macht nur Küstenauffahrten, — er glaubt mehr Sicherheit da, wo mehr Gefahr ist. Ich verteidigte zuletzt heftig gegen ihn den demokratischen Klub wider die Anmaßungen des Magistrats, der die Bürgerwehr einfangen wollte.

¹² See Tschirsch, *op. cit.*, 'W.A. als vaterländischer Dichter und Patriot', pp. 215–17, and articles republished in *Willibald Alexis Bund Festgabe*, 1935, pp. 25 f.

¹³ For extracts from letters quoted below see *Gustav zu Putlitz*, *op. cit.*, pp. 74 f. Originals in order of quotation: Die Wolken sind wieder schwer und trübe, besonders aus Frankfurt, demnächst aus Wien. Wissen Sie aus Ihrer Zeitung von der sterbenden Germania als Gretchen, die im Kerker liegt, Faust ist Heinrich von Gager, Mephisto Schmerling und Gretchen ruft, 'Heinrich, mir graut's vor dir'.

Mein armer Schwager Oberförster Scheffler ist abgebrannt. Ruchlose Hände warfen eine Brandrakete ins Strohdach der Scheune, alle Vorräte, Wirtschaftsgebäude, zum Teil das Vieh verbrannt und nichts verschert. Er selbst in Lebensgefahr. Und welche Rotte Bösewichter, aus Rache, Gewinnsucht, Kommunismus, nachdem sie durch Entschlossenheit und Drohung zurückgeschreckt sind. 'Schnaps, Schnaps, Bruder Scheffler, wir sind alle gleich', räsionierten sie. Die Gebäude muß der Staat aufbauen lassen, das schafft Arbeit, bravo, also ein Narr, der den Brand hinderte.

Seit die deutsche Frage zu einem heiligen Ernst geworden, bin ich drauf und dran, als roter Republikaner verschrien zu werden, und in meiner eignen Zeitung stehe ich mit meinem Vetter Rellstab wie ein feindlicher Bruder ihm gegenüber. . . . Seltsame Kombination, daß ich, der bis dahin als Dichter in der Idee des Preußentums, der Hohenzollernschen Mission mit allen Kräften, aus vollster Überzeugung gelebt, mich durchdrungen fühle, gegen dieses spezifische Preußentum mit allem, was mir zu Kraft blieb zu kämpfen. Die Politik nimmt den Gang eines Schneckenhauses, während die Welt im Sturmtritt forteil.

Sie sind ganz Politiker geworden, wie Sie schreiben, aus innerstem Bedürfnis. Mich hat das fast schmerzlich berührt, denn was wir an dem Dichter verlieren, kann mir (so fest steht mir die Berechtigung der Poesie) auch jetzt der Politiker nicht ersetzen.

¹⁴ *Vossische Zeitung*, 1849, nos. 81, 82, 87, 95, etc. See *Alexis-Fontane-Gesellschaft. Jahrbuch* ed. Ewert and Haaselsberg, Berlin, 1937, pp. 25–30 (reprint of articles), and Tschirsch, 'W.A. als vaterländischer Dichter und Patriot', *op. cit.*, pp. 215–17.

INFIRMITY AND OLD AGE

ALEXIS was now faced with the task of rebuilding his career and fortune in advanced middle age and in a political climate which was distasteful to him. It is clear that he no longer felt at home in Berlin which was growing rapidly into a jumble of ill-connected and somewhat commonplace urban districts, sprawling and unhealthy until the outbreak of cholera in 1866 resulted in drastic sanitary improvements.¹ Even more important to our author was his lack of sympathetic literary friends in the capital; he lost contact with younger writers and returned to his historical studies for his next, rather unwieldy novel, *Ruhe ist die erste Bürgerpflicht* (1852). The treatment in this story of a period of decadence in the recent past culminating in the defeat at Jena (1806) reflects the mood of many Prussian patriots during the years of reaction in which it was composed—disappointment at political developments and humiliation at the Treaty of Olmütz (1850) in which Prussia suffered a diplomatic defeat at the hands of Austria. In his diary for 1850² Varnhagen makes two brief references to Alexis's articles in the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, one of which, he claims, might easily have offended the Prussian king because it gives 'a well-written, energetic review of Prussia's miserable condition'. Alexis had difficulties with the Prussian authorities and with other journalists at this time. His correspondence with the editor of the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, Gustav Kolb, shows that late in 1852³ the latter was in trouble about one of Alexis's unsigned articles, while Alexis himself was the plaintiff in legal action for libel against the editor of the *Neue Preussische Zeitung* in 1850 and 1851.⁴ A letter to Gutzkow dated January 12, 1851 shows Alexis's unhappiness concerning the political situation, which he compares unfavourably with the years of Haugwitz's rule, observing that Haugwitz seems a great personality beside some contemporary politicians.⁵ These were gloomy years for the author; his hopes for Prussia had not materialized, his income had shrunk, his popularity, never great, was now waning, years of unremitting toil were soon to take their toll of his health.

One of the most interesting reviews of these years was devoted to Georg Büchner's work in an edition published by Gutzkow in

1850.⁶ Alexis claims that nobody can read Gutzkow's introductory biography without emotion and nobody can put the book aside without feeling the sincerest sympathy for the youthful Büchner who devoted his whole life to an idea, even if the idea was not acceptable to the reader. Alexis makes it clear that he disagrees with Büchner's political views, he sees him as an ultra-democrat, even a socialist, but also as a man of the most lucid intellect, far from being a Utopian.

Der Zauberer Virgilius, sub-titled 'a fairy-tale of the present' and published in 1851, is a memorial to the happy months spent in Italy. The whole action is woven into a fantastic and romantic journey, of which the author dreams. Virgil acts as his guide in viewing the sights around Naples, just as he had once conducted Dante through Hell. There are references to political questions of the day and also to the literary scene, but the prevailing tone is one of optimism. Virgil, it is implied, has acted as guide to many a literary figure, including Hans Christian Andersen, Countess Hahn, Fanny Lewald, Adolf Stahr; the English, recognizable from the red Murray guide-books they carry, have also availed themselves of his services.

By 1851 Alexis had sold his house in Heringsdorf and was seeking a holiday from the political atmosphere, bustle and noise of Berlin. Quite by chance he selected Arnstadt in Thuringia and published his impressions in a series of articles in *Morgenblatt* for September 1851.⁷ When he arrived in Arnstadt from Berlin, he was delighted to discover that the capital's newspapers were available there and that, although tourists visited the town from Berlin and Leipzig, it was not overrun. Alexis's account of Arnstadt reflects his particular interest in historical and cultural aspects of the locality. He describes a visit to the aged but influential Princess of Schwarzburg-Sonderhausen who maintains her preoccupation with history by reading biographies of Freiherr vom Stein and General Yorck. Alexis accepts the type of industrial development which must necessarily encroach upon history and antiquity, but condemns 'radical, head-strong industry which has recently not been content with the view that the distant past and its rights are obsolete, but, in a philistine concern for triviality, desires also to wipe out all memory of what has been in order to begin history with itself'. Alexis found the town picturesque and hoped that the plan to develop it as a spa would not spoil its naturalness. Thinking that Arnstadt would be an ideal place for summer holidays and for the rest and recuperation from busy Berlin which Laetitia and he increasingly needed, he tried to buy a

piece of ground in the Lindenallee on the banks of the River Gera. The town authorities were delighted to sell him the land at half price, for they thought of him as a tourist attraction! Shortly afterwards Emil Palleske (1823-80) was urging Gottfried Keller to settle in the area, where he could find company in a circle of writers, including Alexis.⁸ On his land Alexis built Haus Lindeneck, in which he lived from 1853, although the house was only completed in 1854. In 1937 the house, which had been altered and added to since Alexis's time, was being used as a hotel and *Kurhaus*.⁹ Alexis's study upstairs had a view of some old linden trees, while the house itself, a photograph of which appeared in *Die Gartenlaube* in 1876 (p. 539), was shaded by chestnuts. At first Alexis and Laetitia intended only to spend the summer months at Arnstadt; they felt a little isolated, particularly Laetitia, who missed the society of Berlin. They found, however, that the country air suited them better, especially when they began to suffer from ill-health.

Apart from commuting between Berlin and Arnstadt, the Haerings did not often venture far afield in the 1850s. Alexis's last trip to his friends in the south, including visits to Justinus Kerner and Gustav Rümelin, seems to have been made in the autumn of 1850.¹⁰

Late in 1852 Heinrich Pröhle appears to have asked Alexis for an article for a periodical. In his reply dated January 2, 1853, Alexis excused himself from the task on the grounds that he was already at work on the sequel to *Ruhe ist die erste Bürgerpflicht*, which appeared with the title *Isegrimm* in 1854;¹¹ he refers to the effort which creative composition now cost him:

... The youthful effervescent power which spurts from the pen is now also a thing of the past, one has to hold one's powers together for shaping the work, in this field shavings fall off no longer.

In other words, he no longer has an excess of material which requires pruning. His interest in criminal cases induced him to be a witness at the execution of the murderer Schall in February 1853; he was much disturbed by what he saw, as he declares in a letter to Gustav Kolb.¹²

From 1854 to 1857 Alexis edited the *Volkskalender* in which he published a number of monographs and short essays written by himself as tributes to great patriots like Joachim Nettelbeck, Oberpräsident Vincke and Friedrich Perthes or his literary master Ludwig Tieck. Fontane has quoted the view of a friend of Alexis in his later

years, Dr. Vollert, who succeeded him as editor of *Der neue Pitaval*, that Alexis was far from being an orthodox Christian and did not flaunt his religious beliefs in public; in his later years he grew more concerned with religious problems, often took Holy Communion or read the Bible.¹³ Alexis's impression of Vincke's outlook¹⁴ quite possibly reflects his own:

He [Vincke] certainly never inclined towards the mysticism confessed by his otherwise excellent teacher and friend Jung-Stilling and he studied Kant's philosophy eagerly, as we have seen, but he always returned to the view that revealed religion was the simplest and surest support for a man in his personal life and in the state, and that the Bible was the best finger-post to a life pleasing to God. Yet he did not, as one says, smear God on his daily bread, he was a Christian in his works rather than in his words. . . .

Alexis's concern at the growth of materialism and the decline in moral standards is expressed in a passage from a review which appeared in *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung* for 1855:¹⁵

. . . No constitutions, maxims, formulae, whether they be biblical or liberal and promoting human happiness, will save a dying nation and lead it to freedom, if it has not already known a rebirth of morality and fair-mindedness. A people blasé about morals has, in spite of all desire for freedom and no matter how high the flames of freedom flicker, fallen victim to servility and is ripe for the knout.

In the same volume¹⁶ Eduard Schmidt-Weissenfels gives an account of literary conditions in Berlin at the time. There is, he declares, no literary school in the capital and no general idea behind the writings of Berlin poets and novelists. Some try to be original, others follow the accepted principles of composition in both form and technique. Alexis is included in the second category and given first place in order of merit among Berlin writers:

The famous novelist [Alexis], by preserving and purifying all the strict forms and rules of the classical school from both the national and the historical point of view simultaneously has filled a gap in literary administration in a way which must be gratefully recognized. Yet at the same time, this man appears to be isolated and, though imitated, copied and recognized as an authority and celebrity by the whole reading public, he is nevertheless without pupils, without disciples into whom he could instil his art.

Alexis was to forfeit most of his stature with the reading public when he left Berlin for good and sank into the comparative obscurity and ill-health of his final years in Arnstadt. Schmidt-Weissenfels remarks that Alexis had founded the *Volkskalender* in the hope that this type of publication might help young writers to introduce their

work to the public, an interest which remained close to Alexis's heart.

Towards the end of 1854 Alexis and his wife, who had no children of their own, had taken into their home the twelve-year-old daughter of Laetitia's sister-in-law, who lived in Budapest and found it difficult to support her family. Alexis and his wife never regretted their decision and the young girl, Letty by name, brought them much happiness. Letty Perceval later became Frau von Petersdorff and was present when the 'Willibald-Alexis-Bund' was founded in Berlin in 1925. She died a few years later.

In the autumn of 1854 the Haerings had made a trip to Gera where they met a Dr. Viletti. One letter to Viletti from the author has been preserved.¹⁷ Alexis writes that the summer before he had bought a she-ass for his wife so that she could make excursions (Laetitia was not a good walker nor was she fond of walking). Unfortunately it soon became obvious that the she-ass was carrying a foal and could not be used for riding. Alexis offers the animal to the doctor in the hope that he will find its milk valuable for his patients.

The winter of 1855-6 brought all kinds of sickness and depression to both Alexis and his wife, as letters to Gutzkow and Putlitz show.¹⁸ Alexis had become a friend of Gutzkow's since they had reviewed one another's novels in 1851-2.¹⁹ In December 1855 he sent Gutzkow a new and shortened edition of *Cabanis* and complained of the times:²⁰

The atmosphere is too discouraging, and for three years I have groaned in toil at the Prussian historical novel (which will probably be the last) in order not to let the silver views of memory be changed immediately into leaden grey by the acid in the air of the present. Why all that, I ask myself, if a *Soll und Haben* [*Debit and Credit* by Gustav Freytag], however full of talent, can delight the Germans and—satisfy them! One is driven to egoism with lashes from the knout.

Early in 1856 Alexis suffered a stroke, from which he never fully recovered. His letter to Gutzkow of April 13, 1856 indicates that he is gradually recovering, but he declares that he will not return to the subject of Prussian humiliation again in his writings, for he is tired of it (and obviously discouraged):²¹

Not that I regret what I have done, not that my love for the genesis of the old Hohenzollerns is extinguished, not that I have given up hope that Hohenzollerns could be born in the future (or a somewhat modified breed) but I, and we, shall not live to see it, and I feel sick of the effort too: 25 years, living fairly well admittedly, but always like an importunate alien—what's the use!

In a further passage he writes that the final Prussian novel in his series, *Dorothe* (1856), has ruined his health ('hat mich umgebracht') and announces bitterly an intention to write in the future only what the public wants to read, for he and his contemporaries have forgotten the moral 'mundus vult decipi'. At the end of October 1856 the Haerings took a holiday in 'Saxon Switzerland'. Putlitz wrote on December 3 from Retzin,²² mentioning that he had been studying the character of Frederick III, successor to the Great Elector whom Alexis had described in *Dorothe*; he declared that Alexis's work had led him to his material and described how he and his wife had read *Dorothe* together for the second time 'with almost greater pleasure' ('mit fast erhöhter Freude'). Thus even Alexis's weakest historical novel seems to have had its champions among his literary friends.

Two of Alexis's letters to his old friend Karl von Holtei have been preserved²³ (dated March 24 and December 29). Both show the effects on Alexis of the stroke from which he suffered; the train of thought sometimes becomes incoherent or the handwriting illegible in the letters of these later years. Of particular interest is the article by Robert Gisecke (1827-90), hitherto overlooked by Alexis researchers, perhaps because it was published anonymously.²⁴ This is accompanied by a full-face portrait of the author in which he sports a beard and side-whiskers with no sign of greyness and looks well fed and contented. Gisecke describes how he visited Alexis in Arnstadt in order to assure himself of his recovery from illness:

In a bright large room on the first floor of his house with broad windows and a balcony looking out over the Ilmenau valley, Herr Haering came towards me with the appearance of perfect health. The man, who is well on in his fifties . . . could pass for someone of forty; his hair is far from being completely grey, his complexion fresh and blooming. He recognized me after our first few words, although he had only met me briefly some years before, and led me into his study. I was moved when he, who showed no sign of illness, began the conversation by confessing that he was still not quite recovered and that he often found speaking difficult.

Gisecke went on to describe how Alexis found difficulty with everyday words, which he could not remember, although he had suddenly recalled whole monologues of *Ajax* in the original Greek—a language which he had not studied for forty years! They talked of Alexis's work, which Gisecke also surveys intelligently in his article. When Gisecke praised the comfort and elegance of Alexis's home in Arnstadt, Alexis replied that he had built the house in order

to spend his last years there. He had it constructed according to his own specifications, but he now had second thoughts and would have arranged it differently—just as he now wished he had arranged his life differently and become a farmer. Gisecke concludes with the observation that Alexis can be pardoned for his dissatisfaction, since he has received no recognition from either the critics or the state.²⁵

By the end of 1857 Alexis and his wife had decided to leave Berlin for good and settle in Arnstadt. Putlitz refers to this resolve in a letter to Alexis dated January 3, 1858.²⁶ The decision, he declares, will mark the end of an epoch in the life of Alexis and his friends, for Alexis, by virtue of his achievements in the field of the Prussian historical novel, belongs to Berlin, the centre of social life in the *Mark*. He then speaks of his friend's great creative talent in terms which must have cheered the sick novelist during years of infirmity and decline:

To produce and feel oneself productive is a wonderful divine gift and I know nothing more beautiful than to care for in secret the seeds which grow in one's heart, which one's own imagination unfolds, until, often years later, they come to light. You have been accorded this divine gift in richest measure, for I scarcely know of a poet in whom the poetic gift of divination is so clearly seen as in you. You have lived centuries ago and seen in your creative mind men, circumstances and nature of the past, as we see the present. Few have this second sight, and none like you for nature.

In these years Alexis wrote very little, a few reviews or cases for the series *Der neue Pitaval*. He had taken to snuff in middle age and he wrote in January 1859 to his friend Gustav Kolb in Augsburg, asking him to send to him 5 lbs of a favourite brand not obtainable in Berlin or Arnstadt.²⁷ In October of this year he and his wife paid what was probably their last visit to Putlitz's home at Retzin. Elizabeth zu Putlitz recounts that only Laetitia's letters later kept them in touch with the Haerings. Putlitz wrote to Geibel in November that Alexis was almost incapable of carrying on a coherent conversation and now belonged to the kind of person whom one tolerates because one is fond of him.²⁸ Alexis and Laetitia stayed a few days at Retzin and then a short time in Berlin. They found the capital too noisy and Laetitia was not able to get the medical treatment which she sought. After staying with relatives at Lehnin, they hurried home to the death-bed of Alexis's aged stepsister Florentine, who died at Arnstadt on December 1, 1859.

The year 1859 was remarkable in particular for two features in the story of Alexis's life. The first was the negotiations with Otto Janke

(one letter dated November 8 has been preserved²⁹) which led up to the publication by this firm of Alexis's collected 'Novels of the Fatherland' from 1861 onwards. Alexis had hoped that Barthol, the publisher of *Ruhe ist die erste Bürgerpflicht*, *Isegrimm* and *Dorothe*, would bring out the collected works and signed a contract with him to that end, but the firm had gone bankrupt and Alexis, who was also financially implicated, had sought advice from Heinrich Brockhaus³⁰ who, however, had not been able to help. Alexis's letter to Janke indicates that the author was still able to manage his own business affairs adequately.

The other feature of interest for 1859 was the publication of Alexis's essay on literary developments during his lifetime to which reference has already been made.³¹ His impressions of the Romantic poet Achim von Arnim deserve to be quoted at length, particularly as Tieck's judgment must have prevented him from regarding Arnim or his work in any idealized way:

I only got to know him in his later years. He had anything but the eccentric appearance which one always expected of the Romantic. His physiognomy, bearing and speech bore the stamp of gentle humanity, so that there was nothing provoking, conceited or peculiar about him. He did not talk about his works but he liked to listen to and read himself works that others had published and which had impressed him. Each of us can judge [Arnim's] work for himself. Rather confused in conception, but with a fresh warmth and humour, it was nevertheless inferior to that of his brother-in-law Clemens Brentano with his freer creativeness. It has already been noted elsewhere that the Romantics, even if they were not hostile to one another, were generally very critical of one another. Tieck said, when Arnim's talents were mentioned and the fact that, if conditions had allowed, the poet might have become something more, 'Yes, a good nobleman of the Mark'.

In March 1860 a last memory of the happy months in Italy was published in the story *Ja in Neapel* (*Yes in Naples*); this was all that was completed of a novel planned to depict contemporary Berlin as its main theme. Alexis notes in his preface that the idyllic atmosphere of his story is not to be taken as typical of the novel of which it was to form a part, a novel on which he had been working spasmodically since 1856. The story is concerned with two lovers who are both wealthy but appear poor to one another—in this situation Alexis may have borrowed features from Georg Büchner's comedy *Leonce und Lena* (written 1836).

The same year Alexis suffered a second stroke which resulted in a partial loss of memory and left him a permanent invalid, paralysed on one side of his body. It was a strange trick of fate that he should

have suffered from the same disease as Frederick William IV at about the same time. By June his health was so poor that Laetitia had to write his letters for him. Later he was able to sign his name once more, but he realized that he could not continue with his work as editor of *Der neue Pitaval*—now his only lasting link with the Brockhaus firm. After some discussion as to where a new editor with the necessary experience and knowledge of both law and literature might be found,³² Brockhaus accepted Alexis's suggestion that 'Appellationsgerichtsrat' Vollert of Arnstadt, a close friend of the author in his later years, should take over the active editorship in 1861, although Alexis's name should still be used for a time.

In September Putlitz wrote to both Marianne Immermann and Geibel of his visit to Alexis. He mentioned to Geibel that Laetitia had asked him to pay the visit and continued:

I certainly found the saddest possible situation. Another stroke has almost paralysed him completely, and his inability to find the right words to express his thoughts has increased to complete incomprehensibility. God preserve us from such an affliction!³³

The last recorded letter of the Brockhaus firm to Alexis personally is dated December 1861; two later letters are addressed to his widow, one to express sympathy on the occasion of his death. In his last ten or eleven years of life the author was compelled by his sickness to live quietly in retirement and was nursed devotedly by Laetitia.³⁴ In a letter to Holtei dated January 31, 1862, only parts of which are legible or coherent,³⁵ he mentions that he has only written three letters, including this one, in the last three years! Here are some of the more comprehensible remarks:

My dear old friend, I can neither write a letter nor anything similar which an intelligent person will accept as such, but you must be content and patient with it. . . . Your kind letter has given us much pleasure. [You write that] you are physically well, but only physically! May you be able to control the monster of depression. You have a dear daughter, plenty of children and a son who is like a father to you. How much I would like to fly away with you, but that is scarcely possible. At the most this summer and to the summer-towns Gotha and Weimar.

I am paralysed in the arm and the foot, and now can scarcely walk . . . only ride in my wheel-chair in fine weather. Writing is now difficult for me, you can see yourself what I can do with my hand. But even more difficult is it for me to read the printed word. I must read through something in a newspaper at least twice in order to understand, but then I understand almost all of it. Yes, dear friend, I am at last learning everything, but it helps little in contact with friends. At the same time I look so physically fit to others that they think I don't need more health. . . . For a fortnight I have had an aching foot which prevents me going out in the garden and suggests I have gout. . . .

You are satisfied with life. I wish you luck with all my heart. You can even write so that the public are pleased. Good luck. I was not so very content, but now I am content. It seems that the critics now show an attitude which should please me; and as far as a livelihood is concerned, there is probably enough there to last out till the death of myself and my dear wife. For we shall probably not live very long. I am hoping, it is true, that one day my strength will grow again and then my power to write would increase and soar joyfully. . . .

Alexis's letter continues with a tribute to his wife who cares for him; later he expresses delight at the blooms in their garden and hopes that Holtei will come to see them and their garden. He ends with the melancholy reflection that so few of his friends remain in Berlin, only Raumer, now eighty years old, keeps his health and his convictions.

In 1867 Alexis was awarded a modest decoration, the 'Hohenzollernsche Hausorden', by the Prussian king. He is reported to have shown great enthusiasm on hearing news of the Prussian victories in 1870.³⁶ His death took place on December 16, 1871. A service was held around his coffin and 'Propst' Drenckmann, a friend of his later years, delivered the funeral oration. His writings had already become dissociated from the forgotten cripple of Arnstadt, despite the fact that obituaries were published in several newspapers or periodicals, two of them written by Gustav Freytag and Karl Gutzkow respectively.³⁷ Laetitia, whose health had been poor in Alexis's last years, died on May 9, 1874 and his business associate of so many years, Heinrich Brockhaus, on November 15, 1874.

Alexis's affection for Putlitz was reflected in his legacy to the younger writer of some oil-paintings which Putlitz piously kept in memory of his friend. Although Alexis seems to have left some of his papers to Putlitz, neither the author nor his correspondents made any serious attempt to safeguard letters or manuscripts, and what remains is probably a small proportion of what once existed. It is clear that Alexis believed that he had said what he wished to say in his historical novels whose reception by the public had proved a disappointment to him. Material which reflects the character and habits of Alexis himself is scanty, though an attempt has been made to present the author's personality from as many points of view as possible. A wartime child, a boy new to his Berlin environment watched over anxiously by his mother, a hardened young soldier and unusually mature student, an energetic and gifted young lawyer, a free-lance writer and critic with a flare for contemporary interests,

a patriotic novelist with a devotion to Prussia and the Hohenzollern dynasty, a speculator in various financial concerns, a criminologist with the widest possible interest in legal cases, a political journalist, an ageing, infirm and forgotten literary figure, Alexis was all of these, and not necessarily at different times. A number of aphorisms found among his literary remains show that he was keenly aware of transience in life and continuing change in conditions:³⁸

Whatever appertains to the stream of Time is to-day borne along by it on the foam of its waves, so that it bespatters the clouds but to-morrow sinks into the abyss. The tragic vein we admire to-day we smile at to-morrow. Thus the tragedy of yesterday always provides material for to-morrow's comedy.

In another aphorism Alexis recognizes that, with the sudden improvement in communications which he had witnessed during his lifetime, some great event has a much more rapid effect in far-off lands than had previously been the case. In others he urges the need for action which may not gain universal approval, denies that authority can have complete integrity and suggests that we should be glad to achieve something, even if it is not our original objective:

If the Creator before decreeing the creation had asked the opinion of clever people, they would have said that the whole idea of the world was a chimera.

Authority seldom misses the opportunity to punish those who deserve it and to draw into its toils those it hates or finds inconvenient.

The man who digs for treasure and is pleased when he finds worms is a fool; but the man who digs for precious metal in sun-scorched mountains and is not pleased when he finds a fresh spring which will still the thirst, such a man is not human. (Cf. Goethe's *Faust I*, ll. 602-4.)

Perhaps most personal of all the aphorisms published is this protest against forms and fashions:

I am assailed by a complete and violent disgust at the idea of relying on forms, ever since I have seen for myself that under its aegis every infamous act succeeds, that the most noble impulse and the simplest truth are disowned unless they assume this drapery.

The following suggests the existence of a guiding Providence, but also the belief that Man's sense of values concerning his achievements is defective:

We strive in many ways. Much succeeds and much seems failure, but the world guides gently and surely all our endeavour. What we thought least of is eventually named after us, while what seems the best has been merely lost effort.

Almost all descriptions of Alexis by his contemporaries are distinguished by a sympathy and sometimes by a warmth of feeling which

would suggest that he made many friends or possessed many well-wishers, despite his reserved character and frankness as a critic. His only lasting adversary was Ludwig Börne, whom he had attacked for what he regarded as a betrayal of Germany.

It is to Holtei's reminiscences that we must turn for the most amusing anecdote concerning Alexis:³⁹

Haering often declared that he could not stand roast mutton and that he was always ill if he was so rash as to partake of it. My wife said that this was mere imagination. In order to convince him of this, a specially prepared leg of mutton was ennobled by the cook's artistry and placed before him at a pleasant repast. He enjoyed it very much as a leg of venison. . . . A week later we told him the truth. Then it occurred to him that he had actually felt unwell after partaking of this pleasure forbidden to him . . . we made dreadful fun of him.

The most complete characterization of Alexis is contained in Fontane's essay already quoted. Fontane⁴⁰ reproduces accounts of Alexis by Dr. Vollert and also by an anonymous person, possibly Hermann Kletke who was acquainted with both writers. Kletke (1813-86), a Silesian, came to Berlin in 1837 and was introduced into the *Mittwochsgesellschaft*; he began working for the *Vossische Zeitung* in 1838, was an editor from 1849 and chief editor from 1867 to 1880. Kletke knew Rellstab and Fontane well and must certainly have met Alexis, who chose to review *Deutsche Geschichte in Liedern* (*German History in Song*), collected by Kletke, in 1846.⁴¹ In Fontane's essay Alexis's love of nature, which endeared long walks to him and which is reflected in his masterly descriptions of landscape, his passion for stories of crime and his preference for furniture in good taste are all confirmed. We are told, however, that despite his sense of beauty, his own needs were simple and easily satisfied. His diligence and modesty, the strange mixture of faith, mockery and doubt in his nature which finds expression in irony, all these are likewise stressed. Vollert remarks that Alexis was not easily understood, he was 'a mixture of a sly fellow and a powerful, rugged man, but with a mind genuinely childlike'⁴²; he was never sentimental, we are told, yet possessed depth of feeling, idealism and a healthy sense of humour. On the whole this is an accurate summing up of some of the more important traits in his character. Yet perhaps his most attractive quality as compared with most of his contemporaries was his tolerance of an opinion or outlook which differed widely from his own. His innate honesty induced him to engage in literary and political argument with his cousin Ludwig Rellstab, but he never allowed this to affect their personal friendship. Moreover,

Alexis was one of the few writers of the second quarter of the nineteenth century who did not descend to personalities in literary criticism. The streak of irony in his nature enabled him to see both sides of every question⁴³ and he was fortunate in being able to applaud the success of a rival without envy. These qualities commend him to the reader and find their expression in his main creative work.

Rightly or wrongly, Alexis is remembered to-day almost exclusively as a historical novelist.⁴⁴ His most talented successors in the genre were Gustav Freytag (1816-95) and Theodor Fontane (1819-98). In an unfavourable review of *Der Zauberer Virgilius* (1851) Freytag seized the opportunity to criticize Alexis's historical novels and to deplore what he regarded as the contrasts in his work: Alexis, he insinuates, recognizes the need for a new and realistic approach to historical presentation (such as Freytag thought himself to be championing!) but is frequently guilty of the false, self-satisfied and destructive outlook of the Romantics. The concluding remark, that the Germans will never forget their debt to him as an innovator in his novels, is somewhat patronizing. The final impression of his review of *Isegrimm* (1854) is of disapproval.⁴⁵

Theodor Fontane was Alexis's natural successor, and it is hoped to examine at a later date the precise nature of his indebtedness to the older writer. Like Alexis he began as a writer of ballads and travel books before proceeding to the novel. Fontane, while still in his teens, once met the author of *Cabanis* in Heringsdorf. He later wrote a study of Alexis, first published in 1873 and later revised, the last known version appearing in his literary remains. His early historical novel *Vor dem Sturm* (1878) has much in common with his favourite Alexis novel *Isegrimm*. *Grete Minde* (1880) was probably inspired linguistically by Alexis's 'chronicle' novels. *Schach von Wutenow* (1883) contains striking parallels with some episodes in *Ruhe ist die erste Bürgerpflicht* and covers almost the same historical period, but Fontane is already turning here towards his real forte, the novels of contemporary Berlin. That his interest in the historical novel persisted is clear from the unfinished work *Die Likedeeler*.⁴⁶

Karl Bleibtreu (1859-1928) proved himself a stout champion of Alexis in his critical work *Revolution der Literatur* (1886). Alexis, he maintains, is a much more talented artist 'in the higher sense' than Freytag and the only writer of the age comparable with Scott who is in Bleibtreu's eyes a genius. Alexis's talent, he considers, has been shamefully neglected and overlooked, he excels Scott in his sense of

history and his grasp of historical detail, and he is probably the only novelist in Europe to have written great historical novels staged in the nineteenth century (*Ruhe ist die erste Bürgerpflicht* and *Isegrimm*).

To commemorate the centenary of Alexis's birth in 1898 a subscription for a memorial was raised and the project was sponsored by more than eighty dignitaries, among them writers like Bleibtreu, Dahn, Ebers, Fontane, Gerhart Hauptmann, Heinrich Hart, Heyse, Detlev von Liliencron, Raabe, Rodenberg, Rosegger, Heinrich Seidel, Spielhagen and Ernst von Wildenbruch, a representative list. At this point his reputation was at its zenith.

From the 1920s up to shortly before the outbreak of the last war there was a revival of interest in Alexis's work, led by the Willibald-Alexis-Bund (later the Alexis-Fontane-Gesellschaft), founded in Berlin. The war destroyed much of the effects of this revival, besides Prussia as a political entity and the Alexis material collected by members of the literary society. Since the war Alker, Koch and Majut have examined Alexis's works within the framework of nineteenth-century literature and assured him of a place among the writers of minor classics. The most recent publishers of his works, Rütten und Loening, Potsdam, have continued to re-issue the historical novels during the 1950s.⁴⁷ It is impossible to assess accurately his popularity among literary circles in Germany or abroad. Only one of the Prussian historical novels was translated into English, *Der Roland von Berlin*;⁴⁸ this was favourably reviewed by several critics, including Thackeray.⁴⁹ Keller mentions Alexis by name in his correspondence. Storm wrote to his wife that he read *Die Hosen des Herrn von Bredow* to his children.⁵⁰ The novels, sometimes in abridged form, were read in many schools and libraries until the end of the last war, by which time about sixty editions and reprints of *Die Hosen des Herrn von Bredow* and over twenty of *Cabanis*, *Der Werwolf* and *Der Roland von Berlin* had appeared.⁵¹

It is probable that more people know the amusing title of *Die Hosen des Herrn von Bredow* than have read the book itself,⁵² and the same may be said of *Ruhe ist die erste Bürgerpflicht*, which is occasionally heard as a saying among older people. Ernst Barlach thought more highly of Alexis's works and ordered some for reading during a period of convalescence.⁵³

However, Alexis has never been a popular historical novelist and probably never will be one, not only because his work is always associated with 'Prussianism' which is regarded with some disfavour and now belongs to the past, but also because he is a bad

story-teller in the sense that his works are too lengthy and unwieldy to attract the modern reader, who has not the patience to seek out the finer passages of description, portrayal or dialogue in his novels or to re-read his work carefully and revise a first unfavourable impression.

REFERENCES

- ¹ See J. Kastan, *Berlin wie es war*, Berlin [1919], especially pp. 18 ff.
- ² Varnhagen von Ense, *Tagebücher*, VII, 1865, pp. 229, 307.
- ³ Letter to Gustav Kolb dated November 5, 1852. Original in Wrocław (Breslau) University Library.
- ⁴ 'Manual-Acten des Rechtsanwalts Goldschmidt in Sachen des Dr George Wilhelm Heinrich Haering gegen den Redakteur der 'Neuen Preußischen Zeitung' Obergerichts-assessor Wagner (Beleidigungsprozeß)' and letters relating to it in Brandenburgische Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek, Potsdam. The case was conducted in Berlin 1850-51 and is probably the one mentioned in Alexis's letter to O. v. Holtzendorff dated August 21, 1851 from Arnstadt in which he thanks this neighbour for his assistance with the case (original with J. A. Stargardt, Marburg). In the Putlitz literary remains, now lost or destroyed, there were documents relating to Alexis's case against a bookseller Pauke, but the date is not known.
- ⁵ Houben, *Gutzkow-Funde*, op. cit., pp. 502 f., esp. 504.
- ⁶ Georg Büchner, *Nachgelassene Schriften*, Frankfurt-on-Main, 1850, reviewed by Alexis in *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, 1851, pp. 959-61.
- ⁷ *Morgenblatt*, 1851, nos. 210-15, pp. 848 ff. See also W. Alexis, *Arnstadt, ein Bild aus Thüringen*, Ferd. Meinhardt, Arnstadt, 1851, 11 pp. Original of quotation below (*Morgenblatt*, *ibid.*, p. 852): 'jene radikale, eigensinnige Industrie, welche jüngst sich nicht damit genügen ließ, daß die Vorzeit und ihre Rechte abgelebt sind, sondern in nüchternem Kleinigkeitssinn auch ihre Erinnerungen austilgen wollte, um die Geschichte und ihr Anno 1 mit sich selbst anzufangen'.
- ⁸ Emil Ermatinger, *Gottfried Kellers Leben*, 4. und 5. Aufl., Stuttgart/Berlin, 1920, I, p. 225.
- ⁹ See K. Müller, 'W. Alexis und Arnstadt', *Thüringer Monatsblätter*, Jg. 45, 1937, pp. 87-8.
- ¹⁰ Letter to Hermann Hauff dated November 25, 1850 in Schiller-Nationalmuseum, Marbach.
- ¹¹ Felix Hasselberg (ed.), 'Neues von W. Alexis', *Tägliche Rundschau*, December 28, 1921, no. 298, pp. 985-6. . . Die übermüthig sprudelnde Jugendkraft, die die Feder ausspritzt, ist nun auch vorüber, man muß seine Kräfte zusammen halten im Gestalten, die Hobelspähne fallen auf diesem Gebiete nicht mehr ab.
- ¹² Letter to Gustav Kolb dated February 11, 1853 in Wrocław (Breslau) University Library.
- ¹³ Fontane, op. cit., pp. 180-81.
- ¹⁴ See W. Alexis, *Oberpräsident Vincke*, Berlin, 1856, p. 10. Freilich neigte er sich nicht zu dem Mysticismus, den sein sonst vortrefflicher Lehrer und Freund Jung Stilling bekannte, und studirte, wie wir sahen, mit Eifer die Kantsche Philosophie aber er kam immer wieder darauf zurück, daß die offenbarte Religion die einfachste und sicherste Stütze des Menschen im Leben und im Staate sei, und die Bibel der beste Wegweiser zu einem Gott wohlgefälligen Leben. Nur schmierte er nicht, wie man zu sagen pflegt, den lieben Gott auf's tägliche Brot, war ein Christ in seinen Werken mehr als in seinen Worten. . .
- ¹⁵ p. 698: . . . Keine Verfassungen, keine Maximen, keine Formeln, weder biblische noch Menschheitsbeglückende liberale, retten ein untergehendes Volk und führen es zur Freiheit, wenn es nicht zuvor in sich in Sittlichkeit und Gerechtigkeit wiedergeboren ist. Ein sittlich blasirtes Volk ist, trotz aller noch so hoch aufflackernden Freiheitsgelüste, dem Servilismus verfallen und für die Knute reif.
- ¹⁶ 1855, p. 279: Der berühmte Romanschreiber hat, indem er volkstümlich und geschichtlich zugleich alle strengen Formen und Regeln der klassischen Schule bewahrte und sichtete, eine Lücke in der literarischen Administration in einer Weise ausgefüllt, die dankbar anerkannt werden muß. Aber man sieht auch diesen Mann isolirt und wenn auch nachgeahmt, kopiert und von der ganzen Lesewelt als Autorität und Zelebrität anerkannt, dennoch ohne Schüler, ohne Jünger, denen er seine Kunst einhauchen könnte.
- ¹⁷ Letter to Dr. Viletti, Elgersburg, dated September 29, 1854, in Theaternmuseum, Munich.
- ¹⁸ H. H. Houben, *Gutzkow-Funde*, Berlin, 1901, p. 507, and Elizabeth zu Putlitz, *Gustav zu Putlitz*, Berlin, 1894, I, letters dated 1855-6.

¹⁹ Gutzkow reviewed *Ruhe ist die erste Bürgerpflicht* in *Beilage zur Augsburger Allgemeinen Zeitung*, May 1852, pp. 2217 ff. (see F. Hasselberg, 'K. Gutzkow an W. Alexis', *Dresdener Neuste Nachrichten* no. 292, December 15, 1928). Alexis reviewed *Die Ritter vom Geiste* in *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, 1851, pp. 513-17, 685-9, 1048-51 and 1852, pp. 73-9; and *Aus der Knabenzeit* in *Vossische Zeitung*, 1852, June 8.

²⁰ *Gutzkow-Funde*, op. cit., p. 507. Der Luftdruck ist doch zu entmutigend, und ich stöhne seit drei Jahren an dem historisch preußischen Roman (der wahrscheinlich der letzte sein wird), um die Silberblicke der Erinnerung nicht sofort durch die Luftsäure der Gegenwart in bleigrau verwandeln zu lassen. Wozu alles das, frage ich mich, wenn ein (obschon noch so talentvolles) 'Soll und Haben' die Deutschen entzückt und — befriedigt! Man wird mit Knutenhieben zum Egoismus gezwungen.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 509-10. Nicht daß es mich bereut, was ich getan, nicht daß meine Liebe für die Genesis der alten Hohenzollern verlöscht ist, nicht daß ich verzagte, daß in künftiger Zeit wieder einmal Hohenzollern geboren werden könnten — (oder etwas modifizierte Kreuzung) — aber ich, wir erleben es nicht, und ich fühle mich denn doch nun auch der Meüz übersättigt: 25 Jahr, zwar leidlich lebend, aber immer noch wie ein unscheuer Fremdling — wozu das!

²² *Gustav zu Putlitz*, op. cit., pp. 219-20.

²³ Holtei, *Simmelsammelsurium*, II. pp. 19-20 and *Schlesisches Jahrbuch*, 1913, Berlin, pp. 121-3.

²⁴ *Illustrierte Zeitung*, Leipzig, XXVIII, June 20, 1857, 'W. Alexis', pp. 483-4. Original of passage quoted below: In einem hellen großen Salon seines Hauses in erster Etage, mit breiten Fenstern und einem Balkon nach dem Ilmenauer Tal hinaus, trat Herr Häring . . . mir entgegen mit dem Anschein vollkommener Gesundheit. Der Mann, der ein hoher Fünfziger ist, . . . konnte für einen Vierziger gelten; sein Haar ist noch lange nicht gänzlich gebleicht, seine Gesichtsfarbe frisch und blühend. Nach der ersten Anrede hatte er mich, den er vor Jahren nur flüchtig gesehen, erkannt und führte mich in sein Studierzimmer. Es war für mich erschütternd, wie er, dem ich nicht eine Spur von Leiden ansah, das Gespräch mit dem Geständnis eröffnete, daß er noch immer nicht ganz hergestellt sei und wie schwer das Sprechen ihm oft falle.

²⁵ Alexis wrote to Gisecke on August 2, 1857 to thank him for his article (letter in Theatermuseum, Munich). He regards himself as a writer in retirement who, because of illness, cannot work as formerly. He writes at length of his illness, complains of the summer heat and expresses appreciation of the portrait, although, he declares, his friends do not like it. He writes, 'ich denke an die vanitas vanitatum täglich ernsthafter'.

²⁶ *Gustav zu Putlitz*, op. cit., p. 224. Original of passage quoted below: Produzieren und sich produktiv fühlen ist eine wunderbare Gottesgabe, und ich weiß nichts schöneres, als die Keime, die im eigenen Herzen wachsen, die die eigene Phantasie entfaltet, im Geheimen zu pflegen, bis sie, nach Jahren oft, ans Licht treten. Diese Gottesgabe ist Ihnen im reichsten Maße geworden, denn ich weiß kaum einen Dichter, bei dem mir die poetische Divinationsgabe so deutlich entgegenrät, als bei Ihnen. Sie lebten Jahrhunderte zurück und sahen im schaffenden Geiste Menschen. Verhältnisse und Natur der Vergangenheit, wie wir die Gegenwart sehen, Diesen Blick, dieses *second sight* haben Wenige, und für die Natur keiner wie Sie.

²⁷ Unpublished letter to Gustav Kolb in Wrocław (Breslau) University Library.

²⁸ *Gustav zu Putlitz*, p. 252.

²⁹ Unpublished letter in Amerika-Gedenkbibliothek, Berlin.

³⁰ See letters from Brockhaus to Alexis dated August 9 and 19, 1859 in Brockhaus archives (unpublished).

³¹ 'Das alte und neue Berlin', see chapter I, note 20. Original of quotation below: Ich lerne ihn erst in seinen späteren Jahren kennen. Er hatte nichts weniger als den Anstrich des Exzentrischen, den man immer im Romantiker erwartete. Der Charakter milder Humanität lag als Stempel auf Physiognomie, Haltung und Sprache; also nichts Herausforderndes, Vorlautes, Besonderes. Er sprach nicht von seinen Dichtungen, er hörte und las gern, was von andern erschien und Eindruck machte. . . . Achims Dichtungen stehen jedem zu eigenem Urteil zu Gebot. Etwas bunt in der Konzeption, aber mit frischer Wärme und Humor, stand er dem freieren Schöpfungsfluß seines Schwagers Clemens Brentano . . . nach. Schon anderwärts ist bemerkt worden, daß die Romantiker, wenn sie auch nicht feindlich einander gegenüberstanden, doch meistens sehr scharf über einander urteilten. Tieck, wenn man Arnims Begabung, erwähnte, und daß der Dichter unter Umständen mehr hätte werden können, äußerte: 'Ja, ein guter kurmärkischer Edelmann.'

³² See unpublished Brockhaus correspondence with Alexis for 1860. One suggestion for the post of editor was Hubert Temme (1798–1881) who was well known in his day for his crime stories (e.g. *Berliner Polizei- und Kriminalgeschichten*, 1858 ff.) and was inspired by *Der neue Pitaval*.

³³ *Gustav zu Putlitz*, p. 279. Ich habe nun freilich die Zustände so traurig als möglich gefunden. Ein erneuter Schlaganfall hat ihn fast ganz gelähmt, und die Unfähigkeit, für die Begriffe die rechten Worte zu finden, bis zur völligen Unverständlichkeit gesteigert. Gott behüte einen vor solchem Leiden!

³⁴ Karl von Holtei (*Simmelsammelsurium*, Breslau, 1872, II, pp. 29), praises Lactitia's devotion and sacrifice in this respect.

³⁵ In Theaternuseum, Munich. Original of extracts given below: Mein teurer alter Freund, wader kann ich einen Brief schreiben, noch etwas was ähnliches aussieht, was ein verständiger darunter versteht, aber du mußt schon zufrieden und geduldig sein. . . . Dein herzlicher Brief hat uns herzlich und Freude gemacht. Dir geht es körperlich jetzt wohl aber bloß körperlich! Mögest du das Ungetüm zu bändigen vermögen. Du hast eine liebe Tochter, Kinder in Fülle und einen Sohn, der dein Vater ist. Wie gern setzte ich mich zu Dir zu fliegen. Aber das ist kaum möglich. Höchstens in diesem Sommer und in die Sommerstädte Gotha und Weimar. Ich bin gelähmt im Arm und im Fuß, kann jetzt einmal kaum zur Hälfte dazu laufen . . . nur bei schönem Wetter in meinem Wagen reiten. Schreiben läßt schwer gehen, sieh selbst, wie mit der Hand sich tun läßt. Aber noch schwieriger handelt sich — eine gedruckte — Hand. Ich muß zwei Mal wenigstens eine Zeitungsschrift durchlesen nur sie zu verstehen — aber dann verstehe ich so ziemlich alles. Ja lieber Freund, ich lerne endlich alles, aber es hilft . . . den Freunden wenig. Dabei sehe ich den Anderen körperlich so wohl aus, daß sie meinen ich brauche gar keine Gesundheit mehr. . . . Seit 14 Tagen habe ich einen drückenden Fuß, der mich . . . in den Garten verbietet und sehr an den Podagra mahnt. . . . Du bist mit dem Leben zufrieden. Ich wünsche Dir von Herzen Glück. Du kannst sogar schreiben, daß es das Publikum freut. Glück auf! Ich war nicht so sehr zufrieden, indessen bin ich zufrieden. Äußerlich zeigen die Kritiker jetzt, was mich freuen konnte; und was das Leben angeht, da ist so viel da, daß es bis zum Tode für mich und meine liebe Frau dauert. Denn allzulang leben wir wohl nicht. Ich hoffe zwar, einst werde mir die Kraft wieder wachsen, und dann würde meine Federkraft sich freudig in die Luft wachsen. . . . Because of some incoherence in the original, it has been necessary to translate somewhat freely.

³⁶ Tschirsch, 'W.A. als vaterländischer Dichter und Patriot', op. cit., p. 220.

³⁷ Freytag, 'Ein Weihnachtsgruß für W. Alexis', *Im neuen Reich*, 1871, no 51 f., II, pp. 969–71. Gutzkow, 'Zum Gedächtnis Wilhelm Haerings', *Beilage zur Augsburger Allgemeinen Zeitung*, 1872, no. 20, pp. 297 f.

³⁸ 'Aphorismen von W. Alexis', communicated by Felix Hasselberg, *Die Zeit*, May 21, 1922, Lit. Beil. 'Zeitstimmen', no. 111. Original text of those quoted below: Was der Strömung der Zeit angehört, wird heute von ihr auf dem Wogenschaum getragen, daß es die Wolken anspritzt, um morgen im Abgrund zu versinken. Der Kothurn, den wir heute bewundern, morgen belächeln wir ihn. So liefert die Tragödie von gestern immer Stoff zur Komödie von heut.

Wenn der Schöpfer, ehe er das Werde sprach, die klugen Leute befragt hätte, würden sie die ganze Welt für eine Chimäre erklärt haben.

Die Macht versäumt selten die Gelegenheit, wenn sie die strafen kann, welche es verdienen, auch die in ihre Bande hineinzuziehen, welche sie haßt und die ihr unbequem sind.

Ein Tor ist, wer nach Schätzen gräbt und froh ist, wenn er Regenwürmer findet; wer aber, wenn er im sonnenverbrannten Gebirg nach edlen Metallen gräbt, eine frische Quelle findet, die dem Schmachttenden den Durst stillt, und nicht darüber froh wäre, der wäre kein Mensch.

Ich bin von einem souveränen, schauernden Ekel gegen den Verlaß auf Formen überfallen, seitdem ich handgreiflich belehrt bin, daß unter ihrem Schutze jede Schandtat leicht gelingt, und der beste Trieb, die einfachste Wahrheit verstoßen werden, wenn sie es vernachlässigen, mit jenem Behang sich zu kleiden.

Wir streben vieles. Mancherlei gelingt,
Und manches scheint mißlungen; doch die Welt
Lenkt unser Wirken alles, leis und sicher.
Was wir am wenigsten gedacht, erhält
Einst unsern Namen, wenn das scheinbar Beste
Verlorne Müß' war.

³⁹ Holtei, *Simmelsammelsurium*, op. cit., pp. 29–30. Haering versicherte oftmals, er vertrage keinen Schöpsenbraten und erkrankte jedesmal, wenn er welchen unvorsichtig genossen. Meine Frau behauptete, das sei Einbildung. Um ihn zu überführen, ward eine besonders ausgestattete Keule kochkünstlerisch veredelt und ihm bei frohem Male vorgesetzt. Er ließ sich's als Rehkeule . . . bestens schmecken. Acht Tage nachher sagten wir ihm die Wahrheit. Nun fiel ihm ein, er hätte sich wirklich unwohl gefühlt auf jenen verbotenen Genuß . . . wurde schrecklich ausgelacht.

⁴⁰ Fontane, *Aus dem Nachlaß*, op. cit., pp. 180 f.

⁴¹ For *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, 1846. See Brockhaus correspondence with Alexis, letter dated October 20, 1846.

⁴² Fontane, op. cit., p. 180: ' . . . ein Gemisch von Schelm und kraftvollem, knorrigen Mann, dabei ein echt kindlicher Sinn'.

⁴³ Fontane, *ibid.*, p. 183, probably quoting Kletke.

⁴⁴ See bibliography, Thomas, 'W.A.'s literary reputation. . . .'

⁴⁵ For both reviews by Freytag, see bibliography.

⁴⁶ See Hermann Fricke, *Theodor Fontanes letzter Romanentwurf 'Die Likedeeler'*, Rathenow, 1938, esp. pp. 61 and 140.

⁴⁷ *Ruhe ist die erste Bürgerpflicht* (1953); *Die Hosen des Herrn von Bredow* (1954); *Isegrim* (1955); *Der Werwolf* (1956), all edited by I. M. Lange.

⁴⁸ *The Burgmaster of Berlin*, translated from the German by W.A.G., Saunders and Otley, London, 1843.

⁴⁹ W. M. Thackeray, *Works*, XIII, London, 1886, pp. 55–6, reprinted from *Fraser's Magazine*, February 1844. Other reviews in *Court Journal*, XV (1843), p. 69, and *Athenaeum*, XIII (1843), p. 959.

⁵⁰ Gottfried Keller, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, ed. Emil Ermatinger, Stuttgart/Berlin, 1919, II, p. 355. Theodor Storm, *Briefe an seine Frau*, ed. Gertrud Storm, Berlin/Brunswick/Hamburg, n.d. Letter dated June 28, 1862, p. 132.

⁵¹ See *Kaysers Bücher-Lexicon* (1750–1910), *Deutsches Bücherverzeichnis* (1911–35) and *Halbjahrsverzeichnis* (1936–43 and from 1945).

⁵² The following 'funny story' is still to be heard occasionally: 'Ein Gehilfe in einem Buchantiquariat mußte einen Katalog zusammenstellen. Als der Katalog fertig war, las man in der Abteilung 'theologische Schriften' folgenden Titel: Bredow: *Die Hosen des Herrn*.'

⁵³ Ernst Barlach. *Aus seinen Briefen*, ed. Friedrich Dross, Munich, 1953. Letter to Friedrich Düsel dated July 4, 1888.

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A more recent but rarer edition is *Vaterländische Romane*, ed. and introduced by Ludwig Lorenz and Adolf Bartels, 10 vols., Hesse und Becker, Leipzig (1912-25). Lorenz provided the biography (63 pp.) in vol. 1 and introduced *Der falsche Woldemar*, *Der Roland von Berlin*, *Die Hosen des Herrn von Bredow* and *Der Werwolf*, Bartels *Dorothe*, *Cabanis*, *Ruhe ist die erste Bürgerpflicht* and *Isegrimm*.

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W = Willibald

A = Alexis.

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