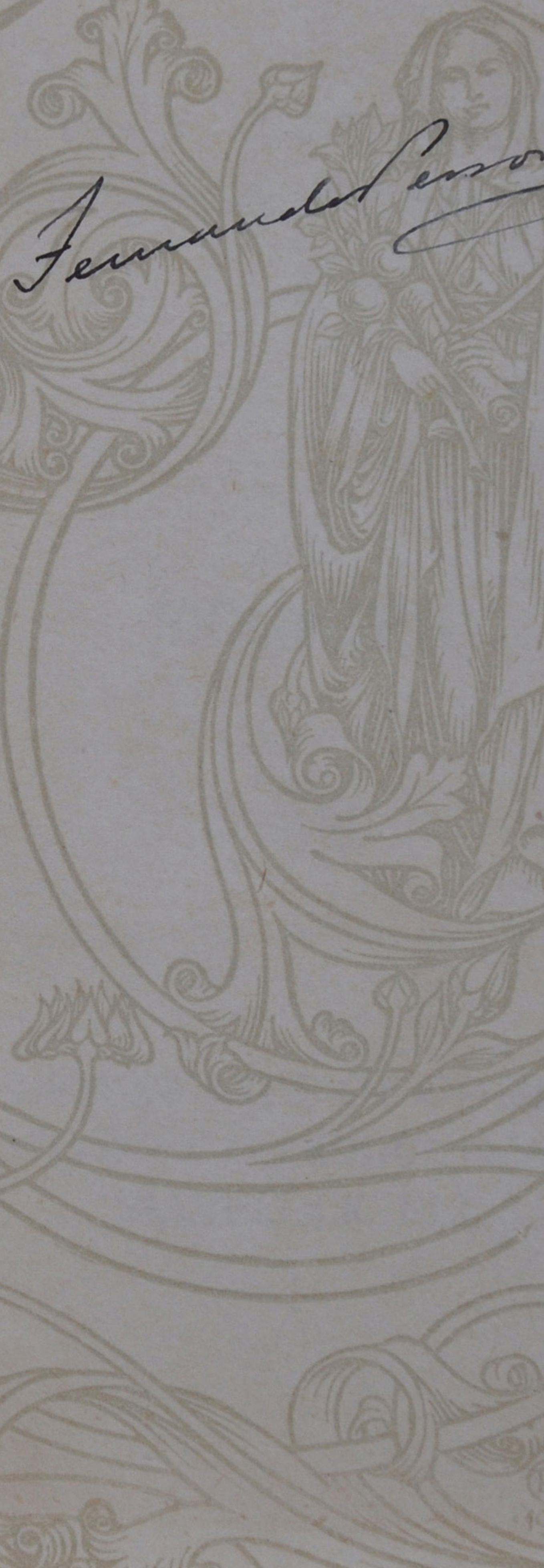
THE ONLY
ENGLISH LIBRARY
ESTABLISHED 1855
M. LEWTAS & TABOADA
138. Rua do Arsenal. 144
LISBOA

EVERYMAN,
I WILL GO WITH
THEE.
& BE THY GVIDE
IN THY MOST NEED
TO GO BY THY SIDE

350



Fernando Lesson.

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

THE BOOK OF GOOD MANNERS

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

MACMILLAN & CO.
AND IN NEW YORK
THE CAMBRIDGE PRESS
LONDON: PUBLISHED

GENESIS

CORRECTED TEXT

SOLUTIONS

THE FILES

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 For a long time it was the popular biography even in Germany, where now, however, it has been superseded by Bielschowsky's *Goethe*, a valuable work undoubtedly, though written by a less skilful hand.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

CHAPTER II

THE PRECOCIOUS CHILD

CHAPTER III

EARLY EXPERIENCES

CHAPTER IV

VARIOUS STUDIES

CHAPTER V

THE CHILD IS FATHER TO THE MAN

BOOK THE SECOND

1765–1771

CHAPTER I

THE LEIPSIC STUDENT

CHAPTER II

MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

CHAPTER III

ART STUDIES

CHAPTER IV

RETURN HOME

CHAPTER V

STRASBURG

CHAPTER VI

HERDER AND FREDERIKA

BOOK THE THIRD

1771–1775

CHAPTER I

DR. GOETHE'S RETURN

CHAPTER II

GÖTZ VON BERLICHINGEN

CHAPTER III

WETZLAR

CHAPTER IV

PREPARATIONS FOR WERTHER

CHAPTER V

WERTHER

CHAPTER VI

THE LITERARY LION

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST WILD WEEKS AT WEIMAR

CHAPTER IV

THE FRAU VON STEIN

CHAPTER V

PRIVATE THEATRICALS

CHAPTER VI

MANY-COLOURED THREADS

CHAPTER VII

THE REAL PHILANTHROPIST

BOOK THE FIFTH

1779–1793

CHAPTER

NEW BIRTH

CHAPTER II

IPHIGENIA

CHAPTER III

PROGRESS

CHAPTER IV

PREPARATIONS FOR ITALY

CHAPTER V

ITALY

CHAPTER VI

EGMONT AND TASSO

CHAPTER VII

RETURN HOME

CHAPTER VIII

CHRISTIANE VULPIUS

CHAPTER IX

THE POET AS A MAN OF SCIENCE

CHAPTER X

THE CAMPAIGN IN FRANCE

BOOK THE SIXTH

1794–1805

CHAPTER I

GOETHE AND SCHILLER

CHAPTER II

WILHELM MEISTER

CHAPTER III

THE ROMANTIC SCHOOL

CHAPTER IV

HERMANN AND DOROTHEA

CHAPTER V

THE THEATRICAL MANAGER

CHAPTER VI

SCHILLER'S LAST YEARS

CHAPTER VII

FAUST

CHAPTER VIII

THE LYRICAL POEMS

BOOK THE SEVENTH

1805–1832

CHAPTER I

THE BATTLE OF JENA

CHAPTER II

GOETHE'S WIFE

CHAPTER III

BETTINA AND NAPOLEON

CHAPTER IV

ELECTIVE AFFINITIES

CHAPTER V

POLITICS AND RELIGION

CHAPTER VI

THE ACTIVITY OF AGE

CHAPTER VII

SECOND PART OF FAUST

CHAPTER VIII

THE CLOSING SCENES

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 noble-men, 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 appreciation, 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."