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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Lone sitting on the shores of old Romance."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER IV

VARIOUS STUDIES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Severer studies were not neglected. To please his father he

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

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

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

CHAPTER V

THE CHILD IS FATHER TO THE MAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BOOK THE SECOND

1765 TO 1771

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

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

CHAPTER I

THE LEIPSIC STUDENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But I must tell you something of myself:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Live and forget not thy HORN."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER II

MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER III

ART STUDIES

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

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

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

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

Da fühl ich die Freuden der wechselden Lust.

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

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

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

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

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

[1] See Book V. ch. v.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER IV

RETURN HOME

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER V

STRASBURG

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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