

Ferdinand Freiligrath, “Hurrah, Germania!” (July 25, 1870)

Abstract

The liberal and democratic views of author Ferdinand Freiligrath (1810–1876) prompted censors to ban his poems in the 1840s. Freiligrath emigrated to London in 1846. Two years later, he returned to Germany, where he met Karl Marx (1818–1883) and became co-editor of Marx’s *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. In 1851, after a period of imprisonment, Freiligrath went into exile in London; he remained there until 1868. Freiligrath’s revolutionary background did not prevent him from embracing a kind of poetry that was emotional, Protestant, and transparently political. The following poem was written just days after France declared war on Prussia in July 1870. The Rhine is an important symbol in the poem, as it was for many nationalists who claimed that France must never hold the river’s left bank: the Rhine was always to be a “German Rhine.” The poem reflects the success of Bismarck’s strategy to portray Germany as a peace-loving nation: Germania, personified as a woman and mother, is unjustly attacked by a belligerent enemy but resolves in righteous anger to protect her children, who, in turn, unite in her support.

Source

Hurrah, Germania!

Hurrah! thou lady proud and fair,
Hurrah! Germania mine!
What fire is in thine eye as there,
Thou bendest o’er the Rhine!
How in July’s full blaze dost thou,
Flash forth thy sword, and go,
With heart elate and knitted brow,
To strike the invader low!
Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!
Hurrah! Germania!

No thought hadst thou, so calm and light,
Of war or battle plain,
But on thy broad fields, waving bright,
Didst mow the golden grain,
With clashing sickles, wreaths of corn,
Thy sheaves didst garner in,
When, hark! across the Rhine War’s horn,
Breaks through the merry din!
Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!
Hurrah! Germania!

Down sickle then and wreath of wheat,
Amidst the corn were cast,
And, starting fiercely to thy feet,
Thy heart beat loud and fast;
Then with a shout I heard thee call,

“Well, since you will, you may!
Up, up, my children, one and all,
On to the Rhine! Away!”
Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!
Hurrah! Germania!

From port to port the summons flew,
Rang o’er our German wave,
The Oder on her harness drew,
The Elbe girt on her glaive;
Neckar and Weser swell the tide,
Main flashes to the sun,
Old feuds, old hates are dash’d aside,
All German men are one!
Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!
Hurrah! Germania!

Swabian and Prussian, hand in hand,
North, South, one host, one vow!
“What is the German’s Fatherland?”
Who asks that question now?
One soul, one arm, one close-knit frame,
One will are we to-day;
Hurrah, Germania! thou proud dame,
Oh, glorious time, hurrah!
Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!
Hurrah! Germania!

Germania now, let come what may,
Will stand unshook through all;
This is our country’s festal day;
Now woe betide thee, Gaul!
Woe worth the hour a robber thrust,
Thy sword into thy hand!
A curse upon him that we must,
Unsheathe our German brand!
Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!
Hurrah! Germania!

For home and hearth, for wife and child,
For all loved things that we,
Are bound to keep all undefiled,
From foreign ruffianry!
For German right, for German speech,
For German household ways,
For German homesteads, all and each,
Strike home through battle’s blaze!
Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!
Hurrah! Germania!

Up, Germans, up, with God! The die,
Clicks loud, — we wait the throw!

Oh, who may think without a sigh,
What blood is doom'd to flow?
Yet, look thou up, with fearless heart!
Thou must, thou shalt prevail!
Great, glorious, free as ne'er thou wert,
All hail, Germania, hail!
Hurrah! Victoria!
Hurrah! Germania!

Source of English translation: Theodore S. Hamerow, ed., *The Age of Bismarck: Documents and Interpretations*. New York: Harper & Row, 1973, pp. 96–97.

Source of original German text: Ferdinand Freiligrath, “Hurra, Germania!” (July 25, 1870), in *Freiligraths Werke*, edited by Paul Zaunert, revised and expanded edition, 2 vols. Leipzig and Vienna: Bibliographisches Institut, 1912, vol. 2, pp. 146–48.

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