finger, and I as always thine. I know no name or bye-name to sign this with. You know me." When the marriage takes place he writes to Kestner: "God bless you; you have surprised me. I had meant to make a holy sepulchre on Good Friday, and bury Lotte's portrait. But it hangs still by my bed, and shall remain there till I die. Be happy. Greet for me your angel, and Lenchen; she shall be the second Lotte, and it shall be as well with her. I wander in the desert where no water is, my hair is my shade, and my blood my spring." The bridesmaid brings him the bridal bouquet, a flower of which he sticks in his hat, as he walks to Darmstadt, in a melancholy mood; but to show that his passion for Charlotte was after all only a poetic passion, here is a passage in the letter he sent to Kestner immediately after the marriage: "O Kestner, when have I envied you Lotte in the human sense? for not to envy you her in the spiritual sense I must be an angel without lungs and liver. Nevertheless I must disclose a secret to you. That you may know and behold. When I attached myself to Lotte, and you know that I was attached to her from my heart, Born talked to me about it, *as people are wont to talk*. 'If I were K. I should not like it. How can it end? You quite cut him out!' and the like. Then I said to him in these very words, in his room, it was in the morning: 'The fact is, I am fool enough to think the girl something remarkable; if she deceived me, and turned out to be as girls usually are, and used K. as capital in order to make the most of her charms, the first moment which discovered that to me, the first moment which brought her nearer to me, would be the last of our acquaintance,' and this I protested and swore. And between ourselves, without boasting, I understand the maiden somewhat, and you know how I have felt for her and for everything she has seen and touched, and wherever she has been, and shall continue to feel to the end of the world. And now see how far I am envious, and must be so. For either I am a fool, which it is difficult to believe, or she is the subtlest deceiver, or then—Lotte, the very Lotte of whom we are speaking." A few days afterwards he writes: "My poor existence is petrified to barren rock. This summer I lose all. Merck goes. My sister too. And I am alone."

The marriage of Cornelia, his much-loved sister, was to him a very serious matter, and her loss was not easily supplied. It came, too, at a time when other losses pained him. Lotte was married, Merck was away, and a dear friend had just died.

Nevertheless, he seems to have been active in plans. Among them was most probably that of a drama on *Mahomet*, which he erroneously places at a later period, after the journeys with Lavater and Basedow, but which Schäfer, very properly, restores to the year 1773, as Boie's *Annual* for 1774 contains the *Mahomet's Song*. Goethe has narrated in full the conception of this piece, which is very grand; he tells us the idea arose within him of illustrating the sad fact, noticeable in the biographies of genius, that every man who attempts to realise a great idea comes in contact with the lower world, and must place himself on its level in order to influence it, and thus compromises his higher aims, and finally forfeits them. He chose Mahomet as the illustration, never having regarded him as an impostor. He had carefully studied the Koran and Mahomet's life, in preparation. "The piece," he says, "opened with a hymn sung by Mahomet alone under the open sky. He first adores the innumerable stars as so many gods; but as the star god (Jupiter) rises, he offers to him, as the king of the stars, exclusive adoration. Soon after, the moon ascends the horizon, and claims the eye and heart of the worshipper, who, refreshed and strengthened by the dawning sun, is afterwards stimulated to new praises. But these changes, however delightful, are still unsatisfactory, and the mind feels that it must rise still higher, and mounts therefore to God, the One Eternal, Infinite, to whom all these splendid but finite creatures owe their existence. I composed this hymn with great delight; it is now lost, but might easily be restored as a cantata, and is adapted for music by the variety of its expression. It would, however, be necessary to imagine it sung according to the original plan, by the leader of a caravan with his family and tribe; and thus the alternation of the voices and the strength of the chorus would be secured.

"Mahomet converted, imparts these feelings and sentiments to his friends; his wife and Ali become unconditional disciples. In the second act, he attempts to propagate this faith in the tribe; Ali still more zealously. Assent and opposition display themselves according to the variety of character. The contest begins, the strife becomes violent, and Mahomet flies. In the third act, he defeats his enemies, makes his religion the public one, and purifies the Kaaba from idols; but this being impracticable by force, he is obliged to resort to cunning. *What in his character is earthly increases and develops itself; the divine retires and is obscured.* In the fourth act, Mahomet

pursues his conquests, his doctrine becomes a *means* rather than an *end*, all kinds of practices are employed, nor are horrors wanting. A woman, whose husband has been condemned by Mahomet, poisons him. In the fifth act he feels that he is poisoned. His great calmness, the return to himself and to his better nature, make him worthy of admiration. He purifies his doctrine, establishes his kingdom, and dies.

"This sketch long occupied my mind; for, according to my custom, I was obliged to let the conception perfect itself before I commenced the execution. All that genius, through character and intellect, can exercise over mankind, was therein to be represented, and what it gains and loses in the process. Several of the songs to be introduced in the drama, were rapidly composed; the only one remaining of them, however, is the *Mahomet's Gesang*. This was to be sung by Ali, in honour of his master, at the apex of his success, just before the change resulting from the poison." Of all his unrealised schemes, this causes me the greatest regret. In grandeur, depth, and in the opportunities for subtle psychological unravelment of the mysteries of our nature, it was a scheme peculiarly suited to his genius. How many *Clavigos* and *Stellas* would one not have given for such a poem?

Maximiliane Laroche had recently married Brentano, a Frankfurt merchant, a widower, many years her senior, with five children. Goethe became intimate at their house; and, as Merck writes, "il joue avec les enfans et accompagne le clavecin de madame avec la basse. M. Brentano, quoique assez jaloux pour un Italien, l'aime et veut absolument qu'il fréquente la maison." The husband wanted his presence, often as an umpire in the disputes with his wife; and the wife, also, chose him umpire in her disputes with her husband; nay, Merck hints, "il a la petite Madame Brentano à consoler sur l'odeur de l'huile, du fromage, et des manières de son mari." So passed autumn and winter, in a tender relation, such as in those days was thought blameless enough, but such as modern writers cannot believe to have been so blameless. For my part I cannot disbelieve his own word on this matter, when he says: "My former relation to the young wife, which was, properly speaking, only that of a brother to a sister, was resumed after marriage. Being of her own age, I was the only one in whom she heard an echo of those voices to which she had been accustomed in her youth. We lived in childish confidence; and, *although there was nothing passionate in our*

intercourse, it was painful, because she was unable to reconcile herself to her new condition." If not passionate, the relation was certainly sentimental and dangerous. Hear how he writes to Frau Jacobi: "It goes well with me, dear lady, and thanks for your double, triple letter. The last three weeks there has been nothing but excitement, and now we are as contented and happy as possible. I say *we*, for since the 15th of January not a branch of my existence has been solitary. And Fate, which I have so often vituperated, is now courteously entitled beautiful, wise Fate, for since my sister left me, this is the first gift that can be called an equivalent. The Max is still the same angel whose simple and darling qualities draw all hearts towards her, and the feeling I have for her—wherein her husband would find cause for jealousy—now makes the joy of my existence. Brentano is a worthy fellow, with a frank, strong character, and not without sense. The children are lively and good." An anecdote, related by his mother to Bettina, gives us an amusing picture of him parading before Max. The morning was bright and frosty. "Wolfgang burst into the room where his mother was seated with some friends: 'Mother, you have never seen me skate, and the weather is so beautiful to-day.' I put on my crimson fur cloak, which had a long train, and was closed in front by golden clasps, and we drove out. There skated my son, like an arrow among the groups. The wind had reddened his cheeks, and blown the powder out of his brown hair. When he saw my crimson cloak he came towards our carriage and smiled coaxingly at me. 'Well,' said I, 'what do you want?' 'Come, mother, you can't be cold in the carriage, give me your cloak.' 'You won't put it on, will you?' 'Certainly.' I took it off, he put it on, threw the train over his arm, and away he went over the ice like a son of the gods. Oh, Bettina, if you could have seen him! Anything so beautiful is not to be seen now! I clapped my hands for joy. Never shall I forget him, as he darted out from under one arch of the bridge and in again under the other, the wind carrying the train behind him as he flew! Your mother, Bettina, was on the ice, and all this was to please her."

No thought of suicide in *that* breast!

Quite in keeping with this anecdote is the spirit of the satirical farce *Götter, Helden, und Wieland*, which is alluded to in this passage of a letter to Kestner, May 1774, and must therefore have been written some time before: "My rough

joke against Wieland makes more noise than I thought. He behaves very well in the matter, as I hear, so that I am in the wrong." The origin of this farce was a strong feeling in the circle of Goethe's friends, that Wieland had modernised, misrepresented, and traduced the Grecian gods and heroes. One Sunday afternoon "the rage for dramatising everything" seized him, and with a bottle of Burgundy by his side he wrote off the piece just as it stands. The friends were in raptures with it. He sent it to Lenz, then at Strasburg, who insisted on its at once being printed. After some demurring, consent was given, and at Strasburg the work saw the light. In reading it, the public, unacquainted with the circumstances and the mood to which it owed its origin, unacquainted also with the fact of its never having been designed for publication, felt somewhat scandalised at its fierceness of sarcasm. But in truth there was no malice in it. Flushed with the insolence and pride of wit, he attacked a poet whom, on the whole, he greatly loved; and Wieland took no offence at it, but reviewed it in the *Teutsche Mercur*, recommending it to all lovers of pasquinade, *persiflage*, and sarcastic wit. This reminds one of Socrates standing up in the theatre, when he was lampooned by Aristophanes, that the spectators might behold the original of the sophist they were hooting on the stage. *Götter, Helden, und Wieland* is really amusing, and under the mask of its buffoonery contains some sound and acute criticism.[1] The peculiarity of it, however, consists in its attacking Wieland for treating heroes unheroically, at a time when, from various parts of Germany, loud voices were raised against Wieland, as an immoral, an unchristian, nay, even an atheistical writer. Lavater called upon Christians to pray for this sinner; theologians forbade their followers to read his works; pulpits were loud against him. In 1773 the whole Klopstock school rose against him[2] in moral indignation, and burned his works on Klopstock's birthday. Very different was Goethe's ire. He saw that the gods and heroes were represented in perruques and satin breeches, that their cheeks were rouged, their thews and sinews shrunk to those of a *petit-maître;* and against such a conception of the old Pagan life he raised his voice.

"I cannot blame you," he writes to Kestner, "for living in the world and making acquaintances amongst men of rank

[1] It called forth a retort, *Thiere, Menschen, und Goethe;* which has not fallen in my way. Critics speak of it as personal, but worthless.

[2] *Gervinus*, iv. p. 285.

and influence. Intercourse with the great is always advantageous to him who knows properly how to use it. I honour gunpowder, if only for its power of bringing me a bird down out of the air. . . . So in God's name continue, and don't trouble yourself about the opinions of others, shut your heart to antagonists as to flatterers. . . . O Kestner, I am in excellent spirits, and if I have not you by my side, yet all the dear ones are ever before me. The circle of noble natures is the highest happiness I have yet achieved. And now, my dear *Götz*, I trust in his strong nature, he will endure. He is a human offspring with many sins, and nevertheless one of the best. Many will object to his clothing and rough angles; yet I have so much applause that it astonishes me. I don't think I shall soon write anything which will again find its public. Meanwhile I work on, in the hope that something striking in the whirl of things may be laid hold of."

On Christmas Day 1773, in answer to Kestner's wish that he should come to Hanover and play a part there, he writes this noticeable sentence: "My father would not object to my entering foreign service, and no hope or desire of an office detains me here—but, dear Kestner, *the talents and powers which I have, I need too much for my own aims; I am accustomed to act according to my instinct, and therewith can no prince be served.*" In less than two years he was to accept service under a prince; but we shall see that he did so with full consciousness of what was required, and of what he could afford to give.

The mention of that prince leads me to make an important correction in the date of the first acquaintance with him, erroneously placed in the December of 1774 by Goethe. It is useless to inquire how Goethe's memory could so have deceived him as to bring this important event in conjunction with his first acquaintance with Lili; the dates of the Knebel correspondence are beyond question. On the 11th February Knebel paid him a visit, and informed him that the two princes, Karl August and Constantine, were desirous of seeing him. He went, and was received with flattering kindness, especially by Karl August, who had just read *Götz*. He dined with his royal hosts in a quiet way, and left them, having received and produced an agreeable impression. They were going to Mainz, whither he promised to follow them. His father, like a sturdy old burgher who held aloof from princes, shook his sceptical head at the idea of this visit. To

Mainz, however, the poet went a day or two afterwards, and spent several days with the young princes, as their guest. This was his first contact with men of high rank.

In the following May he hears with joy that Lotte is a mother, and that her boy is to be called Wolfgang, after him; and on the 16th of June he writes to Lotte: "I will soon send you a friend who has much resemblance to me, and hope you will receive him well; he is named Werther, and is and was—but that he must himself explain."

Whoever has followed the history thus far, moving on the secure ground of contemporary document, will see how vague and inaccurate is the account of the composition of *Werther* given by its author, in his retrospective narrative. It was not originated by growing despair at the loss of Charlotte. It was not originated by tormenting thoughts of self-destruction. It was not to free himself from suicide that he wrote this story of suicide. All these several threads were woven into its woof; but the rigour of dates forces us to the conviction that *Werther*, although taken from his experience, was not written while that experience was being undergone. Indeed, the true philosophy of art would, *a priori*, lead us to the conviction that, although he cleared his "bosom of the perilous stuff" by moulding this perilous stuff into a work of art, he must have essentially outlived the storm before he painted it,—conquered his passion, and subdued the rebellious thoughts, before he made them plastic to his purpose. The poet cannot see to write when his eyes are full of tears; cannot sing when his breast is swollen with sighs, and sobs choke utterance. He must rise superior to his grief before he can sublimate his grief in song. The artist is a master, not a slave; he *wields* his passion, he is not hurried along by it; he possesses, and is not possessed. Art enshrines the great sadness of the world, but is itself not sad. The storm of passion weeps itself away, and the heavy clouds roll off in quiet masses, to make room for the sun, which, in shining through, touches them to beauty with its rays. While pain is in its newness, it is pain, and nothing else; it is not Art, but Feeling. Goethe could not write *Werther* before he had outlived Wertherism. It may have been, as he says, a "general confession," and a confession which brought him certain relief; but we do not confess until we have repented, and we do not repent until we have outlived the error.

Werther was written rapidly. "I completely isolated myself," he says; "nay, prohibited the visits of my friends,

and put aside everything that did not immediately belong to the subject. Under such circumstances, and under so many preparations in secret, I wrote it in four weeks, without any scheme of the whole, or treatment of any part being previously put on paper." It is of this seclusion Merck writes: "Le grand succès que son drame a eu lui tourne un peu la tête. Il se détache de tous ses amis, et n'existe que dans les compositions qu'il prépare pour le public."

It is a matter of some interest to ascertain the exact truth respecting the date of the composition of Werther. As before stated, his own account is manifestly inaccurate; and the only thing which renders it difficult to assign the dates with tolerable precision, is his statement that it was written in four weeks, without any scheme of the whole or treatment of any part having been previously put on paper. If we consent to believe that his memory in this case deceived him, the correspondence of the period furnishes hints from which we may conclude that in 1772, on the arrival of the news about Jerusalem's suicide, he made a general sketch, either in his mind or on paper; and that during the following year he worked at it from time to time. In June 1773, he writes to Kestner: "And thus I dream and ramble through life, writing plays and *novels*, and the like." In July he writes: "I am working my own situation into art for the consolation of gods and men. I know what Lotte will say when she sees it, and I know what I shall answer her." The word in the original is *Schauspiel*—play, drama; Viehoff suggests that he does not mean drama, but a work which will bring his situation *zur Schaw*—before the public eye. In September of the same year, he writes: "You are always by me when I write. At present, I am working at a novel, but it gets on slowly." In November Frau Jacobi writes to him, acknowledging the receipt of a novel, in manuscript, no doubt, which delights her. In February 1774, Merck writes of him: "Je prévois qu'un roman, qui paraîtra de lui à pâques, sera aussi bien reçu que son drame." As we have nowhere a hint of any other novel, besides Werther, at this epoch, it is difficult to resist the evidence of these dates; and we must, therefore, conclude that the assertion in the *Autobiography* is wholly inexact.

In September 1774 he wrote to Lotte, sending her a copy of *Werther:* "Lotte, how dear this little book is to me thou wilt feel in reading it, and this copy is as dear to me as if it were the only one in the world. Thou must have it, Lotte; I have

kissed it a hundred times; have kept it locked up that no one might touch it. O, Lotte! And I beg thee let no one except Meyers see it yet; it will be published at the Leipsic fair. I wish each to read it alone,—thou alone,—Kestner alone,—and each to write me a little word about it. Lotte, adieu Lotte!"

Let us now take a glance at this work, which startled Europe, and which for a long while was all that Europe knew of Goethe.[1]

CHAPTER V

WERTHER

Aujourdhui l'homme désire immensément, mais il veut faiblement: In these words Guizot has written an epigraph for *Werther;* a book composed out of a double history, the history of its author's experience, and the history of one of his friends.

The story of Jerusalem, whom he met in the Wetzlar circle, furnished Goethe with the machinery by which to introduce his own experience. He took many of the details from Kestner's long letter, sent shortly after the catastrophe: the letter may therefore be here abridged, as an introduction to the novel. Jerusalem, melancholy by temperament, was unhappy during the whole of his Wetzlar residence. He had been denied admittance into the high diplomatic society to which his position gave him claims; he had been in unpleasant relations with his ambassador, whose secretary he was; and he had fallen in love with the wife of his friend. Thus oppressed, he shunned company, was fond of long moonlight walks, and once lost himself in the wood, wandering about the whole night. But he was solitary, even in his grief, told none of his friends the causes of his melancholy, and solaced himself with novels—the wretched novels of that day. To these he added all the tragedies he could get hold of; English writers, especially the gloomy writers; and various philosophical works. He wrote also essays, one on suicide, a subject which greatly occupied him. Mendelssohn's *Phædon* was his favourite work.[2] When the rumour reached

[1] SCOTT, in prefacing his translation of *Götz*, says: "It was written by the *elegant* author of the *Sorrows of Werther*."

[2] Goethe, it will be remembered, in Strasburg, made an analysis of this work, contrasting it with Plato's.

Wetzlar of Goué's suicide he said that Goué was not a fit man for such a deed, but defended the act. A few days before his own unhappy end he was talking with Schleimitz about suicide, and said, "It would be a bad look out, however, if the shot were not to take effect!" The rest of the narrative must be told in Kestner's own words, the simple circumstantial style best fitting such a history.

"Last Tuesday he comes with a discontented look to Kielmansegge, who was ill. The latter asks how he is? 'Better than I like to be.' He also that day talked a good deal about love, which he had never done before; and then about the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, which had for some time pleased him more than usual. In the afternoon (Tuesday) he goes to Secretary H.'s. Until eight o'clock in the evening they play tarock together. Annchen Brandt was also there; Jerusalem accompanied her home. As they walk, Jerusalem often strikes his forehead, gloomily and repeatedly says: 'If one were but dead—if one were but in heaven!' Annchen joked him about it; he bargains for a place by her side in heaven, and at parting he says: 'It is agreed, then, that I shall have a place by you in heaven.'

"On Wednesday, as there were great doings at the Crown Prince, and everybody invited everybody, he went there to dinner, though he generally dined at home, and he brought Secretary H. with him. He did not behave there otherwise than usual; if anything, he was more cheerful. After dinner, Secretary H. takes him home with him to see his wife. They take coffee; Jerusalem says to Mrs. H.: 'Dear Mrs. H., this is the last coffee I shall drink with you.' She thinks it a joke, and answers in that tone. The same afternoon (Wednesday) Jerusalem was alone at H.'s: what took place there is unknown; perhaps herein lies the cause of what followed. In the evening, just as it was dark, Jerusalem comes to Garbenheim, into the usual inn, asks whether anyone is in the room above? On the answer, No, he goes up, soon comes down again, goes out into the yard, towards the left, comes back after a little while, goes into the garden; it becomes quite dark, he remains there a long time, the hostess makes her remarks upon this, he comes out of the garden, goes past her with hasty steps, all without saying a word, into the yard, hurrying straight away from it.

"In the meantime, or still later, something passed between H. and his wife, concerning which H. confides to a female

friend that they quarrelled a little about Jerusalem; and his wife at last desired that he would forbid him the house, whereupon he did so the following day, in a note.

"[It is said[1] that Secretary H. has given secret information that on the Wednesday before Jerusalem's death, when he was with H. and his wife taking coffee, the husband was obliged to go to the ambassador. When he returns, he observes an extraordinary seriousness in his wife, and a silence in Jerusalem, which appear strange to him, especially as he finds them so much changed after his return. Jerusalem goes away. Secretary H. makes his observations on the above-mentioned circumstances: he contracts suspicion that something injurious to him may have happened in his absence; for he is very suspicious and jealous. Nevertheless, he puts on a composed and cheerful air, and determines to put his wife to the test. He says: Jerusalem has often invited him to dinner; what does she think of their asking Jerusalem for once to dine with them? She, the wife, answers: No; and she must entirely break off intercourse with Jerusalem; he begins to behave in such a way that she must altogether avoid his society. And she held herself bound to tell him, her husband, what had passed in his absence. Jerusalem had thrown himself at her feet, and had wanted to make a formal declaration of love to her. She was naturally indignant at this, and had uttered many reproaches to him, &c. She now desired that her husband would forbid him, Jerusalem, the house, for she could and would neither see nor hear anything more of him.

"Hereupon, it is said, H. the next morning wrote the note to Jerusalem, &c.]

"In the night of Wednesday-Thursday he got up at two o'clock, awakened the servant, said he could not sleep, he was not well, has a fire lighted, tea made, yet is afterwards, to all appearance, very well.

"Thursday morning, Secretary H. sends Jerusalem a note. The maid will not wait for an answer, and goes away. Jerusalem has just been shaved. At eleven o'clock Jerusalem sends a note to Secretary H., who does not take it from the servant, and says he requires no answer, he cannot enter into any correspondence, and besides they saw each other every day at the office. When the servant brings back the note unopened, Jerusalem throws it on the table and says: Very

[1] The passage in brackets occurs in a subsequent letter; it is inserted here to give the story continuity.

good. (Perhaps to make the servant believe that it related to some indifferent matter.)

"In the middle of the day he dines at home, but takes little —some soup. At one o'clock he sends a note to me, and at the same time one to his ambassador, in which he begs the latter to send him his money for this (or the following) month. The servant comes to me. I am not at home, nor is my servant. Jerusalem in the meantime is gone out, comes home about a quarter-past three, the servant gives him the note again. Jerusalem asks him why he did not leave it at my house with some maid-servant? He replies, because it was open and unsealed. Jerusalem: That was of no consequence, every one might read it; he must take it again. The servant thinks himself hereby warranted to read it also, reads it, and then sends it by a boy who waits in the house. I, in the meantime, had come home; it might be half-past three when I received the following note: 'Might I beg of you to lend me your pistols for a journey which I am about to take?—J.'[1] As I knew nothing of all this that I have told you, or of his principles, having never had any particular intercourse with him, I had not the least hesitation in sending him the pistols.

"The servant had read in the note that his master intended to make a journey, and indeed the latter had himself told him so, also had ordered everything for his journey the next morning at six o'clock, even the *friseur*, without his (the servant's) knowing whither, or with whom, or in what way. But as Jerusalem always kept his engagements secret from him, this did not arouse his suspicion. Nevertheless he thought to himself: 'Is master perhaps going secretly to Brunswick, leaving me here alone?' &c. He had to take the pistols to a gunmaker's to get them loaded.

"The whole afternoon Jerusalem was busy alone; rummaged among his papers, wrote, walked, as the people below in the house heard, rapidly up and down the room. He also went out several times, and paid his small debts; he had taken a pair of ruffles, he said to the servant; they did not satisfy him, he must return them to the tradesman; if he did not like to take them again, there was the money for them, which in fact the tradesman preferred.

"About seven o'clock the Italian master came to him. He

[1] "*Dürfe ich Ew. Wohlgeb. wohl zu einer vorhabenden Reise um ihre Pistolen gehorsamst ersuchen?*" The German epistolary forms of civility are not translatable.

found him restless and out of humour. He complained that he had his hypochondriasis again strongly, and about various things; said also, that the best he could do would be to take himself out of the world. The Italian urged upon him very seriously that such passions must be repressed by philosophy, &c. Jerusalem: That is not so easily done; he would rather be alone to-day, he might leave him, &c. The Italian: He must go into society, amuse himself, &c. Jerusalem: Well, he was going out again. The Italian, seeing the pistols on the table, is anxious about the result, goes away at eight o'clock and to Kielmansegge, to whom he talks of nothing but Jerusalem, his restlessness and discontent, without however mentioning his anxiety, because he believed that he might be laughed at for it.

"The servant went to Jerusalem to take off his boots. But he said, he was going out again; as he really did, before the Silberthor on the Starke Weide and elsewhere in the streets, where, with his hat pressed over his eyes, he rushed by several persons, with rapid steps, without seeing any one. He was also seen about this time standing a long time by the river, in a position as if he meant to throw himself in (so they say).

"Before nine o'clock he comes home, says to the servant that there must be more fuel put in the stove, because he shall not go to bed yet, also tells him to get everything ready for six o'clock in the morning, and has a pint of wine brought to him. The servant, that he may be ready very early, because his master was always very punctual, goes to bed in his clothes.

"As soon as Jerusalem was alone, he seems to have prepared everything for the dreadful deed. He tore up his correspondence and threw it under the table, as I have myself seen. He wrote two letters, one to his relations, the other to H.; it is thought also that he wrote one to the ambassador Höffler, which the latter perhaps suppresses. They lay on the writing-table. The first, which the medical man saw the next morning, contained in substance only what follows, as Dr. Held, who read it, related to me:

"'Dear father, dear mother, dear sisters and brother-in-law, forgive your unhappy son and brother; God, God bless you!'

"In the second, he entreated H. for forgiveness that he had disturbed the peace and happiness of his married life, and created dissension between this dear couple, &c. At first his inclination for H.'s wife had been only virtuous, &c. It is said to have been three sheets long, and to have ended

thus:—'One o'clock. In the other life we shall see each other again.' (In all probability he shot himself immediately on finishing this letter.)"

The sensation produced in Wetzlar by this suicide was immense. People who had scarcely seen Jerusalem were unable to quiet their agitation; many could not sleep; the women especially felt the deepest interest in the fate of this unhappy youth; and *Werther* found a public ready for it.

With these materials in hand, let us take up the novel to see how Goethe employs them. Werther is a man who, not having yet learned self-mastery, imagines that his immense desires are proofs of immense superiority: one of those of whom it has been wittily said that they fancy themselves great painters because they paint with a big brush. He laughs at all rules, whether they be rules of Art, or rules which Convention builds like walls around our daily life. He hates order—in speech, in writing, in costume, in office. In a word, he hates all control. Gervinus remarks that he turns from men to children because they do not pain him, and from them to Nature because she does not contradict him; from truth to poetry, and in poetry from the clear world of Homer to the formless world of Ossian. Very characteristic of the epoch is the boundless enthusiasm inspired by Ossian, whose rhetorical trash the Germans hailed as the finest expression of *Nature's* poetry. Old Samuel Johnson's stern, clear sense saw into the very heart of this subject when he said, "Sir, a man might write such stuff for ever if he would but *abandon* his mind to it." It is abandonment of the mind, throwing the reins on the horse's neck, which makes such writing possible; and it was precisely this abandonment to impulse, this disregard of the grave remonstrances of reason and good sense, which distinguished the Werther epoch.

Werther is not Goethe. Werther perishes because he is wretched, and is wretched because he is so weak. Goethe was "king over himself." He saw the danger, and evaded it; tore himself away from the woman he loved, instead of continuing in a dangerous position. Yet although Werther is not Goethe, there is one part of Goethe living in Werther. This is visible in the incidents and language as well as in the character. It is the part we see reappearing under the various masks of Weislingen, Clavigo, Faust, Fernando, Edward, Meister, and Tasso, which no critic will call the same lay figure variously draped, but which every critic must see belong

to one and the same genus: men of strong desires and weak volitions, wavering impressionable natures unable to attain self-mastery. Goethe was one of those who are wavering because impressionable, but whose wavering is not weakness; they oscillate, but they return into the direct path which their wills have prescribed. He was tender as well as impressionable. He could not be stern, but he could be resolute. He had only therefore, in imagination, to keep in abeyance the native force of resolution which gave him mastery, and in that abeyance a weak wavering character stood before him, the original of which was himself.

When a man delineates himself, he always shrinks from a complete confession. Our moral nature has its modesty. Strong as the impulse may be to drag into light that which lies hidden in the recesses of the soul, pleased as we may be to create images of ourselves, we involuntarily keep back something, and refuse to identify ourselves with the creation. There are few things more irritating than the pretension of another to completely understand us. Hence authors never thoroughly portray themselves. Byron, utterly without self-command, is fond of heroes proud and self-containing. Goethe, the strongest of men, makes heroes the footballs of circumstance. But he also draws from his other half the calm, self-sustaining characters. Thus we have the antithesis of Götz and Weislingen—Albert and Werther—Carlos and Clavigo—Jarno and Meister—Antonio and Tasso—the Captain and Edward; and deepened in colouring, Mephistopheles and Faust.

Werther is not much read nowadays, especially in England, where it labours under the double disadvantage of a bad name and an execrable translation. Yet it is well worth reading in the original, where it will be found very unlike the notion of it current among us. I remember many years ago reading it in the execrable English version with astonishment and contempt; this contempt remained, until accidentally falling in with a Spanish translation, the exquisite beauty of the pictures changed my feeling into admiration, and Goethe's own wonderful prose afterwards fixed that admiration for ever. It is a masterpiece of style; we may look through German literature in vain for such clear sunny pictures, fulness of life, and delicately managed simplicity. Its style is one continuous strain of music, which, restrained within the limits of prose, fulfils all the conditions of poetry; dulcet as the sound of falling waters, and as full of sweet melancholy as an autumnal eve.

Nothing can be simpler than the structure of this book, wherein, as M. Marmier well remarks,[1] every detail is so arranged as to lay bare the sufferings of a diseased spirit. Werther arrives at his chosen retreat, believing himself cured, and anticipating perfect happiness. He is painter and poet. The fresh spring mornings, the sweet cool evenings, soothe and strengthen him. He selects a place under the limes to read and dream away the hours. There he brings his pencil and his Homer. Everything interests him—the old woman who brings his coffee, the children who play around him, the story of a poor family. In this serene convalescence he meets with Charlotte, and a new passion agitates his soul. His simple uniform existence becomes changed. He endeavours by bodily activity to charm away his desires. The days no longer resemble each other: now ecstatic with hope, now crushed with despair. Winter comes: cold, sad, gloomy. He must away. He departs, and mingles with the world, but the world disgusts him. The monotony and emptiness of official life are intolerable to his pretensions; the parchment pride of the noblesse is insulting to his sense of superiority. He returns to the peaceful scene of his former contentment, and finds indeed Charlotte, the children, his favourite woods and walks, but not the calmness which he seeks. The hopelessness of his position overwhelms him. Disgusted with the world—unsatisfied in his cravings—he dies by his own hand.

Rosenkrantz—in the true spirit of that criticism which seeks everywhere for meanings more recondite than the author dreamt of—thinks that Goethe exhibits great art in making Werther a diplomatist, because a diplomatist is a man of *shams* (*scheinthuer*); but the truth is, Goethe made him precisely what he found him. His art is truth. He is so great an artist that the simplest realities have to him significance. Charlotte cutting bread and butter for the children—the scene of the ball—the children clinging round Werther for sugar, and pictures of that kind, betray so little inventive power, that they have excited the ridicule of some English critics to whom poetry is a thing of pomp, not the beautiful vesture of reality. The beauty and art of *Werther* is not in the incidents (a Dumas would shrug despairing shoulders over such invention), but in the representation. What *is* Art but Representation?[2]

[1] *Etudes sur Goethe*, p. 11.

[2] "*L'art n'est qu'une forme*," says George Sand, with a truth few critics

The effect of *Werther* was prodigious. "That nameless unrest," says Carlyle, "the blind struggle of a soul in bondage, that high, sad, longing discontent which was agitating every bosom, had driven Goethe almost to despair. All felt it; he alone could give it voice. And here lies the secret of his popularity; in his deep, susceptive heart he felt a thousand times more keenly what every one was feeling; with the creative gift which belonged to him as a poet, he bodied it forth into visible shape, gave it a local habitation and a name; and so made himself the spokesman of his generation. *Werther* is but the cry of that dim, rooted pain under which all thoughtful men of a certain age were languishing: it paints the misery, it passionately utters the complaint; and heart and voice all over Europe loudly and at once respond to it. True it prescribes no remedy; for that was a far different, far harder enterprise, to which other years and a higher culture were required; but even this utterance of pain, even this little, for the present is grasped at, and with eager sympathy appropriated in every bosom. If Byron's life weariness, his moody melancholy, and mad, stormful indignation, borne on the tones of a wild, and quite artless melody, could pierce so deep into many a British heart, now that the whole matter is no longer new—is indeed old and trite—we may judge with what vehement acceptance this *Werther* must have been welcomed, coming, as it did, like a voice from the unknown regions; the first thrilling peal of that impassioned dirge which, in country after country, men's ears have listened to till they were deaf to all else. For *Werther*, infusing itself into the core and whole spirit of literature, gave birth to a race of sentimentalists who have raged and wailed in every part of the world, till the better light dawned on them, or, at worst, exhausted nature laid herself to sleep, and it was discovered that lamenting was unproductive labour. These funereal choristers, in Germany, a loud, haggard, tumultuous, as well as tearful class, were named the *Kraftmänner*, or Powermen; but have long since, like sick children, cried themselves to rest."[1]

Perhaps there never was a fiction which so startled and enraptured the world. Men of all kinds and classes were moved by it. It was the companion of Napoleon, when in

have penetrated; let me add Goethe's own opinion—surely of weight in such matters: "None will comprehend the simple truth that the highest, the only operation of art is representation" (*Gestaltung*).

[1] *Miscellanies*, vol. i. p. 272.

Egypt; it penetrated into China. To convey in a sentence its wondrous popularity, we may state that in Germany it became a people's book, hawked about the streets, printed on miserable paper, like an ancient ballad; and in the Chinese empire, Charlotte and Werther were modelled in porcelain.[1]

Objectors of course there were. Lessing, for example, who neither suffered from the disease of the epoch, nor tolerated any approach to sentimentality, thought so fiery a production ought to have a cold epilogue to counteract it. "Do you believe," he wrote, "that any Roman or Grecian youth would *thus* and *therefore* have committed suicide? Certainly not. They knew how to guard themselves from the extravagancies of love, and in the days of Socrates such an ἐξ ἔρωτος κατοχὴ whom τι τολμᾷν παρὰ φύσιν impelled, would scarcely be pardoned even by a girl. Such little-great questionable originals only suit our Christian culture, which knows so well how to transform a corporeal necessity into a spiritual perfection. So, worthy Goethe, let us have a concluding chapter; and the more cynical the better."[2] This is a misstatement of the

[1] While in Italy, he received a letter from a young Frenchman, who said: "Oui, Monsieur, je vous dois la meilleure action de ma vie, par conséquent, la racine de plusieurs autres, et pour moi votre livre est bon. Si j'avais le bonheur d'habiter le même pays que vous, j'irais vous embrasser, et vous dire mon secret; mais malheureusement j'en habite un où personne ne croirait au motif qui vient de me déterminer à cette démarche. Soyez satisfait, Monsieur, d'avoir pu à trois cents lieues de votre demeure ramener le cœur d'un jeune homme à l'honnêteté et à la vertu, toute une famille va être tranquille, et mon cœur jouit d'une bonne action."

Let me not forget the visit of his English admirer, who accosted him on the stairs with "You must be the author of *Werther!*" adding that he could not wait a moment longer, all he wanted to say was this: "I will not repeat what you must have heard from thousands, for indeed your work has not affected me so much as it has others; but when I think what it required to write such a book, I am lost in astonishment." Having eased his mind of this weight, he wished Goethe a hearty farewell, and ran down stairs.

A similar story is told by Schiller in a letter to Körner. "A shrivelled figure entered my room, and asked me if I was not Councillor Schiller. I replied in the affirmative. 'I heard that you were here, and could not restrain myself from seeing the author of *Don Carlos.*' '*Gehorsamer Diener!* your most obedient servant,' said I; 'whom have I the honour of addressing?' 'I have not the happiness of being known to you. My name is Vulpius.' 'I am indebted to you for your politeness; unluckily, I have an engagement.' 'Oh, sir, I beg you won't mention it. I am quite satisfied with having seen you.'"—*Briefwechsel*, i. p. 105.

At the risk of swelling this note to unreasonable dimensions, I must quote a passage from *Pliny's Letters*, which records a similar anecdote: "Nunquamne legisti Gaditanum quemdam Titi Livii nomine gloriaque commotum ad visendum eum ab ultimo terrarum orbe venisse, statimque ut viderat abiisse?"—*Lib.* II. *Ep.* iii.

[2] LESSING: *Werke*, x. p. 225, Letter to Eschenberg.

It is surmised that Lessing's objections to *Werther* were sharpened by his

whole question. It is not the extravagance of love which causes Werther's suicide: it is his own diseased moral nature which makes life insupportable, and which makes unhappy love the spark that fires the train. Moreover, one reads with surprise this reference to Greek and Roman life, coming from so admirable a scholar as Lessing. He forgot that Sophocles, in the *Antigone*, makes an unhappy lover commit suicide because his mistress is lost to him. He forgot, also, that the Stoics introduced the "fashion" of suicide into Rome; and in Alexandria the Epicureans established a "society for the suppression of life"—the συναποθανουμενοι — where, having exhausted every pleasure, the members assembled at a feast, the wine-cup went freely round, and in the midst of this orgie they quietly put an end to their contemptible existences:—a new variation of the conversazione, at which, instead of music and æsthetic tea, the guests were invited to supper and suicide.

The Berlin Aristarchus—Nicolai—an upright, but narrow-minded man, and a great enemy of all *schwärmerei*, wrote by way of criticism a parody called the *Joys of Young Werther*, in which sentimentalism is ridiculed:—Werther shoots himself with chicken's blood only, and marries Charlotte "and lives happy all the rest of his life."

Goethe's answer to this was "a burlesque poem called *Nicolai at Werther's Grave*, which, however, cannot be communicated." This poem has been recovered and printed by Boas.[1] It is exceedingly coarse, and not very humorous. The admirers of Werther, of course, are greatly incensed against Nicolai; but they forget that Nicolai never denied the talent of the work, he only echoed Lessing's objection to its tendency. His criticism, moreover, was but a feather in the scale against the praise which poured in from all sides.

While the public was reading the tragic story of *Werther* through fast-flowing tears, a painful sense of indignation rose in the breasts of Kestner and Charlotte at seeing themselves thus dragged into publicity, their story falsified. The narrative was in many respects too close to reality not to be very offensive in its *deviations* from reality. The figures were unmistakable; and yet they were not the real figures. The

dislike at recognising his young friend, Jerusalem, thus brought into a fiction. A letter from Weisse to Garve, quoted by APPELL, *Werther und seine Zeit*, p. 50, confirms this.

[1] *Nachträge zu Goethe's Werke*: Lief. i. p. 12.

eager public soon found out who were the principal personages, and that a real history was at the bottom of the romance; but as the whole truth could not be known, the Kestners found themselves in a very false light. They were hurt by this indiscretion of their friend; more hurt perhaps than they chose to confess; and we may read, in the following fragment of the sketch of the letter sent by Kestner on receipt of the book, the accents of an offended friend whose pride restrains the full expression of his anger:

"Your *Werther* might have given me great pleasure, since it could have reminded me of many interesting scenes and incidents. But as it is, it has in certain respects given me little edification. You know I like to speak my mind.

"It is true, you have woven something new into each person, or have fused several persons into one. So far good. But if in this interweaving and fusing you had taken counsel of your heart, you would not have so prostituted the real persons whose features you borrow. You wished to draw from nature, that your picture might be truthful; and yet you have combined so much that is contradictory, that you have missed the very mark at which you aimed. The distinguished author will revolt against this judgment, but I appeal to reality and truth itself when I pronounce that the artist has failed. The real Lotte would, in many instances, be grieved if she were like the Lotte you have there painted. I know well that it is said to be a character compounded of two, but the Mrs. H. whom you have partly inwoven was also incapable of what you attribute to your heroine. But this expenditure of fiction was not at all necessary to your end, to nature and truth, for it was without any such behaviour on the part of a woman—a behaviour which must ever be dishonourable even to a more than ordinary woman—that Jerusalem shot himself.

"The real Lotte, whose friend you nevertheless wish to be, is in your picture, which contains too much of her not to suggest her strongly: is, I say—but no, I will not say it, it pains me already too much only to think it. And Lotte's husband—you called him your friend, and God knows that he was so—is with her.

"The miserable creature of an Albert! In spite of its being an alleged fancy picture and not a portrait, it also has such traits of an original (only external traits, it is true, thank God, only external), that it is easy to guess the real person.

And if you wanted to have him act so, need you have made him such a blockhead? that forthwith you might step forward and say, see what a fine fellow I am!"

Kestner here touches on a point of morality in literature worth consideration. While emphatically declaring that the artist must take his materials from reality, must employ his own experience, and draw the characters he has really known, we must as emphatically declare that he is bound to represent his experience in forms sufficiently different from the reality to prevent the public reading actual histories beneath his invention, and recognising the persons he has employed as lay figures, whenever those persons are assigned parts which they would reject. There is, of course, great difficulty in keeping to truth while avoiding the betrayal of actual occurrences; but it is a difficulty which is commanded by morality.

Goethe was evidently astounded at the effect his book had produced on his friends: "I must at once write to you, my dear and angry friends, and free my heart. The thing is done; the book is out; forgive me if you can. I will hear nothing till the event has proved how exaggerated your anxiety is, and till you have more truly felt, in the book itself, the innocent mingling of fiction and truth. Thou hast, dear Kestner, exhausted everything, cut away all the ground of my excuse, and left me nothing to say; yet I know not, my heart has still more to say, although I cannot express it. I am silent, but the sweet presentiment I must still retain, and I hope eternal Fate has that in store for me which will bind us yet closer one to the other. Yes, dear ones, I who am so bound to you by love, must still remain debtor to you and your children for the uncomfortable hours which my—name it as you will—has given you. . . . And now, my dear ones, when anger rises within you, think, oh think only that your old Goethe, ever and ever, and now more than ever, is your own."

Their anger fell. They saw that he had committed an indiscretion, but had done no more. They wrote forgiveness, as we gather from this letter Goethe sent on the 21st of November:

"Here I have thy letter, Kestner! On a strange desk, in a painter's studio, for yesterday I began to paint in oil, I have thy letter, and must give thee my thanks! Thanks, dear friend! Thou art ever the same good soul! O that I could spring on thy neck, throw myself at Lotte's feet, one, one

minute, and all, all that should be done away with, explained, which I could not make clear with quires of paper! O ye unbelieving ones! I could exclaim. Ye of little faith! Could you feel the thousandth part of what Werther is to a thousand hearts, you would not reckon the sacrifice you have made towards it! Here is a letter, read it, and send me word quickly what thou thinkest of it, what impression it makes on thee. Thou sendest me Hennings' letter; he does not condemn me; he excuses me. Dear brother Kestner! if you will wait, you shall be contented. I would not, to save my own life, call back Werther, and believe me, believe in me, thy anxieties, thy *gravamina* will vanish like phantoms of the night if thou hast patience; and then, between this and a year, I promise you in the most affectionate, peculiar, fervent manner, to disperse, as if it were a mere north-wind fog and mist, whatever may remain of suspicion, misinterpretation, &c., in the gossiping public, though it is a herd of swine. Werther must—must be! You do not feel *him*, you only feel *me* and *yourselves;* and that which you call *stuck on*, and in spite of you, and others, is *interwoven*. If I live, it is thee I have to thank for it; thus thou art not Albert. And thus—

"Give Lotte a warm greeting for me, and say to her: 'To know that your name is uttered by a thousand hallowed lips with reverence, is surely an equivalent for anxieties which would scarcely, apart from anything else, vex a person long in common life, where one is at the mercy of every tattler.'

"If you are generous and do not worry me, I will send you letters, cries, sighs after Werther, and if you have faith, believe that all will be well, and gossip is nothing, and weigh well your philosopher's letter, which I have kissed.

"O then!—hast not felt how the man embraces thee, consoles thee, and in thy—in Lotte's worth, finds consolation enough under the wretchedness which has terrified you even in the fiction. Lotte, farewell,—Kestner, love me, and do not worry me."

The pride of the author in his darling breaks out in this letter, now his friends have forgiven him. We must admit that Kestner had reason to be annoyed; the more so as his friends, identifying him with the story, wrote sympathetically about it. He had to reply to Hennings on the subject, and in telling him the true story, begged him to correct the false reports. He says: "In the first part of *Werther*, Werther is Goethe himself. In Lotte and Albert he has borrowed

traits from us, my wife and myself. Many of the scenes are quite true, and yet partly altered; others are, at least in our history, unreal. For the sake of the second part, and in order to prepare for the death of Werther, he has introduced various things into the first part which do not at all belong to us. For example, Lotte has never either with Goethe or with any one else stood in the intimate relation which is there described; in this we have certainly great reason to be offended with him, for several accessory circumstances are too true and too well known for people not to point to us. He regrets it now, but of what use is that to us? It is true he has a great regard for my wife; but he ought to have depicted her more faithfully in this point, that she was too wise and delicate ever to let him go so far as is represented in the first part. She behaved to him in such way as to make her far dearer to me than before, if this had been possible. Moreover, our engagement was never made public, though not, it is true, kept a secret: still she was too bashful ever to confess it to any one. And there was no engagement between us but that of hearts. It was not till shortly before my departure (when Goethe had already been a year away from Wetzlar at Frankfurt, and the disguised Werther had been dead half a year) that we were married. After the lapse of a year, since our residence here, we have become father and mother. The dear boy lives still, and gives us, thank God, much joy. For the rest, there is in Werther much of Goethe's character and manner of thinking. Lotte's portrait is completely that of my wife. Albert might have been made a little more ardent. The second part of *Werther* has nothing whatever to do with us. . . . When Goethe had printed his book, he sent us an early copy, and thought we should fall into raptures with what he had done. But we at once saw what would be the effect, and your letter confirms our fears. I wrote very angrily to him. He then for the first time saw what he had done; but the book was printed, and he hoped our fears were idle." In another letter to the same, Kestner says: "You have no idea what a man he is. But when his great fire has somewhat burnt itself out, then we shall all have the greatest joy in him."

We have thus brought to a close the history of *Werther*, its composition and effect: a history so important in the biography of its author, that we might have been excused for having devoted so much space to it, even if the letters, which have furnished the evidence, did not throw so strong a light

upon a period very inadequately represented in the *Wahrheit und Dichtung*.

On the 28th August 1849, the hundredth anniversary of the great poet's birth, when all Germany joined in a jubilee, a small marble monument was erected in the well-known *Wertherplatz* without the Wetzlar gates, where Goethe was wont to sit and muse; three lime trees are planted round it, bearing this inscription:—

RUHEPLATZ DES DICHTERS

GOETHE

ZU SEINEM ANDENKEN FRISCH BEPFLANZT

BEI DER JUBELFEIER AM 28 AUG. 1849.

CHAPTER VI

THE LITERARY LION

GOETHE was now at the perilous juncture in an author's career, when having just achieved a splendid success, he is in danger either of again snatching at laurels in presumptuous haste, or of suffering himself to repose upon the laurels he has won, talking of greatness, instead of learning to be great. Both perils he avoided. He neither traded on his renown, nor conceived that his education was complete. Wisely refraining from completing fresh important works, he kept up the practice of his art by trifles, and the education of his genius by serious studies.

Among these trifles are *Clavigo*, the *Jahrmarktsfest zu Plundersweilen*, and the *Prolog zu Bahrdt's Neuesten Offenbarungen*. For the composition of *Clavigo* we must retrace our steps a little, and once more see him in the Frankfurt circle during the summer of 1774, that is, before the *publication* of *Werther*, which was delayed till October. In his sister's pleasant circle we have already noticed Antoinette Gerock, who was fascinating enough to fix his attentions. They were accustomed to meet once a week, in picnics and pleasure parties; at one of these it was agreed to institute a marriage

lottery. He thus speaks of it:—"Every week lots were drawn to determine the couples who should be symbolically wedded; for it was supposed that every one knew well enough how lovers should conduct themselves, but few had any proper conceptions of the requisite demeanour between man and wife. General rules were laid down to the effect that these wedded couples should preserve a polite indifference, not sitting near each other, nor speaking to each other too often, much less indulging in anything like caresses. At the same time, side by side with this polite indifference, this well-bred calm, anything like discord or suspicion was to be sedulously avoided; and whoever succeeded in gaining the affections of his wife without using the importunities of a lover, was supposed to have achieved their ideal. Much sportive confusion and agreeable pleasantry of course arose from this scheme." Strangely enough, to him it fell thrice to have the same girl appointed by hazard to fill the place of his wife. When fate had brought them together for the third time, it was resolved unanimously that they should be no longer separated, that heaven had spoken, and that hereafter they were to consider themselves as man and wife, and not to draw lots as the others did. At these réunions something new was generally read aloud by one of the party. One evening Goethe brought with him as a novelty the *Mémoire* of Beaumarchais. During the conversation which ensued, Goethe's partner said to him: "If I were thy liege lady, and not thy wife, I would command thee to change this memoir into a play, to which it seems well suited." He answered: "That thou mayst see, my love, that liege lady and wife are one, I here undertake that this day week I will read a play on this very matter." So bold a promise excited astonishment, but he resolved on fulfilling it. "What, in such cases," he says, "is termed invention, was with me spontaneous. While escorting my titulary wife home I was silent; and on her inquiring the cause, I told her that I was thinking out the play, and had already got into the middle of it—intending to show her how gladly I would do anything to please her. Upon which she pressed my hand, and I snatched a kiss. 'Thou must not step out of thy character,' she exclaimed; 'they say it is not proper for married folks to be loving.' 'Let them say what they please,' I replied, 'we will have it our own way.'"

He confesses that before reading the memoir aloud, the subject had appeared to him eminently dramatic; though,

without such a stimulus as he had received, this piece, like so many others, would have remained among the number of *possible* creations. The only novelty in it was his mode of treating the villains. He was weary of those characters so frequently represented, who, from revenge, or from hate, or from trivial motives, ruin a noble nature; and he wished in Carlos to show the working of clear good sense, against passion and inclination. Justified by the precedent of Shakspeare, he translated, word for word, such portions of the memoir as were dramatic; borrowing the dénouement from an English ballad.[1] He was ready before the week expired, and read the piece to a delighted audience.

A few words on this memoir may be useful. Beaumarchais had two sisters living in Madrid, one married to an architect, the other, Marie, engaged to Clavijo, a young author without fortune. No sooner had Clavijo obtained the office he had long solicited, than he refused to fulfil his promise. Beaumarchais hurried to Madrid; his object was twofold: to save the reputation of his sister, and to put a little speculation of his own on foot. He sought Clavijo, and by his sangfroid and courage extorted from him a written avowal of his contemptible conduct. No sooner is this settled, than Clavijo, alarmed at the consequences, solicits a reconciliation with Marie, offering to marry her. Beaumarchais consents, but just as the marriage is about to take place he learns that Clavijo is secretly conspiring against him, accusing him of having extorted the marriage by force, in consequence of which he has procured an order from the government to expel Beaumarchais from Madrid. Irritated at such villainy, Beaumarchais goes to the ministers, reaches the king, and avenges himself by getting Clavijo dismissed from his post. This is, in brief, the substance of the *Mémoire*, which appeared in February 1774. The adventure occurred in 1764, so that Clavijo, who subsequently became a distinguished writer, might have seen himself not only held up to odium in the sparkling pages of Beaumarchais, but represented on the stage of every German theatre. He died in 1806, vice-president of the Natural History Society in Madrid, having previously translated Buffon, and edited the *Mercurio historico y politico de Madrid*. We must suppose that Goethe knew nothing of the existence of Clavijo when he wrote the drama.

[1] So he says: but his memory deceived him. The ballad was an old German ballad, *Das Lied vom Herren und der Magd*. See *Herder's Nachlass*, i. 159.

With Beaumarchais in our hands it is curious to read *Clavigo*, which is as close a reproduction as the dramatic form admits; and is an evidence that Goethe did wisely in not at once proceeding to complete *Faust* (fragments of which were written) or *Cæsar*. He would infallibly have repeated himself. He has repeated himself in *Clavigo*: the external circumstances are changed, but the experience is the same. Clavigo is another Weislingen, and was meant to be so: "I have written a tragedy," Goethe writes to Schönborn, "*Clavigo*, a modern anecdote, dramatised with the greatest simplicity and heartfelt truth. My hero is an irresolute, half-great, half-little man, the pendant to Weislingen, or rather Weislingen himself as the chief person." He has well portrayed the weak ambitious nature of one who hopes to rise still higher in the world, but feels his career obstructed by a passion which made him happy in the obscure days of penniless youth. The popular author and court favourite aspires to some woman of rank; an aspiration in which he is encouraged by his friend Carlos, who mockingly strips off the garlands with which the poet's imagination had decked his mistress.

Marie is a weak, sensitive creature, without much individuality, and is perhaps the poorest sketch Goethe has given of a woman. There is, however, one little touch which shows the poet; it is a sentence which escapes Marie, when Clavigo returns repentant to her feet, appealing to her affection: she throws herself on his neck, exclaiming, "Ah, sister, whence knows he that I love him so—*woher weiss er dass ich ihn so liebe!*"

Marie is overjoyed at Clavigo's return, but her joy is brief. The demon of ambition, aided by the cold sarcasms of Carlos (in whom we see the germ of Mephistopheles), once more troubles Clavigo, and turns him from a marriage so ill suited to his hopes. Carlos bitterly, but truly, says to him, "There is nothing in the world so pitiable as an undecided man, who wavers between two feelings, hoping to reconcile them." He suggests that Beaumarchais should be assassinated. "He who orders the assassination of the brother, pantomimically intimates that he will have nothing to do with the sister," adds Carlos, quite in the Mephistophelic tone. They determine on a contemptible plan. Beaumarchais is to be imprisoned for having insulted and threatened Clavigo under his own [illegible] for him. The order for arrest arrives, and Marie dies bro[illegible] the treachery of her lover.

[illegible]aphie Lavaters.

Up to this point—short at least of the death of Marie—Beaumarchais' *Mémoire* has been faithfully followed; a fifth act is added, with a dénouement to fit it for the stage.

Powerful as this scene is in theatrical effect, one cannot but admit that æsthetically it is poor and almost commonplace. The clumsiness by which the meeting is contrived has been noticed by Rosenkranz.[1] Clavigo is seeking Carlos; he orders the servant who lights the way, *not* to pass through the street where the Beaumarchais family resides, yet the servant actually leads him there because it is the shorter route. The whole tone of this fifth act is not in harmony with what precedes. The act is *grafted on*—it does not *grow out of*—the subject.

As a stage play the interest is great: the situations are effective; the dramatic collision perfect; the plot is clearly and rapidly evolved; the language vigorous, passionate, and pointed. But it must not be tried by any high standard. Merck, anxious about his friend's reputation, would not consent to judge the play according to the theatre-standard, but exclaimed, "Such trash as this you must not write again; others can do that!" Goethe says, that in this Merck was wrong, and for the first time did him an injury. "We should not in all things transcend the notions which men have already formed; it is right that much should be done in accordance with the common way of thinking. Had I written a dozen such pieces (and it would have been easy to do so with a little stimulus), three or four of them would perhaps have kept their place upon the stage."

This can scarcely be accepted as conclusive reasoning. Merck might have replied, "Perhaps so; but you have genius fit for higher things than stage plays." Nevertheless, as before hinted, I think Goethe was right in his course, although the reasons he alleges are unsatisfactory. *Clavigo*, like the other trifles he composed at this period, must be regarded as the sketches with which an artist fills his portfolio, not the works which are to brighten galleries. The impulse to create was imperious; if trifles were demanded, he created trifles. His immense activity was forced to expend itself on minor works, because he dimly felt himself unripe for greater works.

He was beginning to feel himself a man of consequence; the notable men of the day eagerly sought his acquaintance. Among these men we must note Klopstock, Lavater, Basedow,

[1] So he says: but ... ballad, *Das Lied vom Herren und ... Seine Werke*, p. 185.

Jacobi, and the Stolbergs. Correspondence led to personal intercourse. Klopstock arrived in Frankfurt in this October 1774, just before *Werther* appeared. Goethe saw him, read the fragments of *Faust* to him, and discussed skating with him. But the great religious poet was too far removed from the strivings of his young rival to conceive that attachment for him which he felt for men like the Stolbergs, or to inspire Goethe with any keen sympathy.

In June, Lavater also came to Frankfurt. This was a few months before Klopstock's visit. He had commenced a correspondence with Goethe on the occasion of the *Briefe des Pastors*. Those were great days of correspondence. Letters were written to be read in circles, and were shown about like the last new poem. Lavater pestered his friends for their portraits, and for ideal portraits (according to their conception) of our Saviour, all of which were destined for the work on *Physiognomy* on which he was then engaged. The artist who took Goethe's portrait sent Lavater the portrait of Bahrdt instead, to see what he would make of it; the physiognomist was not taken in; he stoutly denied the possibility of such a resemblance. Yet when he saw the actual Goethe he was not satisfied. He gazed in astonishment, exclaiming "*Bist's?* Art thou he?" "*Ich bin's.* I am he," was the answer; and the two embraced each other. Still the physiognomist was dissatisfied. "I answered him with my native and acquired realism, that as God had willed to make me what I was, he, Lavater, must even so accept me."

The first surprise over, they began to converse on the weightiest topics. Their sympathy was much greater than appears in Goethe's narrative, written many years after the characters of both had developed themselves: Goethe's into what we shall subsequently see; Lavater's into that superstitious dogmatism and priestly sophistication which exasperated and alienated many of his friends.

Lavater forms a curious figure in the history of those days: a compound of the intolerant priest, and the factitious sentimentalist. He had fine talents, and a streak of genius, but he was ruined by vanity. In his autobiographic sketch [1] he has represented himself indicating as a child the part he was to play as a man. Like many other children, he formed for him-

[1] See GESSNER'S *Biographie Lavaters.*

self a peculiar and intimate relation with God, which made him look upon his playfellows with scorn and pity, because they did not share his "need and use of God." He prayed for wonders, and the wonders came. God corrected his school exercises. God concealed his many faults, and brought to light his virtuous deeds. In fact, Lavater was said to have been "from the beginning the friend of Lies, who stooped to the basest flatteries to gain influence." To this flattering cringing softness he united the spirit of priestly domination. His first works made a great sensation. In 1769 he translated Bonnet's *Palingénésie*, adding notes in a strain of religious sentimentalism then very acceptable. At a time when the critics were rehabilitating Homer and the early singers, it was natural that the religious world should attempt a restoration of the early Apostolic spirit. At a time when belief in poetic inspiration was a first article of the creed, belief in prophetic inspiration found eager followers. I have already touched on the sentimental extravagance of the time. The lovely Countess Branconi writes to him: "O toi chéri pour la vie, l'âme de mon âme! Ton mouchoir, tes cheveux, sont pour moi ce que mes jarretières sont pour toi!" &c., which is surpassed by what he allowed to be addressed to him by another admirer: "Oh that I could lie on thy breast in Sabbath holy evening stillness —oh thou angel!" This kind of rhodomontade went all round. They wept, and were wept on.

At the time of his arrival in Frankfurt, Lavater was in the first flush of renown. Goethe was peculiarly attracted to him, not only by the singularity of his character, but by a certain community of religious *sentiment*. Community of creed there was not, and could not be. What Goethe *felt* we may gather from his attachment to Fräulein von Klettenberg; what he *thought* may be seen in such letters as this to Pfenninger, a friend of Lavater's: "Believe me, dear brother, the time will come when we shall understand each other. You talk to me as a sceptic, who wishes to *understand*—to have all *demonstrated*—who has had no experience. The contrary of all this is the fact. Am I not more resigned in matters of Understanding and Demonstration than you are? I am, perhaps, a fool to express myself in your language to please you. I ought, by a purely experimental psychology, to place my inmost being before you to show that I am a man, and hence can only feel as other men feel, and that all which appears contradiction between us is only dispute about words, arising from my

inability to feel things under other combinations than those actually felt by me, and hence, in expressing their relation to me, I name them differently, which has been the eternal source of controversy, and will for ever remain so. And yet you always want to oppress me with *evidences*. Wherefore? Do I need evidence of my own existence? Evidence that I feel? I only treasure, love, and demand evidences which convince me that thousands (or even one) have felt before me that which strengthens and invigorates me. And thus to me the word of man becomes like unto the word of God. With my whole soul, I throw myself upon the neck of my brother: Moses, Prophet, Evangelist, Apostle, Spinoza, or Machiavelli! To each, however, I would say: Dear friend, it is with you as it is with me. Certain details you apprehend clearly and powerfully, but the whole can no more be conceived by you than by me."

He names Spinoza in this very remarkable passage; and the whole letter seems like a reproduction of the passage in the *Ethics*, where that great thinker, anticipating modern pyschology, shows "that each person judges of things according to the disposition of his brain, or rather accepts the affections of his imagination as real things. It is no wonder therefore (as we may note in passing) that so many controversies have arisen among men, and that these controversies have at last given birth to scepticism. For although human bodies are alike in many things, there are more in which they differ, and thus what to one appears good, to another appears evil; what to one appears order, to another appears confusion; what to one is pleasant, to another is unpleasant."[1]

It is unnecessary to interrupt the narrative here by more closely scrutinising his studies of Spinoza; enough, if the foregoing citation has made present to our minds the probable parentage of Goethe's opinions. The contrast between Lavater's Christianity and the Christianity of Fräulein von Klettenberg interested him, and gave him matter for thought. He agreed somewhat with both, but he agreed perfectly with neither. The difference between Faith and Knowledge he

[1] "Quæ omnia satis ostendunt, unumquemque *pro dispositione cerebri de rebus judicasse*, vel potius imaginationis affectiones pro rebus accepisse. Quare non mirum est (ut hoc etiam obiter notemus) quod inter homines tot, quot experimur, controversiæ ortæ sint ex quibus tandem Scepticismus. Nam quamvis humana corpora in multus conveniunt, in plurimis tamen discrepant, et ideo id quod uni bonum alteri malum videtur; quod uni ordinatum, alteri confusum; quod uni gratum, alteri ingratum est."—*Ethices: Pars* i. *Append.*

thus reconciled: "In Faith everything depends on the fact of believing; *what* we believe is quite secondary. Faith is a profound sense of security, springing from confidence in the All-powerful, Inscrutable Being. The strength of this confidence is the main point. But *what* we think of this Being depends on other faculties, or even on other circumstances, and is altogether indifferent. Faith is a holy vessel, into which every man may pour his feelings, his understanding, and his imagination, as entirely as he can. Knowledge is the antipode of Faith. Therein the point is not *whether* we know, but *what* we know, *how much* we know, and *how well* we know it. Hence men may dispute about knowledge, because it can be widened, corrected; but not about Faith."

So strong was the attraction of Lavater's society that Goethe accompanied him to Ems. The journey was charming; beautiful summer weather, and Lavater's cheerful gaiety formed pleasant accompaniments to their religious discussions. On returning to Frankfurt, another and very different celebrity was there to distract his attention—Basedow, the education reformer. No greater contrast to Lavater could have been picked out of the celebrities of that day. Lavater was handsome, clean, cheerful, flattering, insinuating, devout; Basedow ugly, dirty among the dirty, sarcastic, domineering, and aggressively heterodox. One tried to restore Apostolic Christianity; the other could not restrain the most insolent sarcasms on the Bible, the Trinity, and every form of Christian creed. One set up as a Prophet, the other as a Pedagogue.

Basedow (born 1723) was also early in indicating his future part. At school the wild and dirty boy manifested rebellious energy against all system and all method; studied in a desultory, omnivorous manner, as if to fit himself for everything; ran away from home, and became a lackey in a nobleman's house; caught up Rousseau's doctrine about a state of nature, which he applied to Education; wrote endless works, or rather incessant repetitions of one work; shouted with such lusty lungs that men could not but hear him; appealed to the nation for support in his philanthropic schemes; collected "a rent" from philanthropists and dupes; attacked established institutions, and parenthetically all Christian tenets; and proved himself a man of restless energy, and of vast and comprehensive ignorance. He made considerable noise in the world; and in private lived somewhat the life of a restless hog who has taken to philanthropy and freethinking.

Much as such a character was opposed to his own, Goethe, eager and inquiring, felt an attraction towards it, as towards a character to study. Like many other studies, this had its drawbacks. He was forced to endure the incessant smoking, and incessant sarcasms of the dirty educationist. The stench he endured with firmness; the anti-Christian tirades he answered with paradoxes wilder than any he opposed. "Such a splendid opportunity of exercising, if not of elevating, my mind," he says, "was not to be thrown away; so prevailing on my father and friends to undertake my law business, I once more set off for the Rhine in Basedow's company." Basedow filled the carriage with smoke, and killed the time with discussions. On the way they fell in with Lavater, and the three visited several chateaux, especially those of noble ladies, everywhere anxious to receive the literary Lions. Goethe, we may parenthetically note, is in error when he says that he was on this voyage greatly pestered by the women wanting to know all about the truth of *Werther;* the fact being that *Werther* did not appear until the following October; for although the exigencies of my narrative have caused a certain anticipation in chronology, this journey with Lavater and Basedow, here made to follow the publication of *Werther,* came *before* it in Goethe's life. If we are not to believe that the women crowded round him with questions about Lotte, we can readily believe that children crowded round him, begging him to tell them stories.

Wild and "genius-like" was his demeanour. "Basedow and I," he says, "seemed to be ambitious of proving who could behave the most outrageously." Very characteristic is the glimpse we catch of him quitting the ball-room, after a heating dance, and rushing up to Basedow's room. The Philanthropist did not go to bed. He threw himself in his clothes upon the bed, and there, in a room full of tobacco smoke and bad air, dictated to his scribe. When fatigue overcame him, he slept awhile, his scribe remaining there, pen in hand, awaiting the awakening of the Philanthropist, who, on opening his eyes, at once resumed the flow of his dictation. Into such a room sprang the dance-heated youth, began a fierce discussion on some problem previously mooted between them, hurried off again to look into the eyes of some charming partner, and before the door closed, heard Basedow recommence dictating.

This union of philosophy with amusement, of restless theo-

rising with animal spirits, indicates the tone of his mind. "I am contented," he said to Lavater, "I am happy. That I feel; and yet the whole centre of my joy is an overflowing yearning towards something which I have not, something which my soul perceives dimly." He could reach that "something" neither through the pious preaching of Lavater, nor through the aggressive preaching of Basedow. Very graphic and ludicrous is the picture he gives of his sitting like a citizen of the world between a prophet on the right and a prophet on the left hand—

Prophete rechts, Prophete links,
Das Welt-Kind in der Mitten—

quietly eating a chicken while Lavater explains to a country parson the mystery of the Revelations, and Basedow astonishes a dancing-master with a scornful exposure of the inutility of baptism.[1]

Nor could he find this "something" in Jacobi, with whom he now came into sentimental intimacy. He could to some extent sympathise with Jacobi's sentimental cravings, and philosophic, religious aspirations, for he was bitten with the Wertherism of the epoch. He could gaze with him in uneasy ecstasy upon the moonlight quivering on the silent Rhine, and pour forth the songs which were murmuring within his breast. He could form a friendship, believing it to rest upon an eternal basis of perfect sympathy; but the inward goad which drove him onwards and onwards, was not to be eradicated until fresh experience had brought about fresh metamorphoses in his development. It is the Youth we have before us here, the Youth in his struggles and many-wandering aims, not the Man grown into clearness.

Jacobi thought that in Goethe he had at length found the man his heart needed, whose influence could sustain and direct him. "The more I consider it," he wrote to Wieland, "the more intensely do I feel how impossible it is for one who has not seen and heard Goethe, to write a word about this extraordinary creation of God's. One needs to be with him but an hour to see that it is utterly absurd to expect him to think and act otherwise than as he does. I do not mean that there is no possibility of an improvement in him; but nothing else is possible with his nature, which develops itself as the flower

[1] See the poem *Diné zu Coblentz.*

does, as the seed ripens, as the tree grows into the air and crowns itself."

Goethe's wonderful *personality* seems almost everywhere to produce a similar impression. Heinse, the author of *Ardinghello*, writes of him at this period to Gleim: "Goethe was with us, a beautiful youth of five-and-twenty, who is all genius and strength from head to foot, his heart full of feeling, his soul full of fire and eagle-winged; I know no man in the whole History of Literature who at such an age can be compared to him in fulness and completeness of genius." Those, and they are the mass, who think of him as the calm and stately minister, the old Jupiter throned in Weimar, will feel some difficulty perhaps in recognising the young Apollo of this period. But it must be remembered that not only was he young, impetuous, bursting into life, and trying his eagle wings with wanton confidence of strength; he was, moreover, a Rhinelander, with the gay blood of that race stimulated by the light and generous wine of the Rhine—not a Northern muddled with beer. When I contrast young Goethe with a Herder, for example, it is always as if a flask of Rhenish glittered beside a seidel of Bavarian beer.

Such answer to his aspirations as the youth could at this period receive, he found in Spinoza. In his father's library there was a little book written against Spinoza, one of the many foolish refutations which that grand old Hebrew's misunderstood system called forth. "It made little impression on me, for I hated controversies, and always wanted to know *what* a thinker thought, and not what another conceived he *ought to have thought*." It made him, however, once more read the article Spinoza, in *Bayle's Dictionary*, which he found pitiable—as indeed it is. If a philosophy is to be judged by its fruits, the philosophy which guided so great and so virtuous a life as that of Spinoza, could not, Goethe thought, deserve the howls of execration which followed Spinozism. He procured the *Opera Posthuma* and studied them; with what fruit let the following confession indicate. He is speaking of his new friendship with Jacobi: "The thoughts which Jacobi imparted to me flowed immediately from his heart. How deeply was I moved when in unlimited confidence he revealed to me the deepest wants and aspirations of his soul. From so amazing a combination of mental wants, passion, and ideas, I could only gather presentiment of what might, perhaps, hereafter grow clearer to me. Fortunately, my mind had

already been prepared, if not thoroughly cultivated in this direction, having in some degree appropriated the results and style of thought of an extraordinary man, and though my study had been incomplete and hasty, I was yet already conscious of important influences derived from this source. This man, who had wrought so powerfully on me, and who was destined to affect so deeply my entire mode of thinking, was Spinoza. After looking around the world in vain for the means of developing my strange nature, I met with the *Ethics* of that philosopher. Of what I read *in* the work, and of what I read *into* it, I can give no account, but I found in it a sedative for my passions, and it seemed to unveil a clear, broad view over the material and moral world. But what especially riveted me to him, was the boundless disinterestedness which shone forth in every sentence. That wonderful sentiment, '*He who truly loves God must not require God to love him in return*,' together with all the preliminary propositions on which it rests, and all the consequences deduced from it, filled my mind.[1] To be disinterested in everything, but most of all in love and friendship, was my highest desire, my maxim, my practice, so that that saucy speech of *Philine's*, 'If I love thee, what is that to thee?' was spoken right out of my heart. Moreover, it must not be forgotten here that the closest unions rest on contrasts. The all-equalising calmness of Spinoza was in striking contrast with my all-disturbing activity; his mathematical method was the direct opposite of my poetic style of thought and feeling, and that very precision which was thought ill adapted to moral subjects made me his enthusiastic disciple, his most decided worshipper. Mind and heart, understanding and sense, sought each other with eager affinity, binding together the most different natures. But now all within was fermenting and seething in action and reaction Fritz Jacobi, the first whom I suffered to look into the chaos, and whose nature was also toiling in its own unfathomable depths, heartily responded to my confidence, and endeavoured to convert me to his own opinions. He, too, felt an unspeakable spiritual want; he, too, would not have it appeased by *outward* aid, but aimed at development and illumination from *within*. I could not comprehend what he communicated to me of the state of his mind; the less, indeed, as I could form no adequate conception of my own. Still, being far in advance

[1] The proposition to which Goethe refers is doubtless the xix. of Book v.: "*Qui Deum amat, conari non potest, ut Deus ipsum contra amet.*"

of me in philosophical thought, and even in the study of Spinoza, he was able to guide and enlighten my efforts."

Although he studied Spinoza much and reverently, he never studied him systematically. The mathematical form into which that thinker casts his granite blocks of thought, was an almost insuperable hinderance to systematic study on the part of one so impatient, so desultory, and so unmathematical as Goethe. But a study may be very fruitful which is by no means systematic; a phrase may fructify, when falling on a proper soil. It has doubtless happened to the reader in his youth to meet with some entirely novel and profoundly suggestive idea, casually cited from an ancient author; if so, he will remember the over-mastering influence it exercised, the longing it awakened for a nearer acquaintance with that author. The casual citation of a passage from Spinoza made my youth restless, and to this day I remember the aspect of the page where it appeared, and the revolution in thought which it effected. A few ideas determined the direction of Goethe's mind. Although he did not study the system of Spinoza with any view of adopting it as a system, he studied it to draw therefrom food which his own mind could assimilate and work into new forms. Spinoza was to him what Kant was to Schiller; but, with characteristic difference, Schiller studied systematically, and tried systematically to reproduce what he had studied.

Side by side with Spinozism, we have to note his struggles to gain clearness respecting Christianity. The influence of Fräulein von Klettenberg attracted him to the Moravians, who seemed to realise early Christianity; with his usual impressionability he studied their history and their doctrines, and gave them some hopes that he would become a convert; but his enthusiasm cooled down when he discovered the wide chasm that separated him from them. "That which separated me from this brotherhood," he says, "as well as from many other worthy Christians, was the very point which has more than once torn the Church with dissent. One party maintained that by the Fall, human nature had been so corrupted to its inmost core, that not a trace of good could be found in it; and that, therefore, man must renounce all trust in his own powers, and look only to the effect of grace. The opposite party, admitting the hereditary imperfections of man, ascribed to nature a certain internal germ of good which, animated by divine grace, was capable of growing up into a joyous tree of

spiritual happiness. This latter conviction penetrated to the depths of my soul all the time that I was, with tongue and pen, maintaining the opposite doctrine. But I had so dawdled along without thinking (*ich dämmerte so hin*) that I had never clearly stated the dilemma to myself."

In spite of all his differences, however, with this sect or that sect, nothing, as he says, could rob him of his love for the Holy Scriptures and for the Founder of Christianity. He therefore wrought out for his own private use a Christianity of his own; and as everything which took possession of his soul always assumed a poetic form, he now conceived the idea of treating epically the history of the *Wandering Jew*. "The legend ran that in Jerusalem there was a shoemaker named Ahazuerus. The shoemaker whom I had known in Dresden, supplied me with the main features of his character; and I animated them with the spirit and humour of an artisan of the school of Hans Sachs, ennobling him by a great love for Christ. In his open workshop he talked with the passers-by, and jested with them after the Socratic fashion; so that the people took pleasure in lingering at his booth. Even the Pharisees and Sadducees spoke to him; and our Saviour himself, and his disciples, often stopped before his door. The shoemaker, whose thoughts were altogether worldly, I nevertheless depicted as feeling a special affection for our Lord, which chiefly showed itself in a desire to convert this great man, whose mind he did not comprehend, to his own way of thinking. He therefore gravely incited Christ to abandon contemplation, to cease wandering through the country with such idlers, and drawing the people away from their work into the desert; because an assembled multitude, he said, was always excitable, and no good could come of such a life. Our Lord endeavoured by parables to instruct him in his higher views, but they were all thrown away on the rough shoemaker. As Christ grew into greater importance, and became a public character, the well-meaning workman pronounced his opinion still more sharply and angrily, declaring that nothing but disorder and tumult could result from such proceedings, and that Christ would at length be compelled to place himself at the head of a party, which certainly was not his design. And now when these consequences had ensued, Christ having been seized and condemned, Ahazuerus gives full vent to his indignation, as Judas, who in appearance had betrayed our Lord, enters the workshop in despair, with

loud lamentations, telling of the frustration of his plan. He had been, no less than the shrewdest of the other disciples, thoroughly persuaded that Christ would declare himself Regent and Chief of the people, and thought by this violence to compel him, whose hesitation had hitherto been invincible, to hasten the declaration.[1] In this persuasion he had roused the priesthood to an act from which they had hitherto shrunk. The disciples, on their side, were not unarmed; and probably all would have gone well, had not our Lord given himself up, and left them in the most helpless condition. Ahazuerus, by no means propitiated by this narrative, embitters the state of the wretched ex-apostle, who has no resource left but to hang himself. As our Saviour is led past the workshop of the shoemaker, on his road to execution, the well-known scene of the legend occurs. The sufferer faints under the burden of the cross, which Simon of Cyrene undertakes to carry. At this moment Ahazuerus steps forward; and, in the style of those harsh common-sense people who, seeing a man miserable through his own fault, feel no compassion, but rather, in their ill-timed justice, make the matter worse by reproaches, repeats all his former warnings, which he now turns into vehement accusations, springing, as it were, from his very love for the sufferer. Our Saviour answers not, but at that instant Veronica covers his face with a napkin, and there, as she removes it and raises it aloft, Ahazuerus sees depicted the features of our Lord, not in their present agony, but radiant with celestial life. Astounded at the sight, he turns away his eyes, and hears the words, 'Over the earth shalt thou wander till thou shalt once more see me in this form.' Overwhelmed by the sentence, he is some time before he recovers himself; *he then finds that every one has gone to the place of execution, and that the streets of Jerusalem are empty.* Unrest and yearnings drive him forth, and his wanderings begin."

This legendary conception he never executed. It lived within him for a long while, and during his travels in Italy he again thought of taking it up; but, like so many other plans, it remained a mere scheme, from the want of some external stimulus urging him to give it a shape.

[1] This new light thrown upon that strange history, though adverse from all tradition, is in strict accordance with our knowledge of human nature. It has been adopted by Archbishop Whately, to whom, indeed, it is generally attributed; and has furnished the subject of a miracle-play to R. H. Horne. See his *Judas Iscariot.*

Another subject also worthy of elaborate treatment is thus mentioned by him: "The common burthen of humanity which we have all to bear falls most heavily on those whose intellectual powers expand early. We may grow up under the protection of parents, we may lean for a while upon our brothers and friends, be amused by acquaintances, rendered happy by those we love, but in the end man is always driven back upon himself; and it seems as if the Divinity had so placed himself in relation to man as not always to respond to his reverence, trust, and love, at least not in the terrible moment of need. Early and often enough had I learned that the call to us is 'Physician, heal thyself'; and how frequently had I been compelled to exclaim in my pain, 'I tread the wine-press alone!' So now, looking round for support to my self-dependence, I felt that the surest basis on which to build was my own productive activity. For many years I had never known it fail me. What I had seen by day often shaped itself into magnificent dreams at night. My time for writing was early in the morning; but in the evening, or deep in the night, when wine and social intercourse had elevated my spirits, you might demand whatever you wanted; only let a subject with some character in it be proposed, and I was at once prepared and ready. In reflecting on this natural gift, I saw that it belonged to me *as my own*, and could neither be fostered nor hindered by any external circumstances; so I sought to make it the basis of my whole existence. This notion transformed itself into an image. The old mythological figure of Prometheus occurred to me; who, severed from the gods, peopled the world from his own workshop. I clearly felt that nothing important could be produced without self-isolation. My productions had been the children of solitude; and since I had formed wider relations with the world there had been no want of power or of *pleasure of invention*, but the *execution* halted, because I had neither in prose nor in verse, what could properly be called a style of my own, and thus with every new work had to begin at the beginning, and make experiments. As in this I had to exclude all aid from men, so, after the fashion of Prometheus, I separated myself from the gods also; and this the more naturally as, with my mode of thinking, one tendency always swallowed up and repelled every other.

"The fable of Prometheus lived within me. The old Titan web I cut up according to my own stature, and began to write

a play expressing the incongruous relation in which Prometheus stood with respect to Jupiter and the later gods, in consequence of his making men with his own hand, giving them life by the aid of Minerva, and thus founding a third dynasty. To this strange composition belongs the monologue which has become famous in German literature, because it called forth a declaration from Lessing against Jacobi on certain important matters of doctrine."[1]

Of this *Prometheus* we possess but a fragment, but the fragment is of such excellence as to make us regret that it never was completed. It lies there among his works, like the torso of the Theseus, enough to prove the greatness of the artist, if not enough to satisfy the spectator. Grand in conception, simple in style, luminous with great thoughts, it would have been an exemplar of the adaptation of an antique symbol to modern meanings, not the idle imitation of a bygone creed.

Nothing can be more unlike Æschylus. The Greek Titan glories in his audacity:

Ἑκὼν ἑκὼν ἥμαρτον, οὐκ ἀρνήσομαι.

"Willingly, willingly I did it, never will I deny the deed!" but while glorying, he *complains:* the injustice of the tyrant wrings from him cries of pain, cries of physical and cries of moral agony. The whole tragedy is one wild outburst of sorrow. The first words he utters fling his clamorous sorrow on the air, call on the Divine Ether and the swift winged Winds, on the Sea Springs and the multitudinous laughter of the waves, on the Universal Mother, the Earth—and on the all-seeing Eye, the Sun, to witness what he, a god, must suffer. These are his opening words; the closing words carry the same burden. He wails over the pangs that are and are to be:—

Αἰ, αἰ τὸ παρὸν τὸ τ' ἐπερχόμενον
Πῆμα στενάχω.

This is antique. The Titan in Goethe utters *no* complaint. There is no bravado in his defiance; the defiance is uncompromising and sublime. His contempt for Zeus is founded

[1] He alludes to the discussion on Spinoza between Jacobi and Lessing, which gave rise to Jacobi's book, *Ueber die Lehre des Spinozas.* This feeble book made a great noise in its day.

on his knowledge of the subordination of Zeus to a higher power—Destiny. "Away," he exclaims, "I serve no slave."

Geh! Ich diene nicht Vasallen!

In this he resembles the Titan drawn by Shelley, in the *Prometheus Unbound*, who, to Mercury's warning of the years of coming torture, calmly and grandly answers:

"Perchance no thought can count them—yet they pass!"

On this conviction rests his self-reliance. He knows the reign of tyranny must end, and he awaits that end.

In Æschylus also, the Titan knows that Zeus must fall; he foresees his own release, and, foreseeing it, resolves to bear his fate as well as he can, "for it is vain to struggle against fate" (v. 105). Nevertheless, the knowledge of an end, and the philosophy which preaches acquiescence, does not prevent him from *complaining*. And this is very Greek. Homer makes even Mars, when wounded, howl with pain; and Sophocles has filled the *Philoctetes* with cries of physical pain. The Greeks had none of our modern notions respecting the effeminacy of complaint.

It may be objected perhaps to the foregoing view of the Titan, that Æschylus has in the first scene made him imperturbably silent, disdaining to answer the taunts of Power and the pity of Vulcan, as they bind him to the rock. These draw from him no groan, no word, no gesture; he has no defiance for the one, nor friendly gratitude for the other. It is not until he is left alone that he appeals to Earth, Air, and Ocean. This silence followed by this passion, produces a sublime effect. But the sublimity was *not* the poet's intention; it is an accidental effect. The silence was simply a *stage-necessity*, as I have elsewhere shown. Whether owing to some eurhythmic tendency in the construction of Greek plays, as Gruppe,[1] and after him Bode,[2] have maintained; or, more probably from motives of economy with respect to the actors, as Geppert asserts;[3] certain it is that in the plays of Æschylus more than *two speakers* were never together on the stage, with one trivial exception in the *Choëphoræ*, where Pylades says a few words. Hence scholars have been puzzled to account for the distribution of the *Prometheus* into parts. In the first scene the

[1] *Ariadne: oder die tragische Kunst der Griechen*, p. 143.
[2] *Geschichte der Hellen, Dichtkunst*, iii. p. 233.
[3] *Alt-Griechische Bühne*, p. 58.

protagonist would take Power and the deuteragonist Vulcan. Prometheus therefore *must* be silent, for there is no one to speak for him. Here comes the difficulty: If Prometheus is necessarily silent during the prologue, how does he become eloquent immediately on being left alone? Welcker[1] supposes that Prometheus was represented by a picture, and the protagonist at the close of the prologue got behind it, and spoke through it; an explanation accepted by Hermann,[2] but shown by Schömann[3] to be full of difficulties. Let that point be settled as it may, the fact remains that the silence of Prometheus was forced by stage necessities, and was *not* meant as an indication of his self-reliance; the further proof of which is to be seen in his wailings and writhings throughout the play—notably in the scene with Mercury (v. 905), where Prometheus is scurrilously fluent.

Shelley never makes his Titan flinch. He stands there as the sublime of *endurance:*

> "To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
> To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
> To defy power which seems omnipotent;
> To love and bear; to hope till Hope creates
> From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
> Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent."

This is grand; but grander far the conception of Goethe, whose Titan knows that he is a god, and that if he be true to himself no power can trouble or destroy his heritage of life and activity:

> Das was ich habe können sie nicht rauben,
> Und was *sie* haben mögen sie beschützen;
> Hier Mein und Dein,
> Und so sind wir geschieden.
>
> EPIMETHEUS.
>
> Wie vieles ist denn Dein?
>
> PROMETHEUS.
>
> Der Kreis den meine Wirksamkeit erfüllt.[4]

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[1] *Opusc.* ii. p. 146. [2] *Trilogie*, p. 30. [3] *Prometheus*, p. 85.

[4] That which I have they cannot rob me of; that which they have, let them guard. Here mine, here thine; and thus are we distinguished.

> EPIMETHEUS.
>
> What, then, is thine?
>
> PROMETHEUS.
>
> The circle my activity doth fill!

This is a profound truth strikingly brought out. Godlike energy is seen only in creation; what we can *do* we *are*: our strength is measured by our plastic power. Thus the contempt of Prometheus for the idleness, the uncreativeness of the gods is both deep and constant.

Curtain thy heavens, Zeus,
With clouds, with mist!
And, like a boy that crushes thistle-tops,
Loosen thy rage on oaks and mountain ridges.
Yet must thou leave
Me my earth standing;
My hut, which myself built;
My hearth, with its bright flame,
Which thou dost envy.
I know nought so pitiful
Under the sun as ye gods!
Scantily nourishing
With the forced offerings
Of tremulous prayer
Your divinity!
Children and beggars,
And fools hope-deluded,
Keep ye from starving!
Who gave me succour
From the fierce Titans?
Who rescued me
From slavery?
Thou, thou, my soul, glowing
With holiest fire!
Yet didst thou, credulous,
Pour forth thy thanks to him
Who slumbers above!

I reverence thee? Wherefore?
Hast lightened the woes
Of the heavily laden?
Hast *thou* dried the tears
Of the troubled in spirit?
Who fashioned me man?
Was it not almighty Time—
And Fate eternal,
Thy lords and mine?
Here I sit and shape
Man in my image:
A race like myself,
That will suffer and weep,
Will rejoice and enjoy,
And scorn thee,
As I!

Even in this rough plaster-cast of translation, does not the grandeur and beauty of the original shine through?

CHAPTER VII

LILI

"I MUST tell you something which makes me happy; and that is the visit of many excellent men of all grades, and from all parts, who, among unimportant and intolerable visitors, call on me often, and stay some time. We first know that we exist, when we recognise ourselves in others (*man weiss erst dass man ist, wenn man sich in andern wiederfindet*)." It is thus he writes to the Countess Augusta von Stolberg, with whom he had formed, through correspondence, one of those romantic friendships which celebrated men, some time in their lives, are generally led to form. This correspondence is among the most characteristic evidences we have of his mental condition, and should be read by every one who wishes to correct the *tone* of the Autobiography. Above all, it is the repository of his fluctuating feelings respecting Lili, the woman whom, according to his statement to Eckermann, he loved more than any other. "She was the first, and I can also add she is the last, I truly loved; for all the *inclinations* which have since agitated my heart, were superficial and trivial in comparison."[1] There is no statement he has made respecting a matter of feeling, to which one may oppose a flatter contradiction. Indeed we find it difficult to believe he uttered such a sentence, unless we remember how carelessly in conversation such retrospective statements are made, and how, at his very advanced age, the memory of youthful feelings must have come back upon him with peculiar tenderness. Whatever caused him to make that statement, the statement is very questionable. I do not think that he loved Lili more than Frederika; and we shall hereafter have positive evidence that his love for the Frau von Stein, and for his wife, was of a much deeper and more enduring nature. "My love for Lili," he said to Eckermann, "had something so peculiar and delicate that even now it has influenced my style in the narrative of that painfully-happy epoch. When you read the fourth volume of my *Autobiography*, you will see that my love was something quite different from love in novels."

[1] *Gespräche*, iii. p. 299.

Well, the fourth volume is now open to every one, and he must have peculiar powers of divination who can read any profound passion in the narrative. A colder love-history was never written by a poet. There is no emotion warming the narrative; there is little of a loving recollection, gathering all details into one continuous story; it is, indeed, with great difficulty one unravels the story at all. He seems to seize every excuse to interrupt the narrative by general reflections, or by sketches of other people. He speaks of himself as "the youth of whom we now write!" He speaks of her, and her circle, in the vaguest manner; and the feelings which agitated him we must "read between the lines."

It is very true, however, that the love there depicted is unlike the love depicted in novels. In novels, whatever may be the amount of foolishness with which the writers adumbrate their ideal of the passion, this truth, at least, is everywhere set forth, that to love we must render up body and soul, heart and mind, all interests and all desires, all prudences and all ambitions, identifying our being with that of another, in union to become elevated. To love is for the soul to choose a companion, and travel with it along the perilous defiles and winding ways of life; mutually sustaining, when the path is terrible with dangers, mutually exhorting, when it is rugged with obstructions, and mutually rejoicing, when rich broad plains and sunny slopes make the journey a delight, showing in the quiet distance the resting-place we all seek in this world.

It was not such companionship he sought with Lili; it was not such self-devotion which made him restlessly happy in her love. This child of sixteen, in all the merciless grace of maidenhood, proudly conscious of her power, ensnared his roving heart through the lures of passionate desire, but she never touched his soul; as the story we have to tell will sufficiently prove.

Anna Elizabeth Schönemann, immortalised as Lili, was the daughter of a great banker in Frankfurt, who lived in the splendid style of merchant princes. She was sixteen when Goethe first fell in love with her. The age is significant. It was somewhat the age of Frederika, Lotte, Antoinette, and Maximiliane. An age when girlhood has charms of grace and person, of beauty and freshness, which even those will not deny who profoundly feel the superiority of a developed woman. There is poetry in this age; but there

is no depth, no fulness of character. Imagine the wide-sweeping mind of the author of *Götz*, *Faust*, *Prometheus*, *The Wandering Jew*, *Mahomet*, in companionship with the mind of a girl of sixteen!

Nor was Lili an exceptional character. Young, graceful, and charming, she was confessedly a coquette. Early in their acquaintance, in one of those pleasant hours of overflowing egotism wherein lovers take pride in the confession of faults (not without intimation also of nobler qualities), Lili told him the story of her life; told him what a flirt she had been; told him, moreover, that she had tried her spells on him, and was punished by being herself ensnared. Armida found herself spell-bound by Rinaldo; but this Rinaldo followed her into the enchanted gardens more out of adventurous curiosity than love.

There was considerable difference in their stations; and the elegant society of the banker's house was every way discordant to the wild youth, whose thoughts were of Nature, and unconstrained freedom. The balls and concerts to which he followed her were little to his taste. "If," he writes to Augusta von Stolberg, "If you can imagine a Goethe in braided coat, from head to foot in the gallantest costume, amid the glare of chandeliers, fastened to the card table by a pair of bright eyes, surrounded by all sorts of people, driven in endless dissipation from concert to ball, and with frivolous interest making love to a pretty blonde, then will you have a picture of the present Carnival-Goethe." In the following poem he expresses Lili's fascination and his uneasiness; the translation aims at accuracy of meaning rather than poetry, because the meaning is here the motive for my citing the poem:

Wherefore so resistlessly dost draw me
  Into scenes so bright?
Had I not enough to soothe and charm me
  In the lonely night?

Homely in my little room secluded,
  While the moon's bright beams
In a shimmering light fell softly on me,
  As I lay in dreams.

Dreaming thro' the golden hours of rapture
  Soothed my heart to rest,
As I felt thy image sweetly living
  Deep within my breast.

Can it be I sit at yonder table,
Gay with cards and lights,
Forced to meet intolerable people,
Because 'tis *she* invites?

Alas! the gentle bloom of spring no longer
Cheereth my poor heart,
There is only spring, and love, and nature,
Angel, where thou art!

The real Goethe is thus drawn in contrast by himself in his letter to Augusta. "But there is another, who in grey beaver coat, with boots, and a brown silk neckerchief, who, ever living in himself, working and striving, now throwing the innocent feelings of youth into little poems, now the strong spices of life into dramas, sketching his friends in chalk, asking neither right nor left what will be thought of his doings, because he always rises through work a step higher, because he springs at no ideal, but lets his nature develop itself fighting and playing." Here the true chord vibrates. Born for poetry, and not to pass his life in ball-rooms dangling after a pretty blonde who coquetted with him and with others, he feels that his passion is a folly. Now when a man feels that—"Cupid may have tapped him on the shoulder, but I warrant him heart whole." Read this poem, and read in it the struggle:

Heart, my heart, what is this feeling,
That doth weigh on thee so sore?
What new life art thou revealing,
That I know myself no more?
Gone is all that once was dearest,
Gone the care that once was nearest,
Gone the labour, gone the bliss,
Ah! whence comes such change as this?
Art thou spell-bound by the beauty
Of a sweetly blooming face;
Beauteous shape, and look so truthful,
And an all-resistless grace?
When the bonds I strive to sever,
Man myself to flee for ever,
Vain are all my efforts, vain!
And but lead me back again.

With such magic-web she binds me,
To burst through I have no skill;
All-absorbing passion blinds me,
Paralyses my poor will.
In her charmèd sphere delaying,
I must live, her will obeying:
Great, oh! great to me the change!
Love, oh! free me! let me range![1]

[1] No one can be more sensible than I am of the inadequacy of this translation, but the English reader would rather have a poor translation than an original he could not understand; and the German reader has only to turn to the original, if it does not linger in his memory.

Lili coquetted, and her coquetry seems to have cooled his passion for a while, though she knew how to rekindle it. She served him as he served poor Käthchen, in Leipsic; and as in Leipsic he dramatised his experience under the form of *Die Laune des Verliebten*, so here he dramatises the new experience in an opera, *Erwin und Elmire*, wherein the coquetry of a mistress brings a lover to despair—a warning to Lili, which does not seem to have been altogether without effect.

Not only had he to suffer from her thoughtlessness, but also from the thoughtfulness of parents on both sides. It was not a marriage acceptable to either house. The banker's daughter, it was thought, should marry into some rich or noble family. A poet, who belonged to a well-to-do yet comparatively unimportant family, was not exactly the bridegroom most desired. On the other hand, the proud, stiff old Rath did not greatly rejoice in the prospect of having a fine lady for his daughter-in-law. Cornelia, who knew her father, and knew his pedantic ways, wrote strongly against the marriage. Merck, Crespel, Horn, and other friends, were all decidedly opposed to so incompatible a match. But of course the lovers were only thrown closer together by these attempts to separate them.

A certain Demoiselle Delf managed to overcome objections, and gain the consent of both families. "How she commenced it, how she got over the difficulties I know not, but one evening she came to us bringing the consent. 'Take each other's hands,' she cried in a half pathetic, half imperious manner: I advanced to Lili and held out my hand: in it she placed hers, not indeed reluctantly, yet slowly. With a deep sigh we sank into each other's arms greatly agitated." No formal betrothal seems to have taken place. Indeed, the consent which was obtained seems in nowise to have altered the feeling of friends and relatives. The nearer marriage seemed, the more impracticable it appeared. To Goethe, after the first flush of joy had subsided, the idea of marriage was in itself enough to make him uneasy, and to sharpen his sense of the *disparity* in station. The arrival of the two Counts Stolberg, and their proposal that he should accompany them in a tour through Switzerland, gave an excuse for freeing himself from Lili, "as an experiment to try whether he could renounce her."

Before accompanying him on his journey, it is necessary to cast a retrospective glance at some biographical details, omitted while the story of Lili was narrated. The mornings

were devoted to poetry, the middle of the day to jurisprudence. Poetry was the breathing-room of his heart. In it he sought to escape from the burden of intolerable doubts. "If I did not write dramas I should be lost," he tells Augusta von Stolberg. Among these dramas we must place *Stella*, for which, as we learn from a letter to Merck, the publisher offered twenty dollars,—that is to say, three pounds sterling. What an insight this gives into the state of Literature; the author of two immensely popular works is offered three pounds for a drama in five acts! Poor Schiller, subsequently, was glad to write histories and translate memoirs for fifteen or eighteen shillings a sheet of sixteen pages.

In *Stella* I can trace no biographical element, and perhaps the absence of this element makes the weakness of the drama. A poorer production was never owned by a great poet; although there have not been wanting critics to see in this also the broad handling of a master. It is the old story of the Count von Gleichen and his two wives. Fernando has deserted his wife, and formed an attachment to Stella; but the peculiarity of the situation is, that he quitted Cecilia, his wife, from no assignable cause, without even having outlived his love for her. He has indeed every reason to respect and cherish her as the mother of his child, and as a high-principled, virtuous woman; but he flies from her like a coward, flies to one more passionate, because she gives him the transports of passion in exchange for his wife's calm affection. The two women meet, and discover their love for the same man.

Here is a fine dramatic collision. On the one side Fernando sees Duty in the shape of a noble, suffering wife, and an engaging daughter; on the other, Passion in the shape of a fascinating mistress. But with this suggestive subject Goethe has done little. He shows us the contemptible weakness of the wavering Fernando, but the subject he has not powerfully wrought out. As I cannot recommend any one to read this play, the two masterly touches it contains may here be cited. The following is delicately observed:

We women believe in men! *In the ardour of passion they deceive themselves, how then can we help being deceived by them?*

This also is charming: Ferdinand returns to Stella after a long absence, and in their endearments she says:

Stella. How we love you! We do not think of the grief you cause us!
Fernando (*stroking her hair*). And has the grief made your hair grey? It

is fortunate your hair is so golden . . . nay, none seems to have fallen out! (*Takes the comb from her hair, which falls on her shoulders. He then twines the hair round his arm, exclaiming:*) Rinaldo once more in the ancient chains!

Artists complain of the dearth of subjects; will no one try his hand at that? Originally the dénouement of this "Play for lovers" (as it was called) solved the difficulty by a romantic piece of bigamy. Fernando is about to fly with Cecilia—about to return to his duty, when his wife—compassionating the situation of Stella, if Fernando should leave her—resolves to sacrifice her conjugal claims, and to *share* him with Stella! The curtain falls as he embraces them both, exclaiming, "Mine! mine!"

This roused vehement opposition. It was said to be a plea in favour of bigamy. The public dimly felt that instead of being a proper solution of the problem, it was on the whole rather ridiculous. Still more unsatisfactory however, if deeply considered, is the dénouement which was added when the play was produced at Weimar, and which now takes the place of the original in his collected works. Therein Fernando, unable to quit Stella, and unable to quit his wife, weeps with both, and blows his brains out. This is an *evasion* of the difficulty, not a solution.

In 1798, a feeble translation of *Stella* was published in England, and suggested to Canning his admirable caricature, *The Rovers*, familiar to all readers of the *Antijacobin*. Among the ludicrous passages of this parody is the famous vow of friendship:

"*Matilda.* A sudden thought strikes me. Let us swear an eternal friendship.

"*Cecilia.* Let us agree to live together."

But this is really a very slight variation from the original:

Stella. Madame! Da fährt mir ein Gedanke durch den Kopf—Wir wollen einander das seyn, was sie uns hätten werden sollen! Wir wollen beisammen bleiben!—Ihre hand!—Von diesen Augenblick an, lass' ich Sie nicht!

Besides *Stella*, he seemed to have worked at *Faust*, and to have written the opera of *Claudine von Villa Bella*, several passages for Lavater's *Physiognomy*, and many smaller poems.

The Stolbergs, with whom the Swiss journey was made, were two ardent admirers of Klopstock, and two specimens of the defiant "genius" class which scorned convention. They

hated imaginary tyrants; outraged sober citizens by their reckless recurrence to a supposed state of nature; and astonished sensible citizens by their exaggerated notions of friendship. Merck was pitiless in his sarcasms and warnings. He could not tolerate the idea of Goethe's travelling with these *Burschen*. But Goethe had too much of kindred devilry in him, breaking out at moments, to object to the wildness of his companions; though he began to suspect all was not right when, after violating every other *convenance*, they insisted on bathing in public. Nature having nothing to say against naked youths in the bright sunshine, what business had old Humdrum to cover its eyes with modest hands, and pretend to be shocked? However, so little prepossessed was Humdrum in favour of the Nude, that stones were showered upon these children of Nature; a criticism which effectively modified their practice, if it failed to alter their views.

Drinking the health of Stolberg's mistress, and then dashing the glasses against the wall to prevent their being desecrated by other lips after so solemn a consecration (a process which looked less heroic when *item'd* in the bill next day), and otherwise demeaning themselves like true children of "genius," they passed a wild and merry time. This journey need not longer detain us. Two visits alone deserve mention. One was to Karl August, who was then in Karlsruhe arranging his marriage with the Princess Luise, and who very pressingly invited the poet to Weimar. The other was to his sister Cornelia, who earnestly set before him all the objections to a marriage with Lili. "I made no promises," he says, "although forced to confess that she had convinced me. I left her with that strange feeling in my heart with which passion nourishes itself; for the boy Cupid clings obstinately to the garment of Hope even when she is preparing with long strides to depart." The image of Lili haunted him amid the lovely scenes of Nature:

> Dearest Lili, if I did not love thee
> How entrancing were a scene like this!
> Yet, my Lili, if I did not love thee,
> What were any bliss?

It was her image which endeared him to his native land. His father, always desirous he should see Italy, was now doubly anxious he should go there, as the surest means of a separation from Lili. But "Lombardy and Italy," says the poet, "lay before me a strange land; while the dear

home of Germany lay behind, full of sweet domesticities, and where—let me confess it—*she* lived who so long had enchained me, in whom my existence was centred. A little golden heart, which in my happiest hours I had received from her, still hung round my neck. I drew it forth and covered it with kisses."

On his return to Frankfurt he learned that Lili's friends had taken advantage of his absence, to try and bring about a separation, arguing, not without justice, that his absence was a proof of lukewarmness. But Lili remained firm; and it was said that she had declared herself willing to go with him to America. A sentence from the *Autobiography* is worth quoting, as a specimen of that love "so unlike the love to be found in novels," which he declared had given a peculiar tone to his narrative. It is in reference to this willingness of Lili to go to America: "the very thing which should have animated my hopes depressed them. My fair paternal house, only a few hundred paces from hers, was after all more endurable and attractive than a remote, hazardous spot beyond the seas!" A sentence which recalls Gibbon's antithesis, on his resignation of his early love: "I sighed as a lover, I obeyed as a son."

He was restless and unhappy during these months, for he was not strong enough to give up Lili, nor sufficiently in love to marry her; jealous of those who surrounded her, hurt by her coldness, he was every now and then led captive by her tenderness. There were moments when bygone days seemed once more restored, and then instantly vanished again. His poem of *Lili's Menagerie* expresses his surly disgust at the familiar faces which surround her. The Bear of the menagerie is a portrait of himself.

Turning to Art for consolation, he began the tragedy of *Egmont*, which he completed many years afterwards in Italy. It was a work which demanded more repose than could be found in his present condition, and I hasten to the dénouement of an episode, which, amid fluctuations of feeling, steadily advanced to an end that must have been foreseen. The betrothal was cancelled. He was once more free. Free, but not happy. His heart still yearned for her, rather because there lay in his nature a need of loving, than because she was the woman fitted to share his life. He lingered about the house o' nights, wrapped in his mantle, satisfied if he could catch a glimpse of her shadow on the blind, as she moved

about the room. One night he heard her singing at the piano. His pulses throbbed, as he distinguished his own song :—

> Wherefore so resistlessly dost draw me
> Into scenes so bright?—

the song he had written in the morning of their happiness! Her voice ceased. She rose, and walked up and down the room, little dreaming that her lover was beneath her window.

To give decision to his wavering feelings, there came, most opportunely, a visitor to Frankfurt. This was in September. Karl August, with his bride, on his way to Weimar, once more pressed him to spend a few weeks at his court. The rapid inclination which had sprung up between the Prince and the Poet—the desire to see something of the great world—the desire, moreover, to quit Frankfurt, all combined to make him eagerly accept the invitation. His father, indeed, tried to dissuade him; partly because he did not like the intercourse of plain citizens with princes; partly because the recent experience of Voltaire with Frederick the Great seemed to point to an inevitable termination in disgrace, if not evaded by servility. His consent was extorted at last, however, and Goethe quitted for ever the paternal roof.

BOOK THE FOURTH

1775 TO 1779

"Quis novus hic nostris successit sedibus hospes?
Quem sese ore ferens! quam forti pectore et armis!
Credo equidem, nec vana fides, genus esse Deorum."
—*Virgil.*

"Tolle Zeiten hab' ich erlebt und hab' nicht ermangelt,
Selbst auch thöricht zu sein wie es die Zeit mir gebot."

CHAPTER I

WEIMAR IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

On the 7th of November 1775, Goethe, aged twenty-six, arrived at the little city on the banks of the Ilm, where his long residence was to confer on an insignificant Duchy the immortal renown of a German Athens.

Small indeed is the space occupied on the map by the Duchy of Saxe-Weimar; yet the historian of the German courts declares, and truly, that after Berlin there is no court of which the nation is so proud.[1] Frederick the Great and Wolfgang Goethe have raised these courts into centres of undying interest. Of Weimar it is necessary we should form a distinct idea, if we would understand the outward life of the poet.

Klein ist unter den Fürsten Germaniens freilich der meine,
Kurz und schmal ist sein Land, mässig nur was er vermag.

"Small among German princes is mine, poor and narrow his kingdom, limited his power of doing good." Thus sings Goethe in that poem, so honourable to both, wherein he acknowledges his debt to Karl August. The geographical importance of Weimar was, and is, small; but we in England have proud reason to know how great a place in the world can be filled by a nation whose place is trivial on the map.

[1] Vehse: *Geschichte der Deutschen Höfe seit der Reformation*, vol. xxviii. p. 3.

We know, moreover, that the Athens, which it is the pride of Weimar to claim as a patronymic, was but a dot upon the surface of Europe, a dot of earth, feeding some twenty thousand freemen, who not only extended the empire of their arms from Eubœa to the Thracian Bosphorus, but who left their glories in Literature, Philosophy, and Art, as marvels and as models for the civilised world. It is interesting therefore to know how small this Duchy of Saxe-Weimar was, that we may appreciate the influence exercised by means so circumscribed. We must know how absurdly scant the income of its generous prince, who, as I am credibly informed, would occasionally supply the deficiencies of his purse by the princely unprinceliness of selling to the Jews a diamond ring, or ancestral snuff-box, that he might hand the proceeds to some struggling artist or poet. I mention this lest it should be supposed that a sarcastic spirit has dictated the enumeration of unimposing details, in the following attempt to reconstruct some image of Weimar and its court.

Weimar is an ancient city on the Ilm, a small stream rising in the Thuringian forests, and losing itself in the Saal, at Jena; this stream on which the sole navigation seems to be that of ducks, meanders peacefully through pleasant valleys, except during the rainy season, when mountain-torrents swell its current, and overflow its banks. The Trent, between Trentham and Stafford—"the smug and silver Trent" as Shakspeare calls it—will give an idea of this stream. The town is charmingly placed in the Ilm valley, and stands some eight hundred feet above the level of the sea. "Weimar," says the old topographer, Mathew Merian, "is *Weinmar*, because it was the wine market for Jena and its environs. Others say it was because some one here in ancient days began to plant the vine, who was hence called *Weinmayer*. But of this each reader may believe just what he pleases." [1]

On a first acquaintance, Weimar seems more like a village bordering a park, than a capital with a court, having all courtly environments. It is so quiet, so simple; and although ancient in its architecture, has none of the picturesqueness which delights the eye in most old German cities. The stone-coloured, light-brown, and apple-green houses have high-peaked slanting roofs, but no quaint gables, no caprices

[1] *Topographia Superioris Saxoniæ Thuringiæ*, &c., 1650, p. 188.

of architectural fancy, none of the mingling of varied styles which elsewhere charms the traveller. One learns to love its quiet simple streets, and pleasant paths, fit theatre for the simple actors moving across the scene; but one must live there some time to discover its charm. The aspect it presented, when Goethe arrived, was of course very different from that presented now; but by diligent inquiry we may get some rough image of the place restored. First be it noted that the city walls were still erect; gates and portcullis still spoke of days of warfare. Within these walls were six or seven hundred houses, not more, most of them very ancient. Under these roofs were about seven thousand inhabitants—for the most part not handsome. The city gates were strictly guarded. No one could pass through them in cart or carriage without leaving his name in the sentinel's book; even Goethe, minister and favourite, could not escape this tiresome formality, as we gather from one of his letters to the Frau von Stein, directing her to go out alone, and meet him beyond the gates, lest their exit together should be known. During Sunday service a chain was thrown across the streets leading to the church, to bar out all passengers, a practice to this day partially retained: the chain is fastened, but the passengers step over it without ceremony. There was little safety at night in those silent streets; for if you were in no great danger from marauders, you were in constant danger of breaking a limb in some hole or other; the idea of lighting streets not having presented itself to the Thuringian mind. In the year 1685, the streets of London were first lighted with lamps; in 1775 Germany had not yet ventured on that experiment. If in 1854 Weimar is still innocent of gas, and perplexes its inhabitants with the dim obscurity of an occasional oil-lamp slung on a cord across the streets, we can understand that in 1775 it had not even advanced so far. And our supposition is exact.[1]

The palace, which now forms three sides of a quadrangle, and is truly palatial in appearance, was in ashes when Goethe arrived. The ducal pair inhabited the Fürstenhaus, which stands opposite. The park was not in existence. In its place

[1] In a decree made at Cassel, in 1775, this sentence is noticeable: "In every house as soon as the alarum sounds at night, every inhabitant must hold out a lighted lantern, in order that the people may find their way in the streets." Quoted by BIEDERMANN: *Deutschland in 18ten Jahrhundert*, i. p. 370.

there was the *Welsche Garten*, a garden arranged after the pattern of Versailles, with trees trimmed into set shapes, with square beds, canals, bridges, and a Babylonic spiral tower called *Die Schnecke*, in which the people assembled to hear music, and to enjoy punch and sweet cakes. To the left of this garden stood the nucleus of the present park, and a wooded mass stretching as far as Upper Weimar.

Saxe-Weimar has no trade, no manufactures, no animation of commercial, political, or even theological activity. This part of Saxony, be it remembered, was the home and shelter of Protestantism in its birth. Only a few miles from Weimar stands the Wartburg, where Luther, in the disguise of Squire George, lived in safety, translating the Bible, and hurling his inkstand at the head of Satan, like a roughhanded disputant as he was. In the market-place of Weimar stand, to this day, two houses from the windows of which Tetzel advertised his indulgences, and Luther afterwards in fiery indignation fulminated against them. These records of religious struggle still remain, but are no longer suggestions for the continuance of the strife. The fire is burnt out; and perhaps in no city of Europe is theology so placid, so entirely at rest. The Wartburg still rears its picturesque eminence over the lovely Thuringian valleys; and Luther's room is visited by thousands of pilgrims; but in this very palace of the Wartburg, besides the room where Luther struggled with Satan, the visitors are shown the Banqueting Hall of the Minnesingers, where poet challenged poet, and the *Sängerkrieg*, or Minstrels' Contest, was celebrated. The contrast may be carried further. It may be taken as a symbol of the intellectual condition of Saxe-Weimar, that while the *relics* of Luther are simply preserved, the Minstrel Hall is now being restored in more than its pristine splendour. Lutheran theology is crumbling away, just as the famous *inkspot* has disappeared beneath the gradual scrapings of visitors' penknives; but the minstrelsy of which the Germans are so proud, daily receives fresh honour and adulation. Nor is this adulation a mere revival. Every year the Wartburg saw assembled the members of that numerous family (the Bachs) which, driven from Hungary in the early period of Reform, had settled in Saxony, and had given, besides the great John Sebastian Bach, many noble musicians to the world. Too numerous to gain a livelihood in one city, the Bachs agreed to meet every year at the Wartburg. This custom, which was continued till the close of the eighteenth

century, not only presented the singular spectacle of one family consisting of no less than a hundred and twenty musicians, but was also the occasion of musical entertainments such as were never heard before. They began by religious hymns, sung in chorus; they then took for their theme some popular song, comic or licentious, varying it by the improvisations of four, five, or six parts; these improvisations were named *Quolibets*, and are considered by many writers to have been the origin of German opera.

The theologic fire has long burnt itself out in Thuringia. In Weimar, where Luther preached, another preacher came, whom we know as Goethe. In the old church there is one portrait of Luther, painted by his friend Lucas Kranach, greatly prized, as well it may be; but for this one portrait of Luther, there are a hundred of Goethe. It is not Luther, but Goethe, they think of here; poetry, not theology, is the glory of Weimar. And, corresponding with this, we find the dominant characteristic of the place to be no magnificent church, no picturesque ancient buildings, no visible image of the earlier ages, but the sweet serenity of a lovely park. The park fills the foreground of the picture, and always rises first in the memory. Any one who has spent happy hours wandering through its sunny walks and winding shades, watching its beauties changing through the fulness of summer, and the striking contrasts of autumn as it deepens into winter, will easily understand how Goethe could have been content to live in so small a city, which had, besides its nest of friends, so charming a park. It was indeed mainly his own creation; and as it filled a large space in his life, it demands more than a passing allusion here.

Southwards from the palace it begins, with no obstacle of wall or iron gate, servant or sentinel, to *seem* to shut us out, so let us enter and look round. In the dew of morning, and in the silence of moonlight, we may wander undisturbed as if in our own grounds. The land stretches for miles away without barrier; park and yellow cornlands forming one friendly expanse. If we pass into it from the palace gates, a winding path to the right conducts us into the Belvedere Allée: a magnificent avenue of chestnut trees, two miles long, stretching from the new street to the summer palace of Belvedere. This affords a shaded promenade along the park, in summer grateful for its coolness, in autumn looking like an avenue of golden trees. It terminates in the gardens of the Belvedere, which

has its park also beautifully disposed. Here the Weimarians resort, to enjoy the fresh air after their fashion, namely, with accompaniments of bad beer, questionable coffee, and detestable tobacco.

If, instead of turning into the Belvedere Allée, we keep within the park, our walks are so numerous that choice becomes perplexing. Let us cross the *Stern Brücke*, a bridge leading from the palace. Turning to our right we pass along through noble trees, charmed by

> "The sound of a hidden brook
> In the leafy month of June,
> Which to the quiet trees all night
> Singeth a quiet tune."

We reach the broad road leading to Upper Weimar. On this road, which skirts a meadow washed by the Ilm, we shall pass Goethe's *Gartenhaus* (Garden House, to be described hereafter), and then winding round the meadow, cross another bridge, and enter a shadowy path, picturesque with well-grouped trees—the solemn pine, the beech, whose dark green patches of moss increase the brilliancy of its silver bark, the weeping birch with its airy elegance of form, the plane tree, the elm, the chestnut and the mountain ash, brilliant with berries hanging like clusters of coral against the deep blue of the sky. One steep side of this path is craggy with masses of moss-covered rock; beneath the other flows the Ilm. A few paces from the bridge which leads us here, stands the *Borkenhaus* (Bark House), a hermit's hut, erected by Goethe for a fête of the duchess, and subsequently the favourite residence of the duke. It is only twenty feet long and fourteen deep, built entirely of wood, and plastered (so to speak) with the bark of trees. It rests against a rock amid the trees, and is surrounded by a wooden gallery, reached by rough wooden steps. Where is the prince who would live in such a hut nowadays? Where are the ministers who would attend council in such a hut? Yet, here Karl August lived alone, glad to escape from the tedium of etiquette, and the palling pleasures of a little court. Here he debated affairs of state, not less momentous to him because they were trivial in European politics. Here he bathed in the Ilm running beneath. Here he could see the Garden House of his poet, and telegraph to him across the Park. In this single room, which was at once dining-room, council-chamber, study, and bedroom, the manly duke lived alone for months.

From the *Borkenhaus* a small flight of stone steps conducts us to a mimic Ruin, and thence a narrow winding path leads to a stone monument, interesting as a witness to the growth of a mythos. It is an antique column, four feet high, round which a serpent winds, in the act of devouring the offering cakes on the top. The inscription says, *Genio Loci.* But the Weimer *plebs*, disregarding antique symbols, and imperfectly acquainted with Virgil, has a legend to tell; a legend sprung, no one knows whence, rapid and mysterious as the growth of fungi, like most legends, to satisfy the imperious craving for *explanations;* a legend which certifies how, formerly, a huge serpent dwelt in this spot, the terror of Weimar, until a cunning baker bethought him of placing poisoned cakes within the monster's reach; and when the greedy ignorance of the serpent had relieved Weimar of the monster, a grateful people erected this monument to an energetic and inventive baker. *Et voilà, comme on écrit l'histoire.*

I will not fatigue the reader by dragging him all over this much loved park, which must be enjoyed directly, not through description;[1] enough for present purposes if it be added that while the summer palace of Belvedere is connected with Weimar by the chestnut avenue, the summer palace and park of Tiefurt is also connected with Weimar by a richly-wooded road, the Webicht. This Tiefurt is a tiny little place, quite a curiosity of diminutiveness. The park, through which runs a branch of the Ilm, is tiny but picturesque. The upper story of the palace is a labyrinth of tiny rooms, some of them so small that, standing with your back against one wall, you can touch the opposite wall with your hand. It was here the Duchess Amalia lived.

"I have lived here fifty years," said Goethe to Eckermann, "and where have I not been? but I was always glad to return to Weimar." The stranger may wonder wherein lies the charm; but a residence at Weimar soon reveals the secret. Among the charms are the environs. First there is Ettersburg, with its palace, woods, and park, some seven miles distant. Then there is Bercka with its charming valley, dear to all pedestrians, within half-a-dozen miles; a little farther is Jena and its enchanting valley, from whose heights we look down on the sombre city, rendered illustrious by so many

[1] If a fuller description be desired, the reader will find one in the charming pages of Stahr's *Weimar und Jena*, to which I take this occasion of acknowledging a large debt.

sounding names. Jena was to science what Weimar was to poetry. Assembled there were men like Griesbach, Paulus, Baumgarten-Crusius, and Danz, to teach theology; Schelling, Fichte, Hegel, Reinhold, and Fries to teach philosophy; Loder, Hufeland, Oken, Döbereiner, to teach science; Luden, Schultz, and others, for history. The Schlegels and the Humboldts also lent their lustre to the place. Besides Jena, we must mention Ilmenau, Eisenach, the Thuringian forests, and the valley of the Saal: environs attractive enough for the most restless wanderer.

Having thus sketched the main features of the *place*, it will now be desirable to give some indication of the *times*, that we may understand the atmosphere in which Goethe lived. Difficult as the restoration of Weimar has been to me, and only possible through the aid of what still remains from the old time, the difficulty has been tenfold with regard to the more changing aspects of society and opinion. Curiously enough the Germans, famous for writing on all subjects, have produced no work on the state of manners and the domestic conditions of this much-be-written period. The books on Goethe are endless; there is not one which tells us of the outward circumstances among which he moved. From far and wide I have gathered together some details which may aid in forming a picture.

Remember that we are in the middle of the eighteenth century. The French Revolution is as yet only gathering its forces together; nearly twenty years must elapse before the storm breaks. The chasm between that time and our own is vast and deep. Every detail speaks of it. To begin with Science—everywhere the torch of civilisation—it is enough to say that Chemistry did not then exist. Abundant materials indeed existed, but that which makes a Science, viz. the power of *prevision* based on *quantitative* knowledge, was still absent; and Alchemy maintained its place among the conflicting hypotheses of the day. Goethe in Frankfurt was busy with researches after the "virgin earth." The philosopher's stone had many eager seekers. In 1787, Semler sent to the Academy of Berlin his discovery that gold grew in a certain atmospheric salt, when kept moist and warm. Klaproth, in the name of the Academy, examined this salt, and found indeed gold leaf in it—which had been put there by Semler's servant to encourage his master's credulity. This age, so incredulous in religion, was credulous in science. In spite of

all the labours of the encyclopedists, in spite of all the philosophic and religious "enlightenment," in spite of Voltaire and La Mettrie, it was possible for Count St. Germain and Cagliostro to delude thousands: and Casanova found a dupe in the Marquise d'Urfé, who believed he could restore her youth, and make the moon impregnate her! It was in 1774 that Mesmer astonished Vienna with his marvels of mystic magnetism. The secret societies of Freemasons and Illuminati, mystic in their ceremonies and chimerical in their hopes—now in quest of the philosopher's stone, now in quest of the perfectibility of mankind—a mixture of religious, political, and mystical reveries, flourished in all parts of Germany, and in all circles.

With Science in so imperfect a condition, we are sure to find a corresponding poverty in material comfort and luxury. High-roads, for example, were only found in certain parts of Germany; Prussia had no chaussée till 1787. Milestones were unknown, although fingerposts existed. Instead of facilitating the transit of travellers, it was thought good political economy to obstruct them, for the longer they remained the more money they spent in the country. A century earlier, stage-coaches were known in England; but in Germany, public conveyances, very rude to this day in places where no railway exists, were few and miserable; nothing but open carts with unstuffed seats. Diligences on springs were unknown before 1800; and what they were, even twenty years ago, many readers doubtless remember. Then as to speed. In 1754 there was "the flying coach" running from Manchester to London, but taking four days and a half on the journey. In 1763 there was a coach between Edinburgh and London, once a month; it passed twelve or fourteen days on the road; though even in our own stage-coach days the distance was performed in forty-eight hours. And as England was a busy nation, always in a hurry, we may gather from these details some idea of the rapidity of German travel. Germans were not flurried by agitations as to loss of time: if you travelled post, it was said with pride that seldom more than an hour's waiting was necessary before the horses were got ready,—at least on frequented routes. Mail travelling was at the rate of five English miles in an hour and a quarter. Letters took nine days from Berlin to Frankfurt, which in 1854 required only twenty-four hours. So slow was the communication of news that, as we learn from the Stein correspondence, the death of Frederick the Great was only known in Carlsbad as

a rumour a week afterward. "By this time," writes Goethe, "you must know in Weimar if it be true." With these obstacles to locomotion, it was natural that men travelled but rarely, and mostly on horseback. What the inns were may be imagined from the infrequency of travellers, and the general state of domestic comfort.

The absence of comfort and luxury (luxury as distinguished from ornament) may be gathered from the Memoirs of the time, and from such works as Bertuch's *Mode Journal*. Such necessities as good locks, doors that shut, drawers opening easily, tolerable knives, carts on springs, or beds fit for a Christian of any other than the German persuasion, are still rarities in Thuringia; but in those days, when sewers were undreamed of, and a post-office was only a vision, much that we moderns consider as comfort was necessarily wanting. The furniture, even of palaces, was extremely simple. In the houses of wealthy bourgeois, chairs and tables were of common fir; not until the close of the eighteenth century did mahogany make its appearance. Looking-glasses followed. The chairs were covered with a coarse green cloth; the tables likewise; and carpets are only now beginning to loom upon the national mind as a possible luxury. The windows were hung with woollen curtains, when the extravagance of curtains was ventured on. Easy chairs were unknown; the only arm chair allowed was the so-called *Grandfather's chair*, which was reserved for the dignity of grey hairs, or the feebleness of age.

The *salon de reception*, or drawing-room, into which greatly-honoured visitors were shown, had of course a kind of Sunday splendour, not dimmed by week-day familiarity. There hung the curtains; the walls were adorned with family portraits or some work of native talent; the tables alluring the eye with china, in guise of cups, vases, impossible shepherds and very allegorical dogs. Into this room the honoured visitor was ushered; and there, no matter what the hour, refreshment of some kind was handed. This custom—a compound product of hospitality and bad inns—lingered until lately in England, and perhaps is still not unknown in provincial towns.

On eating and drinking was spent the surplus now devoted to finery. No one then, except gentlemen of the first water, boasted of a gold snuff-box; even a gold-headed cane was an unusual elegance. The dandy contented himself with a

silver watch. The fine lady blazoned herself with a gold watch and heavy chain; but it was an heirloom! To see a modern dinner service glittering with silver, glass, and china, and to think that even the nobility in those days ate off pewter, is enough to make the lapse of time very vivid to us. A silver teapot and teatray were held as princely magnificence.

The manners were rough and simple. The journeymen ate at the same table with their masters, and joined in the coarse jokes which then passed for hilarity. Filial obedience was rigidly enforced; the stick or strap not unfrequently aiding parental authority. Even the brothers exercised an almost paternal authority over their sisters. Indeed, the position of women was by no means such as our women can hear of with patience; not only were they kept under the paternal, marital, and fraternal yoke, but society limited their actions by its prejudices still more than it does now. No woman of the better class of citizens could go out alone; the servant girl followed her to church, to a shop, or even to the promenade.

The coarseness of language may be imagined from our own literature of that period. The roughness of manners is shown by such a scene as that in *Wilhelm Meister*, where the *Schöne Seele* in her confessions (speaking of high, well-born society) narrates how, at an evening party, forfeits were introduced; one of these forfeits is, that a gentleman shall say something gallant to every lady present; he whispers in the ear of a lady, who boxes his ears, and boxes it with such violence that the powder from his hair flies into a lady's eyes; when she is enabled to see again, it is to see that the husband of the lady has drawn his sword, and stabbed the offender, and that a duel, in the very presence of these women, is only prevented by one of the combatants being dragged from the room.

The foregoing survey would be incomplete without some notice of the *prices* of things; the more so as we shall learn hereafter that the pension Karl August gave Schiller was 200 thalers—about £30 of our money; that the salary of Seckendorff as *Kammerherr* was only 600 thalers, or about £100; and that the salary Goethe received, as Councillor of Legation, was only 1200 thalers, about £200 per annum. It is necessary I should indicate something like the real relation of these sums to the expense of living. We find, in Schiller's correspondence with Körner, that he hires a riding-horse for sixpence

a day (vol. i. p. 84), and gets a manuscript fairly copied at the rate of three halfpence a sheet of sixteen pages (vol. i. p. 92); with us the charge is twopence for every seventy-two words; the whole of *Don Carlos* cost but three and sixpence for copying. He hires a furnished apartment, consisting of two rooms and a bedroom, for two pounds twelve and sixpence a quarter (Charlotte von Kalb writing to Jean Paul, November 1776, says his lodgings will only cost him ten dollars, or thirty shillings a quarter); while his male servant, who in case of need can act as secretary, is to be had for eighteen shillings a quarter (vol. i. p. 111). Reckoning up his expenses he says, "Washing, servants, the barber, and such things, all paid quarterly, and none exceeding six shillings: so that, speaking in round numbers, I shall hardly need more than four hundred and fifty dollars" (vol. ii. p. 94)—that is, about £70 a year. Even when he is married, and sees a family growing round him, he says, "With eight hundred dollars I can live here, in Jena, charmingly—*vecht artig*" (vol. ii. p. 153).

It is evident that in Weimar they led no very sumptuous life. A small provincial town overshadowed by a court, its modes of life were the expression of this contrast. The people, a slow, heavy, ungraceful, ignorant, but good-natured, happy, honest race, feeding on black bread and sausages; rising higher, there were the cultivated classes of employés, artists, and professors; and, higher still, the aristocracy. In the theatre, until 1825, the nobility alone were allowed admission to the boxes; and when the Jena students crowded the pit, elbowing out the Weimar public, that public was forced to return home, or jostle with the students for seats in pit and gallery. Even when the theatre was rebuilt, and the bourgeoisie was permitted a place in the boxes, its place was on the left side of the house, the right being vigorously reserved for the *Vons*. This continued until 1848; since that year of revolutions the public has had the place it can pay for.

It is quite true, the Weimar court but little corresponded with those conceptions of grandeur, magnificence, and historical or political importance, with which the name of court is usually associated. But just as in gambling the feelings are agitated less by the greatness of the stake than by the variations of fortune, so in the social gambling of court intrigue, there is the same ambition and agitation, whether the green cloth be an empire or a duchy. Within its limits Saxe-Weimar displayed all that an imperial court displays in larger proportions: it had

its ministers, its army, its chamberlains, pages, and sycophants. Court favour, and disgrace, elevated and depressed, as if they had been imperial smiles, or autocratic frowns. A standing army of six hundred men, with cavalry of fifty hussars, had its War Department, with war minister, secretary, and clerk.[1]

As the nobles formed the predominating element of Weimar, we see at once how, in spite of the influence of Karl August, and the remarkable men he assembled round him, no real public for Art could be found there. Some of the courtiers played more or less with Art, some had real feeling for it; but the majority set decided faces against all the *beaux esprits*. When the Duchess Amalia travelled with Merck in 1778, Weimar was loud in anticipatory grumblings: "She will doubtless bring back some *bel esprit* picked up *en route!*" was the common cry. And really when we have learned, as we shall learn in a future chapter, the habits of these *beaux esprits*, and their way of making life "genial," impartiality will force us to confess that this imperfect sympathy on the part of the *Vons* was not without its reason.

Not without profound significance is this fact that in Weimar the poet found a Circle, but no Public. To welcome his productions there were friends and admirers; there was no Nation. Germany had no public; nor has it to this day. It was, and is, a collection of cities, not a Nation. To appreciate by contrast the full significance of such a condition we must look at Greece and Rome. There the history of Art tells the same story as is everywhere told by the history of human effort. It tells us that to reach the height of perfection there must be the co-operation of the Nation with individual Genius. Thus it is necessary for the development of science that science should cease to be the speculation of a few, and become the minister of the many; from the constant pressure of unsatisfied *wants*, science receives its energetic stimulus; and its highest reward is the satisfaction of those wants. In Art the same law holds. The whole Athenian Nation co-operated with its artists; and this is one cause why Athenian Art rose into unsurpassed splendour. Art was not the occupation of a few, ministering to the luxury of a few; it was the luxury of all. Its triumphs were not hidden in galleries and museums; they blazed in the noonday sun; they were admired and criticised by the

[1] Lest this should appear too ridiculous, I will add that one of the small German princes (the Graf von Limburg Styrum) kept a corps of hussars, which consisted of a colonel, six officers, and two privates!

whole people; and, as Aristotle expressly says, every free citizen was from youth upwards a critic of Art. Sophocles wrote for all Athens, and by all Athens was applauded. The theatre was open to all free citizens. Phidias and Praxiteles, Scopas and Myron, wrought their marvels in brass and marble, as expressions of a national faith, and the delights of a national mind. Temples and market-places, public groves and public walks, were the galleries wherein these sculptors placed their works. The public treasury was liberal in its rewards; and the rivalry of private munificence was not displayed to secure work for private galleries, but to enrich the public possessions. In this spirit the citizens of Gnidos chose to continue the payment of an onerous tribute rather than suffer their statue of Venus to quit their city. And when some murmurs rose against the expense which Pericles was incurring in the building of the Parthenon, he silenced those murmurs by the threat of furnishing the money from his private purse, and then placing his name on the majestic work.

Stahr, who has eloquently described the effects of such national co-operation in Art, compares the similar influence of publicity during the Middle Ages, when the great painters and sculptors placed their works in cathedrals,—open all day long, in council-houses and market-places, whither the people thronged,—with the fact that in our day Art finds refuge in the galleries of private persons, or in museums closed on Sundays and holidays.[1]

Nor is this all. The effect of Art upon the Nation is visible in the striking fact that in Greece and Rome the truly great men were crowned by the public, not neglected for any artist who pandered to the fashion and the tastes of the few, or who flattered the *first* impressions of the many. It was young Phidias whom the Athenians chose to carve the statue of Pallas Athene, and to build the Parthenon. Suppose Phidias had been an Englishman, would he have been selected by government to give the nation a statue of Wellington, or to build the Houses of Parliament? The names most reverenced by contemporaries in Greece, and in Italy, are the names which posterity has declared to be the highest. Necessarily so. The verdict of the public, when that public includes the whole intelligence of the nation, *must* be the correct verdict in Art.

[1] See his *Torso*, pp. 147–151.

CHAPTER II

THE NOTABILITIES OF WEIMAR

HAVING endeavoured to reconstruct some image of Weimar and its people, we may now descend from generals to particulars, and sketch rapidly the principal figures which will move across that scene, during the first years of Goethe's residence.

The Dowager DUCHESS AMALIA is a very interesting figure. She had the Brunswick blood, with its capriciousness, love of pleasure, and frivolity; but she had also a mind well cultivated, not poorly gifted, and ready in appreciating men of talent. Although a niece of Frederick the Great, she did not follow the princely fashion of the day, and turn her eyes away from German literature, to fix them only upon France. She chose Wieland as the tutor of her son, and made him her own dear friend. Schiller, a rash judge of persons, and not very keen in his perception of woman's character, wrote to Körner, after his first interview with the duchess: "She has made no conquest of me. I cannot like her physiognomy. Her intellect is extremely limited, nothing interests her but what is based on the sensuous: hence the taste she has, or affects to have, for music, painting, and the rest. She is a composer herself, and has set Goethe's *Erwin und Elmire* to music. She speaks little; but has, at any rate, the merit of throwing aside all the stiffness of ceremony." Schiller's verdict cannot be accepted by any one who reflects, that, besides her appreciation of men of talent, who found delight in her society, she learned Greek from Wieland, read Aristophanes, and translated Propertius, was a musical composer, a tolerable judge of art, discussed politics with the Abbé Raynal and Greek and Italian Literature with Villoison; that, moreover, with all her multifarious reading and enjoyments, she contrived to superintend the education of her sons, and manage her kingdom with unusual success. This is not to be done by an "extremely limited intellect."

The "sensuous basis" alluded to by Schiller was certainly there. One sees it in her portraits. One sees it also in the glimpses of her joyous, pleasure-loving existence. Biographers and eulogists omit such details; for in general the biographical mind moves only through periods of rhetoric, which may be

applied with equal felicity to every prince or princess of whom it is the cue to speak. But it is by such details that the image of the duchess can alone be made a *living* one. Here, for example, is a sketch of her, given by an anonymous traveller.[1] "She is small in stature, good-looking, with a very *spirituelle* physiognomy; she has the Brunswick nose, lovely hands and feet, a light yet princely gait, speaks well but rapidly, and has something amiable and fascinating in her nature. . . . This evening there was a redoute, tickets one gulden (*two francs*) each. The court arrived at eight. The duchess was magnificent, *en domino*, and brilliant with jewels. She dances well, lightly, and gracefully. The young princes, who were attired as *Zephyr* and *Amour*, also danced well. The masquerade was very full, lively, and varied. A faro table was laid out: the smallest stake being half a gulden. The duchess staked dollars and half-louis, played generously and lost. But as she was glad to dance, she did not play long. She danced with every mask who invited her, and stayed till nearly three o'clock, when almost every one had gone home." The same writer also speaks of another redoute. "The duchess appeared *en reine grecque*, a very beautiful costume, which suited her well. The ball was very brilliant; some students from Jena were there. At the last ball of the season, the duchess sent me one of her own Savoyard dresses, and I was *frisé* and dressed like a woman by the Countess von Görtz's maid. The young count was likewise dressed as a woman, and we went to court so, dined there, and drove thence to the ball, which lasted till six o'clock."

This pleasure-loving duchess, who knew so well how to manage her kingdom, cared little for the dignities of her state. According to Wieland, she lived sometimes in student fashion, especially at Belvedere, where student-songs, not always the most decorous, rang joyously through the moonlit gardens. Driving once with seven friends in a haycart from Tiefurt, and overtaken by a storm, she made no more ado but drew over her light clothing Wieland's great coat, and in *that* costume drove on.

Her letters, especially those to Goethe's mother, several of which I have seen, have great heartiness, and the most complete absence of anything like formality. In one of them, I remember, she apologises for not having written for some time,

[1] Quoted from BERNOUILLI by VEHSE: *Geschichte der Deutschen Höfe*, vol. xxviii. p. 60.

not from want of friendship, but lack of news: to show that she has been thinking of *Frau Aja*, she sends her a pair of garters worked by herself. "*Liebe Frau Aja!*" she writes on another occasion, "my joy at the receipt of your letter is not easily described, nor will I attempt it, for true feelings are too sacred to be set down in black and white. You know, dear mother, what you are to me, and can believe how infinitely your remembrance of me has rejoiced me."[1]

Beside the figure of the Duchess Amalia, we see that of the merry little humpbacked GÖCHHAUSEN, her maid of honour, by intimates named *Thusnelda*. One sees not why this sprightly little *démon de bonne compagnie* should have been named after the wife of Arminius. She was a great favourite with Amalia, with Karl August also, who was constantly engaged in "wit combats" with her, not always of the mildest. She animated society with her devices, and kept up a voluminous correspondence with wits and notabilities in other cities. She was very fond of Goethe, and wrote constantly to his mother. But Karl August was her darling; perhaps because he plagued her so incessantly. As a sample of the lengths to which tricks were carried, consider the following anecdote, which I have from Frau von Goethe, who had it from her father-in-law, an accomplice in the deed. One night as *Thusnelda* came up the stairs leading to her bedroom, her candle was blown out. Not much heeding this, she went on, reached the gallery into which her bedroom opened, and walked on, *feeling* for the door. There is no great difficulty in finding the door of your own room in the dark, yet Thusnelda groped, and groped, and groped in vain: no lock met her hand, a smooth blank wall allowed her hand to pass and repass over it with increasing confusion. Where was the door? Where was she? After groping some time, her perplexity growing into undefined alarm, she descended to the duchess's room; but she found that closed; the duchess was asleep; and her gentle knockings were not answered. Upstairs she went again, again to pass her hands along the wall, but still to find no door. The night was cold, and she was half-frozen with cold and fear before the mystery was explained: the duke and Goethe had removed her door, and built up the wall in its place.

[1] Here is another extract, which I leave in the original: "Ach Mutter, Mutter!—sie errathen wohl meine Gedanken! was macht der alte Vater? er sollte ja nicht wohl seyn. Grüssen sie ihn von mir, und das tausendmal. Leben Sie wohl, beste Mutter; behalten Sie mir lieb und denken fleissig an ihre Freundin. *Amalia.*"

WIELAND had established his paper, the *Teutsche Merkur*, which was not without its influence. When he ceased to be the prince's tutor, he remained the valued friend of the duchess. He was in all the pleasure parties. So also was EINSIEDEL, who, at first court page, became chamberlain to the Duchess Amalia in 1776. A jovial, careless epicurean; everywhere known as *l'ami*, from his good-nature and eccentricity; filling the mouth of gossip with his extravagances; poet and musician in a small way; actor and inventor of amusements, his name meets us on every page of the Weimar chronicles.

Einsiedel makes us think of CORONA SCHRÖTER, the *Hofsängerin* (singer to the court—we have no such word, because we have no such thing). Goethe had known this beautiful and accomplished creature while he was a student at Leipsic, and when, shortly after his arrival at Weimar, he made an expedition to Leipsic with the duke, he saw her there again, and induced her to come to Weimar. She was the grace of their private theatricals, and the original personator of Iphigenia.

"Als eine Blume zeigt sie sich der Welt,"

says Goethe of her, in that passage wherein he has immortalised her and Mieding.[1] What a description!

She, like a flower, opens to the world.

Corona painted, sang, played, was learned in music, and declaimed with peculiar elegance,—

"The Muses lavished on her every art."

According to Karl August, she was "marble-beautiful, but marble-cold"; Goethe says of her:—

"Und hoch erstaunt, seht Ihr in ihr vereint
Ein Ideal, das Künstlern nur erscheint."[2]

There is a notion current, originating with Riemer, but shown by Schöll to be very improbable, that Goethe had a *liaison* with Corona. I not only agree with Schöll's reasoning, but can corroborate it by the testimony of the Frau von Goethe, who assured me her father-in-law expressly and emphatically

[1] See the poem *Mieding's Tod*.
[2] And gently awed, you feel in her combined
What is Ideal in the artist's mind.

told her that he never had a passion for any actress. Varnhagen von Ense suspects that Corona was privately married to Einsiedel; if not, her letters, still extant although inedited, prove that they were on the footing of lovers.

Another chamberlain, poet, and musician was SECKENDORF, who translated *Werther* into French, a year after Goethe's arrival (*Les Souffrances du Jeune Werther.* Par le B. S. d. S. Erlangen, 1776); and to these gay companions must be added BODE, the translator of Smollett; BERTUCH, the treasurer and the translator of Cervantes; and MUSÆUS, a passionate lover of gardening, who gave Weimar its pleasant *Erholung*, and who might be seen daily crossing the quiet streets with a cup of coffee in one hand, his garden tools in the other, trudging along to that loved retreat. At other times he might be seen plying the ex-drummer, Rüppler, with inspiring *schnapps* to unlock the casket of his memory, wherein were stored the legends and superstitions of the peasantry which Musæus afterwards dressed up in his own style in his celebrated *Volksmärchen*. There was much humour in Musæus; he furnished his Weimar friends with many a pleasant quip and crank. Heinrich Schmidt tells the following. One day Musæus, after a long illness, came to dine with the Schmidts. Every one was amazed at his healthy aspect. He received their reiterated compliments with perfect gravity, till his wife, unable longer to contain herself, confessed that before setting out he had rouged his cheeks![1]

These are the principal figures of Amalia's court. We may now glance at the court of the reigning duke and duchess—Karl August and Luise.

Of the DUCHESS LUISE no one ever speaks but in terms of veneration. She was one of those rare beings who, through circumstances the most trying, as well as through the ordinary details of life, manifest a *noble character*. The Queen of Prussia and the Duchess of Saxe-Weimar are two of the great figures in modern German history; they both opposed the chief man of the age, Napoleon, and were both admired by him for that very opposition. Luise was of a cold temperament, somewhat rigid in her enforcement of etiquette (unlike the dowager), and wore to the last the old costume which had been the fashion in her youth; apt in the early years of her marriage to be a little querulous with her husband, but showing throughout their lives a real and noble friendship for him.

[1] SCHMIDT: *Errinerungen eines weimarischen Veteranen*, p. 21.

And he was worthy of that friendship, much as his strange, and in many respects opposite nature, may have tried her. KARL AUGUST, whom Frederick the Great pronounced, at fourteen, to be the prince, of all he had seen, who gave the greatest promise, was in truth a very mixed, but very admirable, character. He can afford to be looked at more closely and familiarly than most princes. He was a man whose keen appreciation of genius not only drew the most notable men of the day to Weimar, but whose own intrinsically fine qualities *kept* them there. It is easy for a prince to assemble men of talent. It is not easy for a prince to make them remain beside him, in the full employment of their faculties, and in reasonable enjoyment of their position. Karl August was the prince who with the smallest means produced the greatest result in Germany. He was a man of restless activity. His eye was on every part of his dominions; his endeavours to improve the condition of the people were constant. The recently published correspondence shows how active were his intellectual sympathies. In his tastes no man in Germany was so simple, except his dearest friend, Goethe, with whom, indeed, he had many cardinal points in common. I remember, on first seeing their busts together, being struck with a sort of faint family resemblance between them. Karl August might have been a younger brother, considerably "animalised," but still belonging to the family. They had both, on the paternal side, Thuringian blood in their veins; and in many respects Amalia and Frau Aja were akin. But while Karl August had the active, healthy, sensuous, pleasure-loving temperament of his friend, he wanted the *tact* which never allowed Goethe, except in his wildest period, to overstep limits; he wanted the tenderness and chivalry which made the poet so uniformly acceptable to women. He was witty, but his *bon-mots* are mostly of that kind which, repeated after dinner, are not considered fit for drawing-room publication. Very characteristic is it of him, who had bestowed unusual pains in collecting a *Bibliotheca Erotica*, that when Schiller wrote the *Maid of Orleans* he fancied Schiller was going to give another version of *La Pucelle*, and abetted his mistress, the Frau von Heygendorf, in her refusal to play the part of the rehabilitated Maiden! He was rough, soldierly, brusque, and imperious. He was at home when in garrison with Prussian soldiers, but out of his element when at foreign courts, and not always at ease in his own. Goethe describes him longing for his pipe at

the court of Brunswick in 1774: "De son coté notre bon Duc s'ennuie terriblement, il cherche un interet, il n'y voudrait pas etre pour rien, la marche très bien mesurée de tout ce qu'on fait ici le gene, il faut qu'il renonce a sa chere pipe et une fee ne pourroit lui rendre un service plus agreable qu'en changeant ce palais dans une cabane de charbonnier."[1]

In a letter (unprinted), he writes to Goethe, then at Jena, saying he longs to be with him to watch sunrise and sunset, for he can't see the sunset in Gotha, hidden as it is by the crowd of courtiers, who are so *comme il faut*, and know their "fish duty" with such terrible accuracy, that every evening he feels inclined to give himself to the devil. His delight, when not with soldiers, was to be with dogs, or with his poet alone in their simple houses, discussing philosophy, and "talking of lovely things that conquer death." He mingled freely with the people. At Ilmenau he and Goethe put on the miners' dress, descended into the mines, and danced all night with peasant girls. Riding across country, over rock and stream, in manifest peril of his neck; teazing the maids of honour, sometimes carrying this so far as to offend his more princely wife; wandering alone with his dogs, or with some joyous companion; seeking excitement in wine, and in making love to pretty women, without much respect of station; offending by his roughness and wilfulness, though never *estranging* his friends—Karl August, often grieving his admirers, was, with all his errors, a genuine and admirable character. His intellect was active, his judgment, both of men and things, sound and keen. Once, when there was a discussion about appointing Fichte as professor at Jena, one of the opponents placed a work of Fichte's in the duke's hands, as sufficient proof that *such* a teacher could not hold a chair. Karl August read the book—and appointed Fichte. He had great aims; he also had the despotic will which bends circumstances to its determined issues. "He was always in progress," said Goethe to Eckermann; "when anything failed, he dismissed it at once from his mind. I often bothered myself how to excuse this or that failure; but he ignored every shortcoming in the cheerfullest way, and always went forward to something new."

Such was Karl August, as I conceive him from the letters of the period, and from the reports of those who knew him.

[1] *Briefe an Frau von Stein*, iii. p. 85. The French is Goethe's, as also the spelling and accentuation, or rather want of accentuation.

Eight years younger than Goethe, he attached himself to him as to a brother. We shall see this attachment and its reciprocal influence in the following pages; clouds sometimes gather, quarrels and dissatisfaction are not absent (from what long friendship are they absent?); but fifty years of mutual service, and mutual love, proved the genuineness of both their characters.

Among the Weimar notables, FRAU VON STEIN must always have conspicuous eminence. In a future chapter we shall learn more of her. Enough for the present to say that she was *Hofdame* (Lady of Honour) to the Duchess Amalia, and for many years passionately loved by Goethe. Beside her we may mention the COUNTESS VON WERTHER, who was to Karl August what the Baroness von Stein was to Goethe. She, as is well known, is the original of the charming Countess in *Wilhelm Meister*, and her husband was still more eccentric than the eccentric Count. It is related of him that once when the duke and some other illustrious guests were in his chateau, he collected several of his peasants, dressed them in his livery, and blacked their faces to make them pass as negroes!

To close this list we have MAJOR VON KNEBEL, the translator of Lucretius and Propertius, an honest, upright, satirical republican, the intimate friend of Karl August and Goethe, the "philanthropic Timon," as Herder called him, severe against all shams and insincerities, but loving the human nature he declaimed against. As one looks upon his rough, genial, Socratic head, one seems to hear the accents of an independent thoroughly honest nature give weight to what he says.

I have omitted HERDER. He did not come to Weimar till after Goethe, and indeed was drawn thither by Goethe, whose admiration for him, begun at Strasburg, continued unabated. The strange bitterness and love of sarcasm in Herder's nature, which could not repel the young student, did not alter the affection of the man. In one of Goethe's unpublished letters to the Duchess Amalia, there is an urgent appeal on behalf of Herder, whose large family had to be supported on very straitened means; the duke had promised to provide for one of the children, and Goethe writes to Amalia, begging her to do the same for another. No answer coming to this appeal, or at any rate no prompt notice being taken, he writes again more urgently, adding, that if she does not provide for

the child, he (Goethe), out of his small income, will! And this was at a time when Herder was most bitter against Goethe. Well might Merck exclaim: "No one can withstand the disinterestedness of this man!"

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST WILD WEEKS AT WEIMAR

This was the circle into which Goethe entered in all the splendour of youth, beauty, and fame: Youth, which, according to the fine conception of the Greeks, is "the herald of Venus"; Beauty, which those Greeks adored as the splendour of Truth; and Fame, which has at all times been a halo dazzling to mortal eyes. Thus equipped for conquest, how can we wonder that he conquered? Even Amalia, angry with him for having ridiculed her darling Wieland, could not withstand the magic of his presence. Her love of genius left her no choice. She was fascinated by his wild ways, and by his splendid talents. One moment he startled her with a paradox, the next moment he sprang from his seat, waltzing and whirling round the room with antics which made her scream with laughter. And Wieland?—he was conquered at once. He shall speak for himself, in a letter written after their first interview: "How perfectly I felt, at the first glance, he was a man after my own heart! How I loved the magnificent youth as I sat beside him at table! All that I can say (after more than one crisis which I have endured) is this: since that morning my soul is as full of Goethe as a dewdrop of the morning sun. . . . I believe the Godlike creature will remain longer with us than he intended; and if Weimar *can* do anything, his presence will accomplish it." This is very honourable to Wieland: Nestor gazes with unenvious delight upon young Achilles. Heroic eyes are always proud to recognise heroic proportions.

After Wieland and the duchess, the rest were easy to conquer. "He rose like a star in the heavens," says Knebel. "Everybody worshipped him, especially the women." In the costume of his own *Werther*, which was instantly adopted by the duke, he seemed the ideal of a poet. To moderns there are no very sentimental suggestions in a costume which was

composed of blue coat and brass buttons, topboots, and leather breeches, the whole surmounted by powder and pigtail; but in those days this costume was the suggestion of everything tender and romantic. Werther had consecrated it.[1] The duke not only adopted it, but made all around him adopt it also, sometimes paying the tailor's bill himself. Wieland alone was excepted; he was too old for such masqueradings.

Thoroughly to appreciate the effect of Goethe's influence with women, we must remember the state of feeling and opinion at the time. Those were the days of gallantry, the days of

"Puffs, paints, and patches, powders, billets doux."

The laxity of German morals differed from the more audacious licentiousness of France: it had sentimentalism, in lieu of gaiety and luxuriousness, for its basis. The heart of a French marquise was lost over a supper table sparkling with champagne and *bon-mots;* the heart of a German Gräfin yielded more readily to moonlight, melancholy, and a copy of verses. Wit and audacity were the batteries for a Frenchwoman; the German was stormed with sonnets, and a threat of suicide. For the one, Lothario needed sprightliness and *bon ton;* for the other, turbulent disgust at all social arrangements, expressed in interjectional rhetoric, and a deportment outrageous to all conventions. It is needless to add that marriage was to a great extent what Sophie Arnould with terrible wit called it—"the sacrament of adultery"; and that on the subject of the sexes the whole tone of feeling was low. Poor, simple, earnest Schiller, whom no one will accuse of laxity, admired *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, and saw no reason why women should not read it; although to our age the infamy of that book is so great as to stamp a brand upon the society which produced and applauded it. Yet even Schiller, who admired this book, was astounded at the condition of women at Weimar. "There is hardly one of them," he writes to Körner, "who has not had a *liaison*. They are all coquettes. . . . One may very easily fall into an 'affair of the heart,' though it will not *last* any time." It was thought, apparently, that since Eros had wings, he must use them—and fly.

[1] It should be remembered, that in Germany, at that time, *boots* were only worn in very bad weather; and in the presence of women no one ever appeared except in shoes and silk stockings.

With this tone of society we can understand how, as Goethe in after-life confessed to Eckermann, the first years at Weimar were "perplexed with love affairs." A great admirer of women, and greatly admired by them, it was natural he should fall into their snares. Many charmers are named; among them, Fräulein von Kalb, Corona Schröter, and Kotzebue's sister, Amalia: but I am bound to say that, after the most diligent inquiry, I can find *no* reliable evidence for believing any one of those named to have been really loved by him. We must content ourselves with the fact of his having flirted considerably: making love to every bright pair of eyes which for a moment could make him believe what he said.[1]

For the first few months he gave himself up to the excitement of this new life. Among other things he introduced skating. Weimar had hitherto seen no gentleman on the ice; but now, Klopstock having made skating famous by his poetry, Goethe made it fashionable by his daring grace. The duchess soon excelled in the art. Skating on the *Schwansee* became "the rage." Sometimes the banks were illuminated with lamps and torches, and music and fireworks animated the scene. The duchess and ladies, masked as during carnival, were driven in sledges over the noisy ice. "We are somewhat mad here," Goethe writes to Merck, "and play the devil's own game." Wieland's favourite epithet for him was *wüthig*—outrageous; and *wüthig* he was. Strange stories are told of him, now dashing across the ice, now loosening his long hair in Bertuch's room, and, with locks flowing over his shoulders, whirling round in mad Bacchante waltz; and finally, standing in the Jena market-place with the duke, by the hour together, smacking huge sledge whips for a wager. Imagine a duke and a poet thus engaged in a public market-place!

His constant companion, and in all devilries and dissipation his most jovial associate, was Karl August. All ceremony was laid aside between them. They dined together, often shared the same bedroom, and called each other by the brotherly *thou*. "Goethe will never leave this place again," writes Wieland; "K. A. can no longer swim or wade without him. The court, or rather his liaison with the duke, wastes his time, which is really a great pity—and yet—with so magnificent and godlike a creature nothing is ever lost!" Weimar

[1] "Ich log und trog mich bei allen hübschen Gesichtern herum, und hatte den Vortheil immer ein Augenblick zu glauben was ich sagte," he says in a letter to the Frau von Stein, vol. i. p. 5.

was startled in its more respectable circles by the conduct of these two, and their associates: conduct quite in keeping with the period named "the *genial*." [1] In their orgies they drank wine out of skulls (as Byron and his friends did in their wild days), and in ordinary intercourse exhibited but a very mitigated respect for *meum* and *tuum*, borrowing handkerchiefs and waistcoats which were never returned. The favourite epithet of that day was "infinite": Genius drank infinitely, loved infinitely, and swallowed infinite sausages.

But the poet's nature soon wearies of such scenes. After some two months of dissipation, in masking, skating, hunting, drinking, and dicing, the want to be once more among simple people and lovely scenes drove him away from Weimar to Waldeck. Amid the crowded tumult of life he ever kept his soul sequestered; and from the hot air of society be broke impatiently away to the serenity of solitude. While on this journey along the pine-clad mountains, there came over him a feeling of the past, in which the image of Lili painfully reappeared.

He was called back to Weimar by the duke, impatient of his absence; and, while debating in his own mind whether he should accept a place there, or return to Frankfurt, he began to take his seat, as a guest, in the Privy Council. He had tried the court, and now he was about to try what virtue lay in government. "I am here as if at home," so runs one of his letters, "and the duke daily becomes dearer to me." Indeed his father's prognostications had failed. The connection between his son and the duke was of a totally different kind from that between Voltaire and Fritz. In secret, Voltaire despised the verses of his patron, as his patron in secret despised the weakness of Voltaire. A few unguarded expressions were enough to snap the link which bound them together; but a lifetime only deepened the regard of Goethe and Karl August. Nor must it be supposed that their friendship was merely that of boon-companions. Both had high aims and strong wills. Prince Hal might recreate himself with Falstaff, Pistol, Bardolph and the rest; but while chucking Mrs. Quickly under the chin, he knew he was one day to be England's lord. Karl August and Goethe were not the men to lose themselves in the fleeting hours of dissipation; serious, steady business

[1] It is difficult to find an English word to express the German *genial*, which means pertaining to genius. The genial period was the period when every extravagance was excused on the plea of genius.

was transacted almost the moment before some escapade. In their retreat at Ilmenau the poet writes :

> Mein Carl und ich vergessen hier
> Wie seltsam uns ein tiefes Schicksal leitet.
> Und ach ! ich fühl's, im stillen werden wir
> Zu neuen Scenen vorbereitet.

"My Karl and I here forget the strange mysterious Fate which guides us; and I feel that in these quiet moments we are preparing for new scenes." Yes, they learned "in the happy present to forecast the future."

The duke knew what he was doing when he overstepped all precedent, and, in June 1776, elected Goethe to the post of Geheime Legations Rath, with a seat and voice in the Privy Council, and a salary of 1200 thalers. In writing to Goethe's father, the duke intimated that there was absolute freedom of leaving the service at will, and that indeed the appointment was a mere formality, no measure of his affection. "Goethe can have but one position—that of my friend. All others are beneath him."

The post of Geheime Legations Rath at Weimar is not a very magnificent post; and the salary of 1200 thalers (about £200) seems still less magnificent when we remember that at that period the King of Prussia gave the Barberini, an Italian dancer, exactly *ten* times the sum. But, such as it was, the appointment created great noise. Weimar was thunderstruck. The favour shown to Wieland had not passed without scandal; but alarming indeed was this elevation of a Frankfurt bourgeois. A poet, who had gone through none of the routine of business, whose life was anything but "respectable," to be lifted suddenly over the plodding heads of legitimate aspirants! If *this* was to be, what reward could meritorious mediocrity expect? what advantage had slowly-acquired routiniary knowledge?

So murmured scandalised officials and their friends. At last these murmurs expressed themselves distinctly in the shape of a protest. The duke thought the act worthy of a deliberate justification, and with his own hand added these words to the protocol of the acts of his ministry: "Enlightened persons congratulate me on possessing such a man. His genius and capacity are well known. To employ a man of such a stamp in any other functions than those in which he can render available the extraordinary gifts he possesses, is to abuse them. As to the observation that persons of merit may

think themselves unjustly passed over: I observe, in the first place, that nobody to my knowledge, in my service, has a right to reckon on an equal degree of favour; and I add that I will never consent to be governed by mere length of service or rotation in my choice of a person whose functions place him in such immediate relation to myself, and are so important to the happiness of my people. In such a case I shall attend to nothing but the degree of confidence I can repose in the person of my choice. The public opinion which perhaps censures the admission of Dr. Goethe to my council without having passed through the previous steps of Amtmann, Professor, Kammerath, or Regierungsrath, produces no effect on my own judgment. The world forms its opinion on prejudices; but I watch and work—as every man must who wishes to do his duty—not to make a noise, not to attract the applause of the world, but to justify my conduct to God and my conscience."

Assuredly we may echo M. Dumont's sentiment, that "the prince, who, at nineteen, wrote those words, was no ordinary man." He had not only the eye to see greatness, he had also the strong Will to guide his conduct according to his views, untrammelled by routine and formulas. "Say what you will, it is only like can recognise like, and a prince of great capacity will always recognise and cherish greatness in his servants."[1] People saw that the duke was resolved. Murmurs were silenced; or only percolated the gossip of private circles, till other subjects buried them, as all gossip is buried.

The mode of life which the *genial* company led was not only the subject of gossip in Weimar, it grew and grew as scandals grow, *not* losing substance on the way, and reached the ears of distant friends. Thus, only a month before the appointment, Klopstock wrote to Goethe a letter which scandal extorted from friendship.

"HAMBURG, *8th of May* 1776.

"Here is a proof of my friendship, dearest Goethe! It is somewhat difficult, I confess, to give it, but it must be given. Do not fancy that I wish to preach to you about your doings; or that I judge harshly of you because you have other views than mine. But your views and mine quite set aside, what will be the inevitable consequence if your present doings

[1] Goethe in *Eckermann*, iii. p. 232.

continue. The duke, if he continues to drink as he does, instead of strengthening, as he says, his constitution, will ruin it, and will not live long. Young men of powerful constitutions—and that the duke is not—have in this way early perished. The Germans have hitherto, and with justice, complained that their princes would have nothing to do with authors. They now gladly make an exception in favour of the duke. But what a justification will not the other princes have, if you continue your present tone? If only that should happen which I feel will happen! The duchess will perhaps still subdue her pain, for she has a strong, manly intellect. But that pain will become grief! And can *that* be so suppressed? Louisa's grief, Goethe! . . . I must add a word about Stolberg. He goes to Weimar out of friendship for the duke. He must also live well with him. But how? In *his* style? No! unless he, too, becomes altered, he will go away. And then what remains for him? Not in Copenhagen, not in Weimar. I must write to Stolberg; what shall I say to him? You may please yourself about showing this letter to the duke. I have no objection against it. On the contrary; for he is assuredly not yet arrived at that point when he will not listen to the honest word of a friend. KLOPSTOCK."

Goethe's answer, dated the 21st of May, a fortnight later, therefore, runs thus:

"In future, spare us such letters, dear Klopstock! They do no good, and only breed bad blood. You must feel yourself that I have no answer to make. Either I must, like a schoolboy, begin a *Pater peccavi*, or sophistically excuse, or as an honest fellow defend, and perhaps a mingling of all these might express the truth, but to what purpose? Therefore, not a word more between us on this subject. Believe me I should not have a moment's rest if I replied to all such admonitions. It pained the duke a moment to think it was Klopstock. He loves and honours you; you know I do the same. Goodbye. Stolberg must come all the same. We are no worse; and with God's help will be better than what he has seen us."

To this Klopstock indignantly replied:—

"You have much misunderstood the proof of my friendship, which was great, precisely because of my reluctance to mix myself unasked in the affairs of others. And as you include *all* such letters and *all* such admonitions (your expressions are

as strong as that) in the same class with the letter which contained this proof of my friendship, I hereby declare you unworthy of that friendship. Stolberg shall not come, if he listens to me, or rather if he listens to his own conscience."

The breach thus made was never repaired. Stolberg did not come to Weimar; and Klopstock wrote no more.

To return: whatever basis there may have been for the reports which Gossip magnified, certain it is that the duke did not forget the cares of state in these wild orgies. Both he and his friend were very active, and very serious. If Weimar, according to the historian of Germany,[1] stands as an illustrious exception among the German courts, it was because Karl August, upheld by his friend, knew how to carry into earnest practice the axiom of Frederick the Great: "A king is but the first of subjects." Goethe's beneficent activity is seen less in such anecdotes as those often cited of his opening a subscription for Bürger to enable him to complete his translation of *Homer*, and of his relieving Jung Stilling from distress, than in the constant and *democratic* sympathy with which he directed the duke's endeavours.

That he had not the grave deportment of a councillor is very evident. Imagine him as in this anecdote related by Gleim: "Soon after Goethe had written *Werther* I came to Weimar, and wished to know him. I had brought with me the last *Musen Almanack*, a literary novelty, and read here and there a poem to the company in which I passed the evening. While I was reading, a young man, booted and spurred, in a short green shooting-jacket thrown open, came in and mingled with the audience. I had scarcely remarked his entrance. He sat down opposite to me and listened attentively. I scarcely knew what there was about him that particularly struck me, except a pair of brilliant black Italian eyes. But it was decreed that I should know more of him.

"During a short pause, in which some gentlemen and ladies were discussing the merits of the pieces I had read, lauding some and censuring others, the gallant young sportsman (for such I took him to be) arose from his chair, and bowing with a most courteous and ingratiating air to me, offered to relieve me from time to time in reading, lest I should be tired. I could do no less than accept so polite an offer, and immediately handed him the book. But oh! Apollo and all ye

[1] MENZEL, ccxli.

Muses—not forgetting the Graces—what was I then to hear? At first, indeed, things went on smoothly enough:

> Die Zephyr'n lauschten,
> Die Bäche rauschten,
> Die Sonne
> Verbreitet ihr Licht mit Wonne—

the somewhat more solid, substantial fare of Voss, Stolberg, and Bürger was delivered in such a manner that no one had any reason to complain.

"All at once, however, it was as if some wild and wanton devil had taken possession of the young reader, and I thought I saw the Wild Huntsman bodily before me. He read poems that had no existence in the *Almanach;* broke out into all possible modes and dialects. Hexameters, Iambics, doggerel verses one after another, or blended in strange confusion, came tumbling out in torrents. What wild and humorous fancies did he not combine that evening! Amidst them came such noble, magnificent thoughts, thrown in detached and flitting, that the authors to whom he ascribed them must have thanked God on their knees if they had fallen upon their desks.

"As soon as the joke was discovered, universal merriment spread through the room. He put everybody present out of countenance in one way or the other. Even my Mæcenasship, which I had always regarded it as a sort of duty to exercise towards young authors, poets, and artists, had its turn. Though he praised it highly on the one side, he did not forget to insinuate on the other that I claimed a sort of property in the individuals to whom I afforded support and countenance. In a little fable composed extempore in doggerel verses, he likened me wittily enough to a worthy and most enduring turkey hen, that sits on a great heap of eggs of her own and other people's, and hatches them with infinite patience; but to whom it sometimes happens to have a chalk egg put under her instead of a real one: a trick at which she takes no offence.

"'That is either Goethe or the Devil!" cried I to Wieland, who sat opposite me. 'Both,' he replied."

It is worth bearing in mind *what* the young Goethe was, that we may the better understand the reason of what he became. No sooner had he commenced his career as politician, than he began to tone down the extravagance of his demeanour;

without foregoing any enjoyments, he tried to accord more with those in whom a staid demeanour was necessitated by their more flagging pulses of lethargic life. One month after his appointment Wieland writes of him: "Goethe did in truth, during the first months of his visit here, scandalise most people (never me); but from the moment that he decided on becoming a man of business, he has conducted himself with blameless σωφροσυνη and all worldly prudence." Elsewhere he says: "Goethe, with all his real and apparent *sauvagerie*, has, in his little finger, more *conduite* and *savoir faire* than all the court parasites, Boniface sneaks, and political cobweb-spinners have in their whole bodies and souls. So long as Karl August lives no power can remove him."

As we familiarise ourselves with the details of this episode, there appears less and less plausibility in the often iterated declamation against Goethe on the charge of his having "sacrificed his genius to the court." It becomes indeed a singularly foolish display of rhetoric. Let us for a moment consider the charge. He had to choose a career. That of poet was then, as it is still, terribly delusive; verse could create fame, but no money: *fama* and *fames* were then, as now, in terrible contiguity. No sooner is the necessity for a career admitted than much objection falls to the ground; for those who reproach him with having wasted his time on court festivities, and the duties of government which others could have done as well, must ask whether he would have *saved* that time had he followed the career of jurisprudence and jostled lawyers through the courts at Frankfurt? or would they prefer seeing him reduced to the condition of poor Schiller, wasting so much of his precious life in literary "hackwork," translating French books for a miserable pittance? *Time*, in any case, would have been claimed; in return for that given to Karl August, he received, as he confesses in the poem addressed to the duke, "what the great seldom bestow—affection, leisure, confidence, garden and house. No one have I had to thank but him; and much have I wanted, who, as a poet, ill-understood the arts of gain. If Europe praised me, what has Europe done for me? Nothing. Even my works have been an expense to me."

In 1801, writing to his mother on the complaints uttered against him by those who judged falsely of his condition, he says they only saw what he gave up, not what he gained—they

could not comprehend how he grew daily richer, though he daily gave up so much. He confesses that the narrow circle of a burgher life would have ill-accorded with his ardent and wide-sweeping spirit. Had he remained at Frankfurt, he would have been ignorant of the world. But here the panorama of life was unrolled before him, and his experience was every-way enlarged. Did not Leonardo da Vinci spend much of his time charming the court of Milan with his poetry and lute-playing? did he not also spend time in mechanical and hydrostatical labours for the state? No reproach is lifted against his august name; no one cries out against *his* being false to his genius; no one rebukes him for having painted so little at one period. The "Last Supper" speaks for him. Will not *Tasso*, *Iphigenia*, *Hermann und Dorothea*, *Faust*, *Meister*, and the long list of Goethe's works, speak for *him?*

I have dwelt mainly on the dissipation of his *time*, because the notion that a court life affected his genius by "corrupting his mind" is preposterous. No reader of this biography, it is to be hoped, will fail to see the true relations in which he stood to the duke; how free they were from anything like servility, or suppression of genuine impulse. Indeed one of the complaints against him, according to the unexceptionable authority of Riemer, was that made by the subalterns, "of his not being sufficiently attentive to court etiquette." To say, as Niebuhr says, that the "court was a Dalilah to which he sacrificed his locks," is profoundly to misunderstand his genius, profoundly to misread his life. Had his genius been of that stormy kind which produces great Reformers and great Martyrs,—had it been his mission to agitate mankind by words which, reverberating to their inmost recesses, called them to lay down their lives in the service of an Idea,—had it been his tendency to meditate upon the far-off destinies of man, and sway men by the coercion of grand representative abstractions —then, indeed, we might say his place was aloof from the motley throng, and not in sailing down the swiftly-flowing stream to sounds of mirth and music on the banks. But he was not a Reformer, not a Martyr. He was a Poet, whose religion was Beauty, whose worship was of Nature, whose aim was Culture. His mission was to paint Life, and for that it was requisite he should see it. Happier circumstances might indeed have surrounded him, and given him a greater sphere. It would have been very different, as he often felt, if there had been a Nation to appeal to, instead of a heterogeneous mass of

small peoples, willing enough to talk of Fatherland, but in nowise prepared to *become* a Nation. There are many other *ifs* in which much virtue could be found; but inasmuch as he could not create circumstances, we must follow his example, and be content with what the gods provided. I do not, I confess, see what other sphere was open to him in which his genius could have been more sacred; but I do see that he built out of circumstances a noble Temple in which the altar-flame burnt with a steady light. To hypothetical biographers be left the task of settling what Goethe *might have been;* enough for us to catch some glimpse of what he was.

"Poetry," says Carlyle, "is the attempt which man makes to render his existence harmonious." It is the flower into which a life expands; but it is not the life itself, with all daily needs, daily struggles, daily prosaisms. The true poet manfully accepts the condition in which destiny has placed him, and therein tries to make his existence harmonious; the sham poet, like a weak workman, fretful over his tools, is loud in his assurances of what he *might* be, were it his lot to live in other circumstances. Goethe was led by the current of events to a little court, where he was arrested by friendship, love, leisure, and opportunities of a freer, nobler life than Frankfurt Law Courts offered him. After much deliberation he chose his career: these pages will show how in it he contrived to be *true* to his genius.

It is scarcely worth while to notice trash about his servility and court slavery. He was not required to be servile; and his nature was as proud as any prince's. "They call me a prince's servant," he said to Eckermann, "and a prince's slave; as if there were any meaning in such words! Whom do I serve? A tyrant—a despot? Do I serve one who lives for his own pleasures at the people's cost? Such princes and such times are, thank God! far enough from us. For more than half a century I have been connected in the closest relations with the grand-duke, and for half a century have striven and toiled with him; but I should not be speaking truth were I to say that I could name a single day on which the duke had not his thoughts busied with something to be devised and effected for the good of the country; something calculated to better the condition of each individual in it. As for himself, personally, what has his princely state given him but a burden and a task? Is his dwelling, or his dress, or his table more sumptuously provided than that of any private man in easy

circumstances? Go into our maritime cities, and you will find the larder and cellar of every considerable merchant better filled than his. If, then, I am a prince's slave, it is at least my consolation that I am but the slave of one who is himself a slave of the general good."

And to close this subject, read the following passage from Merck's letter to Nicolai—(the Merck who is said by Falk to have spoken so bitterly of the waste of Goethe's life at Weimar): "I have lately paid Goethe a visit at the Wartburg, and we have lived together for ten days like children. I am delighted to have seen with my own eyes what his situation is. The duke is the best of all, and has a character firm as iron: *I would do, for love of him, just what Goethe does.* . . . I tell you sincerely that the duke is most worthy of respect, and one of the cleverest men that I have ever seen,—and consider that he is a prince, and only twenty years of age!" The long and friendly correspondence Merck kept up with the duke is the best pledge that the foregoing estimate was sincere.

CHAPTER IV

THE FRAU VON STEIN

From out the many flirtations that amused him, there rises one which grew into predominant importance, swallowing up all the others, and leaping from lambent flame into eager and passionate fire. It was no transitory flash, but a fire which burnt for ten years; and thereby is distinguished from all previous attachments. It is a silver thread woven among the many-coloured threads which formed the tapestry of his life. I will here detach it, to consider it by itself.

The Baroness von Stein, "Hofdame," and wife of the Master of the Horse, was, both by family and position, a considerable person. To us she is interesting, as having sprung from a Scotch family, named Irving, and as being the sister-in-law to that Baron Imhoff who sold his first wife to Warren Hastings. She was the mother of seven children, and had reached that age which, in fascinating women, is of perilous fascination—the age of three-and-thirty. We can understand something of her power if we look at her portrait, and imagine those delicate, coquettish features animated with the lures of

sensibility, gaiety, and experience of the world. She sang well, played well, sketched well, talked well, appreciated poetry, and handled sentiment with the delicate tact of a woman of the world. Her pretty fingers had turned over many a serious book; and she knew how to gather honey from weeds. With moral deficiencies, which this history will betray, she was to all acquaintances a perfectly *charming* woman; and retained her charm even in old age, as many living witnesses testify. Some years after her first acquaintance with Goethe, Schiller thus writes of her to his friend Körner: "She is really a genuine, interesting person, and I quite understand what has attached Goethe to her. Beautiful she can never have been; but her countenance has a soft earnestness, and a quite peculiar openness. A healthy understanding, truth, and feeling, lie in her nature. She has more than a thousand letters from Goethe; and from Italy he writes to her every week. They say the connection is perfectly pure and blameless."

It was at Pyrmont that Goethe first saw the Frau von Stein's portrait, and was three nights sleepless in consequence of Zimmermann's description of her. In sending her that flattering detail, Zimmermann added, "he will assuredly come to Weimar to see you." Under her portrait Goethe wrote, "What a glorious poem it would be to see how the world mirrors itself in this soul! She sees the world as it is, and yet withal sees it through the medium of love; hence sweetness is the dominant expression." In her reply to Zimmermann she begs to hear more about Goethe, and intimates her desire to see him. This calls forth a reply that she "has no idea of the danger of his magical presence." Such dangers pretty women gladly run into, especially when, like Charlotte von Stein, they are perfect mistresses of themselves.

With his heart still trembling from the agitations of victory over its desires, after he had torn himself away from Lili, he saw this charming woman. The earth continues warm long after the sun has glided below the horizon; and the heart continues warm some time after the departure of its sun. Goethe was therefore prepared to fall desperately in love with one who "viewed all things through the medium of love." And there is considerable interest in noting the *kind* of idol now selected. Hitherto he has been captivated only by very young girls, whose youth, beauty, and girlishness were the charms to his wandering fancy; but now he is fascinated by a *woman*, a woman of rank and elegance, a woman of culture

and experience, a woman who, instead of abandoning herself to the charm of his affection, knew how, without descending from her pedestal, to keep the flame alive. The others loved him,—showed him their love,—and were forgotten. She contrived to keep him in the pleasant fever of hope; made herself necessary to him; made her love an aim, and kept him in the excitement of one

"Who never is, but always to be blest."

Considering the state of society and opinion at that period, and considering moreover that, according to her son's narrative, her husband was scarcely seen in his own home more than once a week, and that no pretence of affection existed between them, we could understand how Goethe's notorious passion for her excited sympathy in Weimar. Not a word of blame escaped any one on this subject. They saw a lover whose mistress gave him just enough encouragement to keep him eager in pursuit, and who knew how to check him when that eagerness would press on too far. In his early letters to her there are sudden outbreaks and reserves; sometimes the affectionate *thou* escapes, and the next day, perhaps even in the next sentence, the prescribed *you* returns. The letters follow almost daily. So early as January 1776 this significant phrase escapes: "Adieu, angel! I shall never become more prudent; and have to thank God for it. Adieu! and yet it grieves me that I love thee so—and precisely thee!"

Here is an answer, apparently, to something she has written (for unhappily we have none of *her* letters: she had taken the precaution to demand her letters back from him, and burnt them, carefully preserving his):

"Wherefore must I plague thee! dearest creature! Wherefore deceive myself and plague thee! We can be nothing to each other, and yet are too much to each other. Believe me thou art in all things one with me—but because I see things as they are it makes me mad! Good night, angel, and good morning. I will see thee no more . . . Only . . . Thou knowest all . . . My heart is . . . All I can say is mere folly. In future I shall see thee as men see the stars." A few days after, he writes, "Adieu, dear sister, since it must be so."

I select the following as indicating the tone: "1*st May*. To-day I shall not see you. Your presence yesterday made so wonderful an impression on me, that I know not as yet

whether I am well or ill from it. Adieu, dearest lady." "1*st May. Evening.* Thou art right to make me a saint, that is to say, to remove me from thy heart. Holy as thou art, I cannot make *thee* a saint. To-morrow, therefore . . . Well, I will not see thee. Good night!" On the 24th of May, a passionate letter reveals that she had written or spoken to him in a decided tone about "appearances" and "the world": "So the purest, most beautiful, truest relation I ever had to a woman, except to my sister, *that* also must be disturbed! I was prepared for it; but I suffered infinitely on account of the past and the future, and of the poor child thus consecrated in sorrow. I will not see you; your presence would make me sad. If I am not to live with you, your love will help me no more than the love of those absent, in which I am so rich. *Presence*, in the moment of need, discerns, alleviates, and strengthens. The absent comes with the hose when the fire is extinguished—and all for the sake of the world! The world, which can be nothing to me, will not let thee be anything to me. You know not what you do . . . The hand of one in solitude who hears not the voice of love, presses hard where it rests. Adieu, best of women!" "25*th May.* You are always the same, always infinite love and goodness. Forgive me if I make you suffer. I will learn to bear my suffering alone." "2*nd June.* Adieu. Love me as ever, I will come seldomer and write seldomer." "4*th June.* Here, dear lady, is a tribute. I will see if I can keep my resolution not to come. You are not quite safe with me. Yesterday there were again some moments in which I truly felt how I love you." "6*th June.* So you could do me the unkindness of remaining away yesterday. Truly what you do must be right in my eyes!! But it made me sad." "7*th June.* You are a darling to have told me all! When one loves one should tell everything. Dearest angel, and I have again three words which will set you at rest, but only words from me to thee! I shall come to-day."

She was forced to quit Weimar for a while. "Dearest lady," he writes, "I dare not think you are going away on Tuesday, and that you will be away from me six months. For what avails all else? It is *presence* alone which influences, consoles, and edifies! even though it sometimes torments—torment is the sunshower of love."

Here is a curious passage: "Last night as I lay in bed half asleep, Philip brought me a letter; half stupefied, I read—

that Lili is betrothed!! I turn round and fall asleep. How I pray that fate may act so by me in the right moment. Dear angel, good night." One more extract. "Oh! you have a way of giving pain which is like that of destiny, which admits of no complaint, however it may grieve."

In a little while the tone grows more subdued. Just as the tone of his behaviour in Weimar, after the first wild weeks, became softened to a lower key, so in these letters we see, after a while, fewer passionate outbreaks, fewer interjections, and no more *thou's*. But love warms them still. The letters are incessant, and show an incessant preoccupation. Certain sentimental readers will be shocked, perhaps, to find so many details about eating and drinking; but when they remember Charlotte cutting bread and butter, they may understand the author of *Werther* eloquently begging his beloved to send him a sausage.

The visitor may still read the inscription, at once homage and souvenir, by which Goethe connected the happy hours of love with the happy hours of active solitude passed in his Garden-house in the Park. Fitly is the place dedicated to the Frau von Stein. The whole spot speaks of her. Here are the flower-beds from which almost every morning flowers, with the dew still on them, accompanied letters, not less fresh and beautiful, to greet the beloved. Here are the beds from which came the asparagus he was so proud to send her. Here is the orchard in which grew the fruit he so often sent. Here is the room in which he dreamt of her; here the room in which he worked, while her image hovered round him. The house stands within twenty minutes' walk from the house where she lived, separated by clusters of noble trees.

If the reader turns back to the description of the Park, he will ascertain the position of this Gartenhaus. Originally it belonged to Bertuch. One day, when the duke was earnestly pressing Goethe to take up his residence at Weimar, the poet (who then lived in the Jägerhaus in the Belvidere Allée), undecided as to whether he should go or remain, let fall, among other excuses, the want of a quiet bit of land, where his taste for gardening could be indulged. "Bertuch, for example, is very comfortable; if I had but such a piece of ground as that!" Hereupon the duke, very characteristically, goes to Bertuch, and without periphrasis, says, "I must have your garden." Bertuch starts: "But, your highness—" "But me no buts," replies the young prince; "I can't help you.

Goethe wants it, and unless we give it to him we shall never keep him here; it is the only way to secure him." This reason would probably not have been so cogent with Bertuch, had not the duke excused the despotism of his act by giving in exchange more than the value of the garden. It was at first only lent to Goethe; but in 1780 it was made a formal gift.

It is charmingly situated, and, although of modest pretensions, is one of the most enviable houses in Weimar. The Ilm runs through the meadows which front it. The town, although so near, is completely shut out from view by the thick-growing trees. The solitude is absolute, broken only by the occasional sound of the church clock, the music from the barracks, and the screaming of the peacocks spreading their superb beauty in the park. So fond was Goethe of this house, that winter and summer he lived there for seven years; and when, in 1782, the duke made him a present of the house in the *Frauenplan*, he could not prevail upon himself to sell the Gartenhaus, but continued to make it a favourite retreat. Often when he chose to be alone and undisturbed, he locked all the gates of the bridges which led from the town to his house, so that, as Wieland complained, no one could get at him except by aid of picklock and crowbar.

It was here, in this little garden, he studied the development of plants, and made many of those experiments and observations which have given him a high rank among the discoverers in Science. It was here the poet escaped from courts. It was here the lover was happy in his love. How modest this Garden-house really is; how far removed from anything like one's preconceptions of it! It is true, that the position is one which many a rich townsman in England would be glad of, as the site for a handsome villa: a pretty orchard and garden on a gentle slope; in front, a good carriage road, running beside a fine meadow, encircled by the stately trees of the park. But the house, a half-pay captain with us would consider a miserable cottage; yet it sufficed for the court favourite and minister. Here the duke was constantly with him; sitting up, till deep in the night, in earnest discussion; often sleeping on the sofa instead of going home. Here both duke and duchess would come and dine with him, in the most simple, unpretending way; the whole banquet in one instance consisting, as we learn from a casual phrase in the Stein correspondence, of "a beer soup and a little cold meat."[1]

[1] Compare also the *Briefwechsel zwischen Karl August und Goethe*, i. 27.

There is something very pleasant in noticing these traits of the simplicity which was then practised. The duke's own hut—the *Borkenhaus*—has already been described (page 200). The hut, for it was nothing else, in which Goethe lived in the Ilmenau mountains, and the more than bourgeois simplicity of the Garden-house, make us aware of one thing among others, namely, that if he sacrificed his genius to a court, it assuredly was not for loaves and fishes, not for luxury and material splendour of any kind. Indeed, such things had no temptation to a man of his simple tastes. "Rich in money," he writes to his beloved, "I shall never become; but, therefore, all the richer in Confidence, Good Name, and Influence over the minds of men."

It was his love of Nature which made him so indifferent to luxury. That love gave him simplicity and hardihood. In many things he was unlike his nation: notably in his voluntary exposure to two bright, wholesome things, which to his contemporaries were little less than bugbears—I mean, fresh air and cold water. The nation which consented to live in the atmosphere of iron stoves, tobacco, and bad breath, and which deemed a pint of water all that man could desire for his ablutions, must have been greatly perplexed at seeing Goethe indulge in fresh air and cold water as enjoyingly as if they were vices.

Two anecdotes will bring this contrast into relief. So great was the German reluctance to even a necessary exposure to the inclemencies of open-air exercise, that historians inform us "a great proportion, especially among the learned classes, employed a miserable substitute for exercise in the shape of a machine, by means of which they comfortably took their dose of movement without leaving their rooms."[1] And Jacobs, in his *Personalien*, records a fact which, while explaining how the above-named absurdity could have gained ground, paints a sad picture of the life of German youth in those days. Describing his boyish days at Gotha, he says: "Our winter pleasures were confined to a not very spacious courtyard, exchanged in summer for a little garden within the walls, which my father hired. *We took no walks. Only once a year, when the harvest was ripe, our parents took us out to spend an evening in the fields.*"[2] So little had Goethe of this prejudice against fresh

[1] BIEDERMANN: *Deutschland's Politische Materielle und Sociale Zustände*, i. p. 343.

[2] Quoted by Mrs. AUSTIN: *Germany from 1760 to 1814*, p. 85.

air, that when he began the rebuilding of his Gartenhaus, instead of sleeping at an hotel or at the house of a friend, he lived there through all the building period; and we find him writing, "At last I have a window once more, and can make a fire." On the 3rd of May he writes: "Good morning: here is asparagus. How were you yesterday? Philip baked me a cake; and thereupon, wrapped up in my blue cloak, I laid myself on a dry corner of the terrace and slept amid thunder, lightning, and rain, so gloriously that my bed was afterwards quite disagreeable." On the 19th he writes: "Thanks for the breakfast. I send you something in return. Last night I slept on the terrace, wrapped in my blue cloak, awoke three times, at 12, 2, and 4, and *each time there was a new splendour in the heavens.*" There are other traces of this tendency to bivouac, but these will suffice. He bathed, not only in the morning sunlight, but also in the Ilm, when the moonlight shimmered on it. Always in the free air seeking vigour—

"Tauche mich in die Sonne früh
Bad' ab im Monde des Tages Müh'."

The duke shared this love of bathing, which December's cold could not arrest. It was here Goethe learned to swim by the aid of "corks" (which so often served him as an illustration), and no inclemency of the weather could keep him out of the water. The fascination of water luring into its treacherous depths, is wonderfully expressed by him in that ballad, which every one knows, and almost every one tries to translate. I have tried my hand in this version:

THE FISHERMAN.

The water rushed, the water swelled:
A fisherman sat by,
And gazed upon his dancing float
With tranquil-dreaming eye.
And as he sits, and as he looks,
The gurgling waves arise:
A maid, all bright with water-drops,
Stands straight before his eyes.

She sang to him, she spake to him:
"My fish why dost thou snare
With human wit and human guile
Into the killing air?
Couldst see how happy fishes live
Under the stream so clear,
Thyself would plunge into the stream,
And live for ever there.

"Bathe not the lovely sun and moon
Within the cool deep sea,
And with wave-breathing faces rise
In two-fold witchery?
Lure not the misty heaven-deeps
So beautiful and blue?
Lures not thine image, mirrored in
The fresh eternal dew?"

The water rushed, the water swelled,
It clasped his feet, I wis;
A thrill went through his yearning heart
As when two lovers kiss!
She spake to him, she sang to him:
Resistless was her strain;
Half drew him in, half lured him in;
He ne'er was seen again.

One night, while the moon was calmly shining on our poetical bather, a peasant, returning home, was in the act of climbing over the bars of the floating bridge; Goethe espied him, and moved by that spirit of devilry which so often startled Weimar, he gave utterance to wild sepulchral tones, raised himself half out of the water, ducked under, and reappeared howling, to the horror of the aghast peasant, who, hearing such sounds issue from a figure with long floating hair, fled as if a legion of devils were at hand. To this day there remains an ineradicable belief in the existence of the water-sprite who howls among the waters of the Ilm.

CHAPTER V

PRIVATE THEATRICALS

"LET my present life," writes Goethe to Lavater, January 1777, "continue as long as it will, at any rate I have heartily enjoyed a genuine experience of the variegated throng and press of the world—Sorrow, Hope, Love, Work, Wants, Adventure, Ennui, Impatience, Folly, Joy, the Expected and the Unknown, the Superficial and the Profound—just as the dice threw—with fêtes, dances, sledgings—adorned in silk and spangles—a marvellous *ménage!* And withal, dear brother, God be praised, in myself and in my real aims in life I am quite happy."

"Goethe plays indeed a high game at Weimar," writes Merck, "but lives at court after his own fashion. The duke

is an excellent man, let them say what they will, and in Goethe's company will become still more so. What you hear is court scandal and lies. It is true the intimacy between master and servant is very great, but what harm is there in that? *Were Goethe a nobleman it would be thought quite right.* He is the soul and direction of everything, and all are contented with him, because he serves many and injures no one. Who can withstand the disinterestedness of this man?"

He had begun to make his presence felt in the serious department of affairs; not only in educating the duke who had chosen him as his friend, but also in practical ameliorations. He had induced the duke to call Herder to Weimar, as *Hof Prediger* (court chaplain) and *General-superintendent;* whereat Weimar grumbled, and gossiped, setting afloat stories of Herder having mounted the pulpit in boots and spurs. Not content with these efforts in a higher circle, Goethe sought to improve the condition of the people; and among his plans we note one for the opening of the Ilmenau mines, which for many years had been left untouched.

Amusement went hand in hand with business. Among the varied amusements, one, which greatly occupied his time and fancy, deserves a more special notice, because it will give us a glimpse of the court, and will also show us how the poet turned sport into profit. I allude to the private theatricals which were started shortly after his arrival. It should be premised that the theatre was still in ashes from the fire of 1774.[1] Seyler had carried his troupe of players elsewhere; and Weimar was without its stage. Just at this period private theatricals were even more "the rage" than they are in England at present. In Berlin, Dresden, Frankfurt, Augsburg, Nuremberg, and Fulda, were celebrated amateur troupes. In Würtzburg, for a long while, a *noble* company put on sock and buskin; in Eisenach, prince and court joined in the sport. Even the Universities, which in earlier times had, from religious scruples, denounced the drama, now forgot their antagonism, and in Vienna, Halle, Göttingen, and Jena, allowed the students to have private stages.

The Weimar theatre surpassed them all. It had its poets, its composers, its scene painters, its costumiers. Whoever showed any talent for recitation, singing, or dancing, was pressed into service, and had to work as hard as if his bread

[1] On the state of the theatre before Goethe's arrival and subsequently, see PASQUÉ: *Goethe's Theaterleitung in Weimar*, 1863.

depended on it. The almost daily rehearsals of drama, opera, or ballet, occupied and delighted men and women glad to have something to do. The troupe was distinguished: the Duchess Amalia, Karl August, Prince Constantine, Bode, Knebel, Einsiedel, Musæus, Seckendorf, Bertuch, and Goethe; with Corona Schröter, Kotzebue's sister Amalia, and Fräulein Göchhausen. These formed a curious strolling company, wandering from Weimar to all the palaces in the neighbourhood—Ettersburg, Tiefurt, Belvedere, even to Jena, Dornburg, and Ilmenau. Often did Bertuch, as Falk tells us, receive orders to have the sumpter waggon, or travelling kitchen, ready for the early dawn, when the court would start with its wandering troupe. If only a short expedition was intended, three sumpter asses were sufficient. If it was more distant, over hill and dale, far into the distant country, then indeed the night before was a busy one, and all the ducal pots and pans were in requisition. Such boiling and stewing and roasting! such slaughter of capons, pigeons, and fowls! The ponds of the Ilm were dragged for fish: the woods were robbed of their partridges; the cellars were lightened of their wines. With early dawn rode forth the merry party, full of anticipation, wild with animal spirits. On they went through solitudes, the grand old trees of which were wont only to see the soaring hawk poised above their tops, or the wild-eyed deer bounding past the hut of the charcoal burner. On they went: youth, beauty, gladness, and hope, a goodly train, like that which animated the forest of Ardennes, when "under the shade of melancholy boughs" the pensive duke and his followers forgot awhile their cares and "painted pomps."

Their stage was soon arranged. At Ettersburg the traces are still visible of this forest stage, where, when weather permitted, the performances took place. A wing of the chateau was also made into a theatre. But the open-air performances were most relished. To rehearsals and performances in Ettersburg the actors, sometimes as many as twenty, were brought in the duke's equipages; and in the evening, after a joyous supper often enlivened with songs, they were conducted home by the duke's body-guard of hussars bearing torches. It was here they performed Einsiedel's opera, *The Gypsies*, with wonderful illusion. Several scenes of *Götz von Berlichingen* were woven into it. The illuminated trees, the crowd of gypsies in the wood, the dances and songs under the blue starlit heavens, while the sylvan bugle sounded from afar, made up a picture,

the magic of which was never forgotten. On the Ilm also, at Tiefurt, just where the river makes a beautiful bend round the shore, a regular theatre was constructed. Trees, and other poetical objects, such as fishermen, nixies, water-spirits, moons, and stars,—all were introduced with effect.

The performances were of the same varied nature as the theatres. Sometimes French comedies, sometimes serious works of art, often broad extravaganzas. Occasionally they played charades, in which the plan was pre-arranged, but the dialogue left to the improvisation of the actors. Once when an actor grew wordy and wandering, they rushed on the stage, carried him off by force, and informed the audience (as if it were part of the piece) that he was suddenly taken ill. The records of that time have preserved for us the outline of a magical piece, got up in honour of Goethe's birthday—*Minerva's Birth, Life, and Deeds.* It was a magnificent magic-lantern piece, with music by Seckendorf. The characters were not represented by puppets, but by gentlemen and ladies, in the so-called *Petit Colisée* at Tiefurt. On the site of this new temple of the Muses stood formerly a solitary wood hut. In the representation every appliance was sought after which external effect demanded. It took place behind a large white curtain, *en silhoutte.* In the *Histoire universelle des Théâtres* there is only one example of a theatrical representation of this kind, namely, the drama which Chiron presented to his pupil, Achilles, and which had the same object and significance as the Tiefurt drama. In antiquity such representations were called *umbræ palpitantes*, by moderns, *ombres chinoises.* They were introduced at the Weimar court about this time, by the Duke George of Saxe-Meiningen, and were very much in favour there.

The subject of this Tiefurt piece is remarkable: Jupiter (in the person of the painter Kraus, on whose shoulders was placed a colossal paste-board head), in order to frustrate the prophecy that on the *accouchement* of his wife Metis, he would be thrust from the throne, has devoured Metis. Thereupon he suffers terrible pains in the head; Ganymede, hovering behind him on a great eagle, offers him the cup of nectar: the pains of the Thunderer increase visibly, and Ganymede soars into the air to fetch Æsculapius and Vulcan. Æsculapius seeks in vain to cure his master. A Cyclops, who is summoned, bleeds him at the nose, without effect. Then comes the powerful Vulcan (represented by the young Duke

Karl August), who, holding in one hand his hammer, in the other a great iron bar, and encircled by an apron, approaches his suffering father, and with one good stroke of the hammer splits his divine skull, out of which proceeds Minerva, the goddess of wisdom (represented by Corona Schröter), at first quite a small figure, but by means of appropriate machinery becoming larger and larger every moment, till at last the whole of her tall slim form is revealed, enveloped in light gauze. She is received by Father Zeus in the most friendly manner; and rich gifts are presented to her by all the gods. She is furnished with a helmet, an ægis, and a lance; Ganymede places Jupiter's owl at her feet, and amidst music and choral singing the curtain falls.

In the third and last act, the poet departed from the materials of the myth. He made the new-born goddess read in the Book of Fate, and find there the *28th of August*[1] marked as one of the most fortunate days. She says that "on that day three-and-thirty years ago a man was given to the world, who will be honoured as one of the best and wisest." Then appears a winged genius in the clouds, bearing Goethe's name. Minerva crowns this name, and at the same time dedicates to it the divine gifts which have been immemorially the tokens of her favour; for example, the golden lyre of Apollo, and the flowery wreath of the Muses. The whip of Momus alone, on the thong of which stood the word "Aves," is laid aside and rejected by the goddess; while the names Iphigenia and Faust appear in the clouds in fire transparencies. At the close, Momus advances unabashed, and brings the reputed symbol of his art as a present to Goethe.

Such was the opening and dedication of the new Weimar-Tiefurt Court Theatre. It is obvious that the piece was intended purely to celebrate the birthday of Goethe, the director of this social theatre; and gives us not a bad idea of the ingenuity and pains bestowed upon these amusements. The reader will not fail to notice that if Goethe prepared fêtes for the birthday of his duchess, Weimar also prepared fêtes for the birthday of its poet.

Another favourite magic-lantern piece was *King Midas*, which is mentioned in Amalia's letters to Knebel in the year 1781. But the best known of the Tiefurt dramas is Goethe's Operetta *Die Fischerin*, performed in the summer of 1782. The

[1] Goethe's birthday.

charming text, beginning with the famous Erl-König, is preserved in Goethe's works. The piece was represented in the Tiefurt Park, partly on the bank of the Ilm near the bridge, partly on the Ilm itself, which was illuminated with numerous torches and lamps. Under lofty alders against the river were placed scattered huts of fishermen; nets, boats, and fishing implements stood around. On Dorten's (Corona Schröter) hearth fire was burning. At the moment in which the fishermen, who had been called together, lighted their strips of wood and torches, and spread themselves with their brilliant lights in boats and on the banks of the river, to search for the lost maiden, the light flashed suddenly up from the necks of land which stretched forward into the Ilm, illuminating the nearest objects, and showing their reflection in the water, while the more distant groups of trees and hills lay in deep night. The spectators had assembled in great numbers, and as they crowded on the wooden bridge, the better to catch the magical effect of the illumination on the water, their weight crushed the bridge in, and the eager gazers fell into the river. No one, however, was injured. The involuntary bathers were heartily laughed at, and the accident was regarded as an amusing interlude.

I find further that when a travesty of the *Birds* of Aristophanes was performed at Ettersburg, the actors were all dressed in real feathers, their heads completely covered, though free to move. Their wings flapped, their eyes rolled, and ornithology was absurdly parodied. It is right to add, that besides these extravagances and *ombres chinoises*, there were very serious dramatic efforts: among them we find Goethe's second dramatic attempt, *Die Mitschuldigen*, which was thus cast:—

Alceste	Goethe.
Söller	Bertuch.
Der Wirth . . .	Musäus.
Sophie	Corona Schröter.

Another play was the *Geschwister*, written in three evenings, it is said, but without evidence, out of love for the sweet eyes of Amalia Kotzebue, sister of the dramatist, then a youth. Kotzebue thus touches the point in his *Memoirs*: "Goethe had at that time just written his charming piece, *Die Geschwister*. It was performed at a private theatre at Weimar, he himself playing William and my sister Marianne—while to me, yes to me—was allotted the important part of postilion! My

readers may imagine with what exultation I trod the stage for the first time before the mighty public itself." Another piece was Cumberland's *West Indian*, in which the duke played *Major O'Flaherty*, Eckhoff (the great actor) the Father, and Goethe *Belcour*, dressed in a white coat with silver lace, blue silk vest, and blue silk knee-breeches, in which they say he looked superb.

While mentioning these I must not pass over the *Iphigenia* (then in prose), which was thus cast:—

Orestes	Goethe.
Pylades	Prince Constantine.
Thoas	Knebel.
Arkas	Seidler.
Iphigenia	Corona Schröter.

"Never shall I forget," exclaims Dr. Hufeland, "the impression Goethe made as Orestes, in his Grecian costume; one might have fancied him Apollo. Never before had there been seen such union of physical and intellectual beauty in one man!" His acting, as far as I can learn, had the ordinary defects of amateur acting; it was impetuous and yet stiff, exaggerated and yet cold; and his fine sonorous voice displayed itself without nice reference to shades of meaning. In comic parts, on the other hand, he seems to have been excellent; the broader the fun, the more at home he felt; and one can imagine the rollicking animal spirits with which he animated the Marktschreier in the *Plundersweilern;* one can picture him in the extravagance of the *Geflichte Braut*,[1] giving vent to his sarcasm on the "sentimental" tone of the age, ridiculing his own *Werther*, and merciless to *Waldemar*.[2]

I have thus brought together, irrespective of dates, the scattered indications of these theatrical amusements. How much enjoyment was produced by them! what social pleasure! and what endless episodes, to which memory recurred in after times, when they were seated round the dinner table! Nor were these amusements profitless. *Wilhelm Meister* was designed and partly written about this period; and the reader, who knows Goethe's tendency to make all his works biographical, will not be surprised at the amount of theatrical experience which is mirrored in that work; nor at the earnestness which

[1] Published, under a very mitigated form, as the *Triumph der Empfindsamkeit.* See the next chapter for further notice of this piece.

[2] Jacobi and Wieland were both seriously offended with his parodies of their writings; but both soon became reconciled to him.

is there made to lurk beneath amusement, so that what to the crowd seems no more than a flattery of their tastes, is to the man himself a process of the highest culture.

Boar-hunting in the light of early dawn, sitting in the middle of the day in grave diplomacy and active council, rehearsing during the afternoon, and enlivening the evening with grotesque serenades or torchlight sledgings—thus passed many of his days; not to mention flirtations, balls, masquerades, concerts, and verse-writing. The muse was, however, somewhat silent, though *Hans Sachs' poetische Sendung*, *Lila*, some charming lyrics, and the dramas and operas written for the occasion, forbid the accusation of idleness. He was storing up materials. *Faust*, *Egmont*, *Tasso*, *Iphigenia*, and *Meister* were germinating.

The muse was silent, but was the soul inactive? As these strange and variegated scenes passed before his eyes, was he a *mere* actor, and not also a spectator? Let his works answer. To some indeed it has seemed as if in thus lowering great faculties to the composition of slight operas and festive pieces, Goethe was faithless to his mission, false to his own genius. This is but a repetition of Merck's exclamation against *Clavigo*, and may be answered as that was answered. Herder thought that the Chosen One should devote himself to great works. This is the objection of a man of letters who can conceive no other aim than the writing of books. But Goethe needed to *live* as well as to write. Life is multiplied and rendered infinite by Feeling and Knowledge. He sought both to feel and to know. The great works he has written—works high in conception, austerely grand in execution, the fruits of earnest toil and lonely self-seclusion—ought to shield him *now* from any charge of wasting his time on frivolities, though to Herder and Merck such a point of view was denied.

It was his real artistic nature, and genuine poetic mobility, that made him scatter with a prodigal hand the trifles which distressed his friends. Poetry was the melodious voice breathing from his entire manhood, not a profession, not an act of duty. It was an impulse: the sounding chords of his poetic nature vibrated to every touch, grave and stately, sweet and impassioned, delicate and humorous. He wrote not for Fame. He wrote not for Pence. He wrote poetry because he had *lived* it; and sang as the bird sings on its bough. Open to every impression, touched to ravishment by beauty, he sang whatever at the moment filled him with delight—now trilling

a careless snatch of melody, now a simple ballad, now a majestic hymn ascending from the depths of his soul on incense-bearing rhythms, and now a grave quiet chaunt, slow with its rich burden of meanings. Men in whom the productive activity is great, cannot be restrained from throwing off trifles, as the plant throws off buds beside the expanded flowers. Michael Angelo carved the Moses, and painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, but did he not also lend his master-hand to the cutting of graceful cameos?

CHAPTER VI

MANY-COLOURED THREADS

HITHERTO our narrative of this Weimar period has moved mainly among generalities, for only by such means could a picture of this episode be painted. Now, as we advance further, it is necessary to separate the threads of his career from those of others with which it was interwoven.

It has already been noted, that he began to tire of the follies and extravagancies of the first months. In this year, 1777, he was quiet in his Garden-house, occupied with drawing, poetry, botany, and the one constant occupation of his heart—love for the Frau von Stein. Love and ambition were the guides which led him through the labyrinth of the court. Amid those motley scenes, amid those swiftly-succeeding pleasures, Voices, sorrowing Voices of the Past, made themselves audible above the din, and recalled the vast hopes which once had given energy to his aims; and these reverberations of an ambition once so cherished, arrested and rebuked him, like the deep murmurs of some solemn bass moving slowly through the showering caprices of a sportive melody. No soul can endure uninterrupted gaiety and excitement. Weary intervals will occur: the vulgar soul fills these intervals with the long lassitude of its ennui; the noble soul with reproaches at the previous waste of irrevocable hours.

The quiet influence exercised by the Frau von Stein is visible in every page of his letters. As far as I can divine the state of things in the absence of her letters, I fancy she coquetted with him; when he showed any disposition to

throw off her yoke, when his manner seemed to imply less warmth, she lured him back with tenderness; and vexed him with unexpected coldness when she had drawn him once more to her feet. "You reproach me," he writes, "with alternations in my love. It is not true; but it is well that I do not every day feel how utterly I love you." Again: "I cannot conceive why the main ingredients of your feeling have lately been Doubt and want of Belief. But it is certainly true that one who did not hold firm his affection might have that affection doubted away, just as a man may be persuaded that he is pale and ill." That she tormented him with these coquettish doubts is but too evident; and yet when he is away from her she writes to tell him he is become dearer! "Yes, my treasure!" he replies, "I believe you when you say your love increases for me during absence. When away, you love the idea you have formed of me; but when present, that idea is often disturbed by my folly and madness. . . . I love you better when present than when absent: hence I conclude my love is truer than yours." At times he seems himself to have doubted whether he really loved her, or only loved the delight of her presence.

With these doubts mingles another element, his ambition to do something which will make him worthy of her. In spite of his popularity, in spite of his genius, he has not subdued her heart, but only agitated it. He endeavours, by *devotion*, to succeed. Thus love and ambition play into each other's hands, and keep him in a seclusion which astonishes and pains several of those who could never have enough of his company.

In the June of this year his solitude was visited by one of the agitations he could least withstand—the death of his only sister, Cornelia. *Sorrows and dreams*, is the significant entry of the following day in his journal.

It was about this time that he undertook the care of Peter Imbaumgarten, a Swiss peasant boy, the protégé of his friend Baron Lindau. The death of the Baron left Peter once more without protection. Goethe, whose heart was open to all, especially to children, gladly undertook to continue the Baron's care; and as we have seen him sending home an Italian image-boy to his mother at Frankfurt, and *Wilhelm Meister* undertaking the care of *Mignon* and *Felix*, so does this "cold" Goethe add love to charity, and become a father to the fatherless.

The autumn tints were beginning to mingle their red and yellow with the dark and solemn firs of the Ilmenau mountains; Goethe and the duke could not long keep away from the loved spot, where poetical and practical schemes occupied the day, and many a wild prank startled the night. There they danced with peasant girls till early dawn; one result of which was a swelled face, forcing Goethe to lay up.

On his return to Weimar he was distressed by the receipt of one of the many letters which *Werther* drew upon him. He had made sentimentality poetical; it soon became a fashion. Many were the melancholy youths who poured forth their sorrows to him, demanding sympathy and consolation. Nothing could be more antipathetic to his clear and healthy nature. It made him ashamed of his *Werther*. It made him merciless to all Wertherism. To relieve himself of the annoyance, he commenced the satirical extravaganza of the *Triumph der Empfindsamkeit*. Very significant, however, of the unalterable kindliness of his disposition is the fact, that although these sentimentalities had to him only a painful or a ludicrous aspect, he did not suffer his repugnance to the malady to destroy his sympathy for the patient. There is a proof of this in the episode he narrates of his Harz journey, made in November and December of this year,[1] known to most readers through his poem, *Die Harzreise in Winter*. The object of that journey was two-fold; to visit the Ilmenau mines, and to visit an unhappy misanthrope whose Wertherism had distressed him. He set out with the duke, who had arranged a hunting party to destroy "a great thing of a boar" then ravaging the country round Eisenach; but, although setting out with them, he left them, *en route*, for purposes of his own.

Through hail, frost, and mud, lonely, yet companioned by great thoughts, he rode along the mountainous solitudes, and reached at last the *Brocken*. A bright sun shone on its eternal snows as he mounted, and looked down upon the cloud-covered Germany beneath him. Here he felt the air of freedom swell his breast. The world with its conventions lay beneath him; the court with its distractions was afar; and the poet stood amidst these snowy solitudes communing with that majestic spirit of beauty which animates Nature. There,

> . . . "high above the misty air
> And turbulence of murmuring cities vast,"[2]

[1] And *not* in 1776, as he says; that date is disproved by his letters to the Frau von Stein.

[2] Wordsworth.

he was lost in reveries of his future life:

Dem Geier gleich
Der auf schweren Morgenwolken,
Mit sanftem Fittig ruhend,
Nach Beute schaut,
Schwebe mein Lied.

This image of the hawk poised above the heavy morning clouds looking for his prey, is (I adopt his own explanation) that of the poet on the snowy heights looking down on the winter landscape, and with his mind's eye seeking amidst the perplexities of social life for some object worthy of his muse.

Writing to his beloved, he speaks of the good effect this journeying amid simple people (to whom he is only known as Herr Weber, a landscape painter) has upon his imagination. It is like a cold bath, he says. And *à propos* of his disguise, he remarks how very *easy* it is to be a rogue, and what advantages it gives one over simple honest men to assume a character that is not your own.

But now let us turn to the *second* object of his journey. The letter of the misanthrope just alluded to was signed Plessing, and dated from Wernigerode. There was something remarkable in the excess of its morbidity, accompanied by indications of real talent. Goethe did not answer it, having already hampered himself in various ways by responding to such extraneous demands upon his sympathy; another and more passionate letter came imploring an answer, which was still silently avoided. But now the idea of personally ascertaining what manner of man his correspondent was, made him swerve from his path; and under his assumed name he called on Plessing.

On hearing that his visitor came from Gotha, Plessing eagerly inquired whether he had not visited Weimar, and whether he knew the celebrated men who lived there. With perfect simplicity Goethe replied that he did, and began talking of Kraus, Bertuch, Musäus, Jagemann, &c., when he was impatiently interrupted with "But why don't you mention Goethe?" He answered that Goethe also had he seen; upon this he was called upon to give a description of that great poet, which he did in a quiet way, sufficient to have betrayed his incognito to more sagacious eyes.

Plessing then with great agitation informed him that Goethe had not answered a most pressing and passionate letter in which he, Plessing, had described the state of his mind, and

had implored direction and assistance. Goethe excused himself as he best could; but Plessing insisted on reading him the letters, that he might judge whether they deserved such treatment.

He listened, and tried by temperate sympathetic counsel to wean Plessing from his morbid thoughts by fixing them on external objects, especially by some active employment. These were impatiently rejected, and he left him, feeling that the case was almost beyond help.

He was subsequently able to assist Plessing, who, on visiting him at Weimar, discovered his old acquaintance, the landscape painter.[1] But the characteristic part of this anecdote—and that which makes me cite it here—is, the practical illustration it gives of his fundamental realism, which looked to nature and earnest activity as the sole cure for megrims, sentimentalisms, and self-torturings. Turn your mind to realities, and the self-made phantoms which darken your soul will disappear like night at the approach of dawn.

In the January of the following year (1778) Goethe was twice brought face to face with Death. The first was during a boar-hunt: his spear snapped in the onslaught, and he was in imminent peril, but fortunately escaped. On the following day, while he and the duke were skating (perhaps talking over yesterday's escape), there came a crowd over the ice, bearing the corpse of the unhappy Fräulein von Lassberg, who, in the despair of unrequited love, had drowned herself in the Ilm, close by the very spot where Goethe was wont to take his evening walk. At all times this would have been a shock to him, but the shock was greatly intensified by the fact that in the pocket of the unfortunate girl was found a copy of *Werther!*[2] It is true we never reproach an author in such cases. No reflecting man ever reproached Plato with the suicide of Cleombrotus, or Schiller with the brigandage of highwaymen. Yet when fatal consequences occur, the author,

[1] In 1788, Plessing was appointed professor of philosophy in the university of Duisburg, where Goethe visited him on his return home from the campaign in France, 1792. The reader may be interested to know, that Plessing entirely outlived his morbid melancholy, and gained a respectable name in German letters. His principal works are *Osiris und Socrates*, 1783; *Historische und Philosophische Untersuchungen über die Denkart Theologie und Philosophie der ältesten Völker*, 1785; and *Memnonium, oder Versuche zur Enthüllung der Geheimnisse des Alterthums*, 1787. He died 1806.

[2] Riemer, who will never admit anything that may seem to tell against his idol, endeavours to throw a doubt on this fact, saying it was reported only out of malice. But he gives no reasons.

whom we absolve, cannot so lightly absolve himself. It is in vain to argue that the work does not, rightly considered, lead to suicide; if it does so, *wrongly* considered, it is the proximate cause; and the author cannot easily shake off that weight of blame. Goethe, standing upon logic, might have said: "If Plato instigated the suicide of Cleombrotus, certainly he averted that of Olympiodorus; if I have been one of the many causes which moved this girl towards that fatal act, I have also certainly been the cause of saving others, notably that young Frenchman who wrote to thank me." He might have argued thus; but Conscience is tenderer than Logic; and if in firing at a wild beast I kill a brother hunter, my conscience will not leave me altogether in peace.

The body was borne to the house of the Frau von Stein, which stood nearest the spot, and there he remained with it the whole day, exerting himself to console the wretched parents. He himself had need of some consolation. The incident affected him deeply, and led him to speculate on all cognate subjects, especially on melancholy. "This inviting sadness," he beautifully says, "has a dangerous fascination, *like water itself, and we are charmed by the reflex of the stars of heaven which shines through both.*"

He was soon, however, "*forced* into theatrical levity" by the various rehearsals necessary for the piece to be performed on the birthday of the duchess. This was the *Triumph der Empfindsamkeit.* The adventure with Plessing, and finally the tragedy of the Fräulein von Lassberg had given increased force to his antagonism against Wertherism and Sentimentality, which he now lashed with unsparing ridicule. The hero of his extravaganza is a Prince, whose soul is only fit for moonlight ecstasies and sentimental rhapsodies. He adores Nature; not the rude, rough, imperfect Nature whose gigantic energy would alarm the sentimental mind; but the beautiful rose-pink Nature of books. He likes Nature as one sees it at the Opera. Rocks are picturesque, it is true; but they are often crowned with tiaras of snow, sparkling, but apt to make one "chilly"; turbulent winds howl through their clefts and crannies, alarming to delicate nerves. The Prince is not fond of the winds. Sunrise and early morn are lovely—but damp; and the Prince is liable to rheumatism.

To obviate all such inconveniences he has had a mechanical imitation of Nature executed for his use; and this accompanies him on his travels; so that at a moment's notice, in secure

defiance of rheumatism, he can enjoy a moonlight scene, a sunny landscape, or a sombre grove.

He is in love; but his mistress is as factitious as his landscapes. Woman is charming but capricious, fond but exacting; and therefore the Prince has a doll dressed in the same style as the woman he once loved. By the side of this doll he passes hours of rapture; for it he sighs; for it he rhapsodises.

The *real* woman appears—the original of that much treasured image. Is he enraptured? Not in the least. His heart does not palpitate in her presence; he does not recognise her; but throws himself once more into the arms of his doll, and thus sensibility triumphs.

There are five acts of this "exquisite fooling." Originally it was much coarser, and more personal than we now see it. Böttiger says that there remains scarcely a shadow of its flashing humour and satiric caprice. The whip of Aristophanes was applied with powerful wrist to every fashionable folly, in dress, literature, or morals, and the spectators saw themselves as in a mirror of sarcasm. At the conclusion, the doll was ripped open, and out fell a multitude of books, such as were then the rage, upon which severe and ludicrous judgments were passed—and the severest upon *Werther*. The whole piece was interspersed with ballets, music, and comical changes of scene; so that what now appears a tiresome farce, was then an irresistible extravaganza.

This extravaganza has the foolery of Aristophanes, and the physical fun of that riotous wit, whom Goethe was then studying. But when critics are in ecstasies with its wit and irony, I confess myself at a loss to conceive clearly what they mean. National wit, however, is perhaps scarcely amenable to criticism. What the German thinks exquisitely ludicrous, is to a Frenchman, or an Englishman, generally of mediocre mirthfulness. Wit requires delicate handling; the Germans generally touch it with gloved hands. Sarcasm is with them too often a sabre not a rapier, hacking the victim where a thrust would suffice. It is a noticeable fact that amid all the riches of their Literature they have little that is comic of a high order. They have produced no Comedy. To them may be applied the couplet wherein the great original of Grotesque Seriousness set forth its verdict:

> Κωμῳδοδιδασκαλίαν εἶναι χαλεπώτατον ἔργον ἁπάντων.
> Πολλῶν γὰρ δὴ πειρασάντων αὐτὴν ὀλίγοις χαρίσασθαι.[1]

[1] ARISTOPHANES: *Equites*, v. 516.

which I will venture to turn thus:

> Miss Comedy is a sad flirt,—you may guess
> From the number who court her, the few she doth bless.

CHAPTER VII

THE REAL PHILANTHROPIST

A STRANGE phantasmagoria is the life he leads at this epoch. His employments are manifold, yet his studies, his drawing, etching, and rehearsing are carried on as if they alone were the occupation of the day. His immense activity, and power of varied employment, scatter the energies which might be consecrated to some great work; but, in return, they give him the varied store of material of which he stood so much in need. At this time he is writing *Wilhelm Meister*, and *Egmont; Iphigenia* is also taking shape in his mind. His office gives him much to do; and Gervinus, who must have known how great were the calls upon his time, should have paused ere he threw out the insinuation of "diplomatic rudeness" when Goethe answered one of his brother-in-law's letters through his secretary. Surely with a brother-in-law one may take such latitude?[1]

This man, whose diplomatic coldness and aristocratic haughtiness have formed the theme of so many long tirades, was of all Germans the most sincerely democratic, until the Reign of Terror in France frightened him, as it did others, into more modified opinions. Not only was he always delighted to be with the people, and to share their homely ways, which were consonant with his own simple tastes, but we find him in the confidence of intimacy expressing his sympathy with the people in the heartiest terms. When among the miners he writes to his beloved, "how strong my love has returned upon me for these lower classes! which one calls the lower, but which in God's eyes are assuredly the highest! Here you meet all the virtues combined: Contentedness,

[1] Since the text was written, the correspondence with the Frau v. Stein has appeared; and from it we learn that in Switzerland he even dictated some letters to *her!* It could not have been "diplomatic rudeness," inasmuch as he usually wrote to the duke himself through his amanuensis.

Moderation, Truth, Straightforwardness, Joy in the slightest good, Harmlessness, Patience—Patience—Constancy in—— in . . . I will not lose myself in panegyric!" Again, he is writing *Iphigenia*, but the news of the misery and famine among the stocking-weavers of Apolda paralyses him. "The drama will not advance a step: it is cursed; the King of Tauris must speak as if no stocking-weaver in Apolda felt the pangs of hunger!"

In striking contrast stands the expression of his contempt for what was called the great world, as he watched it in his visits to the neighbouring courts. If affection bound him to Karl August, whom he was forming, and to Luise, for whom he had a chivalrous regard, his eyes were not blind to the nullity of other princes and their followers. "Good society have I seen," runs one of his epigrams, "they call it the 'good' whenever there is not in it the material for the smallest of poems."

> Gute Gesellschaft hab' ich gesehen; man nennt sie die gute
> Wenn sie zum kleinsten Gedicht keine Gelegenheit giebt.

Notably was this the case in his journey with the duke to Berlin, May 1778. He only remained a few days there; *saw* much, and not without contempt. "I have got quite close to old Fritz, having seen his way of life, his gold, his silver, his statues, his apes, his parrots, and heard his own curs twaddle about the great man." Potzdam and Berlin were noisy with preparations for war. The great king was absent; but Prince Henry received the poet in a friendly manner, and invited him and Karl August to dinner. At table there were several generals; but Goethe, who kept his eyes open, sternly kept his mouth closed. He seems to have felt no little contempt for the Prussian court, and its great men, who appeared very small men in his eyes. "I have spoken no word in the Prussian dominions which might not be made public. Therefore I am called haughty and so forth." Varnhagen intimates that the ill-will he excited by not visiting the literati, and by his reserve, was so great as to make him averse from hearing of his visit in after years.[1] What, indeed, as Varnhagen asks, had Goethe in common with Nicolai, Ramler, Engel, Zellner, and the rest? He did visit the poetess Karschin and the artist Chodowiecki; but from the rest he kept aloof. Berlin

[1] *Vermischte Schriften*, iii. p. 62.

was not a city in which he could feel himself at home; and he doubtless was fully aware of the small account in which he was held by Frederick, whose admiration lay in quite other directions. What culture the king had was French, and his opinion of German literature had been very explicitly pronounced in a work published this year, in which *Goetz von Berlichingen* was cited as a sample of the reigning bad taste. The passage is too curious to be omitted. "Vous y verrez représenter les abominables pièces de Shakspear traduites en notre langue, et tout l'auditoire se pâmer d'aise en entendant ces farces ridicules, et dignes *des sauvages de Canada*." That certainly was afflicting to "le bon goût"; but *that* was not the worst. Shakspeare might be pardoned for *his* faults, "car la naissance des arts n'est jamais le point de leur maturité. Mais voilà encore un Goetz de Berlichingen qui parait sur la scène, imitation détestable de ces mauvaises pièces anglaises, et le parterre applaudit et demande avec enthousiasme la répétition de *ces dégoûtantes platitudes!*"[1]

Thus the two German Emperors, Fritz and Wolfgang, held no spiritual congress; perhaps no good result *could* have been elicited by their meeting. Yet they were, each in his own sphere, the two most potent men then reigning. Fritz did not directly assist the literature of his country, but his *indirect* influence has been indicated by Griepenkerl.[2] He awoke the Germans from their sleep by the rolling of drums; those who least liked the clang of arms or the "divisions of a battlefield," were nevertheless awakened to the fact that something important was going on in life, and they rubbed their sleepy eyes, and tried to *see* a little into that. The roll of drums has this merit, at all events, that it draws men from their library table to the window, and so makes them look out upon the moving, living world of action, wherein the erudite may see a considerable sensation made even by men unable to conjugate a Greek verb in "μι."[3]

On returning to Weimar, Goethe occupied himself with various architectural studies, *à propos* of the rebuilding of the

[1] *De la Littérature Allemande*, p. 46. His opinion of the newly discovered Niebelungen Lied was no less characteristically contemptuous: he declared he would not give such rubbish house-room.

[2] *Der Kunstgenius der Deutschen Literatur des letzten Jahrhunderts*, i. p. 52.

[3] Dr. George has become famous (or *did* become so—for, alas! what is fame?) by his shrewd suspicion that Frederick with all his victories could not accomplish *that* feat of intellectual vigour. Many men still measure greatness by verbs in μι.

palace; and commenced those alterations in the Park, which resulted in the beautiful distribution formerly described. But I pass over many details of his activity to narrate an episode which must win the heart of every reader. In these pages it has been evident, I hope, that no compromise with the truth has led me to gloss over faults, or to conceal shortcomings. All that testimony warrants I have reproduced: good and evil, as in the mingled yarn of life. Faults and deficiencies, even grievous errors, do not estrange a friend from our hearts; why should they lower a hero? Why should the biographer fear to trust the tolerance of human sympathy? Why labour to prove a hero faultless? The reader is no *valet de chambre* incapable of crediting greatness in a *robe de chambre*. Never should we forget the profound saying of Hegel in answer to the vulgar aphorism ("No man is a hero to his valet de chambre"); namely, "This is not because the Hero is no Hero, but because the Valet is a Valet."[1] Having trusted to the effect which the true man would produce, in spite of all drawbacks,—and certain that the true man was *lovable* as well as admirable, I have made no direct appeal to the reader's sympathy, nor tried to make out a case in favour of extraordinary virtue.

But the tribute of affectionate applause is claimed now we have arrived at a passage in his life so *characteristic* of the delicacy, generosity, and nobility of his nature, that it is scarcely possible for any one not to love him, after reading it. Of generosity, in the more ordinary sense, there are abundant examples in his history. Riemer has instanced several,[2] but these are acts of kindness, thoughtfulness, and courtesy, such as one expects to find in a prosperous poet. That he was kind, gave freely, sympathised freely, acted disinterestedly, and that his kindness showed itself in trifles quite as much as in important actions (a most significant trait),[3] is known to all persons moderately acquainted with

[1] "Nicht aber darum weil dieser kein Held ist, sondern weil jener der Kammerdiener ist."—*Philosophie der Geschichte*, p. 40. Goethe repeated this as an epigram; and Carlyle has wrought it into the minds of hundreds; but Hegel is the originator.

[2] *Mittheilungen*, vol. i. pp. 102–5.

[3] There is lamentable confusion in our estimate of character on this point of generosity. We often mistake a spasm of sensibility for the strength of lovingness—making an *occasional* act of kindness the sign of a kind nature. Benj. Constant says of himself: "*Je puis faire de bonnes et fortes actions; je ne puis avoir de bons procédés.*" There are hundreds like him. On the other hand, there are hundreds who willingly perform many little acts of kindness and courtesy, but who never rise to the dignity of generosity; these are *poor* natures, ignorant of the grander throbbings.

German literature. But the disposition exhibited in the story I am about to tell is such as few persons would have imagined to be lying beneath the stately prudence and calm self-mastery of the man so often styled "heartless."

This is the story: A man (his name still remains a secret) of a strange, morbid, suspicious disposition, had fallen into destitution, partly from unfortunate circumstances, partly from his own fault. He applied to Goethe for assistance, as so many others did; and he painted his condition with all the eloquence of despair.

"According to the idea I form of you from your letters," writes Goethe, "I fancy I am not deceived, and this to me is very painful, in believing that I cannot give help or hope to one who needs so much. But I am not the man to say, 'Arise, and go further.' Accept the little that I can give, as a plank thrown towards you for momentary succour. If you remain longer where you are, I will gladly see that in future you receive some slight assistance. In acknowledging the receipt of this money, pray inform me how far you can make it go. If you are in want of a dress, greatcoat, boots, or warm stockings, tell me so; I have some that I can spare.

"Accept this drop of balsam from the compendious medicine chest of the Samaritan, in the same spirit as it is offered."

This was on the 2nd of November 1778. On the 11th he writes again, and from the letter we see that he had resolved to do *more* than throw out a momentary plank to the shipwrecked man—in fact he had undertaken to support him.

"In this parcel you will receive a greatcoat, boots, stockings, and some money. My plan for you this winter is this:

"In Jena living is cheap. I will arrange for board and lodging, &c., on the strictest economy, and will say it is for some one who, with a small pension, desires to live in retirement. When that is secured I will write to you; you can then go there, establish yourself in your quarters, and I will send you cloth and lining, with the necessary money, for a coat, which you can get made, and I will inform the rector that you were recommended to me, and that you wish to live in retirement at the University.

"You must then invent some plausible story, have your name entered on the books of the University, and no soul will ever inquire more about you, neither Burgomaster nor

Amtmann. *I have not sent you one of my coats, because it might be recognised in Jena.* Write to me and let me know what you think of this plan, and at all events in what character you propose to present yourself."

The passage in italics indicates great thoughtfulness. Indeed the whole of this correspondence shows the most tender consideration for the feelings of his protégé. In the postscript he says: "And now step boldly forth again upon the path of life! We live but once. . . . Yes, I know perfectly what it is to take the fate of another upon one's own shoulders, but you shall not perish!" On the 23rd he writes:

"I received to-day your two letters of the 17th and 18th, and have so far anticipated their contents as to have caused inquiry to be made in Jena for the fullest details, as for one who wished to live there under the quiet protection of the University. Till the answer arrives keep you quiet at Gera, and the day after to-morrow I will send you a parcel and say more.

"Believe me you are not a burden on me; on the contrary, it teaches me economy; *I fritter away much of my income which I might spare for those in want.* And do you think that your tears and blessings go for nothing? *He who has, must give, not bless; and if the Great and the Rich have divided between them the goods of this world, Fate has counterbalanced these by giving to the wretched the powers of blessing, powers to which the fortunate know not how to aspire.*"

Noble words! In the mouth of a pharisaical philanthropist *declaiming* instead of *giving*, there would be something revolting in such language; but when we know that the hand which wrote these words was "open as day to melting charity," when we know that (in spite of all other claims) he gave up for some years the sixth part of his very moderate income to rescue this stranger from want, when we know by the irrefragable arguments of deeds, that this language was no hollow phrase, but the deep and solemn utterance of a thoroughly human heart, then, I say, those words awaken reverberations within our hearts, calling up feelings of loving reverence for him who uttered them.

How wise and kind is this also: "Perhaps there will soon turn up occasions for you to be useful to me where you are, for it is not the Project-maker and Promiser, but he who in trifles affords real service, that is welcome to one who would so willingly do something good and enduring.

"Hate not the poor philanthropists with their precautions and conditions, for one need pray diligently to retain, amid such bitter experience, the goodwill, courage, and levity of youth, which are the main ingredients of benevolence. And it is more than a benefit which God bestows when he calls us, who can so seldom do anything to lighten the burden of one truly wretched."

The next letter, dated December 11th, explains itself:—

"Your letter of the 7th I received early this morning. And first, to calm your mind: you shall be forced to nothing; the hundred dollars you shall have, live where you may; but now listen to me.

"I know that to a man his ideas are realities; and although the image you have of Jena is false, still I know that nothing is less easily reasoned away than such hypochondriacal anxieties. I think Jena the best place for your residence, and for many reasons. The University has long lost its ancient wildness and aristocratic prejudices; the students are not worse than in other places, and among them there are some charming people. In Jena, they are so accustomed to the flux and reflux of men that no individual is remarked. And there are too many living in excessively straitened means, for poverty to be either a stigma or a noticeable peculiarity. Moreover it is a city where you can more easily procure all necessities. In the country during the winter, ill, and without medical advice, would not that be miserable?

"Further, the people to whom I referred you are good domestic people, who, on my account, would treat you well. Whatever might occur to you, I should be in a condition, one way or another, to assist you. I could aid you in establishing yourself; need only for the present guarantee your board and lodging, and pay for it later on. I could give you a little on New Year's Day, and procure what was necessary on credit. You would be nearer to me. Every market day I could send you something—wine, victuals, utensils that would cost me little, and would make your existence more tolerable; and I could thus make you more a part of my household expenses. The objection to Gera is, that communication with it is so difficult; things do not arrive at proper times, and cost money which benefits no one. You would probably remain six months in Jena before any one remarked your presence. This is the reason why I preferred Jena to every other place, and you would do the same if you could but see things with un-

troubled vision. How, if you were to make a trial? However, I know a fly can distract a man with sensitive nerves, and that, in such cases, reasoning is powerless.

"Consider it: it will make all things easier. I promise you, you will be confortable in Jena. But if you cannot overcome your objections, then remain in Gera. At New Year you shall have twenty-five dollars, and the same regularly every quarter. I cannot arrange it otherwise. I must look to my own household demands; that which I have given you already, because I was quite unprepared for it, has made a hole, which I must stop up as I can. If you were in Jena, I could give you some little commissions to execute for me, and perhaps some occupation; I could also make your personal acquaintance, and so on. But act just as your feelings dictate; if my reasons do not convince you, remain in your present solitude. Commence the writing of your life, as you talk of doing, and send it me piecemeal, and be persuaded that I am only anxious for your quiet and comfort, and choose Jena simply because I could there do more for you."

The hypochondriacal fancies of the poor man were invincible; and instead of going to Jena he went to Ilmenau, where Goethe secured him a home, and sent him books and money. Having thus seen to his material comforts, he besought him to occupy his mind by writing out the experience of his life, and what he had observed on his travels. In the following letter he refers to his other protégé, Peter Imbaumgarten:

"I am very glad the contract is settled. Your maintenance thus demands a hundred dollars yearly, and I will guarantee the twenty-five dollars quarterly, and contrive also that by the end of this month you shall receive a regular allowance for pocket money. I will also send what I can *in natura*, such as paper, pens, sealing-wax, &c. Meanwhile here are some books.

"Thanks for your news; continue them. The wish to do good is a bold, proud wish; we must be thankful when we can secure even a little bit. I have now a proposition to make. When you are in your new quarters I wish you would pay some attention to a boy, whose education I have undertaken, and who learns the huntsman's craft in Ilmenau. He has begun French; could you not assist him in it? He draws nicely; could you not keep him to it? I would fix the hours when he should come to you. You would lighten my anxiety about him if you could by friendly intercourse ascertain the

condition of his mind, and inform me of it; and if you could keep an eye upon his progress. But of course this depends on your feeling disposed to undertake such a task. Judging from myself—*intercourse with children always makes me feel young and happy.* On hearing your answer, I will write more particulars. *You will do me a real service, and I shall be able to add monthly the trifle which I have set aside for the boy's education.* I trust I shall still be able to lighten your sad condition, so that you may recover your cheerfulness."

Let me call attention to the delicacy with which he here intimates that he does not mean to occupy Kraft's [1] time without remunerating it. If that passage be thoroughly considered, it will speak as much for the exquisite kindness of Goethe's nature as any greater act of liberality. Few persons would have considered themselves unentitled to *ask* such a service from one whose existence they had secured. To pay for it would scarcely have entered their thoughts. But Goethe felt that to demand a service, which might be irksome, would, in a certain way, be selling benevolence; if he employed Kraft's time, it was right that he should pay what he would have paid another master. On the other hand, he instinctively shrunk from the indelicacy of making a decided *bargain.* It was necessary to intimate that the lessons would be paid for; but with that intimation he also conveyed the idea that in undertaking such a task Kraft would be conferring an *obligation* upon him; so that Kraft might show his gratitude, might benefit his benefactor, and nevertheless be benefited. After reading such a sentence, I could, to use Wieland's expression, "have eaten Goethe for love!"

Kraft accepted the charge; and Goethe having sent him some linen for shirts, some cloth for a coat, and begged him to write without the least misgiving, now sends this letter:

"Many thanks for your care of Peter; the boy greatly interests me, for he is a legacy of the unfortunate *Lindau.* Do him all the good you can quietly. How you may advance him! I care not whether he reads, draws, or learns French, so that he does occupy his time, and I hear your opinion of him. For the present, let him consider his first object is to acquire the huntsman's craft, and try to learn from him how he likes it, and how he gets on with it. For, believe me, man must have a trade which will support him. The artist is never

[1] Herr Kraft was the *assumed* name of this still anonymous protégé.

paid; it is the artisan. Chodowiecki, the artist whom we admire, would eat but scanty mouthfuls; but Chodowiecki, the artisan, who with his woodcuts illumines the most miserable daubs, he is paid."

In a subsequent letter he says: "Many thanks. By your attention to these things, and your care of Peter, you have performed true service for me, and richly repaid all that I may have been able to do for you. Be under no anxiety about the future, there will certainly occur opportunities wherein you can be useful to me; meanwhile, continue as heretofore." This was written on the *very day* of his return to Weimar from the Swiss journey! If this tells us of his attention to his protégé, the next letter tells us of his anticipating even the casualty of death, for he had put Kraft on the list of those whom he left as legacies of benevolence to his friends. It should be remarked that Goethe seems to have preserved profound secrecy with respect to the good he was then doing; not even in his confidential letters to Frau von Stein is there one hint of Kraft's existence. In short, *nothing* is wanting to complete the circle of genuine benevolence.

The year 1781 began with an increase of Kraft's pension; or rather, instead of paying a hundred dollars for his board and lodging, and allowing him pocket money, he made the sum two hundred dollars. "I can spare as much as that; and you need not be anxious about every trifle, but can lay out your money as you please. Adieu; and let me soon hear that all your sorrows have left you." This advance seems to have elicited a demand for *more* money, which produced the following characteristic answer:

"You have done well to disclose the whole condition of your mind to me; I can make all allowances, little as I may be able to completely calm you. My own affairs will not permit me to promise you a farthing more than the two hundred dollars, unless I were to get into debt, which in my place would be very unseemly. This sum you shall receive regularly. Try to make it do.

"I certainly do not suppose that you will change your place of residence without my knowledge and consent. Every man has his duty, make a duty of your love to me and you will find it light.

"It would be very disagreeable to me if you were to *borrow* from any one. It is precisely this miserable unrest now troubling you which has been the misfortune of your whole

life, and you have never been more contented with a thousand dollars than you now are with two hundred; because you always still desired something which you had not, and have never accustomed your soul to accept the limits of necessity. I do not reproach you with it; I know, unhappily too well, how it pertains to you, and feel how painful must be the contrast between your present and your past. But enough! One word for a thousand: at the end of every quarter you shall receive fifty dollars; for the present an advance shall be made. Limit your wants: the *Must* is hard, and yet solely by this *Must* can we show how it is with us in our inner man. To live according to caprice requires no peculiar powers." [1]

The following explains itself:

"If you once more read over my last letter you will see plainly that you have misinterpreted it. You are neither *fallen in my esteem*, nor have I a *bad opinion* of you, neither have I suffered my *good opinion* to be led astray, nor has your mode of thinking become *damaged* in my eyes: all these are exaggerated expressions, such as a rational man should not permit himself. Because I also speak out my thoughts with *freedom*, because I wish certain traits in your conduct and views somewhat different, does that mean that I look on you as a *bad man*, and that I wish to discontinue our relations?

"It is these hypochondriacal, weak and exaggerated notions, such as your last letter contains, which I blame and regret. Is it proper that you should say to me: *I am to prescribe the tone in which all your future letters must be written?* Does one command an honourable, rational man such things as that? Is it ingenuous in you on such an occasion to *underline* the words that you eat *my bread?* Is it becoming in a moral being, when one gently blames him, or names something in him as a malady, to fly out as if one had pulled the house about his ears? Do not misconstrue me, therefore, if I wish to see you contented and satisfied with the little I can do for you. So, if you will, things shall remain just as they were; at all events I shall not change my behaviour towards you."

The unhappy man seems to have been brought to a sense of his injustice by this, for although there is but one more letter, bearing the date 1783, that is, two years subsequent to the one just given, the connection lasted for seven years.

[1] I will give the original of this fine saying, as I have rendered it but clumsily: Das *Muss* ist hart, aber beim *Muss* kann der Mensch allein zeigen wie's inwendig mit ihm steht. Willkürlich leben kann jeder.

When Goethe undertook to write the life of Duke Bernhard he employed Kraft to make extracts for him from the Archives; which extracts, Luden, when he came to look over them with a biographical purpose, found utterly worthless.[1] The last words we find of Goethe's addressed to Kraft are, "You have already been of service to me, and other opportunities will offer. I have no grace to dispense, and my favour is not so fickle. Farewell, and enjoy your little in peace." It was terminated only by the death of the poor creature in 1785. Goethe buried him at his own expense, but even to the Jena officials he did not disclose Kraft's real name.[2]

To my apprehension these letters reveal a nature so exquisite in far-thoughted tenderness, so true and human in its sympathies with suffering, and so ready to alleviate suffering by sacrifices rarely made to friends, much less to strangers, that, after reading them, the epithets of "cold" and "heartless," often applied to Goethe, sound like blasphemies against the noblest feelings of humanity. Observe, this Kraft was no romantic object appealing to the sensibility; he had no thrilling story to stimulate sympathy; there was no subscription list opened for him; there were no coteries weeping over his misfortunes. Unknown, unfriended, ill at ease with himself and with the world, he revealed his wretchedness in secret to the great poet, and in secret that poet pressed his hand, dried his eyes, and ministered to his wants. And he did this not as *one* act, not as one passing impulse, but as the sustained sympathy of seven years.

Pitiful and pathetic is the thought that such a man can, for so many years, both in his own country and in ours, have been reproached, nay, even vituperated as cold and heartless! A certain reserve and stiffness of manner, a certain soberness of old age, a want of political enthusiasm, and some sentences wrenched from their true meaning, are the evidences whereon men build the strange hypothesis that he was an Olympian Jove sitting *above* Humanity, *seeing* life but not *feeling* it, his heart dead to all noble impulses, his career a calculated egotism. How it was that one so heartless became the greatest poet of modern times—how it was that he whose works contained the widest compass of human life, should himself be a bloodless pulseless diplomatist—no one thought

[1] See LUDEN'S *Rückblicke in Mein Leben.*

[2] I learn this from a letter to the Judge at Jena, which was exhibited at the *Goethe Austellung* in Berlin, 1861.

of explaining, till Menzel arose, and with unparalleled effrontery maintained that Goethe had no genius, but only talent, and that the miracle of his works lies in their style—a certain adroitness in representation. Menzel is a man so completely rejected by England—the translation of his work met with such hopeless want of encouragement, that I am perhaps wrong to waste a line upon it; but the bold style in which his trenchant accusations are made, and the assumption of a certain manliness as the momentum to his sarcasms, have given his attacks on Goethe a circulation independent of his book. To me he appears radically incompetent to appreciate a poet. I should as soon think of asking the first stalwart Kentish farmer for his opinion on the Parthenon. The farmer would doubtless utter some energetic sentences expressing his sense of its triviality; but the coarse energy of his language would not supply the place of knowledge, feeling, and taste; nor does the coarse energy of Menzel's style supply those deficiencies of nature and education which incapacitate him for the perception of Art.

The paradox still remains, then, in spite of Menzel: a great poet destitute of the feelings which poetry incarnates—a man destitute of soul giving expression to all the emotions he has not—a man who wrote *Werther*, *Egmont*, *Faust*, *Herman und Dorothea*, and *Meister*, yet knew not the joys and sorrows of his kind; will any one defend that paradox?[1] Not only that paradox, but this still more inexplicable one, that all who knew Goethe, whether they were his peers or his servants, loved him only as lovable natures can be loved. Children, women, clerks, professors, poets, princes—all loved him. Even Herder, bitter against every one, spoke of him with a reverence which astonished Schiller, who writes: "He is by many besides Herder named with a species of devotion, and *still more loved as a man* than admired as an author. Herder says he has a clear, universal mind, the truest and deepest feeling, and the greatest purity of heart."[2] Men might learn so much from his works, had not the notion of his coldness and indifference disturbed their judgment. "In no line," says Carlyle, "does he speak with asperity of any man, scarcely of anything. He

[1] I remember once, as we were walking along Piccadilly, talking about the infamous *Büchlein von Goethe*, Carlyle stopped suddenly, and with his peculiar look and emphasis, said, "Yes, it is the wild cry of amazement on the part of all spooneys that the Titan was not a spooney too! Here is a god-like intellect, and yet you see he is not an idiot! Not in the least a spooney!"

[2] *Briefw. mit Körner*, i. p. 136.

knows the good and loves it; he knows the bad and hateful and rejects it; but in neither case with violence. His love is calm and active; his rejection implied rather than pronounced."

And Schiller, when he came to appreciate by daily intercourse the qualities of his great friend, thus wrote of him: "It is not the greatness of his intellect which binds me to him. If he were not as a man more admirable than any I have ever known, I should only marvel at his genius from the distance. But I can truly say that in the six years I have lived with him, I have never for one moment been deceived in his character. He has a high truth and integrity, and is thoroughly in earnest for the Right and the Good; hence all hypocrites and phrase-makers are uncomfortable in his presence." And the man of whom Schiller could think thus is believed by many to have been a selfish egotist, "wanting in the higher moral feelings"!

But so it is in life: a rumour, originating perhaps in thoughtless ignorance, and circulated by malice, gains credence in the face of probability, and then no amount of evidence suffices to dissipate it. There is an atmosphere round certain names, a halo of glory or a halo of infamy, and men perceive this halo without seeking to ascertain its origin. Every public man is in some respects mythical; and the fables are believed in spite of all the contradictions of evidence. It is useless to hope that men will pause to inquire into the truth of what they hear said of another, before accepting and repeating it; but with respect to Goethe, who has now been more than a quarter of a century in his grave, one may hope that evidence so strong as these pages furnish may be held more worthy of credence than anything which gossip or ignorance, misconception or partisanship has put forth without proof.

BOOK THE FIFTH

1779 TO 1793

"Wenn sich der Most auch ganz absurd gebärdet,
Es giebt zuletzt doch noch 'nen Wein."

"Von jener Macht, die alle Wesen bindet
Befreit der Mensch sich der sich überwindet."

"Postquam me experientia docuit, omnia, quæ in communi vita frequenter occurrunt, vana et futilia esse; quum viderem omnia, a quibus et quæ timebam, nihil neque boni neque mali in se habere, nisi quatenus ab iis animus movebatur: constitui tandem inquirere, an aliquid daretur quod verum bonum et sui communicabile esset, et a quo solo rejectis ceteris omnibus animus afficeretur; imo an aliquid daretur, quo invento et acquisito continua ac summa in æternum fruerer lætitia."—SPINOSA.

CHAPTER I

NEW BIRTH

THE changes slowly determining the evolution of character, when from the lawlessness of Youth it passes into the clear stability of Manhood, resemble the evolution of harmony in the tuning of an orchestra, when from stormy discords wandering in pursuit of concord, all the instruments gradually subside into the true key: round a small centre the hurrying sounds revolve, one by one falling into that centre, and increasing its circle, at first slowly, and afterwards with ever-accelerated velocity, till victorious concord emerges from the tumult. Or they may be likened to the gathering splendour of the dawn, as at first slowly, and afterwards with silent velocity, it drives the sullen darkness to the rear, and with a tidal sweep of light takes tranquil possession of the sky. Images such as these represent the dawn of a new epoch in Goethe's life; an epoch when the wanderings of an excitable nature are gradually falling more and more within the circle of law; when aims, before vague, now become clear; when in the recesses of his mind much that was fluent becomes crystallised by the earnestness which gives a definite purpose to his life. All men of genius go through this process of crystallisation. Their youths are disturbed by the turbulence of errors and of passions; if they

outlive these errors they convert them into advantages. Just as the sides of great mountain ridges are rent by fissures filled with molten rock, which fissures, when the lava cools, act like vast supporting ribs strengthening the mountain mass, so, in men of genius, passions first rend, and afterwards buttress life. The diamond, it is said, can only be polished by its own dust; is not this symbolical of the truth that only by its own fallings-off can genius properly be taught? And is not our very walk, as Goethe says, a series of falls?

He was now (1779) entering his thirtieth year. Life slowly emerged from the visionary mists through which hitherto it had been seen; the solemn earnestness of manhood took the place of the vanishing thoughtlessness of youth, and gave a more commanding unity to his existence. He had "resolved to deal with Life no longer by halves, but to work it out in its totality, beauty, and goodness—*vom Halben zu entwöhnen, und im Ganzen, Guten, Schönen, resolut zu leben.*" It is usually said that the residence in Italy was the cause of this change; but the development of his genius was the real cause. The slightest acquaintance with the period we are now considering suffices to prove that long before he went to Italy the change had taken place. An entry in his Diary at this date is very significant. "Put my things in order, looked through my papers, and burnt all the old chips. Other times, other cares! Calm retrospect of Life, and the extravagances, impulses, and eager desires of youth; how they seek satisfaction in all directions. How I have found delight, especially in mysteries, in dark imaginative connections; how I only half seized hold of Science, and then let it slip; how a sort of modest self-complacency runs through all I wrote; how short-sighted I was in divine and human things; how many days wasted in sentiments and shadowy passions; how little good I have drawn from them, and now the half of life is over, I find myself advanced no step on my way, but stand here as one who, escaped from the waves, begins to dry himself in the sun. The period in which I have mingled with the world since October 1775, I dare not yet trust myself to look at. God help me further, and give me light, that I may not so much stand in my own way, but see to do from morning till evening the work which lies before me, and obtain a clear conception of the order of things; that I be not as those are who spend the day in complaining of headache, and the night in drinking the wine which gives the headache!"

There is something quite solemn in those words. The same thought is expressed in a letter to Lavater: "The desire to raise the pyramid of my existence, the basis of which is already laid, as high as practicable in the air, absorbs every other desire, and scarcely ever quits me. I dare not longer delay; I am already advanced in life, and perhaps Death will break in at the middle of my work, and leave the Babylonic tower incomplete. At least men shall say it was boldly schemed, and if I live, my powers shall, with God's aid, reach the completion." And in a recently published letter to the duke, he says: "I let people say what they will, and then I retire into my old fortress of Poetry and work at my *Iphigenia*. By this I am made sensible that I have been treating this heavenly gift somewhat too cavalierly, and there is still time and need for me to become more economical if ever I am to bring forth anything."[1]

No better index of the change can be named than his *Iphigenia auf Tauris*, written at this period. The reader will learn with some surprise that this wonderful poem was originally written in prose. It was the fashion of the day. *Götz*, *Egmont*, *Tasso*, and *Iphigenia*, no less than Schiller's *Robbers*, *Fiesco*, *Kabale und Liebe*, were written in prose; and when *Iphigenia* assumed a poetic form, the Weimar friends were disappointed—they *preferred* the prose.

This was part of the mania for returning to Nature. Verse was pronounced unnatural; although, in truth, verse is not more unnatural than song. Song is to speech what poetry is to prose; it expresses a different mental condition. Impassioned prose *approaches* poetry in the rhythmic impulse of its movements; as impassioned speech in its varied cadences also approaches the intonations of music. Under great emotional excitement, the Arabs give their language a recognisable metre, and almost talk poetry. But prose never *is* poetry, or is so only for a moment; nor is speech song. Schiller learned to see this, and we find him writing to Goethe, "I have never before been so palpably convinced as in my present occupation how closely in poetry Substance and Form are connected. Since I have began to transform my prosaic language into a poetic rhythmical one, I find myself *under a totally different jurisdiction;* even many motives which in the prosaic execution seemed to me to be perfectly in place, I can no longer use:

[1] *Briefwechsel zwischen Karl August und Goethe*, i. 11.

they were merely *good for the common domestic understanding, whose organ prose seems to be;* but verse absolutely demands reference to the imagination, and thus I was obliged to become poetical in many of my motives."

That Goethe should have fallen into the sophism which asserted prose to be more natural than verse is surprising. His mind was full of song. To the last he retained the faculty of singing melodiously, when his prose had degenerated into comparative feebleness. And this prose *Iphigenia* is saturated with verses; which is also the case with *Egmont.* He *meant* to write prose, but his thoughts instinctively expressed themselves in verse. The critical reader will do well to compare the prose with the poetic version.[1] He will not only see how frequent the verses are, but how few were the alterations necessary to be made to transform the prose drama into a poem. They are just the sort of touches which elevate poetry above prose. Thus, to give an example, in the prose he says: *unnütz seyn, ist todt seyn* (to be useless is to be dead), which thus grows into a verse—

Ein unnütz Leben ist ein früher Tod.[1]

Again in the speech of Orestes (Act ii. sc. 1), there is a fine and terrible allusion to Clytemnestra, "Better die here before the altar than in an obscure nook where the nets of murderous near *relatives* are placed." In the prose this allusion is not clear—Orestes simply says, the "nets of assassins."[3]

The alterations do not touch the substance of this drama; we must therefore consider it a product of the period now under review; and as such we may examine it at once.

CHAPTER II

IPHIGENIA

It was very characteristic in Schlegel to call *Iphigenia* "an echo of Greek song"; he delighted in such rhetorical prettinesses; but that German scholars should have so often re-

[1] See vol. xxxiv. of the edition of 1840.
[2] A life not useful is an early death.
[3] Neither Taylor nor Miss Swanwick appears to have seized the allusion. One translates it, "by the *knives of avenging kindred*"; the other, "where *near hands* have spread *assassination's wily net.*"

peated the phrase, and should have so often without misgiving declared *Iphigenia* to be the finest modern specimen of Greek tragedy, is truly surprising, until we reflect on the mass of flagrant traditional errors afloat respecting the Greek drama. For a long while the Three Unities were held to be inseparable from that drama; in spite of the fact that in several plays Unity of Time is obviously disregarded, and in two or three the Unity of Place is equally so. Again there was the notion that Comedy and Tragedy were not suffered to mingle in the same play; in spite of the palpable fact of Æschylus and Euripides having mingled them. It was also believed that Destiny formed the tragic-pivot; in spite of the fact, that in the *majority* of these plays Destiny has *no* place, beyond what the religious conceptions of the poets must of necessity have given to it, just as Christianity must of necessity underlie the tragic conceptions of Christian poets.

The very phrase with which critics characterise *Iphigenia* is sufficient to condemn them. They tell us it has "all the repose of Greek tragedy." Consider it for a moment: *Repose* in a tragedy! that is to say, calmness in the terrific upheaving of volcanic passions. Tragedy, we are told by Aristotle, acts through Terror and Pity, awakening in our bosoms sympathy with suffering; and to suppose *this* effect can be accomplished by the "meditative repose which breathes from every verse," is tantamount to supposing a battle-song will most vigorously stir the blood of combatants if it borrow the accents of a lullaby.

Insensibly our notions of Greek art are formed from sculpture; and hence, perhaps, this notion of repose. But acquaintance with the drama ought to have prevented such an error, and taught men not to confound calmness of *evolution* with calmness of *life*. The unagitated simplicity of Greek scenic representation lay in the nature of the scenic necessities; but we do not call the volcano cold, because the snow rests on its top. Had the Greek drama been exhibited on stages like those of modern Europe, and performed by actors without cothurnus and mask, its deep agitations of passion would have welled up to the surface, communicating responsive agitations to the form. But there were reasons why this could not be. In the Grecian drama, everything was on a scale of vastness commensurate with the needs of an audience of many thousands; and consequently everything was disposed in masses rather than in details; it thus necessarily assumed

something of the sculpturesque form, threw itself into magnificent groupings, and, with a view to its effect, adapted a peculiar eurhythmic construction. It thus assumed slowness of movement, because it could not be rapid without distortion. If the critic doubts this, let him mount on stilts and, bawling through a speaking-trumpet, try what he can make of Shakspeare; he will then have an approximative idea of the restraints laid upon the Grecian actor, who, clothed so as to aggrandise his person, and speaking through a resonant mask, which had a *fixed* expression, could not *act*, in our modern sense of the word, but could only declaim; he had no means of representing the *fluctuations* of passion, and the poet therefore was forced to make him represent passion in broad, fixed masses. Hence the movement of the Greek drama was necessarily large, slow, and simple.

But if we pierce beneath scenic necessities and attend solely to the dramatic life which pulses through the Grecian tragedies, what sort of calmness meets us there? Calmness is a relative word. Polyphemus hurling rocks as school-boys throw cherry-stones, would doubtless smile at our riots, as we smile at buzzing flies; and Moloch howling through the unfathomable wilderness in passionate repentance of his fall, would envy us the wildest of our despair, and call it calmness. But measured by human standards I know not whose sorrow "can bear such emphasis" as to pronounce those pulses calm which throb in the *Œdipus*, the *Agamemnon*, or the *Ajax*. The Labdacidan Tale is one of the sombrest threads woven by the Parcæ.

The subject selected by the Greek dramatists are almost uniformly such as to call into play the darkest passions: madness, adultery, and murder in *Agamemnon;* revenge, murder, and matricide in the *Choëphoræ;* incest in *Œdipus;* jealousy and infanticide in *Medea;* incestuous adultery in *Hippolytus;* madness in *Ajax;* and so on throughout the series. The currents of these passions are for ever kept in agitation, and the alternations of pity and terror close only with the closing of the scene. In other words, in spite of the slowness of its scenic presentation this drama is distinguished by the very absence of the repose which is pronounced its characteristic.

Here we meet with the first profound difference separating Goethe from the Greek dramatist. The repose which was forced upon the Greek, which formed one of his restraints, as the hardness of the marble restrains the sculptor, Goethe has adopted under conditions which did *not* force him; while the

repose, which the Greek kept only at the surface, Goethe has allowed to settle down to the core. In what was accidental, temporal, he has imitated Greek Art; in the one essential characteristic he has not imitated it. Racine, so unjustly treated by Schlegel, *has* given us the passionate life of the Greek Drama, in spite of his *Madame* Hermione and *Monsieur* Oreste; in imitating the slow scenic movement he has also imitated the dramatic agitation of the under-current.

Goethe's *Iphigenia*, then, we must cease to regard according to the Grecian standard. It is a German play. It substitutes profound moral struggles, for the passionate struggles of the old legend. It is not Greek in ideas nor in sentiment. It is German, and transports Germany of the eighteenth century into Scythia during the mythic age, quite as absolutely as Racine places the court of Versailles in the camp of Aulis; and with the same ample justification.[1] The points in which Goethe's work resembles the Greek, are, first, the slowness of its scenic movement and simplicity of its action, which produce a corresponding calmness in the dialogue; and secondly, a saturation of mythic lore. All the rest is German. And this Schiller, as a dramatist, clearly saw. "I am astonished," he says, "to find this piece no longer makes the same favourable impression on me that it did formerly; though I still recognise it as a work full of soul. *It is, however, so astonishingly modern and un-Greek that I cannot understand how it was ever thought to resemble a Greek play.* It is purely moral, but the *sensuous power, the life, the agitation, and everything which specifically belongs to a dramatic work is wanting.* Goethe has himself spoken slightingly of it, but I took that as a mere caprice or coquetry; now I understand him."

Schiller adds, however, that apart from the dramatic form, *Iphigenia* is a marvellous production, which must for ever remain the delight and wonderment of mankind. This is striking the right chord. A drama it is not; it is a marvellous dramatic poem. The grand and solemn movement of its evolution responds to the large and simple ideas which it unfolds. It has the calmness of majesty. In the limpid clearness of its language, the involved mental processes of the

[1] This error of local colouring, which critics more erudite than acute have ridiculed in Racine, is not only an error commanded by the very conditions of Art, but is the very error committed by the Greeks themselves. In this play of *Iphigenia*, Euripides has committed anachronisms as gross as any chargeable to Racine; and justly: he wrote for the audience of his day, he did not write for antiquity.

characters are as transparent as the operations of bees within a crystal hive; while a constant strain of high and lofty music makes the reader feel as if in a holy temple. And above all witcheries of detail there is the one capital witchery, belonging to Greek statues more than to any other works of human cunning—the perfect unity of impression produced by the whole, so that nothing in it seems *made*, but all to *grow*, nothing is superfluous, but all is in organic dependence, nothing is there for detached effect, but the whole is effect. The poem fills the mind; beautiful as the separate passages are, admirers seldom think of passages, they think of the wondrous whole.

I cannot in language less than hyperbolical express my admiration for this work considered in itself; as a drama, I think an instructive parallel might be drawn between it and the *Iphigeneia* of Euripides. The enormous superiority of Goethe in intellectual stature, even aided by the immeasurable advantage he has of writing in a language which is in some sort our own, would not cover his inferiority as a dramatist.

In Euripides we have this groundwork: Iphigenia, about to be sacrificed at Aulis, was snatched away in a cloud by Diana, and a hind substituted in her place; she is now priestess of Diana in Tauris, where she presides over the bloody sacrifice of every stranger thrown on the inhospitable shores. Orestes and Pylades, in obedience to the oracle, come to Tauris intent on bearing away the Image of Diana: that accomplished, Orestes is to be released from the Furies who pursue him. The two are seized, and brought to Iphigenia for sacrifice. A recognition takes place; and she aids them in their original design of carrying away the goddess. They are pursued by the Scythians, but Minerva appears, to cut the knot and calm the rage of Thoas.

This story Goethe has modernised. The characters are essentially different, the moral elements are different, and the effect is different. His Iphigenia, every way superior to the Greek priestess, has the high, noble, tender, delicate soul of a Christian maiden. Forced to fulfil the duties of a Priestess, she subdues by her mild influence the fierce prejudice of Thoas, and makes him discontinue the barbarous practice of human sacrifices. She, who herself had been anointed as a sacrifice, could she preside over the sacrifice of another? This sympathy is modern. No Greek would have suffered her own personal feelings thus to rise up in rebellion against a

religious rite. The key note is struck here, and this tone sounds through the whole piece.

Iphigenia is melancholy, and pines for her native shores, in spite of the honour which attends, and the good she effects by her influence on Thoas. The fate of her family perturbs her. Thoas has conceived a passion for her.

> Thou sharedst my sorrow when a hostile sword
> Tore from my side my last, my dearest son;
> *Long as fierce vengeance occupied my heart,*
> *I did not feel my dwellings' dreary void;*
> But now, returning home, my rage appeased,
> My foes defeated and my son avenged,
> I find there's nothing left to comfort me.[1]

And he expresses a hope to "bear her to his dwelling as a bride," which she gently evades; he then taxes her with the mystery in which she has shrouded herself. She answers—

> If I concealed, O king, my name and race,
> 'Twas fear which prompted me, and not mistrust;
> For didst thou know who stands before thee now,
> And what accursed head thy arm protects,
> A shuddering horror would possess thy heart;
> And, far from wishing me to share thy throne,
> Wouldst banish me perchance.

Thoas replies, with generosity, that nothing shall make him cease his protection.

> In my hands
> The goddess placed thee; thou hast been to me
> As sacred as to her, and her behest
> Shall for the future also be my law.
> If thou canst hope in safety to return
> Back to thy kindred, I renounce my claims.

This promise becomes an important agent in the dénouement, and is skilfully contrived. Iphigenia, urged by him to speak out, utters this tremendous line:

> Know: I issue from the race of Tantalus![2]

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[1] In all extracts from this work I avail myself of the translation by Miss SWANWICK (*Selections from Goethe and Schiller*), which is many degrees superior to that of the late WILLIAM TAYLOR (*Survey of German Poetry*, vol. iii.). Feeling, as I profoundly feel, the insuperable difficulties of translating Goethe into English, it would ill become me to criticise Miss Swanwick's version; but it would also be very unjust not to add, that all versions miss the exquisite beauty of the original, and resemble it no more than a rough wood-cut resembles a Titian.

[2] *Vernimm: ich bin aus Tantalus Geschlecht.*
Miss Swanwick, from metrical necessity, has weakened this into:—
"Attend: I issue from the Titan's race."
It was indispensable to preserve the name of Tantalus, so pregnant with terrible suggestion.

Thoas is staggered; but after she has narrated the story of her race, he repeats his offer of marriage, which she will not accept. Irritated by her refusal, he exclaims:

> Be priestess still
> Of the great goddess who selected thee;
> And may she pardon me that I from her
> Unjustly, and with secret self-reproach,
> Her ancient sacrifice so long withheld.
> From olden times no stranger near'd our shore
> But fell a victim at her sacred shrine;
> But thou with kind affection didst enthral me
> That I forgot my duty. Thou didst rock
> My senses in a dream: I did not hear
> My people's murmurs: now they cry aloud,
> Ascribing my poor son's untimely death
> To this my guilt. No longer for thy sake
> Will I oppose the wishes of the crowd
> Who urgently demand the sacrifice.
> . . . . . .
> Two strangers, whom in caverns of the shore
> We found concealed, and whose arrival here
> Bodes to my realm no good, are in my power:
> With them thy goddess may once more resume
> Her ancient, pious, long-suspended rites.

Thus ends the first act.

In the conception of Thoas a great dramatic collision is rendered impossible: so high and generous a nature cannot resist an appeal to his generosity; and thus the spectator foresees there will be no struggle. In Euripides, on the contrary, the fierce Scythian looms from the dark background, terrible as fate; and he is artfully withheld from appearing on the scene until the very last. *How* he is to be appeased no spectator foresees. To be sure he is appeased by a *Deus ex machina*, and not by a dramatic unravelling of the entangled threads; but this inferiority is, dramatically speaking, more than compensated by the effect of the collision, and the agitation kept up to the last. Thoas, in Goethe, is a *moral*, not a *dramatic* figure.[1]

The carelessness to all dramatic effect which weakens this play is seen in the very avoidance of a path Euripides had

[1] The notion of making Thoas in love is not new. LAGRANGE-CHANCEL, In his *Oreste et Pylade* (a real treat to any one with a perception of the ludicrous) has thrown as much "galanterie" into this play as one may find in an opera. Thoas loves Iphigénie, who loves Pylade; but while the tyrant sighs in vain, the truculent Scythian is sighed for by Thomyris, *princesse du sang royal des Scythes*. As a specimen of *couleur locale*, I may mention that Thoas in this play has a *capitaine des gardes* and two *ministres d'état*, with an *ambassadeur Sarmate* resident at his court.

opened, viz., the certainty in the mind of the audience that Orestes and Pylades are the two captives to be slaughtered. In Euripides, Orestes and his companion appear on the scene before they are made prisoners; in Goethe, not till after their capture has been announced. The effect of the announcement in Euripides is powerful, in Goethe it is null.[1]

In the second act Orestes and Pylades appear. The scene between them is very undramatic, but beautiful as a poetic exposition of their mental conditions. Orestes feels—

> It is the path of death that now we tread,
> At every step my soul grows more serene.

But Pylades clings to life, and to his purpose. "Am I not," he says—

> As ever full of courage and of joy?
> And love and courage are the spirit's wings
> Wafting to noble actions.
>
> *Orestes.* Noble actions?
> Time was when fancy painted such before us!
> When oft, the game pursuing, on we roam'd
> O'er hill and valley: hoping that ere long,
> With club and weapon arm'd, we so might chase
> The track of robber or of monster huge.
> And then at twilight, by the glassy sea,
> We peaceful sat reclined against each other;
> The waves came dancing to our very feet,
> And all before us lay the wide, wide world.
> Then on a sudden one would seize his sword,
> And future deeds shone round us like the stars
> Which gemm'd in countless throngs the vaults of night.
> *Pylades.* Endless, my friend, the projects which the soul
> Burns to accomplish. We would every deed
> Perform at once as grandly as it shows
> After long ages, when from land to land
> The poet's swelling song hath rolled it on.
> It sounds so lovely what our fathers did,
> When in the silent evening shade reclined,
> We drink it in with music's melting tones.
> And what we do, is as it was to them
> Toilsome and incomplete.

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[1] Compare EURIP. v. 264, *sq.* There is one touch in the peasant's narrative which is very significant of that period when gods walked the earth so familiarly with man that every stranger might be taken for a god:

> ἐνταῦθα δισσοὺς εἶδε τις νεανίας
> βουφορβὸς ἡμῶν καπεχώρησεν πάλιν
> ἄκροισι δακτύλοισι πορθμεύων ἴχνος,
> ἔλεξε δ' οὐχ ὁρᾶτε · δαίμονές τινες
> θάσσουσίν οἵδε.

"There one of our cowboys espied the two youths, and stepping backwards on the points of his toes, retraced his steps, saying, 'Do you not see them? they are gods seated there.'"

Pylades fails to inspire him, however, with the resolution which he feels, and with belief in the probability of their escape from the shameful death, which Orestes accepts so calmly. Pylades has heard from the guards the character of Iphigenia; and congratulates himself on the fact that it is a woman who holds their fates in her hands, for even the best of men

> With horror may familiarise his mind;
> Through custom so transform his character,
> That he at length shall make himself a law
> Of what his very soul at first abhorred.

On some not very intelligible pretext he makes Orestes withdraw, that he may have an interview with Iphigenia; and as she approaches, unbinds his chains, and speaks, he adroitly bursts forth into these words:

> Delicious music! dearly welcome tones
> Of our own language in a foreign land!
> With joy my captive eye once more beholds
> The azure mountains of my native coast.[1]

He then tells her a story something like the real one, but disguising names: the *purpose* of which I do not detect. She inquires after her family, and hears the story of her mother's guilt. Noting her agitation, he asks if she be connected with that family by friendship. She sternly replies:

> Say on: and tell me how the deed was done.

He tells her. All she says is a few brief words, which are terribly significant: when he concludes, she veils herself, and withdraws, saying:

> Enough. Thou soon wilt see me once again.

and the act ends in this very *evasive* manner. The third act opens with the visit of Iphigenia to Orestes, in which she requests him to finish the story that Pylades had already half told; and he does so at some length. Disdaining the

1 M. PATIN has, I think, mistaken the import of this speech: comparing it with the simple exclamation of Philocletes, he says, "Philoclète n'en savait pas tant, il n'était pas si habile à se rendre compte de ses secrets mouvements: tout ce qu'il pouvait était de s'écrier, 'O douce parole!'" *Etudes sur les Tragiques Grecs*, iii. p. 323. But Pylades is not expressing *his* sentiments. His ear is not unfamiliar with the accents of his own language—he has just before heard them from Orestes; but by picturing Greece to *her*, he adroitly excites her sympathy for *himself*, a Greek.

guile which had prompted Pylades to conceal their names, he boldly says :

I am Orestes !

Here is a proper ἀναγνωρισις,—and naturally, no less than dramatically, it demands a cry from the heart of Iphigenia, who should at once fling herself into her brother's arms, and confess their relationship. Instead of this, she suffers him to continue talking, and to withdraw ; she only reveals herself in the next scene ! This is more like the dramatic treatment we find in juvenile writers, than what is expected from a great poet. Orestes has a return of his madness. He recovers from it, to feel himself purified by his sister's purity ; and Pylades now suggests that they shall bear away the image, and depart together.

It is evident that the tragic situation in this story is the slaughter of a brother by a sister ignorant of a relationship perfectly known to the audience. So far from having developed the tragedy of such a situation, Goethe has scarcely touched upon it, and never once awakened our fears : from first to last we are in no suspense, our emotions are untouched, our curiosity alone is excited to watch the process by which the terrible fate will be escaped. In Euripides, on the contrary, everything conspires to increase the terror of the situation. Iphigenia, formerly so mild that she wept with her victims, now rages like a lioness bereaved of her cubs. She has dreamed that Orestes is dead, and in her desolate condition resolves to wreak her woe on others. Her brother and her friend are brought before her. She questions them as to their names. Orestes refuses to tell her. In a rapid interchange of questions and answers she learns the story of her family ; and then offers to save *one* of their lives, on condition that the pardoned carry for her a letter to Argos. Here a contest of generosity ensues, as to who shall accept his life. Pylades is at length prevailed upon. The discovery is thus managed : Pylades, bound by his oath to deliver the letter, suggests this difficulty, viz., that should the boat be upset, or should the letter be lost, how then can he fulfil his promise ? Hereupon, to anticipate such an accident, Iphigenia tells him the contents of the letter ; and in telling him reveals her name. This produces the natural cry from Orestes, who avows himself, and clasps her in his arms. The dramatic movement of this scene is admirable. From this point the

interest slackens in Euripides, in Goethe it deepens. In the Greek play it is the culmination of passionate interest; for although the stratagem by which Iphigenia contrives to bear away the sacred image would flatter the propensities of the cunning Athenian audience,[1] it must have been, even to them, a delight altogether of a lower kind, addressing lower faculties, than those addressed by the tragic processional grandeur of the earlier portions; whereas in the German play, the hitherto feeble passionate interest now rises in an ascending scale of high *moral* interest, so that the tragedy evolved addresses the conscience rather than the emotions, being less the conflict of passions, than the high conflict with duty.

In the fourth act Iphigenia has to save more than her brother's life; she has to save him from the Furies; this is only to be done by deceit, inasmuch as force is impossible under the circumstances. To a Greek mind nothing could be more satisfactory. The Greek *preferred* deceit to force; but the Christianised conscience revolts from deceit as cowardly and deeply immoral. Accordingly Iphigenia shudders at the falsehood which is forced upon her, and only requires to be reminded by the king's messenger of the constant kindness and considerateness with which Thoas has treated her, to make her pause. When, therefore, Pylades arrives, urging her to flight, she communicates to him her scruples.

Pylades. Him thou dost fly who would have slain thy brother.
Iphig. To me at least he hath been ever kind.
Pylades. What fate commands is not ingratitude.
Iphig. Alas! it still remains ingratitude,—
Necessity alone can justify it.
Pylades. Thee before gods and men it justifies.
Iphig. *But my own heart is still unsatisfied.*
Pylades. Scruples too rigid are a cloak for pride.
Iphig. *I cannot argue, I can only feel.*

How modern all this is! Pylades, with more worldly views, says:

[1] Comp. EURIPIDES, v. 1157, *sq.* Iphigenia pretends that as the image of the goddess has been stained by the impure hands of the two captives, it must be purified, and for this purpose she intends to cleanse it in the sea, but that must be done in solitude. She then bids Thoas command that every citizen shall remain within doors, carefully avoiding a sight of that which may pollute them—μυσαρὰ γὰρ τὰ τοιάδ' ἐστι:—nay more, with an ingenuity which is almost farcical, she bids Thoas himself remain within the Temple, throwing a veil over his eyes as the captives issue forth, and he is not to consider it at all singular if she is a long while absent. In this way she contrives to escape with the image, having made fools of Thoas and his guards.

Life teaches us
To be less strict with others than ourselves;
Thou'lt learn the lesson too. So wonderful
Is human nature, and its varied ties
Are so involved and complicate, that none
May hope to keep his inmost spirit pure,
And walk without perplexity thro' life.

Here, then, lies the tragedy. Will this soul belie its own high instincts, even for the sake of saving her brother? The alternative is horrible; and after portraying the temptation in all its force, and human frailty in all its tenderness, the poet shows us human grandeur in this fine burst from the unhappy priestess:

Attend, O king!
A secret plot is laid; 'tis vain to ask
Touching the captives; they are gone, and seek
Their comrades, who await them on the shore.
The eldest—he whom madness lately seized,
And who is now recovered—is Orestes,
My brother! and the other, Pylades,
His early friend and faithful confidant.
From Delphi, Phœbus sent them to this shore,
With a divine command to steal away
The image of Diana, and to him
Bear back the sister, promising for this
Redemption to the blood-stained matricide.
I have delivered now into thy hands
The remnants of the house of Tantalus:
Destroy us—if thou darest!

For anything like this we seek in vain throughout the Greek *Iphigenia;* and the mere grandeur of the conception would produce an overpowering effect on the stage, if delivered with adequate depth and dignity.

Had Thoas been represented as a fierce Scythian, or even had he not been hitherto allowed to convince us of his generosity, the "collision" would have been stronger; as it is, we have little faith in his ferocity. He has nearly relented when Orestes rushes in with drawn sword to hasten Iphigenia away, because their design has been discovered. A scene ensues in which Thoas is resolved not to suffer the image of Diana to be borne away; and as to carry it away is the object of Orestes, it must be decided by force of arms. But now a light suddenly breaks in upon Orestes, who reads the oracle in another way. Apollo said—

"Back to Greece the sister bring,
Who in the sanctuary on Tauris' shore
Unwillingly abides; so ends the curse."
To Phœbus' sister we applied the words,
And he referred to *thee.*

It was Iphigenia who was to purify him, and to bear *her* away is to fulfil Apollo's orders. This interpretation loosens the knot. Iphigenia recalls to Thoas his promise that she should depart if ever she could return in safety to her kindred, and he reluctantly says, "Then go!" to which she answers—

> Not so, my king; I cannot part
> Without thy blessing, or in anger from thee.
> Banish us not! the sacred right of guests
> Still let us claim: so not eternally
> Shall we be severed. Honour'd and belov'd,
> As my own father was, art thou by me:
> Farewell! Oh! do not turn away, but give
> One kindly word of parting in return.
> So shall the wind more gently swell our sails,
> And from our eyes with softened anguish flow
> The tears of separation. Fare thee well!
> And graciously extend to me thy hand
> In pledge of ancient friendship.
> *Thoas (extending his hand).* Fare thee well.

This is a very touching, noble close, and is in exquisite harmony with the whole.

The remarks on this masterpiece have already occupied so much space that I could not, were I disposed, pause to examine the various collateral points of criticism which have been raised in Germany. I will merely allude to the characteristic difference between Ancient and Modern Art exhibited in the treatment of the Furies, which in Euripides are terrible Apparitions, real beings personated by actors; in Goethe they are Phantasms moving across the stage of an unhappy soul, but visible only to the inward eye; in like manner the Greek dénouement is the work of the actual interference of the Goddess in person, whereas the German dénouement is a loosening of the knot by deeper insight into the meaning of the oracle.

CHAPTER III

PROGRESS

In the beginning of 1779 we find Goethe very active in his new official duties. He has accepted the direction of the War Department, which suddenly assumes new importance, owing to the preparations for a war. He is constantly riding about the country, and doing his utmost to alleviate the

condition of the people. "Misery," he says, "becomes as prosaic and familiar to me as my own hearth, but nevertheless I do not let go my idea, and will wrestle with the unknown Angel, even should I halt upon my thigh. No man knows what I do, and with how many foes I fight, to bring forth a little."

Among his undertakings may be noted an organisation of Firemen, then greatly wanted. Fires were not only numerous, but were rendered terrible by the want of any systematic service to subdue them. Goethe, who in Frankfurt had rushed into the bewildered crowd, and astonished spectators by his rapid peremptory disposition of their efforts into a system—who in Apolda and Ettersburg lent aid and command, till his eyebrows were singed and his feet were burned—naturally took it much to heart that no regular service was supplied; and he persuaded the duke to institute one.

On this (his thirtieth) birthday the duke, recognising his official services, raised him to the place of *Geheimrath*. "It is strange and dreamlike," writes the Frankfurt burgher in his new-made honour, "that I in my thirtieth year enter the highest place which a German citizen can reach. *On ne va jamais plus loin que quand on ne sait où l'on va*, said a great climber of this world." If he thought it strange, Weimar thought it scandalous. "The hatred of people here," writes Wieland, "against our Goethe, who has done no one any harm, has grown to such a pitch since he has been made Geheimrath, that it borders on fury." But the duke, if he heard these howls, paid no attention to them. He was more than ever with his friend. They started on the 12th of September on a little journey into Switzerland, in the strictest incognito, and with the lightest of travelling trunks. They touched at Frankfurt, and stayed in the old house in the *Hirschgraben*, where Rath Goethe had the pride of receiving not only his son as Geheimrath, but the prince, his friend and master. Goethe's mother was, as may be imagined, in high spirits—motherly pride and housewifely pride being equally stimulated by the presence of such guests.

From Frankfurt they went to Strasburg. There the recollection of Frederika irresistibly drew him to Sesenheim. In his letter to the Frau von Stein he says: "On the 25th I rode towards Sesenheim, and there found the family as I had left it eight years ago. I was welcomed in the most friendly manner. The second daughter loved me in those days better than I

deserved, and more than others to whom I have given so much passion and faith. I was forced to leave her at a moment when it nearly cost her her life; she passed lightly over that episode to tell me what traces still remained of the old illness, and behaved with such exquisite delicacy and generosity from the moment that I stood before her unexpected on the threshold, that I felt quite relieved. I must do her the justice to say that she made not the slightest attempt to rekindle in my bosom the cinders of love. She led me into the arbour, and there we sat down. It was a lovely moonlight, and I inquired after every one and everything. Neighbours had spoken of me not a week ago. I found old songs which I had composed, and a carriage I had painted. We recalled many a pastime of those happy days, and I found myself as vividly conscious of all, as if I had been away only six months. The old people were frank and hearty, and thought me looking younger. I stayed the night there, and departed at dawn, leaving behind me friendly faces; so that I can now think once more of this corner of the world with comfort, and know that they are at peace with me."

There is something very touching in this interview, and in his narrative of it, forwarded to the woman he *now* loves, and who does not repay him with a love like that which he believes he has inspired in Frederika. He finds this charming girl still unmarried, and probably is not a little flattered at the thought that she still cherishes his image to the exclusion of every other. She tells him of Lenz having fallen in love with her, and is silent respecting her own share in that little episode; a silence which all can understand and few will judge harshly; the more so as her feelings towards Lenz were at that time doubtless far from tender. Besides, apart from the romance of meeting with an old lover, there was the pride and charm of thinking what a world-renowned name her lover had achieved. It was no slight thing even to have been jilted by such a man; and she must have felt that he had not behaved to her otherwise than was to have been expected under the circumstances.

On the 26th Goethe rejoined his party, and "in the afternoon I called on Lili, and found the lovely *Grasaffen*[1] with a baby of seven weeks old, her mother standing by. There also I was received with admiration and pleasure. I made

[1] *Grasaffen*, i.e. "green monkey," is Frankfurt slang for "budding miss," and alludes to the old days when he knew Lili.

many inquiries, and to my great delight found the good creature happily married. Her husband, from what I could learn, seems a worthy, sensible fellow, rich, well placed in the world; in short, she has everything she needs. He was absent. I stayed dinner. After dinner went with the duke to see the cathedral, and in the evening saw Paesiello's beautiful opera *L'Infante di Zamora*. Supped with Lili, and went away in the moonlight. The sweet emotions which accompanied me I cannot describe."

We may read in these two descriptions the difference of the two women, and the difference of his feeling for them. From Strasburg he went to Emmendingen, and there visited his sister's grave. Accompanied by such thoughts as these three visits must have called up, he entered Switzerland. His *Briefe aus der Schweitz*, mainly composed from the letters to the Frau von Stein, will inform the curious reader of the effect these scenes produced on him; we cannot pause here in the narrative to quote from them. Enough if we mention that in Zurich he spent happy hours with Lavater, in communication of ideas and feelings; and that on his way home he composed the little opera of *Jery und Bätely*, full of Swiss inspiration. In Stuttgart the duke took it into his head to visit the court, and as no presentable costume was ready, tailors had to be set in activity to furnish the tourists with the necessary clothes. They assisted at the New Year festivities of the Military Academy, and here for the first time Schiller, then twenty years of age, with *The Robbers* in his head, saw the author of *Götz* and *Werther*.

It is probable that among all the figures thronging in the hall and galleries on that imposing occasion, none excited in the young ambitious student so thrilling an effect as that of the great poet, then in all the splendour of manhood, in all the lustre of an immense renown. Why has no artist chosen this for an historical picture? The pale, sickly young Schiller, in the stiff military costume of that day, with pigtail and papillotes, with a sword by his side, and a three-cornered hat under his arm, stepping forward to kiss the coat of his sovereign duke, in grateful acknowledgment of the three prizes awarded to him for Medicine, Surgery, and Clinical science; conscious that Goethe was looking on, and could know nothing of the genius which had gained, indeed, trivial medical prizes, but had failed to gain a prize for German composition. This pale youth and this splendid man were in a few years to become

noble rivals, and immortal friends; to strive with generous emulation, and the most genuine delight in each other's prowess; presenting such an exemplar of literary friendship as the world has seldom seen. At this moment, although Schiller's eyes were intensely curious about Goethe, he was to the older poet nothing beyond a rather promising medical student.

Karl August on their return to Frankfurt again took up his abode in the Goethe family, paying liberal attention to Frau Aja's good old Rhine wine, and privately sending her a sum of money to compensate for the unusual expenses of his visit. By the 13th January he was in Weimar once more, having spent nearly nine thousand dollars on the journey, including purchases of works of art.

Both were considerably altered to their advantage. In his Diary Goethe writes: "I feel daily that I gain more and more the confidence of people; and God grant that I may deserve it, not in the easy way, but in the way I wish. What I endure from myself and others no one sees. The best is the deep stillness in which I live *vis-à-vis* to the world, and thus win what fire and sword cannot rob me of." He was crystallising slowly; slowly gaining the complete command over himself. "I will be lord over myself. No one who cannot master himself is worthy to rule, and only he *can* rule." But with such a temperament this mastery was not easy; wine and women's tears, he felt, were among his weaknesses:

> Ich könnte viel glücklicher seyn,
> Gäb's nur keinen Wein
> Und keine Weiberthränen.

He could not entirely free himself from either. He was a Rhinelander, accustomed from boyhood upwards to the stimulus of wine; he was a poet, never free from the fascinations of woman. But just as he was never known to lose his head with wine, so also did he never lose himself entirely to a woman: the stimulus never grew into intoxication.

One sees that his passion for the Frau von Stein continues; but it is cooling. It was necessary for him to love some one, but he was loving here in vain, and he begins to settle into a calmer affection. He is also at this time thrown more and more with Corona Schröter; and his participation in the private theatricals is not only an agreeable relaxation from the heavy pressure of official duties, but is giving him materials

for *Wilhelm Meister*, now in progress. "Theatricals," he says, "remain among the few things in which I still have the pleasure of a child and an artist." Herder, who had hitherto held somewhat aloof, now draws closer and closer to him, probably on account of the change which is coming over his way of life. And this intimacy with Herder awakens in him the desire to see Lessing; the projected journey to Wolfenbüttel is arrested, however, by the sad news which now arrives that the great gladiator is at peace: Lessing is dead.

Not without significance is the fact that, coincident with this change in Goethe's life, comes the passionate study of science, a study often before taken up in desultory impatience, but now commencing with that seriousness which is to project it as an active tendency through the remainder of his life. In an unpublished "Essay on Granite," written about this period, he says: "No one acquainted with the charm which the secrets of Nature have for man, will wonder that I have quitted the circle of observations in which I have hitherto been confined, and have thrown myself with passionate delight into this new circle. I stand in no fear of the reproach that it must be a spirit of contradiction which has drawn me from the contemplation and portraiture of the human heart to that of Nature. For it will be allowed that all things are intimately connected, and that the inquiring mind is unwilling to be excluded from anything attainable. And I who have known and suffered from the perpetual agitation of feelings and opinions in myself and in others, delight in the sublime repose which is produced by contact with the great and eloquent silence of Nature." He was trying to find a secure basis for his aims; it was natural he should seek a secure basis for his mind; and with such a mind that basis could only be found in the study of Nature. If it is true, as men of science sometimes declare with a sneer, that Goethe was a poet in science (which does not in the least disprove the fact that he was great in science, and made great discoveries), it is equally true that he was a scientific poet. In a future chapter we shall have to consider what his position in science truly is; for the present we merely indicate the course of his studies. Buffon's wonderful book, *Les Epoques de la Nature* — rendered antiquated now by the progress of geology, but still attractive in its style and noble thoughts—produced a profound impression on him. In Buffon, as in Spinoza, and

later on, in Geoffroy St. Hilaire, he found a mode of looking at Nature which thoroughly coincided with his own, gathering many details into a poetic synthesis. Saussure, whom he had seen at Geneva, led him to study mineralogy; and as his official duties gave him many occasions to mingle with the miners, this study acquired a practical interest, which soon grew into a passion—much to the disgust of Herder, who, with the impatience of one who thought books the chief objects of interest, was constantly mocking him for "bothering himself about stones and cabbages." To these studies must be added anatomy, and in particular osteology, which in early years had also attracted him, when he attained knowledge enough to draw the heads of animals for Lavater's *Physiognomy*. He now goes to Jena to study under Loder, professor of anatomy.[1] For these studies his talent, or want of talent, as a draughtsman, had further to be cultivated. To improve himself he lectures to the young men every week on the skeleton. And thus, amid serious duties and many distractions in the shape of court festivities, balls, masquerades, and theatricals, he found time for the prosecution of many and various studies. He was like Napoleon, a giant-worker, and never so happy as when at work.

Tasso was conceived, and commenced (in prose) at this time, and *Wilhelm Meister* grew under his hands, besides smaller works. But nothing was published. He lived for himself, and the small circle of friends. The public was never thought of. Indeed the public was then jubilant at beerhouses, and scandalised in salons, at the appearance of *The Robbers;* and a certain Küttner, in publishing his *Characters of German Poets and Prose Writers* (1781) could complacently declare that the shouts of praise which intoxicated admirers had once raised for Goethe were now no longer heard. Meanwhile *Egmont* was in progress, and assuming a far different tone from that in which it was originated.

It is unnecessary to follow closely all the details, which letters abundantly furnish, of his life at this period. They will not help us to a nearer understanding of the man, and they would occupy much space. What we observe in them all is, a slow advance to a more serious and decisive plan of existence. On the 27th of May his father dies. On the 1st of June he comes to live in the town of Weimar, as more

[1] Comp. *Brief. zwischen Karl August und Goethe*, i. 25, 26.

consonant with his position and avocations. The Duchess Amalia has promised to give him a part of the necessary furniture. He quits his *Gartenhaus* with regret, but makes it still his retreat for happy hours. Shortly afterwards the Duchess Amalia demonstrates to him at great length the necessity of his being ennobled; the duke, according to Düntzer, not having dared to break the subject to him. In fact, since he had been for six years at court without a patent of nobility, he may perhaps have felt the "necessity" as somewhat insulting. Nevertheless, I cannot but think that the Frankfurt citizen soon became reconciled to the *von* before his name; the more so as he was never remarkable for a contempt of worldly rank. Immediately afterwards the President of the Kammer, von Kalb, was suddenly dismissed from his post, and Goethe was the substitute, at first merely occupying the post *ad interim;* but not relinquishing his place in the Privy Council.

More important to us is the relation in which he stands to Karl August, and the Frau von Stein. Whoever reads with proper attention the letters published in the Stein correspondence will become aware of a notable change in their relation about this time (1781–2). The tone, which had grown calmer, now rises again into passionate fervour, and every note reveals the happy lover. From the absence of her letters, and other evidence, it is impossible to assign the cause of this change with any certainty. It may have been that Corona Schröter made her jealous. It may have been that she feared to lose him. One is inclined to suspect her of some questionable motive, because it is clear that her conduct to him was not straightforward in the beginning, and, as we shall see, became ungenerous towards the close. Whatever the motive, the fact is indubitable. In his letters may be plainly seen the extraordinary fascination she exercised over him, the deep and constant devotion he gave her, the thorough identification of her with all his thoughts and aims. A sentence or two must suffice here. "O thou best beloved! I have had all my life an ideal wish of how I would be loved, and have sought in vain its realisation in vanishing dreams; and now, when the world daily becomes clearer to me, I find this realisation in thee, and in a way which can never be lost." Again. "Dearest, what do I not owe thee! If thou didst not also love me so entirely, if thou only hadst me as a friend among others, I should still be bound to dedicate my whole

existence to thee. For could I ever have renounced my errors without thy aid? When could I have looked so clearly at the world, and found myself so happy in it, before this time when I have nothing more to seek in it?" And this: "As a sweet melody raises us to heaven, so is to me thy being and thy love. I move among friends and acquaintances everywhere as if seeking thee; I find thee not, and return into my solitude."

While he was thus happy, thus settling down into clearness, the young duke, not yet having worked through the turbulence of youth, was often in discord with him. In the published correspondence may be read confirmation of what I have elsewhere learned, namely, that although during their first years of intimacy the poet stood on no etiquette in private with his sovereign, and although to the last Karl August continued the brotherly *thou*, and the most affectionate familiarity of address, yet Goethe soon began to perceive that another tone was called for on his part. His letters become singularly formal as he grows older; at times almost unpleasantly so. The duke writes to him as to a friend, and he replies as to a sovereign.

Not that his affection diminished; but as he grew more serious, he grew more attentive to decorum. For the duchess he seems to have had a tender admiration, something of which may be read in *Tasso*. Her noble, dignified, though somewhat inexpressive nature, the greatness of her heart, and delicacy of her mind, would all the more have touched him, because he knew and could sympathise with what was not perfectly happy in her life. He was often the pained witness of little domestic disagreements, and had to remonstrate with the duke on his occasional roughness.

From the letters to the Frau von Stein we gather that Goethe was gradually becoming impatient with Karl August, whose excellent qualities he cherishes while deploring his extravagances. "Enthusiastic as he is for what is good and right, he has, notwithstanding, less pleasure in it than in what is improper; it is wonderful how reasonable he can be, what insight he has, how much he knows; and yet when he sets about anything good, he must needs begin with something foolish. Unhappily, one sees it lies deep in his nature, and that the frog is made for the water even when he has lived some time on land." In the following we see that the "servile courtier" not only remonstrates with the duke, but refuses to accompany him on his journey, having on a previous journey

been irritated by his manners. "Here is an epistle. If you think right, send it to the duke, speak to him and do not spare him. I only want quiet for myself, and for him to know with whom he has to do. *You can tell him also that I have declared to you I will never travel with him again.* Do this in your own prudent gentle way." Accordingly he lets the duke go away alone: but they seem to have come to some understanding subsequently, and the threat was not fulfilled. Two months after, this sentence informs us of the reconciliation: "I have had a long and serious conversation with the duke. In this world, my best one, the dramatic writer has a rich harvest; and the wise say, Judge no man until you have stood in his place." Later on we find him complaining of the duke going wrong in his endeavours to do right. "God knows if he will ever learn that fireworks at midday produce no effect. I don't like always playing the pedagogue and bugbear, and from the others he asks no advice, nor does he ever tell them of his plans." Here is another glimpse: "The duchess is as amiable as possible, the duke is a good creature, and one could heartily love him if he did not trouble the intercourse of life by his manners, and did not make his friends indifferent as to what befalls him by his breakneck recklessness. It is a curious feeling, that of daily contemplating the possibility of our nearest friends breaking their necks, arms, or legs, and yet have grown quite callous to the idea!" Again: "The duke goes to Dresden. He has begged me to go with him, or at least to follow him, but I shall stay here. . . . The preparations for the Dresden journey are quite against my taste. The duke arranges them in his way, *i.e.* not always the best, and disgusts one after the other. I am quite calm, for it is not alterable, and I only rejoice that there is no kingdom for which such cards could be played often."

These are little discordant tones which must have arisen as Goethe grew more serious. The real regard he had for the duke is not injured by these occasional outbreaks. "The duke," he writes, "is guilty of many follies which I willingly forgive, remembering my own." He knows that he can at any moment put his horses to the carriage and drive away from Weimar, and this consciousness of freedom makes him contented; although he now makes up his mind that he is destined by nature to be an author and nothing else. "I have a purer delight than ever, when I have written something which well expresses what I meant . . ." "I am truly

born to be a private man, and do not understand how fate has contrived to throw me into a ministry and into a princely family." As he grows clearer on the true mission of his life, he also grows happier. One can imagine the strange feelings with which he would now take up *Werther*, and for the first time since ten years read this product of his youth. He made some alterations in it, especially in the relation of Albert to Lotte; and introduced the episode of the peasant who commits suicide from jealousy. Schöll, in his notes to the *Stein Correspondence*,[1] has called attention to a point worthy of notice, viz., that Herder, who helped Goethe in the revision of this work, had pointed out to him the very same fault in its composition which Napoleon two-and-twenty years later laid his finger on; the fault, namely, of making Werther's suicide partly the consequence of frustrated ambition and partly of unrequited love—a fault which, in spite of Herder and Napoleon, in spite also of Goethe's acquiescence, I venture to think no fault at all, as will be seen when the interview with Napoleon is narrated.

CHAPTER IV

PREPARATIONS FOR ITALY

With the year 1783 we see him more and more seriously occupied. He has ceased to be "the Grand Master of all the Apes," and is deep in old books and archives. The birth of a crown prince came to fill Weimar with joy, and give the duke a sudden seriousness. The baptism, which took place on the 5th of February, was a great event in Weimar. Herder preached "like a God," said Wieland, whose cantata was sung on the occasion. Processions by torchlight, festivities of all kinds, poems from every poet, *except* Goethe, testified the people's joy. There is something very generous in this silence. It could not be attributed to want of affection. But he who had been ever ready with ballet, opera, or poem, to honour the birthday of the two duchesses, must have felt that now, when all the other Weimar writers were pouring in their offerings, he ought not to throw the weight of his position in

[1] Vol. iii. p. 268.

the scale against them. Had his poem been the worst of the offerings, it would have been prized the highest because it was his.

The duke, proud in his paternity, writes to Merck: "You have reason to rejoice with me; for if there be any good dispositions in me they have hitherto wanted a fixed point, but now there is a firm hook upon which I can hang my pictures. With the help of Goethe and good luck I will so paint that if possible the next generation shall say, he too was a painter!" And from this time forward there seems to have been a decisive change in him; though he does complain of the "taciturnity of his *Herr Kammerpräsident*" (Goethe), who is only to be drawn out by the present of an engraving. In truth this *Kammerpräsident* is very much oppressed with work, and lives in great seclusion, happy in love, active in study. The official duties which formerly he undertook so gaily, are obviously becoming burdens to him, the more so now his mission rises into greater distinctness. The old desire for Italy begins to torment him. "The happiest thing is, that I can now say I am on the right path, and from this time forward nothing will be lost."

In his poem *Ilmenau,* written in this year, Goethe vividly depicts the character of the duke, and the certainty of his metamorphosis. Having seen how he speaks of the duke in his letters to the Frau von Stein, it will gratify the reader to observe that these criticisms were no "behind the back" carpings, but were explicitly expressed even in poetry. "The poem of Ilmenau," Goethe said to Eckermann, "contains in the form of an episode an epoch which in 1783 when I wrote it, had happened some years before; so that I could describe myself historically and hold a conversation with myself of former years. There occurs in it a night scene after one of the breakneck chases in the mountain. We had built ourselves at the foot of a rock some little huts, and covered them with fir branches, that we might pass the night on dry ground. Before the huts we burned several fires and cooked our game. Knebel, whose pipe was never cold, sat next to the fire, and enlivened the company with his jokes, while the wine passed freely. Seckendorf had stretched himself against a tree, and was humming all sorts of poetics. On one side lay the duke in deep slumber. I myself sat before him in the glimmering light of the coals, absorbed in various grave thoughts, suffering for the mischief which my writings had produced." The sketch

of the duke is somewhat thus to be translated: "Who can tell the caterpillar creeping on the branch, of what its future food will be? Who can help the grub upon the earth to burst its shell? The time comes when it presses out and hurries winged into the bosom of the rose. Thus will the years bring *him* also the right direction of his strength. As yet, beside the deep desire for the True, he has a passion for Error. Temerity lures him too far, no rock is too steep, no path too narrow, peril lies at his side threatening. Then the wild unruly impulse hurries him to and fro, and from restless activity, he restlessly tries repose. Gloomily wild in happy days, free without being happy, he sleeps, fatigued in body and soul, upon a rocky couch."

While we are at Ilmenau let us not forget the exquisite little poems written there this September, with a pencil, on the wall of that hut on the Gickelhahn, which is still shown to visitors:

Ueber allen Gipfeln
Ist Ruh,
In allen Wipfeln
Spürest du
Kaum einen Hauch;
Die Vögelein schweigen in Walde;
Warte nur, balde
Ruhest du auch.

He had many unpleasant hours as Controller of the Finances, striving in vain to make the duke keep within a prescribed definite sum for expenses; a thing always found next to impossible with princes (not often possible with private men), and by no means accordant with our duke's temperament. "Goethe contrives to make the most sensible representations," Wieland writes to Merck, "and is indeed *l'honnête homme à la cour;* but suffers terribly in body and soul from the burdens which for our good he has taken on himself. It sometimes pains me to the heart to see how good a face he puts on while sorrow like an inward worm is silently gnawing him. He takes care of his health as well as he can, and indeed he has need of it." Reports of this seem to have reached the ear of his mother, and thus he endeavours to reassure her: "You have never known me strong in stomach and head; and that one must be serious with serious matters is in the nature of things, especially when one is thoughtful and desires the good and true. . . . I am, after my manner, tolerably well, am able to do all my work, to enjoy the intercourse of good

friends, and still find time enough for all my favourite pursuits. I could not wish myself in a better place, now that I know the world and know how it looks behind the mountains. And you, on your side, content yourself with my existence, and should I quit the world before you, I have not lived to your shame; I leave behind me a good name and good friends, and thus you will have the consolation of knowing that I *am not entirely dead.* Meanwhile live in peace; fate may yet give us a pleasant old age, which we will also live through gratefully."

It is impossible not to read, beneath these assurances, a tone of sadness such as corresponds with Wieland's intimation. Indeed, the duke, anxious about his health, had urged him in the September of this year to make a little journey in the Harz. He went, accompanied by Fritz von Stein, the eldest son of his beloved, a boy of ten years of age, whom he loved and treated as a son. "Infinite was the love and care he showed me," said Stein, when recording those happy days. He had him for months living under the same roof, taught him, played with him, formed him. His instinctive delight in children was sharpened by his love for this child's mother. A pretty episode in the many-coloured Weimar life, is this, of the care-worn minister and occupied student snatching some of the joys of paternity from circumstances which had denied him wife and children.

The Harz journey restored his health and spirits: especially agreeable to him was his intercourse with Sömmering, the great anatomist, and other men of science. He returned to Weimar to continue *Wilhelm Meister*, which was now in its fourth book; to continue his official duties; to see more and more of Herder, then writing his *Ideen;* and to sun himself in the smiles of his beloved.

The year 1784 begins with an alteration in the theatrical world. The Amateur Theatre, which has hitherto given them so much occupation and delight, is now closed. A regular troupe is engaged. For the birthday of the duchess, Goethe prepares the *Planet Dance*, a masked procession; and prepares an oration for the reopening of the Ilmenau mines, which must greatly have pleased him as the beginning of the fulfilment of an old wish. From his first arrival he had occupied himself with these mines, and the possibility of their being once more set working. After many difficulties, on the 24th of February this wish was realised. It is related of him,

that on the occasion of this opening speech, made in presence of all the influential persons of the environs, he appeared to have well in his head all that he had written, for he spoke with remarkable fluency. All at once the thread was lost; he seemed to have forgotten what he had to say. "This," says the narrator, "would have thrown any one else into great embarrassment; but it was not so with him. On the contrary, he looked for at least ten minutes steadily and quietly round the circle of his numerous audience; they were so impressed by his personal appearance, that during the very long and almost ridiculous pause every one remained perfectly quiet. At last he appeared to have again become master of his subject; he went on with his speech, and without hesitation continued it to the end as serenely as if nothing had happened."

His osteological studies brought him this year the discovery of an intermaxillary bone in man, as well as in animals.[1] In a future chapter[2] this discovery will be placed in its historical and anatomical light; what we have at present to do with it, is to recognise its biographical significance. Until this discovery was made, the position of man had always been separated from that of even the highest animals, by the fact (assumed) that he had *no* intermaxillary bone. Goethe, who everywhere sought unity in Nature, believed that such a difference did not exist; his researches proved him to be right. Herder was at that time engaged in proving that no structural difference could be found between men and animals; and Goethe, in sending Knebel his discovery, says that it will support this view. "Indeed, man is most intimately allied to animals. The co-ordination of the Whole makes every creature to be that which it is, and man is as much man through the form of his upper jaw, as through the form and nature of the last joint of his little toe. And thus is every creature but *a note of the great harmony*, which must be studied in the Whole, or else it is nothing but a dead letter. From this point of view I have written the little essay, and that is properly speaking the interest which lies hidden in it."

[1] He thus announces it to Herder, March 27, 1784: "I hasten to tell you of the fortune that has befallen me. I have found neither gold nor silver, but that which gives me inexpressible joy, the *os intermaxillare* in Man! I compared the skulls of men and beasts, in company with Loder, came on the trace of it, and see there it is!"—*Aus Herder's Nachlass*, i. 75.

[2] See further on the chapter on *The Poet as a Man of Science*.

The discovery is significant therefore as an indication of his tendency to regard Nature in her unity. It was the prelude to his discoveries of the metamorphosis of plants, and of the vertebral theory of the skull: all three resting on the same mode of conceiving Nature. His botanical studies received fresh impulse at this period. Linnæus was a constant companion on his journeys, and we see him with eagerness availing himself of all that the observations and collections of botanists could offer him in aid of his own. "My geological speculations," he writes to the Frau von Stein, "make progress. I see much more than the others who accompany me, because I have discovered certain fundamental laws of formation, which I keep secret, and can from them better observe and judge the phenomena before me . . . ." "Every one exclaims about my solitude, which is a riddle, because no one knows with what glorious unseen beings I hold communion." It is interesting to observe his delight at seeing a zebra—which was a novelty in Germany—and his inexhaustible pleasure in the elephant's skull, which he has procured for study. Men confined to their libraries, whose thoughts scarcely venture beyond the circle of literature, have spoken with sarcasm, and with pity, of this waste of time. But—dead bones for dead bones—there is as much poetry in the study of an elephant's skull, as in the study of those skeletons of the past—history and classics. All depends upon the mind of the student; to one man a few old bones will awaken thoughts of the great organic processes of nature, thoughts as far-reaching and sublime as those which the fragments of the past awaken in the historical mind. Impressed with this conviction, the great Bossuet left the brilliant court of Louis XIV. to shut himself up in the anatomical theatre of Duverney, that he might master the secrets of organisation before writing his treatise *De la Connaissance de Dieu.*[1] But there are minds, and these form the majority, to whom dry bones are dry bones, and nothing more. "How legible the book of Nature becomes to me," Goethe writes, "I cannot express to thee; my long lessons in spelling have helped me, and now my quiet joy is inexpressible. Much as I find that is new, I find nothing unexpected; everything fits in, because I have no system, and desire nothing but the pure truth." To help him

[1] This work contains a little treatise on anatomy, which testifies the patience of the theologian's study.

in his spelling he begins algebra; but the nature of his mind was too unmathematical for him to pursue that study long.

Science and love were the two pillars of his existence in these days. "I feel that thou art always with me," he writes; "thy presence never leaves me. In thee I have a standard of all women, yea of all men; in thy love I have a standard of fate. Not that it darkens the world to me, on the contrary, it makes the world clear; I see plainly how men are, think, wish, strive after, and enjoy; and I give every one his due, and rejoice silently in the thought that I possess so indestructible a treasure."

The duke increased his salary by 200 thalers, and this, with the 1800 thalers received from the paternal property, made his income now 3200 thalers. He had need of money, both for his purposes and his numerous charities. We have seen, in the case of Kraft, how large was his generosity; and in one of his letters to his beloved, he exclaims, "God grant that I may daily become more economical, that I may be able to do more for others." The reader knows this is not a mere phrase thrown in the air. All his letters speak of the suffering he endured from the sight of so much want in the people. "The world is narrow," he writes, "and not every spot of earth bears every tree; mankind suffers, and *one is ashamed to see oneself so favoured above so many thousands.* We hear constantly how poor the land is, and daily becomes poorer; but we partly think this is not true, and partly hurry it away from our minds when once we see the truth with open eyes, see the irremediableness, and see how matters are always bungled and botched!" That he did his utmost to ameliorate the condition of the people in general, and to ameliorate particular sorrows as far as lay in his power, is strikingly evident in the concurrent testimony of all who knew anything of his doings. If he did not write dithyrambs of Freedom, and was not profoundly enthusiastic for Fatherland, let us attribute it to any cause but want of heart.

The stillness and earnestness of his life seem to have somewhat toned down the society of Weimar. He went very rarely to court; and he not being there to animate it with his inventions, the Duchess Amalia complained that they were all asleep; the duke also found society insipid: "the men have lived through their youth, and the women mostly married." The duke altered with the rest. The influence of his dear friend was daily turning him into more resolute paths: it had

even led him to the study of science, as we learn from his letters. And Herder, also, now occupied with his great work, shared these ideas, and enriched himself with Goethe's friendship. Jacobi came to Weimar, and saw his old friend again, quitting him with real sorrow. He was occupied at this time with the dispute about Lessing's Spinozism, and tried to bring Goethe into it, who very characteristically told him, "Before I write a syllable μετα τα φυσικα, I must first have clearly settled my φυσικα." All controversy was repugnant to Goethe's nature: he said, "If Raphael were to paint it, and Shakspeare dramatise it, I could scarcely find any pleasure in it." Jacobi certainly was not the writer to conquer such repugnance. Goethe objected to his tone almost as much as to his opinions. "When self-esteem expresses itself in contempt of another, be he the meanest, it must be repellant. A flippant, frivolous man may ridicule others, may controvert them, scorn them; but he who has any respect for himself seems to have renounced the right of thinking meanly of others. And what are we all that we can dare to raise ourselves to any height?" He looks upon Jacobi's metaphysical *tic* as a compensation for all the goods the gods have given him. "House, riches, children, sister and friends, and a long &c., &c., &c. On the other hand, God has punished you with metaphysics like a thorn in your flesh; me he has blessed with science, that I may be happy in the contemplation of his works." How characteristic is this: "When you say we can only *believe* in God (p. 101), I answer that I lay great stress on *seeing* (*schauen*), and when Spinoza, speaking of *scientia intuitiva*, says: *Hoc cognoscendi genus procedit ab adequata idea essentiæ formalis quorundam Dei attributorum ad adequatam cognitionem essentiæ rerum*, these few words give me courage to dedicate my whole life to the observation of things which I can reach, and of whose *essentiæ formalis* I can hope to form an adequate idea, without in the least troubling myself how far I can go." He was at variance, and justly, with those who called Spinoza an atheist. He called him the most theistical of theists, and the most Christian of Christians—*theissimum et christianissimum*.

While feeling the separation of opinion between himself and Jacobi, he still felt the sympathy of old friendship. It was otherwise with Lavater. Their intimacy had been great; no amount of difference had overshadowed it, until the priestly element of Lavater, formerly in abeyance, grew into offensive prominence. He clouded his intellect with superstitions, and

aspired to be a prophet. He had believed in Cagliostro and his miracles, exclaiming, "Who would be so great as he, had he but a true sense of the Evangelists?" He called upon that mystifier, in Strasburg, but was at once sent about his business. "When a great man," writes Goethe of Lavater, in 1782, "has a dark corner in him, it is terribly dark." And the dark corner in Lavater begins to make him uneasy. "I see the highest power of reason united in Lavater with the most odious superstition, and that by a knot of the finest and most inextricable kind." To the same effect he says in one of the Xenien—

> Wie verfährt die Natur um Hohes und Niedres im Menschen
> Zu verbinden? sie stellt Eitelkeit zwischen hinein.

It was a perception of what he thought the hypocritical nature of Lavater which thoroughly disgusted him, and put an end to their friendship; mere difference of opinion never separated him from a friend.

His scientific studies became enlarged by the addition of a microscope, with which he followed the investigations of Gleichen, and gained some insight into the marvels of the world of Infusoria. His drawings of the animalcules seen by him were sent to the Frau von Stein; and to Jacobi he wrote: "Botany and the microscope are now the chief enemies I have to contend against. But I live in perfect solitude apart from all the world, as dumb as a fish." Amid these multiform studies,—mineralogy, osteology, botany, and constant "dipping" into Spinoza, his poetic studies might seem to have fallen into the background, did we not know that *Wilhelm Meister* has reached the fifth book, the opera of *Scherz, List, und Rache* is written, the great religious-scientific poem *Die Geheimnisse* is planned, *Elpenor* has two acts completed, and many of the minor poems are written. Among these poems, be it noted, are the two songs in *Wilhelm Meister*, "*Kennst du das Land*" and "*Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt*," which speak feelingly of his longing for Italy. The preparations for that journey are made in silence. He is studying Italian, and undertakes the revision of his works for a new edition, in which Wieland and Herder are to help him.

Seeing him thus happy in love, in friendship, in work, with young Fritz living with him, to give him, as it were, a home, and every year bringing fresh clearness in his purposes, one may be tempted to ask what was the strong impulse which

could make him break away from such a circle, and send him lonely over the Alps? Nothing but the impulse of genius. Italy had been the dream of his youth. It was the land where self-culture was to gain rich material and firm basis. That he was born to be a Poet, he now deliberately acknowledged; and nothing but solitude in the Land of Song seemed wanting to him. Thither he yearned to go; thither he would go.

He accompanied the duke, Herder, and the Frau von Stein to Carlsbad in July 1786, taking with him the works to be revised for Göschen's new edition. The very sight of these works must have strengthened his resolution. And when Herder and the Frau von Stein returned to Weimar, leaving him alone with the duke, the final preparations were made. He had studiously concealed this project from every one except the duke, whose permission was necessary; but even from him the project was partially concealed. "Forgive me," he wrote to the duke, "if at parting I spoke vaguely about my journey and its duration. I do not yet know myself what is to become of me. You are happy in a chosen path. Your affairs are in good order, and you will excuse me if I now look after my own; nay, you have often urged me to do so. I am at this moment certainly able to be spared; things are so arranged as to go on smoothly in my absence. In this state of things all I ask is an indefinite furlough." He says that he feels it necessary for his intellectual health that he should "lose himself in a world where he is unknown;" and begs that no one may be informed of his intended absence. "God bless you, is my hearty wish, and keep me your affection. Believe me that if I desire to make my existence more complete, it is that I may enjoy it better with you and yours."

This was on the 2nd September 1786. On the third he quitted Carlsbad incognito. His next letter to the duke begins thus: "One more friendly word out of the distance, without date or place. Soon will I open my mouth and say how I get on. How it will rejoice me once more to see your handwriting." And it ends thus: "Of course you let people believe that you know where I am." In the next letter he says, "I must still keep the secret of my whereabouts a little longer."

CHAPTER V

ITALY

THE long yearning of his life was at last fulfilled: he was in Italy. Alone, and shrouded by an assumed name from all the interruptions with which the curiosity of admirers would have perplexed the author of *Werther*, but which never troubled the supposed merchant Herr Möller, he passed amid orange trees and vineyards, cities, statues, pictures and buildings, feeling himself "at home in the wide world, no longer an exile." The passionate yearnings of Mignon had grown with his growth and strengthened with his strength, through the early associations of childhood, and all the ambitions of manhood, till at last they made him sick at heart. For some time previous to his journey he had been unable to look at engravings of Italian scenery, unable even to open a Latin book, because of the overpowering suggestions of the language; so that Herder could say of him that the only Latin author ever seen in his hand was Spinoza. The feeling grew and grew, a mental home-sickness which nothing but Italian skies could cure. We have only to read Mignon's song, "*Kennst du das Land*," which was written before this journey, to perceive how trance-like were his conceptions of Italy, and how restless was his desire to journey there.

And now this deep unrest was stilled. Italian voices were loud around him, Italian skies were above him, Italian Art was before him. He felt this journey was a new birth. His whole being was filled with warmth and light. Life stretched itself before him calm, radiant, and strong. He saw the greatness of his aims, and felt within him powers adequate to those aims.

He has written an account of his journey; but although no man could have produced a greater work, had he deliberately set himself to do so, and although some passages of this work are among the most delightful of the many pages written about Italy, yet the *Italiänische Reise* is, on the whole, a very disappointing book. Nor could it well have been otherwise, under the circumstances. It was not written soon after his return, when all was fresh in his memory, and when his style had still its warmth and vigour; but in the decline of his great powers,

he collected the hasty letters sent from Italy to the Frau von Stein, Herder, and others, and from them he extracted such passages as seemed suitable, weaving them together with no great care, or enthusiasm. Had he simply printed the letters themselves, they would doubtless have given us a far more vivid and interesting picture; in the actual form of the work we are wearied by various trifles and incidents of the day circumstantially narrated, which in letters would not improperly find a place, but which here want the pleasant, careless, chatty form given by correspondence. The *Italiänische Reise* wants the charm of a collection of letters, and the solid excellence of a deliberate work. It is mainly interesting as indicating the effect of Italy on his mind; an effect apparently too deep for utterance. He was too completely possessed by the new life which streamed through him, to bestow much time in analysing and recording his impressions.

Curious it is to notice his open-eyed interest in all the geological and meteorological phenomena which present themselves; an interest which has excited the sneers of some who think a poet has nothing better to do than to rhapsodise. They tolerate his enthusiasm for Palladio, because architecture is one of the Arts; and forgive the enthusiasm which seized him in Vicenza, and made him study Palladio's works as if he were about to train himself for an architect; but they are distressed to find him in Padua, once more occupied with "cabbages," and tormented with the vague conception of a Typical Plant, which will not leave him. Let me confess, however, that some cause for disappointment exists. The poet's yearning is fulfilled; and yet how little literary enthusiasm escapes him! Italy is the land of History, Literature, Painting, and Music; its highways are sacred with associations of the Past; its byways are centres of biographic and artistic interest. Yet Goethe, in raptures with the climate, and the beauties of Nature, is almost silent about Literature, has no sense of Music, and no feeling for History. He passes through Verona without a thought of Romeo and Juliet; through Ferrara without a word of Ariosto, and scarcely a word of Tasso. In this land of the Past, it is the Present only which allures him. He turns aside in disgust from the pictures of crucifixions, martyrdoms, emaciated monks, and all the hospital pathos which makes galleries hideous; only in Raphael's healthier beauty, and more human conceptions, can he take delight. He has no historic sense enabling him to qualify his

hatred of superstition by recognition of the painful religious struggles which, in their evolutions, assumed these superstitious forms. He considers the pictures as things of the present, and because their motives are hideous he is disgusted; but a man of more historic feeling would, while marking his dislike of such conceptions, have known how to place them in their serial position in the historic development of mankind.

It is not for Literature, it is not for History, it is not for poetical enthusiasm, we must open the *Italiänische Reise*. There is no eloquence in the book; no, not even when, at Venice, he first stands in presence of the sea. Think of the feelings which the first sight of the sea must call up in the mind of a poet, and then marvel at his reserve. But if the *Italiänische Reise* does not flash out in eloquence, it is everywhere warm with the intense happiness of the writer. In Venice, for example, his enjoyment seems to have been great, as every hour the place ceased to be a *name* and became a *picture*. The canals, lagoons, narrow streets, splendid architecture, and animated crowds, were inexhaustible delights. From Venice he passed rapidly through Ferrara, Bologna, Florence, Arezzo, Perugia, Foligno, and Spoleto, reaching Rome on the 28th October.

In Rome, where he stayed four months, enjoyment and education went hand in hand. "All the dreams of my youth I now see living before me. Everywhere I go I find an old familiar face; everything is just what I thought it, and yet everything is new. It is the same with ideas. I have gained no new idea, but the old ones have become so definite, living, and connected one with another, that they may pass as new." The riches of Rome are at first bewildering; a long residence is necessary for each object to make its due impression. Goethe lived there among some German artists: Angelica Kaufmann, for whom he had great regard, Tischbein, Moritz, and others. They respected his incognito as well as they could, although the fact of his being in Rome could not long be entirely concealed. He gained, however, the main object of his incognito, and avoided being lionised. He had not come to Italy to have his vanity tickled by the approbation of society; he came for self-culture, and resolutely pursued his purpose.

Living amid such glories of the past, treading each day the ground of the Eternal City, every breath from the Seven Hills must have carried to him some thought of history. "Even

Roman antiquities," he writes, "begin to interest me. History, inscriptions, coins, which hitherto I never cared to hear about, now press upon me. Here one reads history in quite another spirit than elsewhere; not only Roman history, but world history." Yet I do not find that he read much history, even here. Art was enough to occupy him; and for Painting he had a passion which renders his want of talent still more noticeable. He visited churches and galleries with steady earnestness; studied Winckelmann, and discussed critical points with the German artists. Unhappily he also wasted precious time in fruitless efforts to attain facility in drawing. These occupations, however, did not prevent his completing the versification of *Iphigenia*, which he read to the German circle, but found only Angelica who appreciated it; the others having expected something *genialisch*, something in the style of *Götz with the Iron Hand*. Nor was he much more fortunate with the Weimar circle, who, as we have already seen, preferred the prose version.

Art thus with many-sided influence allures him, but does not completely fill up his many-sided activity. Philosophic speculations give new and wondrous meanings to Nature; and the ever-pressing desire to discover the secret of vegetable forms sends him meditative through the gardens about Rome. He feels he is on the track of a law which, if discovered, will reduce to unity the manifold variety of forms. Men who have never felt the passion of discovery may rail at him for thus, in Rome, forgetting, among plants, the quarrels of the Senate and the eloquence of Cicero; but all who have been haunted by a great idea will sympathise with him, and understand how insignificant is the existence of a thousand Ciceros in comparison with a law of Nature.

Among the few acquaintances he made, let us note that of Monti the poet, at the performance of whose tragedy, *Aristodemo*, he assisted. Through this acquaintance he was reluctantly induced to allow himself to be enrolled a member of the Arcadia,[1] under the title of *Megalio*, "*per causa della grandezza*, or rather *grandiosità delle mie opere*, as they express it."

And what said Weimar to this prolonged absence of its poet? Instead of rejoicing in his intense enjoyment, instead of sympathising with his aims, Weimar grumbled and gossiped,

[1] This is erroneously placed by him during his second residence in Rome. His letter to Fritz von Stein, however, gives the true date.

and was loud in disapprobation of his neglect of duties at home, while wandering among ruins and statues. Schiller, who had meanwhile come to Weimar, sends to Körner the echo of these grumblings: "Poor Weimar! Goethe's return is uncertain, and many here look upon his eternal separation from all business as decided. While he is painting in Italy, the Vogts and Schmidts must work for him like beasts of burden. He spends in Italy for doing nothing a salary of 1800 dollars, and they, for half that sum, must do double work." One reads such sentences from a Schiller with pain; and there are several other passages in the correspondence which betray a jealousy of his great rival, explicable, perhaps, by the uneasy, unhappy condition in which he then struggled, but which gives his admirers pain. This jealousy we shall hereafter see openly and even fiercely avowed.

While Weimar grumbled, Weimar's duke in truer sympathy wrote affectionately to him, releasing him from all official duties, and extending the leave of absence as long as it might be desired. Without Goethe, Weimar must indeed have been quite another place to Karl August; but no selfishness made him desire to shorten his friend's stay in Italy. Accordingly, on the 22nd of February, Goethe quitted Rome for Naples, where he spent five weeks of hearty enjoyment. Throwing aside his incognito, he mixed freely with society, and still more freely with the people, whose happy careless *far niente* delighted him. He there made the acquaintance of Sir William Hamilton, and saw the lovely Lady Hamilton, the syren whose beauty led the noble Nelson astray. Goethe was captivated by her grace, as she moved through the mazes of the shawl dance she made famous. He was also captivated in quite another manner by the writings of Vico, which had been introduced to him by his acquaintance Filangierie, who spoke of the great thinker with southern enthusiasm.

"If in Rome one must *study*," he writes, "here in Naples one can only *live*." And he lived a manifold life: on the seashore, among the fishermen, among the people, among the nobles, under Vesuvius, on the moonlit waters, on the causeway of Pompeii, in Pausilippo,—everywhere drinking in fresh delight, everywhere feeding his fancy and experience with new pictures. Thrice did he ascend Vesuvius; and as we shall see him during the campaign in France pursuing his scientific observations undisturbed by the cannon, so here

also we observe him deterred by no perils from making the most of his opportunity. Nor is this the only noticeable trait. Vesuvius could make him forget in curiosity his personal safety, but it did not excite one sentence of poetry. His description is as quiet as if Vesuvius were Hampstead Heath.

The enthusiasm breaks out, however, here and there. At Pæstum he was in raptures with the glorious antique temples, the remains of which still speak so eloquently of what Grecian art must have been.

Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Capua interested him less than might have been anticipated. "The book of Nature," he says, "is after all the only one which has in every page important meanings." It was a book which fastened him as fairy tales fasten children.

> "Here about the beach he wandered, nourishing a youth sublime
> With the fairy tales of Science and the long result of Time."

Wandering thus lonely, his thoughts hurried by the music of the waves, the long-baffling, long-soliciting mystery of vegetable forms grew into clearness before him, and the typical plant was no more a vanishing conception, but a principle clearly grasped.

On the 2nd of April he reached Palermo. He stayed a fortnight among its orange trees and oleanders, given up to the exquisite sensations which, lotus-like, lulled him into forgetfulness of everything, save the present. Homer here first became a living poet to him. He bought a copy of the *Odyssey*, read it with unutterable delight, and translated as he went, for the benefit of his friend Kniep. Inspired by it, he sketched the plan of *Nausikaa*, a drama in which the *Odyssey* was to be concentrated. Like so many other plans, this was never completed. The garden of Alcinous had to yield to the *Metamorphoses of Plants*, which tyrannously usurped his thoughts.

Palermo was the native city of Count Cagliostro, the audacious adventurer who, three years before, had made so conspicuous a figure in the affair of the Diamond Necklace. Goethe's curiosity to see the parents of this reprobate, led him to visit them, under the guise of an Englishman bringing them news of their son. He has narrated the adventure at some length; but as nothing of biographical interest lies therein, I pass on with this brief indication, adding that his sympathy,

always active, was excited in favour of the poor people, and he twice sent them pecuniary assistance, confessing the deceit he had practised.

He returned to Naples on the 14th of May, not without a narrow escape from shipwreck. He had taken with him the two first acts of *Tasso* (then in prose), to remodel them in verse. He found on reading them over, that they were soft and vague in expression, but otherwise needing no material alteration. After a fortnight at Naples, he once more arrived in Rome. This was on the 6th of June 1787, and he remained till the 22nd of April 1788: ten months of labour, which only an activity so unusual as his own could have made so fruitful. Much of his time was wasted in the dabbling of an amateur, striving to make himself what Nature had refused to make him. Yet it is perhaps perilous to say that with such a mind any effort was fruitless. If he did not become a painter by his studies, the studies were doubtless useful to him in other ways. Art and antiquities he studied in company with artistic friends. Rome is itself an education; and he was eager to learn. Practice of the art sharpened his perceptions. He learned perspective, drew from the model, was passionate in endeavours to succeed with landscape, and even began to model a little in clay. Angelica Kaufmann told him, that in Art he *saw* better than any one else; and the others believed perhaps that with study he would be able to do more than see. But all his study and all his practice were vain; he never attained even the excellence of an amateur. To think of a Goethe thus obstinately cultivating a branch of art for which he had no talent, makes us look with kinder appreciation on the spectacle, so frequently presented, of really able men obstinately devoting themselves to produce poetry which no cultivated mind can read; men whose culture and insight are insufficient to make them perceive in themselves the difference between aspiration and inspiration.

If some time was wasted upon efforts to become a painter, the rest was well employed. Not to mention his scientific investigations, there was abundance of work executed. *Egmont* was rewritten. The rough draft of the two first acts had been written at Frankfurt, in the year 1775; and a rough cast of the whole was made at Weimar, in 1782. He now took it up again, because the outbreak of troubles in the Netherlands once more brought the patriots into collision with the House of Orange. The task of rewriting was

laborious, but very agreeable, and he looked with pride on the completed drama, hoping it would gratify his friends. These hopes were somewhat dashed by Herder, who—never much given to praise—would not accept Clärchen, a character which the poet thought, and truly thought, he had felicitously drawn. Besides *Egmont*, he prepared for the new edition of his works, new versions of *Claudine von Villa Bella* and *Erwin und Elmire*, two comic operas. Some scenes of *Faust* were written; also these poems: *Amor als Landschaftsmaler; Amor als Gast; Künstler's Erdenwallen;* and *Künstler's Apotheose*. He thus completed the last four volumes of his collected works which Göschen had undertaken to publish, and which we have seen him take to Carlsbad and to Italy, as his literary task.

The effect of his residence in Italy, especially in Rome, was manifold and deep. Foreign travel, even to unintelligent, uninquiring minds, is always of great influence, not merely by the presentation of new objects, but also, and mainly, by the withdrawal of the mind from all the intricate connections of habit and familiarity which mask the real relations of life. This withdrawal is important, because it gives a new standing-point from which we can judge ourselves and others, and it shows how much that we have been wont to regard as essential is, in reality, little more than routine. Goethe certainly acquired clearer views with respect to himself and his career: severed from all those links of habit and routine which had bound him in Weimar, he learned in Italy to take another and a wider survey of his position. He returned home, to all appearance, a changed man. The crystallising process which commenced in Weimar was completed in Rome. As a decisive example, we note that he there finally relinquishes his attempt to become a painter. He feels that he is born only for poetry, and during the next ten years resolves to devote himself to literature.

One result of his study of art was to reconcile his theories and his tendencies. We have noted on several occasions the objective tendency of his mind, and we now find him recognising that tendency as dominant in ancient art. "Let me," he writes to Herder, "express my meaning in a few words. The ancients represented *existences*, we usually represent the *effect;* they portrayed the terrible, we terribly; they the agreeable, we agreeably, and so forth. Hence our exaggeration, mannerism, false graces, and all excesses. For when we

strive after effect, we never think we can be effective enough." This admirable sentence is as inaccurate in an historical, as it is accurate in an æsthetical sense; unless by the ancients we understand only Homer and some pieces of sculpture. As a criticism of Æschylus, Euripides, Pindar, Theocritus, Horace, Ovid, or Catullus, it is quite wide of the truth; indeed, it is merely the traditional fiction current about ancient art, which vanishes on a steady gaze; but inaccurate though it be, it serves to illustrate Goethe's theories. If he found *that* in Italy, it was because that best assimilated with his own tendencies, which were eminently concrete. "People talk of the study of the ancients," he says somewhere, "but what does it mean, except that we should look at the real world, and strive to express it, for that is what they did." And to Eckermann he said: "All eras in a state of decline are subjective; on the other hand, all progressive eras have an objective tendency. Our present time is retrograde, for it is subjective." Here in Rome he listens to his critical friends with a quiet smile, "when in metaphysical discussions they held me not competent. I, being an artist, regard this as of little moment. Indeed, I prefer that the principle from which and through which I work should be hidden from me." How few Germans could say this; how few could say with him, "*Ich habe nie über das Denken gedacht;* I have never thought about Thought."

Leaving all such generalities, and descending once more to biographic detail, we meet Goethe again in the toils of an unhappy passion. How he left the Frau von Stein we have seen. Her image accompanied him everywhere. To her he wrote constantly. But he has before confessed that he loved her less when absent from her, and the length of his absence now seems to have cooled his ardour. He had been a twelvemonth away from her, when the charms of a young Milanese, with whom he was thrown together in Castel Gandolfo, made him forget the coldness, almost approaching rudeness, with which hitherto he had guarded himself from female fascination. With the rashness of a boy he falls in love, and then learns that his mistress is already betrothed. I am unable to tell this story with any distinctness, for he was nearly eighty years old when he wrote the pretty but vague account of it in the *Italiänische Reise*, and there are no other sources come to hand. Enough that he loved, learned she was betrothed, and withdrew from her society to live down his grief. During her

illness, which followed upon an unexplained quarrel with her betrothed, he was silently assiduous in attentions; but although they met after her recovery, and she was then free, I do not find him taking any steps towards replacing the husband she had lost. As may be supposed, the tone of his letters to the Frau von Stein became visibly altered: they became less confidential and communicative; a change which did not escape her.

With Herder his correspondence continues affectionate. Pleasant it is to see the enthusiasm with which he receives Herder's *Ideen*, and reads it in Rome with the warmest admiration; so different from the way in which Herder receives what *he* sends from Rome!

On the 22nd April 1788, he turned homewards, quitting Rome with unspeakable regret, yet feeling himself equipped anew for the struggle of life. "The chief objects of my journey," he writes to the duke, "were these: to free myself from the physical and moral uneasiness which rendered me almost useless, and to still the feverish thirst I felt for true art. The first of these is tolerably, the second quite achieved." Taking *Tasso* with him to finish on his journey, he returned through Florence, Milan, Chiavenna, Lake Constance, Stuttgart, and Nürnberg, reaching Weimar on the 18th June, at ten o'clock in the evening.[1]

CHAPTER VI

EGMONT AND TASSO

THERE are men whose conduct we cannot approve, but whom we love more than many whose conduct is thoroughly admirable. When severe censors point out the sins of our favourites, reason may acquiesce, but the heart rebels. We make no protest, but in secret we keep our love unshaken. It is with

[1] It will be seen from this route that he never was in Genoa; consequently the passage in Schiller's correspondence with Körner (vol. iv. p. 59), wherein a certain G. is mentioned as having an unhappy attachment to an artist's model, cannot allude to Goethe. Indeed the context, and Körner's reply, would make this plain to any critical sagacity; but many writers on Goethe are so ready to collect scandals without scrutiny, that this warning is not superfluous. Vehse, for instance, in his work on the court of Weimar, has not the slightest misgiving about the G. meaning Goethe; it never occurs to him to inquire whether Goethe ever was in Genoa, or whether the dates of these letters do not point unmistakably in another direction.

poems as with men. The greatest favourites are not the least amenable to criticism; the favourites with Criticism are not the darlings of the public. In saying this we do not stultify Criticism, any more than Morality is stultified in our love of agreeable rebels. In both cases admitted faults are cast into the background by some energetic excellence.

Egmont is such a work. It is far, very far, from a masterpiece, but it is an universal favourite. As a tragedy, criticism makes sad work with it; but when all is said, the reader thinks of Egmont and Clärchen, and flings criticisms to the dogs. These are the figures which remain in the memory: bright, genial, glorious creations, comparable to any to be found in the long galleries of Art.

As a Drama—*i.e.* a work constructed with a view to representation—it wants the two fundamental requisites, viz. a collision of elemental passions, from whence the tragic interest should spring; and the construction of its materials into the dramatic form. The first fault lies in the conception; the second in the execution The one is the error of the dramatic poet; the other of the dramatist. Had Shakspeare treated this subject, he would have thrown a life and character into the mobs, and a passionate movement into the great scenes, which would have made the whole live before our eyes. But I do not think he would have surpassed Egmont and Clärchen.

The slow languid movement of this piece, which makes the representation somewhat tedious, does not lie in the length of the speeches and scenes, so much as in the undramatic construction. Julian Schmidt has actually remarked: "A dramatic intention hovered before him, but he executed it in a lyrical musical style. Thus in the interview between Egmont and Orange, the two declaim against each other, instead of working on each other." It is in certain passages dramatic, but the whole is undramatic. It approximates to the novel in dialogue.

Schiller, in his celebrated review of this work, praises the art with which the local colouring of History is preserved; but most people would willingly exchange this historical colouring for some touches of dramatic movement. The merit, such as it is, belongs to erudition, not to poetry; for the local colour is not, as in *Götz*, and in Scott's romances, vivid enough to place the epoch before our eyes. Schiller, on the other hand, objects to the departure from history, in making Egmont unmarried, and to the departure from heroic dignity in making

him in love. Goethe of course knew that Egmont had a wife and several children. He rejected such historical details; and although I am disposed to agree with Schiller, that by the change he deprived himself of some powerful dramatic situations, I still think he did right in making the change.

In the first place it has given us the exquisite character of Clärchen, the gem of the piece. In the next place it is dubious whether he would have treated the powerful situations with the adequate dramatic intensity. He knew and confessed that his genius was not tragic. "I was not born for a tragic poet," he wrote to Zelter; "my nature is too conciliating; hence no really tragic situation interests me, for it is in its essence irreconcilable."

The character of Egmont is that of a healthy, noble, heroic man; and it is his humanity which the poet wishes to place before us. We are made spectators of a happy nature, not of great actions; the hero, for he is one, presents himself to us in his calm strength, perfect faculties, joyous, healthy freedom of spirit, loving generous disposition; not in the hours of strenuous conflict, not in the spasms of his strength, not in the altitude of momentary exultation, but in the quiet strength of permanent power. This presentation of the character robs the story of its dramatic collision. The tendency of Goethe's mind, which made him look upon men rather as a Naturalist than as a Dramatist, led him to prefer delineating a character, to delineating a *passion;* and his biographical tendency made him delineate Egmont as more like what Wolfgang Goethe would have been under the same circumstances. This same tendency to draw from his own experience also led him to create Clärchen. Rosenkranz, indeed, seeking to show the profound historical conception of this work, says, that the love for Clärchen was necessary "as an indication of Egmont's sympathy with the people"; but the reason seems to me to have been less critical, and more biographical.

It is a sombre and a tragic episode in history which is treated in this piece. The revolution of the Netherlands was one imperiously commanded by the times; it was the revolt of citizens against exasperating oppression; of conscience against religious tyranny; of the nation against a foreigner. The Duke of Alva, who thought it better the Emperor should lose the Netherlands than rule over a nation of heretics, but who was by no means willing that the Netherlands should be lost, came to replace the Duchess of Parma in the regency; came

to suppress with the sword and scaffold the rebellion of the heretics. The strong contrast of Spaniard and Hollander, of Catholic and Protestant, of despotism and liberty which this subject furnished, are all *indicated* by Goethe; but he has not used them as powerful dramatic elements. The characters talk, talk well, talk lengthily; they do not act. In the course of their conversations we are made aware of the state of things; we do not dramatically assist at them.

Egmont opens with a scene between soldiers and citizens, shooting at a mark. A long conversation lets us into the secret of the unquiet state of the country, and the various opinions afloat. Compare it with analogous scenes in Shakspeare, and the difference between dramatic and non-dramatic treatment will be manifest. Here the men are puppets; we see the author's *intention* in all they say; in Shakspeare the men betray themselves, each with some peculiar trick of character.

The next scene is still more feeble. The Duchess of Parma and Machiavelli are in conversation. She asks his counsel; he advises tolerance, which she feels to be impossible: except in the casual indication of two characters, the whole of this scene is unnecessary: and indeed Schiller, in his adaptation of this play to the stage, lopped away the character of the Duchess altogether, as an excrescence.

The free, careless, unsuspicious nature of Egmont is well contrasted with that of the suspicious Orange; his character is painted by numerous vivid touches, and we are in one scene made aware of the danger he is in. But the scene ends as it began, in talk. The next scene introduces Clärchen and her unhappy lover Brackenburg. Very pretty is this conception of his patient love, and her compassion for the love she cannot share:

Mother. Do you send him away so soon?

Clärchen. I long to know what is going on; and besides—do not be angry with me, mother—his presence pains me. I never know how I ought to behave towards him. I have done him a wrong, and it goes to my very heart to see how deeply he feels it. Well—it can't be helped now.

Mother. He is such a true-hearted fellow!

Clärchen. I cannot help it, I must treat him kindly. *Often without a thought I return the gentle, loving pressure of his hand.* I reproach myself that I am deceiving him, that I am

nourishing a vain hope in his heart. I am in a sad plight. God knows I do not willingly deceive him. *I do not wish him to hope, yet I cannot let him despair!*

Is not that taken from the life, and is it not exquisitely touched?

Clärchen. I loved him once, and in my soul I love him still. I could have married him; yet I believe I never was really and passionately in love with him.

Mother. You would have been happy with him.

Clärchen. I should have been provided for, and led a quiet life.

Mother. And it has all been trifled away by your folly.

Clärchen. I am in a strange position. When I think how it has come about, I know it indeed, and yet I know it not. *But I have only to look on Egmont, and all becomes clear to me;* yes, then even stranger things would seem quite natural. Oh, what a man he is! The provinces worship him. And in his arms am I not the happiest being alive?

Mother. And the future?

Clärchen. I ask but this—does he love me? *Does* he love me—as if there could be a doubt!

There are reminiscences of Frederika in this simple, loving Clärchen, and in the picture of her devotion to the man so much above her. This scene, however, though very charming, is completely without onward movement. It is talk, not action; and the return of Brackenburg at the close, with his despairing monologue, is not sufficient for the termination of an act.

In act second we see the citizens again; they are becoming more unruly as events advance. Vanzen comes to stir their rebellious feelings; a quarrel ensues, which is quieted by the appearance of Egmont, who, on hearing their complaints, advises them to be prudent. "Do what you can to keep the peace; you stand in bad repute already. Provoke not the king still further. The power is in his hands. An honest citizen who maintains himself industriously has everywhere as much freedom as he needs." He quits them, promising to do his utmost for them, advising them to stand against the new doctrines, and not to attempt to secure privileges by sedition. The people's hero is no demagogue. He opposes the turbulence of the mob, as he opposes the tyranny of the crown. In

the next scene we have him with his secretary; and here are further manifested the kindness and the *insouciance* of his nature. "It is my good fortune that I am joyous, live fast, and take everything easily. I would not barter it for a tomb-like security. My blood rebels against this Spanish mode of life, nor are my actions to be regulated by the cautious measures of the court. Do I live only to think of life? Shall I forego the enjoyment of the present moment that I may secure the next, which, when it arrives, must be consumed in idle fears and anxieties?" This is not the language of a politician, but of a happy man. "Take life too seriously, and what is it worth? If the morning wake us to no new joys, if the evening bring us not the hope of new pleasures, is it worth while to dress and undress? Does the sun shine on me to-day that I may reflect on yesterday? That I may endeavour to foresee and to control what can neither be foreseen nor controlled—the destiny of to-morrow?" The present is enough for him. "The sunsteeds of Time, as if goaded by invisible spirits, bear onward the light car of Destiny. Nothing remains for us but, with calm self-possession, firmly to grasp the reins, and guide the car now right, now left, here from the precipice, there from the rock. Who knows Whither he is hasting? Who reflects from Whence he came?"

Very poetic, and tragic too, is this contrast of character with circumstance. We know the peril which threatens him. We feel that this serenity is in itself the certain cause of his destruction; and it affects us like the joyousness of Romeo, who, the moment before he hears the terrible news of Juliet's death, feels "his bosom's lord sit lightly on its throne." In the scene which follows between Egmont and Orange, there is a fine argumentative exposition of their separate views of the state of affairs; Orange warns him to fly while there is yet safety; but he sees that flight will hasten civil war, and he remains.

Act the third once more brings the Duchess and Machiavelli before us, and once more they talk about the troubles of the time. The scene changes to Clärchen's house, and we are spectators of that exquisite interview which Scott has borrowed in *Kenilworth*, where Leicester appears to Amy Robsart in all his princely splendour. Beautiful as this scene is, it is not enough to constitute one act of a drama, especially the *third* act; for nothing is done in it, nothing is indicated even in the development of the story which had not been indicated before;

the action stands still that we may see childish delight, womanly love, and manly tenderness.

The poetic reader, captivated by this scene, will be impatient at the criticism which espies a fault in it, and will declare such a picture infinitely superior to any dramatic effect. "What pedantry," he will exclaim, "to talk of technical demands in presence of a scene like this!" and with a lofty wave of the hand dismiss the critic into contempt. Nevertheless, the critic is forced by his office to consider what are the technical demands. If the poet has attempted a drama, he must be tried by dramatic standards. However much we may delight in the picture Goethe has presented in this third act, we cannot but feel that Shakspeare, while giving the picture, would have made it subservient to the progress and development of the piece; for Shakspeare was not only a poet, he was also a dramatic poet.

Act the fourth again shows us citizens talking about the times, which grew more and more ominous. In the next scene Alva, the terrible Alva, appears, having laid all his plans. Orange has fled, but Egmont comes. A long discussion, very argumentative but utterly undramatic, between Alva and Egmont, is concluded by the arrest of the latter.

Act the fifth shows us Clärchen in the streets trying to rouse Brackenburg and the citizens to revolt and to the rescue of Egmont. There is great animation in this scene, wherein love raises the simple girl into the heroine. The citizens are alarmed, and dread to hear Egmont named:

Clärchen. Stay! stay! Shrink not away at the sound of his name, to meet whom ye were wont to press forward so joyously! When rumour announced his approach, when the cry arose, "Egmont comes! he comes from Ghent!" then happy were they who dwelt in the streets through which he was to pass. And when the neighing of his steed was heard, did not every one throw aside his work, while a ray of hope and joy, like a sunbeam from his countenance, stole over the toil-worn faces which peered from every window. Then as ye stood in doorways ye would lift up your children and pointing to him exclaim, "See! that is Egmont! he who towers above the rest! 'Tis from him ye must look for better times than those your poor fathers have known!"

Clärchen, unable to rouse the citizens, is led home by Bracken-

burg. The scene changes to Egmont's prison, where he soliloquises on his fate; the scene again changes, and shows us Clärchen waiting with sickly impatience for Brackenburg to come and bring her the news. He comes; tells her Egmont is to die; she takes poison, and Brackenburg, in despair, resolves also to die. The final scene is very weak and very long. Egmont has an interview with Alva's son, whom he tries to persuade into aiding him to escape; failing in this, he goes to sleep on a couch, and Clärchen appears in a vision as the figure of Liberty. She extends to him a laurel crown. He wakes—to find the prison filled with soldiers who lead him to execution.

There are great inequalities in this work, and some disparities of style. It was written at three different periods of his life; and although, when once completed, a work may benefit by careful revision extending over many years, it will inevitably suffer from fragmentary composition; the delay which favours revision, is fatal to composition. A work of Art should be completed before the paint has had time to dry; otherwise the changes brought by time in the development of the artist's mind will make themselves felt in the heterogeneous structure of the work. *Egmont* was conceived in the period when Goethe was under the influence of Shakspeare; it was mainly executed in the period when he had taken a classical direction. It wants the stormy life of *Götz*, and the calm beauty of *Iphigenia*. Schiller thought the close was too much in the opera style; and Gervinus thinks that preoccupation with the opera, which Goethe at this period was led into by his friendly efforts to assist Kayser, has given the whole work an operatic turn. I confess I do not detect this; but I see a decided deficiency in dramatic construction, which is also to be seen in all his later works; and that he really did not know what the drama properly required, to *be* a drama as well as a poem, we shall see clearly illustrated in a future chapter. Nevertheless, I end as I began with saying that find what fault you will with *Egmont*, it still remains one of those general favourites against which criticism is powerless.

Still less satisfactory from the dramatic point of view is *Tasso;* of which we may say what Johnson says of *Comus*, "it is a series of faultless lines, but no drama." Indeed, for the full enjoyment of this exquisite poem, it is necessary that the reader should approach it as he approaches *Comus*, or *Manfred*, or *Philip von Artevelde*, with no expectations of

finding in it the qualities of *Othello*, or *Wallenstein*. It has a charm which few can resist; but it wants all the requisites of stage representation. There is scarcely any action; and what little there is only serves as a vehicle of struggle which goes on in Tasso's mind, instead of the struggle and collision of two minds. Even the dramatic elements of love and madness, are not dramatically treated. We feel their presence in Tasso's mind; we never see their flaming energy fusing the heterogeneous materials of circumstance into fiery unity; we are thus spectators of a disease, not of an acted story. Hence the beauty of this work lies in its poetry, and cannot be reproduced in a translation.

The moment chosen by Goethe is when Tasso, having just completed his *Jerusalem Delivered*, gives unmistakable signs of the unhappy passion and unhappy malady which have made his biography one of the saddest in the sad list of "mighty poets in their misery dead." German critics have affirmed that the piece is saturated with historical facts and local colour. But it is clear that great liberties have been taken both with history and local colour. Indeed, there was too obvious a superficial resemblance between the position of Tasso at the court of Ferrara and Goethe at the court of Weimar not to make these liberties necessary. Had Goethe painted the actual relation between Tasso and Alphonso, the public might have read between the lines reflections on Karl August. Moreover, it is difficult to deny the truth of Madame de Stael's remark, that "les couleurs du Midi ne sont pas assez prononcées." The tone of the work is German throughout, and would considerably have surprised an Italian of the court of Ferrara.

Tasso was finally completed shortly after the rupture with the Frau von Stein, presently to be related; but I have noticed it here, as the most convenient place. It is in truth to be regarded as one of the products of his early Weimar years, having been merely versified in Italy, and after his return home.

CHAPTER VII

RETURN HOME

GOETHE came back from Italy greatly enriched, but by no means satisfied. The very wealth he had accumulated embarrassed him, by the new problems it presented, and the new horizons it revealed:

> "For all experience is an arch wherethrough
> Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades
> For ever and for ever as we move."

He had in Rome become aware that a whole life of study would scarcely suffice to still the craving hunger for knowledge; and he left Italy with deep regret. The return home was thus, in itself, a grief; the arrival was still more painful. Every one will understand this, who has lived for many months away from the circle of old habits and old acquaintances, feeling in the new world a larger existence more consonant with his nature and his aims; and has then returned once more to the old circle, to find it unchanged,—pursuing its old paths, moved by the old impulses, guided by the old lights,—so that he feels himself a *stranger*. To return to a great capital, after such an absence, is to feel ill at ease; but to return from Italy to Weimar! It we, on entering London, after a residence abroad, find the same interests occupying our friends which occupied them when we left, the same family gossip, the same books talked about, the same placards loud upon the walls of the unchanging streets, the world seeming to have stood still while we have lived through so much: what must Goethe have felt coming from Italy, with his soul filled with new experience and new ideas, on observing the quiet unchanged Weimar? No one seemed to understand him; no one sympathised in his enthusiasm, or in his regrets. They found him changed. He found them moving in the same dull round, like blind horses in a mill.

First, let us note that he came back resolved to dedicate his life to Art and Science, and no more to waste efforts in the laborious duties of office. From Rome he had thus written to Karl August: "How grateful am I to you for having given me this priceless leisure. My mind having from youth upwards had this bent, I should never have been at ease until I had reached this end. My relation to affairs sprang out of my

personal relation to you; now let a new relation, after so many years, spring from the former. I can truly say, that in the solitude of these eighteen months I have found my own self again. But as what? As an Artist! What else I may be, you will be able to judge and use. You have shown throughout your life that princely knowledge of what men are, and what they are useful for; and this knowledge has gone on increasing, as your letters clearly prove to me: to that knowledge I gladly submit myself. Ask my aid in that Symphony which you mean to play, and I will at all times gladly and honestly give you my advice. Let me fulfil the whole measure of my existence at your side, then will my powers, like a new-opened and purified spring, easily be directed hither and thither. Already I see what this journey has done for me, how it has clarified and brightened my existence. As you have hitherto borne with me, so care for me in future; you do me more good than I can do myself, more than I can claim. I have seen a large and beautiful bit of the world, and the result is, that I wish only to live with you and yours. Yes, I shall become more to you than I have been before, if you let me do what I only can do, and leave the rest to others. Your sentiments for me, as expressed in your letters, are so beautiful, so honourable to me, that they make me blush,—that I can only say: Lord, here am I, do with thy servant as seemeth good unto thee."

The wise duke answered this appeal nobly. He released his friend from the Presidency of the Chamber, and from the direction of the War Department, but kept a distinct place for him in the Council, "whenever his other affairs allowed him to attend." The poet remained the adviser of his prince, but was relieved from the more onerous duties of office. The direction of the Mines, and of all Scientific and Artistic Institutions, he retained; among them that of the Theatre.

It was generally found that he had grown colder in his manners since his Italian journey. Indeed, the process of crystallisation had rapidly advanced; and beyond this effect of development, which would have taken place had he never left Weimar, there was the further addition of his feeling himself at a different standing-point from those around him. The less they understood him, the more he drew within himself. Those who understood him, Moritz, Meyer, the duke, and Herder, found no cause of complaint.

During the first few weeks he was of course constantly