

The works of Heinrich Heine (Volume 6)

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This historic book may have numerous typos, missing text or index. Purchasers can download a free scanned copy of the original book (without typos) from the publisher. 1892. Not illustrated. Excerpt: ... CHAPTER VI. When after long years the Emperor Otto III. went to the tomb where the remains of Charles (Charlemagne) were placed, he entered the vault with two bishops and Count Lanmel (who wrote the description of these details). The corpse was not recumbent, as is usual, but sat upright, like a living man, on a chair. On the head was a crown of gold; he held the sceptre in his hands, on which were gloves, but his nails had grown out through the leather. The vault was very strongly built of marble and lime. It was necessary to break an opening, and those who entered perceived a strong odour. All at once sank on their knees and manifested their respect for the dead. The Emperor Otto placed on the corpse a white robe, cut its nails, and otherwise repaired the ravages of time. The limbs were in nowise decayed, save that there was something gone from the tip of the nose. Otto had it replaced with gold. Then he took a tooth from the mouth of Charlemagne, had the vault walled up, and went his way. In the night Charlemagne appeared to him in a dream and announced to him that he, Otto, would not attain to old age and would leave no heirs. This is what is related in the Deutsche Sagen (" German Traditions "); but it is not the only instance of the kind. Even so your King Francis I. opened the grave of the mighty Roland, to see for himself if the hero was of such giant stature as poets have sung. This was just before the battle of Pavia. Sebastian of Portugal entered the vaults of his ancestors and gazed on the dead monarchs before he went to Africa.1 Strange and terrible curiosity which impels men so often to look into the graves of the past! It occurs at remarkable periods, at the end of an epoch or just before a catastrophe. In this our time we have seen a similar thin...

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