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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

An excitable impetuous youth, ambitious of shining in

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER VI

HERDER AND FREDERIKA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He was already a captive.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Dear new friend,—

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

"Dear, dear friend,—

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

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

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

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

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

"How delicious a sensation is the hope of seeing again

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ORATION ON SHAKSPEARE.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[2] *Die Wahlfahrt nach Sesenheim.*

BOOK THE THIRD

1771 TO 1775

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

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

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

CHAPTER I

DR. GOETHE'S RETURN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER II

GÖTZ VON BERLICHINGEN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER III

WETZLAR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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