

Classic Poetry Series

**Heinrich Federer**  
**- poems -**

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# Heinrich Federer(6 October 1866 - 29 April 1928)

Heinrich Federer was a Swiss writer and catholic priest.

## <b>Biography</b>

He was a student at the Benedictine school at Sarnen. After studying in Roman Catholic seminaries at Eichstätt, Freiburg, and St Gall, he was ordained priest in 1893. After seven years of pastoral work, asthma compelled his retirement in 1900. He turned to journalism (remaining in holy orders), and edited the Züricher Nachrichten. A few years later he began to write fiction, which was widely read in the second and third decades of the 20th c.

His novels and stories are sharply divided by their subject-matter into two categories, realistic novels of Swiss and especially Alpine life of his own day, and historical stories set in Italy. The inspiration of the latter is commonly attributed to his reading of C. F. Meyer. Both groups of works share deep psychological insight into a wide range of characters.

Federer began with an Alpine novel set in Appenzell, Berge und Menschen, and Lachweiler Geschichten (both 1911), and followed these with another Alpine novel, Pilatus (1912). The first of the Italian stories is Sisto e Sesto (1913); others are Das letzte Stündlein des Papstes (1914), Umbrische Geschichten (1921), Wander- und Wundergeschichten aus dem Süden (1924), and Unter südlichen Sonnen und Menschen (1926). The Swiss stories include Jungfer Therese (1913), the novel Das Mätteliseppi (1916), and Regina Lob (1925). For the story Papst und Kaiser im Dorf (1924) Federer received the Gottfried Keller prize. He wrote two autobiographical works, Am Fenster (1927) and Aus jungen Tagen (1928), and a volume of poems, Ich lösche das Licht (1930), appeared posthumously. A drama, Thomas Becket, was performed at Sarnen in 1898, but not published. Within somewhat restricted conventional forms Federer wrote with power and conviction.

# Deutsch Ist Ein Urwald

Französisch ist ein edler Park, Italienisch ein großer, heller, bunter Wald. Aber Deutsch ist beinahe wie ein Urwald, so dicht und geheimnisvoll, so ohne großen Durchgang und doch tausendpfadig. Im Park kann man sich nicht verirren, in der italienischen Waldhelle nicht so leicht und gefährlich; aber im Deutschen kann einer in vier, fünf Minuten im Dickicht verschwinden. Darum, weil der Weg so schwierig scheint, suchen die meisten möglichst gradlinig hindurchzumarschieren, was eigentlich gegen die Natur dieser Sprache ist. Sie will gewiß eine Hauptrichtung, aber ladet durch hundert Pfade und Pfädchen nach links und rechts bald aus ihr heraus, bald wieder in sie hinein.

Heinrich Federer