

Classic Poetry Series

Johann Gabriel Seidl
- poems -

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Johann Gabriel Seidl(21 June 1804 – 18 July 1875)

Poet, author of the present Austrian national hymn, b. at Vienna, 21 June 1804; d. there, 17 July, 1875. The family of Seidl was of Swiss origin, Johann's grandparents having settled in Austria. The poet's father is described as an able lawyer, and his mother as a good housewife. After passing through the gymnasium with the greatest success, their only son attended the university at the age of fifteen to devote the then usual two years to philosophy. On the completion of this period, he applied himself to the study of jurisprudence, but the early death of his father compelled him to support himself and his mother by acting as private tutor. Consequently he exchanged jurisprudence for pedagogy, passed his qualifying examination in this faculty in 1827, and two years later was appointed to the state gymnasium in Cilli. Before moving thither he married Therese Schlesinger, who bore him two children. The laudatory necrologies which a false report of his death evoked both at home and abroad, attracted the attention of the authorities, so that after eleven happy years at Cilli he had to return again to Vienna as custodian of the imperial cabinet of medals and antiques. A little later he was appointed censor of books, an office which he filled until 1848. He was then elected corresponding, and in 1851 regular, member of the Imperial Academy of Sciences. After his version of the Haschka national anthem had been declared the authentic text, honors were heaped on the poet: the knight's cross of the Order of Franz Joseph, medal for art and science, the post of imperial treasurer (1856), and appointment as ministerial counsel (1866). In 1871 he received a pension and was simultaneously invested with the Order of the Iron Crown of the third class; on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, he received the title and character of an aulic councillor. The town of Cilli named him an honorary freeman. Shortly afterwards his health began to fail. His death was characterized by the same piety which had marked his life. In 1892 the municipal council of Vienna dedicated to him an honorary grave in the Zentralfriedhof, and at the centenary of his birth a bust and memorial tablet were unveiled at his former residence in Cilli. Seidl was a very fruitful poet and author, and the enumeration of his works occupies twenty-five pages in Godeke's "Grundriss". Only a few, however, have an interest for modern readers. Of the numerous collections of poems the "Bifolien" are still of interest, but his novels, sixty in number, are long forgotten. For drama he had no talent, however much he strove after the palm of dramatic poetry. His best compositions are his dialectic poems, "Flinserln", of which many have become real folksongs of Austria. His name is immortally linked with his adaptation of the Austrian national anthem. As a scholar Seidl was tirelessly active. Still prized are his collections of legends, and also his contribution to the "Stizungsberichten der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften", to scientific, historical, and geographical journals and to the

"Zeitschrift für die österreichischen Gymnasien", founded in 1850.

Der Wanderer An Den Mond Franz Schubert

Johann Gabriel Seidl

King Erich's Faith

In the high church of Upsala the great altar stands in sight,□
With candles blazing round it, and torches sparkling bright;□
On the steps of that great altar, with devoutly lifted hand,□
See, arrayed in shining vestments, Erich, King of Sweden, stand!□

"Great God! who seeks thy shelter forever safe shall dwell!□
Who makes the Lord his ally hath wisely done and well!"□
He cries, the rest responding, till choir and dome resound,—□
"When God the Lord is with us, where shall a foe be found?"□

And while they thus stand praying, right, left, the choir are thrust,□
And in a courier rushes, all breathless, grimed with dust:□ 10
"God's mercy now! Skalater! He comes! O King! the Danes,□
Seven hundred strong, already are pouring on the plains!"□

The monarch hears him calmly the tale of terror tell:□
"Who makes the Lord his ally," he cries, "hath chosen well!"□
In bursts a second courier, all panting with dismay:□ 15
"The Dane is at the gate now, and the last bolt gives way!"□

But still the king keeps chanting with brave and lofty swell:□
"Who makes the Lord his ally hath wisely done and well!"□
Still a third courier enters,—but, ere his news he told,□
His head a Danish sabre swift from his body rolled.□ 20

Then rang a wild alarum,—a dismal, deafening cry;□
Skalater comes with frenzy demoniac in his eye;□
Skalater comes, and with him his seven hundred men;□
With altar, king, and country it seemed all over then.□

But, all at once, Sir Erich raised the gold cross in air,□
And stretched it toward the heavens, and waved it glittering there;□
And of the seven gashes of Jesus every wound□
Hundred-fold glory flashes, the foeman to confound.□

Seven hundred men fall prostrate with lowly bended brow,□
Mute in the dust, adoring the mighty Conqueror now;□
And Erich and his people the song of triumph swell:□
"Who makes the Lord his refuge shall aye securely dwell!"

Johann Gabriel Seidl

The Wanderer's Address To The Moon

I on earth, you in heaven,
both of us moving sturdily on.
I sad and cheerless, you gentle and clear,
what can the difference really be?
I go as a stranger from one land to another,
so homeless and unknown;
uphill, downhill, in and out of forests,
but, ah, nowhere is my home.
But you travel up and down,
from your eastern cradle, to western grave,
sail in and out of every land,
and yet you are home wherever you are.
The heavens, endlessly outstretched,
are your beloved native land.
Happy is he, who wherever he goes,
stands on his native soil.

Johann Gabriel Seidl