

FAMOUS GERMAN AUTHOR EXPOSED

Karl May, "Polyglot Traveler" and Idol of Youth, Ex-Convict and Fraud.

London, April 30.—According to Berlin dispatches to London papers this week, Germany has lost one of its most cherished illusions.

Every youth in Germany knew the name of Karl May, traveler, author and man of adventure. He has written a whole library describing his explorations in remote corners of the earth and many story books based on his strange experience in those far lands. His villa at Dresden is crowded with curiosities which, he said, he had brought back from his wanderings. It has often happened that princely personages dropped in to inspect the private museum of the veteran voyager. It was understood that May spoke languages that no one else in the immediate neighborhood knew anything about. Chinese and Choc-taw were but the beginning of the linguistic attainments attributed to him.

Such was Karl May of yesterday. But today has changed all that. For he was so indiscreet as to appear as prosecutor in a libel action.

Some one, it appears, had referred to him as a born criminal. Unfortunately for him, the person in question undertook to prove that accusation, and his lawyer told a story about Karl May very nearly as strange as those which that prolific writer is in the habit of telling about himself, only of rather a different order.

To begin with, he offered to prove that the traveler May, who now is 68 years of age, had never been outside of Germany till 1890, when his woe of travel had long been getting a little musty. He admitted that May had experienced adventures, and those of a very remarkable kind, in 1869. He said that the plaintiff, who already had sentences of six year imprisonment and four years' penal servitude behind him, relapsed into a career of crime, and was soon being wanted on a warrant. To escape arrest he took refuge in the depths of the Silesian forests, where he found a fellow outlaw in a deserter, Louis Kruegel, who had left his regiment with several hundred thalers out of the regimental cashbox.

The pair swore eternal friendship, and agreed with other kindred spirits to found a band of robbers. A cave cutained with moss on the Waldenburg domain was headquarters of May and his merry men. From this centre they practiced innumerable villainies. Their specialty was attacks on peasant women returning from market, robbing them of the product of their sales.

Their raids established such a state of terror that attendance at markets began to fall off. The towns of Hohenstein and Ernstthal accordingly entreated the government to send a force of troops to clear the neighborhood of the bandits. This was done, and with the assistance of local fire brigades and clubs, the soldiers proceeded to beat the woods.

The two ringleaders of the robber band saved themselves by an ingenious and daring trick. Among the plunder piled up in their cave they had found the uniform of a Saxon warden. This May put on, and having tied Kruegel's hands behind his back, he marched him unmolested through the encompassing ring.

On another occasion they were sitting in an inn when a couple of gendarmes who were searching for them rode up. As the gendarmes entered the building May and Kruegel dropped from a window and leaping on to the horses, galloped off.

These were the most interesting, though not the only, incidents of questionable nature which the defendant proposed to prove out of life of the famous Karl May.

May denied these tales, but was obliged to admit his acquaintance with the inside of prison walls, though under what circumstances he declined to state.

To make a long story short, the court, without calling on the defendant to prove his assertions, dismissed the case, and Germany thus lost another of its illusions.