

August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben, *Founding Songs* (1872)

Abstract

The nineteenth-century German poet August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben (1798–1874) is best known for his *Deutschlandlied* of 1841, which became the German national anthem after the melody of Joseph Haydn's (1732–1809) *Kaiserquartett* was added to it. In this two-part excerpt from his *Founding Songs* [*Gründerlieder*], Fallersleben mocks the well-to-do middle-class citizens who benefited from the economic boom of the “Founding Years” [*Gründerjahre*] following German unification in 1871. The last line of each poem alludes to the overheated stock-market speculation that led to the bank crashes of 1872/73 and what used to be called the “Great Depression” of 1873–1896.

Source

I. Founder's Morning Song

Vanished has the long, dark night,
The bourse already shines in new splendor,
To spritely life has awakened all that,
Which lay asleep in heavy dreams,
And so the day begins its course.

I heave a sigh of relief before the worry and toil,
And see around me in the springtime green,
That flowers are unfolding their blossoms,
So new courage blossoms in my heart,
My stocks are doing quite well right now.

II. Founder's Midday Song

I am a founder, cheerful and alive,
Today, already, I'll sit down at the table,
As I ought not to labor any more,
Except to count the interest I've accrued.

Thank God, I know how to help myself,
Nothing shall be my care, neither the town nor state:
Loyally devoted to the founder's life am I,
And thus procure for myself a decent life.

What do I care about *service* to the public?
The main thing here is *profit* for myself:
And as a just reward I'll make for myself alone,
A bourgeois crown out of all my shares.

Source: August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben, *Founding Songs* (1872); reprinted in Wolfgang Piereth, ed., *Das 19. Jahrhundert. Ein Lesebuch zur deutschen Geschichte 1815–1918*, 2nd ed. Munich: C. H. Beck, 1997, p. 93.

Translation: Erwin Fink

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