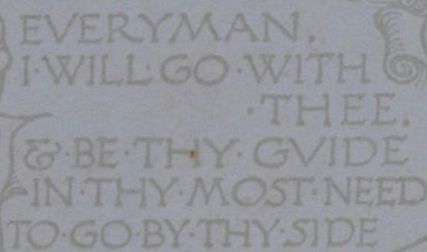
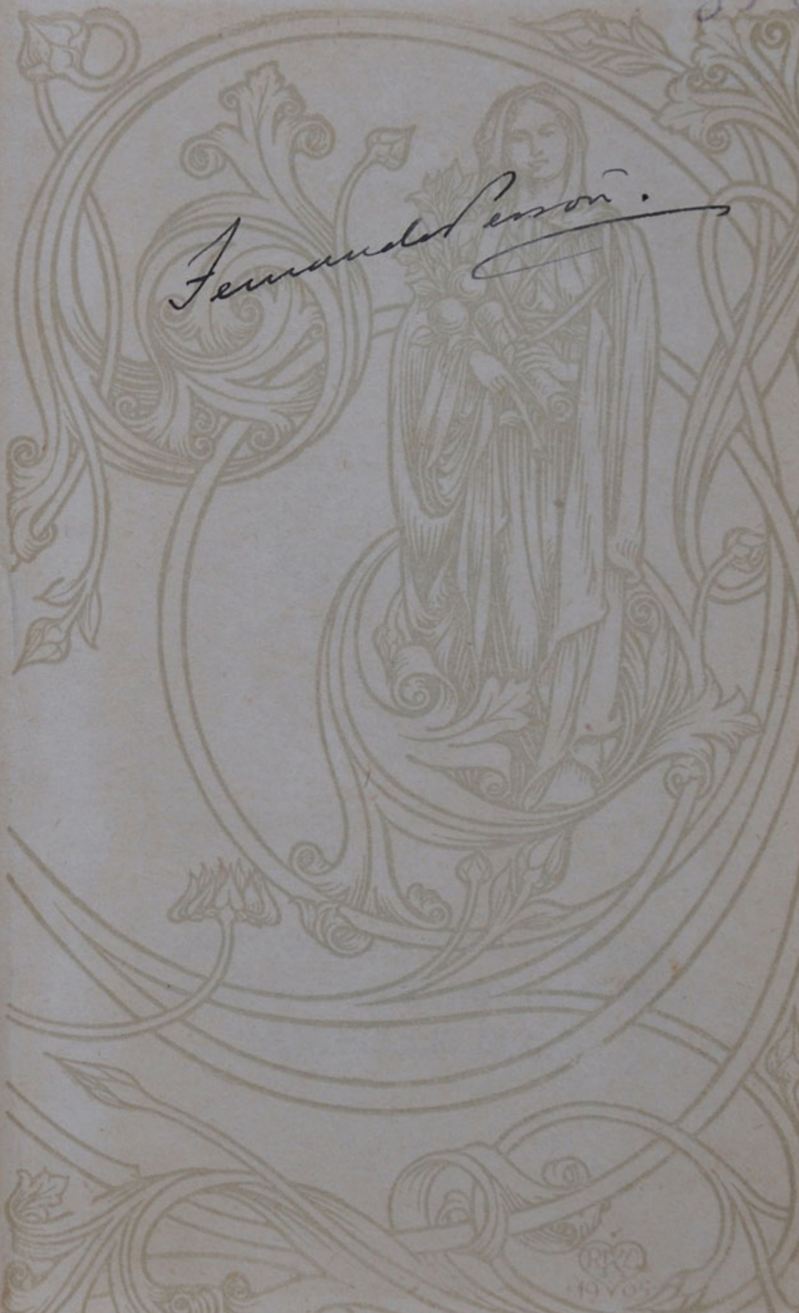
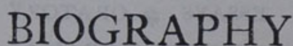
THE ONLY
ENGLISH LIBRARY
ESTABLISHED 1855
M. LEWTAS & TABOADA
138, Rua do Arsenal, 144
LISBOA





EVERYMAN'S LIBRARY
EDITED BY ERNEST RHYS



BIOGRAPHY

LEWES' LIFE OF GOETHE
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
HAVELOCK ELLIS

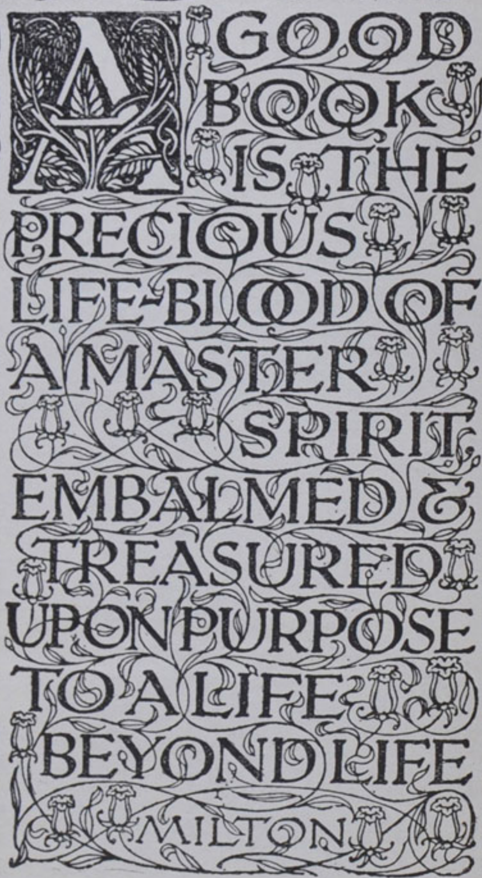
THE PUBLISHERS OF *EVERYMAN'S LIBRARY* WILL BE PLEASED TO SEND FREELY TO ALL APPLICANTS A LIST OF THE PUBLISHED AND PROJECTED VOLUMES TO BE COMPRISED UNDER THE FOLLOWING TWELVE HEADINGS:

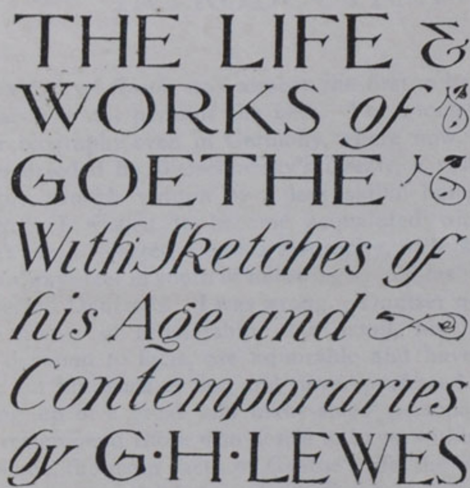
TRAVEL ❦ SCIENCE ❦ FICTION
THEOLOGY & PHILOSOPHY
HISTORY ❦ CLASSICAL
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
ESSAYS ❦ ORATORY
POETRY & DRAMA
BIOGRAPHY
ROMANCE

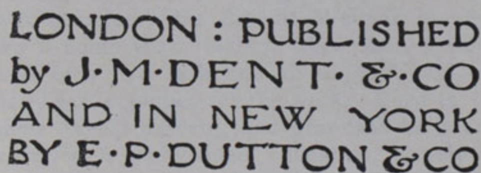
IN TWO STYLES OF BINDING, CLOTH, FLAT BACK, COLOURED TOP, AND LEATHER, ROUND CORNERS, GILT TOP.

LONDON: J. M. DENT & CO.
NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO.

45


A GOOD
BOOK
IS THE
PRECIOUS
LIFE-BLOOD OF
A MASTER
SPIRIT,
EMBALMED &
TREASURED
UPON PURPOSE
TO A LIFE
BEYOND LIFE
MILTON


THE LIFE &
WORKS of
GOETHE
With Sketches of
his Age and
Contemporaries
by G·H·LEWES


LONDON : PUBLISHED
by J·M·DENT· &·CO
AND IN NEW YORK
BY E·P·DUTTON &CO

INTRODUCTION

LEWES'S *Life of Goethe* was almost the first to be written, and in essentials it is still perhaps the best. For a long time it was the popular biography even in Germany, where now, however, it has been superseded by Bielschowsky's *Goethe*, a valuable work undoubtedly, though written by a less skilful hand. Many years ago, when I wished to become acquainted with the facts of Goethe's life, I rejected Lewes's biography, with that exaggerated fear we always feel in youth of following an old-fashioned authority, and selected Düntzer's. I was wrong. Düntzer possessed indeed all the merits of scholarship; his detail, his impartiality, his severe devotion to facts, are admirable and have not been surpassed, but his work is not, and never professed to be, a broad summing up of a great and many-sided personality. To-day I would recommend those who desire to have, within the covers of one volume, the main facts of Goethe's life, the statement of his achievements, and the means of estimating his place in the world, to select Lewes. Certainly there are some irrelevant and digressive passages in this book, but in the abridged edition which Lewes himself made in 1873, under the title of *The Story of Goethe's Life*, far too much was cut out. It is better to study the complete work, as finally revised by the author, and here, by the sound judgment of the editor and publishers of *Everyman's Library*, presented to the reader in a single compact and beautiful volume.[1]

Lewes completed his *Life* at Weimar in 1855, but he had planned it some years earlier, when such a work still had the freshness of a new task and an original exploration. He was singularly well equipped for the work. Born in London in 1817, of remote Welsh descent, and grandson of a notable actor, he had received a many-sided education, largely in France and Germany. At one time he studied medicine, but his inability to endure the spectacle of suffering caused him to abandon all idea of becoming a doctor; at a much later period in life, however, he reverted to the study of physiology, became a pioneer in modern

[1] I recommend the reader, even if his knowledge of German is but slight, to have by his side in reading this biography Hartleben's *Goethe-Brevier*, a collection of some of the most intimately personal of Goethe's poems (including a few usually excluded from collected editions), chronologically arranged, the date and occasion of composition being stated in the headlines. It is an invaluable commentary on the biographical narrative.

biological speculation, and made various valuable physiological suggestions. He had an inherited passion for the drama, wrote plays, as well as dramatic criticism, and sometimes himself acted. The bent of his literary tastes led him to sympathise with the qualities of French rather than of German literature, but from an early period he admired Goethe as well as Lessing. He became also a novelist, and attained in this field a certain measure of success. In philosophy he was always interested, having indeed planned a philosophical treatise before he was twenty. His chief achievement here was his well-known *Biographical History of Philosophy*, published in 1845, not indeed a profound work, but brilliant and stimulating. A few years later he planned the *Life of Goethe*. It was an important epoch in his own life. He had married some time earlier, but the marriage was unfortunate. There were wrongs on both sides, and in 1854 he left his family, though still working hard to support wife and children, and joined George Eliot. On taking this memorable step the pair went to live in Germany, studying Goethe in the places he had made famous, and here, in George Eliot's company, Lewes completed the *Life*, certainly one of the most admirable biographies in the English language. He died in 1878.

A part of the charm and the value of Lewes's biography lies in his nearness to its object. He was old enough to have talked with Goethe; he actually talked and corresponded with many who had known him intimately, and in this and other ways he acquired much original information and saw many unpublished letters. His nearness also enabled him to view Goethe without that halo which distance and the reverence of several generations have now surrounded him with; there is nothing of the abject hero-worshipper about Lewes, and (although his opinions by no means always carry conviction) he discusses, criticises, even condemns, when he thinks it necessary. He wrote for a world which still knew little about Goethe, and cherished many antipathetic prejudices; this gave him a freedom of which he fully availed himself; that is the source of much of the freshness and vivacity of his work. There was another and even more important sense in which Lewes was near to Goethe. He was not a man of genius, but with his very various talents and aptitudes he had the temperament of genius. In his own smaller way he had encountered the same problems of art and thought and life as Goethe had had to wrestle with. Goethe was a dilettante—that is to say, a lover of all things—on a more than heroic scale; Lewes was something of the same on a lower plane. He was an artist and a man of science, a thinker and a man of the world. It was an invaluable

combination of qualities for approaching a personality of Goethe's immense scope; none of his successors have possessed a similar excellent qualification, certainly not Düntzer, the dry and precise scholar, nor Bielschowsky, an invalided school-teacher, pensioned by government, who spent his life in Berlin. Lewes's position in relation to his subject gave him a freedom and independence, a sanity and balance of judgment, which we can scarcely expect from the ordinary "Goethe-investigator."

It is impossible, indeed, that Lewes's presentation of particular aspects of Goethe's life and activity should be equal at every point to that reached by those who have written special monographs in this field. If, for instance, we read Felicie Ewart's book on Goethe's father, we obtain a more complete, interesting, and sympathetic picture of the Frankfurt town-councillor than Lewes, or even Goethe himself, has given us. Professor Herford again, in his Taylorian lecture on Goethe's Italian journey, presents that significant epoch in Goethe's life in a more lucid, orderly, and comprehensive way than Lewes, with whom, however, he is by no means in conflict. When, again, Lewes, following Goethe's enthusiastic friends, describes him as in personal appearance "a young Apollo," he is no doubt right in the main, but when we read Stahl's *Wie sah Goethe aus?* we learn that deductions are to be made from that description. To give one more instance, Lewes's chapter on Goethe as a man of science is admirable; but we cannot expect that he should give us so wonderful a picture of Goethe's scientific activities as has lately been presented in *Goethe als Naturforscher*, by Professor Rudolf Magnus, who has here followed Goethe step by step. But in all essentials Lewes's conclusions remain well balanced and reliable.

Whatever Lewes's skill and judgment as a biographer, however, the doubt may still arise whether the activity of Goethe-students during the past thirty years has not revealed much that ought to have a place in every good biography, and much also that is likely to invalidate conclusions founded on imperfect knowledge. That is a reasonable suspicion. I have, therefore, systematically compared Lewes's and Bielschowsky's works, chapter by chapter, in order to ascertain what new light the latter casts on the former. While Bielschowsky, whose work is on a larger scale, inevitably gives more information, new and old, both about Goethe and his friends, it can scarcely be said that at any crucial point he overthrows Lewes's presentment of the matter, or even that he reveals the existence of any misleading personal bias in his predecessor. Lewes with insistent iteration seeks indeed to show that Goethe's *Autobiography*, written in old age, is inaccurate; Bielschowsky is

convinced of its accuracy in every detail. But as Lewes considers that the inaccuracy is mainly that of tone, it is not clear that this divergence of opinion is radical. Again, German critics have been inclined to resent Lewes's rather slighting attitude towards German culture generally, an attitude, however, which he shared with one of the greatest of Germans, Nietzsche. Yet Lewes emphasises the Germanic culture with which Goethe became impregnated at Strasburg; while Bielschowsky, on his side, admits that "Goethe's Germanic nature is more apparent to foreigners than to his fellow-countrymen." Lewes, in telling how Goethe received his licentiate at the University, wonders how or where he obtained his doctor's degree; Bielschowsky knows that the licentiate was counted, even officially, as equivalent to the degree. The point is typical of many that are due to the growth of knowledge, but they are quite unimportant.

Of greater interest is the contribution to Goethe's biography furnished by the publication of his letters to Behrisch, the friend of his student days at Leipzic. Lewes's account of Goethe's relations with Käthchen Schönkopf (Annette) is at some points vague; we do not clearly understand how the rupture came about, and, misled by Goethe's own way of stating the matter, Lewes attributed the parting entirely to Annette. In the letters in which Goethe himself describes the incidents and emotions of that time, day by day, to Behrisch, a vivid and detailed page is added to his biography. But it is no more than a page, and Lewes's narrative even of this episode requires little re-writing.

Lewes and Bielschowsky are not altogether in agreement regarding the two women who had the largest part in Goethe's life, Frau von Stein and Christiane Vulpius, who finally became his wife. In Lewes's eyes Frau von Stein was a charming and clever coquette, completely mistress of herself, and deliberately playing with Goethe. This is not the opinion of Bielschowsky, who considers that she genuinely loved him from an early period and comprehended his complex nature, though her character and circumstances long held her back from him. Bielschowsky seems herein to be supported by the evidence. But in his depreciation of Christiane, and his tendency to minimise Goethe's love for her, he seems to be simply following a German tradition. In Germany it has required a pioneer like Hirth (in his recent *Weg zur Liebe*) to do justice to Christiane and the large place which—with all her faults and defects—she held in Goethe's life; but the same standpoint had been taken by Lewes half-a-century earlier. Bielschowsky will not even grant—though he admits this is only

an opinion—that the *Roman Elegies* were mainly inspired by Christiane.

There is one important respect in which Bielschowsky has a distinct advantage over Lewes. Although Lewes decisively recognises that Goethe's work was mainly autobiographical in its inspiration, much of the detailed evidence of this was not in his hands. Bielschowsky shows that Goethe's writings were autobiographical throughout, and that when not so they were either of poor quality or remained mere fragments. Lewes can see no personal elements in *Clavigo* or *Stella*, but Bielschowsky points out, doubtless correctly, that in the first Marie is based on Frederika, and Carlos corresponds in part to Merck—which accounts for Merck's dislike of the piece—while in *Stella* Fernando is Goethe with his more virile elements omitted, Stella is an exact portrait of Lili, and Cecilia is Frederika, who reappears again and again in his books, and has her final apotheosis at the conclusion of *Faust*. Lewes has a poor opinion of *Stella*, and the conclusion (which greatly puzzled Goethe himself) is undoubtedly bad, yet nevertheless, as Schrempf has lately pointed out, *Stella* has an important place in Goethe's treatment of the problems of love. In *Tasso* Goethe himself is the poet, Frau von Stein is the Princess, and Karl August is Alfonso. In *Hermann and Dorothea* Goethe blended together 1775 and 1795; it is founded on the troubles that befell Lili and her husband at the later date, when they had to flee from the French Terrorists into Germany, and at the same time Goethe learnt the high regard and affection which Lili still cherished for him; in Hermann and his parents he pictured himself and his parents. In the *Westöstliche Divan* Suleika is known with certainty to be the young actress and dancer, Frau Marianne Willemer, who at that time stirred Goethe's still youthful emotions.

Yet, however imperfect Lewes's knowledge was at these and similar points, he clearly realised that the study of Goethe's writings is an essential part of the study of Goethe's life. Even the greatest and most memorable of his books, *Wilhelm Meister* and *Faust*,—instinctively, and sometimes, it would seem, almost unconsciously,—are great autobiographical transcripts written from different sides of the same life. It is the chief value of such a book as this of Lewes's that it gives us the clue to the interpenetration of Goethe's biography with Goethe's writings. In so doing it helps us to understand a life which is, beyond all others, full of instruction and inspiration for those who face the complex problems of the modern world.

HAVELOCK ELLIS.

The following are the works published by Lewes:—'Biographical History of Philosophy,' 2 volumes, 1845–1846, 1857, 1867, 1871, 1880, Lubbock's 'Hundred Best Books,' 1891; The Spanish Drama, 'Lope de Vega and Calderon' (from the *Foreign Quarterly*), 1846; 'Ranthorpe' (a Novel), 1847; 'Rose, Blanche, and Violet' (a Novel), 1848; 'The Noble Heart' (Drama), 1850; 'Life of Maximilien Robespierre, with Extracts from unpublished Correspondence,' 1849, 3rd edition, 1899; Comte's 'Philosophy of the Sciences' (from the *Leader*), Bohn's 'Scientific Library,' 1853; 'Life of Goethe,' 2 volumes, 1855, 1864, 1875, 1882, 1890, 1906 (The London Library), abridged edition, 1873; 'Seaside Studies at Ilfracombe, Tenby, the Scilly Isles, and Jersey,' 1858, 1860; 'Physiology of Common Life,' 2 volumes, 1859–1860; 'Studies in Animal Life, 1862; 'Aristotle, a chapter from the History of Sciences, including an Analysis of Aristotle's Scientific Writings,' 1864; 'Problems of Life and Mind,' 5 volumes, 1874–1879; 'Female Characters of Goethe,' Explanatory Text to Kaulbach's Drawings, 2nd edition, 1874; 'On Actors and the Art of Acting,' 1875; 'Dramatic Essays,' reprinted from the *Examiner*, with Introduction and Notes by W. Archer and R. W. Lowe, 1896; 'The Principles of Success in Literature,' edited with Notes, T. S. Knowlson (Scott Library), 1898. Lewes also contributed Articles to the *Westminster*, 1840–1842; to the *British and Foreign Review*, 1842; *Foreign Quarterly*, 1843; *Edinburgh*, 1843–1845; *British and Foreign Quarterly*, 1843, 1844; *New Quarterly*, 1844; *Classical Museum*, 1844; *British Quarterly*, 1847, 1849; *Fraser*, 1848; *Leader* (of which Journal Lewes was Joint-Editor with T. Leigh Hunt), 1852. From 1865 to the close of 1866 Lewes was Editor of the *Fortnightly;* some of his articles on the Drama, republished 1875, appeared first in the *Pall Mall Gazette;* Life: Sully, *New Quarterly*, October 1879.

TO

THOMAS CARLYLE

WHO FIRST TAUGHT ENGLAND TO APPRECIATE GOETHE

THIS WORK IS INSCRIBED AS A MEMORIAL

OF ESTEEM FOR RARE AND

NOBLE QUALITIES

PREFACE

THERE was, perhaps, some temerity in attempting a *Life of Goethe* at a time when no German author had undertaken the task; but the reception which my work has met with, even after the appearance of the biographies by Viehoff and Schäfer, is a justification of the temerity. The sale of thirteen thousand copies in England and Germany, and the sympathy generously expressed, not unmingled, it is true, with adverse and even angry criticism, are assurances that my labours were not wholly misdirected, however far they may have fallen short of their aim. For the expressions of sympathy, public and private, I cannot but be grateful; and I have done my best to profit by criticism even when it was most hostile.

I wish to make special mention of the assistance tendered me by the late Mr. Franz Demmler. Although a stranger to me, this accomplished student of Goethe kindly volunteered, amid many and pressing avocations, to re-read my book with the express purpose of annotating it; and he sent me several sheets of notes and objections, all displaying the vigour of his mind and the variety of his reading. Some of these I was glad to use; and even those which I could not agree with or adopt, were always carefully considered. On certain points our opinions were diametrically opposed; but it was always an advantage to me to read criticisms so frank and acute.

The present edition is altered in form and in substance. It has been rewritten in parts, with a view not only of introducing all the new material which several important publications have furnished, but also of correcting and reconstructing it so as to make it more worthy of public favour. As there is little probability of any subsequent publication bringing to light fresh material of importance, I hope that this reconstruction of my book will be final.

With respect to the use I have made of the materials at hand, especially of Goethe's *Autobiography*, I can but repeat what was said in the Preface to the First Edition: the *Dichtung und Wahrheit* not only wants the egotistic garrulity and detail which give such confessions their value,- but presents great difficulties to a biographer. The main reason of this is the abiding inaccuracy of *tone*, which, far more misleading than the many inaccuracies of *fact*, gives to the whole youthful period, as narrated by him, an aspect so directly contrary to what is given by contemporary evidence, especially his own letters, that an attempt to reconcile the contradiction is futile. If any one doubts this, and persists in his doubts after reading the first volume of this work, let him take up Goethe's Letters to the Countess von Stolberg, or the recently published letters to Kestner and Charlotte, and compare their tone with the tone of the Autobiography, wherein the old man depicts the youth as the old man saw him, not as the youth felt and lived. The picture of youthful follies and youthful passions comes softened through the distant avenues of years. The turbulence of a youth of genius is not indeed quite forgotten, but it is hinted with stately reserve. Jupiter serenely throned upon Olympus forgets that he was once a rebel with the Titans.

When we come to know the real facts, we see that the Autobiography does not so much misstate as understate; we, who can "read between the lines," perceive that it errs more from want of sharpness of relief and percision of detail than from positive misrepresentation. Controlled by contemporary evidence, it furnishes one great source for the story of the early years; and I greatly regret there is not more contemporary evidence to furnish more details.

For the later period, besides the mass of printed testimony in shape of Letters, Memoirs, Reminiscences, &c., I have endeavoured to get at the truth by consulting those who lived under the same roof with him, those who lived in friendly intercourse with him, and those who have made his life and

work a special duty. I have sought to acquire and to reproduce a definite image of the living man, and not simply of the man as he appeared in all the reticences of print. For this purpose I have controlled and completed the testimonies of print by means of papers which have never seen the light, and papers which in all probability never will see the light—by means of personal corroboration, and the many slight details which are gathered from far and wide when one is alive to every scrap of authentic information and can see its significance; and thus comparing testimony with testimony, completing what was learned yesterday by something learned to-day, not unfrequently helped to one passage by details furnished from half-a-dozen quarters, I have formed the conclusions which appear in this work. In this difficult, and sometimes delicate task, I hope it will be apparent that I have been guided by the desire to get at the truth, having no cause to serve, no partisanship to mislead me, no personal connection to trammel my judgment. It will be seen that I neither deny, nor attempt to slur over, points which may tell against my hero. The man is too great and too good to forfeit our love, because on some points he may incur blame.

Considerable space has been allotted to analyses and criticisms of Goethe's works; just as in the life of a great Captain, much space is necessarily occupied by his campaigns. By these analyses I have tried to be of service to the student of German literature, as well as to those who do not read German; and throughout it will be seen that pains have not been spared to make the reader feel at home in this foreign land.

The scientific writings have been treated with what proportionately may seem great length; and this, partly because science filled a large portion of Goethe's life; partly, because, even in Germany, there was nothing like a full exposition of his aims and achievements in this direction.

The Priory, North Bank, Regent's Park.
November 1863.

CONTENTS

BOOK THE FIRST

1749-1765

CHAPTER I

PARENTAGE

PAGE

Character and extent of Goethe's claim to greatness—His Ancestry—Genealogical tables—Goethe's father and mother—What he derived from them 1

CHAPTER II

THE PRECOCIOUS CHILD

Birth of Goethe—Character of the epoch—Position of Frankfurt—Moderate elevation of Goethe's social status—Anecdotes—Maternal tuition—His love for his sister Cornelia—His love of story-telling—Grandmother and grandfather Textor—Early compositions in Latin and German—Character of Goethe's precocity—His school life 10

CHAPTER III

EARLY EXPERIENCES

Character not formed by circumstances—Early religious doubts awakened by the Lisbon earthquake—Early symbolical representation of the soul's aspirations to the Deity—The Seven Years' War—Invention of little stories—Occupation of Frankfurt by the French—The French theatre—Duel with Derones—His first play 19

CHAPTER IV

VARIOUS STUDIES

Departure of the French, and resumption of study—The Polyglott romance—Biblical studies—Influence of Fräulein von Klettenberg—Early love for Gretchen—Disappointment—Fascination exercised by Goethe 27

CHAPTER V

THE CHILD IS FATHER TO THE MAN

PAGE

Characteristics of the man to be traced in the moral lineaments of the child—Characteristics of Goethe—His many-sidedness—His seriousness, formality, and rationality—His impatient susceptibility 33

BOOK THE SECOND

1765–1771

CHAPTER I

THE LEIPSIC STUDENT

Goethe commences his collegiate life at Leipsic—Wearies of logic and jurisprudence—Appearance in society—Acquaintance with Frau Böhme—Literary society at the *table d'hôte* of Herr Schönkopf—Falls in love with Anna Katharina Schönkopf—Description of Goethe in Horn's letters to Moors—Composition of "Die Laune des Verliebten"—Works of Goethe an embodiment of his experiences—Pranks and extravagances with Behrisch—Composition of "The Fellow Sinners" . . . 37

CHAPTER II

MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

Subjective and objective intellects—Antagonism between the ideal and the real—Objective character of Goethe's genius—Concrete tendency in his works—Comparison of Goethe with Shakspeare—Moral toleration 51

CHAPTER III

ART STUDIES

Goethe neglects his collegiate studies—His love songs—Joins Œser's drawing class—Trip to Dresden—Learns engraving—Serious illness—State of religious doubt—Returns to Frankfurt . . 55

CHAPTER IV

RETURN HOME

His reception at home—Letters to Käthchen Schönkopf—Marriage of Käthchen with Dr. Kanne—Unpleasant relations with his father—Studies in alchemy—Religion more prominently in his thoughts 59

CHAPTER V

STRASBURG

PAGE

Goes to Strasburg university—Description of his person—Strasburg cathedral—Various studies—Disgust at the "Système de la Nature"—Raphael's cartoons—Ominous pictures exhibited to Marie Antoinette—Mystical and metaphysical studies—Early tendency towards nature-worship—Giordano Bruno—Notes on Bayle's criticism — Remarkable comment on a chapter in Fabricius — Society at Strasburg—Improvement in his demeanour—Increased circle of friends—First meeting and friendship with Stilling—Friendship with Franz Lerse—Conquers his irritability and sensitiveness—Two love poems—Dancing at Strasburg—Story of Emilia and Lucinda, the dancing-master's daughters 66

CHAPTER VI

HERDER AND FREDERIKA

Goethe's German culture—Acquaintance with Herder—His opinion of Goethe—His influence—Strange Introduction of Goethe to the Brion family—Frederika — Goethe's letter — Affection of Goethe and Frederika—Goethe obtains his doctor's degree—Frederika's visit to Strasburg—Effect of Shakspeare on Germany —Goethe's oration on Shakspeare—His tractate on German architecture—Parting with Frederika 80

BOOK THE THIRD

1771–1775

CHAPTER I

DR. GOETHE'S RETURN

Reception by his father—Commencement of the Storm and Stress period—Goethe's reluctance to appear in print—His anguish at having renounced Frederika—Reasons why he did not marry her—Hard work—Johann Heinrich Merck—The Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen—Goethe's fondness for skating . . . 99

CHAPTER II

GÖTZ VON BERLICHINGEN

Three versions of "Götz"—Goethe's own account of the composition—Character of Gottfried with the Iron Hand—"Götz" a dramatic chronicle, not a drama—Unlike Shakspeare in construction, in the presentation of character, and in the language —Its injurious influence on dramatic art—Its originality denied by Hegel 108

CHAPTER III

WETZLAR

PAGE

Wetzlar—The Imperial Court of Justice, a German chancery—The Teutsche Haus—The Round Table and its knights—Description of Goethe by Kestner—His acquaintance with Gotter—Connection with the Göttingen School—Moral contest between individuals and Government—Literary and philosophic insurrection—Goethe falls in love with Charlotte Buff—Kestner's engagement to Charlotte—Jerusalem's unhappy passion—Goethe's visit to Höpfner—Melancholy departure from Wetzlar 115

CHAPTER IV

PREPARATIONS FOR WERTHER

Goethe interrogates fate whether he should become an artist—Maximiliane von Laroche—"Pater Brey" and "Satyros"—Studies at Frankfurt—Rewriting "Götz von Berlichingen"—Publication of "Götz"—Misrepresentation of Herder's reception of the work—Amusing offer of a bookseller—Unrest and extravagancies of the age—General want of faith—Letters to Kestner and Charlotte—Coquetting with suicide—Suicide of Jerusalem—Its effects on Goethe—State of his mind—Marriage of Charlotte to Kestner—Marriage of Cornelia—Goethe meditates a drama on Mahomet—Marriage of Maximiliane Laroche with Brentano—Dangerous intimacy—Publication of "Götter, Helden, and Wieland"—First acquaintance with Karl August—Composition of "Werther" 129

CHAPTER V

WERTHER

Kestner's narrative of Jerusalem's suicide—Sensation at Wetzlar—Character of Werther—Distinction between Werther and Goethe—Wretched English translation of "Werther"—Simplicity of the structure of the book—Its prodigious effect—Objections of Lessing—Parody by Nicolai—Nicolai at Werther's grave—Enthusiasm of Zimmermann and Kotzebue—Indignation of Kestner and Charlotte—Goethe obtains their forgiveness—Kestner's letter to Hennings 149

CHAPTER VI

THE LITERARY LION

Marriage Lotteries—Antoinette Gerock—"Mémoire" of Beaumarchais—Story of Beaumarchais and Clavijo—Goethe's composition of "Clavigo"—Character of the play—Merck's reproach—Goethe's acquaintance with Klopstock and Lavater—Character

PAGE

of Lavater—Sentimentalism of the epoch—Probable parentage of Goethe's religious opinions—Faith and knowledge—Acquaintance with Basedow, the educational reformer—Wild and genius-like demeanour—Acquaintance with Jacobi—Impressions produced by his wonderful personality—Studies Spinoza—Studies the history and doctrines of the Moravians—Conceives the idea of treating epically the history of the "Wandering Jew"—Projects a play on the fable of Prometheus—Comparison of the extant fragment with the "Prometheus" of Æschylus and of Shelley 164

CHAPTER VII

LILI

Love for Anna Elizabeth Schönemann (Lili)—Character of Lili—Goethe's verses to Lili—"Erwin und Ulmire"—Objections to the marriage—Composition of "Stella"—Canning's caricature of the work—Tour in Switzerland with the two Counts Stolberg—Separation from Lili—"Lili's Menagerie"—Commencement of "Egmont"—Goethe accepts Karl August's invitation to Weimar 185

BOOK THE FOURTH

1775–1779

CHAPTER I

WEIMAR IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Description of Weimar—The Wartburg—Banqueting-hall of the Minnesingers—Annual meeting of the Bachs—The Park—Legend of the serpent of Weimar—Charming environs—Social condition of the period—State of Science—Absence of comfort and luxury—Rough and simple manners—Condition of the people—Prices—Influence of the Court—No real public for Art at Weimar—Necessity in Art for the co-operation of the nation with individual genius 195

CHAPTER II

THE NOTABILITIES OF WEIMAR

The Dowager Duchess Amalia—Mdlle. Göchhausen—Wieland—Einsiedel—Corona Schröter—Bertuch—Musæus—Seckendorf—The Duchess Luise—Karl August—Gräfin Werther—Frau von Stein—Knebel—Herder 209

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST WILD WEEKS AT WEIMAR

PAGE

Sensation created by Goethe at Weimar—Laxity of German morals based on sentimentalism—Goethe's flirtations—Skating; dissipation leading to weariness—His close intimacy with Karl August—Raised to the post of Geheime Legations Rath—Protest of the officials silenced by the Duke—Exaggerated scandal—Klopstock's letter of remonstrance—Breach between Klopstock and Goethe—Gleim's anecdote of Goethe—Absurdity of the charge that Goethe sacrificed his genius to the Court—Merck's approbation of Goethe's position 217

CHAPTER IV

THE FRAU VON STEIN

Charlotte, Baroness von Stein—Goethe falls in love with her—Extracts from letters—The Gartenhaus in the Park dedicated to her—The Duke takes it from Bertuch, and transfers it to Goethe—Royal visits—Love of Nature—Ballad of "The Fisherman" 229

CHAPTER V

PRIVATE THEATRICALS

Goethe's influence with the Duke, and efforts to improve Weimar—Popularity of private theatricals—Open air performances—Representation of "Minerva's Birth, Life, and Deeds"—Goethe's operetta "Die Fischerin"—Miscellaneous performances—Representation of the "Iphigenia"—Goethe's acting—Various employments of time. 237

CHAPTER VI

MANY-COLOURED THREADS

Love and ambition—Death of his sister—Adopts a poor boy—Letters from sentimental youths—Composition of "Triumph der Empfindsamkeit"—Journey to the Harz mountains in disguise—Interview with Plessing, the misanthrope—Suicide of Fraulein von Lassberg—Goethe's increased hatred of Wertherism—Representation of the "Triumph der Empfindsamkeit" 245

CHAPTER VII

THE REAL PHILANTHROPIST

PAGE

His manifold employments and studies—His love of the people—Visit to Berlin—Frederic the Great—Goethe's kindness—His delicate benevolence to Kraft—His Letters to Kraft—Refutation of the opinion that Goethe was cold and heartless . . . 252

BOOK THE FIFTH

1779-1793

CHAPTER

NEW BIRTH

Passage of Youth to Manhood--Composition of the "Iphigenia" in prose—The prose mania 266

CHAPTER II

IPHIGENIA

Mistaken notion that the "Iphigenia" is a specimen of the Greek tragedy—Necessary calmness of evolution in the Greek drama confounded with calmness of life—Deep passions called into play by the Greek dramatists—Profound difference between Goethe and Euripides—"Iphigenia" not a Greek but a German play—Not a drama, but a dramatic poem—Parallel between the Iphigenia of Goethe and the Iphigenia of Euripides 269

CHAPTER III

PROGRESS

Goethe active in his official duties—Raised to the rank of Geheimrath—Journey with Karl August to Frankfurt and Strasburg—Interview with Frederika—Interview with Lili—Journey to Switzerland—Schiller first sees Goethe—Return to Weimar—Changes in his mode of life—Passionate study of science—Tendency to believe in the unity of nature—Slow advance to a more serious and decisive plan of existence—Raised to nobility—Increased devotion to the Frau von Stein—Occasional discords with Karl August—Feels authorship to be the true mission of his life 281

CHAPTER IV

PREPARATIONS FOR ITALY

PAGE

Birth of a crown prince—Goethe's poem of "Ilmenau"—Increased official burdens—Journey in the Harz with Fritz von Stein—Prepares the "Planet Dance"—Pronounces an oration on the re-opening of the Ilmenau mines—Discovers an intermaxillary bone in man—Biographical significance of the discovery—Studies in natural history—Changes in Weimar society—Increase of salary—His generosity—Separation of opinion between Goethe and Jacobi—Goethe disgusted with the hypocritical nature of Lavater—Strong impulse to visit Italy—His secret departure 291

CHAPTER V

ITALY

Goethe in Italy under an assumed name—The "Italiänische Reise"—His delight in the present, and not in the past—His residence in Venice and Rome—Passion for art—Tries to discover the secret of vegetable forms — Weimar grumbling —His visit to Naples—Sir William and Lady Hamilton —Vesuvius, Pæstum, Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Capua—Palermo—Visits the parents of Cagliostro—Return to Rome —Literary labours—Effect of his residence in Italy—Result of his study of art—Falls in love with a young Milanese—Returns to Weimar 301

CHAPTER VI

EGMONT AND TASSO

"Egmont" a universal favourite, but not a masterpiece—A novel in dialogue, not a drama—The character of Egmont a type of humanity—Materials and construction of the play—Analysis of "Egmont"—"Tasso" 310

CHAPTER VII

RETURN HOME

Melancholy return from Italy to Weimar—Letter to Karl August —Relieved from the more onerous duties of office—Coolness towards the Frau von Stein—Schiller's account of his first interview with Goethe—Wide gulf between the two—Difference in their fortunes 319

CHAPTER VIII

CHRISTIANE VULPIUS

PAGE

Her first meeting with Goethe—Her position, education, and character—Her connection with Goethe—Composition of the "Roman Elegies"—How far a poet is justified in disregarding the conventional proprieties of his age—Goethe's love for Christiane—Disapprobation of Weimar society—Rupture with the Frau von Stein—Goethe's letters to Frau von Stein—Her letter describing his illness 325

CHAPTER IX

THE POET AS A MAN OF SCIENCE

Studies—Goethe's authority accepted in art, but rejected in science—Real nature of authority, and claims of amateurs—His treatise on the "Metamorphoses of Plants"—Its cold reception—Before its age—Recognition of his labours by St. Hilaire—Modern recognition of his discovery—High character of his botanical and anatomical studies—Unfortunate studies in optics—Misunderstanding of Newton's theory—Publication of the "Beiträge zur Optik"—Opposition to it—Goethe's obstinacy and irritability—His "Theory of Colours" expounded and contrasted with that of Newton—Goethe's explanation of the phenomena of refraction—Source of his errors—Misconception of method—Efforts to supply the place of experiment and mathematics by observation and reason—Native direction of his mind towards the concrete phenomena, not towards abstractions—His success in the organic sciences—Not a metaphysician, but a thinker on the *a priori* method—Review of his discovery of the intermaxillary bone—Claims of Vicq d'Azyr—Employment of the comparative method—The doctrine of morphology—The vertebral theory, and theory of Metamorphosis—Goethe's creation of a type—Claims of Linnæus and Wolff—Goethe's hypothesis of elaborated sap opposed to Wolff's hypothesis of deficient sap—Law of vegetation and law of reproduction clearly seen by Goethe—Goethe's efforts to create the science of philosophic anatomy—The positive method—Principle of development grasped and applied by Goethe—Law of division of labour in the animal organism clearly expressed in his formula—His "Introduction to Comparative Anatomy"—Vertebral theory of the skull criticised—Examination of Goethe's claim to the discovery of the vertebral theory of the skull 336

CHAPTER X

THE CAMPAIGN IN FRANCE

PAGE

Goethe's second visit to Italy—The Venetian Epigrams—Return to Weimar—Friday evenings—"Der Gross Kophta"—Invasion of France for the restoration of Louis XVI.—Goethe accompanies the army—Utter want of interest in politics—Opposed to the principles of the Revolution, but without sympathy for the Royalists—His diary of the "Campaign of France"—Return to Weimar—His house in the Frauenplan—The study, the library, and the bedroom—Friendship with Meyer—The "Bürger-general"—The "Aufgeregten"—"Reinecke Fuchs" 378

BOOK THE SIXTH

1794–1805

CHAPTER I

GOETHE AND SCHILLER

Friendship of Goethe and Schiller—Their profound dissimilarity—Personal appearance of both—Points of resemblance between them—Their mutual earnestness in art—Similarity in the phases of their development—Goethe restored to poetry by Schiiler—Goethe's admiration for his rivals—His praise of Schiller—Shakspeare's silence about his rivals—Indifference of Weimar to the progress of the Revolution—Contemporary state of German literature—"Die Horen" started by Schiller—Rapid growth of the friendship between Goethe and Schiller—Beneficial influence of Schiller on Goethe—Goethe's scientific ardour and poetical plans—Failure of the "Horen"—Publication of the "Xenien"—Sensation produced 394

CHAPTER II

WILHELM MEISTER

English, French, and German views on the camel—German philosophical criticism—Goethe's primary intention in "Wilhelm Meister"—Alterations in the plan—Schiller's objection—Its twofold purposes—dramatic and educational—Characters in the novel—Artistic atheism—Supposed immorality of "Wilhelm Meister"—Its deep and healthy moral meaning—The "Confessions of a Fair Saint"—Extract from Schiller's criticisms on "Wilhelm Meister" 406

CHAPTER III

THE ROMANTIC SCHOOL

PAGE

Influences of Goethe and Schiller on each other—Evil effects of philosophy on German literature—Character of the Romantic School in Germany—Schlegel, Fichte, Schelling, Schleiermacher, and Solger—Shakspeare translated by Tieck and Schlegel—Preference of the Romanticists for the legends and heroes of Catholicism—General enthusiasm for Mysticism—Art the handmaid of Religion—Return of the painters to Roman Catholicism and the middle ages—Theoretical discussions of Goethe and Schiller—Goethe's literary labours—Gives Schiller a plan of "William Tell"—Walter Scott 416

CHAPTER IV

HERMANN AND DOROTHEA

Foundation of "Hermann and Dorothea"—Character of the poem—Truthful descriptions of country life and country people—Objective delineation of the scenes—Pure human existence represented in the subject matter—Clearness and significance of the style—Subtleties of German æsthetical criticism . . 422

CHAPTER V

THE THEATRICAL MANAGER

Court character of the Weimar stage—National co-operation indispensable to dramatic art—Error of Goethe and Schiller in appealing only to the cultivated few—Necessity for the combination of amusement with instruction in the drama—Failure of Goethe's experiments on the Weimar stage, arising from his contempt of public opinion—The Jena students—Despotic efforts of Goethe to control public criticism—Managerial despotism over the actors—Reverence of the actors for Goethe—Difficulties in the management—Effect of the connection of Goethe and Schiller—Representation of "Wallenstein"—Devrient's critical observations on the Weimar school—Difficulties of rhythm and pronunciation—Art preferred to nature—Rehabilitation of the French tragedy—Delusive efforts to found a German drama by poetic works and antique restorations—Goethe no dramatist—His version of "Romeo and Juliet"—Character of Shakspeare's play—The injurious alterations by Goethe—Declining interest of Goethe in the theatre after Schiller's death—Refusal to admit performing dogs on the stage—Offensively dismissed by Karl August—The Duke's regret 434

CHAPTER VI

SCHILLER'S LAST YEARS

PAGE

Goethe's mode of daily life—His reception of visitors—Bürger and Heine—Jean Paul Richter's description of Goethe and Schiller—Friendship of Goethe and Schiller, and partisanship of their respective admirers—Kotzebue's unsuccessful efforts to create a coolness between Goethe and Schiller—Herder's jealousy of Schiller—The "Natürliche Tochter"—Madame de Stael's visit to Weimar—Illness of Goethe and Schiller—Schiller's death . 450

CHAPTER VII

FAUST

Gradual development of "Faust," and progress of its composition—The problem of our intellectual existence, and picture of our social existence—Resemblance between "Faust" and "Hamlet"—Twofold cause of the popularity of "Hamlet": intellectual sublimity and dramatic variety—Popularity of "Faust"—The "idea of 'Faust'" not so important a study as the "means" which produce the effect—Analysis of the First Part of "Faust"—The Theatre Prologue—The Prologue in Heaven—Necessity for the two Prologues—First scene of Faust in his study—The scene before the gate—Faust's study—Auerbach's cellar—The witches' kitchen—Meeting with Margaret—Wood and cavern—The "Walpurgis Nacht"—Causes of the early disappointment and after fascination of the readers of "Faust"—Inadequacy of all translations of poetry—Analysis of Marlowe's "Faustus" and Calderon's "El Magico Prodigioso"—Description of Maler Müller's play—Coleridge's criticisms on Goethe's "Faust" compared with Goethe's own observations—In "Faust," the problem stated but not solved 461

CHAPTER VIII

THE LYRICAL POEMS

Goethe's fame lessened by his wealth—Perfection of his poetry and occasional feebleness of his prose—Witchery of his lyrics—Sincerity of their style—Simplicity and directness of the images—Story of the "Bride of Corinth"—"Gott und die Bajadere"—The "Erl King" 497

BOOK THE SEVENTH

1805–1832

CHAPTER I

THE BATTLE OF JENA

PAGE

Effect of Schiller's death on Goethe—Visit of Jacobi—Acquaintance with Gall—Appreciation of Phrenology—Battle of Jena—Sacking of Weimar—French soldiers in Goethe's house—courage of the Duchess Luise—Napoleon's intemperate rage against Karl August—Characteristic outburst of Goethe . . 502

CHAPTER II

GOETHE'S WIFE

Goethe's wife 506

CHAPTER III

BETTINA AND NAPOLEON

Restoration of peace at Weimar—Visit of Bettina—Her character—True nature of her intercourse with Goethe—Forbidden Goethe's house—Unauthenticity of the "Correspondence" proved by Riemer—Napoleon at Erfurt—His reception of Karl August, Goethe, and Wieland—Conversations of Napoleon with Goethe—Goethe flattered by Napoleon's attentions — Beethoven's ostentatious independence, and Goethe's supposed servility . 510

CHAPTER IV

ELECTIVE AFFINITIES

Goethe's passion for Minna Herzlieb—"Die Walverwandtschaften"—Plot and character of the novel—General criticisms—Marriage of Minna—Death of Goethe's mother 520

CHAPTER V

POLITICS AND RELIGION

Goethe's acquaintance with Beethoven — Death of Wieland — Struggle of Germany against Napoleon—Goethe's indifference in politics, but earnestness in art—Accused of looking on life only as an artist—Accused of irreligion—Changes in his religious opinions—Opposition to dogmatic teachings—Theosophy and ethics—His religion—His system of morals—Character of his old age—His oriental studies—"The Westöstliche Divan"—Ovation at Frankfurt 526

CHAPTER VI

THE ACTIVITY OF AGE

PAGE

Publication of the "Kunst und Alterthum"—His growing tendency towards mysticism—Visit of Werther's Charlotte—Death of his wife, Christiane—Marriage of his son with Ottilie von Pogwisch—Anecdote of the enlargement of the Jena library—Quarrel with the Landtag concerning the accounts of the commission for art and science—Charged with stealing an ingot of gold—Story of Döbereiner and the bar of platinum—Story of the hundred engravings borrowed from Knebel—Miscellaneous literary labours—"Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre"—Character of the work—Eckermann's account of its extension—Opposition to it in Germany—Spread of Goethe's fame in Italy, England, and France—Vitality of his old age—His passion for Fraulein von Lewezow—Celebration of his jubilee at Weimar—Protection of his copyright throughout Germany—Death of Karl August—Effect on Goethe 541

CHAPTER VII

SECOND PART OF FAUST

Embarrassment in expressing a faithful opinion—Comparison of the impression produced by "Faust" and the "Second Part"—Character of the "Second Part"—Symbolism in art must be intrinsically beautiful and interesting, as well as significant—The "Second Part of Faust" a failure—Analysis and criticism . 557

CHAPTER VIII

THE CLOSING SCENES

Goethe in his eighty-first year—Revolution of July, and contest between Cuvier and St. Hilaire—Death of Goethe's only son—Tribute to Goethe from fifteen Englishmen—Thackeray's residence at Weimar, and interview with Goethe—Goethe's activity in his old age—Signs of decay—Death 566

INDEX 577

THE LIFE OF GOETHE

BOOK THE FIRST

1749 TO 1765

Vom Vater hab' ich die Statur,
Des Lebens ernstes Führen;
Von Mütterchen die Frohnatur,
Die Lust zu fabuliren.

Hätte Gott mich anders gewollt,
So hätt' er mich anders gebaut.

CHAPTER I

PARENTAGE

QUINTUS CURTIUS tells us that, in certain seasons, Bactria was darkened by whirlwinds of dust, which completely covered and concealed the roads. Left thus without their usual landmarks, the wanderers awaited the rising of the stars,—

"To light them on their dim and perilous way."

May we not say the same of Literature? From time to time its pathways are so obscured beneath the rubbish of the age, that many a footsore pilgrim seeks in vain the hidden route. In such times let us imitate the Bactrians: let us cease to look upon the confusions of the day, and turning our gaze upon the great Immortals who have gone before, seek guidance from their light. In all ages the biographies of great men have been fruitful in lessons. In all ages they have been powerful stimulants to a noble ambition. In all ages they have been regarded as armouries wherein are gathered the weapons with which great battles have been won.

There may be some among my readers who will dispute Goethe's claim to greatness. They will admit that he was a great poet, but deny that he was a great man. In denying it, they will set forth the qualities which constitute their ideal

of greatness, and finding him deficient in some of these qualities, will dispute his claim. But in awarding him that title, I do not mean to imply that he was an ideal man; I do not present him as the exemplar of all greatness. No man can be such an exemplar. Humanity reveals itself in fragments. One man is the exponent of one kind of excellence, another of another. Achilles wins the victory, and Homer immortalises it: we bestow the laurel crown on both. In virtue of a genius such as modern times have only seen equalled once or twice, Goethe deserves the epithet of great; unless we believe a great genius can belong to a small nature. Nor is it in virtue of genius alone that he deserves the title. Merck said of him that what he lived was more beautiful than what he wrote; and his Life, amid all its weaknesses and all its errors, presents a picture of a certain grandeur of soul, which cannot be contemplated unmoved. I shall make no attempt to conceal his faults. Let them be dealt with as harshly as severest justice may dictate, they will not eclipse the central light which shines throughout his life. But although I neither wish to excuse, nor to conceal faults which he assuredly had, we must always bear in mind that the faults of a celebrated man are apt to carry an undue emphasis. They are thrown into stronger relief by the very splendour of his fame. Had Goethe never written *Faust* no one would have heard that he was an inconstant lover, or a tepid politician. His glory immortalises his shame.

Let us begin as near the beginning as may be desirable, by glancing at his ancestry. That he had inherited his organisation and tendencies from his forefathers, and could call nothing in himself original, he has told us in these verses:

> "Vom Vater hab' ich die Statur,
> Des Lebens ernstes Führen;
> Von Mütterchen die Frohnatur,
> Die Lust zu fabuliren.
> Urahnherr war der Schönsten hold,
> Das spukt so hin und wieder;
> Urahnfrau liebte Schmuck und Gold,
> Das zuckt wohl durch die Glieder.
> Sind nun die Elemente nicht,
> Aus dem Complex zu trennen,
> Was ist denn an dem ganzen Wicht
> Original zu nennen?"[1]

[1] "From my father I inherit my frame, and the steady guidance of life; from dear little mother my happy disposition, and love of story-telling. My ancestor was a 'ladies' man,' and that habit haunts me now and then; my ancestress

The first glimpse we get of his ancestry carries us back to about the middle of the seventeenth century. In the Grafschaft of Mansfeld, in Thuringia, the little town of Artern numbered among its scanty inhabitants a farrier, by name Hans Christian Goethe. His son, Frederick, being probably of a more meditative turn, selected a more meditative employment than that of shoeing horses: he became a tailor. Having passed an apprenticeship (not precisely that of *Wilhelm Meister*), he commenced his Wanderings, in the course of which he reached Frankfurt. Here he soon found employment, and being, as we learn, "a ladies' man," he soon also found a wife. The master tailor, Sebastian Lutz, gave him his daughter, on his admission to the citizenship of Frankfurt and to the guild of tailors. This was in 1687. Several children were born, and vanished; in 1700 his wife, too, vanished, to be replaced, five years afterwards, by Frau Cornelia Schellhorn, the daughter of another tailor, Georg Walter; she was then a widow, blooming with six-and-thirty summers, and possessing the solid attractions of a good property, namely, the hotel *Zum Weidenhof*, where her new husband laid down the scissors, and donned the landlord's apron. He had two sons by her, and died in 1730, aged seventy-three.

Of these two sons, the younger, Johann Caspar, was the father of our poet. Thus we see that Goethe, like Schiller, sprang from the people. He makes no mention of the lucky tailor, nor of the Thuringian farrier, in his autobiography. This silence may be variously interpreted. At first, I imagined it was aristocratic prudery on the part of *von* Goethe, minister and nobleman; but it is never well to put ungenerous constructions, when others, equally plausible and more honourable, are ready; let us rather follow the advice of Arthur Helps, to "employ our *imagination* in the service of charity." We can easily imagine that Goethe was silent about the

loved finery and show, which also runs in the blood. If, then, the elements are not to be separated from the whole, what can one call original in the descendant?"

This is a very inadequate translation; but believing that to leave German untranslated is unfair to those whose want of leisure or inclination has prevented their acquiring the language, I shall throughout translate every word cited. At the same time it is unfair to the poet, and to the writer quoting the poet, to be forced to give translations which are after all felt *not* to represent the force and spirit of the original. I will do my best to give *approximative* translations, which the reader will be good enough to accept as such, rather than be left in the dark.

tailor, because, in truth, having never known him, there was none of that affectionate remembrance which encircles the objects of early life, to make this grandfather figure in the autobiography beside the grandfather Textor, who *was* known and loved. Probably, also, the tailor was seldom talked of in the parental circle. There is a peculiar and indelible ridicule attached to the idea of a tailor in Germany, which often prevents people of much humbler pretensions than Goethe, from whispering their connection with such a trade. Goethe does mention this grandfather in the Second Book of his *Autobiography*, and tells us how he was teased by the taunts of boys respecting his humble parentage; these taunts even went so far as to imply that he might possibly have had several grandfathers; and he began to speculate on the possibility of some latent aristocracy in his descent. This made him examine with some curiosity the portraits of noblemen, to try and detect a likeness.

Johann Caspar Goethe received a good education, travelled into Italy, became an imperial councillor in Frankfurt, and married, in 1748, Katharina Elizabeth, daughter of Johann Wolfgang Textor, the chief magistrate (*Schultheiss*).[1]

The genealogical tables of kings and conquerors are thought of interest, and why should not the genealogy of our poet be equally interesting to us? In the belief that it will be so, I here subjoin it.

Goethe's father was a cold, stern, formal, somewhat pedantic, but truth-loving upright-minded man. He hungered for knowledge; and, although in general of a laconic turn, freely imparted all he learned. In his domestic circle his word was law. Not only imperious, but in some respects capricious, he was nevertheless greatly respected, if little loved, by wife, children, and friends. He is characterised by Krause as *ein geradliniger Frankfurter Reichsbürger*—"a formal Frankfurt citizen," whose habits were as measured as his gait.[2] From

[1] The family of Textor and Weber exist to this day, and under both names in the Hohenlohe territory. Karl Julius Weber, the humorous author of "Democritus" and of the "Briefe eines in Deutschland reisenden Deutschen," was a member of it. In the description of the *Jubilæum* of the Nürnberg University of Altorf, in 1723, mention is made of one Joannes Guolfgangus Textor as a bygone ornament of the faculty of law; and Mr. Demmler, to whom I am indebted for these particulars, suggests the probability of this being the same John Wolfgang, who died as Oberbürgermeister in Frankfort, 1701.

[2] Perhaps *geradliniger* might be translated as "an old square-toes," having reference to the antiquated cut of the old man's clothes. The fathers of the

GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE GOETHE FAMILY

FRIEDRICH GEORG GOETHE,
Born Sept. 7, 1657, at Artern, in the county of Mansfeld, where his father was a farrier; from 1687 a citizen and tailor in Frankfurt-on-the-Maine; married first, ANNA ELISABETH LUTZ, a tailor's daughter (died 1700); secondly, May 4, 1705, Mrs. CORNELIA SCHELLHORN (born Sept. 27, 1668; buried March 28, 1754); died as keeper of the inn *Zum Weidenhof* at Frankfurt; buried Feb. 13, 1730.

JOHANN MICHAEL GOETHE, died 1733.

JOHANN CASPAR GOETHE, born July 31, 1710; died May 27, 1782, as Imperial Councillor in Frankfurt; married Aug. 20, 1748, KATHARINA ELIZABETH TEXTOR (born Feb. 19, 1731; died Sept. 13, 1808).

JOHANN WOLFGANG von GOETHE, born Aug. 28, 1749; died March 22, 1832; from July 13, 1788, lived with CHRISTIANE VULPIUS (died June 6, 1816); married her, Oct. 19, 1806.

CORNELIE FRIEDRICA CHRISTIANE, born Dec. 7, 1750; died June 8, 1777, at Emmendingen; married Nov. 1, 1773, JOH. GE. SCHLOSSER (born 1739; died 1799, at Frankfurt).

HERMANN JACOB, born Nov. 26, 1752; died Jan. 11, 1759.

KATHARINA ELIZABETH, born Sept. 8, 1754; died Jan. 19, 1756

JOHANNA MARIA, born March 28, 1756; died Aug. 9, 1759.

GEORG ADOLF, born June 14, 1760; died Feb. 16, 1761.

JULIUS AUGUST WALTHER von GOETHE, born Dec. 25, 1789, in Weimar; died as Privy Councillor, Oct. 28, 1830, at Rome; married April 1817, OTTILIE von POGWISCH.

MARIE ANNA LUISE SCHLOSSER, born Oct. 28, 1774; died Sept. 28, 1811; married 1795, NICOLOVIUS, at Eutin (died 1839).

ELISABETH KATHARINA JULIE SCHLOSSER, born May 10, 1777; died July 5, at Emmendingen.

WALTHER WOLFGANG von GOETHE, born Feb. 1818.

WOLFGANG MAX. von GOETHE, born Sept. 18, 1820.

ALMA von GOETHE, born Oct. 1827.

GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE TEXTOR FAMILY.

GEORG WEBER,
Citizen of Weickersheim, a small town in the Jaxt district, near Mergentheim.

WOLFGANG WEBER,
Councillor at Hohenlohe, and Director of the Chancery at Neuenstein; according to the custom of the time, translated his family name WEBER into Latin, and called himself TEXTOR.

JOHANN WOLFGANG TEXTOR,
Born at Neuenstein; until 1690, Vice Court Judge and President-Vicar at the Electoral Court of Justice at Heidelberg; afterwards Consul and First Syndic at Frankfurt; died there Dec. 27, 1701.

CHRISTOPH HEINRICH TEXTOR, Councillor of Justice and Advocate to the Elector Palatine; died 1716.

JOHANN NICOLAUS TEXTOR, Colonel and City Commandant; married 1737, a widow von BARCKHAUSEN, born von KLETTENBERG.

JOHANN WOLFGANG TEXTOR, born Dec. 12, 1693; died Feb. 6, 1771, as Imperial Councillor and Magistrate at Frankfurt; married ANNA MARGARETHA LINDHEIMER, daughter of Dr. CORNELIUS LINDHEIMER, Procurator of the Imperial Chamber of Justice at Wetzlar (born July 31, 1711; died April 15, 1783).

KATHARINA ELISABETH, born Feb. 19, 1731; died Sept. 13, 1808; married Aug. 20, 1748, the father of the Poet, Councillor GOETHE.

JOHANNA MARIA, born 1734; married Nov. 11, 1751, the druggist MELBER, in Frankfurt.

ANNA MARIA, born 1738; married Nov. 2, 1756, the clergyman M. Stark, in Frankfurt.

JOHANN JOST, born 1739; died Sept. 19, 1792, as Sheriff in Frankfurt.

ANNA CHRISTINA, born Oct. 24, 1743.

him the poet inherited the well-built frame, the erect carriage, and the measured movement which in old age became stiffness, and was construed as diplomacy or haughtiness; from him also came that orderliness and stoicism which have so much distressed those who cannot conceive genius otherwise than as vagabond in his habits. The craving for knowledge, the delight in communicating it, the almost pedantic attention to details, which are noticeable in the poet, are all traceable in the father.

The mother was more like what we conceive as the proper parent for a poet. She is one of the pleasantest figures in German literature, and one standing out with greater vividness than almost any other. Her simple, hearty, joyous, and affectionate nature endeared her to all. She was the delight of children, the favourite of poets and princes. To the last retaining her enthusiasm and simplicity, mingled with great shrewdness and knowledge of character, *Frau Aja*, as they christened her, was at once grave and hearty, dignified and simple. She had read most of the best German and Italian authors, had picked up considerable desultory information, and had that "mother wit" which so often in women and poets seems to render culture superfluous, their rapid intuitions anticipating the tardy conclusions of experience. Her letters are full of spirit: not always strictly grammatical; not irreproachable in orthography; but vigorous and vivacious. After a lengthened interview with her, an enthusiast exclaimed, "Now do I understand how Goethe has become the man he is!"[1] Wieland, Merck, Bürger, Madame de Stael, Karl August, and other great people sought her acquaintance. The Duchess Amalia corresponded with her as with an intimate friend; and her letters were welcomed eagerly at the Weimar Court. She was married at seventeen, to a man for whom she had no love, and was only eighteen when the poet was born.[2] This, instead of making her prematurely old, seems to have perpetuated her girlhood. "I and my Wolfgang," she said, "have always held fast to each other, because we were both young together." To him she trans-

present generation dubbed the stiff coat of their grandfathers, with its square skirts and collars, by the name of *magister matheseos*, the name by which the Pythagorean proposition is known in Germany.

[1] *Ephemeriden der Literatur*, quoted in *Nicolovius über Goethe*.

[2] Lovers of parallels may be reminded that Napoleon's mother was only eighteen when the hero of Austerlitz was born.

mitted her love of story-telling, her animal spirits, her love of everything which bore the stamp of distinctive individuality, and her love of seeing happy faces around her. "Order and quiet," she says in one of her charming letters to Freiherr von Stein, "are my principal characteristics. Hence I despatch at once whatever I have to do, the most disagreeable always first, and I gulp down the devil without looking at him. When all has returned to its proper state, then I defy any one to surpass me in good humour." Her heartiness and tolerance are the causes, she thinks, why every one likes her. "I am fond of people, and *that* every one feels directly—young and old. I pass without pretension through the world, and that gratifies men. I never *bemoralise* any one—*always seek out the good that is in them, and leave what is bad to him who made mankind, and knows how to round off the angles.* In this way I make myself happy and comfortable." Who does not recognise the son in those accents? The kindliest of men inherited his loving happy nature from the heartiest of women.

He also inherited from her his dislike of unnecessary agitation and emotion: that deliberate avoidance of all things capable of disturbing his peace of mind, which has been construed as coldness. Her sunny nature shrank from storms. She stipulated with her servants that they were not to trouble her with afflicting news, except upon some positive necessity for the communication. In 1805, when her son was dangerously ill at Weimar, no one ventured to speak to her on the subject. Not until he had completely recovered did she voluntarily enter on it. "I knew it all," she remarked, "but said nothing. Now we can talk about him without my feeling a stab every time his name is mentioned."

In this voluntary insulation from disastrous intelligence, there is something so antagonistic to the notorious craving for excitement felt by the Teutonic races, something so unlike the morbid love of intellectual drams—the fierce alcohol of emotion with which we intoxicate ourselves, that it is no wonder if Goethe has on this account been accused of insensibility. Yet, in truth, a very superficial knowledge of his nature suffices to show that it was not from coldness he avoided indulgence in the "luxury of woe." It was excess of sensibility, not want of sympathy. His delicate nature shrank from the wear and tear of excitement. That which to coarser natures would have been a stimulus, was to him a

disturbance. It is doubtless the instinct of an emotional nature to seek such stimulants; but his reason was strong enough to keep this instinct under control. Falk relates that when Goethe heard he had looked upon Wieland in death, "and thereby procured myself a miserable evening, and worse night, he vehemently reproved me for it. Why, said he, should I suffer the delightful impression of the features of my friend to be obliterated by the sight of a disfigured mask? I carefully avoided seeing Schiller, Herder, or the Duchess Amalia, in the coffin. I, for my part, desire to retain in my memory a picture of my departed friends more full of soul than the mere mask can furnish me."

This subjection of the instinct of curiosity to the dictates of reason is not coldness. There is danger indeed of carrying it too far, and of *coddling* the mind; but into this extreme neither Goethe nor his mother can be said to have fallen. At any rate, let the reader pronounce what judgment he thinks fit, it is right that he should at the outset distinctly understand it to be a characteristic of the man. The self-mastery it implies forms the keystone of his character. In him the *emotive* was subjected to the *intellectual.* He was "king over himself." He, as he tells us, found men eager enough to lord it over others, while indifferent whether they could rule themselves—

> "Das wollen alle Herren seyn,
> Und keiner ist Herr von sich!"

He made it his study to subdue into harmonious unity the rebellious impulses which incessantly threatened the supremacy of reason. Here, on the threshold of his career, let attention be called to this cardinal characteristic: his footsteps were not guided by a light tremulous in every gust, liable to fall to the ground amid the hurrying agitation of vulgar instincts, but a torch grasped by an iron will, and lifted high above the currents of those lower gusts, shedding a continuous steady gleam across the troubled path. I do not say he never stumbled. At times the clamorous agitation of rebellious passions misled him as it misleads others, for he was very human, often erring; but viewing his life as it disposes itself into the broad masses necessary for a characteristic apprecia-tion, I say that in him, more than in almost any other man of his time, naked vigour of resolution, moving in alliance

with steady clearness of intellect, produced a self-mastery of the very highest kind.[1]

This he owed partly to his father and partly to his mother. It was from the latter he derived those characteristics which determined the movement and orbit of his artistic nature: her joyous, healthy temperament, humour, fancy, and susceptibility, were, in him, creative, owing to the marvellous insight which gathered up the scattered and vanishing elements of experience into new and living combinations.

CHAPTER II

THE PRECOCIOUS CHILD

JOHANN WOLFGANG GOETHE was born on the 28th August 1749, as the clock sounded the hour of noon, in the busy town of Frankfurt-on-the-Maine. The busy town, as may be supposed, was quite heedless of what was then passing in the corner of that low, heavy-beamed room in the *Grosse Hirsch Graben*, where an infant, black, and almost lifeless, was watched with agonising anxiety—an anxiety dissolving into tears of joy, as the aged grandmother exclaimed to the pale mother: "*Räthin, er lebt!* he lives!" But if the town was heedless, not so were the stars, as astrologers will certify; the stars knew who was gasping for life beside his trembling mother, and in solemn convocation they prefigured his future greatness. Goethe, with a grave smile, notes this conjunction of the stars.

Whatever the stars may have betokened, this August 1749 was a momentous month to Germany, if only because it gave birth to the man whose influence on his nation has been greater than that of any man since Luther, not even excepting Lessing. A momentous month in very momentous times. It was the middle of the eighteenth century: a period when the movement which had culminated in Luther was passing from religion to politics, and freedom of thought was translating itself into liberty of action. From theology the movement had communicated itself to philosophy, morals, and politics. The agitation was still mainly in the higher classes,

[1] "All I have had to do I have done in kingly fashion," he said: "I let tongues wag as they pleased. What I saw to be the right thing that I did."

but it was gradually descending to the lower. A period of deep unrest: big with events which would expand the conceptions of all men, and bewilder some of the wisest.

It is not the biographer's province to write a history of an epoch while telling the story of a life; but some historical indication is necessary, in order that the time and place should be vividly before the reader's mind; and perhaps the readiest way to call up such a picture in a paragraph will be to mention some of the "notables" of that period, and at what points in their career they had arrived. In that very month of August Madame du Chatelet, the learned translator of Newton, the loving but pedantic *Uranie* of Voltaire, died in childbed, leaving him without a companion, and without a counsellor to prevent his going to the court of Frederick the Great. In that year Rousseau was seen in the brilliant circle of Madame d'Epinay, disputing with the Encyclopedists, declaiming eloquently on the sacredness of maternity, and going home to cast his newborn infant into the basket of the Foundling Hospital. In that year Samuel Johnson was toiling manfully over his English dictionary; Gibbon was at Westminster, trying with unsuccessful diligence to master the Greek and Latin rudiments; Goldsmith was delighting the Tony Lumpkins of his district, and the "wandering bear-leaders of genteeler sort," with his talents, and enjoying that "careless idleness of fireside and easy chair," and that "tavern excitement of the game of cards, to which he looked back so wistfully from his first hard London struggles." In that year Buffon, whose *scientific* greatness Goethe was one of the first to perceive, produced the first volume of his *Histoire Naturelle.* Haller was at Göttingen performing those experiments on sensibility and irritability which were to immortalise him. John Hunter, who had recently left Scotland, joined Cheselden at the Chelsea Hospital. Mirabeau and Alfieri were tyrants in their nurseries; and Marat was an innocent boy of five years old, toddling about in the Val de Travers, unmolested as yet by the wickedness of "les aristocrats."

If these names have helped to call up the period, we must seek in Goethe's own pages for a picture of the place. He has painted the city of Frankfurt as one who loved it. No city in Germany was better fitted for the birthplace of this cosmopolitan poet. It was rich in speaking memorials of the past, remnants of old German life, lingering echoes of the

voices which sounded through the middle ages: such as a town within a town, the fortress within a fortress, the walled cloisters, the various symbolical ceremonies still preserved from feudal times, and the Jews' quarter, so picturesque, so filthy, and so strikingly significant. But if Frankfurt was thus representative of the past, it was equally representative of the present. The travellers brought there by the Rhine-stream, and by the great northern roads, made it a representative of Europe, and an emporium of Commerce. It was thus a centre for that distinctively modern idea—Industrialism—which began, and must complete, the destruction of Feudalism. This two-fold character Frankfurt retains to the present day: the storks, perched upon its ancient gables, look down upon the varied bustle of Fairs held by modern Commerce in the ancient streets.

The feeling for antiquity, and especially for old German life, which his native city would thus picturesquely cultivate, was rivalled by a feeling for Italy and its splendours, which was cultivated under the paternal roof. His father had lived in Italy, and had retained an inextinguishable delight in all its beauties. His walls were hung with architectural drawings and views of Rome; and the poet was thus familiar from infancy with the Piazza del Popolo, St. Peter's, the Coliseum, and other centres of grand associations. Typical of his own nature and strivings is this conjunction of the Classic and the German—the one lying nearest to him, in homely intimacy, the other lying outside, as a mere *scene* he was to contemplate. Goethe by nature was more Greek than German, but he never freed himself from German influence.

Thus much on time and place, the two cardinal conditions of life. Before quitting such generalities for the details of biography, it may be well to call attention to one hitherto unnoticed, viz., the moderate elevation of his social status. Placed midway between the two perilous extremes of affluence and want, his whole career received a modifying impulse from this position. He never knew adversity. This alone must necessarily have deprived him of one powerful chord which vibrates through literature. Adversity, the sternest of teachers, had nothing to teach him. He never knew the gaunt companionship of Want, whispering terrible suggestions. He never knew the necessity to conquer for himself breathing-room in the world; and thus all the feelings of bitterness, opposition, and defiance, which accompany and perplex the

struggle of life, were to him almost unknown; and he was taught nothing of the aggressive and practical energy which these feelings develop in impetuous natures. How much of his serenity, how much of his dislike to politics, may be traced to this origin?

That he was the loveliest baby ever seen, exciting admiration wherever nurse or mother carried him, and exhibiting, in swaddling clothes, the most wonderful intelligence, we need no biographer to tell us. Is it not said of every baby? But that he was in truth a wonderful child we have undeniable evidence, and of a kind less questionable than the statement of mothers and relatives. At three years old he could seldom be brought to play with little children, and only on the condition of their being pretty. One day, in a neighbour's house, he suddenly began to cry and exclaim, "That black child must go away! I can't bear him!" And he howled till he was carried home, where he was slowly pacified; the whole cause of his grief being the ugliness of the child.

A quick, merry little girl grew up by the boy's side. Four other children also came, but soon vanished. Cornelia was the only companion who survived, and for her his affection dated from her cradle. He brought his toys to her, wanted to feed her and attend on her, and was very jealous of all who approached her. "When she was taken from the cradle, over which he watched, his anger was scarcely to be quieted. He was altogether much more easily moved to anger than to tears." To the last his love for Cornelia was passionate.

In old German towns, Frankfurt among them, the ground-floor consists of a great hall where the vehicles are housed. This floor opens in folding trap-doors, for the passage of wine-casks into the cellars below. In one corner of the hall there is a sort of lattice, opening by an iron or wooden grating upon the street. This is called the *Geräms*. Here the crockery in daily use was kept; here the servants peeled their potatoes, and cut their carrots and turnips, preparatory to cooking; here also the housewife would sit with her sewing, or her knitting, giving an eye to what passed in the street (when anything did pass there) and an ear to a little neighbourly gossip. Such a place was of course a favourite with the children.

One fine afternoon, when the house was quiet, Master Wolfgang, with his cup in his hand and nothing to do, finds himself in this *Geräms*, looking out into the silent street; and

telegraphing to the young Ochsensteins who dwelt opposite. By way of doing something he begins to fling the crockery into the street, delighted at the smashing music which it makes, and stimulated by the approbation of the brothers Ochsenstein, who chuckle at him from over the way. The plates and dishes are flying in this way, when his mother returns: she sees the mischief with a housewifely horror, melting into girlish sympathy, as she hears how heartily the little fellow laughs at his escapade, and how the neighbours laugh at him.

This genial, indulgent mother employed her faculty for story-telling to his and her own delight. "Air, fire, earth, and water I represented under the forms of princesses; and to all natural phenomena I gave a meaning, in which I almost believed more fervently than my little hearers. As we thought of paths which led from star to star, and that we should one day inhabit the stars, and thought of the great spirits we should meet there, I was as eager for the hours of story-telling as the children themselves; I was quite curious about the future course of my own improvisation, and any invitation which interrupted these evenings was disagreeable. There I sat, and there Wolfgang held me with his large black eyes; and when the fate of one of his favourites was not according to his fancy, I saw the angry veins swell on his temples, I saw him repress his tears. He often burst in with 'But, mother, the princess won't marry the nasty tailor, even if he does kill the giant.' And when I made a pause for the night, promising to continue it on the morrow, I was certain that he would in the meanwhile think it out for himself, and so he often stimulated my imagination. When I turned the story according to his plan, and told him that he had found out the dénouement, then was he all fire and flame, and one could see his little heart beating underneath his dress! His grandmother, who made a great pet of him, was the confidante of all his ideas as to how the story would turn out, and as she repeated these to me, and I turned the story according to these hints, there was a little diplomatic secrecy between us, which we never disclosed. I had the pleasure of continuing my story to the delight and astonishment of my hearers, and Wolfgang saw with glowing eyes the fulfilment of his own conceptions, and listened with enthusiastic applause." What a charming glimpse of mother and son!

The grandmother here spoken of lived in the same house,

and when lessons were finished, away the children hurried to her room, to play. The dear old lady, proud as a grandmother, "spoiled" them of course, and gave them many an eatable, which they would get only in her room. But of all her gifts nothing was comparable to the puppetshow with which she surprised them on the Christmas Eve of 1753, and which Goethe says "created a new world in the house." The reader of *Wilhelm Meister* will remember with what solemn importance the significance of such a puppetshow is treated, and may guess how it would exercise the boy's imagination.

There was also the grandfather Textor, whose house the children gladly visited, and whose grave personality produced an impression on the boy, all the deeper because a certain mysterious awe surrounded the monosyllabic dream-interpreting old gentleman. His portrait presents him in a *perruque à huit étages*, with the heavy golden chain round his neck, suspending a medal given him by the Empress Maria Theresa; but Goethe remembered him more vividly in his dressing-gown and slippers, moving amid the flowers of his garden, weeding, training, watering; or seated at the dinner table where on Sundays he received his guests.

The mother's admirable method of cultivating the inventive activity of the boy, finds its pendant in the father's method of cultivating his receptive faculties. He speaks with less approbation than it deserved of his father's idea of education; probably because late in life he felt keenly his deficiencies in systematic training. But the principle upon which the father proceeded was an excellent one, namely, that of exercising the intellect rather than the memory. An anecdote was dictated, generally something from everyday life, or perhaps a trait from the life of Frederick the Great; on this the boy wrote dialogues and moral reflections in Latin and German. Some of these have been preserved and published; a glance at them shows what a mastery over Latin was achieved in his eighth year. We can never be *quite* certain that the hand of the master is not mingled with that of the child; but the very method of independence which the master throughout pursued is contrary to a supposition of his improving the exercises, although the style is certainly above what even advanced pupils usually achieve. Dr. Wisemann, of Frankfurt, to whom we are indebted for these exercises and compositions, written during Goethe's sixth, seventh, and eighth years, thinks there can be no doubt of their being the unassisted productions of

the boy. In one of the dialogues there is a pun which proves that the dialogue was written in Latin first, and then translated into German. It is this: the child is making wax figures, his father asks him why he does not relinquish such trivialities. The word used is *nuces*, which, meaning trivialities in a metaphorical sense, is by the boy wilfully interpreted in its ordinary sense, as *nuts*—"*cera nunc ludo non nucibus*"—I play with wax, not with nuts. The German word *nüsse* means nuts simply, and has no metaphorical meaning.

Here is one of his moral reflections. "Horatius and Cicero were indeed Heathens, yet more sensible than many Christians; for the one says silver is baser than gold, gold than virtue; and the other says nothing is so beautiful as virtue. Moreover, many Heathens have surpassed Christians in virtue. Who was truer in friendship than Damon? more generous than Alexander? more just than Aristides? more abstinent than Diogenes? more patient than Socrates? more humane than Vespasian? more industrious than Apelles and Demosthenes?" Platitudes these, doubtless; but they are platitudes which serve many as the ripe maxims of maturity. They give us a notion of the boy being somewhat "old-fashioned," and they show great progress in culture. His progress in Greek was remarkable, as may be seen from his published exercises. Italian he learned by listening to his father teaching Cornelia. He pretended to be occupied with his own lesson, and caught up all that was said. French, too, he learned, as the exercises testify; and thus before he is eight, we find him writing German, French, Italian, Latin, and Greek.

He was, in fact, a precocious child. This will probably startle many readers, especially if they have adopted the current notion that precocity is a sign of disease, and that marvellous children are necessarily evanescent fruits which never ripen, early blossoms which wither early. *Observatum fere est celerius occidere festinatam maturitatem*, says Quintilian, in the mournful passage which records the loss of his darling son; and many a proud parent has seen his hopes frustrated by early death, or by matured mediocrity following the brilliant promise. It may help to do away with some confusion on this subject, if we bear in mind that men distinguish themselves by *receptive* capacity and by *productive* capacity; they learn, and they invent. In men of the highest class these two qualities are united. Shakespeare and Goethe are not less remarkable for the variety of their knowledge, than for the activity of their

invention. But as we call the child clever who learns his lessons rapidly, and the child clever who shows wit, sagacity, and invention, this ambiguity of phrase has led to surprise when the child who was "so clever" at school, turns out a mediocre man; or, conversely, when the child who was a dunce at school turns out a man of genius.

Goethe's precocity was nothing abnormal. It was the activity of a mind at once greatly receptive and greatly productive. Through life he manifested the same eager desire for knowledge, not in the least alarmed by that bugbear of "knowledge stifling originality," which alarms some men of questionable genius and unquestionable ignorance. He knew that if abundant fuel stifles miserable fires, it makes the great fire blaze.

> "Ein Quidam sagt: 'Ich bin von keiner Schule;
> Kein Meister lebt mit dem ich buhle;
> Auch bin ich weit davon entfernt
> Dass ich von Todten was gelernt.'
> Das heisst, wenn ich ihn recht verstand:
> 'Ich bin ein Narr auf eigne Hand!'"[1]

In the summer of 1754 the old house was entirely rebuilt, Wolfgang officiating at the ceremony of laying the foundation, dressed as a little bricklayer. The quick, observant boy found much in this rebuilding of the paternal house to interest him; he chatted with the workmen, learning their domestic circumstances, and learning something of the builder's art, which in after years so often occupied him. This event, moreover, led to his being sent to a friend during the restoration of the upper part of the house—for the family inhabited the house during its reconstruction, which was made story by story from the ground upwards—and the event also led to his being sent to school.

Viehoff thinks that Germany would have had quite another Goethe had the child been kept at a public school till he went to the university; and quotes Gervinus to the effect that Goethe's home education prevented his ever thoroughly appreciating history, and the struggles of the masses. Not accepting

[1] An exquisite epigram, which may be rendered thus:—

> An author boasting said: "I follow none;
> I owe my wisdom to myself alone;
> To neither ancient nor to modern sage
> Am I indebted for a single page."—
> To place this boasting in its proper light:
> This author is—a Fool in his own Right!

the doctrine that Character is formed by Circumstances, I cannot accept the notion of school life affecting the poet to this extent. We have only to reflect how many men are educated at public schools *without* their imbibing a love of history and sympathy with the masses, to see that Goethe's peculiarities must have had some other source than home education. That source lay in his character. Moreover, it is extremely questionable whether Goethe could have learned to sympathise with the masses in a school of one of the German imperial towns, where there could be no "masses," but only close corporations, ruled and ruling according to narrow and somewhat sordid ideas. From intercourse with the sons of Frankfurt citizens, no patriotism, certainly no republicanism, was to be learned. Nor was the public teaching, especially the historical teaching, likely to counteract this influence, or to inspire the youth with great national sympathies. Those ideas had not penetrated schools and universities. History, as taught by Schiller and Heeren, was undreamed of. "When I entered at Tübingen in 1826," writes Mr. Demmler to me, "the university of Paulus, Schelling, Hegel, and, in days of yore, of Melanchthon, Reuchlin, and Kepler, traditions were still surviving of the lectures of Rösler, professor of history. In one of them, as I was told by a fellow of the college who had heard it, the old cynical sceptic said, 'As regards the Maid of Orleans, I conclude she was a cow girl, and was, moreover, on a very friendly footing with the young officers.' Another time he said, 'Homer was a blind schoolmaster and wandering minstrel, and I cannot comprehend the fuss that is made about his poems.'" If this was the man who instructed Schelling and Hegel (1790–94), we may form some estimate of what Goethe would have heard forty years earlier.

One thing, however, he did learn at school, and that was disgust at schools. He, carefully trained at home, morally as well as physically, had to mingle with schoolboys who were what most schoolboys are,—dirty, rebellious, cruel, low in their tastes and habits. The contrast was very painful to him, and he was glad when the completion of his father's house once more enabled him to receive instruction at home.

One school anecdote he relates which well illustrates his power of self-command. Fighting during school time was severely punished. One day the teacher did not arrive at the appointed time. The boys played together till the hour was

nearly over, and then three of them, left alone with Wolfgang, resolved to drive him away. They cut up a broom, and reappeared with the switches "I saw their design, but I at once resolved not to resist them till the clock struck. They began pitilessly lashing my legs. I did not stir, although the pain made the minutes terribly long. My wrath deepened with my endurance, and on the first stroke of the hour I grasped one of my assailants by the hair and hurled him to the ground, pressing my knee on his back; I drew the head of the second, who attacked me behind, under my arm and nearly throttled him; with a dexterous twist I threw the third flat on the ground. They bit, scratched, and kicked. But my soul was swelling with one feeling of revenge, and I knocked their heads together without mercy. A shout of murder brought the household round us. But the scattered switches and my bleeding legs bore witness to my story."

CHAPTER III

EARLY EXPERIENCES

It is profoundly false to say that "Character is formed by Circumstance," unless the phrase, with unphilosophic equivocation, include the whole complexity of circumstances, from Creation downwards. Character is to outward Circumstance what the Organism is to the outward world: living *in* it, but not specially determined *by* it. A wondrous variety of vegetable and animal organisms live and flourish under circumstances which furnish the *means* of living, but do not determine the *specific forms* of each organism. In the same way *various* characters live under *identical* circumstances, nourished by them, not formed by them. Each character assimilates, from surrounding circumstance, that which is by it assimilable, rejecting the rest; just as from the earth and air the plant draws those elements which will serve it as food, rejecting the rest. Every biologist knows that Circumstance has a *modifying* influence; but he also knows that those modifications are only possible within certain limits. Abundance of food and peculiar treatment will modify the ferocity of a wild beast; but it will not make the lion a lamb. I have known a cat, living at a mill, from abundance of fish food take spontaneously to

the water; but the cat was distinctively a cat, and not an otter, although she had lost her dread of water. Goethe truly says that if Raphael were to paint peasants at an inn he could not help making them look like Apostles, whereas Teniers would make his Apostles look like Dutch boors; each artist working according to his own inborn genius.

Instead, therefore, of saying that man is the creature of Circumstance, it would be nearer the mark to say that man is the architect of Circumstance. It is Character which builds an existence out of Circumstance. Our strength is measured by our plastic power. From the same materials one man builds palaces, another hovels, one warehouses, another villas; bricks and mortar are mortar and bricks, until the architect can make them something else. Thus it is that in the same family, in the same circumstances, one man rears a stately edifice, while his brother, vacillating and incompetent, lives for ever amid ruins: the block of granite which was an obstacle on the pathway of the weak, becomes a stepping-stone on the pathway of the strong.[1]

If the reader agrees with this conception of the influence of circumstances, he will see that I was justified in laying some stress on Goethe's social position, though I controverted Viehoff and Gervinus on the point of school education. The continued absence of Want is one of those permanent and powerful conditions which necessarily modify a character. The well-fed lion loses his ferocity. But the temporary and incidental effect of school education, and other circumstances of minor importance, can never be said to modify a character; they only more or less accelerate its development.

Goethe furnishes us with a striking illustration of the degree in which outward circumstances affect character. He became early the favourite of several eminent painters, was constantly in their ateliers, playing with them, and making them explain their works to him. He was, moreover, a frequent visitor at picture sales and galleries, till at last his mind became so familiarised with the subjects treated by artists, that he could at once tell what historical or biblical subject was represented

[1] "The greatness or the smallness of a man is determined for him at his birth, as strictly as it is determined for a fruit, whether it is to be a currant or an apricot. Education, favourable circumstances, resolution, industry, may do much, in a certain sense they do *everything;* that is to say, they determine whether the poor apricot shall fall in the form of a green bead, blighted by the east wind, and be trodden under foot; or whether it shall expand into tender pride and sweet brightness of golden velvet."—RUSKIN, *Modern Painters*, iii. p. 44.

in every painting he saw. Indeed, his imagination was so stimulated by familiarity with these works, that in his tenth or eleventh year he wrote a description of twelve possible pictures on the history of Joseph, and some of his conceptions were thought worthy of being executed by artists of renown. It may be further added, in anticipation, that during the whole of his life he was thrown much with painters and pictures, and was for many years tormented with the desire of becoming an artist. If, therefore, Circumstance had the power of forming faculty, we ought to find him a painter. What is the fact? The fact is that he had *not* the faculty which makes a painter; he had no faculty, properly speaking, for plastic art, and years of labour, aided by the instruction and counsel of the best masters, were powerless to give him even a respectable facility. All therefore that Circumstance did in this case was to give his other faculties the opportunity of exercising themselves in art; it did not create the special faculty required. Circumstance can create no faculty: it is food, not nutrition; opportunity, not character.

Other boys, besides Goethe, heard the Lisbon earthquake eagerly discussed; but they had not their religious doubts awakened by it, as his were awakened in his sixth year. This catastrophe, which, in 1755, spread consternation over Europe, he has described as having greatly perturbed him. The narratives he heard of a magnificent capital suddenly smitten—churches, houses, towers, falling with a crash—the bursting land vomiting flames and smoke—and sixty thousand souls perishing in an instant—shook his faith in the beneficence of Providence. "God, the creator and preserver of heaven and earth," he says, "whom the first article of our creed declared to be so wise and benignant, had not displayed paternal care in thus consigning both the just and the unjust to the same destruction. In vain my young mind strove to resist these impressions. It was impossible; the more so as the wise and religious themselves could not agree upon the view to be taken of the event."

At this very time Voltaire was agitating the same doubts.

> "Direz-vous, en voyant cet amas de victimes:
> Dieu s'est vengé, leur mort est le prix de leur crimes?
> Quel crime, quelle faute ont commis ces enfans
> Sur le sein maternel écrasés et sanglans?
> Lisbonne qui n'est plus, eût-elle plus de vices
> Que Londres, que Paris, plongés dans les délices?
> Lisbonne est abîmée; et l'on danse à Paris."

We are not, however, to suppose that the child rushed hastily to such a conclusion. He debated it in his own mind as he heard it debated around him. Bettina records that on his coming one day from church, where he had listened to a sermon on the subject, in which God's goodness was justified, his father asked him what impression the sermon had made. "Why," said he, "it may after all be a much simpler matter than the clergyman thinks; God knows very well that an immortal soul can receive no injury from a mortal accident."

Doubts once raised would of course recur, and the child began to settle into a serious disbelief in the benignity of Providence, learning to consider God as the wrathful Deity depicted by the Hebrews. This was strengthened by the foolish conduct of those around him, who, on the occasion of a terrible thunderstorm which shattered the windows, dragged him and his sister into a dark passage, "where the whole household, distracted with fear, tried to conciliate the angry Deity by frightful groans and prayers." Many children are thus made sceptics; but in a deeply reflective mind such thoughts never long abide, at least not under the influences of modern culture, which teaches that Evil is essentially a narrow finite thing, thrown into obscurity on any comprehensive view of the Universe; and that the amount of evil massed together from every quarter must be held as small compared with the broad beneficence of Nature.

The doubts which troubled Wolfgang gradually subsided. In his family circle he was the silent reflective listener to constant theological debates. The various sects separating from the established church all seemed to be animated by the one desire of approaching the Deity, especially through Christ, more nearly than seemed possible through the ancient forms. It occurred to him that he, also, might make such an approach, and in a more direct way. Unable to ascribe a form to the Deity, he "resolved to seek Him in His works, and in the good old Bible fashion, to build an altar to Him." For this purpose he selected some types, such as ores and other natural productions, and arranged them in symbolical order on the elevations of a music stand; on the apex was to be a flame typical of the soul's aspiration, and for this a pastille did duty. Sunrise was awaited with impatience. The glittering of the house tops gave signal; he applied a burning-glass to the pastille, and thus was the worship

consummated by a priest of seven years old, alone in his bedroom!"[1]

Lest the trait just cited should make us forget that we are tracing the career of a child, it may be well to recall the anecdote related by Bettina, who had it from his mother; it will serve to set us right as to the childishness. One day his mother, seeing him from her window cross the street with his comrades, was amused with the gravity of his carriage, and asked laughingly, if he meant thereby to distinguish himself from his companions. The little fellow replied, "I *begin* with this. Later on in life I shall distinguish myself in far other ways."

On another occasion, he plagued her with questions as to whether the stars would perform all they had promised at his birth. "Why," said she, "must you have the assistance of the stars, when other people get on very well without?" "I am not to be satisfied with what does for other people!" said the juvenile Jupiter.

He had just attained his seventh year when the Seven Years' War broke out. His grandfather espoused the cause of Austria, his father that of Frederick. This difference of opinion brought with it contentions, and finally separation between the families. The exploits of the Prussian army were enthusiastically cited on the one side and depreciated on the other. It was an all-absorbing topic, awakening passionate partisanship. Men looked with strange feelings on the struggle which the greatest captain of his age was maintaining against Russia, Austria, and France. The ruler of not more than five millions of men was fighting unaided against the rulers of more than a hundred millions; and, in spite of his alleged violation of honour, it was difficult to hear without enthusiasm of his brilliant exploits. Courage and genius in desperate circumstances always awaken sympathy; and men paused not to ask what justification there was for the seizure of Silesia, nor why the Saxon standards drooped heavily in the churches of Berlin. The roar of victorious cannon stunned the judgment; the intrepid general was blindly worshipped. The Seven Years' War soon became a German epos. Archenholtz wrote its history (1791); and this work—noisy with guard-room bragging and folly, the rant of a *miles gloriosus*

[1] A similar anecdote is related of himself by that strange Romancist, once the idol of his day, and now almost entirely forgotten, Restif de la Bretonne. —See *Le Illuminé*, par GÉRARD DE NERVAL.

turned *philosophe*—was nevertheless received with enthusiasm, was translated into Latin, and read in schools in company with Tacitus and Cæsar.

This Seven Years' War was a circumstance from which, as it is thought, Goethe ought to have received some epic inspiration. He received from it precisely that which was food to his character. He caught the grand enthusiasm, but, as he says, it was the *personality* of the hero, rather than the greatness of his cause, which made him rejoice in every victory, copy the songs of triumph, and the lampoons directed against Austria. He learnt now the effects of party spirit. At the table of his grandfather he had to hear galling sarcasms, and vehement declamations showered on his hero. He heard Frederick "shamefully slandered." "And as in my sixth year, after the Lisbon earthquake, I doubted the beneficence of Providence, so now, on account of Frederick, I began to doubt the justice of the world."

Over the doorway of the house in which he was born was a lyre and a star, announcing, as every interpreter will certify, that a poet was to make that house illustrious. The poetic faculty early manifested itself. We have seen him inventing conclusions for his mother's stories; and as he grew older he began to invent stories for the amusement of his playfellows, after he had filled his mind with images—

> "Lone sitting on the shores of old Romance."

He had read the *Orbis Pictus*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Homer's *Iliad* in prose, *Virgil* in the original, *Telemachus*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Anson's Voyages*, with such books as *Fortunatus*, *The Wandering Jew*, *The Four Sons of Aymon*, &c. He also read and learned by heart most of the poets of that day: Gellert, Haller, who had really some gleams of poetry; and Canitz, Hagedorn, Drollinger,—writers then much beloved, now slumbering upon dusty shelves, unvisited, except by an occasional historian, and by spiders of an inquiring mind.

Not only did he tell stories, he wrote them also, as we gather from a touching little anecdote preserved by Bettina. The small-pox had carried off his little brother Jacob. To the surprise of his mother, Wolfgang shed no tears, believing Jacob to be with God in heaven. "Did you not love your little brother, then," asked his mother, "that you do not grieve for his loss?" He ran to his room, and from under

the bed drew a quantity of papers on which he had written stories and lessons. "All these I had written that I might teach them to him," said the child. He was then nine years old.

Shortly before the death of his brother he was startled by the sound of the warder's trumpet from the chief tower, announcing the approach of troops. This was in January 1759. It seemed as if the warder never *would* cease blowing his sounding horn. On came the troops in continuous masses, and the rolling tumult of their drums called all the women to the windows, and all the boys in admiring crowds into the streets. The troops were French. They seized the guard-house, and in a little while the city was a camp. To make matters worse, these troops were at war with Frederick, whom Wolfgang and his father worshipped. They were soon billeted through the town, and things relapsed into their usual routine, varied by a military occupation. In the Goethe-house an important personage was quartered,—Count de Thorane, the king's lieutenant, a man of taste and munificence, who assembled round him artists and celebrities, and won the affectionate admiration of Wolfgang, though he failed to overcome the hatred of the old councillor.

This occupation of Frankfurt brought with it many advantages to Goethe. It relaxed the severity of paternal book education, and began another kind of tuition—that of life and manners. The perpetual marching through the streets, the brilliant parades, the music, the "pomp, pride, and circumstance" were not without their influence. Moreover, he now gained conversational familiarity with French,[1] and acquaintance with the theatre. The French nation always carries its "civilisation" with it, namely, a café and a theatre. In Frankfurt both were immediately opened, and Goethe was presented with a "free admission" to the theatre, a privilege he used daily, not always understanding, but always enjoying what he saw. In tragedy the measured rhythm, slow utterance, and abstract language enabled him to understand the scenes, better than he understood comedy, wherein the language, besides moving amid the details of private life, was also more rapidly spoken. But at the theatre, boys are not critical, and do not need to understand a play in order to

[1] He says that he had never learned French before; but this is erroneous, as his exercises prove.

enjoy it.[1] A *Racine*, found upon his father's shelves, was eagerly studied, and the speeches were declaimed with more or less appreciation of their meaning.

The theatre, and acquaintance with a chattering little braggart, named Derones, gave him such familiarity with the language, that in a month he surprised his parents with his facility. This Derones was acquainted with the actors, and introduced him "behind the scenes." At ten years of age to go "behind the scenes" means a great deal. We shall see hereafter how early he was introduced behind the scenes of life. For the present let it be noted that he was a frequenter of the green-room, and admitted into the dressing-room, where the actors and actresses dressed and undressed with philosophic disregard to appearances; and this, from repeated visits, he also learned to regard as quite natural.

A grotesque scene took place between these two boys. Derones excelled, as he affirmed, in "affairs of honour." He had been engaged in several, and had always managed to disarm his antagonist, and then nobly forgive him. One day he pretended that Wolfgang had insulted him: satisfaction was peremptorily demanded, and a duel was the result. Imagine Wolfgang, aged twelve, arrayed in shoes and silver buckles, fine woollen stockings, dark serge breeches, green coat with gold facings, a waistcoat of gold cloth, cut out of his father's wedding waistcoat, his hair curled and powdered, his hat under his arm, and little sword, with silk sword-knot. This little mannikin stands opposite his antagonist with theatrical formality; swords clash, thrusts come quick upon each other, the combat grows hot, when the point of Derones' rapier lodges in the bow of Wolfgang's sword-knot; hereupon the French boy, with great magnanimity, declares that he is satisfied! The two embrace, and retire to a café to refresh themselves with a glass of almond milk.[2]

[1] Well do I remember, as a child of the same age, my intense delight at the French theatre, although certainly no three consecutive phrases could have been understood by me. Nay, so great was this delight, that although we regarded the French custom, of opening theatres on Sunday, with the profoundest sense of its "wickedness," the attraction became irresistible: and one Sunday night, at Nantes, my brother and I stole into the theatre with pricking consciences. To this day I see the actors gesticulating, and hear the audience cry *bis! bis!* redemanding a *couplet* (in which we joined with a stout British *encore!*); and to this day I remember how we laughed at what we certainly understood only in passing glimpses. Goethe's ignorance of the language was, I am sure, no obstacle to his enjoyment.

[2] To remove incredulity, it may be well to remind the reader that to this day German youths fight out their quarrels with swords—not fists.

Theatrical ambition, which stirs us all, soon prompted Wolfgang. As a child he had imitated Terence; he was now to make a more elaborate effort in the style of Piron. When the play was completed he submitted it to Derones, who, pointing out several grammatical blunders, promised to examine it more critically, and talked of giving it *his* support with the manager. Wolfgang saw, in his mind's eye, the name of his play already placarded at the corners of the street! Unhappily Derones in his critical capacity was merciless. He picked the play to pieces, and stunned the poor author with the critical jargon of that day; proclaimed the absolute integrity of the Three Unities, abused the English, laughed at the Germans, and maintained the sovereignty of French taste in so confident a style, that his listener was without a reply. If silenced, however, he was not convinced. It set him thinking on those critical canons. He studied the treatise on the Unities by Corneille, and the prefaces of Racine. The result of these studies was profound contempt for that system; and it is, perhaps, to Derones that we owe something of the daring defiance of all "rule," which startled Germany in *Goetz von Berlichingen*.

CHAPTER IV

VARIOUS STUDIES

At length, June 1761, the French quitted Frankfurt; and studies were seriously resumed. Mathematics, music, and drawing were commenced under paternal snperintendence. For mathematics Wolfgang had no aptitude; for music little; he learned to play on the harpsichord, and subsequently on the violoncello, but he never attained any proficiency. Drawing continued through life a pleasant exercise.

Left now to the calm of uninterrupted studies, he made gigantic strides. Even the hours of recreation were filled with some useful occupation. He added English to his polyglott store; and to keep up his several languages, he invented a Romance, wherein six or seven brothers and sisters scattered over the world corresponded with each other. The eldest describes in good German all the incidents of his travels; his sister answers in womanly style with short sharp sentences,

and nothing but full stops, much as *Siegwart* was afterwards written. Another brother studies theology, and therefore writes in Latin, with postcripts in Greek. A third and a fourth, clerks at Hamburgh and Marseilles, take English and French; Italian is given to a musician; while the youngest, who remains at home, writes in Jew-German. This romance led him to a more accurate study of geography. Having placed his characters in various parts of the globe, he was not satisfied till he had a distinct idea of these localities, so that the objects and events should be consonant with probability. While trying to master the strange dialect—Jew-German—he was led to the study of Hebrew. As the original language of the Old Testament this seemed to him an indispensable acquisition. His father consented to give him a Hebrew master; and although he attained no scholarship in that difficult language, yet the reading, translating, and committing to memory of various parts of the Bible, brought out the meaning more vividly before him; as every one will understand who compares the lasting effect produced by the laborious school reading of Sallust and Livy, with the facile reading of Robertson and Hume. The Bible made a profound impression upon him. To a boy of his constitutional reflectiveness, the severe study of this book could not fail to exercise a deep and permeating influence; nor, at the same time, in one so accustomed to think for himself, could it fail to awaken certain doubts. "The contradiction," he says, "between the actual or possible, and tradition, forcibly arrested me. I often posed my tutors with the sun standing still on Gideon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon; not to mention other incongruities and impossibilities. All my doubts were now awakened, as in order to master the Hebrew I studied the literal version by Schmidt, printed under the text."

One result of these Hebrew studies was a biblical poem on Joseph and his Brethren; which he dictated to a poor half idiot who lived in his father's house, and who had a mania for copying or writing under dictation. Goethe soon found the process of dictation of great service; and through life it continued to be his favourite mode of composition. All his best thoughts and expressions, he says, came to him while walking; he could do nothing seated.

To these multifarious studies in Literature must be added multifarious studies of Life. The old Frankfurt city with its busy crowds, its fairs, its mixed population, and its many

sources of excitement, offered great temptations, and great pasture to so desultory a genius. This is perhaps a case wherein Circumstance may be seen influencing the direction of Character. A boy of less impressionable nature, of less many-sided curiosity, would have lived in such a city undisturbed; some eyes would see little of the variety, some minds would be unsolicited by the exciting objects. But Goethe's desultory, because impulsive, nature found continual excitement in fresh objects; and he was thus led to study many things, to grasp at many forms of life, instead of concentrating himself upon a few. A large continuity of thought and effort was perhaps radically uncongenial to such a temperament; yet one cannot help speculating whether under other circumstances he might not have achieved it. Had he been reared in a quiet little old German town, where he would have daily seen the same faces in the silent streets, and come in contact with the same characters, his culture might have been less various, but it might perhaps have been deeper. Had he been reared in the country, with only the changing seasons and the sweet serenities of Nature to occupy his attention when released from study, he would certainly have been a different poet. The long summer afternoons spent in lonely rambles, the deepening twilights filled with shadowy visions, the slow uniformity of his external life necessarily throwing him more and more upon the subtler diversities of inward experience, would inevitably have influenced his genius in quite different directions, would have animated his works with a very different spirit. Yet who shall say that to him this would have been all gain? Who shall say that it would not have been a loss? For such an organisation as his the life he led was perhaps the very best. He was desultory, and the varieties of objects which solicited his attention, while they helped to encourage that tendency, also helped to nourish his mind with images and experience, such as afterwards became the richest material for his art. His mind was concrete, and in this many-coloured life at Frankfurt, it found abundant material.

At any rate it is idle to speculate on what would have been; we must concern ourselves with what was. The boy saw much of life, in the lower as in the upper classes. He passed from the society of the Count de Thorane, and of the artists whom the Count assembled round him (from whom the boy learned something of the technical details of painting), to the society

of the Jews in the strange, old, filthy, but deeply-interesting *Judengasse*; or to that of various artisans, in whose shops his curiosity found perpetual food. The Jews were doubly interesting to him: as social pariahs, over whom there hovered a mingled mystery of terror and contempt; and as descendants of the Chosen People, who preserved the language, the opinions, and many of the customs of the old biblical race. He was impressed by their adherence to old customs; by their steadfastness and courageous activity; by their strange features and accents; by their bright cleverness and good nature. The pretty Jewish maidens, also, smiled agreeably upon him. He began to mingle with them; managed to get permission to attend some of their ceremonies; and attended their schools. As to artisans, he was all his life curious about their handicrafts, and fond of being admitted into their family circles. Scott himself was not fonder of talking to one; nor did Scott make better use of such manifold experience. Frederika's sister told her visitor that Goethe knew several handicrafts, and had even learned basket-making from a lame man in Sesenheim. Here in Frankfurt the boy was welcome in many a shop. The jeweller, Lautensack, gladly admitted him to witness the mysteries of his art, while he made the bouquet of jewels for the Kaiser, or a diamond snuff-box which Rath Goethe had ordered as a present for his wife; the boy eagerly questioning him respecting precious stones, and the engravings which the jeweller possessed. Nothnagel, the painter, had established an oil-cloth manufactory; and the boy not only learned all the processes, but lent a helping hand.

Besides these forms of life, there were others whose influence must not be overlooked; one of these brings before us the Fräulein von Klettenburg, of whom we first get a glimpse in connection with his Confirmation, which took place at this period, 1763. The readers of *Wilhelm Meister* are familiar with this gentle and exquisite character, where she is represented in the "Confessions of a Beautiful Soul."[1] In the "Confessions" we see that the "piety" and retirement are represented less as the consequences of evangelical illumination, than of moral serenity and purity shrinking from

[1] Or as we in England, following Carlyle, have been misled into calling it, the "Confessions of a Fair Saint." The *schöne Seele—une belle âme*, was one of the favourite epithets of the last century. Goethe applies it to Klopstock, who was neither "saint nor fair."

contact with a world of which it has been her fate to see the coarsest features. The real Fräulein von Klettenburg it is perhaps now impossible to separate from the ideal so beautifully painted by Goethe. On him her influence was avowedly very great, both at this period and subsequently. It was not so much the effect of religious discussion, as the experience it gave him of a deeply religious nature. She was neither bigot nor prude. Her faith was an inner light which shed mild radiance around her.[1] Moved by her influence, he wrote a series of *Religious Odes*, after the fashion of that day, and greatly pleased his father by presenting them copied neatly in a quarto volume. His father begged that every year he would present him with such a volume.

A very different sort of female influence has now to be touched on. His heart began to flutter with the emotions of love. He was not quite fifteen, when Gretchen, the sister of one of his disreputable companions, first set his youthful pulses throbbing to the movements of the divine passion. The story is told in a rambling way in the Autobiography, and may here be very briefly dismissed. He had often turned his poetical talents to *practical* purposes, namely, writing wedding and funeral verses, the produce of which went in joyous feastings. In these he was almost daily thrown with Gretchen; but she, though kind, treated him as a child, and never permitted the slightest familiarity. A merry life they led, in picnics and pleasure bouts; and the coronation of the Kaiser Joseph II. was the occasion of increased festivity. One night, after the fatigues of a sight-seeing day, the hours rolled unheeded over these thoughtless, merry heads, and the stroke of midnight startled them. To his dismay, Wolfgang found he had forgotten the door-key with which hitherto he had been able to evade paternal knowledge of his late hours. Gretchen proposed that they should all remain together, and pass the night in conversation. This was agreed on. But, as in all such cases, the effort was vain. Fatigue weighed down their eyelids; conversation became feebler and feebler; two strangers already slumbered in corners of the room; one friend sat in a corner with his betrothed, her head reposing on his shoulder; another crossing his arms upon the table, rested his head upon them—and snored. The noisy room had

[1] In VARNHAGEN VON ENSE'S *Vermischte Schriften* (vol. iii. p. 33), the reader will find a few significant details respecting this remarkable person, and some of her poems.

become silent. Gretchen and her lover sat by the window talking in undertones. Fatigue at length conquered her also, and drooping her head upon his shoulder she too slept. With tender pride he supported that delicious burden, till like the rest he gave way, and slept.

It was broad day when he awoke. Gretchen was standing before a mirror arranging her cap. She smiled on him more amiably than ever she had smiled before; and pressed his hand tenderly as he departed. But now, while he seemed drawing nearer to her, the dénouement was at hand. Some of the joyous companions had been guilty of nefarious practices, such as forgeries of documents. His friend and Gretchen were involved in the accusation, though falsely. Wolfgang had to undergo a severe investigation, which, as he was perfectly innocent, did not much afflict him; but an affliction came out of the investigation, for Gretchen in her deposition concerning him, said, "I will not deny that I have often seen him, and seen him with pleasure, but I treated him as a child, and my affection for him was merely that of a sister." His exasperation may be imagined. A boy aspiring to the dignity of manhood knows few things more galling than to be treated as a boy by the girl whom he has honoured with his homage. He suffered greatly at this destruction of his romance: nightly was his pillow wet with tears; food became repugnant to him; life had no more an object.

But pride came to his aid; pride and that volatility of youth, which compensates for extra sensitiveness by extra facility for forgetting. He threw himself into study, especially of philosophy, under guidance of a tutor, a sort of *Wagner* to the young *Faust*. This tutor, who preferred dusty quartos to all the landscapes in the world, used to banter him upon being a true German, such as Tacitus describes, avid of the emotions excited by solitude and scenery. Laughter weaned him not from the enjoyment. He was enjoying his first sorrow: the luxury of melancholy, the romance of a forlorn existence, drove him into solitude. Like Bellerophon he fed upon his own heart, away from the haunts of men. He made frequent walking excursions. Those mountains which from earliest childhood had stood so distant, "haunting him like a passion," were now his favourite resorts. He visited Homburg, Kronburg, Königstein, Wiesbaden, Schwalbach, Biberich. These filled his mind with lovely images.

Severer studies were not neglected. To please his father he

was diligent in application to jurisprudence; to please himself he was still more diligent in literature: *Morhof's Polyhistor*, *Gessner's Isagoge*, and *Bayle's Dictionary*, filled him with the ambition to become an University Professor. Herein, as, indeed, throughout his career, we see the strange impressibility of his nature, which, like the fabled chameleon, takes its colour from every tree it lies under.

The melancholy fit did not last long. A circle of lively friends, among them Horn, of whom we shall hear more anon, drew him into gaiety again. Their opinion of his talents appears to have been enormous; their love for him, and interest in all he did, was of the kind which followed him through life. No matter what his mood—in the wildest student-period, in the startling genius-period, and in the diplomatic-period—whatever offence his manner created, was soon forgotten in the irresistible fascination of his nature. The secret of that fascination was his own overflowing lovingness, and his genuine interest in every individuality, however opposite to his own.

With these imperfect glances at his early career we close this book, on his departure from home for the university of Leipsic. Before finally quitting this period, we may take a survey of the *characteristics* it exhibits, as some guide in our future inquiries.

CHAPTER V

THE CHILD IS FATHER TO THE MAN

As in the soft round lineaments of childhood we trace the features which after years will develop into more decided forms, so in the moral lineaments of the Child may be traced the characteristics of the Man. But an apparent solution of continuity takes place in the transition period; so that the youth is in many respects unlike what he has been in childhood, and what he will be in maturity. In youth, when the passions begin to stir, the character is made to swerve from the orbit previously traced. Passion, more than Character, rules the hour. Thus we often see the prudent child turn out an extravagant youth; but he crystallises once more into prudence, as he hardens with age.

This was certainly the case with Goethe, who, if he had

died young, like Shelley or Keats, would have left a name among the most *genial*, not to say extravagant, of poets; but who, living to the age of eighty-two, had fifty years of crystallisation to acquire a definite figure which perplexes critics. In his childhood, scanty as the details are which enable us to reconstruct it, we see the main features of the man. Let us glance rapidly at them.

And first of his *manysidedness*. Seldom has a boy exhibited such variety of faculty. The multiplied activity of his life is prefigured in the varied tendencies of his childhood. We see him as an orderly, somewhat formal, inquisitive, reasoning, deliberative child, a precocious learner, an omnivorous reader, and a vigorous logician who thinks for himself—so independent, that at six years of age he doubts the beneficence of the Creator; at seven, doubts the competence and justice of the world's judgment. He is inventive, poetical, proud, loving, volatile, with a mind open to all influences, swayed by every gust, and yet, while thus swayed as to the direction of his activity, master over that activity. The most diverse characters, the most antagonistic opinions interest him. He is very studious: no bookworm more so; alternately busy with languages, mythology, antiquities, law, philosophy, poetry, and religion; yet he joins in all festive scenes, gets familiar with life in various forms, and stays out late o' nights. He is also troubled by melancholy, dreamy moods, forcing him ever and anon into solitude.

Among the dominant characteristics, however, are seriousness, formality, rationality. He is by no means a naughty boy. He gives his parents no tremulous anxiety as to what will become of him. He seems very much master of himself. It is this which in later years perplexed his judges, who could not reconcile this appearance of self-mastery, this absence of enthusiasm, with their conceptions of a poet. Assuredly he had enthusiasm, if ever man had it: at least, if enthusiasm (being "full of the God") means being filled with a divine idea, and by its light working steadily. He had little of the other kind of enthusiasm—that insurrection of the feelings carrying away upon their triumphant shoulders the Reason which has no longer power to guide them; for his intellect did not derive its main momentum from his feelings. And hence it is that whereas the quality which first strikes us in most poets is *sensibility*, with its caprices, infirmities, and generous errors; the first quality which strikes us in Goethe

—the Child and Man, but *not* the Youth—is *intellect*, with its clearness and calmness. He has also a provoking immunity from error. I say *provoking*, for we all gladly overlook the errors of enthusiasm: some, because these errors appeal to our compassion; and some, because these errors establish a community of impulse between the sinner and ourselves, forming, as it were, broken edges which show us where to look for support—scars which tell of wounds we have escaped. Whereas, we are pitiless to the cold prudence which shames our weakness and asks no alms from our charity. Why do we all preach Prudence, and secretly dislike it? Perhaps, because we dimly feel that life without its generous errors might want its lasting enjoyments; and thus the very mistakes which arise from an imprudent, unreflecting career, are absolved by that instinct which suggests other aims for existence beyond prudential aims. This is one reason why the erring lives of Genius command such deathless sympathy.

Having indicated so much, I may now ask those who are distressed by the calm, self-sustaining superiority of Goethe in old age, whether, on deeper reflection, they cannot reconcile it with their conceptions of the poet's nature? We admire Rationality, but we sympathise with Sensibility. Our dislike of the one arises from its supposed incompatibility with the other. But if a man unites the mastery of Will and Intellect to the profoundest sensibility of Emotion, shall we not say of him that he has in living synthesis vindicated both what we preach and what we love? That Goethe united these will be abundantly shown in this Biography. In the chapters about to follow we shall see him wild, restless, aimless, erring, and extravagant enough to satisfy the most ardent admirer of the vagabond nature of genius: the Child and the Man will at times be scarcely traceable in the Youth.

One trait must not be passed over, namely, his *impatient susceptibility*, which, while it prevented his ever thoroughly mastering the technic of any one subject, lay at the bottom of his multiplied activity in directions so opposed to each other. He was excessively impressible, caught the impulse from every surrounding influence, and was thus never constant to one thing, because his susceptibility was connected with an impatience which soon made him weary. There are men who learn many languages, and never thoroughly master the grammar of one. Of these was Goethe. Easily excited to throw his energy in a new direction, he had not the patience

which begins at the beginning, and rises gradually, slowly into assured mastery. Like an eagle he swooped down upon his prey; he could not watch for it, with cat-like patience. It is to this impatience we must attribute the fact of so many works being left fragments, so many composed by snatches during long intervals. *Prometheus*, *Mahomet*, *Die Natürliche Tochter*, *Elpenor*, *Achilleis*, *Nausikäa*, remain fragments. *Faust*, *Egmont*, *Tasso*, *Iphigenia*, *Meister*, were many years in hand. Whatever could be done in a few days—while the impulse lasted—was done; longer works were spread over a series of years.

BOOK THE SECOND

1765 TO 1771

"In grossen Städten lernen früh
Die jüngsten Knaben was;
Denn manche Bücher lesen sie
Und hören diess und dass;
Vom Lieben und vom Küssen
Sie brauchen's nicht zu wissen;
Und mancher ist im zwölften Jahr
Fast klüger als sein Vater war
Da er die Mutter nahm."

"Œser taught me that the Ideal of Beauty is Simplicity and Repose, and thence it follows that no youth can be a Master."

CHAPTER I

THE LEIPSIC STUDENT

In the month of October 1765, Goethe, aged sixteen, arrived in Leipsic, to commence his collegiate life, and to lay, as he hoped, the solid foundation of a future professorship. He took lodgings in the Feuerkugel, between the Old and New Markets, and was by the rector of the University inscribed on the 19th as student "in the Bavarian nation." At that period, and until quite recently, the University was classed according to four "Nations," viz., the *Misnian*, the *Saxon*, the *Bavarian*, and the *Polish*. When the inscription was official, the "nations" were what in Oxford and Paris are called "tongues"; when not official, they were students' clubs, such as they exist to this day. Goethe, as a Frankfurter, was placed in the Bavarian.[1]

If the reader has any vivid recollection of the Leipsic chapters in the *Autobiography*, let me beg him to dismiss them with all haste from his mind; that very work records the inability of recalling the enchanting days of youth "with the dimmed powers of an aged mind;" and it is evident that the calm narrative of his Excellency J. W. von Goethe very inaccurately represents the actual condition of the raw, wild student, just escaped from the paternal roof, with money which

[1] Otto Jahn, in the *Briefe an Leipziger Freunde*, p. 9.

seems unlimited in his purse, with the world before him which his genius is to open. His own letters, and the letters of his friends, enable us "to read between the lines" of the *Autobiography*, and to read there a very different account.

He first presented himself to Hofrath Böhme, a genuine German professor, shut within the narrow circle of his speciality. To him, Literature and the Fine Arts were trivialities; and when the confiding youth confessed his secret ambition of studying *belles lettres*, in lieu of the jurisprudence commanded by his father, he met with every discouragement. Yet it was not difficult to persuade this impressible student that to rival Otto and Heineccius was the true ambition of a vigorous mind. He set to work in earnest, at first, as students usually do on arriving at seats of learning. His attendance at the lectures on philosophy, history of law, and jurisprudence, was assiduous enough to have pleased even his father. But this flush of eagerness quickly subsided. Logic was invincibly repugnant to him. He hungered for realities, and could not be satisfied with definitions. To see operations of his mind which, from childhood upwards, had been conducted with perfect ease and unconsciousness, suddenly pulled to pieces, in order that he might gain the superfluous knowledge of what they were, and what they were called, was to him tiresome and frivolous. "I fancied I knew as much about God and the world as the professor himself, and logic seemed in many places to come to a dead standstill." We are here on the threshold of that experience which has been immortalised in the scene between Mephistopheles and the Student. Jurisprudence soon became almost equally tiresome. He already knew as much law as the professor thought proper to communicate; and what with the tedium of the lectures, and the counter-attraction of delicious fritters, which used to come "hot from the pan precisely at the hour of lecture," no wonder that volatile Sixteen soon abated attendance.

Volatile he was, wild, and somewhat rough, both in appearance and in speech. He had brought with him a wild, uneasy spirit struggling towards the light. He had also brought with him the rough manners of Frankfurt, the strong Frankfurt dialect and colloquialisms, rendered still more unfit for the Leipsic salon by a mixture of proverbs and biblical allusions. Nay, even his costume was in unpleasant contrast with that of the society in which he moved. He had an ample wardrobe, but unhappily it was doubly out of fashion: it had been manu-

factured at home by one of his father's servants, and thus was not only in the Frankfurt style, but grotesquely made in that style. To complete his discomfiture, he saw a favourite low comedian throw an audience into fits of laughter by appearing on the stage dressed precisely in that costume, which he had hitherto worn as the latest novelty! All who can remember the early humiliations of being far behind their companions in matters of costume, will sympathise with this youth. From one of his letters written shortly after his arrival, we may catch a glimpse of him. "To-day I have heard two lectures: Böhme on law, and Ernesti on Cicero's *Orator*. That'll do, eh? Next week we have collegium philosophicum et mathematicum. I haven't seen Gottsched yet. He is married again. She is nineteen and he sixty-five. She is four feet high, and he seven feet. She is as thin as a herring, and he as broad as a feathersack. I make a great figure here! But as yet I am no dandy. I never shall become one. I need some skill to be industrious. In society, concerts, theatre, feastings, promenades, the time flies. Ha! it goes gloriously. But also expensively. The devil knows how my purse feels it. Hold! rescue! stop! There go two louis d'or. Help! there goes another. Heavens! another couple are gone. Pence are here as farthings are with you. Nevertheless one can live cheaply here. So I hope to get off with two hundred thalers—what do I say? with three hundred. N.B. Not including what has already gone to the devil."

Dissatisfied with College, he sought instruction elsewhere. At the table where he dined daily, kept by Hofrath Ludwig the rector, he met several medical students. He heard little talked of but medicine and botany, and the names of Haller, Linnæus, and Buffon were incessantly cited with respect. His ready quickness to interest himself in all that interested those around him, threw him at once into these studies, which hereafter he was to pursue with passionate ardour, but which at present he only lightly touched. Another source of instruction awaited him, one which through life he ever gratefully acknowledged, namely, the society of women.

> "Willst du genau erfahren was sich ziemt,
> So frage nur bei edlen Frauen an!"[1]

So he speaks in *Tasso;* and here, in Leipsic, he was glad to

[1] "Wouldst clearly learn what the Becoming is, inquire of noble-minded women!"

learn from Frau Böhme not only some of the requisites for society, but also some principles of poetic criticism. This delicate, accomplished woman was able to draw him into society, to teach him l'ombre and picquet, to correct some of his awkwardnesses, and lastly to make him own that the poets he admired were a deplorable set, and that his own imitations of them deserved no better fate than the flames. He had got rid of his absurd wardrobe at one fell swoop, without a murmur at the expense. He now had also to cast away the poetic wardrobe brought from home with so much pride. He saw that it was poetic frippery—saw that his own poems were lifeless; accordingly, a holocaust was made of all his writings, prose and verse, and the kitchen fire wafted them into space.

But society became vapid to him at last. He was not at his ease. Cards never amused him, and poetical discussion became painful. "I have not written a long while," he writes to his friend Riese. "Forgive me. Ask not after the cause! It was not occupation, at all events. You live contented in Marburg; I live so here. Solitary, solitary, quite solitary. Dear Riese, this solitude has awakened a certain sadness in my soul:—

> It is my only pleasure,
> Away from all the world,
> To lie beside the streamlet,
> And think of those I love.

But contented as I am, I still feel the want of old companions. I sigh for my friends and my maiden, and when I feel that my sighs are vain,—

> Then fills my heart with sorrow,—
> My eye is dim;
> The stream which softly passed me,
> Roars now in storm.
> No bird sings in the bushes,
> The zephyr which refreshed me
> Now storms from the north,
> And whirls off the blossoms.
> With tremor I fly from the spot,—
> I fly, and seek in deserted streets
> Sad solitude.

Yet how happy I am, quite happy! Horn has drawn me from low spirits by his arrival. He wonders why I am so changed

> He seeks to find the explanation,
> Smiling thinks o'er it, looks me in the face;
> But how can he find out my cause of grief?
> I know it not myself.

But I must tell you something of myself:

> Quite other wishes rise within me now,
> Dear friend, from those you have been wont to hear.
> You know how seriously I wooed the Muse;
> With what a hate I scorned those whom the Law
> And not the Muses beckoned. And you know
> How fondly I (alas! most falsely) hoped
> The Muses loved me,—gave me gift of song!
> My Lyre sounded many a lofty song,
> But not the Muses, not Apollo sent them.
> True, it is my pride made me believe
> The Gods descended to me, and no Master
> Produced more perfect works than mine!
> No sooner came I here, than from my eyes
> Fell off the scales, as I first learned to prize
> Fame, and the mighty efforts fame required.
> Then seemed to me my own ambitious flight
> But as the agitation of a worm,
> Who in the dust beholds the eagle soar,
> And strives to reach him; strains every nerve,
> Yet only agitates the dust he lies in.
> Sudden the wind doth rise, and whirls the dust
> In clouds, the worm is also raisèd with it:
> Then the poor worm believes he has the wings
> Of eagles, raising him too in the air!
> But in another moment lulls the wind,
> The cloud of dust drops gently on the ground,
> And with the dust the worm, who crawls once more!

Don't be angry with my galimathias. Good-bye. Horn will finish this letter."

Not only is this letter curious in its revelations of his state of mind, but the verses into which it spontaneously flows, and which I have translated with more jealous fidelity to the meaning than to poetical reproduction, show how among his friends he was even then regarded as a future poet. The confession uttered in the final verses, clearly owes its origin to Frau Böhme's criticisms; but it is not every young poet who can be so easily discouraged. Even *his* discouragement could not last long. Schlosser, afterwards his brother-in-law, came to Leipsic, and by his preaching and example once more roused the productive activity which showed itself in German, French, English, and Italian verses.

Schlosser, who was ten years his senior, not only awakened emulation by his own superior knowledge and facility, but further aided him by introducing him to a set of literary friends, with whom poetic discussions formed the staple of conversation. This circle met at the house of one Schönkopf, a *Weinhändler* and *Hauswirth*, living in the Brühl, No. 79.[1]

[1] The house still stands there, but has been almost entirely remodelled.

To translate these words into English equivalents would only mislead the reader. Schönkopf kept neither an hotel, nor a public house, but what in Germany is a substitute for both. He sold wine, and kept a *table d'hôte;* occasionally also let bedrooms to travellers. His wife, a lively, cultivated woman, belonging to a good family in Frankfurt, drew Frankfurt visitors to the house; and with her Goethe soon became on terms of intimacy, which would seem surprising to the English reader who only heard of her as an innkeeper's wife. He became one of the family, and fell in love with the daughter. I must further beg the reader to understand that in Germany, to this day, there is a wide difference between the dining customs and our own. The English student, clerk, or bachelor, who dines at an eating-house, chop-house, or hotel, goes there simply to get his dinner, and perhaps look at the *Times.* Of the other diners he knows nothing, cares little. It is rare that a word is interchanged between him and his neighbour. Quite otherwise in Germany. There the same society is generally to be found at the same table. The *table d'hôte* is composed of a circle of *habitués*, varied by occasional visitors, who in time become, perhaps, members of the circle. Even with strangers conversation is freely interchanged; and in a little while friendships are formed over these dinner tables, according as natural tastes and likings assimilate, which, extending beyond the mere hour of dinner, are carried into the current of life. Germans do not rise so hastily from the table as we; for time with them is not so precious; life is not so crowded; time can be found for quiet after-dinner talk. The cigars and coffee, which appear before the cloth is removed, keep the company together; and in that state of suffused comfort which quiet digestion creates, they hear without anger the opinions of antagonists. In such a society must we imagine Goethe in the Schönkopf establishment, among students and men of letters, all eager in advancing their own opinions, and combating the false taste which was not their own.

To complete this picture, and to separate it still more from our English customs, you must imagine host and hostess dining at the table, while their charming daughter, who had cooked or helped to cook the dinner, brought them the wine. This daughter was the Anna Katharina, by intimates called Käthchen, and by Goethe, in the *Autobiography*, designated as Annchen and Annette. Her portrait, still extant, is very pleasing. She was then nineteen, lively, and loving; how

could she be insensible to the love of this glorious youth, in all the fervour of genius, and with all the attractions of beauty? They saw each other daily, not only at dinner but in the evenings, when he accompanied the piano of her brother by a feeble performance on the flute. They also got up private theatricals, in which Goethe and Käthchen played the lovers. *Minna von Barnhelm*, then a novelty, was among the pieces performed. That these performances were of a strictly amateur order may be gathered from the fact that in one of them the part of a nightingale, which is important, was represented by a handkerchief, rolled up into such ornithological resemblance as art could reach.

Two letters, quite recently discovered, have fallen into my hands; they give us a curious glimpse of him at this time, such as one may look for in vain in his own account of himself, or in the accounts of any other writer. They are from his friend Horn, whose arrival he mentioned in the letter previously quoted, and who was one of his daily companions in Frankfurt. The first is dated 12th of August 1766, and is addressed to one Moors, a Frankfurt companion.

"To speak of our Goethe! He is still the same proud, fantastic personage as when I came hither. If you only saw him, you would either be mad with anger or you would burst with laughter. I cannot at all understand how a man can so quickly transform himself. His manners and his whole bearing, at present, are as different as possible from his former behaviour. Over and above his pride, he is a dandy; and all his clothes, handsome as they are, are in so odd a taste that they make him conspicuous among all the students. But this is indifferent to him; one may remonstrate with him for his folly as much as one likes—

> Man mag Amphion seyn und Feld und Wald bezwingen,
> Nur keinen Goethe nicht kann man zur Klugheit bringen.[1]

All his thought and effort is only to please himself and his lady-love. In every circle he makes himself more ridiculous than agreeable. Merely because the lady admires it, he has put on tricks and gestures that one cannot possibly refrain

1 "One may be Amphion and coerce the trees and rocks, but not bring Goethe to his senses."

from laughing at. He has adopted a walk which is quite insufferable. If you only saw it!

> 'Il marche à pas comptés,
> Comme une Recteur suivi des quatre Facultés.'

His society is every day more intolerable to me, and he, too, tries to avoid me whenever he can. I am too plain a man for him to walk across the street with me. What would the 'king of Holland' say if he saw him in this guise? Do write again to him soon and tell him your opinion; else he and his lady-love will remain as silly as ever. Heaven only preserve me, as long as I am here, from any sweetheart, for the women here are the very devil. Goethe is not the first who has made a fool of himself to please his Dulcinea. I only wish you could see her just for once: she is the most absurd creature in the world. Her *mine coquette avec un air hautain* is all with which she has bewitched Goethe. Dear friend! how glad should I be if Goethe were still what he was in Frankfurt! Good friends as we were formerly, we can now scarcely endure each other for a quarter of an hour. Yet with time I still hope to convert him, though it is a hard matter to make a coxcomb wise. But I will venture everything for the sake of it.

> Ach! früchtete dies mein Bemühn!
> Ach! könnt' ich meinen Zweck erreichen!
> Ich wollt' nicht Luther, nicht Calvin,
> Noch einem der Bekehrer weichen.[1]

I cannot write to him again what I have here told you. I shall be delighted if you will do so. I care neither for his anger nor for that of his lady-love. For, after all, he is not easily offended with me; even when we have quarrelled he sends for me next day. So much of him; more another time.

Live and forget not thy HORN."

Moors followed Horn's advice, and expressed to Goethe, apparently in very plain terms, his astonishment and dissatisfaction at the disadvantageous change. In October of the same year, he received from Horn the following explanation:

"But, dear Moors! how glad you will be to learn that we have lost no friend in our Goethe, as we falsely supposed. He had so travestied himself as to deceive not only me but

[1] "Ah, if my attempt succeed, I should not envy Luther, Calvin, nor any other Converter."

a great many others, and we should never have discovered the real truth of the matter, if your letter had not threatened him with the loss of a friend. I must tell you the whole story as he himself told it to me, for he has commissioned me to do so in order to save him the trouble. He is in love, it is true—he has confessed it to me, and will confess it to you; but his love, though its circumstances are sad, is not culpable, as I formerly supposed. He loves. But not that young lady whom I suspected him of loving. He loves a girl beneath him in rank, but a girl whom—I think I do not say too much—you would yourself love if you saw her. I am no lover, so I shall write entirely without passion. Imagine to yourself a woman, well grown, though not very tall; a round, agreeable, though not extraordinarily beautiful face; open, gentle, engaging manners; a very pretty understanding, without having had any great education. He loves her very tenderly, with the perfect, honest intentions of a virtuous man, though he knows that she can never be his. Whether she loves him in return I know not. You know, dear Moors, that is a point about which one cannot well ask; but this much I can say to you, that they seem to be born for each other. Now observe his cunning! That no one may suspect him of such an attachment, he undertakes to persuade the world of precisely the opposite, and hitherto he has been extraordinarily successful. He makes a great parade, and seems to be paying court to a certain young lady of whom I have told you before. He can see his beloved and converse with her at certain times without giving occasion for the slightest suspicion, and I often accompany him to her. If Goethe were not my friend I should fall in love with her myself. Meanwhile he is supposed to be in love with the Fräulein —— (but what do you care about her name?) and people are fond of teasing him about her. Perhaps she herself believes that he loves her, but the good lady deceives herself. Since that time he has admitted me to closer confidence, has made me acquainted with his affairs, and shown me that his expenditure is not so great as might be supposed. He is more of a philosopher and moralist than ever; and innocent as his love is, he nevertheless disapproves it. We often dispute about this, but let him take what side he will, he is sure to win; for you know what weight he can give to only apparent reasons. I pity him and his good heart, which really must be in a very melancholy condition, since he loves the most virtuous and perfect of girls

without hope. But if we suppose that she loves him in return, how miserable must he be on that very account! I need not explain that to you, who so well know the human heart. He has told me that he will write you one or two things about it himself. There is no necessity for me to recommend silence to you on this subject; for you yourself see how necessary it is. . . ."

Imagine this somewhat fantastic youth assured that his passion is returned, and then imagine him indulging in the boyish caprice of tormenting his beloved. There is nothing more cruel than youth; and youthful lovers, once assured of victory, are singularly prone to indulge in the most frivolous pretexts for ingeniously tormenting. "Man loves to conquer, likes not to feel secure," Goethe says, in the piece wherein he dramatised this early experience:

"Erringen will der Mensch; er will nicht sicher seyn."

Had Käthchen coquetted with him, keeping him in the exquisite pain of suspense, she would have been happier: but as he said in his little poem, *Der Wahre Genuss*, "she is perfect, and her only fault is—that she loves me":

Sie ist volkommen, und sie fehlet
Darin allein dass sie mich liebt.

He teased her with trifles and idle suspicions; was jealous without cause, convinced without reason; plagued her with fantastic quarrels, till at last her endurance was exhausted, and her love was washed away in tears. No sooner was he aware of this, than he repented, and tried to recover the jewel which like a prodigal he had cast away. In vain. He was in despair, and tried in dissipation to forget his grief. A better issue was poetry. Several of his lyrics bore the burden of this experience; and one entire play, or pastoral, is devoted to a poetical representation of these lovers' quarrels: this is *Die Laune des Verliebten*, which is very curious as the earliest extant work of the great poet, and as the earliest specimen of his tendency to turn experience into song. In the opera of *Erwin und Elmire* he subsequently treated a similar subject, in a very different manner. The first effort is the more curious of the two. The style of composition is an imitation of those pastoral dramas, which, originated by Tasso and Guarini in the soft and almost luscious *Aminta* and

Pastor Fido, had by the French been made popular all over Europe.

Two happy and two unhappy lovers are somewhat artificially contrasted; the two latter representing Käthchen and the poet. Action there is none; the piece is made up of talk about love, some felicitous verses of the true stamp and ring, and an occasional glimpse of insight into the complexities of passion. Eridon, the jealous lover, torments his mistress in a style at once capricious and natural; with admirable truth she deplores his jealousy and excuses it:

> Zwar oft betrübt er mich, doch rührt ihn auch mein Schmerz.
> Wirft er mir etwas vor, fängt er mich au zu plagen,
> So darf ich nur ein Wort, ein gutes Wort nur sagen,
> Gleich ist er umgekehrt, die wilde Zanksucht flieht,
> Er weint sogar mit mir, wenn er mich weinen sieht.[1]

It is admirably said that the very absence of any cause for grief prompts him to create a grief:

> *Da er kein Elend hat, will er sich Elend machen.*

Amine is also touched with a delicate pencil. Her lovingness, forgivingness, and endurance are from the life. Here is a couplet breathing the very tenderness of love:

> Der Liebe leichtes Band machst du zum schweren Joch.
> Du quälst mich als Tyrann; und ich? *ich lieb dich noch!*[2]

One more line and I have done: Eglé is persuading Eridon that Amine's love of dancing is no trespass on her love for him; since, after having enjoyed her dance, her first thought is to seek him:

> *Und durch das Suchen selbst wirst du ihr immer lieber.*[3]

In such touches as these lurks the future poet; still more so in the very choice of the subject. Here, as ever, he does not cheat himself with pouring feigned sorrows into feigning verse: he embalms his own experience. He does not trouble himself with drawing characters and events from the shelves

1 'Tis true he vexes me, and yet my sorrow pains him.
Yet let him but reproach—begin to tease me,
Then need I but a word, a single kind word utter,
Away flies all his anger in a moment,
And he will weep with me, because he sees me weep.

2 "The fairy link of Love thou mak'st a galling yoke.
Thou treat'st me as a slave; and I? I love thee still!"

3 "And in the very search her heart grows fonder of thee."

of the library: his soul is the fountain of his inspiration. His own life was uniformly the text from which he preached. He sang what he had felt, and because he had felt it; not because others had sung before him. He was the echo of no man's joys and sorrows, he was the lyrist of his own. This is the reason why his poems have an endless charm: they are as indestructible as passion itself. They reach our hearts because they issue from his. Every bullet hits the mark, according to the huntsman's superstition, if it have first been dipped in the marksman's blood.

He has told us, emphatically, that *all his works are but fragments of the grand confession of his life.* Of him we may say what Horace so well says of Lucilius, that he trusted his secrets to books as to faithful friends:

> "Ille velut fidis arcana sodalibus olim
> Credebat libris; neque, si male cesserat, unquam
> Decurrens alio, neque si bene: *quo fit, ut omnis*
> *Votiva pateat veluti descripta tabella*
> *Vita senis.*"[1]

How clearly he saw the nullity of every other procedure is shown in various passages of his letters and conversations. Riemer has preserved one worth selecting: "There will soon be a poetry without poetry, a real ποίησις, where the subject matter is ἐν ποιήσει, in the *making*: a manufactured poetry."[2] He dates from Leipsic the origin of his own practice, which he says was a tendency he never could deviate from all his life. "namely, the tendency to transform into an image, a poem, everything which delighted or troubled me, or otherwise occupied me, and to come to some distinct understanding with myself upon it, to set my inward being at rest." The reason he gives for this tendency is very questionable. He attributes it to the isolation in which he lived with respect to matters of taste forcing him to look within for poetical subjects. But had not the tendency of his genius lain in that direction, no such circumstances could have directed it.

Young, curious, and excitable as he was, nothing is more natural than that he should somewhat shock the respecta-

[1] Sermon., lib. ii. 1.

[2] *Briefe von und an Goethe.* Herausgeg. von RIEMER. 1846. What follows is untranslatable, from the play on words: "Die Dichter heissen dann so, wie schon Moritz spasste, *a spissando, densando*, vom Dichtmachen, weil sie Alles zusammendrängen, und kommen mir vor wie eine Art Wurstmacher, die in den Darm des Hexameters oder Trimeters ihre Wort- und Sylbenfülle stopfen."

bilities by his pranks and extravagancies. His constant companion was Behrisch, one of the most interesting figures among these Leipsic friends. With strongly-marked features and a certain dry causticity of manner, always well dressed, and always preserving a most staid demeanour, Behrisch was about thirty years of age, and had an ineradicable love of fun and mystification. He could treat trifles with an air of immense importance. He would invent narratives about the perversity and absurdity of others, in order to convulse his hearers with the unction of his philippics against such absurdity. He was fond of dissipation, into which he carried an air of supreme gravity. He rather affected the French style of *politesse*, and spoke the language well; and, above all, he had some shrewd good sense, as a buttress for all his follies. Behrisch introduced him to some damsels who "were better than their reputation," and took him into scenes more useful to the future poet than advantageous to the repute of the young student. He also laughed him out of all respect for gods, goddesses, and other mythological inanities which still pressed their heavy dulness on his verse; would not let him commit the imprudence of rushing into print, but calmed the author's longing, by beautifully copying his verses into a volume, adorning them with vignettes. Behrisch was, so to speak, the precursor of Merck; his influence not so great, but somewhat of the same kind. The friends were displeased to see young Goethe falling thus away from good society into such a disreputable course; but just as Lessing before him had neglected the elegant Leipsic world for actors and authors of more wit than money, and preferred Mylius, with his shoes down at heel, to all that the best drest society could offer; so did young Goethe neglect salon and lecture-hall for the many-coloured scene of life in less elegant circles. Enlightened by the result, we foresee that the poet will receive little injury from these sources; he is gaining experience, and experience even of the worst sides of human nature will be sublimated into noble uses, as carrion by the wise farmer is turned into excellent manure. In this great drama of life every Theatre has its Green-room; and unless the poet know how it is behind the scenes he will never understand how actors speak and move.

Goethe had often been "behind the scenes," looking at the skeleton which stands in almost every house. His adventure with Gretchen, and its consequences, early opened his eyes

to the strange gulfs which lie under the crust of society. "Religion, morals, law, rank, habits," he says, "rule over the *surface* of social life. Streets of magnificent houses are kept clean; every one outwardly conducts himself with propriety; but the disorder within is often only the more desolate; and a polished exterior covers many a wall which totters, and falls with a crash during the night, all the more terrible because it falls during a calm. How many families had I not more or less distinctly known in which bankruptcy, divorce, seduction, murder, and robbery had wrought destruction! Young as I was, I had often, in such cases, lent my succour; for as my frankness awakened confidence, and my discretion was known, and as my activity did not shun any sacrifice—indeed, rather preferred the most perilous occasions—I had frequently to mediate, console, and try to avert the storm; in the course of which I could not help learning many sad and humiliating facts."

It was natural that such sad experience should at first lead him to view the whole social fabric with contempt. To relieve himself he—being then greatly captivated with Molière's works,—sketched the plans of several dramas, but their plots were so uniformly unpleasant, and the catastrophes so tragic, that he did not work out these plans. "The Fellow Sinners" (*Die Mitschuldigen*), is the sole piece which was completed, and it now occupies a place among his writings. Few, in England at least, ever read it; yet it is worth a rapid glance, and is especially remarkable as the work of a youth not yet eighteen. It is lively, and strong with effective situations and two happily sketched characters,—Söller, the scampish husband, and his father-in-law, the inquisitive landlord. The plot is briefly this: Söller's wife—before she became his wife—loved a certain Alcest; and her husband's conduct is not such as to make her forget her former lover, who, at the opening of the play, is residing in her father's hotel. Alcest prevails upon her to grant him an interview in his own room, while her husband, Söller, is at the masquerade. Unluckily, Söller has determined to rob Alcest that very night. He enters the room by stealth—opens the escritoire—takes the money—is alarmed by a noise—hides himself in an alcove, and then sees his father-in-law, the landlord, enter the room! The old man, unable to resist a burning curiosity to know the contents of a letter which Alcest has received that day, has come to read it in secret. But he in turn is alarmed by the

appearance of his daughter, and, letting the candle fall, he escapes. Söller is now the exasperated witness of an interview between Alcest and his wife: a situation which, like the whole of the play, is a mixture of the ludicrous and the painful—very dramatic and very unpleasant.

On the following day the robbery is discovered. Sophie thinks the robber is her father; he returns her the compliment—nay, more, stimulated by his eager curiosity, he consents to inform Alcest of his suspicion in return for the permission to read the contents of the mysterious letter. A father sacrificing his daughter to gratify a paltry curiosity is too gross; it is the only trait of juvenility in the piece—a piece otherwise prematurely old. Enraged at such an accusation, Sophie retorts the charge upon her father, and some unamiable altercations result. The piece winds up by the self-betrayal of Söller, who, intimating to Alcest that he was present during a certain nocturnal interview, shields himself from punishment. The moral is—"Forget and forgive among fellow sinners."

CHAPTER II

MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

THE two dramatic works noticed towards the close of the last chapter, may be said to begin the real poetic career of their author, because in them he drew from his actual experience. They will furnish us with a text for some remarks on his peculiar characteristics, the distinct recognition of which will facilitate the comprehension of his life and writings. We make a digression, but the reader will find that in thus swerving from the direct path of narrative, we are only tacking to fill our sails with wind.

Frederick Schlegel (and after him Coleridge) aptly indicated a distinction, when he said that every man was born either a Platonist or an Aristotelian. This distinction is often expressed in the terms *subjective* and *objective* intellects. Perhaps we shall best define these by calling the objective intellect one which is eminently *impersonal*, and the subjective intellect one which is eminently *personal;* the former disengaging itself as much as possible from its own prepossessions, striving to see and represent objects as they exist; the other viewing all objects in

the light of its own feelings and preconceptions. It is needless to add that no mind can be exclusively objective, nor exclusively subjective; but every mind has a more or less dominant tendency in one of these directions. We see the contrast in Philosophy, as in Art. The realist argues from Nature upwards, argues inductively, starting from reality, and never long losing sight of it; even in the adventurous flights of hypothesis and speculation, being desirous that his hypothesis shall correspond with realities. The idealist argues from an Idea downwards, argues deductively, starting from some conception, and seeking in realities only visible illustrations of a deeper existence. The achievements of modern Science, and the masterpieces of Art, prove that the grandest generalisations and the most elevated types can only be reached by the former method; and that what is called the "ideal school," so far from having the superiority which it claims, is only more lofty in its *pretensions;* the realist, with more modest pretensions, achieves loftier results. The Objective and Subjective, or, as they are also called, the Real and Ideal, are thus contrasted as the termini of two opposite lines of thought. In Philosophy, in Morals, and in Art, we see a constant antagonism between these two principles. Thus in Morals the Platonists are those who seek the highest morality *out* of human nature, instead of in the healthy development of all human tendencies, and their due co-ordination; they hope, in the *suppression* of integral faculties, to attain some superhuman standard. They call that Ideal which no Reality can reach, but for which we should strive. They superpose *ab extra*, instead of trying to develop *ab intra*. They draw from their own minds, or from the dogmas handed to them by tradition, an arbitrary mould, into which they attempt to fuse the organic activity of Nature.

If this school had not in its favour the imperious instinct of progress, and aspirations after a better, it would not hold its ground. But it satisfies that craving, and thus deludes many minds into acquiescence. The poetical and enthusiastic disposition most readily acquiesces: preferring to overlook what man *is*, in its delight of contemplating what the poet makes him. To such a mind all conceptions of man must have a halo round them,—half mist, half sunshine; the hero must be a Demigod, in whom no *valet de chambre* can find a failing: the villain must be a Demon, for whom no charity can find an excuse.

Not to extend this to a dissertation, let me at once say that Goethe belonged to the *objective* class. "Everywhere in Goethe," says Franz Horn, "you are on firm land or island; nowhere the infinite sea." A better characterisation was never written in one sentence. In every page of his works may be read a strong feeling for the real, the concrete, the living; and a repugnance as strong for the vague, the abstract, or the supersensuous. His constant striving was to study Nature, so as to see her *directly*, and not through the mists of fancy, or through the distortions of prejudice,—to look at men, and *into* them,—to apprehend things as they were. In his conception of the universe he could not separate God *from* it, placing Him above it, beyond it, as the philosophers did who represented God whirling the universe round His finger, "seeing it go." Such a conception revolted him. He animated the universe with God; he animated fact with divine life; he saw in Reality the incarnation of the Ideal; he saw in Morality the high and harmonious action of all human tendencies; he saw in Art the highest representation of Life. If we look through his works with critical attention, we shall observe the *concrete* tendency determining—first, his choice of subjects; secondly, his handling of character; and, thirdly, his style. Intimately connected with this concreteness is that other characteristic of his genius, which determined his *creative impulses only in alliance with emotions he himself had experienced*. His imagination was not, like that of many others, incessantly at work in the combination and recombination of images, which could be accepted for their own sake, apart from the warrant of preliminary confrontation with fact. It demanded the confrontation; it moved with ease only on the secure ground of Reality. In like manner we see that in science there are men whose active imaginations carry them into hypothesis and speculation, all the more easily because they do not bring hypothesis to the stern test of fact. The mere delight in combining ideas suffices them; provided the deductions are *logical*, they seem almost indifferent to their *truth*. There are poets of this order; indeed most poets are of this order. Goethe was of a quite opposite tendency. In him, as in the man of science, an imperious desire for reality controlled the errant facility of imagination. "The first and last thing demanded of Genius," he says, "is love of truth."

Hence we see why he was led to portray men and women instead of demigods and angels; no Posas and Theklas, but

Egmonts and Clärchens. Hence also his portraitures carry their moral *with* them, *in* them, but have no moral superposed—no accompanying verdict as from some outstanding judge. Further,—and this is a point to be insisted on,—his style, both in poetry and prose, is subject to the same law. It is vivid with pictures, but it has scarcely any imagery. Most poets describe objects by metaphors or comparisons; Goethe seldom tells you what an object is *like*, he tells you what it *is*. Shakspeare is very unlike Goethe in this respect. The prodigal luxuriance of his imagery often entangles, in its overgrowth, the movement of his verse. It is true, he also is eminently concrete: he sees the real object vividly, and he makes us see it vividly; but he scarcely ever paints it save in the colours of metaphor and simile. Shakspeare's imagery bubbles up like a perpetual spring: to say that it repeatedly *overflows*, is only to say that his mind was lured by its own sirens away from the direct path. He did not master his Pegasus at all times, but let the wild careering creature take its winged way. Goethe, on the contrary, always masters his: perhaps because his steed had less of restive life in its veins. Not only does he master it, and ride with calm assured grace: he seems so bent on reaching the goal, that he scarcely thinks of anything else. To quit metaphor, he may be said to use with the utmost sparingness all the aids of imagery, and to create images of the objects, rather than images of what the objects are like.

Shakspeare, like Goethe, was a decided realist. He, too, was content to let his pictures of life carry their own moral with them. He uttered no moral verdict; he was no Chorus preaching on the text of what he pictured. Hence we cannot gather from his works what were his opinions. But there is this difference between him and Goethe, that his intense sympathy with the energetic passions and fierce volitions of our race made him delight in heroic characters, in men of robust frames and impassioned lives. Goethe, with an infusion of the best blood of Schiller, would have been a Shakspeare; but, such as Nature made him he was—not Shakspeare.

Turning from these abstract considerations to the two earliest works which form our text, we observe how the youth is determined in the choice of his subject by the realistic tendency. Instead of ranging through the enchanted gardens of Armida—instead of throwing himself back into

the distant Past, thus escaping from the trammels of a modern subject, which the confrontation of reality always makes more difficult, this boy fashions into verse his own experience, his own observation. He looks into his own heart,—he peers into the byways of civilisation, walking with curious observation through squalid streets and dark fearful alleys. Singular, moreover, is the absence of any fierce indignation, any cry of pain at the sight of so much corruption underlying the surface of society. In youth the loss of illusions is generally followed by a cynical misanthropy, or a vehement protest. But Goethe is neither cynical nor indignant. He seems to accept the fact as a thing to be admitted, and quietly striven against, with a view to its amelioration. He seems to think with the younger Pliny, that indulgence is a part of justice, and would cite with approval the favourite maxim of the austere yet humane Thraseas, *qui vitia odit homines odit*,—he who hates vices hates mankind.[1] For in the *Mitschuldigen* he presents us with a set of people whose consolation is to exclaim, "Rogues all!"—and in after years he wrote of this piece, that it was dictated, though unconsciously, by "far-sighted tolerance in the appreciation of moral actions, as expressed in the eminently Christian sentence, '*Let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone.*'"

CHAPTER III

ART STUDIES

Frau Böhme died. In her he lost a monitress and friend, who had kept some check on his waywardness, and drawn him into society. The Professor had long since cooled towards him, after giving up all hopes of making him another Heineccius. It was pitiful. A youth with such remarkable dispositions, who would *not* be assiduous in attendance at lecture, and whose amusement during lecture was to sketch caricatures of various law dignitaries in his notebook; another ornament to jurisprudence irrecoverably lost! Indeed, the collegiate aspect of this Leipsic residence is not one promising to professors; but we—instructed by the result—know how much better he was

[1] Pliny, *Epist.* lib. viii. 22. After the text was written, Schöll published Goethe's notebook kept at Strasburg, wherein may be read this very aphorism transcribed. It was just the sort of passage to captivate him.

employed, than if he had filled a hundred volumes of note-books by diligent attendance at lecture. He studied much, in a desultory manner; he studied Molière and Corneille; he began to translate *Le Menteur*. The theatre was a perpetual attraction; and even the uneasy, unsatisfied condition of his affections, was instructing him in directions whither no professor could lead him. But greater than all was the influence of Shakspeare, whom he first learned a little of through Dodd's *Beauties of Shakspeare*, a work not much prized in England, where the plays form part of our traditional education, but which must have been a revelation to the Germans, something analogous to what Charles Lamb's *Specimens of the Old English Drama* was to us. The marvellous strength and beauty of language, the bold and natural imagery of these *Beauties*, startled the young poets of that day, like the discovery of huge fossil remains of some antediluvian fauna; and to gratify the curiosity thus awakened, he says there came Wieland's prose translation of several plays, which he studied with enthusiasm.[1]

There are no materials to fill up the gaps of his narrative here, so that I am forced to leave much indistinct. For instance, he has told us that Käthchen and he were no longer lovers; but we find him writing to her in a friendly and even lover-like tone from Frankfurt, and we know that friendly intercourse still subsisted between them. Of this, however, not a word occurs in the *Autobiography*. Nor are we accurately informed how he made the acquaintance of the Breitkopf family. Breitkopf was a bookseller in Leipsic, in whose house Literature and Music were highly prized. Bernhard, the eldest son, was an excellent performer, and composed music to Goethe's songs, which were published in 1769, under this title: *Neue Lieder in Melodieen gesetzt von Bernhard Theodor Breitkopf*. The poet is not named. This *Liederbuch* contains twenty songs, the majority of which were subsequently reprinted in the poet's works. They are love songs, and contain a love-philosophy more like what is to be found in Catullus, Horace, and Wieland, than what one would expect from a boy, did we not remember how the braggadocio of youth delights in expressing *roué* sentiments, as if to give itself airs of profound experience. This youth sings with gusto of inconstancy:

> Da fühl ich die Freuden der wechselden Lust.

---

[1] It is possible that Wieland's translation only then fell into Goethe's hands, but the publication was commenced before his arrival in Leipzig, namely in 1761.

He gaily declares that if one mistress leaves you another will love you, and the second is sweeter to kiss than the first:

> Es küsst sich so süsse der Busen der Zweiten,
> Als kaum sich der Busen der Ersten geküsst.

Another acquaintance, and one more directly influential, was that of Œser, the director of the Drawing Academy. He had been the friend and teacher of Winckelmann, and his name stood high among connoisseurs. Goethe, who at home had learned a little drawing, joined Œser's class, where, among other fellow-students, was the Hardenberg who afterwards made such a noise in the Prussian political world. He joined the class, and did his best to acquire by labour the skill which only a talent can acquire. That he made little progress in drawing, we learn from his subsequent confession, no less than from his failure; but tuition had this effect at least—it taught him to use his eyes. In a future chapter[1] I shall have occasion to enter more fully on this subject. Enough if for the present a sentence or two from his letters tell us the enthusiasm Œser inspired. "What do I not owe to you," he writes to him, "for having pointed out to me the way of the True and the Beautiful!" and concludes by saying, "the undersigned is your work!" Writing to a friend of Œser's, he says that Œser stands beside Shakspeare and Wieland in the influence exercised over him. "His instruction will influence my whole life. He it was who taught me that the Ideal of Beauty is Simplicity and Repose, and thence it follows that no youth can be a master."

Instruction in the theory of Art he gained from Œser, from Winckelmann, and from *Laokoon*, the incomparable little book which Lessing at this period carelessly flung upon the world. Its effect upon Goethe can only be appreciated by those who early in life have met with this work, and risen from it with minds widened, strengthened, and inspired.[2] It opened a pathway amid confusion, throwing light upon many of the obscurest problems which torment the artist. It awakened in Goethe an intense yearning to see the works of ancient masters; and these beckoned from Dresden. To Dresden he went. But here, in spite of Œser, Winckelmann, and Lessing, in

[1] See Book V. ch. v.

[2] Macaulay told me that the reading of this little book formed an epoch in his mental history, and that he learned more from it than he had ever learned elsewhere.

spite of grand phrases about Art, the invincible tendency of his nature asserted itself, and instead of falling into raptures with the great Italian pictures, he confesses that he took their merits upon trust, and was really charmed by none but the landscape and Dutch painters, whose subjects appealed directly to his experience. He did not feel the greatness of Italian Art; and what he did not feel he would not feign.

It is worth noticing that this trip to Dresden was taken in absolute secrecy. As, many years later, he stole away to Italy without letting his friends even suspect his project, so now he left Leipsic for Dresden without a word of intimation. Probably the same motive actuated him in both instances. He went to see, to enjoy, to learn, and did not want to be disturbed by personal influence—by other people's opinions.

On his return he was active enough with drawing. He made the acquaintance of an engraver named Stock,[1] and with his usual propensity to try his hand at whatever his friends were doing, he forthwith began to learn engraving. In the *Morgenblatt* for 1828 there is a detailed account of two of his engravings, both representing landscapes with small cascades shut in by rocks and grottoes; at the foot of each are these words: *peint par A. Theile, gravé par Goethe.* One plate is dedicated *à Monsieur Goethe, Conseillier actuel de S. M. Impériale, par son fils très obéissant.* In the room which they show to strangers in his house in Frankfurt, there is also a specimen of his engraving—very amateurish; but Madame von Goethe showed me one in her possession which really has merit.

Melancholy, wayward, and capricious, he allowed Lessing to pass through Leipsic without making any attempt to see the man he so much admired: a caprice he afterwards repented, for the opportunity never recurred. Something of his hypochondria was due to mental, but more to physical causes. Dissipation, bad diet (especially the beer and coffee), and absurd endeavours to carry out Rousseau's preaching about returning to a state of nature, had seriously affected his health. The crisis came at last. One summer night (1768) he was seized with violent hæmorrhage. He had only strength enough to call to his aid the fellow-student who slept in the next room. Medical assistance promptly came. He was saved; but his convalescence was embittered by the discovery of a tumour on his neck, which lasted some time. His recovery was slow,

[1] This Stock had two amiable daughters, one of whom married (1785) Körner, the correspondent of Schiller, and father of the poet.

but it seemed as if it relieved him from all the peccant humours which had made him hypochondriacal, leaving behind an inward lightness and joyousness to which he had long been a stranger. One thing greatly touched him—the sympathy expressed for him by several eminent men; a sympathy he felt to be quite undeserved, for there was not one among them whom he had not vexed or affronted by his caprices, extravagances, morbid opposition, and stubborn persistence.

One of these friends, Langer, not only made an exchange of books with him, giving a set of Classic authors for a set of German, but also, in devout yet not dogmatic conversation, led his young friend to regard the Bible in another light than that of a merely human composition. "I loved the Bible and valued it, for it was almost the only book to which I owed my moral culture. Its events, dogmas, and symbols were deeply impressed on my mind." He therefore felt little sympathy with the Deists who were at this time agitating Europe; and although his tendency was strongly against the Mystics, he was afraid lest the poetical spirit should be swept away along with the prophetical. In one word, he was in a state of religious doubt—"destitute of faith, yet terrified at scepticism."

This unrest and this bodily weakness he carried with him, September 1768, from Leipsic to Frankfurt, whither we will follow him.

CHAPTER IV

RETURN HOME

He returned home a boy in years, in experience a man. Broken in health, unhappy in mind, with no strong impulses in any one direction, uncertain of himself and of his aims, he felt, as he approached his native city, much like a repentant prodigal, who has no vision of the fatted calf awaiting him. His father, unable to perceive the real progress he had made, was very much alive to the slender prospect of his becoming a distinguished jurist. The fathers of poets are seldom gratified with the progress in education visible to them; and the reason is that they do not know their sons to be poets, nor understand that the poet's orbit is not the same as their own. They tread the common highway on which the milestones accurately mark distances; and seeing that their sons have trudged but

little way according to this measurement, their minds are filled with misgivings. Of that silent progress, which consists less in travelling on the broad highway, than in development of the limbs which will make a sturdy traveller, parents cannot judge.

Mother and sister, however, touched by the worn face, and, woman-like, more interested in the man than what he had achieved, received him with an affection which compensated for his father's coldness. There is quite a pathetic glimpse given of this domestic interior in the *Autobiography*, where he alludes to his father's impatience at his illness, and anxiety for his speedy recovery. And we gladly escape from this picture to the Letters written from Frankfurt to his old love, Käthchen Schönkopf.[1] It appears that he left Leipsic without saying adieu. He thus refers to it:

"Apropos, you will forgive me that I did not take leave of you. I was in the neighbourhood, I was even below at the door; *I saw the lamp burning and went to the steps, but I had not the courage to mount.* For the last time—how should I have come down again?

"Thus I now do what I ought to have done then: I thank you for all the love and friendship which you have constantly shown me, and which I shall never forget. I need not beg you to remember me,—a thousand occasions will arise which must remind you of a man who for two years and a half was part of your family, who indeed often gave you cause for displeasure, but still was always a good lad, and whom it is to be hoped you will often miss; at least, I often miss you."

The tumour on his neck became alarming: the more so as the surgeons, uncertain about its nature, were wavering in their treatment. Frequent cauterisation, and constant confinement to his room, were the worst parts of the cure. He read, drew, and etched to wile away the time; and by the end of the year was pronounced recovered. This letter to Käthchen announces the recovery.

"My best, anxious Friend,—You will doubtless have heard from Horn, on the new year, the news of my recovery; and I hasten to confirm it. Yes, dear friend, it is over, and in future you must take it quietly, even if you hear—he is laid up again! You know that my constitution often makes a slip, and in a week gets on its legs again; this time it was

[1] Printed in *Goethe's Briefe an seine Leipziger Freunde.* Herausgegeben von Otto Jahn.

bad, and seemed yet worse than it was, and was attended with terrible pains. Misfortune is also a good. I have learned much in illness which I could have learned nowhere else in life. It is over, and I am quite brisk again, though for three whole weeks I have not left my room, and scarcely any one has visited me but my doctor, who, thank God! is an amiable man! An odd thing it is in us men: when I was in lively society I was out of spirits, now I am forsaken by all the world I am cheerful; for even throughout my illness my cheerfulness has comforted my family, who were not in a condition to comfort themselves, to say nothing of me. The new year's song which you have also received, I composed during an attack of great foolery, and had it printed for the sake of amusement. Besides this, I draw a great deal, write tales, and am contented with myself. God give me, this new year, what is good for me; may He do the same for all of us, and if we pray for nothing more than this, we may certainly hope that He will give it us. If I can only get along till April, I shall easily reconcile myself to my condition. Then I hope things will be better; in particular my health may make progress daily, because it is now known precisely what is the matter with me. My lungs are as sound as possible, but there is something wrong at the stomach. And, in confidence, I have had hopes given me of a pleasant, enjoyable mode of life, so that my mind is quite cheerful and at rest. As soon as I am better again I shall go away into foreign countries, and it must depend only on you and another person how soon I shall see Leipsic again; in the meantime I think of going to France to see what French life is, and learn the French language. So you can imagine what a charming man I shall be when I return to you. It often occurs to me, that it would be a laughable affair, if, in spite of all my projects, I were to die before Easter. In that case I would order a gravestone for myself in Leipsic churchyard, that at least every year on St. John's day you might visit the figure of St. John and my grave. What do you think?"

To celebrate his recovery, Rath Moritz gave a great party, at which all the Frankfurt friends assembled. In a little while, however, another illness came to lay the poet low; and, worse than all, there came the news from Leipsic that Käthchen was engaged to a Dr. Kanne, whom Goethe had introduced to her. This for ever decided his restlessness about her. Here is a letter from him.

"My dear, my beloved Friend,—A dream last night has reminded me that I owe you an answer. Not that I had entirely forgotten it,—not that I never think of you: no, my dear friend, every day says something to me of you and of my faults. But it is strange, and it is an experience which perhaps you also know, the remembrance of the absent, though not extinguished by time, is veiled. The distractions of our life, acquaintance with new objects, in short, every change in our circumstances, do to our hearts what smoke and dirt do to a picture,—they make the delicate touches quite undiscernible, and in such a way that one does not know how it comes to pass. A thousand things remind me of you; I see your image a thousand times, but as faintly, and often with as little emotion, as if I thought of some one quite strange to me; it often occurs to me that I owe you an answer, without my feeling the slightest impulse to write to you. Now, when I read your kind letter, which is already some months old, and see your friendship and your solicitude for one so unworthy, I am shocked at myself, and for the first time feel what a change has taken place in my heart, that I can be without joy at that which formerly would have lifted me up to heaven. Forgive me this! Can one blame an unfortunate man because he is unable to rejoice? My wretchedness has made me dead to the good which still remains to me. My body is restored, but my mind is still uncured. I am in dull, inactive repose; that is not happiness. And in this quietude my imagination is so stagnant, that I can no longer picture to myself what was once dearest to me. It is only in a dream that my heart often appears to me as it is,—only a dream is capable of recalling to me the sweet images, of so recalling them as to reanimate my feelings; I have already told you that you are indebted to a dream for this letter. I saw you, I was with you; how it was, is too strange for me to relate to you. In one word, you were married. Is that true? I took up your kind letter, and it agrees with the time; if it is true, O may that be the beginning of your happiness!

"When I think of this disinterestedly, how does it rejoice me to know that you, my best friend, you, before every other who envied you and fancied herself better than you, are in the arms of a worthy husband; to know that you are happy, and freed from every annoyance to which a single state, and especially your single state, was exposed! I thank my dream that it has vividly depicted your happiness to me, and the

happiness of your husband, and his reward for having made you happy. Obtain me his friendship in virtue of your being my friend, for you must have all things in common, even including friends. If I may believe my dream we shall see each other again, but I hope not so very quickly, and for my part I shall try to defer its fulfilment. If, indeed, a man can undertake anything in opposition to destiny. Formerly I wrote to you somewhat enigmatically about what was to become of me. Now I may say more plainly that I am about to change my place of residence, and move farther from you. Nothing will any more remind me of Leipsic, except, perhaps, a restless dream; no friend who comes from thence; no letter. And yet I perceive that this will be no help to me. Patience, time, and distance will do that which nothing else can do; they will annihilate every unpleasant impression, and give us back our friendship, with contentment, with life, so that after a series of years we may see each other again with altogether different eyes, but with the same heart. Within a quarter of a year you shall have another letter from me, which will tell you of my destination and the time of my departure, and which can once more say to superfluity what I have already said a thousand times. I entreat you not to answer me any more; if you have anything more to say to me, let me know it through a friend. That is a melancholy entreaty, my best! you, the only one of all her sex, whom I cannot call friend, for that is an insignificant title compared with what I feel. I wish not to see your writing again, just as I wish not to hear your voice; it is painful enough for me that my dreams are so busy. You shall have one more letter; that promise I will sacredly keep, and so pay a part of my debts; the rest you must forgive me."

To round off this story, the following extract may be given from the last letter which has been preserved of those he wrote to her. It is dated Frankfurt, January 1770.

"That I live peaceably is all that I can say to you of myself, and vigorously, and healthily, and industriously, for I have no woman in my head. Horn and I are still good friends, but, so it happens in the world, he has his thoughts and ways, and I have my thoughts and ways, and so a week passes and we scarcely see each other once. But, everything considered, I am at last tired of Frankfurt, and at the end of March I shall leave it. I must not yet go to you, I perceive; for if I came at Easter you could not be married. And Käthchen Schön-

kopf I will not see again, if I am not to see her otherwise than so. At the end of March, therefore, I go to Strasburg; if you care to know that, as I believe you do. Will you write to me to Strasburg also? You will play me no trick. For, Käthchen Schönkopf, now I know perfectly that a letter from you is as dear to me as from any hand in the world. You were always a sweet girl and will be a sweet woman. And I, I shall remain Goethe. You know what that means. If I name my name, I name my whole self, and you know that so long as I have known you I have lived only as part of you."

So fall away the young blossoms of love which have not the force to ripen into fruit. "The most lovable heart," he writes to Käthchen, with a certain bit of humour, "is that which loves the most readily; but that which easily loves also easily forgets." It was his case; he could not be happy without some one to love; but his mobile nature soon dried the tears wrung from him by her loss.

Turning once more to his domestic condition, we find him in cold, unpleasant relations with his father, who had almost excited the hatred of his other child, Cornelia, by the stern, pedantic, pedagogic way in which he treated her. The old man continued to busy himself with writing his travels in Italy, and with instructing his daughter. She, who was of a restless, excitable, almost morbid disposition, secretly rebelled against his tyranny, and made her brother the confidant of all her griefs. The poor mother had a terrible time of it, trying to pacify the children, and to stand between them and their father.

Very noticeable is one detail recorded by him. He had fallen ill again; this time with a stomach disorder, which no therapeutic treatment in the power of Frankfurt medicine seemed to mitigate. The family physician was one of those duped dupers who still clung to the great promises of Alchemy. It was whispered that he had in his possession a marvellous panacea, which was only to be employed in times of greatest need, and of which, indeed, no one dared openly speak. Frau Aja, trembling for her son, besought him to employ this mysterious salt. He consented. The patient recovered, and belief in the physician's skill became more complete. Not only was the poet thus restored once more to health, he was also thereby led to the study of Alchemy, and, as he narrates, employed himself in researches after the "virgin earth." In the little study of that house in the *Hirsch-graben*, he collected

his glasses and retorts, and following the directions of authorities, sought, for a time, to penetrate the mystery which then seemed so penetrable. It is characteristic of his ardent curiosity and volatility that he should have now devoted the long hours of study to works such as Welling's *Opus Mago-cabbalisticum et Theosophicum*, and the unintelligible mystifications and diatribes of Paracelsus. He also tried Van Helmont (an interesting though fantastic writer), Basil Valentine, and other Alchemists. These, however, must quickly have been laid aside. They were replaced by the "Compendium" and the "Aphorisms" of Boerhaave, who at that period filled Europe with the sound of his name.[1] Goethe's studies of these writings were valuable as preparations for *Faust;* and were not without influence on his subsequent career in science.

Renewed intercourse with Fräulein von Klettenberg, together with much theological and philosophical reading, brought Religion into prominence in his thoughts. He has given a sketch of the sort of Neoplatonic Christianity into which his thoughts moulded themselves; but as this sketch was written so very many years after the period to which it relates, one cannot well accept its authenticity. For biographic purposes it is enough to indicate that, beside these Alchemic studies, Religion rose also into serious importance. Poetry seemed quite to have deserted him, although he still occasionally touched up his two plays. In a letter he humorously exposes the worthlessness of the *Bardenpoesie*, then in fashion among versifiers, who tried to be patriotic and Tyrtæan by huddling together golden helmets, flashing swords, the tramp of horses, and when the verse went lame for want of a syllable, supplying an *Oh!* or *Ha!* "Make me feel," he says, "what I have not yet felt,—make me think what I have not yet thought, then I will praise you. But shrieks and noise will never supply the place of pathos."

Paoli, the Corsican Patriot, passed through Frankfurt at this time, and Goethe saw him in the house of Bethmann, the rich merchant; but, with this exception, Frankfurt presented nothing remarkable to him, and he was impatient to escape from it. His health was sufficiently restored for his father to hope that now Jurisprudence could be studied with some

[1] So little can contemporary verdicts settle an author's position, that Boerhaave, whose "Institutions" were thought worthy of a Commentary in seven quartos by the great Haller, and whose "Aphorisms" were expanded into five quartos by the illustrious Von Swieten, is now nothing but a name.

success; and Strasburg was the university selected for that purpose.

CHAPTER V

STRASBURG

He reached Strasburg on the 2nd April 1770. He was now turned twenty, and a more magnificent youth never, perhaps, entered the Strasburg gates. Long before celebrity had fixed all eyes upon him he was likened to an Apollo; and once, when he entered a dining-room, people laid down their knives and forks to stare at the beautiful youth. Pictures and busts, even when most resembling, give but a feeble indication of that which was most striking in his appearance; they give the form of features, but not the play of features; nor are they very accurate as to the form. His features were large and liberally cut, as in the fine sweeping lines of Greek art. The brow was lofty and massive, and from beneath it shone large lustrous brown eyes of marvellous beauty, their pupils being of almost unexampled size. The slightly aquiline nose was large, and well cut. The mouth was full, with a short, arched upper lip, very sensitive and expressive. The chin and jaw boldly proportioned; and the head rested on a handsome and muscular neck.

In stature he was rather above the middle size; but although not really tall, he had the aspect of a tall man, and is usually so described, because his presence was very imposing.[1] His frame was strong, muscular, yet sensitive. Dante says this contrast is in the nature of things, for—

> "Quanta la cosa è più perfetta,
> Più senta 'l bene, e così la doglienza."

Excelling in all active sports, he was almost a barometer in sensitiveness to atmospheric influences.

Such, externally, was the youth who descended at the hotel *zum Geist*, in Strasburg, this 2nd April, and who, ridding himself of the dust and *ennui* of a long imprisonment in the diligence, sallied forth to gaze at the famous cathedral, which made a wonderful impression on him as he came up to it

[1] Rauch, the sculptor, who made the well-known statuette of Goethe, explained this to me as owing to his large bust and erect carriage.

through the narrow streets. The Strasburg Cathedral not inaptly serves as the symbol of his early German tendencies; and its glorious tower is always connected, in my mind, with the brief but ardent endeavours of his Hellenic nature to throw itself into the old German world. German his spirit was not, but we shall see him, under the shadow of this tower, for a moment inspired with true German enthusiasm.

His lodgings secured—No. 80, on the south side of the Fishmarket—he delivered his letters of introduction, and arranged to dine at a *table d'hôte* kept by two maiden ladies, named Lauth, in the Krämergasse, No. 13. The guests here were about ten in number, mostly medical. Their president was Dr. Salzmann, a clean old bachelor of eight and forty, scrupulous in his stockings, immaculate as to his shoes and buckles, with hat under his arm, and scarcely ever on his head—a neat, dapper, old gentleman, well instructed, and greatly liked by the poet, to whom he gave excellent advice, and for whom he found a valuable *repetent*.[1] In spite of the services of this excellent repetent, jurisprudence wearied him considerably, according to his account; at first, however, he seems to have taken to it with some pleasure, as we learn by a letter, in which he tells Fräulein von Klettenberg a different story:—"Jurisprudence begins to please me very much. Thus it is with all things as with Merseburg beer: the first time we shudder at it, and having drunk it for a week, we cannot do without it." The study of jurisprudence, at any rate, did not absorb him. Schöll has published a note-book kept during this period, which reveals an astonishing activity in desultory research.[2] When we remember that the society at his *table d'hôte* was principally of medical students, we are prepared to find him eagerly throwing himself into the study of anatomy and chemistry. He attended Lobstein's lectures on Anatomy, Ehrmann's clinical lectures, with those of his son on midwifery, and Spielman's on chemistry. Electricity occupied him, Franklin's great discovery having brought

[1] The medical student will best understand what a repetent is, if the word be translated a *grinder;* the university student, if the word be translated a *coach.* The repetent prepares students by an examination, and also by repeating and explaining in private what the professor has taught in the lecture hall.

[2] *Briefe und Aufsätze von Goethe.* Herausgegeben von ADOLF SCHÖLL. In this, as in his other valuable work, Schöll is not content simply to reprint papers entrusted to him, but enriches them by his own careful, accurate editing.

that subject into prominence. No less than nine works on electricity are set down in the notebook to be studied. We also see from this notebook that chromatic subjects begin to attract him —the future antagonist of Newton was preluding in the science. Alchemy still fascinated him; and he wrote to Fräulein von Klettenberg, assuring her that these mystical studies were his secret mistresses. With such a direction of his thoughts, and the influence of this pure, pious woman still operating upon him, we can imagine the disgust which followed his study of the *Système de la Nature*, then making so great a noise in the world. This dead and dull exposition of an atheism as superficial as it was dull, must have been every way revolting to him: irritating to his piety, and unsatisfying to his reason. Voltaire's wit and Rousseau's sarcasms he could copy into his notebook, especially when they pointed in the direction of tolerance; but he who could read Bayle, Voltaire, and Rousseau with delight, turned from the *Système de la Nature* with scorn; especially at a time when we find him taking the sacrament, and trying to keep up an acquaintance with the pious families to which Fräulein von Klettenberg had introduced him. I say *trying*, because even his goodwill could not long withstand their dulness and narrowness; he was forced to give them up, and confessed so much to his friend.

Shortly after his arrival in Strasburg, namely in May 1770, an event occurred which agitated the town, and gave him an opportunity of seeing, for the first time, Raphael's cartoons. Marie Antoinette, the dauphiness of France elect, was to pass through on her way to Paris. On a small island on the Rhine a building was erected for her reception; and this was adorned with tapestries worked after the cartoons. These tapestries roused his enthusiasm; but he was shocked to find that they were placed in the side chambers, while the chief salon was hung with tapestries worked after pictures by modern French artists. That Raphael should thus be thrown into a subordinate position was less exasperating to him than the *subjects* chosen from the modern artists. "These pictures were the history of Jason, Medea, and Creusa—consequently, a story of a most wretched marriage. To the left of the throne was seen the bride struggling against a horrible death, surrounded by persons full of sympathetic grief; to the right stood the father, horror-struck at the murdered babes at his feet; whilst the fury, in her dragon car, drove through the air."

All the ideas which he had learned from Œser were outraged by this selection. He did not quarrel so much with the arrangement which placed Christ and the Apostles in side chambers, since he had thereby been enabled to enjoy the sight of them. "But a blunder like that of the grand saloon put me altogether out of my self-possession, and with loud and vehement cries I called to my comrades to witness the insult against feeling and taste. 'What!' I exclaimed, regardless of bystanders, 'can they so thoughtlessly place before the eyes of a young queen, on her first setting foot in her dominions, the representation of the most horrible marriage perhaps that ever was consummated! Is there among the architects and decorators no one man who understands that pictures *represent something*—that they work upon the mind and feelings—that they produce impressions and excite forebodings? It is as if they had sent a ghastly spectre to meet this lovely, and as we hear most joyous, lady at the very frontiers!'" To him, indeed, pictures meant something; they were realities to him, because he had the true artistic nature. But to the French architects, as to the Strasburg officials, pictures were pictures—ornaments betokening more or less luxury and taste, flattering the eye, but never touching the soul.

Goethe was right; and omen-lovers afterwards read in that picture the dark foreshadowing of her destiny. But no one then could have foreseen that her future career would be less triumphant than her journey from Vienna to Paris. That smiling, happy, lovely princess of fifteen, whose grace and beauty extort expressions of admiration from every beholder, as she wends her way along roads lined with the jubilant peasantry leaving their fields to gaze upon her, through streets strewn with nosegays, through triumphal arches, and rows of maidens garlanded, awaiting her arrival to offer her spring-flowers as symbols—can her joy be for a moment dashed by a pictured sorrow? Can omens have a dark significance to her?

"I still vividly remember," says Goethe, "the beauteous and lofty mien, as charming as it was dignified, of the young princess. Plainly visible in her carriage, she seemed to be jesting with her female attendants respecting the throng which poured forth to meet her train." Scarcely had the news of her happy arrival in the capital reached them, than it was followed by the intelligence of the accident which had disturbed the festivities of her marriage. Goethe's thoughts

naturally recurred to the ominous pictures: a nature less superstitious would not have been entirely unmoved by such a coincidence.

"The excitement over, the Strasburgers fell into their accustomed tranquillity. The mighty stream of courtly magnificence had now flowed by, and left me no other longing than that for the tapestries of Raphael, which I could have contemplated and worshipped every hour. Luckily my earnest desires succeeded in interesting several persons of consequence, so that the tapestries were not taken down till the very last moment."

The re-established quiet left him time for studies again. In a letter of this date, he intimates that he is "so improved in knowledge of Greek as almost to read Homer without a translation. I am a week older; *that* you know says a great deal with me, not because I do much, but many things." Among these many things, we must note his ardent search through mystical metaphysical writings for the material on which his insatiable appetite could feed. Strange revelations in this direction are afforded by his notebook. On one page there is a passage from Thomas à Kempis, followed by a list of mystical works to be read; on another page, sarcastic sentences from Rousseau and Voltaire; on a third a reference to Tauler. The book contains an analysis of the *Phædon* of Moses Mendelssohn, contrasted with that of Plato; and a defence of Giordano Bruno against the criticism of Bayle.

Apropos of Bruno, one may remark the early tendency of Goethe's mind towards Nature-worship. Tacitus, indeed, noticed the tendency as national.[1] The scene in Frankfurt, where the boy-priest erected his Pantheistic altar, will help to explain the interest he must have felt in the glimpse Bayle gave him of the great Pantheist of the sixteenth century—the brilliant and luckless Bruno, who after teaching the heresy of Copernicus at Rome and Oxford, after combating Aristotle and gaining the friendship of Sir Philip Sidney, was publicly burnt on the 17th February 1600, in the presence of the Roman crowd: expiating thus the crime of teaching that the earth moved, when the Church declared it to be stable. A twofold interest attached itself to the name of Bruno. He was a martyr of Philosophy, and his works were rare; everyone

[1] *German.* ix., *sub fine.* What Tacitus there represents as a more exalted creed than anthropomorphism, was really a lower form of religious conception—the Fetichism, which in primitive races precedes Polytheism.

abused him, few had read him. He was almost as much hated as Spinoza, and scarcely anyone knew the writings they reviled. The rarity of Bruno's works made them objects of bibliopolic luxury; some were among the black swans of literature. The *Spaccio* had been sold for thirty pounds in England, and three hundred florins in Holland. Hamann, whom Herder and Goethe ardently admired, searched Italy and Germany for the *De la Causa* and *Del Infinito* in vain. Forbidden fruit is tempting; but when the fruit is rare, as well as forbidden, the attraction is irresistible.[1] Pantheism, which captivates poetical minds, has a poetical grandeur in the form given to it by Bruno which would have allured Goethe had his tendencies not already lain in that direction. To preach that doctrine Bruno became a homeless wanderer, and his wanderings ended in martyrdom. Nothing could shake his faith; as he loftily says, "con questa filosofia l'anima mi s'aggrandisce e mi si magnifica l'intelletto."

Goethe's notes on Bayle's criticism may be given here, as illustrating his metaphysical opinions and his mastery of French composition. We can be certain of the authenticity of the French: in spite of inaccuracies and inelegancies, it is fluent and expressive, and gives one the idea of greater conversational command of the language than he reports of himself.

"Je ne suis pas du sentiment de M. Bayle à l'égard de Jor. Brunus, et je ne trouve ni d'impiété ni d'absurdité dans les passages qu'il cite, quoique d'ailleurs je ne prétende pas d'excuser cet homme paradoxe. 'L'uno, l'infinito, lo ente e quello ch' è in tutto, e per tutto anzi è l'*istezzo* ubique. E che *cosse* la infinita dimenzione per non essere magnitudine coincide coll' individuo, come la infinita moltitudine, per non esser numero coincide coll' unita.' *Giord. Brun. Epist. Ded. del Tratt. de la Causa Principio et Uno.*[2]

"Ce passage mériteroit une explication et une recherche plus philosophiques que le disc. de M. Bayle. Il est plus

[1] Since then the works have been made accessible through the cheap and excellent edition collected by A. WAGNER: *Opere di Giordano Bruno Nolano.* 2 vols. Leipzic: 1830. But I do not observe that, now they are accessible, many persons interest themselves enough in Bruno to read them; yet they are worth studying.

[2] "The One, the Infinite, the Being, and that which is in all things is everywhere the same. Thus infinite extension not being magnitude coincides with the individual, as infinite multitude because it is not number coincides with unity." The words in italics are given as in Goethe—carelessly copied for *l'istesso* and *cosi*. See BRUNO, *Opere*, i. p. 211, ed. Wagner.

facile de prononcer un passage obscur et contraire à nos notions que de la déchiffrer, et que de suivre les idées d'un grand homme. Il est de même du passage où il plaisante sur une idée de Brunus, que je n'applaudis pas entièrement, si peu que les précédentes, mais que je crois du moins profondes et peut-être fécondes pour un observateur judicieux. Notez, je vous prie, de B. une absurdité: il dit que ce n'est point l'être qui fait qu'il y a beaucoup de choses, mais que cette multitude consiste dans ce qui paroit sur la superfice de la substance."

In the same notebook there is a remarkable comment on a chapter in Fabricius (*Bibliog. Antiq.*) which Goethe has written in Latin, and which may be thus rendered: "To discuss God apart from Nature is both difficult and perilous; it is as if we separated the soul from the body. We know the soul only through the medium of the body, and God only through Nature. Hence the absurdity, as it appears to me, of accusing those of absurdity who philosophically have united God with the world. For everything which exists, necessarily pertains to the essence of God, because God is the one Being whose existence includes all things. Nor does the Holy Scripture contradict this, although we differently interpret its dogmas each according to his views. All antiquity thought in the same way; an unanimity which to me has great significance. To me the judgment of so many men speaks highly for the rationality of the doctrine of emanation; though I am of no sect, and grieve much that Spinoza should have coupled this pure doctrine with his detestable errors."[1] This reference to Spinoza, whom he subsequently reverenced as one of his best teachers, is easily explicable when we reflect that he then knew no more of Spinoza than could be gathered from Bayle.

[1] I subjoin the original, as the reader may not be displeased to see a specimen of Goethe's Latin composition: Separatim de Deo, et natura rerum disserere difficile et pericolosum est, eodem modo quam si de corpore et anima sejunctim cogitamus. Animam nonnisi mediante corpore, Deum nonnisi perspecta natura cognoscimus; hinc absurdum mihi videtur, eos absurditatis accusare, qui ratiocinatione maxime philosophica Deum cum mundo conjunxere. Quæ enim sunt omnia ad essentiam Dei pertinere necesse est, cum Deus sit unicum existens et omnia comprehendat. Nec Sacer Codex nostræ sententiæ refragatur, cujus tamen dicta ab unoquoque in sententiam suam torqueri patientur ferimus. Omnis antiquitatis ejusdem fuit sententiæ, cui consensui quam multum tribuo. Testimonio enim mihi est virorum tantorum sententia rectæ rationi quam convenientissimum fuisse systema emanativum, licet nulli subscribere velim sectæ, valdeque doleam Spinozismum, teterrimis erroribus ex eodem fonte manantibus, doctrinæ huic purissimæ iniquissimum fratrem natum esse.

Time was not all consumed by these studies, multifarious as they were. Lively Strasburg had its amusements, and Goethe joined his friend Salzmann in many a pleasant party. The various pleasure grounds and public gardens were always crowded with promenaders, and there the mixture of the old national costume with modern fashions gave charming variety to the scene, and made the pretty women still more attractive.

He found himself in the presence of two sharply-defined nationalities. Alsatia, and especially Strasburg, although belonging to France, still preserved its old German character. Eight hundred years of national life were not to be set aside at once, when it pleased the powers, at the peace of Westphalia, to say that Alsatia should be French. Until the middle of the eighteenth century the old German speech, costume, and manners were so dominant, that a Frankfurter, or a Mainzer, found himself at once at home there. But just before the outbreak of the French Revolution the gradual influx of officials brought about a sort of fashion in French costume. Milliners, friseurs, and dancing masters had done their best, or their worst, to "polish" society. But the surface was rough, and did not take kindly to this polishing. Side by side with the French *employé*, there was the old German professor, who obstinately declined to acquire more of the foreigners' language than sufficed for daily needs and household matters; for the rest he kept sturdily Teutonic. Even in costume the imitation was mainly confined to the upper classes.[1] Goethe describes the maidens of the bourgeoisie still wearing their hair in one long plait, falling behind, and their petticoats of picturesque but perilous brevity.

Salzmann introduced him to several families, and thus more than by all his advice helped to soften down the exuberant expression of animal spirits which very often sinned against quiet conventionalities; for by inducing him to frequent society, it forced him to learn that demeanour which society imperatively demands. In *Wilhelm Meister* great stress is laid upon the culture necessary to fit a man of genius for society; and one of the great motives advanced for the pursuance of a theatrical career is the facility it affords a man of gaining address.

An excitable impetuous youth, ambitious of shining in

[1] Stoeber: *Der Aktuar Salzmann*, 1855, p. 7.

society, yet painfully conscious of the unsuitableness of his previous training for the attainment of that quietness deemed so necessary, would require to attend to every trifle which might affect his deportment. Thus, although he had magnificent hair, he allowed the hairdresser to tie it up in a bag, and affix a false queue. This obliged him to remain propped up powdered, from an early hour of the morning, and also to keep from overheating himself and from violent gestures, lest he should betray the false ornament. "This restraint contributed much towards making me for a time more gentle and polite in my bearing; and I got accustomed to shoes and stockings, and to carrying my hat under my arm; I did not, however, neglect wearing fine understockings as a protection against the Rhine gnats." To these qualifications as a cavalier, he added those of an excellent swordsman and rider. With his fellow-students he had abundant exercise in the use of the rapier; and prompted, I presume, by his restless desire to do all that his friends did, he began to learn the violoncello!

His circle of friends widened; and even that of his fellow-boarders in the Krämergasse increased. Among the latter, two deserve special mention—Jung Stilling and Franz Lerse. Stilling has preserved an account of their first meeting.[1] About twenty were assembled at dinner, when a young man entered the room in high spirits, whose large clear eyes, splendid brow, and beautifully proportioned figure, irresistibly drew the attention of Troost and Stilling. The former remarked, "That must be an extraordinary man!" Stilling assented; but feared lest they might be somewhat annoyed by him, he looked such a wild rollicking fellow. Meanwhile they learned that this student, whose unconstrained freedom and *àplomb* made them draw under their shells, was named Herr Goethe. Dinner proceeded. Goethe, who sat opposite Stilling, had completely the lead in conversation, without once seeking it. At length one of the company began quizzing the wig of poor Stilling; and the fun was relished by all except Troost, Salzmann, and one who, indignantly reproving them for making game of so inoffensive a person, silenced the ridicule immediately; this was none other than the large-eyed student whose appearance had excited Stilling's uneasiness. The friendship thus begun was continued by the sympathy and tender affectionateness Goethe always displayed towards the

[1] STILLING'S *Wanderschaft*, p. 158.

simple, earnest, and unfriended thinker, whose deep religious convictions, and trusting child-like nature, singularly interested him. Goethe was never tired of listening to the story of his life. Instinctively he sought on all sides to penetrate the mysteries of humanity, and, by probing every man's experience, to make it his own. Here was a poor charcoal-burner, who from tailoring had passed to keeping a school; that failing, he had resumed his needle; and having joined a religious sect, had, in silent communion with his own soul, gained for himself a sort of culture which raised him above the ordinary height of men:—what was there in his life or opinions to captivate the riotous, sceptical, prosperous student? There was *earnestness*—there was *genuineness*. Goethe was eminently qualified to become the friend of one who held opposite convictions to his own, for his tolerance was large and genuine, and he respected every real conviction. Sympathising with Stilling, listening to him, and dexterously avoiding any interference with his religious faith, he was not only enabled to be his friend, but also to learn quietly and surely the inner nature of such men.

Franz Lerse attracted him by different qualities: upright manliness, scrupulous orderliness, dry humour, and a talent for reconciling antagonists. As a memorial of their friendship his name is given to the gallant fellow in *Götz von Berlichingen*, who knows how to subordinate himself with dignity.

Salzmann had some years before founded a sort of club, or, as Stilling calls it, *Gesellschaft der schönen Wissenschaften*, the object of which was to join a book society with a debating club. In 1763–4 this club had among its members no less a person than O. F. Müller, the renowned helminthologist; and now in 1770–1 it numbered, among others, Goethe, Lerse, Jung Stilling, Lenz, Weyland, and, as a guest, was honoured by the presence of Herder, who was then writing his work on the *Origin of Language*.

Generally speaking, Goethe is so liberal in information about his friends and contemporaries, and so sparing of precise indications of his own condition, that we are left in the dark respecting much that would be welcome knowledge. There is one thing mentioned by him which is very significant: although his health was sufficiently established for ordinary purposes, he still suffered from great irritability. Loud sounds were disagreeable to him; diseased objects aroused

loathing and horror. And he was especially troubled with giddiness, which came over him whenever he looked down from a height. All these infirmities he resolved to conquer, and that somewhat violently. In the evening when they beat the tattoo, he went close to the drums, though the powerful rolling and beating of so many seemed enough to make his heart burst in his bosom. Alone he ascended the highest pinnacle of the cathedral, and sat in what is called the neck, under the crown, for a quarter of an hour before venturing to step out again into the open air. Standing on a platform, scarcely an ell square, he saw before him a boundless prospect, the church and the supports of his standing place being concealed by the ornaments. He felt exactly as if carried up in a balloon. These painful sensations he repeated until they became quite indifferent; he subsequently derived great advantage from this conquest, in mountainous excursions and geological studies. Anatomy was also of double value, as it taught him to tolerate the most repulsive sights while satisfying his thirst for knowledge. He succeeded so well, that no hideous sight could disturb his self-possession. He also sought to steel himself against the terrors of imagination. The awful and shuddering impressions of darkness in churchyards, solitary places, churches and chapels by night, he contrived to render indifferent—so much so, that when a desire came over him to recall in such scenes the pleasing shudder of youth, he could scarcely succeed even by the strangest and most terrific images.

Two love poems, written during this year—*Stirbt der Fuchs so gilt der Balg*, and *Blinde Kuh*—put us on the scent of flirtations. He is silent respecting Dorilis and Theresa in his autobiography; and in ordinary cases a biographer would accept that silence, without drawing any conclusion from the poems. No one hereafter will think of identifying the Claribels, Isabels, and Madelines, with young ladies whom our poets met in society, and who led captive their inconstant hearts. With Goethe it is otherwise. All his poems grow out of occasions: they are flowers of which circumstance is the earth. Utterances of real feelings to real beings, they are unlike all coquettings with imaginary beauties. His poems are evidences.[1] Unhappily, the bare *fact* in this instance is all we can discover.

[1] I find Viehoff insisting on a similar clue: he supposes Dorilis and Theresa (probably one and the same person) to be real persons, and that

One flirtation, however, was not so easily effaced. From childhood his strange didactic father had instructed him and his sister in dancing, a task which seems rather ludicrous as we picture to ourselves the cold, formal, rigorous old Frankfurter. He was perfectly unconscious of any incongruity. With the utmost gravity he drilled them into a minuet, playing to them on the flageolet. Goethe's dancing had been for sometime neglected, and when he stood up to a minuet once at Leipzig, he got through it so awkwardly as to draw upon himself the suspicion of having done so to prevent being invited again.

A handsome youth unable to dance was an anomaly in Strasburg. Not a Sunday evening passed without the pleasure gardens being crowded with gay dancers; galas frequently enlivened the week; and the merry Alsatians, then as now, seldom met but they commenced spinning round in the waltz. Into these gardens, amidst these waltzers, Goethe constantly went—yet could not waltz. He resolved at length to learn. A friend recommended him to a dancing-master of repute, who soon pronounced himself gratified with the progress made.

This master, a dry, precise, but amiable Frenchman, had two daughters, who assisted him at his lessons, acting both as partners and correctors. Two pretty girls, both under twenty, charming with French vivacity and coquetry, could not fail to interest the young poet; nor could the graceful, handsome youth fail to create an impression on two girls whose lives were somewhat lonesome. Symptoms of this interest very soon showed themselves. The misfortune was that the state of their feelings made what dramatists call "a situation." Goethe's heart inclined towards Emilia, who loved another; while that of Lucinda, the elder sister, was bestowed upon him. Emilia was afraid to trust herself too much with him; but Lucinda was always at hand, ready to waltz with him, to protract his lesson, or to show him little attentions. There were not many pupils; so that he often remained after his lesson to chat away the time, or to read aloud to them a romance: dangerous moments!

He saw how things stood, yet puzzled himself about the reserve of the younger sister. The cause of it came out at

Goethe knew them through Salzmann. Mr. Demmler argues with some force that Dorilis can be none other than Frederika,—of whom more anon.

last. One evening, after the dance was over, Lucinda detained him in the dancing-room, telling him that her sister was in the sitting-room with a fortune-teller, who was disclosing the condition of a lover to whom the girl's heart was given. "Mine," said Lucinda, "is free, and I must get used to its being slighted."

He tried to parry this thrust by divers little compliments; and, indiscreetly enough, advised her to try her own fate with the fortune-teller, offering to do the same himself. Lucinda did not like that tampering with fate, declaring that the disclosures of the oracle were too true to be made a matter of sport. Probably this piqued him into a little more earnestness than he had shown, for ultimately he persuaded her to go into the sitting-room with him. They found Emilia much pleased with the information that she had received from the pythoness, who was highly flattered at the new devotee to her shrine. A handsome reward was promised her if she should disclose the truth. With the customary ceremonial she began to tell the fortune of the elder sister. She hesitated. "Oh, I see," said Emilia, "that you have something unpleasant to tell." Lucinda turned pale, but said, "Speak out; it will not cost me my life." The fortune-teller heaved a deep sigh, and proceeded with her disclosures. Lucinda, she said, was in love; but her love was not returned; another person standing in the way. And she went on with more in the same style. It is not difficult to imagine that the sybil should readily enough interpret the little drama which was then acting by the youth and two girls before her eyes. Lucinda showed evidence of distress; and the old woman endeavoured to give a better turn to the affair by throwing out hopes of letters and money. "Letters," said Lucinda, "I do not expect; and money I do not want. If I love as you say, I have a right to be loved in return." The fortune-teller shuffled the cards again; but that only made matters worse; the girl now appeared in the oracular vision in greater trouble, her lover at a greater distance. A third shuffle of the cards was still worse; Lucinda burst into a passionate flood of tears, and rushed from the room. "Follow her," said Emilia, "and comfort her." But he hesitated, not seeing what comfort he could well give, as he could not assure her of some return for her affection. "Let us go together," he replied. Emilia doubted whether her presence would do good; but she consented. Lucinda had locked

herself in; and paying the old woman for her work, Goethe left the house.

He had scarcely courage to revisit the sisters; but on the third day Emilia sent for him, and he received his lesson as usual. Lucinda, however, was absent; and when he asked for her, Emilia told him that she was in bed, declaring that she should die. She had thrown out great reproaches against him for his ungrateful behaviour. "And yet I do not know," said he, "that I am guilty of having expressed any sort of affection for her. I know somebody who can bear me witness of that." Emilia smiled. "I comprehend," she said; "but if we are not careful we shall all find ourselves in a disastrous position. Forgive me if I say that you must not go on with your lessons. My father says that he is ashamed to take your money any longer, unless you mean to pursue the art of dancing; since you know already what is needed by a young man in the world." "Do you tell me to avoid the house, Emilia?" he asked. "Yes," she said; "but not on my own account. When you had gone the other day, I had the cards cut for you; and the same answer was given thrice. You were surrounded by friends, and all sorts of good fortune; but the ladies kept aloof from you; my poor sister stood farthest of all. One other constantly came near to you; but never close; for a third person, a man, always came between. I will confess that I thought I was myself this second lady; and now you will understand my advice. I have promised myself to another, and until now I loved him more than any one. Yet your presence might become more dangerous to me than it has been; and then what a position would be yours between two sisters, one of whom you would have made miserable by your affection, and the other by your coldness." She held out her hand and bade him farewell; she then led him to the door; and in token that it was to be their last meeting, she threw herself upon his bosom and kissed him tenderly. Just as he had put his arms round her, a side door flew open, and her sister, in a light but decorous dressing gown, rushed in, crying, "You shall not be the only one to take leave of him!" Emilia released him. Lucinda took him in her arms, pressed her black locks against his cheeks; remained thus for some time, and then drawing back looked him earnestly in the face. He took her hand, and tried to muster some kind expressions to soothe her; but she turned away, walked passionately up and down the room, and then threw herself

in great agitation into a corner of the sofa. Emilia went up to her, but was violently repulsed; and a scene ensued, which had in it, says the principal performer, nothing really theatrical, although it could only be represented on the stage by an actor of sensibility. Lucinda poured forth reproaches against her sister. "This," said she, "is not the first heart beating for me that you have wheedled away. Was it not so with the one now betrothed to you, while I looked on and bore it? I, only, know the tears it cost me; and now you would rob me of this one. How many would you manage to keep at once? I am frank and easy-tempered, and all think they understand me at once, and may slight me. You are secret and quiet, and make people wonder at what may be concealed behind: there is nothing there but a cold, selfish heart, sacrificing everything to itself." Emilia seated herself by her sister, and remained silent, while Lucinda, growing more excited, began to betray matters not quite proper for him to hear. Emilia made a sign to him to withdraw. But Lucinda caught the sound, sprang towards him, and then remained lost in thought. "I know that I have lost you," she said: "I claim you no more;—but neither shall you have him." So saying, she grasped him wildly by the head, with her hands thrust among his hair, pressed her face to his, and kissed him repeatedly on the mouth. "Now fear my curse! Woe upon woe, for ever and ever, to her who for the first time after me kisses these lips! Dare to sport with him now! Heaven hears my curse! And you, begone, begone while you may!"

He hurried from the house never to return. Is not this narrative like a scene in a novel? The excited little Frenchwoman—the bewildered poet—the old fortune-teller, and the dry old dancing-master, faintly sketched, in the background, are the sort of figures a novelist would delight in.

CHAPTER VI

HERDER AND FREDERIKA

ONE thing very noticeable in this Strasburg period is the thoroughly *German* culture it gave him. In those days culture was mostly classical and French. Classical studies had never

exercised much influence over him; and, indeed, throughout his career, he approached antiquity more through Art than through the Greek and Roman writers. To the French, on the other hand, he owed a great deal, both of direction and material. A revival of the old German nationality was, however, actively agitated at this epoch. Klopstock, Lessing, Herder, Shakspeare, and Ossian were the rivals opposed to France. A feeling of national pride gave its momentum to this change in taste. Gothic art began to be considered the true art of modern times.

At the *table d'hôte* our friends, all German, not only banished the French language, but made a point of being in every way unlike the French. French literature was ridiculed as affected, insincere, unnatural. The truth, homely strength, and simplicity of the German character were set against this literature of courtiers. Goethe had been dabbling in mediæval studies, had been awe-struck by the cathedral, had been inspired by Shakspeare, and had seen Lessing's iconoclastic wit scattering the pretensions of French poetry. Moreover, he had read the biography of *Götz von Berlichingen*, and the picture of that Titan in an age of anarchy had so impressed itself upon him, that the conception of a dramatic reproduction of it had grown up in his mind. *Faust* also lay there as a germ. The legend of that wonder-worker especially attracted him, now that he was in the condition into which youths so readily fall after a brief and unsatisfactory attempt to penetrate the mysteries of science. "Like him, too, I had swept the circle of science, and had early learned its vanity; like him I had trodden various paths, always returning unsatisfied." The studies of alchemy, medicine, jurisprudence, philosophy, and theology, which had so long engaged him, must have made him feel quite a personal interest in the old Faust legend.

In such a mood the acquaintance with Herder was of great importance. Herder was five years his senior, and had already created a name for himself. He came to Strasburg with an eye-disease, which obliged him to remain there the whole winter, during the cure. Goethe, charmed with this new vigorous intellect, attended on him during the operation, and sat with him morning and evening during his convalescence, listening to the wisdom which fell from those lips, as a pupil listens to a much-loved master. Great was the contrast between the two men, yet the difference did not separate them.

Herder was decided, clear, pedagogic; knowing his own aims, and fond of communicating his ideas. Goethe was sceptical and inquiring. Herder rude, sarcastic, and bitter; Goethe amiable and infinitely tolerant. The bitterness which repelled so many friends from Herder, could not repel Goethe: it was a peculiarity of his to be at all times able to learn from antagonistic natures; meeting them on the common ground of sympathy, he avoided those subjects on which inevitably they must clash. It is somewhat curious that although Herder took a great liking to his young friend, and was grateful for his kind attentions, he seems to have had little suspicion of his genius. The only fragment we have of that period, which gives us a hint of his opinion, is in a letter to his bride, dated February 1772: "Goethe is really a good fellow, only somewhat light and sparrow-like,[1] for which I incessantly reproach him. He was almost the only one who visited me during my illness in Strasburg whom I saw with pleasure; and I believe I influenced him in more ways than one to his advantage." His own conceit may have stood between Goethe and himself; or he may have been too conscious of his young friend's defects to think much of his genius. "Herder, Herder," Goethe writes to him from Strasburg, "be to me what you are. If I am destined to be your planet, so will I be, and willingly and truly, a friendly moon to your earth. But you must feel that I would rather be Mercury, the last, the smallest of the seven, to revolve with you about the sun, than the first of the five which turn round Saturn."[2] In one of the many inaccuracies of his *Autobiography*, he says, that he withheld from Herder his intention of writing "Götz"; but there is a passage in Herder's work on German Art, addressed to Goethe, which very plainly alludes to this intention.[3] Such oversights are inevitable in retracing the minor details of the past.

There was indeed contrast enough between the two, in age, character, intellect, and knowledge, to have prevented any very close sympathy. Herder loved the abstract and ideal in men and things, and was for ever criticising and complaining

[1] *Nur etwas leicht und Spatzenmässig:* I translate the phrase, leaving the reader to interpret it, for twenty Germans have given twenty different meanings to the word "sparrow-like," some referring to the chattering of sparrows, others to the boldness of sparrows, others to the curiosity of sparrows, and others to the libertine character of sparrows. Whether Herder meant gay, volatile, forward, careless, or amorous, I cannot decide.

[2] *Aus Herder's Nachlass*, i. p. 28.

[3] HERDER: *Von deutschen Art und Kunst*, p. 112.

of the individual, because it did not realise his ideal standard. What Gervinus says of Herder's relation to Lessing, namely, that he loved him when he considered him as a whole, but could never cease plaguing him about details, holds good also of his relation to Goethe through life. Goethe had little of that love of mankind in the abstract, which to Herder, and so many others, seems the substitute for individual love,—which animates philanthropists who are sincere in their philanthropy, even when they are bad husbands, bad fathers, bad brothers, and bad friends. He had, instead of this, the most overflowing love for individual men. His concrete and affectionate nature was more attracted to men than to abstractions. It is because many do not recognise this that they declaim against him for his "indifference" to political matters, to history, and to many of the great questions which affect Humanity.

Herder's influence on Goethe was manifold, but mainly in the direction of poetry. He taught him to look at the Bible as a magnificent illustration of the truth that Poetry is the product of a national spirit, not the privilege of a cultivated few. From the poetry of the Hebrew People he led him to other illustrations of national song; and here Homer and Ossian were placed highest. It was at this time that Ossian made the tour of Europe, and everywhere met believers. Goethe was so delighted with the wild northern singer, that he translated the song of "Selma," and afterwards incorporated it in *Werther*. Besides Shakspeare and Ossian, he also learned, through Herder, to appreciate the *Vicar of Wakefield;* and the exquisite picture there painted, he was now to see living in the parsonage of Frederika's father.

Upon the broad and lofty gallery of the Strasburg Cathedral he and his companions often met to salute the setting sun with brimming goblets of Rhine wine. The calm wide landscape stretched itself for miles before them, and they pointed out the several spots which memory endeared to each. One spot, above all others, has interest for us—Sesenheim, the home of Frederika. Of all the women who enjoyed the distinction of Goethe's love, none seem to me so fascinating as Frederika. Her idyllic presence is familiar to every lover of German literature, through the charming episode of the *Autobiography*, over which the poet lingered with peculiar delight. The secretary is now living to whom this episode was dictated, and he remembers vividly how much affected Goethe seemed

to be as these scenes revisited memory; walking up and down the room, with his hands behind him, he often stopped in his walk, and paused in the dictation; then after a long silence, followed by a deep sigh, he continued the narrative in a lower tone.

Weyland, a fellow-boarder, had often spoken of a clergyman who with his wife and two amiable daughters, lived near Drusenheim, a village about sixteen miles from Strasburg. Early in October 1770, Weyland proposed to his friend to accompany him on a visit to the worthy pastor. It was agreed between them that Weyland should introduce him under the guise of a shabby theological student. His love of incognito often prompted him to such disguises. In the present instance he borrowed some old clothes, and combed his hair in such a way that when Weyland saw him he burst out into a fit of laughter. They set forth in high glee. At Drusenheim they stopped, Weyland to make himself spruce, Goethe to rehearse his part. Riding across the meadows to Sesenheim, they left their horses at the inn, and walked leisurely towards the parsonage,—an old and somewhat dilapidated farm-house, but very picturesque, and very still. They found pastor Brion at home, and were welcomed by him in a friendly manner. The rest of the family were in the fields. Weyland went after them, leaving Goethe to discuss parish interests with the pastor, who soon grew confidential. Presently the wife appeared; and she was followed by the eldest daughter bouncing into the room, inquiring after Frederika, and hurrying away again to seek her.

Refreshments were brought, and old acquaintances were talked over with Weyland,—Goethe listening. Then the daughter returned, uneasy at not having found Frederika. This little domestic fuss about Frederika prepared the poet for her appearance. At length she came in. Both girls wore the national costume, with its short, white, full skirt and furbelow, not concealing the neatest of ankles, a tight bodice and black taffeta apron. Frederika's straw hat hung on her arm; and the beautiful braids of her fair hair drooped on a delicate white neck. Merry blue eyes, and a piquant little *nez retroussé*, completed her attractions. In gazing on this bright young creature, then only sixteen, Goethe felt ashamed of his disguise. It hurt his *amour propre* to appear thus before her like a bookish student, shorn of all personal advantages. Meanwhile conversation rattled on between Weyland

and his family. Endless was the list of uncles, aunts, nieces, cousins, gossips, and guests they had something to say about, leaving him completely excluded from the conversation. Frederika seeing this, seated herself by him, and with charming frankness began to talk to him. Music was lying on the harpsichord; she asked him if he played, and on his modestly-qualified affirmative begged him "to favour them." Her father, however, suggested that *she* ought to begin, by a song. She sat down to the harpsichord, which was somewhat out of tune, and, in a provincial style, performed several pieces, such as then were thought enchanting. After this she began to sing. The song was tender and melancholy, but she was apparently not in the mood, for acknowledging her failure she rose and said, "If I sing badly it is not the fault of my harpsichord nor of my teacher: let us go into the open air, and then you shall hear my Alsatian and Swiss songs." Into the air they went, and soon her merry voice carolled forth:

> "I come from a forest as dark as the night,
> And believe me, I love thee, my only delight.
> Ei ja, ei ja, ei, ei, ei, ei, ja, ja, ja!"[1]

He was already a captive.

His tendency to see pictures and poetry in the actual scenes of life, here made him see realised the Wakefield family. If pastor Brion did not accurately represent Mr. Primrose, yet he might stand for him; the elder daughter for Olivia, the younger for Sophia; and when at supper a youth came into the room, Goethe involuntary exclaimed, "What, Moses too!" A very merry supper they had; so merry that Weyland, fearing lest wine and Frederika should make his friend betray himself, proposed a walk in the moonlight. Weyland offered his arm to Salome, the elder daughter (always named *Olivia* in the *Autobiography*), Frederika took Goethe's arm. Youth and moonlight—need one say more? Already he began to scrutinise her tone in speaking of cousins and neighbours, jealous lest it should betray an affection. But her blithe spirit was as yet untroubled, and he listened in delicious silence to her unembarrassed loquacity.

On retiring for the night the friends had much to talk over. Weyland assured him the incognito had not been betrayed; on the contrary, the family had inquired after the young

[1] The entire song is to be found in the *Sesenheimer Liederbuch* and in Viehoff: *Goethe Erläutert*, vol. i. p. 110.

Goethe, of whose joviality and eccentricities they had often heard. And now came the tremulous question: was Frederika engaged? No. That was a relief! Had she ever been in love? No. Still better! Thus chatting, they sat till deep in the night, as friends chat on such occasions, with hearts too full and brains too heated for repose. At dawn Goethe was awake, impatient to see Frederika with the dew of morning on her cheek. While dressing he looked at his costume in disgust, and tried in vain to remedy it. His hair could be managed; but when his arms were thrust into his threadbare coat, the sleeves of which were ludicrously short, he looked pitiable; Weyland, peeping at him from under the coverlet, giggled. In his despair he resolved to ride back to Strasburg, and return in his own costume. On the way another plan suggested itself. He exchanged clothes with the son of the landlord at the Drusenheim Inn, a youth of his own size; corked his eyebrows, imitated the son's gait and speech, and returned to the parsonage the bearer of a cake. This second disguise also succeeded, so long as he kept at a distance; but Frederika running up to him and saying, "George, what do you here?" he was forced to reveal himself. "Not George, but one who asks forgiveness." "You shocking creature!" she exclaimed, "how you frightened me!" The jest was soon explained and forgiven, not only by Frederika, but by the family, who laughed heartily at it.

Gaily passed the day; the two hourly falling deeper and deeper in love. Passion does not chronicle by time: moments are hours, hours years, when two hearts are rushing into one. It matters little, therefore, that the *Autobiography* speaks of only two days passed in this happy circle, whereas a letter of his says distinctly he was there "some days—*einige Tage*" (*less* than three cannot be understood by *einige*). He was there long enough to fall in love, and to captivate the whole family by his gaiety, obligingness, and poetic gifts. He had given them a taste of his quality as a romancist, by telling the story of *The New Melusina* (subsequently published in the *Wanderjahre*). He had also interested himself in the pastor's plans for the rebuilding of the parsonage, and proposed to take away the sketches with him to Strasburg.

The pain of separation was lightened by the promise of speedy reunion. He returned to Strasburg with new life in his heart. He had not long before written to a friend that for the first time he knew what it was to be happy without his

heart being engaged. Pleasant people and manifold studies left him no time for *feeling*. "Enough, my present life is like a sledge journey, splendid and sounding, but with just as little for the heart as it has much for eyes and ears." Another tone runs through his letters now, to judge from the only one which has been recovered.[1] It is addressed to Frederika, dated the 15th October.

"Dear new friend,—

"I dare to call you so; for if I can trust the language of eyes, then did mine in the first glance read the hope of this new friendship in yours—and for our hearts I will answer. You, good and gentle as I know you, will you not show some favour to one who loves you so?

"Dear, dear friend,—

"That I have something to say to you there can be no question; but it is quite another matter whether I exactly know wherefore I now write, and *what* I may write. Thus much I am conscious of by a certain inward unrest: that I would gladly be by your side, and a scrap of paper is as true a consolation and as winged a steed for me here in noisy Strasburg, as it can be to you in your quiet, if you truly feel the separation from your friend.

"The circumstances of our journey home you can easily imagine, if you marked my pain at parting, and how I longed to remain behind. Weyland's thoughts went forwards, mine backwards; so you can understand how our conversation was neither interesting nor copious.

"At the end of the Wanzenau we thought to shorten our route, and found ourselves in the midst of a morass. Night came on; and we only needed the storm which threatened to overtake us, to have had every reason for being fully convinced of the love and constancy of our princesses.[2]

"Meanwhile, the scroll which I held constantly in my hand —fearful of losing it—was a talisman, which charmed away all the perils of the journey. And now?—oh I dare not utter it—either you can guess it, or you will not believe it!

"At last we arrived, and our first thought, which had been our joy on the road, was the project soon to see you again.

"How delicious a sensation is the hope of seeing again

[1] SCHÖLL, *Briefe und Aufsätze*, p. 51. The letters in Pfeiffer's book are manifest forgeries.

[2] An allusion doubtless intelligible to the person addressed, but I can make nothing of it.

those we love! And we, when our coddled heart is a little sorrowful, at once bring it medicine and say: Dear little heart, be quiet, you will not long be away from her you love; be quiet, dear little heart! Meanwhile we give it a chimera to play with, and then is it good and still as a child to whom the mother gives a doll instead of the apple which it must not eat.

"Enough, we are *not* here, and so you see you were wrong. You would not believe that the noisy gaiety or Strasburg would be disagreeable to me after the sweet country pleasures enjoyed with you. Never, Mamsell, did Strasburg seem so empty to me as now. I hope, indeed, it will be better when the remembrance of those charming hours is a little dimmed—when I no longer feel so vividly how good, how amiable my friend is. Yet ought I to forget that, or to wish it? No; I will rather retain a little sorrow and write to you frequently.

"And now many, many thanks and many sincere remembrances to your dear parents. To your dear sister many hundred . . . what I would so willingly give you again!"

A few days after his return, Herder underwent the operation previously alluded to. Goethe was constantly with him; but as he carefully concealed all his mystical studies, fearing to have them ridiculed, so one may suppose he concealed also the new passion which deliciously tormented him. In silence he occupied himself with Frederika, and carefully sketched plans for the new parsonage. He sent her books, and received from her a letter, which of course seemed priceless.

In November he was again at Sesenheim. Night had already set in when he arrived; his impatience would not suffer him to wait till morning, the more so as the landlord assured him the young ladies had only just gone home, where "they expected some one." He felt jealous of this expected friend; and he hastened to the parsonage. Great was his surprise to find them *not* surprised; greater still to hear Frederika whisper, "Did I not say so? Here he is!" Her loving heart had prophesied his coming, and had named the very day.

The next day was Sunday, and many guests were expected. Early in the morning Frederika proposed a walk with him, leaving her mother and sister to look after domestic preparations. Who shall describe that walk, wherein the youthful pair abandoned themselves without concealment to all the delightful nothings of commencing love? They talked over the expected pleasures of the day, and arranged how to be

always together. She taught him several games; he taught her others; and underneath these innocent arrangements, Love serenely smiled. The church bell called them from their walk. To church they went, and listened—not very attentively—to the worthy pastor. Another kind of devotion made their hearts devout. He meditated on her charming qualities, and as his glance rested on her ruddy lips, he recalled the last time woman's lips had been pressed to his own; recalled the curse which the excited French girl had uttered, a curse which hitherto had acted like a spell.

This superstition not a little troubled him in games of forfeits, where kisses always form a large proportion; and his presence of mind was often tried in the attempts to evade them; the more so as many of the guests, suspecting the tender relation between him and Frederika, sportively took every occasion to make them kiss. She, with natural instinct, aided him in his evasions. The time came, however, when, carried away by the excitement of the dance and games, he felt the burning pressure of her lips crush the superstition in a

> "Kiss, a long, long kiss
> Of youth and beauty gathered into one."

He returned to Strasburg, if not a formally betrothed, yet an accepted lover. As such the family and friends seem to have regarded him. Probably no betrothal took place, on account of his youth, and the necessity of obtaining his father's consent. His muse, lately silent, now found voice again, and several of the poems Frederika inspired are to be read in his published works.[1]

He had been sent to Strasburg to gain a doctor's degree. His Dissertation had been commenced just before this Sesenheim episode. But Shakspeare, Ossian, *Faust*, *Götz*, and, above all, Frederika, scattered his plans, and he followed the advice of friends to choose, instead of a Dissertation, a number of Theses, upon which to hold a disputation. His father would not hear of such a thing, but demanded a regular Dissertation. He chose, therefore, this theme, "*That it is the duty of every law-maker to establish a certain religious worship binding upon clergy and laity.*" A theme he supported by historical and philosophical arguments. The Dissertation was written in Latin, and sent to his father, who received it with pleasure.

[1] The whole have been reprinted in the *Sesenheimer Liederbuch*; and in VIEHOFF'S *Goethe Erlaütert*.

But the dean of the faculty would not receive it—either because its contents were paradoxical, or because it was not sufficiently erudite. In lieu thereof he was permitted to choose Theses for disputation. The Disputation was held on the 6th of August 1771, his opponent being Franz Lerse, who pressed him hard. A jovial *schmaus*, a real students' banquet, crowned this promotion of Dr. Goethe.[1]

He could find no time for visits to Sesenheim during this active preparation for his doctorate; but he was not entirely separated from Frederika: her mother had come with both daughters to Strasburg, on a visit to a rich relative. He had been for some time acquainted with this family, and had many opportunities of meeting his beloved. The girls, who came in their Alsatian costume, found their cousins and friends dressed like Frenchwomen; a contrast which greatly vexed Olivia, who felt "like a maidservant" among these fashionable friends. Her restless manners evidently made Goethe somewhat ashamed of her. Frederika, on the other hand, though equally out of her element in this society, was more self-possessed, and perfectly contented so long as he was by her side. There is in the *Autobiography* a significant phrase: this visit of the family is called a "peculiar test of his love." And test it was, as every one must see who considers the relations in which the lovers stood. He was the son of an important Frankfurt citizen, and held almost the position of a nobleman in relation to the poor pastor's daughter. Indeed, the social disparity was so great, that many explain his not marrying Frederika on the ground of such a match being impossible,—"his father," it is said, "would not have listened to such a thing for a moment." Love in nowise troubles itself about station, never asks "what will the world say?" but there is quite a different solicitude felt by Love when approaching Marriage. In the first eagerness of passion, a prince may blindly pursue a peasant; but when his love is gratified by return, when reflection reasserts its duties, then the prince will consider what in other minds will be the estimation of his mistress. Men are very sensitive to the opinions of others on their mistresses and wives; and Goethe's love must indeed have been put to the test, at seeing Frederika and her sister thus in glaring contrast with the society in

[1] There is some obscurity on this point. From a letter to Salzmann, it seems he only got a licentiate degree at this time. The doctorate he certainly had; but *when* his diploma was prepared is not known.

which he moved. In the groves of Sesenheim she was a wood-nymph; but in Strasburg salons the wood-nymph seemed a peasant. Who is there that has not experienced a similar destruction of illusion, in seeing an admired person lose almost all charm in the change of environment?

Frederika laid her sweet commands on him one evening, and bade him entertain the company by reading *Hamlet* aloud. He did so, to the great enjoyment of all, especially Frederika, "who from time to time sighed deeply, and a passing colour tinged her cheeks." Was she thinking of poor Ophelia—placing herself in that forlorn position?

> "For Hamlet and the trifling of his favour,
> Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood!"

She may have had some presentiment of her fate. The applause, however, which her lover gained was proudly accepted by her, "and in her graceful manner she did not deny herself the little pride of having shone through him."

It is quite certain that his passion gave him vague uneasiness. "How happy is he," he writes, "whose heart is light and free! Courage urges us to confront difficulties and dangers, and only by great labour are great joys obtained. That, perhaps, is the worst I have to allege against love. They say it gives courage: never! The heart that loves is weak. When it beats wildly in the bosom, and tears fill our eyes, and we sit in an inconceivable rapture as they flow—then, oh! then, we are so weak, that flower-chains bind us, not because they have the strength of any magic, but because we tremble lest we break them."

The mention of *Hamlet* leads us naturally into the society where he sought oblivion, when Frederika quitted Strasburg. Her departure, he confesses, was a *relief* to him. She herself felt on leaving that the end of their romance was approaching. He plunged into gaiety to drown tormenting thoughts. "If you could but see me," he wrote to Salzmann, after describing a dance which had made him forget his fever: "my whole being was sunk in dancing. And yet could I but say: I am happy; that would be better than all. 'Who is't can say I am at the worst?' says Edgar (in *Lear*). That is some comfort, dear friend. My heart is like a weathercock when a storm is rising, and the gusts are changeable." Some days later he wrote: "All is not clear in my soul. I am too curiously awake not to feel that I grasp at shadows. And

yet . . . To-morrow at seven my horse is saddled, and then adieu!"

Besides striving to drown in gaiety these tormenting thoughts, he also strove to divert them into channels of nobler activity; stimulated thereto by the Shakspearian fanaticism of his new friend Lenz.

Reinhold Lenz, irrevocably forgotten as a poet, whom a vain effort on the part of Gruppe has tried to bring once more into public favour,[1] is not without interest to the student of German literature during the *Sturm und Drang* period. He came to Strasburg in 1770, accompanying two young noblemen as their tutor, and mingling with them in the best society of the place; and, by means of Salzmann, was introduced to the Club. Although he had commenced by translating Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, he was, in the strictest sense of the word, one of the Shakspeare bigots, who held to the severest orthodoxy in Shakspeare as a first article of their creed, and who not only maintained the Shakspeare clowns to be incomparable, but strove to imitate them in their language. Many an extravagant jest, and many an earnest discussion served to vary the hours. It is not easy for us to imagine the effect which the revelation of such a mind as Shakspeare's must have produced on the young Germans. His colossal strength, profundity of thought, originality and audacity of language, his beauty, pathos, sublimity, wit, and wild overflowing humour, and his accuracy of observation as well as depth of insight into the mysteries of passion and character, were qualities which no false criticism, and, above all, no national taste, prevented Germans from appreciating. It was very different in France. There an established form of art, with which national pride was identified, and an established set of critical rules, upon which Taste securely rested, necessarily made Shakspeare appear like a Cyclops of Genius—a monster, though of superhuman proportions. Frenchmen could not help being shocked at many things in Shakspeare; yet even those who were most outraged, were also most amazed at the pearls to be found upon the dung-hill. In Germany the pearls alone were seen. French taste had been pitilessly ridiculed by Lessing. The French Tragedy had been contrasted with Shakspeare, and pronounced unworthy of comparison. To the Germans, therefore, Shakspeare was a standard borne by

[1] GRUPPE: *Reinhold Lenz Leben und Werke*: 1861.

all who combated against France, and his greatness was recognised with something of wilful preference. The state of German literature also rendered his influence the more prodigious. Had Shakspeare been first revealed to *us* when Mr. Hayley was the great laureat of the age, we should have felt something of the eagerness with which the young and ardent minds of Germany received this greatest poet of all ages.

I am fortunately enabled, thanks to Otto Jahn, to give here a very interesting illustration of the enthusiasm with which these young men studied Shakspeare; and among the new materials this Biography contains, perhaps nothing will be so welcome in England. It is an oration prepared by Goethe for one of the meetings of the Shakspeare-circle before mentioned. To hear the youth of one-and-twenty thus eloquent on his great idol, lets us intimately into the secret of his mental condition.

ORATION ON SHAKSPEARE.

"In my opinion, the noblest of our sentiments is the hope of continuing to live, even when destiny seems to have carried us back into the common lot of non-existence. This life, gentlemen, is much too short for our souls; the proof is, that every man, the lowest as well as the highest, the most incapable as well as the most meritorious, will be tired of anything sooner than of life, and that no one reaches the goal towards which he set out; for however long a man may be prosperous in his career, still at last, and often when in sight of the hoped-for object, he falls into a grave, which God knows who dug for him, and is reckoned as nothing. Reckoned as nothing? I? who am everything to myself, since I know things only through myself! So cries every one who is truly conscious of himself; and makes great strides through this life—a preparation for the unending course above. Each, it is true, according to his measure. If one sets out with the sturdiest walking pace, the other wears seven-leagued boots and outstrips him; two steps of the latter are equal to a day's journey of the former. Be it as it may with him of the seven-leagued boots, this diligent traveller remains our friend and our companion, while we are amazed at the gigantic steps of the other and admire them, follow his footsteps and measure them with our own.

"Let us up and be going, gentlemen! To watch a solitary march like this enlarges and animates our souls more than to stare at the thousand footsteps of a royal procession. To-day we honour the memory of the greatest traveller on this journey of life, and thereby we are doing an honour to ourselves. When we know how to appreciate a merit we have the germ of it within ourselves. Do not expect that I should say much or methodically; mental calmness is no garment for a festival; and as yet I have thought little upon Shakspeare; to have glimpses, and, in exalted passages, to feel, is the utmost I have been able to obtain. The first page of his that I read made me his for life; and when I had finished a single play, I stood like one born blind, on whom a miraculous hand bestows sight in a moment. I saw, I felt, in the most vivid manner, that my existence was infinitely expanded, everything was now unknown to me, and the unwonted light pained my eyes. By little and little I learned to see, and, thanks to my receptive genius, I continue vividly to feel what I have won. I did not hesitate for a moment about renouncing the classical drama. The unity of place seemed to me irksome as a prison, the unities of action and of time burthensome fetters to our imagination; I sprang into the open air, and felt for the first time that I had hands and feet. And now that I see how much injury the men of rule did me in their dungeon, and how many free souls still crouch there, my heart would burst if I did not declare war against them, and did not seek daily to batter down their towers.

"The Greek drama, which the French took as their model, was both in its inward and outward character such, that it would be easier for a marquis to imitate Alcibiades than for Corneille to follow Sophocles. At first an *intermezzo* of divine worship, then a mode of political celebration, the tragedy presented to the people great isolated actions of their fathers with the pure simplicity of perfection; it stirred thorough and great emotions in souls because it was itself thorough and great. And in what souls? Greek souls! I cannot explain to myself what that expresses, but I feel it, and appeal for the sake of brevity to Homer and Sophocles, and Theocritus; they have taught me to feel it.

"Now hereupon I immediately ask: Frenchmen, what wilt thou do with the Greek armour? it is too strong and too heavy for thee.

"Hence, also, French tragedies are parodies of themselves.

How regularly everything goes forward, and how they are as like each other as shoes, and tiresome withal, especially in the fourth act,—all this, gentlemen, you know from experience, and I say nothing about it.

"Who it was that first thought of bringing great political actions on the stage I know not; this is a subject which affords an opportunity to the amateur for a critical treatise. I doubt whether the honour of the invention belongs to Shakspeare; it is enough that he brought this species of drama to the pitch which still remains the highest, for few eyes can reach it, and thus it is scarcely to be hoped that any one will see beyond it or ascend above it. Shakspeare, my friend! if thou wert yet amongst us, I could live nowhere but with thee; how gladly would I play the subordinate character of a Pylades, if thou wert Orestes; yes, rather than be a venerated high-priest in the temple of Delphos.

"I will break off, gentlemen, and write more to-morrow, for I am in a strain which, perhaps, is not so edifying to you as it is heartfelt by me.

"Shakspeare's dramas are a beautiful casket of rarities, in which the history of the world passes before our eyes on the invisible thread of time. His plots, to speak according to the ordinary style, are no plots, for his plays all turn upon the hidden point (which no philosopher has yet seen and defined), in which the peculiarity of our *ego*, the pretended freedom of our will, clashes with the necessary course of the *whole*. But our corrupt taste so beclouds our eyes, that we almost need a new creation to extricate us from this darkness.

"All French writers, and Germans infected with French taste, even Wieland, have in this matter, as in several others, done themselves little credit. Voltaire, who from the first made a profession of vilifying everything majestic, has here also shown himself a genuine Thersites. If I were Ulysses, his back should writhe under my sceptre. Most of these critics object especially to Shakspeare's characters. And I cry, nature, nature! nothing so natural as Shakspeare's men.

"There I have them all by the neck. Give me air that I may speak! He rivalled Prometheus, and formed his men feature by feature, only of *colossal size;* therein lies the reason that we do not recognise our brethren; and then he animated them with the breath of *his* mind; *he* speaks in all of them, and we perceive their relationship.

"And how shall our age form a judgment as to what is natural? Whence can we be supposed to know nature, we who, from youth upwards, feel everything within us, and see everything in others, laced up and decorated? I am often ashamed before Shakspeare, for it often happens that at the first glance I think to myself I should have done that differently; but soon I perceive that I am a poor sinner, that nature prophecies through Shakspeare, and that my men are soap-bubbles blown from romantic fancies.

"And now to conclude,—though I have not yet begun. What noble philosophers have said of the world, applies also to Shakspeare;—namely, that what we call evil is only the other side, and belongs as necessarily to its existence and to the Whole, as the torrid zone must burn and Lapland freeze, in order that there may be a temperate region. He leads us through the whole world, but we, enervated, inexperienced men, cry at every strange grasshopper that meets us: He will devour us.

"Up, gentlemen! sound the alarm to all noble souls who are in the Elysium of so-called good taste, where drowsy in tedious twilight they are half alive, half not alive, with passions in their hearts and no marrow in their bones; and because they are not tired enough to sleep, and yet are too idle to be active, loiter and yawn away their shadowy life between myrtle and laurel bushes."

In these accents we hear the voice of the youth who wrote *Götz with the Iron Hand*. If the reader turn to the *Autobiography* and see there what is said of Shakspeare, he will be able to appreciate what I meant in saying that the *tone* of the *Autobiography* is unlike the reality. The tone of this speech is that of the famous *Sturm und Drang* (storm and stress) period, which in after life became so very objectionable to him. How differently Schiller was affected by Shakspeare may be read in the following confession:—"When at an early age I first grew acquainted with this poet, I was indignant at his coldness—indignant with the insensibility which allowed him to jest and sport amidst the highest pathos. Led by my knowledge of more modern poets to seek the poet in his works; to meet and sympathise with his heart; to reflect with him over his object; it was insufferable to me that this poet gave me nothing of himself. Many years had he my reverence—certainly my earnest study, before I could comprehend his individuality. I was not yet fit to comprehend nature at first hand."

The enthusiasm for Shakspeare naturally incited Goethe to dramatic composition, and, besides *Götz* and *Faust* before mentioned, we find in his notebook the commencement of a drama on *Julius Cæsar*.

Three forms rise up from out the many influences of Strasburg into distinct and memorable importance: Frederika; Herder; the Cathedral. An exquisite woman, a noble thinker, and a splendid monument, were his guides into the regions of Passion, Poetry, and Art. The influence of the Cathedral was great enough to make him write the little tractate on German architecture *D. M. Erwini à Steinbach;* the enthusiasm of which was so incomprehensible to him in after years, that he was with difficulty persuaded to reprint the tractate among his works. Do we not see here—as in so many other traits—how different the youth is from the child and man?

How thoroughly he had entered into the spirit of Gothic architecture is indicated by the following anecdote. In company with some friends he was admiring the Strasburg Cathedral, when one remarked, "What a pity it was not finished, and that there should be only one steeple." Upon this he answered, "It is a matter of equal regret to me to see this solitary steeple unfinished; the four spiral staircases leave off too abruptly at the top; they ought to have been surmounted by four light pinnacles, with a higher one rising in the centre instead of the clumsy mass." Some one, turning round to him, asked him who told him *that?* "The tower itself," he answered; "I have studied it so long, so attentively, and with so much love, that it has at last confessed to me its open secret." Whereupon his questioner informed him that the tower had spoken truly, and offered to show him the original sketches, which still existed among the archives.

Inasmuch as in England many professed admirers of architecture appear imperfectly acquainted with the revival of the taste for Gothic art, it may not be superfluous to call attention to the fact that Goethe was among the very first to recognise the peculiar beauty of that style, at a period when classical, or pseudo-classical, taste was everywhere dominant. It appears that he was in friendly correspondence with Sulpiz Boisserée, the artist who made the restored design of the Cologne Cathedral; from whom he doubtless learned much. And we see by the *Wahlverwandtschaften* that he had a portfolio of designs illustrative of the principle of the pointed style. This

was in 1809, when scarcely any one thought of the Gothic; long before Victor Hugo had written his *Notre Dame de Paris;* long before Pugin and Ruskin had thrown their impassioned energy into this revival; at a time when the church in Langham Place was thought beautiful, and the Temple Church was considered an eyesore.

And now he was to leave Strasburg,—to leave Frederika. Much as her presence had troubled him of late, in her absence he only thought of her fascinations. He had not ceased to love her, though he already felt she never would be his. He went to say adieu. "Those were painful days, of which I remember nothing. When I held out my hand to her from my horse, the tears were in her eyes, and I felt sad at heart. As I rode along the footpath to Drusenheim a strange phantasy took hold of me. I saw in my mind's eye my own figure riding towards me, attired in a dress I had never worn—pike grey with gold lace. I shook off this phantasy, but eight years afterwards I found myself on the very road, going to visit Frederika, and that too in the very dress which I had seen myself in, in this phantasm, although my wearing it was quite accidental." The reader will probably be somewhat sceptical respecting the dress, and will suppose that this prophetic detail was afterwards transferred to the vision by the imagination of later years.[1]

And so farewell Frederika, bright and exquisite vision of a poet's youth! We love you, pity you, and think how differently *we* should have treated you! We make pilgrimages to Sesenheim as to Vaucluse, and write legibly our names in the Visitors' Album, to testify so much. And we read, not without emotion, narratives such as that of the worthy philologist Näke, who in 1822 made the first pilgrimage,[2] thinking, as he went, of this enchanting Frederika (and somewhat also of a private Frederika of his own), examined every rood of the ground, dined meditatively at the inn (with a passing reflection that the bill was larger than he anticipated), took coffee with the pastor's successor; and, with a sentiment touching in a philologist, bore away a sprig of the jessamine which in days gone by had been tended by the white hands of Frederika, and placed it in his pocket-book as an imperishable souvenir.

[1] The correspondence with the Frau von Stein contains a letter written by him a day or two after this visit, but, singularly enough, *no* mention of this coincidence.

[2] *Die Wahlfahrt nach Sesenheim.*

BOOK THE THIRD

1771 TO 1775

"Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,
Sich ein Charakter in dem Strom der Welt."

"Trunken müssen wir alle seyn:
Jugend ist Trunkenheit ohne Wein."

"They say best men are moulded out of faults,
And, for the most, become much more the better
For being a little bad."—*Shakspeare.*

CHAPTER I

DR. GOETHE'S RETURN

On the 25th or 28th of August 1771, he quitted Strasburg. His way led through Mannheim; and there he was first thrilled by the beauty of ancient masterpieces, some of which he saw in plaster cast. Whatever might be his predilection for Gothic Art, he could not view these casts without feeling himself in presence of an Art in its way also divine; and his previous study of Lessing lent a peculiar interest to the Laokoon group, now before his eyes.

Passing on to Mainz he fell in with a young wandering harpist, and invited the ragged minstrel to Frankfurt, promising him a public in the Fair, and a lodging in his father's house. It was lucky that he thought of acquainting his mother with this invitation. Alarmed at its imprudence, she secured a lodging in the town, and so the boy wanted neither shelter nor patronage.

Rath Goethe was not a little proud of the young Doctor. He was also not a little disturbed by the young Doctor's manners; and often shook his ancient respectable head at the opinions which exploded like bombshells in the midst of conventions. Doctoral gravity was but slightly attended to by this young hero of the *Sturm und Drang.* The revolutionary movement known by the title of the *Storm and Stress* was then about to astonish Germany, and to startle all conventions, by works such as Gerstenberg's *Ugolino*, Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*, and Klinger's *Sturm und Drang* (from

whence the name). The wisdom and extravagance of that age united in one stream: the masterly criticisms of Lessing,—the enthusiasm for Shakspeare,—the mania for Ossian and the northern mythology,—the revival of ballad literature,—and imitations of Rousseau, all worked in one rebellious current against established authority. There was one universal shout for Nature. With the young, Nature seemed to be a compound of volcanoes and moonlight; her force explosion, her beauty sentiment. To be insurgent and sentimental, explosive and lachrymose, were the true signs of genius. Everything established was humdrum. Genius, abhorrent of humdrum, would neither spell correctly, nor write correctly, nor demean itself correctly. It would be *German*—lawless, rude, and natural. Lawless it was, and rude it was, but not natural, according to the nature of any reputable type.

It is not easy, in the pages of the *Autobiography*, to detect in Goethe an early leader of the *Sturm und Drang;* but it is easy enough to detect this in other sources. Here is a glimpse, in a letter from Mayer of Lindau (one of the Strasburg set) to Salzmann, worth chapters of the *Autobiography* on such a point. "*O Corydon, Corydon quæ te dementia cepit!* According to the chain in which our ideas are linked together, *Corydon* and *dementia* put me in mind of the extravagant Goethe. He is still at Frankfurt, is he not?"

That such a youth, whose wildness made friends nickname him the "bear" and the "wolf," could have been wholly pleasing to his steady, formal father, is not to be expected. Yet the worthy sire was not a little proud of his son's attainments. The verses, essays, notes, and drawings which had accumulated during the residence in Strasburg were very gratifying to him. He began to arrange them with scrupulous neatness, hoping to see them shortly published. But the poet had a virtue, perhaps of all virtues the rarest in youthful writers,—a reluctance to appear in print. Seeing, as we daily see, the feverish alacrity with which men accede to that extremely imaginary request, "request of friends," and dauntlessly rush into print,—seeing the obstinacy with which they cling to all they have written, and insist on what they have written being printed—Goethe's reluctance demands an explanation. And, if I may interpret according to my own experience, the explanation is, that his delight in composition was rather the pure delight of intellectual activity, than a delight in the result: delight, not in the *work*, but in the

working. Thus, no sooner had he finished a poem than his interest in it began to fade; and he passed on to another. Thus it was that he left so many works fragments, his interest having been exhausted before the whole was completed.

He had a small circle of literary friends to whom he communicated his productions, and this was publication enough for him. We shall see him hereafter, in Weimar, writing solely for a circle of friends, and troubling himself scarcely at all about a public. It was necessary for him to occupy himself with some work which should absorb him, as *Götz* did at this time, for only in work could he forget the pain, almost remorse, which followed his renunciation of Frederika. If at Strasburg he had felt that an end was approaching to this sweet romance, at Frankfurt, among family connections, and with new prospects widening before him, he felt it still more. He wrote to her. Unhappily that letter is not preserved. It would have made clear much that is now conjectural. "Frederika's answer," he says, "to the letter in which I had bidden her adieu, tore my heart. I now, for the first time, became aware of her bereavement, and saw no possibility of alleviating it. She was ever in my thoughts; I felt that she was wanting to me; and, worst of all, I could not forgive myself! Gretchen had been taken from me; Annchen had left me; but now, for the first time, I was guilty; I had wounded, to its very depths, one of the most beautiful and tender of hearts. And that period of gloomy repentance, bereft of the love which had so invigorated me, was agonising, insupportable. But man will live; and hence I took a sincere interest in others, seeking to disentangle their embarrassments, and to unite those about to part, that they might not feel what I felt. Hence I got the name of the 'Confidant,' and also, on account of my wanderings, I was named the 'Wanderer.' Under the broad open sky, on the heights or in the valleys, in the fields and through the woods, my mind regained some of its calmness. I almost lived on the road, wandering between the mountains and the plains. Often I went, alone or in company, right through my native city as though I were a stranger in it, dining at one of the great inns in the High Street, and after dinner pursuing my way. I turned more than ever to the open world and to Nature; there alone I found comfort. During my walks I sang to myself strange hymns and dithyrambs. One of these, the *Wanderer's Sturmlied*, still remains. I remember singing it aloud in an

impassioned style amid a terrific storm. The burden of this rhapsody is that a man of genius must walk resolutely through the storms of life, relying solely on himself;" a burden which seems to give expression to what he then felt respecting his relation to Frederika.

Although we have no exact knowledge of the circumstances, from the height of which to judge his conduct, the question must be put, Why did he not marry Frederika? It is a question often raised, and as often sophistically answered. By one party he is angrily condemned; disingenuously absolved by another. But he himself acknowledged his fault. He himself never put forth any excuse. He does not hint at disparity of station, he does not say there were objections from his parents. He makes *no* excuse, but confesses the wrong, and blames himself without sophistication. Yet the excuses he would not suggest, partisans have been eager to suggest for him. Some have sought far and wide in the gutters of scandal for materials of defence. One gets up a story about Frederika being seduced by a Catholic priest; whence it is argued that Goethe could not be expected to marry one so frail; whence also it follows, by way of counterblast, that it was *his* desertion which caused her fall.[1] The basis of fact on which this lie is reared (there is usually some basis, even for the wildest lies), is that Frederika brought up the orphan child of her sister Salome.

Let me endeavour, without sophistication, to state the real case, at least as far as the imperfect evidence admits of a judgment. It seems always to have been forgotten by the many writers who have discussed this topic, that our judgment is misled by the artistic charm which he has thrown over the narrative: we fail to separate the Fact from the Fiction; we read the poem he has made up from his early experience, and read it as if the poem were an unvarnished record of that experience. He has painted Frederika so charmingly; he has told the story of their simple youthful love with so much grace, and quiet emotion; he has made us believe so entirely in the Idyl, that our sympathies are rudely disturbed when we find the Idyl is not to end in a marriage.

But if we consider the case calmly, divesting it, as much as possible, of the illusive suggestions of romance, we may, perhaps, come to the conclusion, that it was, after all, only

[1] Strangely enough, although Goethe read the MS. in which Näke repeats this story, he takes no notice of it.

a "love-affair" between a boy and a girl, a temporary fascination, such as often stirs the affections of youth, without deepening into serious thought of marriage. Doubtless the reader can from his or her own history rapidly recall such an experience; certainly the experience of their friends will supply such cases. If we read the story in this light all is clear. The boy and girl are fascinated by each other; they look into each other's eyes, and are happy; they walk together, talk together, and, when separated, think of each other. But they never think of marriage; or think of it vaguely as a remote contingency. Young love's dream is enough for them. They are pained at parting; perhaps all the more so, because they dimly feel that the awakening is at hand. But there is a sort of tacit understanding that marriage is not the issue to be looked for. Had anyone hinted to either Goethe or Frederika that their passion was but a "youthful stirring of the blood," and not an eternal union of souls, they would assuredly have resented it with emphatic denial. Yet so it was. Goethe soon consoled himself; and there is positive evidence that Frederika, shortly afterwards, allowed herself to be consoled by Lenz.

Such, after mature deliberation, I believe to have been the real story. When in old age Goethe, reviewing the pleasant dreams of youth, and weaving them into an artistic narrative, avowedly half fiction, came to that episode with Frederika, he thought of it as we all think of our early loves, with a mingled tenderness and pain; his imagination was kindled, and he turned his experience into a poem. But the fact thus idealised was a very ordinary fact; the story thus poetised was a very common story, and could be told by ninety out of every hundred students, who do *not* marry the idol of the last university term. That Goethe, with his affectionate sensitive nature, was for a time in love with Frederika, is possible. It is certain that whatever the agitation of his feelings, they were not *deeply* moved; she had laid no firm hold of his soul; there were none of those ties between them which grow stronger with advancing time.

No sooner had he made this decisively clear to himself, than he wrote to Frederika to tell her so. No woman can be given up without feeling pain, and probably Frederika's affections were far more deeply engaged than his were; nevertheless, in spite of the pain she doubtless felt, and pathetically expressed in her letter to him, we find her presently engaged

in another "love-affair," with the poet Lenz, which, though it ended in a breach, certainly went so far as the exchange of vows; and, according to Lenz, the growth of the passion was rapid. "It was with us both," he writes to his friend, "as with Cæsar: *veni, vidi, vici.* Through unconscious causes grew our confidence—and now it is sworn, and indissoluble." When, in after years, Goethe visited Frederika, she—having long given up Lenz,—whose madness must have made her rejoice in her escape—told him of Lenz having pretended to be in love with her, but omitted to say anything about her own reciprocity; and she omitted this from motives which every woman will appreciate. But however obscure the story may be, it seems certain that at least for a short time she believed in and returned Lenz's passion.[1]

After this exposition of what I conceive to be the real case, it will be easy to answer the outcry of the sentimentalists against Goethe's "faithlessness" and his "cruel treatment of Frederika," without recurring to the excuses sometimes put forth, that to have been faithful to her he must have been faithless to his genius; and that it was better one woman's heart should be broken (which it was *not*) than that the poet's experience should be narrowed within the small circle of domestic life. It is a mistake to speak of faithlessness at all. We may regret that he did not feel the serious affection which would have claimed her as a wife; we may upbraid him for the thoughtlessness with which he encouraged the sentimental relation; but he was perfectly right to draw back from an engagement which he felt his love was not strong enough properly to fulfil. It seems to me that he acted a more moral part in relinquishing her, than if he had swamped this lesser in a greater wrong, and escaped one breach of faith by a still greater breach of faith—a reluctant, because unloving marriage. The thoughtlessness of youth, and the headlong impetus of passion, frequently throw people into rash engagements; and in these cases the *formal* morality of the world, more careful of externals than of truth, declares it to be nobler for such rash engagements to be kept, even when the rashness is felt by the engaged, than that a man's honour should be stained by a withdrawal. The letter thus takes precedence of the spirit. To satisfy this prejudice a life is sacrificed. A miserable marriage rescues the honour; and

[1] For full details see GRUPPE: *Reinhold Lenz, Leben und Werke,* 1861, pp. 11 *sq.*

no one throws the burden of that misery upon the prejudice. I am not forgetting the necessity of being stringent against the common thoughtlessness of youth in forming such relations; but I say that this thoughtlessness once having occurred, reprobate it as we may, the pain which a separation may bring had better be endured, than evaded by an unholy marriage, which cannot come to good.

Frederika herself must have felt so too, for never did a word of blame escape her; and we shall see how affectionately she welcomed him, when they met after the lapse of years. This, however, does not absolve him from the blame of having thoughtlessly incurred the responsibility of her affection. That blame he must bear. The reader will apportion it according as he estimates the excuses of temperament, and the common thoughtlessness of us all in such matters.

Although I think Goethe's conduct in this matter perfectly upright, and justifiable from a far more serious point of view than that of being faithful to his genius, I am not at all disposed to acquiesce in the assumption that marriage with Frederika would have crippled his genius by narrowing his sympathies. The cause of his relinquishing her was the want of a sufficiently powerful love; and that also is his justification. Had he loved her enough to share a life with her, his experience of woman might have been less extensive, but it would assuredly have gained an element it wanted. It would have been deepened. He had experienced, and he could paint (no one better), the exquisite devotion of woman to man; but he had scarcely ever felt the peculiar tenderness of man for woman, when that tenderness takes the form of vigilant protecting fondness. He knew little, and that not until late in life, of the subtle interweaving of habit with affection, which makes life saturated with love, and love itself become dignified through the serious aims of life. He knew little of the exquisite *companionship* of two souls striving in emulous spirit of loving rivalry to become better, to become wiser, teaching each other to soar. He knew little of this; and the kiss he feared to press upon the loving lips of Frederika—the life of sympathy he refused to share with her—are wanting to the greatness of his works.

In such a mood as that which followed the rupture with Frederika, it is not wonderful if Frankfurt and the practice of law were odious to him. Nothing but hard work could do him good: and he worked hard. From the Herder

Correspondence it appears that he read Greek writers with some eagerness, his letters being studded with citations from Plato, Homer, and Pindar. *Die griechen sind mein einzig studium*, he says. We find him also working at *Götz von Berlichingen*. Gothic Art, a kindred subject, occupies him, and from thence, by an easy transition, he passes to the Bible, to study it anew. The results of this study are seen in two little tractates published in 1773, one called *Brief des Pastor's zu . . . an den neuen Pastor zu . . .;* the other, *Zwo wichtige bisher unerörtete biblische Fragen, zum erstenmal gründlich beantwortet von einem Landgeistlichen in Schwaben.* The influence of Fräulein von Klettenberg is traceable in the religious sentiment of these works; while his own affectionate nature speaks in the tolerance preached. Of the two biblical questions, one goes to prove that it was not the ten commandments which stood on the tables of Moses, but ten laws of the Israelitish-Jehovah covenant. The second is an answer, by no means clear, to the question: "What is it to speak with tongues?" which he explains as a "speech of the Spirit, more than pantomime, and yet inarticulate."

Among the friends to whom he communicated his plans and ideas, two must be named: Schlosser, whom we have seen at Leipsic, and Merck, whose influence was very beneficial. The portrait sketched of this remarkable man in the *Autobiography* gives a very incorrect idea to those who cannot control what is there said by other direct evidence; especially calculated to mislead is the nickname "Mephistopheles Merck," for whatever tendency to sarcasm Merck may have indulged in, it is quite clear that his admiration was generous and warm, his influence over Goethe being uniformly one of friendly incitement, or of friendly warning.

Johann Heinrich Merck was born in Darmstadt, 1741. The son of an apothecary, he raised himself to the companionship of princes. He was at this time *Kriegsrath* in Darmstadt, and in correspondence with most of the notabilities of the day; among them Herder, who had the highest opinion of his abilities, and the most jealous anxiety to retain his friendship, fearing lest the new friendship with Goethe should step between them; as, indeed, eventually it did. Merck, whose significance in the history of German literature is considerable, and whose correspondence shows him to have critically influenced men greatly his superiors in production, was one of the most zealous propagators of English literature. He

began by translating Hutcheson *On Beauty*, Addison's *Cato*, and Shaw's *Travels in the Levant*. The Shakspeare neophytes found him prepared to share their enthusiasm; and when, in 1772, he persuaded Schlosser to undertake the editing of the *Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen*, and to make it the Moniteur of the *Sturm und Drang* party, his own contributions were numerous and valuable.[1] His official duties do not seem to have pressed very heavily upon him, for he made frequent excursions, and seems to have stayed some time at Frankfurt. The friendship between him and Goethe was warm. He saw more deeply than Herder into this singular genius, and on many critical occasions we find him always manifesting a clear insight, and a real regard.

The *Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen* was a point of reunion, bringing Goethe into relation with many persons of ability. It also afforded him an opportunity of exercising himself in criticism. Thirty-five of the articles he wrote for this journal have been collected into his works, where the curious student will seek them. In these studies the time flew swiftly. He had recommenced horse and sword exercise, and Klopstock having made skating illustrious, it soon became an amusement of which he was never tired; all day long and deep into the night he was to be seen wheeling along; and as the full moon rose above the clouds over the wide nocturnal fields of ice, and the night wind rushed at his face, and the echo of his movements came with ghostly sound upon his ear, he seemed to be in Ossian's world. Indoors there were studies and music. "Will you ask my violoncello master," he writes to Salzmann, "if he still has the sonatas for two basses, which I played with him, and if so, send them to me as quickly as convenient? I practise this art somewhat more earnestly than before. As to my other occupations, you will have gathered from my drama (*Götz*), that the purposes of my soul are becoming more earnest."

It has before been hinted that *Sturm und Drang*, as it manifested itself in the mind and bearing of the young Doctor, was but very moderately agreeable to the old Rath Goethe; and whatever sympathy we may feel with the poet, yet, as we are all parents, or hope to be, let us not permit our sympathy to become injustice; let us admit that the

[1] See for further information the work of STAHR: *Johann Heinrich Merck. Ein Denkmal.*

old Rath had considerable cause for parental uneasiness, and let us follow the son to Wetzlar without flinging any hard words at his father.

CHAPTER II

GÖTZ VON BERLICHINGEN

ALTHOUGH *Götz* was not published until the summer of 1773, it was written in the winter of 1771, or, to speak more accurately, the first of the three versions into which the work was shaped, was written at this time. We must bear in mind that there are three versions: the first is entitled the *Geschichte Gottfriedens von Berlichingen mit der eisernen Hand, dramatisirt*,[1] which was not published until very many years afterwards. The second is entitled *Götz von Berlichingen, Schauspiel*,[2] and is the form in which the work was *originally* published. The third is an adaptation of this second piece, with a view to stage representation, which adaptation was made with Schiller during the efforts to create a national stage at Weimar.[3]

The first form is the one I most admire, and the one which, biographically, has most interest. While he is on his way to Wetzlar we will open his portfolio, and take out this manuscript for closer scrutiny, instead of waiting till he publishes the second version. From a letter to Salzmann we learn that it was written in November 1771. "My whole genius is given to an undertaking which makes me forget Shakspeare, Homer, everything; I am dramatising the history of the noblest of Germans, to rescue the memory of a brave man; and the labour it costs me kills time here, which is at present so necessary for me." He gives the following account of its composition, in the *Autobiography*:—"An unceasing interest in Shakspeare's works had so expanded my mind, that the narrow compass of the stage and the short time allotted to a representation, seemed to me insufficient for the development of an important idea. The life of *Götz von Berlichingen*, written by himself, suggested the historic mode of treatment; and my imagination took so wide a sweep, that my dramatic construction also went beyond all theatrical limits in seeking more and more to approach life. I had, as I proceeded,

[1] *Werke*, vol. xxxiv. of the edition of 1840.
[2] *Werke*, vol. ix.
[3] *Werke*, vol. xxxv.

talked the matter over with my sister, who was interested heart and soul in such subjects; and I so often renewed this conversation, without taking any steps towards beginning the work, that at last she impatiently and urgently entreated me not to be always talking, but, once for all, to set down upon paper that which must be so distinct before my mind. Moved by this impulse, I began one morning to write, without having made any previous sketch or plan. I wrote the first scenes, and in the evening they were read aloud to Cornelia. She greatly applauded them, but doubted whether I should go on so; nay, she even expressed a decided unbelief in my perseverance. This only incited me the more; I wrote on the next day, and also on the third. Hope increased with the daily communications, and step by step everything gained more life as I mastered the conception. Thus I kept on, without interruption, looking neither backwards nor forwards, neither to the right nor to the left; and in about six weeks I had the pleasure of seeing the manuscript stitched."

Gottfried von Berlichingen, surnamed of the Iron Hand, was a distinguished predatory Burgrave of the sixteenth century;[1] one of the last remains of a turbulent, lawless race of feudal barons, whose personal prowess often lent the lustre of romance to acts of brigandage. Gottfried with the Iron Hand was a worthy type of the class. His loyalty was as unshakable as his courage. Whatever his revered emperor thought fit to do, he thought right to be done. Below the emperor he acknowledged no lord. With his fellow barons he waged continual war. Against the Bishop of Bamberg, especially, he was frequently in arms; no sooner was a peace arranged with him, than the Bishop of Mainz was attacked. War was his element. With something of Robin Hood chivalry, he was found on the side of the weak and persecuted; unless when the Kaiser called for his arm, or unless when tempted by a little private pillage on his own account. To his strong arm the persecuted looked for protection. A tailor earns two hundred florins by shooting at a mark; the sum is withheld; he goes to Götz with a piteous tale; instantly the Iron Hand clutches the recalcitrant debtors travelling that way, and makes them pay the two hundred florins.

[1] Scott by an oversight makes him flourish in the fifteenth century. He was born in 1482, and thus reached man's estate with the opening of the sixteenth century.

It was a tempting subject for a poet of the eighteenth century, this bold chivalrous robber, struggling single-handed against the advancing power of civilisation, this lawless chieftain making a hopeless stand against the Law, and striving to perpetuate the feudal spirit. Peculiarly interesting to the poet was the consecration of *individual* greatness in Götz. Here was a man great not by privilege, but by Nature; his superiority given him by no tradition, by no court favour, but by favour only of his own strong arm and indomitable spirit. And was not the struggle of the whole eighteenth century a struggle for the recognition of individual worth, of Rights against Privileges, of Liberty against Tradition? Such also was the struggle of the sixteenth century. The Reformation was to Religion, what the Revolution was to Politics: a stand against the tyranny of Tradition—a battle for the rights of *individual* liberty of thought and action, against the absolute prescriptions of privileged classes.

In the *Chronicle of Götz von Berlichingen* his deeds are recorded by himself with unaffected dignity. There Goethe found materials, such as Shakspeare found in Holingshed and Saxo-Grammaticus; and used them in the same free spirit. He has dramatised the *chronicle*—made it live and move before us; but he has dramatised a chronicle, not written a drama. This distinction is drawn for a reason which will presently appear.

Viehoff has pointed out the use which has been made of the chronicle, and the various elements which have been added from the poet's own invention. The English reader cannot be expected to feel the same interest in such details as the German reader does; it is enough therefore to refer the curious to the passage,[1] and only cite the characters invented by Goethe; these are Adelheid, the voluptuous, fascinating demon; Elizabeth, the noble wife, in whom Goethe's mother saw herself; Maria, a reminiscence of Frederika; Georg, Franz Lerse, Weislingen, and the Gypsies. The death of Götz is also new. The tower mentioned by Goethe is still extant at Heilbronn, under the name of Götzen's Thurm. The rest, including the garden, is the creation of the poet. Götz was confined for only one night in that tower. His death, which according to the play must have happened in 1525, did not occur till 1562, when the

[1] *Goethe's Leben*, vol. ii. pp. 77, 79.

burly old knight, upwards of eighty, died at his castle of Horberg, at peace with all men, and in perfect freedom. His tomb may be seen at the monastery of Schönthal.[1]

Götz was a dramatic chronicle, not a drama. It should never have been called a drama, but left in its original shape with its original title. This would have prevented much confusion; especially with reference to Shakspeare, and his form of dramatic composition. While no one can mistake the *influence* of Shakspeare in this work, there is great laxity of language in calling it Shakspearian; a laxity common enough, but not admissible. Critics are judges who rely on precedents with the rigour of judges on the bench. They pronounce according to precedent. That indeed is their office. No sooner has an original work made its appearance, than one of these two courses is invariably pursued: it is rejected by the critics because it does not range itself under any acknowledged class, and thus is branded because it is not an imitation; or it is quietly classified under some acknowledged head. The latter was the case with *Götz von Berlichingen.* Because it set the unities at defiance, and placed the people beside the nobles on the scene; because instead of declaiming, as in French tragedy, the persons spoke dramatically to the purpose; because, in short, it did *not* range under the acknowledged type of French tragedy, it was supposed to range under the Shakspearian type—the only accepted antagonist to the French.

Is it like Othello? Is it like Macbeth? Is it like Richard III., Henry IV., King John, Julius Cæsar, or any one unquestioned play by Shakspeare? Unless the words "Shakspearian style" are meaningless, people must mean that Götz resembles Shakspeare's plays in the structure and organisation of plot, in the delineation of character, and in the tone of dialogue; yet a cursory review of the play will convince any one that in all these respects it is singularly *unlike* Shakspeare's plays.

In *construction* it differs from Shakspeare, first, as intended to represent an *epoch* rather than a *story;* secondly, as taking the licenses of narrative art, instead of keeping the stage always in view, and submitting to the stern necessities of theatrical representation; thirdly, as wanting in that central unity round which all the persons and events are grouped,

[1] Count Joseph Berlichingen, the present representative of the family, has recently published a *Life of Götz*, but it has not reached me.

so as to form a work of art. It is a succession of scenes; a story of episodes.

In the presentation of character the work is no less un-Shakspearian. Our national bigotry, indeed, assumes that every masterly portraiture of character is Shakspearian; an assumption which can hardly maintain itself in the presence of Sophocles, Racine, and Goethe. Each poet has a manner of his own, and Shakspeare's manner is assuredly not visible in Götz von Berlichingen. The characters move before us with singular distinctness in their external characteristics, but they do not, as in Shakspeare, involuntarily betray the inmost secret of their being. We know them by their language and their acts; we do not know their thoughts, their self-sophistications, their involved and perplexed motives, partially obscured even to themselves, and seen by us in the cross lights which break athwart their passionate utterances. To take a decisive example: Weislingen is at once ambitious and irresolute, well-meaning and weak.[1] The voice of friendship awakens remorse in him, and forces him to accept the proffered hand of Götz. He swears never again to enter the bishop's palace. But, easily seduced by noble thoughts, he is afterwards seduced as easily by vanity: tempted he falls, turns once more against his noble friend, and dies betrayed and poisoned by the wife to whom he has sacrificed all—dies unpitied by others, despicable to himself. This vacillation is truthful, but not truthfully presented. We who only see the conduct cannot explain it. We stand before an enigma, as in real life; not before a character such as Art enables us to see, and see through. It is not the business of Art to present enigmas; and Shakspeare, in his strongest, happiest moods, contrives to let us see into the wavering depths of the *souls*, while we follow the *actions* of his characters. Contrast Weislingen with such vacillating characters as Richard II., King John, or Hamlet. The difference is not of degree, but of kind.

Nor is the language Shakspearian. It is powerful, picturesque, clear, dramatic; but it is not pregnant with thought, obscured in utterance, and heavy with that superfœtation of ideas, which is a characteristic and often a fault in Shakspeare. It has not his redundancy, and prodigal imagery. Indeed it is very singular, and as the production of a boy especially so,

[1] In his vacillation, Goethe meant to stigmatise his own weakness with regard to Frederika, as he tells us in the *Wahrheit und Dichtung*.

in the absence of all rhetorical amplification, and of all delight in imagery for its own sake.

It was the first-born of the Romantic School, or rather of the tendency from which that school issued; and its influence has been wide-spread. It gave the impulse and direction to Scott's historical genius, which has altered our conceptions of the past, and given new life to history. It made the Feudal Ages a subject of eager and almost universal interest. It decided the fate of French tragedy in German literature. But its influence on dramatic art has been, I think, more injurious than beneficial, and mainly because the distinction between a dramatised chronicle and a drama has been lost sight of.

This injurious influence is traceable in the excessive importance it has given to local colour, and the intermingling of the historic with the dramatic element. Any one at all acquainted with the productions of the Romantic School in Germany or France will understand this. Goethe's object not being to write a drama, but to dramatise a picture of the times, local colour was of primary importance; and because he made it so attractive, others have imitated him in departments where it is needless. Nay, critics are so persuaded of its importance, that they strain every phrase to show us that Shakspeare was also a great painter of times; forgetting that local colouring is an appeal to a critical and learned audience, not an appeal to the heart and imagination. It is history, not drama. Macbeth in a bag-wig, with a small sword at his side, made audiences tremble at the appalling ruin of a mind entangled in crime. The corrected costume would not make that tragedy more appalling, had we not now grown so critical that we demand historical "accuracy," where, in the true dramatic age, they only demanded passion. The merest glance at our own dramatic literature will suffice to show the preponderating (and misplaced) influence of History, in the treatment, no less than in the subjects chosen.

Götz, as a picture of the times, is an animated and successful work; but the eighteenth century is on more than one occasion rudely thrust into the sixteenth; and on this ground Hegel denies its claim to the highest originality. "An original work appears as the creation of *one* mind, which, admitting of no external influence, fuses the whole work in one mould, as the events therein exhibited were fused. If it contains

scenes and motives which do not naturally evolve themselves from the original materials, but are brought together from far and wide, then the internal unity becomes necessarily destroyed, and these scenes betray the author's subjectivity. For example, Goethe's *Götz* has been greatly lauded for originality, nor can we deny that he has therein boldly trampled under foot all the rules and theories which were then accepted: but the execution is notwithstanding not thoroughly original. One may detect in it the poverty of youth. Several traits, and even scenes, instead of being evolved from the real subject, are taken from the current topics of the day. The scene, for example, between Götz and Brother Martin, which is an allusion to Luther, contains notions gathered from the controversies of Goethe's own day, when—especially in Germany—people were pitying the monks because they drank no wine, and because they had passed the vows of chastity and obedience. Martin, on the other hand, is enthusiastic in his admiration of Götz, and his knightly career: 'When you return back laden with spoils, and say, such a one I struck from his horse ere he could discharge his piece; such another I overthrew, horse and man; and then, returning to your castle, you find your wife.' . . . Here Martin wipes his eye and pledges the wife of Götz. Not so—not with such thoughts did Luther begin, but with quite another religious conviction!"

"In a similar style," Hegel continues, "Basedow's pedagogy is introduced. Children, it was said, learn much that is foolish and unintelligible to them; and the real method was to make them learn objects, not names. Karl thus speaks to his father just as he would have spoken in Goethe's time from parrot-memory: 'Jaxt-hausen is a village and castle upon the Jaxt, which has been the property and heritage for two hundred years of the Lords of Berlichingen.' 'Do you know the Lord of Berlichingen?' asks Götz; the child stares at him, and, from pure erudition, knows not his own father. Götz declares that *he* knew every pass, pathway, and ford about the place, before he knew the name of village, castle, or river." [1]

Considered with reference to the age in which it was produced, *Götz von Berlichingen* is a marvellous work: a work of daring power, of vigour, of originality; a work to form an epoch in the annals of letters. Those who now read it as the

[1] HEGEL'S *Vorlesungen über die Æsthetik*, i. p. 382.

work of the great Geothe may be somewhat disappointed; but at the time of its appearance no such "magnificent monster" had startled the pedantries and proprieties of the schools;—"a piece," said the critic in the *Teutsche Mercur* of the day, "wherein the three unities are shamefully outraged, and which is neither a tragedy nor a comedy, and is, notwithstanding, the most beautiful, the most captivating monstrosity."

The breathless rapidity of movement renders a first reading too hurried for proper enjoyment; but on recurring to the briefly indicated scenes, we are amazed at their fulness of life. How marvellous, for example, is that opening scene of the fifth act (removed from the second version), where Adelheid is in the gipsies' tent! Amid the falling snow shines the lurid gleam of the gypsy fire, around which move dusky figures; and this magnificent creature stands shuddering as she finds herself in the company of an old crone who tells her fortune, while a wild-eyed boy gazes ardently on her and alarms her with his terrible admiration; the whole scene *lives*, yet the touches which call it into life are briefer than in any other work I can remember.

CHAPTER III

WETZLAR

In the spring of 1772 he arrived at Wetzlar with *Götz* in his portfolio, and in his head many wild, unruly thoughts. A passage in the *Autobiography* amusingly illustrates his conception of the task he had undertaken in choosing to inform the world of his early history. Remember that at Wetzlar he fell in love with Charlotte, and lived through the experience which was fused into *Werther*, and you will smile as you hear him say: "What occurred to me at Wetzlar is of no great importance, but it may receive a higher interest if the reader will allow me to give a cursory glance at the history of the Imperial Chamber, in order to present to his mind the unfavourable moment at which I arrived." This it is to write autobiography when one has outlived almost the memories of youth, and lost sympathy with many of its agitations. At the time he was in Wetzlar he would have looked strangely on any one who ventured to tell him that the history of the

Imperial Chamber was worth a smile from Charlotte ; but at the time of writing his meagre account of Wetzlar, he had, perhaps, some difficulty in remembering what Charlotte's smiles were like. The biographer has a difficult task to make any coherent story out of this episode.[1]

In Wetzlar there were two buildings interesting above all others to us—the Imperial Court of Justice, and *Das teutsche Haus*. The Imperial Court was a Court of Appeal for the whole empire, a sort of German Chancery. Imagine a *German* Chancery! In no country does Chancery move with railway speed, and in Germany even the railways are slow. Such a chaotic accumulation of business as this Wetzlar *Kammer-Gericht* presented, was perhaps never seen before. Twenty thousand cases lay undecided on Goethe's arrival, and there were but seventeen lawyers to dispose of them. About sixty was the utmost they could get through in a year, and every year brought more than double that number to swell the heap. Some cases had lingered through a century and a half, and still remained far from a decision. This was not a place to impress the sincere and eminently practical mind of Goethe with a high idea of Jurisprudence.

Das teutsche Haus was one of the remnants of the ancient institution of the *Teutsche Ritter*, or Teutonic Order of Knighthood, celebrated in German mediæval history. The student is familiar with the black armour and white mantles of these warrior-priests, who fought with the zeal of missionaries and the terrible valour of knights, conquering for themselves a large territory, and still greater influence. But it fared with them as with the knights of other Orders. Their strength lay in their zeal; their zeal abated with success. Years brought them increasing wealth, but the spiritual wealth and glory of their cause departed. They became what all corporations inevitably become; and at the time now written of they were reduced to a level with the Knights of Malta. The Order still possessed property in various parts of Germany, and in certain towns there was a sort of steward's house,

[1] Fortunately, during the very months in which I was rewriting this work, there appeared an invaluable record in the shape of the correspondence between Goethe and Kestner, so often alluded to by literary historians, but so imperfectly known. (*Goethe und Werther. Briefe Goethe's, meistens aus seiner Jugendzeit.* Herausgegeben von A. Kestner: 1854.) This book, which is very much in need of an editor, is one of the richest sources to which access has been had for a right understanding of Goethe's youth; and it completes the series of corroborative evidence by which to control the *Autobiography*.

where rents were collected and the business of the Order transacted; this was uniformly styled *das teutsche Haus.* There was such a one in Wetzlar; and the *Amtmann*, or steward, who had superintendence over it, was a certain Herr Buff, on whom the reader is requested to fix his eye, not for any attractiveness of Herr Buff, intrinsically considered, but for the sake of his eldest daughter, Charlotte. She is the heroine of this Wetzlar episode.

Nor was this house the only echo of the ancient Ritterthum in Wetzlar. Goethe, on his arrival, found there another, and more consciously burlesque parody, in the shape of a Round Table and its Knights, bearing such names as St. Amand the Opiniative, Eustace the Prudent, Lubormirsky the Combative, and so forth. It was founded by August Friedrich von Goué, secretary to the Brunswick Embassy, of whom we shall hear more: a wild and whimsical fellow, not without a streak of genius, who drank himself to death. He bore the title of Ritter Coucy, and christened Goethe "*Götz von Berlichingen der Redliche*—Götz the Honest." In an imitation of *Werther* which Goué wrote,[1] a scene introduces this Round Table at one of its banquets at the Tavern; a knight sings a French song, whereupon Götz exclaims, "Thou, a German Ritter, and singest foreign songs!" Another knight asks Götz, "How far have you advanced with the monument which you are to erect to your ancestor?" Götz replies, "It goes quietly forward. Methinks it will be a slap in the face to pedants and the public."[2]

Of this Round Table and its buffooneries, Goethe has merely told us that he entered heartily into the fun at first, but soon wearying of it, relapsed into his melancholy fits. "I have made many acquaintances," says *Werther*, "but have found no society. I know not what there is about me so attractive that people seek my company with so much ardour. They hang about me, though I cannot walk two steps in their path." A description of him, written by Kestner at this period, is very interesting, as it gives us faithfully the impression he produced on his acquaintances before celebrity had thrown its halo round his head, and dazzled the perceptions of his admirers:

---

[1] *Masuren, oder der junge Werther. Ein Trauerspiel aus dem Illyrischen.* 1775.

[2] "Ein Stück das Meister und Gesellen auf's Maul schlägt." Cited by APPELL: *Werther und seine Zeit*, p. 38.

"In the spring there came here a certain Goethe, by trade[1] a *Doctor Juris*, twenty-three years old, only son of a very rich father; in order—this was his father's intention—that he might get some experience in *praxi*, but according to his own intention, that he might study Homer, Pindar, &c., and whatever else his genius, his manner of thinking, and his heart might suggest to him.

"At the very first the *beaux esprits* here announced him to the public as a colleague, and as a collaborator in the new Frankfurt *Gelehrte Zeitung*, parenthetically also as a philosopher, and gave themselves trouble to become intimate with him. As I do not belong to this class of people, or rather am not so much in general society, I did not know Goethe until later, and quite by accident. One of the most distinguished of our *beaux esprits*, the Secretary of Legation Gotter, persuaded me one day to go with him to the village of Garbenheim—a common walk. There I found him on the grass, under a tree, lying on his back, while he talked to some persons standing round him—an epicurean philosopher (von Goué, a great genius), a stoic philosopher (von Kielmansegge), and a hybrid between the two (Dr. König)—and thoroughly enjoyed himself. He was afterwards glad that I had made his acquaintance under such circumstances. Many things were talked of—some of them very interesting. This time, however, I formed no other judgment concerning him than that he was no ordinary man. You know that I do not judge hastily. I found at once that he had genius, and a lively imagination; but this was not enough to make me estimate him highly.

"Before I proceed further, I must attempt a description of him, as I have since learned to know him better. He has a great deal of talent, is a true genius and a man of character; possesses an extraordinarily vivid imagination, and hence generally expresses himself in images and similes. He often says, himself, that he always speaks figuratively, and can never express himself literally; but that when he is older he hopes to think and say the thought itself as it really is. He is ardent in all his affections, and yet has often great power over himself. His manner of thinking is noble: he is so free from prejudices that he acts as it seems good to him, without troubling himself whether it will please others, whether it is the fashion,

[1] *Seiner Handthierung nach.* The word is old German, and now fallen out of use, although the verb *handthieren* is still occasionally used.

whether conventionalism allows it. All constraint is odious to him.

"He is fond of children, and can occupy himself with them very much. He is *bizarre*, and there are several things in his manners and outward bearing which might make him disagreeable. But with children, women, and many others, he is nevertheless a favourite. He has a great respect for the female sex. In *principiis* he is not yet fixed, and is still striving after a sure system. To say something of this, he has a high opinion of Rousseau, but is not a blind worshipper of him. He is not what is called orthodox. Still this is not out of pride or caprice, or for the sake of making himself a *rôle*. On certain important subjects he opens himself to few, and does not willingly disturb the contentment of others in their own ideas. It is true he hates scepticism, strives after truth and after conviction on certain main points, and even believes that he is already convinced as to the weightiest; but as far as I have observed, he is not yet so. He does not go to church or to the sacrament, and prays seldom. For, says he, I am not hypocrite enough for that. Sometimes he seems in repose with regard to certain subjects, sometimes just the contrary. He venerates the Christian religion, but not in the form in which it is presented by our theologians. He believes in a future life, in a better state of existence. He strives after truth, yet values the feeling of truth more than the demonstration. He has already done much, and has many acquirements, much reading; but he has thought and reasoned still more. He has occupied himself chiefly with the *belles lettres* and the fine arts, or rather with all sorts of knowledge, except that which wins bread."

On the margin of this rough draught, Kestner adds: "I wished to describe him, but it would be too long a business, for there is much to be said about him. In one word, *he is a very remarkable man*."

Further on: "I should never have done, if I attempted to describe him fully."

The Gotter referred to at the opening of this letter was a young man of considerable culture, with whom Goethe became intimate over renewed discussions on art and criticism. "The opinions of the ancients," he says, "on these important topics I had studied by fits and starts for some years. Aristotle, Cicero, Quinctilian, Longinus—none were neglected, but they did not help me, for they presupposed an experience which I

needed. They introduced me to a world infinitely rich in works of art; they unfolded the merits of great poets and orators, and convinced me that *a vast abundance of objects must lie before us ere we can think upon them*—that we must accomplish something, nay fail in something, before we can learn our own capacities and those of others. My knowledge of much that was good in ancient literature was merely that of a schoolboy, and by no means vivid. The most splendid orators, it was apparent, had *formed themselves in life*, and we could never speak of them as artists without at the same time mentioning their personal peculiarities. With the poets this was perhaps less the case: but everywhere nature and art came in contact only through life. And thus the result of all my investigations was my old resolution to study Nature, and to allow her to guide me in loving imitation."

Properly to appreciate this passage we must recall the almost universal tendency of the Germans to construct poems in conformity with definite rules, making the poet but a development of the critic. Lessing nobly avowed that he owed all his success to his critical sagacity; Schiller, it is notorious, hampered his genius by fixing on his Pegasus the leaden wings of Kant's philosophy; and Klopstock himself erred in too much criticism. Goethe was the last man to disdain the rich experience of centuries, the last man to imagine that ignorance was an advantageous basis for a poet to stand upon, but he was too thoroughly an artist not to perceive the insufficiency of abstract theories in the production of a work of art which should be the expression of real experience.

In conjunction with Gotter he translated Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, though he speaks slightingly of his share in it. Through Gotter's representations he was also persuaded to publish some little poems in Boie's *Annual*. "I thus [1] came into contact with those," he says, "who, united by youth and talent, afterwards effected so much in various ways. Bürger, Voss, Hölty, the two Counts Stolberg, and several others grouped round Kolpstock; and in this poetical circle, which extended itself more and more, there was developed a tendency which I know not exactly how to name. One might call it that need of independence which always arises in times of peace—that is to say precisely when, properly speaking, one is not

[1] Düntzer in his *Studien* has thrown doubts on this connection with the Göttingen School having originated in Wetzlar. But the point is of no importance, and Goethe's own version is left undisturbed in the text.

dependent. In war we bear restraints of force as well as we can; we are physically, but not morally wounded; the restraint disgraces no one; it is no shame to serve the time; we grow accustomed to suffering both from foes and friends; we have wishes rather than definite views. On the contrary, in times of peace our love of freedom becomes more and more prominent, and the greater our freedom, the more we wish for it; we will tolerate nothing above us; we will not be restrained; no one shall be restrained! This tender, sometimes morbid feeling, assumes in noble souls the form of justice: such a spirit then manifested itself everywhere; and because but few were oppressed, it was wished to free these from occasional oppression. And thus arose a certain moral contest between individuals and the government, which, however laudable its origin, led to unhappy results. Voltaire, reverenced for his conduct in the affair of Calais, had excited great attention; and in Germany Lavater's proceedings against the *Landvogt* (sheriff of the province), had perhaps been even more striking. The time was approaching when dramatists and novelists sought their villains among ministers and official persons; hence arose a world, half real, half imaginary, of action and reaction, in which the most violent accusations and instigations were made by writers of periodical journals, under the garb of justice, who produced the more powerful effect because they made the public imagine that it was itself the tribunal—*a foolish notion, as no public has an executive power;* and in Germany, dismembered as it was, public opinion neither benefited nor injured any one."

It was a period of deep unrest in Europe: the travail of the French revolution. In Germany the spirit of the revolution issued from the study and the lecture hall; it was a literary and philosophic insurrection, with Lessing, Klopstock, Kant, Herder, and Goethe, for leaders. Authority was everywhere attacked, because everywhere it had shown itself feeble, or tyrannous. The majestic peruke of Louis XIV. was lifted by an audacious hand, which thus revealed the baldness so long concealed. No one *now* believed in that Grand Monarque; least of all Goethe, who had *Götz von Berlichingen* in his portfolio, and to whom Homer and Shakspeare were idols. "Send me no more books," writes Werther, "I will no longer be led, incited, spurred by them. There is storm enough in this breast. I want a cradle-melody, and that I have in all its fulness in Homer. How often do I lull with it my raging blood to rest!"

The Kestner Correspondence proves, what before was known, that *Werther* is full of biography, and that Goethe was then troubled with fits of depression following upon days of the wildest animal spirits. He was fond of solitude; and the lonely hours passed in reading, or making sketches of the landscape in his rough imperfect style.

"A marvellous serenity has descended on my spirit," writes Werther, "to be compared only to the sweet mornings of spring which so charm my heart. I am alone, and here life seems delicious in this spot formed for natures like mine. I am so happy, so filled with the calm feeling of existence, that my art suffers. I cannot sketch, yet never was I a greater painter than at this moment! When the dear valley clothes itself in vapour, and the sun shines on the top of my impenetrable forest and only a few gleams steal into its sanctuary, while I lie stretched in the tall grass by the cascade, curiously examine the many grasses and weeds, and contemplate the little world of insects with their innumerable forms and colours, and feel within me the presence of the Almighty who formed us after his own image, the breath of the All-loving who sustains us in endless bliss,—my friend, when my eyes are fixed on all these objects, and the world images itself in my soul like the form of a beloved, then I yearn and say: Ah! couldst thou but express that which lives within thee, that it should be the mirror of thy soul, as thy soul is the mirror of the Infinite God!"

The image of Frederika pursued him. It could only be banished by the presence of another. "When I was a boy," he prettily says in a letter to Salzmann, "I planted a cherry-tree, and watched its growth with delight. Spring frost killed the blossoms, and I had to wait another year before the cherries were ripe—then the birds ate them; another year the caterpillars—then a greedy neighbour—then the blight. Nevertheless, when I have a garden again, I shall again plant a cherry-tree!" He did so:

> "And from Beauty passed to Beauty,
> Constant to a constant change." [1]

The image which was to supplant that of Frederika was none other than that of the Charlotte Buff before mentioned. Two years before his arrival, her mother had died. The care of the house and children devolved upon her; she was only

[1] Monckton Milnes.

sixteen, yet good sense, housewifely aptitude, and patient courage carried her successfully through this task. She had for two years been betrothed to Kestner, secretary to the Hanoverian Legation, then aged four-and-twenty: a quiet, orderly, formal, rational, cultivated man, possessing great magnanimity, as the correspondence proves, and a dignity which is in nowise represented in the Albert of *Werther*, from whom we must be careful to distinguish him, in spite of the obvious identity of position. How Goethe came to know Kestner has already been seen; how he came to know Lotte may now be told.[1] The reader with *Werther* in hand may compare the narrative there given with this extract from Kestner's letter to a friend. "It happened that Goethe was at a ball in the country where my maiden and I also were. I could only come late, and was forced to ride after them. My maiden, therefore, drove there in other society. In the carriage was Dr. Goethe, who here first saw Lottchen. He has great knowledge, and has made Nature in her physical and moral aspects his principal study, and has sought the true beauty of both. No woman here had pleased him. Lottchen at once fixed his attention. She is young, and although not regularly beautiful, has a very attractive face. Her glance is as bright as a spring morning, and especially it was so that day, for she loves dancing. She was gay, and in quite a simple dress. He noticed her feeling for the beauty of Nature, and her unforced wit,—rather humour than wit. He did not know she was betrothed. I came a few hours later; and it is not our custom in public to testify anything beyond friendship to each other. He was excessively gay (this he often is, though at other times melancholy); Lottchen quite fascinated him, the more so because she took no trouble about it, but gave herself wholly to the pleasure of the moment. The next day, of course, Goethe called to inquire after her. He had seen her as a lively girl, fond of dancing and pleasure; he now saw her under another and a better aspect,—in her domestic quality."

To judge from her portrait, Lotte must, in her way, have been a charming creature: not intellectually cultivated, not poetical,—above all, not the sentimental girl described by *Werther;* but a serene, calm, joyous, open-hearted German maiden, an excellent housewife, and a priceless manager. Goethe at once fell in love with her. An extract from Kest-

[1] Lotte and Lottchen, it is perhaps not altogether superfluous to add, are the favourite diminutives of Charlotte.

ner's account will tell us more. After describing his engagement to Lotte, he adds,—"She is not strictly a brilliant beauty, according to the common opinion; to me she is one: she is, notwithstanding, the fascinating maiden who might have hosts of admirers, old and young, grave and gay, clever and stupid, &c. But she knows how to convince them quickly that their only safety must be sought in flight or in friendship. One of these, as the most remarkable, I will mention, because he retains an influence over us. A youth in years (twenty-three), but in knowledge, and in the development of his mental powers and character, already a man, an extraordinary genius, and a man of character, was here,—as his family believed, for the sake of studying the law, but in fact to track the footsteps of Nature and Truth, and to study Homer and Pindar. He had no need to study for the sake of a maintenance. Quite by chance, after he had been here some time, he became acquainted with Lottchen, and saw in her his ideal: he saw her in her joyous aspect, but was soon aware that this was not her best side; he learned to know her also in her domestic position, and, in a word, became her adorer. It could not long remain unknown to him that she could give him nothing but friendship; and her conduct towards him was admirable. Our coincidence of taste, and a closer acquaintance with each other, formed between him and me the closest bond of friendship. Meanwhile, although he was forced to renounce all hope in relation to Lottchen, and *did* renounce it, yet he could not, with all his philosophy and natural pride, so far master himself as completely to repress his inclination. And he has qualities which might make him dangerous to a woman, especially to one of susceptibility and taste. But Lottchen knew how to treat him so as not to encourage vain hope, and yet make him admire her manner towards him. His peace of mind suffered: there were many remarkable scenes, in which Lottchen's behaviour heightened my regard for her; and he also became more precious to me as a friend; but I was often inwardly astonished that love can make such strange creatures even of the strongest and otherwise the most self-sustained men. I pitied him, and had many inward struggles; for, on the one hand, I thought that I might not be in a position to make Lottchen so happy as he would make her; but, on the other hand, I could not endure the thought of losing her. The latter feeling conquered, and in Lottchen I have never once been able to perceive a shadow of the same conflict."

Another extract will place this conflict in its true light:— "I am under no further engagement to Lottchen than that under which an honourable man stands when he gives a young woman the preference above all others, makes known that he desires the like feeling from her, and when she gives it, receives from her not only this, but a complete acquiescence. This I consider quite enough to bind an honourable man, especially when such a relation lasts several years. But in my case there is this in addition, that Lottchen and I have expressly declared ourselves, and still do so with pleasure, without any oaths and asseverations." This absence of any *legal* tie between them must have made Kestner's position far more trying. It gives a higher idea both of his generous forbearance and of the fascination exercised by Goethe: for what a position! and how much nobility on all sides was necessary to prevent petty jealousies ending in a violent rupture! Certain it is that the greatest intimacy and the most affectionate feelings were kept up *without* disturbance. Confident in the honour of his friend and the truth of his mistress, Kestner never spoiled the relation by a hint of jealousy. Goethe was constantly in Lotte's house, where his arrival was a jubilee to the children, who seized hold of him, as children always take loving possession of those who are indulgent to them, and forced him to tell them stories. It is a pleasant sight to see Goethe with children; he always shows such hearty fondness for them; and these brothers and sisters of Lotte were doubly endeared to him because they belonged to her.

One other figure in this Wetzlar set arrests our attention: it is that of a handsome blonde youth, with soft blue eyes and a settled melancholy expression. His name is Jerusalem, and he is the son of the venerable Abbot of Riddagshausen.[1] He is here attached as secretary to the Brunswick Legation, a colleague, therefore, of von Goué. He is deeply read in English literature, and has had the honour of Lessing's friendship; a friendship subsequently expressed in the following terms, when Lessing, acting as his editor, wrote the preface to his Philosophical Essays: "When he came to Wolfenbüttel he gave me his friendship. I did not enjoy it long, but I cannot easily name one who in so short a space of time excited in me more affection. It is true I only learned to know one side of his nature, but it was the side which explains all the rest. It was

[1] No Catholic, as this title might seem to imply, but a Protestant; his abbey, secularised two centuries before, yielded him only a title and revenues.

the desire for clear knowledge; the talent to follow truth to its last consequences; the spirit of cold observation; but an ardent spirit not to be intimidated by truth. . . . How sensitive, how warm, how active this young inquirer was, how true a man among men, is better known to more intimate friends." The Essays which these words introduce are five in number; the titles are given below.[1]

The melancholy of his disposition led him to think much of suicide, which he defended on speculative grounds. And this melancholy, and these meditations, were deepened by an unhappy passion for the wife of one of his friends. The issue of that passion we shall have to narrate in a future chapter. For the present it is enough to indicate the presence of this youth among the circle of Goethe's acquaintances. They saw but little of each other, owing to the retiring sensitiveness of Jerusalem; probably the same cause had kept them asunder years before in Leipsic, where they were fellow-students; but their acquaintance furnished Goethe with material which he was afterwards to use in his novel.

Jerusalem's unhappy passion and Goethe's unhappy passion, one would think, must have been a bond of union between them; but in truth Goethe's passion can scarcely have been called "unhappy"—it was rather a delicious uneasiness. Love, in the profound, absorbing sense, it was not. It was an *imaginative passion*, in which the poet was more implicated than the man. Lotte excited his imagination; her beauty, her serene gaiety, her affectionate manners, charmed him; the romance of his position heightened the charm, by giving an *unconscious security* to his feelings. I am persuaded that if Lotte had been free, he would have fled from her as he fled from Frederika. In saying this, however, I do not mean that the impossibility of obtaining her gave him any comfort. He was restless, impatient, and, in a certain sense, unhappy. He believed himself to be desperately in love with her, when in truth he was only in love with the indulgence of the emotions she excited; a paradox which will be no mystery to those acquainted with the poetic temperament.

Thus passed the summer. In August he made a little

[1] I. Dass die Sprache dem ersten Menschen durch Wunder nicht mitgetheilt sein kann. II. Ueber die Natur und den Ursprung der allgemeinen und abstrakten Begriffe. III. Ueber die Freiheit. IV. Ueber die Mendelssohnsche Theorie vom sinnlichen Vergnügen. V. Ueber die vermischten Empfindungen.

excursion to Giessen, to see Professor Höpfner, one of the active writers in the *Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen.* Characteristically he calls on the professor incognito, presenting himself as a shy awkward student; which, as Höpfner only knows him through correspondence, is facile enough. The comic scene ends by his jumping into the professor's arms, exclaiming, "I am Goethe!" In Giessen, he found Merck. He persuaded him to return to Wetzlar, to be introduced to Lotte. Merck came; but so far from undervaluing her, as the very inaccurate account in the *Autobiography* would have us understand, Merck wrote to a friend: "J'ai trouvé aussi l'amie de Goethe, cette fille dont il parle avec tant d'enthousiasme dans toutes ses lettres. Elle mérite réellement tout ce qu'il pourra dire du bien sur son compte."[1] He exasperated Goethe by preferring the "Juno form" of one of her friends, and pointing her out as the more worthy of attention, because she was disengaged. That Goethe should have been offended, was in the order of things; but in the retrospective glance which he gave to this period in his old age, he ought to have detected the really friendly spirit animating Merck; he ought not to have likened him to Mephistopheles; the more so as Merck's representations were really effectual, and hastened the dénouement. Every day made Goethe's position less tenable. At last he consented to tear himself away, and accompany Merck in a trip down the Rhine. It was time. Whatever factitious element there may have been in his romance, the situation was full of danger; indulgence in such emotions would have created at last a real and desperate passion; there was safety but in flight.

Merck left Wetzlar, having arranged that Goethe should join him at Coblentz. The following extracts from Kestner's *Diary* will remind the reader of Goethe's departure from Leipsic without saying adieu to Käthchen. His dislike of "scenes" made him shrink from those emotions of leave-taking usually so eagerly sought by lovers.

"*Sept.* 10*th*, 1772. To-day Dr. Goethe dined with me in the garden; I did not know that it was the last time. In the evening Dr. Goethe came to the *teutsche Haus.* He, Lottchen, and I, had a remarkable conversation about the future state; about going away and returning, &c., which was not begun by him, but by Lottchen. We agreed that the one who died first

[1] *Briefe aus dem Freundeskreise von Goethe, Herder, Merck,* p. 59.

should, if he could, give information to the living, about the conditions of the other life. Goethe was quite cast down, for he knew that the next morning he was to go."

"*Sept. 11th*, 1772. This morning at seven o'clock Goethe set off without taking leave. He sent me a note with some books. He had long said that about this time he would make a journey to Coblentz, where the pay-master of the forces, Merck, awaited him, and that he would say no good-byes, but set off suddenly. So I had expected it. But that I was, notwithstanding, unprepared for it, I have felt—felt deep in my soul. In the morning I came home. 'Herr Dr. Goethe sent this at ten o'clock.' I saw the books and the note, and thought what this said to me—'He is gone!'—and was quite dejected. Soon after, Hans [1] came to ask me if he were really gone? The *Geheime Räthin* Langen had sent to say by a maid-servant: 'It was very ill-mannered of Dr. Goethe to set off in this way, without taking leave.' Lottchen sent word in reply: 'Why had she not taught her nephew better?' Lottchen, in order to be certain, sent a box which she had of Goethe's, to his house. He was no longer there. In the middle of the day the *Geheime Räthin* Langen sent word again: 'She would, however, let Dr. Goethe's mother know how he had conducted himself.' Every one of the children in the *teutsche Haus* was saying: '*Doctor Goethe is gone!*' In the middle of the day I talked with Herr von Born, who had accompanied him, on horseback, as far as Brunnfells. Goethe had told him of our evening's conversation. Goethe had set out in very low spirits. In the afternoon I took Goethe's note to Lottchen. She was sorry about his departure; the tears came into her eyes while reading. Yet it was a satisfaction to her that he was gone, since she could not give him the affection he desired. We spoke only of him; indeed, I could think of nothing else, and defended the manner of his leaving, which was blamed by a silly person; I did it with much warmth. Afterwards I wrote him word what had happened since his departure."

How graphically do these simple touches set the whole situation before us: the sorrow of the two lovers at the departure of their friend, and the consternation of the children on hearing that Dr. Goethe is gone! One needs such a picture to reassure us that the episode, with all its strange romance, and with all its danger, was not really a fit of morbid

[1] One of Lotte's brothers.

sentimentalism. Indeed, had Goethe been the sentimental Werther he has represented, he would never have had the strength of will to tear himself from such a position. He would have blown his brains out, as Werther did. On the other hand, note what a worthy figure is this of Kestner, compared with the cold Albert of the novel. A less generous nature would have rejoiced in the absence of a rival, and forgotten, in its joy, the loss of a friend. But Kestner, who knew that his friend was his rival,—and such a rival, that doubts crossed him whether this magnificent youth were not really more capable of rendering Lotte happy than he himself was,—grieved for the absence of his friend!

Here is Goethe's letter, referred to in the passage just quoted from the Diary:

"He is gone, Kestner; when you get this note, he is gone! Give Lottchen the enclosed. I was quite composed, but your conversation has torn me to pieces. At this moment I can say nothing to you but farewell. If I had remained a moment longer with you I could not have restrained myself. Now I am alone, and to-morrow I go. O my poor head!"

This was the enclosure, addressed to Lotte:

"I certainly hope to come again, but God knows when! Lotte, what did my heart feel while you were talking, knowing, as I did, that it was the last time I should see you? Not the last time, and yet to-morrow I go away. He is gone! What spirit led you to that conversation? When I was expected to say all I felt, alas! what I cared about was here below, was your hand, which I kissed for the last time. The room, which I shall not enter again, and the dear father who saw me to the door for the last time. I am now alone, and may weep; I leave you happy, and shall remain in your heart. And shall see you again; *but not to-morrow is never!* Tell my boys, He is gone. I can say no more."

CHAPTER IV

PREPARATIONS FOR WERTHER

HAVING sent his luggage to the house of Frau von Laroche, where he was to meet Merck, he made the journey down the Lahn, on foot. A delicious sadness subdued his thoughts as

he wandered dreamily along the river banks; and the lovely scenes which met his eye solicited his pencil, awakening once more the ineffectual desire (which from time to time haunted him) of becoming a painter. He had really no faculty in this direction, yet the desire often suppressed now rose up in such a serious shape, that he resolved to settle for ever whether he should devote himself to the art or not. The test was curious. The river glided beneath, now flashing in the sunlight, now partially concealed by willows. Taking a knife from his pocket he flung it with his left hand into the river, having previously resolved that if he saw it fall he was to become an artist; but if the sinking knife were concealed by the willows he was to abandon the idea. No ancient oracle was ever more ambiguous than the answer now given him. The willows concealed the sinking knife, but the water splashed up like a fountain, and was distinctly visible. So indefinite an answer left him in doubt.[1]

He wandered pleasantly on the banks till he reached Ems, and then journeyed down the river in a boat. The old Rhine opened upon him; and he mentions with peculiar delight the magnificent situation of Oberlahnstein, and, above all, the majesty of the castle of Ehrenbreitstein. On arriving at the house of Geheimrath von La Roche, where he had been announced by Merck, he was most kindly received by this excellent family. His literary tendencies bound him to the mother; his joyousness and strong sense, to the father; his youth and poetry, to the daughters. The Frau von Laroche, Wieland's earliest love, had written a novel in the Richardson style, *Die Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim;* and Schäfer remarks that she probably gathered Merck, Goethe, and others into her house with a view to favourable criticisms of this novel. If this were her design, she succeeded with Goethe, who reviewed her book in the *Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen.* Whether this compliance was extorted by herself, or by the charms of her daughter Maximiliane, history saith not; certain

[1] This mode of interrogating fate recalls that strange passage in ROUSSEAU'S *Confessions* (Livre vi.), where he throws a stone at a tree: if he hits, it is a sign of salvation; if he misses, of damnation! Fortunately he hits: "Ce qui, véritablement. n'étais pas difficile, car j'avais eu le soin de le choisir fort gros et fort près; depuis lors je n'ai plus douté de mon salut." Had Goethe read this passage? The *Confessions* appeared in 1768, that is, four years before this journey down the Lahn. Yet from a passage in one of his letters to the Frau von Stein, it seems as if he then, 1782, first read the *Confessions.*

it is that the dark eyes of the daughter made an impression on the heart of the young reviewer. She is the Mlle. B. introduced in *Werther;* but she is even still more interesting to us as the future mother of Bettina. They seem to have looked into each other's eyes, flirted and sentimentalised, as if no Lotte had been left in Wetzlar. Nor will this surprise those who have considered the mobile nature of our poet. He is miserable at moments, but the fulness of abounding life, the strength of victorious will, and the sensibility to new impressions, keep his ever-active nature from the despondency which killed Werther. He is not always drooping because Charlotte is another's. He is open to every new impression, serious or gay. Thus, among other indications, we find him throwing off *Pater Brey* and *Satyros*, sarcasm and humour which are curious as products of the Werther period, although of no absolute worth; and we follow him up the Rhine, in company with Merck and his family, leisurely enjoying Rheinfels, St. Goar, Bacharach, Bingen, Elfeld, and Biberich,—

> "The blending of all beauties; streams and dells,
> Fruit, foliage, crag, wood, cornfield, mountain, vine,
> And chiefless castles, breathing stern farewells
> From gray but leafy walls where Ruin greenly dwells"—

sketching as if life were a leisure summer day.

He returned to Frankfurt, and busied himself with law, literature, and painting. Wandering Italians, then rare, brought casts of antique statues to Frankfurt; and with delighted eagerness he purchased a complete set, thus to revive as much as possible the grand impression he received at Mannheim. Among his art-studies must be noted the attention bestowed on the Dutch painters. He began to copy some still-life pictures; one of these he mentions with pride, and what, think you, this one was?—a copy of a tortoiseshell knife-handle inlaid with silver! He has *Götz von Berlichingen* in his portfolio, and delights in copying a knife-handle!

To law he devoted himself with greater assiduity than ever. His father, delighted at going through the papers with him, was peculiarly gratified at this honourable diligence, and in his delight was willing to overlook the other occupations of "this singular creature," as he rightly named him. Goethe's literary plans were numerous, and the *Frankfurt Journal* gave him constant opportunities for expressing himself on poetry, theology, and even politics. Very significant is the following

passage from one of these articles, in reply to the complaint that the Germans had no Fatherland, no Patriotism. "When we have a place in the world where we can repose with our property, a field to nourish us, and a house to cover us, have we not there our Fatherland? and have not thousands upon thousands in every city got this? and do they not live happy in their limited sphere? Wherefore, then, this vain striving for a sentiment we neither have nor can have, a sentiment which only in certain nations, and in certain periods, is the result of many concurrent circumstances? Roman patriotism! God defend us from it, as from a giant! we could not find the stool upon which to sit, nor the bed on which to lie in such patriotism!" He was also rewriting *Götz von Berlichingen*. He found, on re-reading the manuscript, that, besides the unities of time and place, he had sinned against the higher unity of composition. He says,—

"In abandoning myself to my imagination, I had not deviated much in the beginning, and the first acts were pretty much as had been intended. In the following acts, however, and especially towards the end, I was unconsciously led away by a singular passion. In making Aldelheid so lovable, I had fallen in love with her myself,—my pen was unconsciously devoted to her alone,—the interest in her fate gained the preponderance; and as, moreover, Götz, towards the end, has little to do, and afterwards only returns to an unhappy participation in the Peasant War, nothing was more natural than that a charming woman should supplant him in the mind of the author, who, casting off the fetters of art, thought to open a new field. I was soon sensible of this defect, or rather this culpable superfluity, since my poetical nature always impelled me to unity. Instead of the biography of Götz and German antiquities, I now confined my attention to my own work, to give it more and more historical and national substance, and to cancel that which was fabulous or passionate. In this I indeed sacrificed much, as the inclination of the man had to yield to the conviction of the artist. Thus, for instance, I had placed Aldelheid in a terrific nocturnal gipsy scene, where she produced a great effect by her beautiful presence. A nearer examination banished her; and the love affair between Franz and his gracious lady, which was very circumstantially carried on in the fourth and fifth acts, was much condensed, and only the chief points indicated.

"Without altering the manuscript, which I still possess

in its original shape, I determined to rewrite the whole, and did this with such activity, that in a few weeks I produced an entirely new version. It had never been my intention to have the second poem printed, as I looked upon this likewise as no more than a preparatory exercise, the foundation of a new work, to be accomplished with greater industry and deliberation.

"When I suggested my plans to Merck, he laughed at me, and asked what was the meaning of this perpetual writing and rewriting? The work, he said, by this means, only becomes different, and seldom better; you must see what effect one thing produces, and then try something new. 'Be in time at the hedge, if you would dry your linen,' he exclaimed, in the words of the proverb: hesitation and delay only make uncertain men. On the other hand, I pointed out how unpleasant it would be to offer a bookseller a work on which I had bestowed so much affection, and perhaps have it refused; for how would they judge of so young, nameless, and audacious an author? As my dread of the press gradually vanished, I wished to see printed my comedy *Die Mitschuldigen*, upon which I set some value, but I found no publisher inclined to undertake it.

"Here the mercantile taste of my friend was at once excited. He proposed that we should publish at our own expense this singular and striking work, from which we should derive large profit. Like many others, he used often to reckon up the bookseller's profit, which with many works was certainly great, especially if what was lost by other writings and commercial affairs was left out of the calculation. We settled that I should procure the paper, and that he should answer for the printing. To work we went, and I was pleased to see my wild dramatic sketch in clean proof sheets; it looked really better than I myself expected. We completed the work, and it was sent off in several parcels. It was not long before the attention it excited became universal. But as, with our limited means, the copies could not be forwarded, a pirated edition suddenly made its appearance. As, moreover, there could be no immediate return, especially in ready money, for the copies sent out, and as my treasury was not very flourishing at the time when much attention and applause was bestowed upon me, I was extremely perplexed how to pay for the paper by means of which I had made the world acquainted with my talent. On the other hand, Merck, who knew better how to

help himself, was certain that all would soon come right again; but I never perceived that to be the case."

There is some inaccuracy in the foregoing, which a comparison of the first and second versions of the work will rectify. The changes he effected were very slight, and mainly consist in the striking out of the two scenes in which Adelheid plays so conspicuous a part.

A greater inaccuracy, amounting to injustice, is contained in the passage about Herder, as we now learn from the *Posthumous Papers* of the latter, from which it is clear that he *did* greatly admire *Götz*, and wrote warmly of it to his betrothed, saying, "you will have some heavenly hours of delight when you read it, for there is in it uncommon German strength, depth, and truth, although here and there it is rather schemed than artistically wrought (*nur gedacht*)." Probably in writing to Goethe he was more critical, and, as usual with him, somewhat pedagogic; but it is also probable that he was loud in praise, since the poet replies, "Your letter was a consolation. I already rank the work much lower than you do. Your sentence that Shakspeare has quite spoiled me, I admit to the full. The work must be fused anew, freed from its dross, and with newer, better metal cast again. Then it shall appear before you." He seems to have been nettled (not unnaturally) at the sentence, "all is rather schemed than artistically wrought," which, he says, is true of *Emilia Galotti*, and prevents his altogether liking it, although a masterpiece. Judging from a tolerably extensive acquaintance with authors in relation to criticism, I should think it highly probable that the longer Goethe pondered on Herder's letter the fainter became his pleasure in the praise, and the stronger his irritation at the blame. I have known a feeling of positive gratitude for a criticism, slowly change into an uneasy and almost indignant impression of injustice having been done. That Goethe did not, on reflection, so entirely concur with the objections he was at first ready to admit, appears from the fact that he did not recast his work.

When *Götz* appeared the effect on the public was instantaneous, startling. Its bold expression of the spirit of Freedom, its defiance of French criticism, and the originality no less than the power of the writing, carried it triumphant over Germany. It was pronounced a masterpiece in all the *salons* and in all the beer-houses of that uneasy time. Imitations followed

with amazing rapidity; the stage was noisy with the clang of chivalry, and the book shelves creaked beneath the weight of resuscitated Feudal Times.

An amusing example of "the trade" is mentioned by Goethe. A bookseller paid him a visit, and with the air of a man well-satisfied with his proposal, offered to give an *order* for a dozen plays in the style of *Götz*, for which a handsome *honorarium* should be paid. His offer was the more generous, because such was the state of literature at this period, that, in spite of the success *Götz* achieved, it brought no money to its author—pirated editions circulating everywhere, and robbing him of his reward. Moreover, what the bookseller proposed was what the public expected. When once a writer has achieved success in any direction, he must continue in that direction, or peril his reputation. An opinion has been formed of him; he has been *classed;* and the public will not have its classification disturbed. Nevertheless, if he repeat himself, this unreasoning public declaims against his "poverty." No man ever repeated himself less than Goethe. He did not model a statue, and then amuse himself with taking casts of it in different materials. He lived, thought, and suffered; and because he had lived, thought, and suffered, he wrote. When he had once expressed his experience in a work, he never recurred to it. The true artist, like the snake, casts his skin, but never resumes it. He works according to the impulse from within, not according to the demand from without. And Goethe was a genuine artist, never exhausting a lucky discovery, never working an impoverished vein. Every poem came fresh from life, coined from the mint of his experience

Götz is the greatest product of the *Sturm und Drang* movement. As we before hinted, this period is not simply one of vague wild hopes and retrospections of old German life, it is also one of unhealthy sentimentalism. Goethe, the great representative poet of his day—the secretary of his age—gives us masterpieces which characterise both these tendencies. Beside the insurgent Götz, stands the dreamy Werther. And yet, accurately as these two works represent two active tendencies of that time, they are both far removed above the perishing extravagances of that time; they are both *ideal* expressions of the age, and as free from the disease which corrupted it, as Goethe himself was free from the weakness of his contemporaries. Wilkes used to say that he had never been a Wilkite. Goethe was never a Werther. To appreciate

the distance which separated him and his works from his sentimental contemporaries and their works, we must study the characters of such men as Jacobi, Klinger, Wagner, and Lenz, or we must read such works as *Woldemar*. It will then be plain why Goethe turned with aversion from such works, his own included, when a few years had cleared his insight and settled his aims. Then also will be seen the difference between genius which idealises the spirit of the age, and talent which panders to it.[1]

It was, indeed, a strange epoch; the unrest was the unrest of disease, and its extravagances were morbid symptoms. In the letters, memoirs, and novels, which still remain to testify to the follies of the age, may be read a self-questioning and sentimental introspection, enough to create in healthy minds a distaste both for sentiment and self-questioning. A factitious air is carried even by the most respectable sentiments; and many *not* respectable array themselves in rose-pink. Nature is seldom spoken of but in hysterical enthusiasm. Tears and caresses are prodigally scattered, and upon the slightest provocations. In Coburg an *Order of Mercy and Expiation* is instituted by sensitive noodles. Leuchsenring, whom Goethe satirised in *Pater Brey* as a professional sentimentalist, gets up a secret society, and calls it the *Order of Sentiment*, to which tender souls think it a privilege to belong. Friendship is fantastically deified; brotherly love draws trembling souls together, not on the solid grounds of affection and mutual service, but on entirely imaginary grounds of "spiritual communion"; whence arose, as Jean Paul wittily says, "an universal love for all men and beasts—except reviewers." It was a sceptical epoch, in which everything established came into question. Marriage, of course, came badly off among a set of men who made the first commandment of genius to consist in loving your neighbour *and* your neighbour's wife.

These were symptoms of disease; the social organisation was out of order; a crisis, evidently imminent, was heralded by extravagances in literature, as elsewhere. The cause of the disease was want of faith. In religion, in philosophy, in politics, in morals, this eighteenth century was ostentatious of its disquiet and disbelief. The old faith, which for so long had made European life an organic unity, and which in its

[1] As Karl Grün epigrammatically says of Goethe and his contemporaries, "he was at once patient and physician, they were patients and nothing else."

tottering weakness had received a mortal blow from Luther, was no longer universal, living, active, dominant; its place of universal directing power was vacant; a new faith had not arisen. The French Revolution was another crisis of that organic disturbance which had previously shown itself in another order of ideas,—in the Reformation. Beside this awful crisis, other minor crises are noticeable. Everywhere the same P otestant spirit breaks through traditions in morals, in literature, and in education. Whatever is established, whatever rests on tradition, is questioned. The classics are no longer believed in; men begin to maintain the doctrine of progress, and proclaim the superiority of the moderns. Art is pronounced to be in its nature progressive. Education is no longer permitted to pursue its broad traditional path; the methods which were excellent for the past, no longer suffice for the present; everywhere new methods rise up to ameliorate the old. The divine right of institutions ceases to gain credence. The individual claimed and proclaimed his freedom: freedom of thought and freedom of act. Freedom is the watchword of the eighteenth century.

Enough has been said to indicate the temper of those times, and to show why *Werther* was the expression of that temper. Turning to the novel itself, we find it so bound up with the life of its author, that the history of his life at this epoch is the record of the materials from which it was created; we must, therefore, retrace our steps again to the point where Goethe left Wetzlar, and, by the aid of his letters to Kestner, follow the development of this strange romance.

Götz was published in the summer of 1773. It was in the autumn of 1772 that Goethe left Wetzlar, and returned home. His letters to Kestner and Charlotte are full of passionate avowals and tender reminiscences. The capricious orthography and grammar to be noticed in them, belong to a period when it was thought unworthy of a genius to conform to details so fastidious as correct spelling and good grammar; but the affectionate nature which warms these letters, the abundant love the writer felt and inspired, these belong to him, and not to his age. If a proof were wanted of Goethe's loving disposition, we might refer to these letters, especially those addressed to the young brother of Charlotte. The reader of this biography, however, will need no such proof, and we may therefore confine ourselves to the relation of Goethe to the Kestners. "God bless you, dear Kestner,"

runs one of the early letters, "and tell Lotte that I often believe I can forget her; but then I have a relapse, and it is worse with me than ever." He longs once more to be sitting at her feet, letting the children clamber over him. He writes in a strain of melancholy, which is as much poetry as sorrow: when a thought of suicide arises, it is only one among the many thoughts which hurry through his mind. There is a very significant passage in the *Autobiography*, which aptly describes his real state of mind: "I had a large collection of weapons, and among them a very handsome dagger. This I placed by my bedside every night, and before extinguishing my candle I made various attempts to pierce the sharp point a couple of inches into my breast; but not being able to do it I laughed myself out of the notion, threw aside all hypochondriacal fancies, and resolved to live." He played with suicidal thoughts, because he was restless, and suicide was a fashionable speculation of the day; but whoever supposes these thoughts of suicide were serious, has greatly misunderstood him. He had them not, even at this period; and when he wrote *Werther* he had long thrown off even the faint temptation of poetic longings for death. In October 1772 the report reaches him that his Wetzlar friend, Goué, has shot himself: "Write to me at once about Goué," he says to Kestner; "*I honour such an act, and pity mankind*, and let all the Philisters make their tobacco-smoke comments on it and say: There, you see! Nevertheless, I hope never to make my friends unhappy by such an act, myself." He was too full of life to do more than coquette with the idea of death. Here is a confession: "I went to Homburg, and there gained new love of life, seeing how much pleasure the appearance of a miserable thing like me can give such excellent people." On the 7th of November he suddenly appeared in Wetzlar with Schlosser, and stayed there till the 10th, in a feverish, but delicious, enthusiasm. He writes to Kestner on reaching home: "It was assuredly high time for me to go. Yesterday evening I had thoroughly criminal thoughts as on the sofa. . . . And when I think how above all my hopes your greeting of me was, I am very calm. I confess I came with some anxiety. I came with a pure, warm, full heart, dear Kestner, and it is a hell-pain when one is not received in the same spirit as one brings. But so—God give you a whole life such as those two days were to me!"

The report of Goué's suicide, before alluded to, turned out

to be false; but the suicide of Jerusalem was a melancholy fact. Goethe immediately writes to Kestner:

"Unhappy Jerusalem! The news was shocking, and unexpected; it was horrible to have this news as an accompaniment to the pleasantest gift of love. The unfortunate man! But the devil, that is, the infamous men who enjoy nothing but the chaff of vanity, and have the lust of idolatry in their hearts, and preach idolatry, and cramp healthy nature, and overstrain and ruin the faculties, are guilty of this misery, of our misery. If the cursed parson is not guilty, God forgive me that I wish he may break his neck like Eli. The poor young man! When I came back from a walk, and he met me in the moonlight, I said to myself, he is in love. Lotte must still remember that I laughed about it. God knows, loneliness undermined his heart, and for seven years[1] his form has been familiar to me. I have talked little with him. When I came away, I brought with me a book of his; I will keep that and the remembrance of him as long as I live."

Among the many inaccuracies of the *Autobiography*, there is one of consequence on the subject of *Werther*, namely, the assertion that it was the news of Jerusalem's suicide which suddenly set him to work. The news reached him in October 1772, and in November Kestner sent him the narrative of Jerusalem's last days. Not until the middle and end of 1773 did he write *Werther*. In fact, the state of his mind at this period is by no means such as the *Autobiography* describes. Read this letter written in December: "That is wonderful! I was about to ask if Lenchen[2] had arrived, and you write to tell me she is. If I were only there I would nullify your discourse, and astonish all the tailors; I think I should be fonder of her than of Lotte. From the portrait she must be an amiable girl, much better than Lotte, if not precisely the . . . *And I am free and thirsting for love.* I must try and come; yet that would not help me. Here am I once more in Frankfurt, and carry plans and fancies about with me, which I should not do if I had but a maiden." In January he seems to have found a maiden, for he writes: "Tell Lotte there is a certain maiden here whom I love heartily, and whom I would choose before all others if I had any thought of marriage, and she also was born on the 11th January.[3] It would be pretty: such a pair! Who knows what God's will is?" I agree with Viehoff

[1] This "seven years" refers to the first sight of Jerusalem at Leipsic.
[2] A sister of Charlotte's.
[3] Lotte's birthday.

against Düntzer, that this alludes to Anna Antoinette Gerock, a relation of Schlosser's, who is known to have loved him passionately, and to have furnished some traits for Mignon. Clear it is that he is not very melancholy. "Yesterday I skated from sunrise to sunset. And I have other sources of joy which I can't relate. Be comforted that I am almost as happy as people who love, like you two, that I am as full of hope, and that I have lately *felt* some poems. My sister greets you, my maiden also greets you, my gods greet you." Thus we see, that, although Lotte's picture hangs by his bedside, although her image hovers constantly before him, and the *Teutsche Haus* is the centre of many yearning thoughts, he is not pining despondently for Charlotte. He has rewritten *Götz*, and allowed Merck to carry it to the printer's. He is living in a very merry circle, one figure in which is Antoinette Gerock, as we gather from a letter written in February 1773, a month after that in which he refers to his "maiden." Here is the passage: "At Easter I will send you a quite adventurous novelty.[1] My maiden greets Lotte. In character she has much of Lenchen, and my sister says resembles her portrait. If we were but as much in love as you two—meanwhile I will call her my 'dear little wife,' for recently she fell to me in a lottery as my wife." She was then only fifteen, and their relation to each other will be described in chap. vi.

And now the day approaches when Lotte is to be married and leave Wetzlar. He writes to her brother Hans, begging him, when Lotte departs, to write at least once a week, that the connection with the *Teutsche Haus* may not be broken, although its jewel is carried away. He writes to Kestner to be allowed to get the wedding ring. "I am wholly yours, but from henceforth care not to see you nor Lotte. Her portrait too shall away from my bedroom the day of her marriage, and shall not be restored till I hear she is a mother; and from that moment a new epoch begins, in which I shall not love her but her children, a little indeed on her account, but that's nothing to do with it; and if you ask me to be godfather, my spirit shall rest upon the boy, and he shall make a fool of himself for a maiden like his mother." Enclosed was this note to Lotte: "May my memory with this ring for ever remain with you in your happiness. Dear Lotte, some time hence we shall see each other again, you with this ring on your

[1] *Götz.*