at court. Thus the *Hof-Courier Buch* tells us that the day after his arrival he dined at court. This was the 19th June. Again on the 20th, 22nd, 25th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th. In July, on the 1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 11th, 12th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, and 21st, and so on almost uninterruptedly till September. His official release made the bond of friendship stronger. Besides, every one was naturally anxious to hear about his travels, and he was delighted to talk of them.

But if Weimar complained of the change, to which it soon grew accustomed, there was one who had deeper cause of complaint, and whose nature was not strong enough to bear it—the Frau von Stein. Absence had cooled the ardour of his passion. In Rome, to the negative influence of absence, was added the positive influence of a new love. He had returned to Weimar, still grateful to her for the happiness she had given him, still feeling for her the affection which no conduct of hers could destroy, and which warmed his heart towards her to the last; but he returned also with little of the passion she had for ten years inspired; he returned with a full conviction that he had outlived it. Nor did her presence serve to rekindle the smouldering embers. Charlotte von Stein was now five-and-forty. It is easy to imagine how much he must have been struck with the change in her. Had he never left her side, this change would have approached with gradual steps, stealthily escaping observation; but the many months' absence removed a veil from his eyes. She was five-and-forty to him, as to others. In this perilous position she adopted the very worst course. She found him changed, and told him so, in a way which made him feel more sharply the change in her. She thought him cold, and her resource was—reproaches. The resource was more feminine than felicitous. Instead of sympathising with him in his sorrow at leaving Italy, she felt the regret as an offence; and perhaps it was; but a truer, nobler nature would surely have known how to merge its own pain in sympathy with the pain of one beloved. He regretted Italy; she was not a compensation to him; she saw this, and her self-love suffered. The coquette who had so long held him captive, now saw the captive freed from her chains. It was a trying moment. But even in the worst aspect of the position, there was that which a worthy nature would have regarded as no small consolation: she might still be his dearest friend; and the friendship of such a man

was worth more than the love of another. But this was not to be.

Before the final rupture, he went with her to Rudolstadt, and there for the first time spoke with Schiller, who thus writes to Körner, 12th September, 1788: "At last I can tell you about Goethe, and satisfy your curiosity. The first sight of him was by no means what I had been led to expect. He is of middle stature, holds himself stiffly and walks stiffly; his countenance is not open, but his eye very full of expression, lively, and one hangs with delight on his glances. With much seriousness his mien has nevertheless much goodness and benevolence. He is brown complexioned, and seemed to me older in appearance than his years. His voice is very agreeable, his narrations are flowing, animated, and full of spirit; one listens with pleasure; and when he is in good humour, as was the case this time, he talks willingly and with great interest. We soon made acquaintance, and without the slightest effort; the circle, indeed, was too large, and every one too jealous of him, for me to speak much with him alone, or on any but general topics. . . . On the whole, I must say that my great idea of him is not lessened by this personal acquaintance; but I doubt whether we shall ever become intimate. Much that to me is now of great interest, he has already lived through; he is, less in years than in experience and self-culture, so far beyond me that we can never meet on the way; and his whole being is originally different from mine, his world is not my world, our conceptions are radically different. Time will show."

Could he have looked into Goethe's soul he would have seen there was a wider gulf between them than he imagined. In scarcely any other instance was so great a friendship ever formed between men who at first seemed more opposed to each other. At this moment Goethe was peculiarly ill-disposed towards any friendship with Schiller, for he saw in him the powerful writer who had corrupted and misled the nation. He has told us how pained he was on his return from Italy to find Germany jubilant over Heinse's *Ardinghello*, and Schiller's *Robbers*, and *Fiesco*. He had pushed far from him, and for ever, the whole *Sturm und Drang* creed; he had outgrown that tendency, and learned to hate his own works which sprang from it; in Italy he had taken a new direction, hoping to make the nation follow him in this higher region, as it had followed him before. But while he advanced, the

nation stood still; he "passed it like a ship at sea." Instead of following him, the public followed his most extravagant imitators. He hoped to enchant men with the calm ideal beauty of an *Iphigenia*, and the sunny heroism of an *Egmont;* and found every one enraptured with *Ardinghello* and *Karl Moor*. His publisher had to complain that the new edition of his works, on which so much time and pains had been bestowed, went off very slowly, while the highly-spiced works of his rivals were bought by thousands.

> Schüler macht sich der Schwärmer genug, und rühret die Menge
> Wenn der vernünftige Mann einzelne Liebende zählt.
> Wunderthätige Bilder sind meist nur schlechte Gemälde,
> Werke des Geists und der Kunst sind für den Pöbel nicht da.[1]

In this frame of mind it is natural that he should keep aloof from Schiller, and withstand the various efforts made to bring about an intimacy. "To be much with Goethe," Schiller writes in the February following, "would make me unhappy; with his nearest friends he has no moments of overflowingness: I believe, indeed, he is an egoist, in an unusual degree. He has the talent of conquering men, and of binding them by small as well as great attentions: but he always knows how to hold himself free. He makes his existence benevolently felt, but only like a god, without giving himself: this seems to me a consequent and well-planned conduct, which is calculated to ensure the highest enjoyment of self-love. . . . Thereby is he hateful to me, although I love his genius from my heart, and think greatly of him. . . . It is quite a peculiar mixture of love and hatred he has awakened in me, a feeling akin to that which Brutus and Cassius must have had for Cæsar. I could kill his spirit, and then love him again from my heart." These sentences read very strangely now we know how Schiller came to love and reverence the man whom he here so profoundly misunderstands, and whom he judges thus from the surface. But they are interesting sentences in many respects; in none more so than in showing that if he, on nearer acquaintance, came to love the noble nature of his great rival, it is a proof that he had seen how superficial had been his first judgment. Let the reader who has been led to think harshly of Goethe, from one cause or another, take this into considera-

[1] Dreamers make scholars enough, they flatter the weakness of thousands,
While the intelligent man counts his disciples by tens.
Poor indeed are the pictures famous for miracle-working:
Art in its loftiest forms ne'er can be prized by the mob.

tion, and ask himself whether he too, on better knowledge, might not alter his opinion.

"With Goethe," so runs another letter, "I will not compare myself, when he puts forth his whole strength. He has far more genius than I have, and greater wealth of knowledge, a more accurate sensuous perception (*eine sichere Sinnlichkeit*), and to all these he adds an artistic taste, cultivated and sharpened by knowledge of all works of Art." But with this acknowledgment of superiority there was coupled an unpleasant feeling of *envy* at Goethe's happier lot, a feeling which his own unhappy position renders very explicable. "I will let you see into my heart," he writes to Körner. "*Once for all, this man, this Goethe, stands in my way*, and recalls to me so often that fate has dealt hardly with me. How lightly is *his* genius borne by his fate; and how must *I* even to this moment struggle!"

Fate had indeed treated them very differently. Throughout Schiller's correspondence we are pained by the sight of sordid cares, and anxious struggles for existence. He is in bad health, in difficult circumstances. We see him forced to make literature a trade; and it is a bad one. We see him anxious to do hack-work, and translations, for a few dollars, quite cheered by the prospect of getting such work; nay, glad to farm it out to other writers, who will do it for less than he receives. We see him animated with high aspirations, and depressed by cares. He too is struggling through the rebellious epoch of youth, but has not yet attained the clearness of manhood; and no external aids come to help him through the struggle. Goethe, on the contrary, never knew such cares. All his life he had been shielded from the depressing influence of poverty; and now he has leisure, affluence, renown, social position—little from *without* to make him unhappy. When Schiller therefore thought of all this, he must have felt that fate had been a niggard stepmother to him, as she had been a lavish mother to his rival.

Yet Goethe had his sorrows, too, though not of the same kind. He bore within him the flame of genius, a flame which consumes while it irradiates. His struggles were with himself, and not with circumstances. He felt himself a stranger in the land. Few understood his language; none understood his aims. He withdrew into himself.

There is one point which must be noticed in this position of the two poets, namely, that however great Schiller may be now esteemed, and was esteemed by Goethe after awhile, he

was not at this moment regarded with anything beyond the feeling usually felt for a rising young author. His early works had indeed a wide popularity; but so had the works of Klinger, Maler Müller, Lenz, Kotzebue, and others, who never conquered the great critics; and Schiller was so unrecognised at this time that, on coming to Weimar, he complains, with surprise as much as with offended self-love, that Herder seemed to know nothing of him beyond his name, not having apparently read one of his works. And Goethe, in the official paper which he drew up recommending Schiller to the Jena professorship, speaks of him as "a Herr Friedrich Schiller, author of an historical work on the Netherlands." So that not only was Schiller's tendency antipathetic to all Goethe then prized, he was not even in that position which commands the respect of antagonists; and Goethe considered Art too profoundly important in the development of mankind, for differences of tendency to be overlooked as unimportant.

CHAPTER VIII

CHRISTIANE VULPIUS

One day early in July, 1788, Goethe, walking in the much-loved park, was accosted by a fresh, young, bright-looking girl, who, with many reverences, handed him a petition. He looked into the bright eyes of the petitioner, and then, in a conciliated mood, looked at the petition, which entreated the great poet to exert his influence to procure a post for a young author, then living at Jena by the translation of French and Italian stories. This young author was Vulpius, whose *Rinaldo Rinaldini* has doubtless made some of my readers shudder in their youth. His robber romances were at one time very popular; but his name is now only rescued from oblivion, because he was the brother of that Christiane who handed the petition to Goethe, and who thus took the first step on the path which led to their marriage. Christiane is on many accounts an interesting figure to those who are interested in the biography of Goethe; and the love she excited, no less than the devotedness with which for eight-and-twenty years she served him, deserve a more tender memory than has befallen her.

Her father was one of those wretched beings whose drunken-

ness slowly but surely brings a whole family to want. He would sometimes sell the coat off his back for drink. When his children grew up, they contrived to get away from him, and to support themselves: the son by literature, the daughters by making artificial flowers,[1] woollen work, &c. It is usually said that Christiane was utterly uneducated, and the epigrammatic pen glibly records that "Goethe married his servant." She never was his servant. Nor was she uneducated. Her social position indeed was very humble, as the foregoing indications suggest: but that she was not uneducated is plainly seen in the facts, of which there can be no doubt, namely, that for her were written the *Roman Elegies*, and the *Metamorphoses of Plants;* and that in her company Goethe pursued his optical and botanical researches. How much she understood of these researches we cannot know: but it is certain that, unless she had shown a lively comprehension, he would never have persisted in talking of them to her. Their time, he says, was not spent only in caresses, but also in rational talk:

Wird doch nicht immer geküsst, es wird vernünftig gesprochen.

This is decisive. Throughout his varied correspondence we always see him presenting different subjects to different minds, treating of topics in which his correspondents are interested, not dragging forward topics which merely interest *him;* and among the wide range of subjects he had mastered, there were many upon which he might have conversed with Christiane, in preference to science, had she shown any want of comprehension of scientific phenomena. There is one of the *Elegies*, the eighth, which in six lines gives us a distinct idea of the sort of cleverness and the sort of beauty which she possessed; a cleverness not of the kind recognised by schoolmasters, because it does not display itself in aptitude for book-learning; a beauty not of the kind recognised by conventional taste, because it wants the conventional regularity of feature.

Wenn du mir sagst, du habest als Kind, Geliebte, den Menschen
Nicht gefallen, und dich habe die Mutter verschmäht,
Bis du grösser geworden und still dich entwickelt; ich glaub' es:
Gerne denk' ich mir dich als ein besonderes Kind.
Fehlet Bildung und Farbe, doch auch der Blüthe des Weinstocks,
Wenn die Beere, gereift, Menschen und Götter entzückt.[2]

Surely the poet's word is to be taken in such a case?

[1] This detail will give the reader a clue to the poem *Der neue Pausias.*

[2] "When you tell me, dearest, that as a child you were not admired, and even your mother scorned you, till you grew up and silently developed your-

While, however, rectifying a general error, let me not fall into the opposite extreme. Christiane had her charm; but she was not a highly gifted woman. She was not a Frau von Stein, capable of being the companion and the sharer of his highest aspirations. Quick motherwit, a lively spirit, a loving heart, and great aptitude for domestic duties, she undoubtedly possessed; she was gay, enjoying, fond of pleasure even to excess, and—as may be read in the poems which she inspired—was less the mistress of his Mind than of his Affections. Her golden-brown locks, laughing eyes, ruddy cheeks, kiss-provoking lips, small and gracefully rounded figure, gave her "the appearance of a young Dionysos."[1] Her *naïveté*, gaiety and enjoying temperament, completely fascinated Goethe, who recognised in her one of those free, healthy specimens of Nature which education had not distorted with artifice. She was like a child of the sensuous Italy he had just quitted with so much regret; and there are few poems in any language which approach the passionate gratitude of those in which he recalls the happiness she gave him.

Why did he not marry her at once? His dread of marriage has already been shown; and to this abstract dread there must be added the great disparity of station: a disparity so great that not only did it make the *liaison* scandalous, it made Christiane herself reject the offer of marriage. Stahr reports that persons now living have heard her declare that it was her own fault her marriage was so long delayed; and certain it is that when—Christmas 1789—she bore him a child (August von Goethe, to whom the Duke stood godfather), he took her with her mother and sister to live in his house, and always regarded the connection as a marriage. But however he may have regarded it, Public Opinion has not forgiven this defiance of social laws. The world blamed him loudly; even his admirers cannot think of the connection without pain. "The Nation," says Schäfer, "has never forgiven its greatest poet for this rupture with Law and Custom; nothing has stood so much in the way of a right appreciation of his moral character, nothing has created more false judgments on the tendency of his writings than his half-marriage."

But let us be just. While no one can refrain from deploring

self; I can quite believe it. I can readily imagine you as a peculiar child. If the blossoms of the vine are wanting in colour and form, the grapes once ripe are the delight of gods and men."

[1] So says Madame Schopenhauer, *not* a prejudiced witness.

that Goethe, so eminently needing a pure domestic life, should not have found a wife whom he could avow, one who would in all senses have been a wife to him, the mistress of his house, the companion of his life; on the other hand, no one who knows the whole circumstances can refrain from confessing that there was also a bright side to this dark episode. Having indicated the dark side, and especially its social effect, we have to consider what happiness it brought him at a time when he was most lonely, most unhappy. It gave him the joys of paternity, for which his heart yearned. It gave him a faithful and devoted affection. It gave him one to look after his domestic existence, and it gave him a peace in that existence which hitherto he had sought in vain.

> Oftmals hab' ich geirrt, und habe mich wieder gefunden,
> Aber glücklicher nie; nun ist diess Mädchen mein Glück!
> Ist auch dieses ein Irrthum, so schont mich, ihr klügeren Götter,
> Und benehmt mir ihn erst drüben am kalten Gestad.[1]

There is a letter still extant (unpublished) written ten years after their first acquaintance, in which, like a passionate lover, he regrets not having taken something of hers on his journey —even her slipper—that he might feel less lonely![2] To have excited such love, Christiane must have been a very different woman from that which it is the fashion in Germany to describe her as being. In conclusion, let it be added that his Mother not only expressed herself perfectly satisfied with his choice, received Christiane as a daughter, and wrote affectionately to her, but refused to listen to the officious meddlers who tried to convince her of the scandal which the connection occasioned.

The *Roman Elegies* are doubly interesting: first, as expressions of his feelings; secondly, as perhaps the most perfect poems of the kind in all literature. In them we see how the journey to Italy had saturated his mind with the spirit of ancient Art. Yet while reproducing the past with matchless felicity, he is, at the same time, thoroughly *original*. Nowhere in Greek or Roman literature do I remember this union of

[1] "Often have I erred, and always found the path again, but never found myself happier: now in this maiden lies my happiness! If this, too, is an error, O spare me the knowledge, ye gods, and let me only discover it beyond the grave."

[2] My accomplished German translator here adds some passages from Goethe's correspondence with Herder, which indicate the fervour of the passion Christiane excited and sustained.

great thoughts, giving grandeur to the verse, with individual passion, giving it intensity. They are not simply elegies—out-pourings of individual feelings—they are *Roman* elegies, and mirror a world. In modern poems all classical recollections and allusions are for the most part frigid and laboured, springing from study; not the spontaneous forms of poetic expression. In these *Roman Elegies* the classic world lives again; indeed at times one can almost say he is more antique than the ancients.[1] The thirteenth elegy, *Amor der Schalk*, for example, is in Anacreon's manner, but far above anything we have of Anacreon. Antique also is the direct unmisgiving sensuousness of the poet, and his unperplexed earnestness of passion, an earnestness which does not absorb the other activities of his nature, but allies itself with them. Thus in the fifth elegy there is a picture of the most vivid sensuousness, aiding, not thwarting, the poetical activity. What a poem, what a world of emotion and thought these lines suggest:

> Ueberfällt sie der Schlaf, lieg' ich und denke mir viel.
> Oftmals hab' ich auch schon in ihren Armen gedichtet,
> Und des Hexameters Mass leise mit fingernder Hand
> Ihr auf dem Rücken gezählt. Sie athmet in lieblichem Schlummer,
> Und es durchglühet ihr Hauch mir bis ins Tiefste die Brust.

This picture of the poet murmuring verses while his beloved sleeps softly by his side; warmed by her breath, yet with fingering hand marking the rhythm of verse; is typical of the whole story of Goethe's love. Passion fed, it never stifled the flame of his genius. He enjoyed; but in the brief pauses of enjoyment the presence of high aims was felt.

The blending of individual passion with classic forms, making the past live again in the feeling of the present, may be illustrated by the following example:

> Lass dich, Geliebte, nicht reu'n, dass du mir so schnell dich ergeben!
> Glaub' es, ich denke nicht frech, denke nicht niedrig von dir.
> Vielfach wirken die Pfeile des Amor: einige ritzen
> Und vom schleichenden Gift kranket auf Jahre das Herz.
> Aber mächtig befiedert, mit frisch geschliffener schärfe,
> Dringen die andern ins Mark, zünden behende das Blut.
> *In der heroischen Zeit, da Götter und Göttinnen liebten,*
> *Folgte Begierde dem Blick, folgte Genuss der Begier.*
> Glaubst du, es habe sich lange die Göttin der Liebe besonnen,
> Als in Idäischen Hain einst ihr Anchises gefiel?

[1] Schlegel happily says of them, "they enrich Roman poetry with German poems." *Charakteristiken und Kritiken*, ii. p. 199.

Hätte Luna gesäumt, den schönen Schläfer zu küssen.
O, so hätt' ihn geschwind, neidend, Aurora geweckt.[1]

Many of the finest passages are as antique in their directness of expression as in other qualities. He said justly to Eckermann, that Metre is a peculiar veil which clothes the nakedness of expression, and makes that admissible which in prose would be offensive, and which even in another lighter kind of Metre would be offensive. In the *Don Juan* stanza he says the material of the *Roman Elegies* would be indelicate. On the question how far a poet is justified in disregarding the conventional proprieties of his age in the portrayal of feeling, let Schiller be heard: "The laws of propriety are foreign to innocent nature; only the experience of corruption has given origin to them. But as soon as that corruption has taken place, and natural innocence has vanished from manners, the laws of propriety are sacred, and moral feeling will not offend them. They have the same validity in an artificial world as the laws of nature have in a world of innocence. But the very thing which constitutes the poet, is that he banishes from himself everything which reminds him of an artificial world, that he may restore nature in her primitive simplicity. And if he has done this, he is thereby absolved from all laws by which a perverted heart seeks security against itself. He is pure, he is innocent, and whatever is permitted to innocent nature is permitted also to him. If thou who readest and hearest him art no longer innocent, and if thou canst not even momentarily become so by his purifying presence, it is thy *misfortune* and not his; thou forsakest him, he did not sing for thee."

Had Goethe written nothing but the *Roman Elegies*, he would hold a first place among German poets. These elegies are, moreover, scarcely less interesting in their biographical

[1] In Mr. Theodore Martin's volume of privately printed poems and translations, the passage in the text is thus rendered:—

Blush not, my love, at the thought, thou yieldest so soon to my passion,
Trust me, I think it no shame—think it no vileness in thee!
Shafts from the quiver of Amor have manifold consequence. Some scratch,
And the heart sickens for years with the insidious bane:
Others drawn home to the head, full plumed, and cruelly pointed,
Pierce to the marrow, and straight kindle the blood into flame.
In the heroical age, when goddess and god were the lovers,
Scarce did they look but they long'd, longing they rush'd to enjoy.
Think'st thou Love's goddess hung back, when deep in the forest of Ida,
She, with a thrill of delight, first her Anchises beheld?
Coyly had Luna delayed to fondle the beautiful sleeper,
Soon had Aurora in spite waken'd the boy from his dream.

significance. They speak plainly of the effect of Italy upon his mind. They speak eloquently of his love for Christiane. There are other tributes to her charms, and to the happiness she gave him; but were there no other tributes, these would suffice to show the injustice of the opinion which the malicious tongues of Weimar have thrown into currency respecting her; opinions, indeed, which received some countenance from her subsequent life, when she had lost youth and beauty, and when the faults of her nature had acquired painful prominence. It is Goethe's misfortune with posterity that he is mostly present to our minds as the calm old man, seldom as the glorious youth. The majority of busts, portraits, and biographic details, are of the late period of his career. In like manner, it is the misfortune of his wife that testimonies about her come mostly from those who only saw her when the grace and charm of youth had given place to a coarse and corpulent age. But the biographer's task is to ascertain by diligent inquiry what is the truth at the various epochs of a career, not limiting himself to one epoch; and as I have taken great pains to represent the young Goethe, so also have I tried to rescue the young Christiane from the falsifications of gossip, and the misrepresentations derived from judging her youth by her old age.

It has already been intimated that Weimar was loud in disapprobation of this new liaison; although it had uttered no word against the liaison with the Frau von Stein. The great offence seems to have been his choosing one beneath him in rank. A chorus of indignation rose. It produced the final rupture between him and the Frau von Stein. Here is a letter wherein he answers her reproaches: "If you could but listen to me, I would gladly tell you, that although your reproaches pain me at the moment, they leave no trace of anger in my heart against you. Moreover, I can set them right. If you have much to bear from me, it is but just that I should also bear with you. It is much better that we should come to a friendly understanding, than strive constantly to come to unanimity, and when that striving fails, separate again. It is impossible to clear myself with you, because, on every reckoning, I must remain your debtor. But if we consider how much we have all to bear from each other, we shall still, dearest, forgive one another. Farewell, and love—me. On the first opportunity you shall hear more about the pretty secrets."

The pretty secrets here alluded to are probably about Christiane. The letter produced a reply, which called from him the

following: "Thanks for thy letter, although it has troubled me in more ways than one. I delayed answering it, because it is difficult in such cases to be sincere, and not give pain. . . . What I left behind in Italy I will not now repeat; you have already repulsed my confidence on that subject in a manner sufficiently unfriendly. When I first returned, you were, unhappily, in a peculiar mood, and I honestly confess the way in which you received me was excessively painful. I saw Herder and the duchess depart for Italy; they urgently offered me a place in their carriage, but I stayed behind for the sake of that friend for whom I had returned; and this, too, was at a moment when I was incessantly and sarcastically told that I might as well have remained in Italy,—that I had no sympathy, and so on. And all this before there was a hint of the liaison which now seems to offend you so much. And what is this liaison? Who is beggared by it? Who makes any claims on the feelings I give the poor creature? Who, on the hours I pass in her society? Ask Fritz, ask the Herders, ask any one who knows me intimately, whether I am less sympathetic, less active, or less friendly than before? Whether I do not rather now, for the first time, rightly belong to them and to society? And it must be by a miracle indeed if I should have forgotten the best, the deepest relation of all, that, namely, to thee. How vividly I have felt my disposition to be the same, whenever it has happened that we have talked on some interesting subject! But I freely confess that the manner in which you have treated me hitherto is not to be endured. When I was inclined to talk, you shut my lips; when I was communicative about Italy, you complained of my indifference; when I was active for my friends, you reproached me with coldness and neglect of you. You criticised every look, blamed every movement, and constantly made me feel ill at ease. How then can openness and confidence continue, while you repulse me with predetermined ill humour? I would add more, did I not fear that in your present mood it might irritate you more than it would tend to reconcile us. Unhappily you have long despised my advice with reference to coffee, and have adopted a regimen eminently injurious to your health. As if it were not already difficult enough to conquer certain moral impressions, you strengthen your hypochondria by physical aids, the evil influence of which you have long acknowledged, and out of love to me had for some time relinquished, to the obvious improvement of your health. May the present journey do you good! I

do not quite relinquish the hope that you will again learn to know me. Farewell. Fritz is happy, and visits me constantly."

Over this letter she wrote *O!!!* It was a terrible letter to receive, and she doubtless was indignant at what she conceived to be its injustice. She had been "misunderstood." People always *are* misunderstood in such cases. They are blameless, but their conduct is misrepresented. They are conscious of having felt precisely the reverse of what is attributed to them; and they wonder that they are not known better.

Shifting our position, and reading the letter less from the Frau von Stein's point of view, than from the point of view of bystanders, we read in it the amplest justification of the writer. We see how intensely unamiable must have been her manner of receiving him. Her subsequent conduct but too well confirms this impression. She showed herself worse than unamiable. The final passage of the letter alluding to her hypochondria being aggravated by coffee and bad diet, reads like an impertinence; but those who know how serious he was in his objections to the use of coffee, and how clearly he perceived the influence of physical well-being on moral health, will not be surprised at it. At any rate, whatever accents of harshness may be heard in this letter, there is no mistaking the pain in it; and a week after, he writes the following:

"It is not easy for me to write a letter with more pain than the one I last wrote to thee, which was probably as unpleasant for thee to read as for me to write. Meanwhile at least the lips have been opened, and I hope that never may we henceforth keep them closed against each other. I have had no greater happiness than my confidence in thee, which formerly was unlimited, and since I have been unable to use it, I have become another man, and must in future still more become so. I do not complain of my present condition, I have managed to make myself at home in it, and hope to keep so, although the climate once more affects me, and will sooner or later make me unfit for much that is good. But when I think of the damp summer and severe winter, and of the combination of outward circumstances which makes existence here difficult, I know not which way to turn.[1] I say this as much in relation to *thee* as to myself, and assure thee that it

[1] This is a paraphrastic abbreviation of the passage, which if given as in the original would need long collateral explanations.

pains me infinitely to give thee pain under such circumstances. I will say nothing in my own excuse. But I would beg thee to help me so that the relation which thou objectest to may not become still more objectionable, but remain as it is. Give me once more thy confidence; see the case from a natural point of view, let me speak to thee quietly and reasonably about it, and I dare to hope that everything between us will once more be pure and friendly. Thou hast seen my mother and made her happy; let my return make me happy also."

He offered friendship in vain; he had wounded the self-love of a vain woman; there is a relentless venom in ignoble minds, when the self-love is wounded, which poisons friendship and destroys all gratitude. It was not enough for the Frau von Stein that he had loved her so many years with a rare devotion; it was not enough that he had been more to her child than its own father was; it was not enough that now the inevitable change had come, he still felt tenderness and affection for her, grateful for what she *had* been to him; the one fact, that he had ceased to love her, expunged the whole past. A nature with any nobleness never forgets that once it loved, and once was happy in that love; the generous heart is grateful in its memories. The heart of the Frau von Stein had no memory but for its wounds. She spoke with petty malice of the "low person" who had usurped her place; rejected Goethe's friendship; affected to pity him; and circulated gossip about his beloved. They were forced to meet; but they met no longer as before. To the last he thought and spoke of her tenderly; and I know on unexceptionable authority that when there was anything appetising brought to table, which he thought would please her, he often said, "Send some of this to the Frau von Stein."

There is a letter of hers extant which shows what was the state of her feelings after a lapse of twelve years. It may find a place here as a conclusive document with which to wind up the strange episode of their history. It is addressed to her son. Three passages are italicised by way of emphasis, to call attention to the spirit animating the writer.

"WEIMAR, *January 12th*, 1801.

"I did not know that our *former friend Goethe*, was still so dear to me, that a severe illness, from which he has been suffering for nine days, would so deeply affect me. It is a

convulsive cough accompanied with erysipelas; he can lie in no bed, and is obliged always to be kept in a standing posture, otherwise he would be choked. His neck, as well as his face, is swollen and full of internal blisters, his left eye stands out like a great nut, and discharges blood and matter; he is often delirious, inflammation of the brain was feared, so he was bled, and had mustard foot-baths, which made his feet swell, and seemed to do him some good; but last night the convulsive cough returned, I fear from his having been shaved yesterday; my letter will tell you either of his being better or of his death—I shall not send it before. The Schillers and I have already shed many tears over him in the last few days; I deeply regret now that *when he wished to visit me on New Year's Day, I, alas! because I lay ill with headache, excused myself*, and now I shall perhaps never see him again.

"14*th*. Goethe is better, but the twenty-first day must be got over; between this and then something else might happen to him, because the inflammation has injured something in his head and his diaphragm. Yesterday he ate with great appetite some soup which I had sent him; his eye, too, is better, but he is very melancholy, and they say he wept for three hours; especially he weeps when he sees August, who has in the meantime taken refuge with me: I am sorry for the poor boy, he was dreadfully distressed, but he is already accustomed to drink away his troubles; he lately in *a club belonging to his mother's class*, drank seventeen glasses of champagne, and I had the greatest difficulty in keeping him from wine when he was with me.

"15*th*. Goethe sent to me to-day, thanked me for my sympathy, and hoped he should soon be better; the doctors consider him out of danger, but his recovery will take a long time yet."

Who could believe that this was written by one passionately loved for ten years, and written of one who was thought to be dying? Even here her hatred to Christiane cannot restrain itself.

CHAPTER IX

THE POET AS A MAN OF SCIENCE

To the immense variety of his studies in Art and Science must now be added a fragmentary acquaintance with the philosophy of Kant. He had neither the patience nor the delight in metaphysical abstractions requisite to enable him to master the Critique of Pure Reason; but he read here and there in it, as he read in Spinoza; and was especially interested in the æsthetical portions of the *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*. This was a means of bringing him nearer to Schiller, who still felt the difference between them to be profound; as we see in what he wrote to Körner: "His philosophy draws too much of its material from the world of the senses, where I only draw from the soul. His mode of presentation is altogether too sensuous for me. But his spirit works and seeks in every direction, striving to create a whole, and that makes him in my eyes a great man."

Remarkable indeed is the variety of his strivings. After completing *Tasso*, we find him writing on the Roman Carnival, and on Imitation of Nature, and studying with strange ardour the mysteries of botany and optics. In poetry it is only necessary to name the *Roman Elegies*, to show what productivity in that direction he was capable of; although, in truth, his poetical activity was then in subordination to his activity in science. He was, socially, in an unpleasant condition; and, as he subsequently confessed, would never have been able to hold out, had it not been for his studies in Art and Nature. In all times these were his refuge and consolation.

On Art, the world listened to him attentively. On Science, the world would not listen; but turned away in silence, sometimes in derision. In both he was only an amateur. He had no executive ability in Painting or Sculpture to give authority to his opinions, yet his word was listened to with respect, often with enthusiasm.[1] But while artists and the public admitted that a man of genius might speak with some authority,

[1] RAUCH, the sculptor, told me that among the influences of his life, he reckons the enthusiasm which Goethe's remarks on Art excited in him. Many others would doubtless say the same.

although an amateur, men of science were not willing that a man of genius should speak on *their* topics, until he had passed College Examinations and received his diploma. The veriest blockhead who had received a diploma, considered himself entitled to sneer at the poet who "dabbled in comparative anatomy." Nevertheless that poet made discoveries and enunciated laws, the importance of which the professional sneerer could not even appreciate, so far did they transcend his knowledge.

Professional men have a right to be suspicious of the amateur, for they know how arduous a training is required by Science. But while it is just that they should be *suspicious*, it is absurd for them to shut their eyes. When the amateur brings forward crudities, which he announces to be discoveries, their scorn may be legitimate enough; but when he happens to bring forward a discovery, and they treat it as crudity, their scorn becomes self-stultification. If their professional training gives them superiority, that superiority should give them greater readiness of apprehension. The truth is, however, that ordinary professional training gives them nothing of the sort. The mass of men, simply because they are a mass of men, receive with difficulty every new idea, unless it lies in the track of their own knowledge; and this opposition, which every new idea must vanquish, becomes tenfold greater when the idea is promulgated from a source not in itself authoritative.

But whence comes this authority? From the respect paid to genius and labour. The man of genius who is known to have devoted much time to the consideration of any subject is justly supposed to be more competent to speak on that subject than one who has paid little attention to it. No amount of genius, no amount of study, can secure a man from his native fallibility; but, after adequate study, there is a presumption in his favour; and it is this presumption which constitutes authority. In the case of a poet who claims to be heard on a question of science, we naturally assume that he has not given the requisite labour; and on such topics genius without labour carries no authority. But if his researches show that the labour *has* been given, we must then cease to regard him as a poet, and admit him to the citizenship of science. No one disputes the immense glory of a Haller, or a Redi, on the ground of their being poets. They were poets and scientific workers; and so was Goethe. This

would perhaps have been more readily acknowledged if he had walked in the well-beaten tracks of scientific thought; but he opened new tracks, and those who might, perhaps, have accepted him as a colleague, were called upon to accept him as a guide. Human nature could not stand this. The presumption against a poet was added to the presumption against novelty; singly each of these would have been an obstacle to a ready acceptance; united they were insuperable.

When Goethe wrote his excellent little treatise on the *Metamorphoses of Plants*,[1] he had to contend against the twofold obstacle of resistance to novelty, and his own reputation. Had an obscure professor published this work, its novelty would have sufficed to render it unacceptable; but the obscurest name in Germany would have had a *prestige* greater than the name of the great poet. All novelty is *prima facie* suspicious; none but the young welcome it; for is not every new discovery a kind of slur on the sagacity of those who overlooked it? And can novelty in science, promulgated by a poet, be worth the trouble of refutation? The professional authorities decided that it could not. The publisher of Goethe's works, having consulted a botanist, declined to undertake the printing of the *Metamorphoses of Plants*. The work was only printed at last because an enterprising bookseller hoped thereby to gain the publication of the other works. When it appeared, the public saw in it a pretty piece of fancy, nothing more. Botanists shrugged their shoulders, and regretted the author had not reserved his imagination for his poems. No one believed in the theory, not even his attached friends. He had to wait many years before seeing it generally accepted, and it was then only accepted because great botanists had made it acceptable. A considerable authority on this matter has told us how long the theory was neglected, and how "depuis dix ans (written in 1838) il n'a peut-être pas été publié un seul livre d'organographie, ou de botanique descriptive, qui ne porte l'empreinte des idées de cet écrivain illustre."[2] It was the fact of the theory being announced by the author of *Werther* which mainly retarded its acceptance; but the fact also that the theory was leagues in advance of the state of science in that day, must not be overlooked. For it is curious that the leading idea had been briefly yet explicitly

[1] He has also a poem on this subject, but it is scarcely more poetical.

[2] Auguste St. Hilaire: *Comptes Rendus des Séances de l'Acad.* vii. 437. See also his work *Morphologie Végétale*, vol. i. p. 15.

announced as early as 1759, by Caspar Friedrich Wolff, in his now deservedly celebrated *Theoria Generationis*, and again, in 1764, in his *Theorie von der Generation*.[1] I shall have to recur to Wolff; at present it need only be noted that even *his* professional authority and remarkable power could not secure the slightest attention from botanists for the morphological theory—a proof that the age was not ripe for its acceptance.

A few of the eminent botanists began, after the lapse of some years, to recognise the discovery. Thus Kieser declared it to be "certainly the vastest conception which vegetable physiology had for a long time known." Voigt expressed his irritation at the blindness of the botanists in refusing to accept it. Nees von Esenbeck, one of the greatest names in the science, wrote in 1818, "Theophrastus is the creator of modern botany. Goethe is its tender father, to whom it will raise looks full of love and gratitude, as soon as it grows out of its infancy, and acquires the sentiment which it owes to him who has raised it to so high a position." And Sprengel, in his History of Botany, frequently mentions the theory. In one place he says, "The *Metamorphoses* had a meaning so profound, joined to such great simplicity, and was so fertile in consequences, that we must not be surprised if it stood in need of multiplied commentaries, and if many botanists failed to see its importance."

It is now, and has been for some years, the custom to insert a chapter on Metamorphosis in every work which pretends to a high scientific character.

"For a half century," says Goethe in the History of the Botanical Studies, "I have been known as a poet in my own country and abroad. No one thinks of refusing me that talent. But it is not generally known, it has not been taken into consideration, that I have also occupied myself seriously through many years with the physical and physiological phenomena of Nature, observing them with the perseverance which passion alone can give. Thus when my essay on the development of plants, published nearly forty years before, fixed the attention of botanists in Switzerland and France, there seemed no expression for the astonishment at the fact of a poet thus going out of his route to make a discovery so

[1] I have only been able to procure this latter work, which is a more popular and excursive exposition of the principles maintained in the Inaugural Dissertation of 1759.

important. It is to combat this false notion that I have written the history of my studies, to show that a great part of my life has been devoted to Natural History, for which I had a passion. It is by no sudden and unexpected inspiration of genius, but through long prosecuted studies, I arrived at my results. I might doubtless have accepted the honour which men wished to pay my sagacity, and in secret rejoiced in it. But as it is equally pernicious in science to keep exclusively to facts, or exclusively to abstract theories, I have deemed it my duty to write, for serious men, the detailed history of my studies."

He was not *much* hurt at the reception of his work. He knew how unwilling men are to accord praise to any one who aims at success in different spheres, and found it perfectly natural they should be so unwilling; adding, however, that "an energetic nature feels itself brought into the world for *its own development, and not for the approbation of the public.*"

We shall have occasion to consider his theory of Metamorphosis hereafter; at present let us follow the biographical path, and note his confession that some of the happiest moments of his life were those devoted to his botanical studies. "They have acquired an inestimable value in my eyes," he says, "because to them I owe the most beautiful of all the relations which my lucky star shone on. To them I owe the friendship of Schiller."

Side by side with botanical and anatomical studies must be placed his optical studies. A more illustrative contrast can scarcely be found than is afforded by the history of his efforts in these two directions. They throw light upon scientific Method, and they throw light on his scientific qualities and defects. If we have hitherto followed him with sympathy and admiration, we must now be prepared to follow him with that feeling of pain which rises at the sight of a great intellect struggling in a false direction. His botanical and anatomical studies were of that high character which makes one angry at their cold reception; his optical studies were of a kind to puzzle and to irritate the professional public.

He has written the history of these studies also. From youth upwards he had been prone to theorise on painting, led thereto, as he profoundly remarks, by the very absence of a talent for painting. It was not necessary for him to theorise on poetry; he had within him the creative power. It *was* necessary for him to theorise on painting, because he wanted

"by reason and insight to fill up the deficiences of nature." In Italy these theories found abundant stimulus. With his painter friends he discussed colour and colouring, trying by various paradoxes to strike out a truth. The friends were all deplorably vague in their notions of colour. The critical treatises were equally vague. Nowhere could he find firm ground. He began to think of the matter from the opposite side—instead of trying to solve the artists' problem, he strove to solve the scientific problem. He asked himself, What is colour? Men of science referred him to Newton; but Newton gave him little help. Professor Büttner lent him some prisms and optical instruments, to try the prescribed experiments. He kept the prisms a long while, but made no use of them. Büttner wrote to him for his instruments; Goethe neither sent them back, nor set to work with them. He delayed from day to day, occupied with other things. At last Büttner became uneasy, and sent for the prisms, saying they should be lent again at a future period, but that at any rate he must have them returned. Forced thus to part with them, yet unwilling to send them back without making one effort, he told the messenger to wait, and taking up a prism, looked through it at the white wall of his room, expecting to see the whole wall coloured in various tints, according to the Newtonian statement. To his astonishment, he saw nothing of the kind. He saw that the wall remained as white as before, and that only there, where an opaque interfered, could a more or less decisive colour be observed; that the window frames were most coloured, while the light grey heaven without showed no trace of colour. "It needed very little meditation to discover that to produce colour a *limit* was necessary, and instinctively I exclaimed, 'Newton's theory is false!'" There could be no thought of sending back the prisms at such a juncture; so he wrote to Büttner begging for a longer loan, and set to work in real earnest.

This was an unhappy commencement. He began with a false conception of Newton's theory, and thought he was overthrowing Newton when, in fact, he was combating his own error. The Newtonian theory does *not* say that a white surface seen through a prism appears coloured, but that it appears white, its edges only coloured. The fancied discovery of Newton's error stung him like a gadfly. He multiplied experiments, turned the subject incessantly over in his mind, and instead of going the simple way to work, and learning the

a, b, c, of the science, tried the very longest of all short cuts, namely, experiment on insufficient knowledge. He made a white disc on a black ground, and this, seen through the prism, gave him the spectrum, as in the Newtonian theory; but he found that a black disc on a white ground also produced the same effect. "'If Light,' said I to myself, 'resolves itself into various colours in the first case; then must Darkness also resolve itself into various colours in this second case.'" And thus he came to the conclusion that Colour is not contained in Light, but is the product of an intermingling of Light and Darkness.

"Having no experience in such matters, and not knowing the direction I ought to take, I addressed myself to a Physicist of repute, begging him to verify the results I had arrived at. I had already told him my doubts of the Newtonian hypothesis, and hoped to see him at once share my conviction. But how great was my surprise when he assured me that the phenomenon I spoke of was already known, and perfectly explained by the Newtonian theory. In vain I protested and combated his arguments, he held stolidly to the *credo*, and told me to repeat my experiments in a *camera obscura*."

Instead of quieting him, this rebuff only turned him away from all Physicists, that is, from all men who had special knowledge on the subject, and made him pursue in silence his own path. Friends were amused and interested by his experiments; their ignorance made them ready adepts. The Duchess Luise showed especial interest; and to her he afterwards dedicated his *Farbenlehre*. The duke also shared the enthusiasm. The Duke of Gotha placed at his disposal a magnificent laboratory. Prince August sent him splendid prisms from England. Princes and poetasters believed he was going to dethrone Newton; men of science only laughed at his pretension, and would not pay his theory the honour of a refutation. One fact he records as very noticeable, namely, that he could count Anatomists, Chemists, Littérateurs, and Philosophers, such as Loder, Sömmering, Göttling, Wolff, Forster, Schelling (and, subsequently, Hegel), among his adherents; but not one Physicist—*hingegen keinen Physiker!* Nor does he, in recording this fact, see that it is destructive of his pretensions.

What claim had Anatomists, Littérateurs, and Philosophers to be heard in such a controversy? Who would listen to a mathematician appealing to the testimony of zoologists against

the whole body of mathematicians past and present? There is this much, however, to be said for Goethe: he had already experienced neglect from professional authorities when he discovered the intermaxillary bone, and when, in the *Metamorphoses of Plants*, he laid before them a real discovery, the truth of which he profoundly felt. He was prepared therefore for a similar disregard of his claims when he not only produced a new theory, but attacked the highest scientific authority. He considered that Newtonians looked on him as a natural enemy. He thought them steadfastly bent on maintaining established prejudice. He thought they were a guild united against all innovation by common interest and common ignorance. Their opposition never made him pause; their arguments never made him swerve. He thought them profoundly in error when they imagined optics to be a part of mathematics; and as he did not understand mathematics, he could not appreciate their arguments.

His *Beiträge zur Optik*, which appeared in 1791, was a sort of feeler thrown out to the great public. The public was utterly unsympathising. The ignorant had no interest in such matters, and certainly would not address themselves to a poet for instruction; the physicists saw that he was wrong. "Everywhere," he says, "I found incredulity as to my competence in such a matter; everywhere a sort of repulsion at my efforts; and the more learned and well-informed the men were, the more decided was their opposition."

For years and years he continued his researches with a patience worthy of admiration. Opposition moved him not: it rather helped to increase his obstinacy. It extorted from him expressions of irritability and polemical bad taste, which astound us in one elsewhere so calm and tolerant. Perhaps, as Kingsley once suggested to me, he had a vague feeling that his conclusions were not sound, and felt the jealousy incident to imperfect conviction. Where his conviction was perfect, he was calm. The neglect of his Metamorphoses—the denial of his discovery of the intermaxillary bone—the indifference with which his essays on Comparative Anatomy were treated—all this he bore with philosophic serenity. But on the *Farbenlehre* he was always sensitive, and in old age ludicrously so. Eckermann records a curious conversation, wherein he brings forward a fact he has observed, which contradicts the theory of colours; and Goethe not only grows angry, but refuses to admit the fact. In this matter of Colour he showed himself morally

weak, as well as intellectually weak. "As for what I have done as a poet," said the old man once, "I take no pride in it whatever. Excellent poets have lived at the same time with myself; more excellent poets have lived before me, and will come after me. But that in my century I am the only person who knows the truth in the difficult science of colours —of that, I say, I am not a little proud."

The reader will doubtless be curious to know something of this Theory of Colours; and although it must necessarily appear greatly to its disadvantage in the brief abstract for which alone I can find space, an abstract without the numerous illustrations and experiments which give the theory a plausible aspect, yet the kernel of the matter will appear.

The Newtonian theory is that white light is composed of the seven prismatic colours, *i.e.* rays having different degrees of refrangibility. Goethe says it is not composed at all, but is the simplest and most homogeneous thing we know.[1] It is absurd to call it composed of *colours*, for every light which has taken a colour is darker than colourless light. Brightness cannot therefore be a compound of darkness. There are but two pure colours, *blue* and *yellow*, both of which have a tendency to become *red*, through *violet* and *orange;* there are also two mixtures, *green* and *purple*. Every other colour is a degree of one of these, or is impure. Colours originate in the modification of Light by outward circumstances. They are not developed *out* of Light, but *by* it. For the phenomenon of Colour, there is demanded Light and Darkness. Nearest the Light appears a colour we name *yellow;* nearest the Darkness, a colour we name *blue*. Mix these two and you have *green*.

Starting from the fundamental error of the simplicity of Light, Goethe undertakes to explain all the phenomena of Colour, by means of what he calls the *Opaques*—the media. He maintains that on the one hand there is Light, and on the other Darkness; if a semi-transparent medium be brought between the two, from these contrasts and this medium, Colours are developed, contrasted in like manner, but soon through a reciprocal relation tending to a point of reunion.

[1] "Let us thank the gods," exclaims Schelling, "that they have emancipated us from the Newtonian spectrum (*spectrum* truly!) of composed light. We owe this to the genius to whom our debt is already so large."—*Zeitschrift, für specul. Philos.* ii. p. 60. To the same effect Hegel in his *Encyclopädie der philos. Wissenschaften.*

The highest degree of Light seen through a medium very slightly thickened appears *yellow*. If the density of the medium be increased, or if its volume become greater, the light will gradually assume a *yellow-red*, which deepens at last to a *ruby*.

The highest degree of Darkness seen through a semi-transparent medium, which is itself illuminated by a light striking on it, gives a *blue* colour; which becomes paler as the density of the medium is increased; but on the contrary becomes darker and deeper as the medium becomes more transparent. In the least degree of dimness short of absolute transparency, the deep *blue* becomes the most beautiful *violet*.

There are many interesting facts adduced in illustration. Thus, smoke appears yellow or red before a light ground, blue before a dark ground; the blue colour, at the under part of a candle-flame, is also a case of blue seen opposite a dark ground. Light transmitted through the air is yellow, orange or red, according to the density of the air; Darkness transmitted through the air is blue, as is the case of the sky, or distant mountains.

He tells a curious anecdote in illustration of this blueness of darkness. A painter had an old portrait of a theologian to clean; the wet sponge passing over the black velvet dress, suddenly changed it to a *light blue plush*. Puzzled at this truly remarkable phenomenon, and not understanding how light blue could be the ground of deep black, he was in great grief at the thought of having thus ruined the picture. The next morning, to his joy, he found the black velvet had resumed its pristine splendour. To satisfy his curiosity, he could not refrain from wetting a corner once more, and again he saw the *blue* appear. Goethe was informed of the phenomenon, which was once more produced, in his presence. "I explained it," he says, "by my doctrine of the semi-opaque medium. The original painter, in order to give additional depth to his black, may have passed some particular varnish over it; on being washed, this varnish imbibed some moisture, and hence became semi-opaque, in consequence of which the *black* beneath immediately appeared *blue*." The explanation is very ingenious; nor does the Edinburgh reviewer's answer seem to meet the question, when he says:[1] "As there is no gum or resin, or varnish of any kind that possesses the property of yielding blue or any other colour by being wetted, we have

[1] *Edin. Rev.* Oct. 1840, p. 117.

no doubt the varnish had been worn off, or else the picture never had been varnished." It is not a question of wetted varnish yielding blue, but of wetted varnish furnishing the medium through which black appears blue. His own explanation, however, is probably correct. He assumes that there was no varnish, and that the particles of bodies which produce blackness, on the usual theory, are smaller than those which produce blue or any other colour; and if we increase the size of the particles which produce blackness by the smallest quantity, they yield the *blue* colour described by Goethe. The action of the water swelled them a little, and thus gave them the size which fitted them to reflect *blue* rays.

The theory loses much of its seductive plausibility when thus reduced to its simplest expression. Let us, however, do the same for the Newtonian theory, and then estimate their comparative value. Newton assumes that white Light is a compound; and he proves this assumption by decomposing a beam of light into its elements. These elements are rays, having different degrees of refrangibility, separable from each other by different media. Each ray produces its individual colour. Not only will the beam of white Light in passing through a prism be separated into its constituent rays, or colours, but these rays may be again collected by a large lens, and, in being thus brought together, again reappear as white Light. There are few theories in science which present a more satisfactory union of logic and experiment.

It cannot be denied that Goethe's theory is also extremely plausible; and he has supported it with so many accurate experiments and admirable observations, that to this day it has not only found ardent advocates, even among men of science, though these are few, but has very sorely perplexed many Newtonians, who, relying on the mathematical accuracy of their own theory, have contemptuously dismissed Goethe's speculation instead of victoriously refuting it. His obstinacy was excusable, since believing himself to be in the right he challenged refutation, and no one picked up his gauntlet. They declined in contempt; he interpreted it as bigotry. He tried to get the French Academy to make a report on his work. This honour was withheld: Cuvier disdainfully declaring that such a work was not one to occupy an Academy; Delambre answering all solicitations with this phrase: "Des observations, des expériences, et surtout ne commençons pas par attaquer Newton." As if the *Farbenlehre* were not founded

on observations and experiments! as if the glory of Newton were to stand inviolate before all things! Goethe might well resent such treatment. If he was wrong in his theory, if his experiments were incomplete, why were these errors not pointed out? To contradict Newton might offer a presumption against the theory; but Newtonians were called upon not to explain the contradiction between Goethe and Newton, which was vociferously announced, but the contradiction between Goethe and Truth, which they contemptuously asserted.

As this is a branch of science in which I can pretend to no competence, and as I have met with no decisive refutation of Goethe which can be quoted here, I should consider it sufficient to say that the fact of the vast majority of physicists in Europe refusing to pay any attention to the *Farbenlehre*, although not in itself more than a presumption against that theory, is nevertheless a presumption so very strong as only to be set aside by stringently coercive evidence. Looking at the *Farbenlehre* from the impartial, if imperfect, point of view of an outsider, I should say that not only has Goethe manifestly misunderstood Newton, but has presented a theory which is based on a radical mistake. The mistake is that of treating Darkness as a positive quality, rather than as a simple negation of Light. By means of this Darkness, as a *co-operating agent* with Light, colours are said to arise. Stripped of all the ambiguities of language, the theory affirms that Light is itself perfectly colourless until mingled with various degrees of Nothing—or, in other words, until it suffers various diminutions; and with each diminution the colours become of a deeper hue. This may seem too preposterous for belief; yet what is Darkness but the negation of Light? It is true that Goethe has in one place named Darkness, in the abstract, a pure negation; but it is not less true that in the construction of his theory, Darkness plays the part of a positive; and necessarily so; for if we once conceive it as a simple negative, the theory falls to the ground. Light being assumed as colourless, no diminution of the colourless can give colours. Unless Darkness be positive,—co-operative,—we are left to seek the elements of colour *in* Light; and this is precisely where the Newtonian theory finds it.

It was an old idea that the different confines of shadow variously modify light, producing various colours. This Newton has elaborately refuted (*Optics*, part II. book i.), proving by simple experiments that all colours show themselves indiffer-

ently in the confines of shadow; and that when rays which differ in refrangibility are separated from one another, and any one is considered apart, "the colour of the light which it composes cannot be changed by any refraction or reflection whatever, as it ought to be were colours nothing else than modifications of light caused by refractions, reflections, and shadows."

It should be emphatically stated that the highest physical authorities have borne testimony to the accuracy of Goethe's facts; and as these facts are exceedingly numerous, and often highly important, the value of his optical studies must be estimated as considerable. He was a man of genius, and he laboured with the passionate patience of genius. But in awarding our admiration to the man, we may withhold assent from his theory. That which has exasperated men of science, and caused them to speak slightingly of his labours, is the bitterly polemical tone of contempt with which he announced a discovery which they could not recognise as true. He was aggressive and weak. He vociferated that Newton was in error; and a casual glance at his supposed detection of the error discovered a fundamental misconception. If we stand aloof from these heats of personal conflict, and regard the subject with a calmer eye, we shall see that the question simply reduces itself to this: which of the two theories offers the fullest and clearest explanation of the facts?

Light and Colours are, like Sound and Tones, to be viewed as objective phenomena, related to certain external conditions; or as subjective phenomena, related to certain sensations. Before asking What is Light or Sound? we must consider whether we seek the objective fact, or the subjective sensation. Every one admits that, apart from a sensitive organism, the objective phenomena of Light and Sound exist, although *not* as the Light and Sound known in our sensations. But as we can only know them through our sensations, it seems eminently philosophical to begin our study with these. And this Goethe has done. He first unfolds the laws of physiological colours, *i.e.*, the modifications of the retina; and his immense services in this direction have been cordially recognised by Physiologists. Since, however, we can never learn thus what are the external *conditions* of the phenomena, we have to seek in objective facts such an explanation as will best guide us. The assumption of rays having different degrees of refrangibility may one day turn out to be erroneous; but it

is an assumption which colligates the facts better than any other hitherto propounded, and therefore it is accepted. By regarding both Sound and Light as produced from waves of an elastic medium, acoustic and optic phenomena are reducible to *calculation*. It is true they thus incur Goethe's reproach of ceasing to be concrete objects to the mind, and becoming mathematical symbols; but this is the very ambition of scientific research: a point to which I shall presently return. Let us compare the objective and subjective facts.

If an elastic rod be made to vibrate, the ear perceives nothing until the vibrations reach eight in a second, at which point the lowest tone becomes audible; if the rapidity of the vibrations be now constantly accelerated, tones higher and higher in the scale become audible, till the vibrations reach 24,000 in a second, at which point the ear again fails to detect any sound. In like manner, it is calculated that when vibrations reach 483 billions in a second, Light, or rather the red ray, begins to manifest itself to the retina; with increasing rapidity of vibration, the colours pass into orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet, till 727 billions are reached, at which point no *light* is perceptible. Here chemical action begins; and the rays are called chemical rays; as at the other end of the spectrum they are called heat rays. These are objective *conditions* which have been rigorously ascertained: and most important results have been arrived at through them.

The subjective facts according to Goethe lead to the belief that Tones are the product of Sound and Silence, as Colours are of Light and Darkness. Sound is made various (in tones) by various intermixtures with Silence. Descending from the highest audible note there is a gradual retardation of the vibrations, caused by the gradual encroachments of Silence, until at length Silence predominates and no Sound is heard. Suppose this hypothesis granted, we shall still have to ask what are the *conditions* of this Silence? If these are retardations of vibration, we may dispense with the hypothetical Silence. By similar reasoning we dispense with the hypothetical Darkness.

The assumption of different rays of unequal refrangibility is not only supported by the prismatic decomposition and recomposition of Light, but also finds confirmation in the law of Refraction discovered by Snellius. And the consequence drawn from it, namely, that the relation of the sine of incidence, though constant for each colour, *varies* in the different colours of the spectrum, brings the whole question within the

domain of mathematical calculation. The phenomena cease to be *qualitative* only, and become *quantitative:* they are measurable, and are measured. On Goethe's theory, granting its truth, the phenomena are not measurable; and whoever glances into a modern work on Optics will see that the precision and extent to which calculation has been carried, are in themselves sufficient grounds for assigning the preference to the theory which admits such calculation. For as Copernicus profoundly says, "It is by no means necessary that hypotheses should be true, nor even seem true; it is enough if they *reconcile calculation with observations.*"[1]

Goethe's want of acquaintance with Mathematics and with the Methods of Physical Science prevented his understanding the defect in his own theory, and the manifest superiority of the theory which he attacked. He opposed every mathematical treatment of the subject as mischievous; and Hegel, who has shown himself still more opposed to the Methods of Science, applauds him on this very point.

"I raised the whole school of Mathematicians against me," says Goethe, "and people were greatly amazed that one who had no insight into Mathematics could venture to contradict Newton. *For that Physics could exist independently of Mathematics no one seemed to have the slightest suspicion.*" Nor has that suspicion gained yet any ground with men in the least conversant with Physics, however necessary it may sometimes have been to protest against too exclusive an employment of Mathematics. But the misconception which lies at the bottom of Goethe's polemics was a very natural one to a poet never trained in Mathematical or Experimental science, and unaware of the peculiar position occupied by Mathematics as the great Instrument of research. In his essay, *Ueber Mathematik und deren Misbrauch*,[2] he compares the philosopher employing such an instrument to a man who should invent a machine for drawing a cork, an operation which two arms and hands very easily effect.

To make his error intelligible, let us suppose a man of great intellectual acuteness and energy suddenly to light upon the idea that our chemical theories were vitiated by a false basis—that the atomic theory was not only an hypothesis, but an hypothesis which misrepresented the order of Nature; there being, in truth, none of the quantitative relations as are

[1] COPERNICUS: *De Revolutionibus Orbium Cœlestium*, 1566.
[2] *Werke*, xl. p. 468.

presupposed in that theory. Imagine the reformer setting to work, multiplying experiments, inventing explanations, disregarding all that the accumulated experience of ages had stored up on this very matter, and above all despising, as useless or worse, the very Instrument which rescues Chemistry from rough guess-work, and elevates it into the possibility of a science—the Instrument known as the Balance. It is probable that our reformer would make many curious observations, some of them quite new. It is probable that he would in many directions stimulate research. But it is certain that he would be hopelessly wrong in his theories, for he would necessarily be imperfect in his data. Without the delicate control of the Balance, chemical experiment can never become *quantitative;* and without quantitative knowledge there can be no chemical science strictly so called, but only *qualitative, i.e.* approximative knowledge. No amount of observation will render observation precise unless it can be measured. No force of intellect will supply the place of an Instrument. You may watch falling bodies for an eternity, but without Mathematics mere watching will yield no law of gravitation. You may mix acids and alkalis together with prodigality, but no amount of experiment will yield the secret of their composition, if you have flung away the Balance.

Goethe flung away the Balance. Hegel boldly says this is Goethe's merit—*das Prisma heruntergebracht zu haben.* He praises the "pure sense of Nature," which in the poet rebelled against Newton's "barbarism of Reflection." To the same effect Schelling, who does not hesitate to choose it as the very ground for proclaiming Goethe's superiority over the Newtonians, that "instead of the artificially confused and disfiguring experiments of the Newtonians, he places the purest, simplest verdicts of Nature herself before us;" he adds, "it is not surprising that the blind and slavish followers of Newton should oppose researches which prove that precisely the very section of Physics, in which up to this time they have imagined the most positive, nay, almost geometric evidence, to be on their side, is based on a fundamental error."[1]

This point of Method, if properly examined, will help to elucidate the whole question of Goethe's aptitude for dealing with physical science. The native direction of his mind is visible in his optical studies as decisively as in his poetry;

[1] SCHELLING: *Zeitschrift für spekulative Philos.* ii. p. 60.

that direction was towards the *concrete* phenomenon, not towards abstractions. He desired to explain the phenomena of colour, and in Mathematics these phenomena disappear; that is to say, the very *thing* to be studied is hurried out of sight and masked by abstractions. This was utterly repugnant to his mode of conceiving Nature. The marvellous phenomena of polarised light in the hands of Mathematicians excited his boundless scorn. "One knows not," he says, "whether a body or a mere ruin lies buried under those formulas."[1] The name of Biot threw him into a rage; and he was continually laughing at the Newtonians about their Prisms and Spectra, as if Newtonians were pedants who preferred their dusky rooms to the free breath of heaven. He always spoke of observations made in his garden, or with a simple prism in the sunlight, as if the natural and simple Method were much more certain than the artificial Method of Science. In this he betrayed his misapprehension of Method. He thought that Nature revealed herself to the patient observer—

> Und was sie deinem Geist nicht offenbaren mag,
> Das zwingst du ihr nicht ab mit Hebeln und mit Schrauben.

"And what she does not reveal to the Mind will not be extorted from her by Levers and Screws." Hence his failure; hence also his success; for we must not forget that if as a contribution to Optics his *Farbenlehre* be questionable, as a contribution to the knowledge of colour demanded by Artists it is very valuable. Painters have repeatedly acknowledged the advantage they have derived from it; and I remember hearing Riedel, at Rome, express the most unbounded enthusiasm for it; averring that, as a colourist, he had learned more from the *Farbenlehre*, than from all the other teachers and books he had ever known. To artists and physiologists —*i.e.* to those who are mainly concerned with the phenomena of colour as perceptions, and who demand qualitative rather than quantitative knowledge—his labours have a high value; and even physicists must admit that, however erroneous the theory and imperfect the method he has adopted, still the immense accumulation and systematisation of facts, and the ingenuity with which he explains them, deserve serious respect. As Bacon felicitously says, a tortoise on the right path will beat a racer on the wrong path; and if it be true that Goethe

[1] *Werke*, xl. 473.

was on the wrong path, it is not less true that he shows the thews and sinews of a racer.

It is with other feelings that we contemplate him labouring in the organic sciences. There the native tendencies of his mind and the acquired tendencies of education better fitted him for success. Biology has peculiar fascinations for the poetical mind, and has seduced several poets to become physiologists. Mathematics are not required. Concrete observations furnish the materials for a keen and comprehensive comparison.

Let it be distinctly understood, and that not on the testimony of the admiring biographer, but on some of the highest scientific testimonies in Europe,[1] that in the organic sciences Goethe holds an eminent place—eminent not because of his rank as a poet, but in spite of it. Let it be understood that in these sciences he is not to be treated as a poet, a facile amateur, but as a *thinker* who, having mastered sufficient knowledge to render his path secure, gave an impulse to the minds of contemporaries and successors, which is not even yet arrested.

Goethe was a thinker in science, a manipulator of scientific ideas. He was not one of those laborious and meritorious workers who with microscope and scalpel painfully collect the materials from which Science emerges. He worked, too, in his way, and everywhere sought in the order of Nature for verification of the ideas which he had conceived *a priori*. Do not however mistake him for a metaphysician. He was a positive thinker on the *a priori* Method; a Method vicious only when the seeker rests contented with his own assumptions, or seeks only a *partial* hasty confrontation with facts—what Bacon calls *notiones temere a rebus abstractas;* a Method eminently philosophic when it merely *goes before* the facts, anticipating what will be the tardy conclusions of experience. The *a priori* Method is a bright and brilliant instrument. It will cut the fingers when clumsily handled. It will cut deep into the truth if rightly used; as it was by Kepler and Goethe,

[1] In the first edition of this work several passages were quoted in support of the assertion in the text; but one effect of this chapter has been to render such evidence superfluous, Goethe's position in science becoming daily more widely recognised. The following references are therefore all that need now be given:—AUGUSTE ST. HILAIRE: *Morphologie Végétale*, i. p. 15. OSCAR SCHMIDT: *Goethe's Verhältniss zu den organischen Wissenschaften*, p. 10. JOHANNES MUELLER: *Ueber phantastische Gesichtserscheinungen*, p. 104. CUVIER: *Histoire des Sciences Naturelles*, iv. p. 316. ISIDORE, GEOFFROY ST. HILAIRE: *Essais de Zoologie générale*, p. 139. OWEN: *Archetype and Homologies of the Skeleton*, p. 3. HELMHOLTZ: *Allgemeine Monatsschrift*, May 1853. VIRCHOW: *Goethe als Naturforscher.*

who looked upon nature from the heights, but having seen or fancied they saw something in the plains, at once descended to verify the truth of their observation.

We will glance at his achievements in this field, The intermaxillary bone[1] was long a bone of contention among anatomists. Vesalius—one of the grandest and boldest of the early pioneers who wrote against Galen, as the philosophers wrote against Aristotle—declared, and with justice, that Galen's anatomy was not founded on the dissection of the *human* body, but on that of animals. A proof, said he, is that "Galen indicates a separate bone connected with the maxillary by sutures; a bone which, as every anatomist can satisfy himself, exists only in animals." The Galenists were in arms. They could bring no fact in evidence, but *that* was of very little consequence; if facts were deficient, was not hypothesis always ready? Sylvius, for example, boldly said that man *had formerly* an intermaxillary bone. If he has it no longer, he *ought* to have it. It is luxury, it is sensuality which has gradually deprived man of this bone.[2] What has not luxury been made to answer for! The dispute was carried down through centuries, no one attempting to demonstrate anatomically the existence of the bone. Camper actually raised this presumed absence of the bone into the one distinguishing mark separating man from the ape; which is doubly unfortunate, for in the first place the bone is not absent in man, and secondly, in as far as it can be considered absent in man it is equally absent in the chimpanzee, the highest of the apes.[3] Thus was anatomy a treacherous ally in this question, although Camper knew not how treacherous.

This slight historical sketch will serve to show that the discovery, if unimportant, was at least far from easy; indeed so little did it lie in the track of general knowledge, that it was at first received with contemptuous disbelief, even by men so eminent as Blumenbach,[4] and it was forty years gaining general

[1] It is the centre bone of the upper jaw—that which contains the incisor teeth.

[2] This same Sylvius it was who replied to Vesalius that Galen was not wrong when he described man as having seven bones in his sternum (there are only three): "for," said he, "in ancient times the robust chests of heroes might very well have had more bones than our degenerate day can boast." It is impossible to decide upon what might have been; but the mummies are ancient enough, and they have no more bones than we.

[3] Blumenbach had already noted that in some young apes and baboons no trace was discoverable of the bone.

[4] See his *Comparative Anatomy*, translated by Lawrence; and the translator's note, p. 60.

acceptance, although Loder, Spix, and Sömmering at once recognised it. Camper, to whom Goethe sent the manuscript, found that it was *très élégant, admirablement bien écrit, c'est à dire d'une main admirable*, but thought a better Latin style desirable. Goethe began to despise the pedantry of professional men who would deny the testimony of their five senses in favour of an old doctrine; and he admirably says, "the phrases men are accustomed to repeat incessantly end by becoming convictions, *and ossify the organs of intelligence.*"[1]

The most remarkable point in this discovery is less the discovery than the Method which led to it. The intermaxillary bone in animals contains the incisor teeth. Man has incisor teeth; and Goethe, fully impressed with the conviction that there was Unity in Nature, boldly said, if man has the teeth in common with animals, he must have the bone in common with animals. Anatomists, lost in details, and wanting that fundamental conception which now underlies all philosophical anatomy, saw no abstract necessity for such identity of composition; the more so, because *evidence* seemed wholly against it. But Goethe was not only guided by the true philosophic conception, he was also instinctively led to the true Method of demonstration, namely, Comparison of the various modifications which this bone underwent in the animal series. This Method has now become *the* Method; and we require to throw ourselves into the historical position to appreciate its novelty, at the time he employed it. He found on comparison that the bone varied with the nutrition of the animal, and the size of the teeth. He found, moreover, that in some animals the bone was not separated from the jaw; and that in children the sutures were traceable. He admitted that seen from the front no trace of the sutures was visible, but on the interior there were unmistakable traces. Examination of the fœtal skull has since set the point beyond dispute. I have

[1] Since the first edition of this work was published, I have come upon a piquant illustration of the not very honourable tendency in men to plume themselves on the knowledge of a discovery which they had formerly rejected. VICQ D'AZYR: *Discours sur l'Anatomie* (*Œuvres*, iv. 159), mentioning his discovery of the intermaxillary, adds, "J'ai appris de M. Camper, dans son dernier voyage à Paris, *que cet os lui est connu depuis très long temps.*" Now this same Camper, on receiving the anonymous dissertation in which Goethe propounded the discovery, said, "Je dois ré-examiner tout cela"; but on learning that Goethe was the author, he wrote to Merck that he had "convinced himself that the bone did not exist" (see VIRCHOW: *Goethe als Naturforscher*, p. 79); yet no sooner does a great anatomist tell him that the bone exists, than he complacently declares "I have known it a long while."

seen one where the bone was distinctly separated; and I possess a skull, the ossification of which is far advanced at the parietal sutures, yet internally faint traces of the intermaxillary are visible.[1]

Goethe made his discovery in 1784, and communicated it to several anatomists. Loder mentions it in his *Compendium* in 1787.

Respecting Goethe's claim to the honour of this discovery, I have recently discovered a fact which is of great or small significance according to the views we hold respecting such claims; namely, whether the clear enunciation of an idea, though never carried out in detail, suffices to give priority; or whether, in the words of Owen,[2] "He becomes the true discoverer who establishes the truth: and the sign of the proof is the general acceptance. Whoever, therefore, resumes the investigation of a neglected or repudiated doctrine, elicits its true demonstration, and discovers and explains the nature of the errors which have led to its tacit or declared rejection, may calmly and confidently await the acknowledgments of his rights in its discovery." If we hold the former view, we must assign the discovery of the intermaxillary in man to Vicq d'Azyr; if we hold the latter, to Goethe. In the *Traité d'Anatomie et de Physiologie*, which the brilliant anatomist published in 1786, we not only find him insisting on the then novel idea of an uniform plan in the structure of organic beings, according to which Nature "semble opérer toujours d'après un modèle primitif et général dont elle ne s'écarte qu'à regret et dont on rencontre partout des traces;"[3] but we find this explicit illustration given among others: "Peut on s'y refuser enfin (*i.e.* to admit the traces of a general plan) en comparant les os maxillaires antérieurs que j'appelle *incisifs* dans les quadrupèdes, avec cette pièce osseuse qui soutient les dents incisives supérieurs dans l'homme, où elle est séparée de l'os maxillaire par une petite fêlure très remarquable dans les fœtus, à peine visible dans les adultes, et dont personne n'avoit connu l'usage." In a subsequent passage of the second *Discours*

[1] These might be considered abnormal cases. But M. J. Weber has devised a method of treating the skull with dilute nitric acid, which makes the separation of the bones perfect. *Froriep's Notizen*, 1828, bd. 19, 282. VIRCHOW: *l.c.* p. 80.

[2] OWEN: *Homologies of the Skeleton*, p. 76. Comp. also MALPIGHI: *Opera Posthuma*, 1697, p. 5.

[3] VICQ D'AZYR: *Œuvres*, iv. p. 26. The work is there called *Discours sur l'Anatomie.*

he say: "Toutes ces dents sont soutenues dans la mâchoire antérieure par un os que j'ai décrit sous le nom d'incisif ou labial, que quelques-uns appellent intermaxillaire, que l'on à découvert depuis peu dans les morses, et *dont j'ai reconnu les traces dans les os maxillaires supérieurs du fœtus humain.*"[1]

The reader will remark that this is not simply the announcement of the fact, but is adduced in illustration of the very same doctrine which Goethe invoked. The *Traité d'Anatomie*, as we have seen, was published in 1786; that is to say, two years after Goethe had made his discovery; and Sömmering, in writing to Merck,[2] says: "I have expressed my opinion on Vicq d'Azyr's work in the *Götting. Gelehrt. Anzeig.* It is the best we have. But as far as the work has yet gone Goethe is not mentioned in it." From which it may be inferred that Sömmering supposed Vicq d'Azyr to have been acquainted with Goethe's contemporary labours; but against such a supposition we must remember that, if Germany took note of what was passing in France, discoveries made in Germany travelled with great slowness across the Rhine; and in illustration of this slowness we may note that Geoffroy St. Hilaire, who was several years afterwards nobly working out conceptions of Philosophical Anatomy in a spirit so identical with that of Goethe, was utterly unconscious of the existence of a predecessor, and noticing the monograph of G. Fischer, said, "*Gœthes* aurait le premier découvert l'interpariétal dans quelques rongeurs, et se serait contenté d'en faire mention par une note manuscrite sur un exemplaire d'un traité d'anatomie comparée."[3]

But the conclusive point is this: although the *Traité d'Anatomie* did not appear till 1786, the discovery of the intermaxillary was published by Vicq d'Azyr in the Académie des Sciences for 1779,[4] five years before Goethe announced his discovery to Herder. The question of priority is therefore settled. The Frenchman had no need of any acquaintance with what the German poet had worked out; and Merck's astonishment at finding Goethe's "so-called discovery accepted

[1] VICQ D'AZYR: *Œuvres*, iv. p. 159. [2] *Briefe an Merck*, p. 493.

[3] *Philosophie Anatomique*, ii. p. 55. Geoffroy was afterwards very proud to have the suffrage of *Gœthes;* and Geoffroy's son has spoken most honourably of the coincidence between the speculations of his father and the poet.

[4] In the first edition I stated that "from a note to BLUMENBACH'S *Comparative Anatomy* (p. 19), it seems as if Vicq d'Azyr had made this observation as early as 1780." The date in the text is given by Vicq d'Azyr himself, *Œuvres*, iv. 159.

by Vicq d'Azyr" was wholly misplaced; but can we be equally sure that Goethe was altogether ignorant of his predecessor? I think he was. The sudden enthusiasm, the laborious investigation, the jubilate of triumph, are evidences that if ever his predecessor's discovery had come under his notice (which is highly improbable) it was completely forgotten; and we may judge how completely Vicq d'Azyr's announcement had been without echo in the scientific world, from the fact that the three most illustrious men of the day, Camper, Blumenbach, and Sömmering, knew nothing of it, and denied the existence of the bone Goethe claimed to have discovered. Thus, in assigning priority to Vicq d'Azyr, we by no means diminish Goethe's merit. He it was who thoroughly worked out the discovery; he it was who gave it a fixed and definite place in science; he it is who is always named as the discoverer.

The only importance of this discovery is the philosophic Method which it illustrates; the firm belief it implies that all organisms are constructed on an uniform plan, and that Comparative Anatomy is only valid because such a plan is traceable. In our day it seems an easy conception. We are so accustomed to consider all the variations in organic structures as modifications of a type, that we can hardly realise to ourselves any other conception. That it was by no means an obvious idea, nor one easy to apply, may be seen in two brilliant applications—the metamorphosis of plants, and the vertebral theory of the skull.

Place a flower in the hands of the cleverest man of your acquaintance, providing always he has not read modern works of science, and assure him that leaf, calyx, corolla, bud, pistil, and stamen, differing as they do in colour and in form, are nevertheless all modified leaves; assure him that flower and fruit are but modifications of one typical form, which is the leaf; and if he has any confidence in your knowledge he may accept the statement, but assuredly it will seem to him a most incomprehensible paradox. Place him before a human skeleton, and, calling his attention to its manifold forms, assure him that every bone is either a vertebra, or the appendage to a vertebra, and that the skull is a congeries of vertebræ under various modifications; he will, as before, accept your statement, perhaps; but he will, as before, think it one of the refinements of transcendental speculation to be arrived at only by philosophers. Yet both of these astounding propositions are first

principles in Morphology; and in the History of Science both of these propositions are to be traced to Goethe. Botanists and anatomists have, of course, greatly modified the views he promulgated, and have substituted views nearer and nearer the truth, without yet being quite at one. But he gave the impulse to their efforts.

While botanists and anatomists were occupied in analysis, striving to distinguish separate parts, and give them distinct names, his poetical and philosophic mind urged him to seek the supreme synthesis, and reduce all diversities to a higher unity. In his poem addressed to Christiane he says:

> Thou, my love, art perplexed with the endless seeming confusion
> Of the luxuriant wealth which in the garden is spread;
> Name upon name thou hearest, and in thy dissatisfied hearing,
> With a barbarian noise one drives another along.
> All the forms resemble, yet none is the same as another;
> Thus the whole of the throng points at a deep-hidden law.[1]

To prove this identity was no easy task. He imagined an ideal typical plant (*Urpflanze*), of which all actual plants were the manifold realisations; and this I cannot but agree with Schleiden in considering a conception at once misleading and infelicitous. He was happier in the conception of all the various organs of the plant as modifications of one fundamental type; this type he names the *Leaf*. Not that we are to understand the metamorphosis of plants to be analogous to the metamorphosis of animals (an error into which I fell in my first edition, as Ferdinand Cohn properly points out), nor indeed is it such a metamorphosis at all. The pistil and petal are not first developed into leaves, and from these leaves changed into petal and pistil; as a caterpillar develops into a grub, and the grub into a butterfly. This would be metamorphosis. Instead of this we must conceive the whole plant as a succession of repetitions of the original type variously modified; in some of these repetitions the modification has been slight, in others considerable. The two typical forms are stem and leaf. From the seed there is an ascending and a descending axis, formed of a succession of stems: the ascending axis is called the aerial stem; the descending axis is the root. From both of these stems lateral stems or branches are given off; and from these again others. The Leaf is the second type: it forms all the other organs by various modifications. Widely as a pistil differs from a petal,

[1] Whewell's translation: *Hist. Inductive Sciences*, iii. 360.

and both from an ordinary leaf, they are disclosed as identical by the history of their development.

It is impossible to be even superficially acquainted with biological speculations, and not to recognise the immense importance of the recognition of a Type. As Helmholtz truly observes: "The labours of botanists and zoologists did little more than collect materials, until they learned to dispose them in such a series that the laws of dependence and a generalised type could be elicited. Here the great mind of our poet found a field suited to it; and the time was favourable. Enough material had been collected in botany and comparative anatomy for a clear survey to be taken; and although his contemporaries all wandered without a compass, or contented themselves with a dry registration of facts, he was able to introduce into science two leading ideas of infinite fruitfulness."

And here the question presents itself: Is Goethe rightfully entitled to the honour universally awarded to him of having founded the Morphology of Plants? We must again evoke the distinction previously stated (p. 356). No one denies that the doctrine was so entirely novel that botanists at first rejected it with contempt, and only consented to accept it when some eminent botanists had shown it to be true. No one denies that Goethe worked it out; if any predecessor had conceived the idea, no one had carried the idea into its manifold applications. But he has himself named Linnæus and Wolff as his precursors; and it is of some interest to ascertain in what degree these precursors have claim to the honour of the discovery.

It has been remarked by the eminent botanist Ferdinand Cohn,[1] that the great Linnæus mingled with his observation much fantastic error, which the poet Goethe was the first to eliminate. But Dr. Hooker, while admitting the metaphysical and speculative matter which Linnæus has mixed up with his statements, is disposed to value them highly. "The fundamental passage is in the *Systema Naturæ*, in the introduction to which work the following passage occurs: 'Prolepsis (Anticipation) exhibits the mystery of the metamorphosis of plants, by which the herb, which is the *larva* or imperfect condition, is changed into the declared fructification: for the plant is capable of producing either a leafy herb or a fructification.

[1] *Goethe und die Metamorphosen der Pflanzen*, in the *Deutsches Museum of* PRUTZ, iv. Jan. 1862.

. . . When a tree produces a flower, nature anticipates the produce of five years where these come out all at once; forming of the bud leaves of the next year, *bracts;* of those of the following year, the *calyx;* of the following, the *corolla;* of the next, the *stamina;* of the subsequent, the *pistils*, filled with the granulated marrow of the seed, the terminus of the life of a vegetable.' . . . In the *Prolepsis* the speculative matter, which Linnæus himself carefully distinguishes as such, must be separated from the rest, and this may, I think, be done in most of the sections. He starts with explaining clearly and well the origin and position of buds, and their constant presence, whether developed or not, in the axils of the leaf: adding abundance of acute observations and experiments to prove his statements. The leaf he declares to be the first effort of the plant in spring: he proceeds to show, successively, that bracts, calyx, corolla, stamen, and pistils are each of them metamorphosed leaves."[1] Dr. Hooker adds, "There is nothing in all this that detracts from the merits of Goethe's re-discovery;" and there can be little doubt that, had not Goethe, or another, proved the doctrine, botanists would to this day have continued to pass over the passage in Linnæus as one of his "fanciful flights."

The *aperçu* was in Linnæus; a spark awaiting the presence of some inflammable imagination; and when we remember how fond Goethe was of Linnæus, we can hardly suppose that this *aperçu* had not more than once flashed across his mind as a gleam of the truth. With regard to Caspar Friedrich Wolff the evidence is far from satisfactory. It is certain that Wolff in his immortal work on "Generation" had clearly grasped the morphological principles, and had left Goethe very little to add to them. But it is very uncertain whether Goethe had ever read Wolff. Some years after the publication of his work he mentions with pride the fact of Wolff having been his "admirable precursor," and says that his attention to the work had been drawn by a namesake of the great embryologist. It was with no little surprise therefore that I read in Düntzer,[2] the unhesitating assertion that in 1785 Herder had made Goethe a present of Wolff's *Theoria Generationis*, which contained a rough outline of several of Goethe's favourite ideas. If this statement were correct, Goethe would be under serious suspicion; but it is not correct. On referring to the passage

[1] WHEWELL: *Hist. of Ind. Sciences*, 3rd ed., iii. 553.
[2] *Goethe und Karl August*, 1861, p. 212.

in Herder's letter to Knebel, which Düntzer pretends is the authority for this statement, I find, in the first place, that Herder does not specify the *Theoria Generationis*, nor indeed can we be sure he refers to C. F. Wolff at all; he merely says, "Wolf," which is a common name among German authors; in the second place he does not say that he has *given* the book to Goethe, but that he *intends* doing so when he can get a copy; meanwhile Knebel is not to mention the book to Goethe. And out of such a sentence as this, Düntzer has constructed a "fact," which while it gives his pedantry the small delight of correcting in a foot note Goethe's assertion that F. A. Wolff directed his attention to the *Theoria Generationis*, lays Goethe open to the charges of having borrowed his morphology from Wolff, of having concealed the fact, and of having pretended never to have seen his predecessor's work until his attention was directed to it some years afterwards. Against such charges the following arguments may be urged. First, there is Goethe's own explicit statement—and his veracity is not lightly to be questioned. Secondly, if the work referred to by Herder was the *Theoria Generationis* (which is probable, but not certain), and if it was given as intended (also probable but not certain), we have no evidence that Goethe read it. Thirdly, and conclusively, the date of the very letter in which Herder mentions his intention is ten years *later* (1795) than Düntzer would have us suppose; and is thus five years *after* the publication of Goethe's views (1790).[1]

The *Metamorphosen* was published in 1790. In 1817 Goethe says that he had requested his scientific friends to make notes of any passages they might meet in earlier writers relative to the topic he had treated, because he was convinced that there was nothing absolutely new. His friend F. A. Wolff directed him to Caspar Friedrich. In expressing his admiration for his great predecessor he is proud to acknowledge how much he had learned from him during five-and-twenty years. Now five-and-twenty years from 1817 brings us back to 1792—that is to say, two years after the publication of the *Metamorphosen*, and three years before the letter written by Herder.[2] So that

[1] See KNEBEL: *Nachlass*, ii. 268, which is the authority cited by Düntzer, whose inaccuracy is unpardonable in one so uniformly dull, and so merciless in ferreting out the small inaccuracies of others.

[2] It should be added that Knebel's editors place a (?.) after the date 1795. But we have no reason to suppose they could err by *ten* years in assigning this letter its place; Düntzer professes no doubt as to the accuracy of the date; and internal evidence, taken with what is said above, renders it highly probable that 1795 is very little removed from the correct date.

if we assume the work in question to have been the *Theoria Generationis*, Goethe was perfectly correct in mentioning A. F. Wolff, and not Herder, as the friend to whom he was first indebted for a knowledge of its existence.

The tone in which Goethe speaks of Caspar Friedrich Wolff is assuredly not that of a man who had any obligations to conceal; but of a man who recognising a precursor with pleasure, speaks of the two theories as two independent modes of conceiving the phenomena, the theory of his precursor being pre-eminently physiological, while his own was pre-eminently morphological.

With regard both to Linnæus and Wolff it may be said that they anticipated the morphology of plants, but that to Goethe belongs the credit of establishing it. We do not take from the credit of Columbus by showing that five centuries before he discovered the New World, Scandinavian voyagers had repeatedly touched on those shores; nor do we diminish the value of Goethe's contribution to Science, by showing that before him Wolff had perceived the identity of the various organs of the plant. It was not the purpose of the Scandinavians to discover the New World. They did not make their discovery a possession for mankind. Neither was it Wolff's purpose to create a new theory in Botany. He discovered a process of Nature while he was seeking the laws of Epigenesis, and he only used his discovery as one of several illustrations. Columbus set out with the distinct purpose of discovery, and made his discovery a possession for all time. So also Goethe set out with the distinct purpose, and Botanists justly declare that to his work they owe the idea of plant metamorphosis.

Goethe's work is very beautiful, and may be read without any previous botanical knowledge. It traces the metamorphoses of the grain into the leaf, and thence into the flower. The morphological part is perfect, except that, as Cohn remarks, he has given an exclusive predominance to the leaf, and overlooked the not less important stem. It is to be regretted that he hampers himself with the following physiological hypothesis: every segment proceeding immediately from that which goes before it, receiving its nourishment through all the segments which have gone before, must, he says, be more perfect, and must send to its leaves and buds a more elaborated sap. The result is that the coarser fluids are rejected, the finer attracted, and the plant grows more and more perfect till it reaches its point of culmination.

This hypothesis of a more elaborated sap, reaching the ultimate segments, is in direct contradiction to the hypothesis of Wolff, which also declares the flower to be modified leaves; but how modified?[1] they are modified because they are imperfect. Their development has been arrested. They are smaller, have less sap, the sap has lost its chlorophyl, and the colour of the flower is an evidence of *imperfection*. I cannot stop to consider Wolff's ingenious arguments by which he endeavours to show that flowering and fructification are arrests of development. It is enough to indicate the contrast between his and Goethe's views. Both are agreed that inasmuch as a differentiation does take place, it must have some cause; but the cause is by Wolff said to be deficiency of sap, by Goethe elaborated sap.

Goethe agrees with Wolff as regards the passage of the leaf into the flower being dependent on the acceleration or retardation of the sap. It had been noticed by Linnæus that a too abundant supply of food retards the flowering, and accelerates the growth of leaves; whereas a moderate supply, nay, even an approach to starvation, accelerates the flowering and diminishes the number of leaves. Wolff attributes this simply to the fact that so long as there is abundant nutriment there will be abundant growth, and no arrest in the shape of imperfect leaves (*i.e.* flowers); and when nutriment is scanty, the arrest soon takes place. But unfortunately for this opinion, and indeed for the opinion that flowers are imperfect leaves resulting from a want of nutriment, there is a class of plants which blossom *before* they put forth leaves. Goethe's explanation, hypothetical though it be, is better. He says that as long as there are any of the grosser fluids to be rejected, the organs of the plant are forced to employ themselves in this labour, which labour renders flowering impossible; but no sooner do we limit the nourishment than, by diminishing this process of elaboration, we accelerate the flowering.

We are here touching on the great law of antagonism between Growth and Development which is intimately connected with the law of Reproduction—a subject too vast to be even indicated in this rapid survey. The student will note, however, that although Goethe perils his position by the introduction of an hypothetical elaboration of fluids, without assigning a cause for that elaboration, he nevertheless sees, what many

[1] *Theorie von der Generation*, § 80, *sq.*

fail to see, that Reproduction is only another form of Growth —a process of differentiation. "The vital forces of the plant," he says, "manifest themselves in two ways: on the one hand *vegetation*, issuing in the stem and leaves; and on the other *reproduction*, issuing in flowers and fruits. If we examine vegetation closely, we shall see that the plant continuing itself from articulation to articulation, from leaf to leaf, and putting forth buds, accomplishes a *reproduction* which differs from that ordinarily so-named in being *successive*—it manifests itself in a series of isolated developments instead of manifesting itself *simultaneously*. That force which produces buds has the greatest analogy with that which determines simultaneously the higher act of propagation. We can force the plant to produce buds incessantly, or we can accelerate the epoch of flowering; the first by abundant nourishment, the second by nourishment less abundant. In defining *budding* as 'successive propagation,' and *flowering* and *fructification* as 'simultaneous propagation,' we designate the mode in which each manifests itself. Thus, then, whether the plant buds, flowers, or fructifies, it is always by means of *the same organs*, the form and destination of which are changed. The same organ which expands into a leaf upon the stem and presents such varied forms, contracts to make the calyx, expands again to make the petal, to contract once more into the sexual organs, and expand for the last time into fruit."

Whatever may be the final decision upon the Metamorphoses of Plants, there must ever remain the great and unique glory of a poet having created a new branch of science, and by means as legitimately scientific as those of any other creation. Morphology now counts among its students illustrious names, and crowds of workers. And this science we owe to the author of *Faust*. Nor is this all. He has priority in some of the most luminous and comprehensive ideas which are now guiding philosophic speculation on the science of life. In the historical sketch which Carus prefixes to his *Transcendental Anatomy*, after setting forth the various tentatives men had made to discover by means of *descriptive* anatomy, and occasional comparisons, the true relations of the various parts of the body, he says:[1] "If we go back as far as possible into the history of the labours undertaken with a view to arrive at the philosophic conception of the skeleton, we find that the first

[1] *Anatomie Comparée*, vol. iii. p. 3. French trans.

idea of a metamorphosis of the osseous forms,—*i.e.* that all forms are but modifications more or less traceable of one and the same Type—belongs to Goethe." After a quotation of Goethe's words, Carus adds: "It is difficult to express in clearer terms the idea of the Unity which rules over the plurality of the skeleton-forms. Its first great application was the vertebral theory of the skull."

Let me repeat, as a matter of justice, and not to allow the high praise bestowed on Goethe's efforts to mislead the reader's expectation, that the merit is that of a *thinker in science*, not the merit of an industrious discoverer and collector of details. His great effort was to create a Method, to establish principles upon which the science could be founded. In an admirable little essay on "Experiment as the mediator between the Object and the Subject," written in 1793, we see how clear were his ideas on Method. "Man," he says, "regards at first all external objects with reference to himself; and rightly so, for his whole fate depends on them, on the pleasure or pain which they cause him, on their utility or danger to him." This is the initial stage of all speculation. Its Method is the determination of the external order according to *analogies drawn from within*. The culmination of this Method is seen in the fundamental axiom of Des Cartes and Spinoza: *all clear ideas are true*. So long as this Method is followed, Metaphysics reigns triumphant, and Science is impossible. It is displaced by the Objective Method. Goethe remarks how much more difficult is the task of discerning objects according to this Method, *i.e.* not as related to *us*, but as related to one another. Our touchstone of pleasure or pain is given up. With godlike indifference we become *spectators*, and seek that which *is*, not that which touches *us*. Thus the real botanist considers less the beauty, or the use of flowers, than their laws of growth, and their relation to each other. And as the sun shines on them, developing them all impartially, so must the philosopher look on them with calm contemplative eye, taking the terms of his comparison from the circle he contemplates, not from any figments of his own mind. Goethe sets aside all inquiry into final causes,—by Bacon justly styled "barren virgins,"—and seeks to know what *is*.

It is worthy of remark that the study of Development is quite a modern study. Formerly men were content with the full-statured animal,—the perfected art,—the completed society. The phases of development and the laws of growth

were disregarded, or touched on in a vague uncertain manner. A change has come over the spirit of inquiry. "The history of Development," says Von Baer, "is the true torchbearer in every inquiry into organic bodies." In Geology, in Physiology, in History, and in Art, we are now all bent on tracing the phases of development. To understand the *grown* we try to follow the *growth*.

As a thinker in science Goethe was truly remarkable, and as a worker not contemptible. To prove how far he was in advance of his age we have only to cite a single passage which, in its aphoristic pregnant style, contains the clear announcement of biological laws, which have since been named among the glories of Geoffroy St. Hilaire, Von Baer, Milne-Edwards, Cuvier, and Lamarck.

"Every living being is not a unity but a plurality. Even when it appears as an individual, it is the reunion of beings living and existing in themselves, identical in origin, but which may appear identical or similar, different or dissimilar.

"The *more imperfect* a being is the more do its individual parts *resemble each other*, and the more do these parts *resemble the whole*. The *more perfect* the being is the more *dissimilar are its parts*. In the former case the parts are more or less a repetition of the whole; in the latter case they are totally unlike the whole.

"The more the parts resemble each other, the less subordination is there of one to the other. *Subordination of parts indicates high grade of organisation.*"[1]

To illustrate by familiar examples. Take a polyp and cut it into several pieces; each piece will live and manifest all those phenomena of nutrition and sensibility which the whole polyp manifested. Turn it inside out like a glove, the internal part becomes its skin, the external part becomes its stomach. The reason is, that in the simple structure of the polyp, the parts resemble each other and resemble the whole. There is no individual organ, or apparatus of organs, performing one function, such as nutrition, and nothing else. Every function is performed by every part; just as in savage societies, every man is his own tailor, his own armourer, his own cook, and his own policeman. But take an animal higher in the scale, and there you find the structure composed of dissimilar parts, and each part having a different office. That animal cannot

[1] *Zur Morphologie*, 1807 (written in 1795), *Werke*, xxxvi. p. 7.

be hewn in pieces and each piece continue to live as before. That animal cannot have its skin suddenly turned into a stomach. That animal, in the social body, cannot make his own clothes or his own musket; the division of labour which has accompanied his higher condition has robbed him of his universal dexterity.

The law invoked by Goethe, is now to be met with in every philosophic work on zoology. One form of it is known in England as Von Baer's law, viz. that Development proceeds from the Like to the Unlike, from the General to the Particular, from the Homogeneous to the Heterogeneous. I have too profound an admiration for Von Baer to wish in any way to diminish his splendid claims, but I cannot help remarking that when writers attribute to him the merit of having discovered this law, they are in direct contradiction with Von Baer himself, who not only makes no such claim, but in giving the formula adds, "this law of development has indeed never been overlooked."[1] His merit is the splendid application and demonstration of the law, not the first perception of it.

It is generally known that the law of "division of labour in the animal organism" is claimed by Milne-Edwards, the great French zoologist, as a discovery of his own. Yet we see how clearly it is expressed in Goethe's formula. And with even more clearness do we see expressed Cuvier's principle of classification, viz. the *subordination of parts*. I do not wish to press this point further, nor do I wish that these great men should be robbed of any merit in order to glorify Goethe with their trophies. The student of history knows how discoveries are, properly speaking, made by the Age, and not by men. He knows that all discoveries have had their anticipations; and that the world justly credits the man who makes the discovery *available*, not the man who simply perceived that it was possible. I am not here writing the history of science, but the biography of Goethe; and the purpose of these citations is to show that he placed himself at the highest point of view possible to his age, and that as a thinker he thought

[1] "Dieses Gesetz der Ausbildung ist wohl nie verkannt worden." *Zur Entwickelungsgeschichte.* Erster Theil, p. 153. Among others, WOLFF has clearly stated it. *Theorie von der Generation*, § 28, p. 163. See also MECKEL, *Traité d'Anatomie Comparée.* French trans., i. 297. BUFFON also says: "Un corps organisé dont toutes les parties seraient semblables à lui-même est la plus simple car ce n'est que la répétition de la même forme." *Hist. Nat.*, 1749, ii. 47.

the thoughts which the greatest men have subsequently made popular.

Observe, moreover, that Goethe's anticipation is not of that slight and fallacious order which, like so many other anticipations, rests upon a vague or incidental phrase. He did not simply attain an *aperçu* of the truth. He mastered the law, and his mastery of that law sprang from his mastery of the whole series of conceptions in which it finds its place. Thus in his "Introduction to Comparative Anatomy," written in 1795, he pointed out the essentially sterile nature of the comparisons then made, not only in respect of comparing animals with men and with each other, not only in the abuse of final causes, but also in taking man as the standard, instead of commencing with the simplest organisms and rising gradually upwards. One year after this, Geoffroy St. Hilaire, ignorant of what was passing in the study at Weimar, and in the Museum at Jena, published his *Dissertation sur les Makis*, wherein he began his renovation of the science. He, too, like Goethe, was bent on the creation of a Type according to which all organised structures could be explained. This conception of a Type (*allgemeines Bild*), according to which the whole animal kingdom may be said to be constructed, was a truly scientific conception, and has borne noble fruit. It must not, however, be confounded with a Platonic Idea. It was no metaphysical entity, it was simply a scientific artifice. Goethe expressly says that we are not for an instant to believe in the *existence* of this Type as an objective reality, although it is the generalised expression of that which really exists. This caution has not been sufficiently present to the minds of several speculators; and the idea of a Type has engendered not a few extravagances. Nevertheless, the net result of these speculations has been good.

One of the most interesting applications of the idea of a Type is the theory of the vertebral structure of the skull. Every cultivated reader knows that transcendental anatomists now conceive the skull as composed of three, or more, vertebræ variously modified; but very few readers have a distinct conception of what parts of the skull are separable into vertebræ, or what is the amount of resemblance now traceable underneath the modifications; and this is the less to be wondered at, seeing that even now there is no great unanimity among independent investigators. The principles of Morphology are not always sufficiently attended to. Just as in con-

sidering the Metamorphoses of Plants we had to dismiss the idea of the pistil or stamen having been modified from a leaf, so must we dismiss the idea of a skull having been modified from a vertebral column. In both cases we may express the morphological identity—the unity of composition—by considering every organ in the plant as a modification of the typical leaf, and every bone in the skeleton as a modification of the typical vertebra (or part of a vertebra); but it is as inaccurate and misleading to call the skull a vertebral column, as it would be to call the brain a spinal cord. Between the brain and cord there is a fundamental identity: both are masses of ganglionic substance, having (as I have elsewhere shown)[1] identical properties and similar, though not the same, functions. But over and above these fundamental resemblances there are manifest and important differences. To disregard these differences, and fix attention solely on the resemblances, is eminently unphilosophical; and we can only be justified in saying that the structure of the skull is on the same *general plan* as the structure of the rest of the spinal axis, precisely as we say that the structure of the fish exhibits the same general plan as the structure of the quadruped. In other words, every special vertebra is the *individual* form of a *general* type. The skull is not, as Oken maintains, a modified spinal column.[2] To maintain this is to say that the spinal vertebra is the typical form from which the cranial vertebræ are developed; whereas, in truth, both are but variations of one typical form; and the idea of Kielmeyer that the spinal column is a skull, is quite as accurate as the idea of Oken that the skull is a spinal column. Indeed, Kielmeyer's idea is the more admissible of the two; for if we seek our evidence in embryology, or in that "permanent embryology" the Animal Series, we find the cranial vertebræ are *first* in order of time: in fishes the skull alone presents true osseous development of all the segments of the typical bone; and if we go still lower in the series, we find—in the Cephalopoda—a rudimentary brain, not unlike the lower forms of the brain in fishes, enclosed in a rudimentary skull, but without a spinal cord or spinal column. We are justified, therefore, in saying that the skull cannot be a modification of the spinal column.

[1] *Reports of British Association for the Advancement of Science*, 1859, and *Physiology of Common Life*, vol. ii.

[2] "As the brain is a more voluminously developed spinal cord, so is the brain-case a more voluminous spinal column." OKEN; cited by OWEN, *Homologies*, p. 74.

Oken and Spix regard the head as a "repetition" of the trunk; the brain is a repetition of the spinal cord; the mouth repeats the intestine and abdomen; the nose repeats the lungs and thorax; the jaws the limbs. Unfortunately for this ingenious scheme, there are vertebrate animals with heads but without limbs; and it would therefore be nearer the mark to call the limbs modified jaws, than to call jaws modified limbs. In presence of such perplexities, we cannot wonder if some men have objected to the vertebral theory, that it amounts to nothing more than saying a vertebra is a bone.

The typical vertebra is thus defined by Owen: "One of those segments of the endoskeleton which constitutes the axis of the body and the protecting canals of the nervous and vascular trunks."[1] A perfect vertebra should therefore contain at least two arches, one to form the protecting walls of a nervous centre, the other to form the protecting walls of the great blood-vessels. Now if we make a section of the skull, we find that this bony box "consists of a strong central mass whence spring an upper arch and a lower arch. The upper arch is formed by the walls of the cavity containing the brain, and stands in the same relation to it as does the neural arch of a vertebra to the spinal cord with which that brain is continuous. The lower arch encloses the other viscera of the head, in the same way as the ribs embrace those of the thorax. And not only is the general analogy between the two manifest, but a young skull may readily be separated into a number of segments, in each of which it requires but little imagination to trace a sort of family likeness to such an expanded vertebra as the atlas."[2]

The luminous guide of anatomical research, by Geoffroy St. Hilaire named "le principe des connexions," will thus easily lead us to recognise the neural arches of the brain-case as homologues of the neural arches of the spinal axis, and we may ask with Huxley, "What can be more natural than to take another step to conceive the skull as a portion of the vertebral column still more altered than the sacrum or coccyx, whose vertebræ are modified in correspondence with the expansion of the anterior end of the nervous centre and the needs of the cephalic end of the body?" This was the question which flashed upon the poet's mind, and which indeed is so intimately allied to the morphological doctrines

[1] Owen: *Homologies*, p. 81.
[2] Huxley: *Croonian Lecture*, 1858.

he had already found realised in plants, that far from estimating it as a discovery which reflects singular honour on his sagacity, I am disposed to think more lightly of it than of many a neglected sentence in his little studied essays. I say this, not because the idea seems obvious now it has been stated, and every one can make the egg stand on end after Columbus, but because in Goethe's attempt to carry his idea into anatomical detail, it is universally confessed that he was not successful. This is a point to which we shall presently return. Meanwhile I may add that, on re-examination of this complex subject, I am of opinion that neither Goethe nor Oken has been free from a certain indistinctness of conception, or has sufficiently kept before him all the elements of the problem. A fundamental mistake, already touched upon, is in the supposed relation of the skull to the spinal axis. Anatomists would scarcely venture to affirm that the brain bears the same relation to the cervical enlargement of the spinal cord, as that enlargement bears to the lumbar enlargement of the cord; yet they affirm, explicitly and implicitly, that the brain-case bears the same relation to the cervical vertebræ as those vertebræ bear to the lumbar. Whereas anatomy very plainly teaches that over and above certain fundamental resemblances between the brain and spinal cord, resemblances not much greater than between the sympathetic ganglia and the brain, there are also manifest and important differences, very early exhibited in the course of embryological development, and bringing with them corresponding differences in the protecting bones. And in this point of view the researches of embryologists, as expounded in Huxley's remarkable Croonian Lecture, seem decisive. I will cite here the conclusion to which Huxley is led: "The fallacy involved in the vertebral theory of the skull," he says, "is like that which before Von Baer infested our notions of the relations between fishes and mammals. The mammal was imagined to be a modified fish, whereas, in truth, both fish and mammal start from a common point, and each follows its own road thence. So I conceive what the facts teach us is this:—the spinal column and the skull start from the same primitive condition—a common central plate with its laminæ dorsales and ventrales—whence they immediately begin to diverge. The spinal column, in all cases, becomes segmented into its somatomes; and in the great majority of cases distinct centra and intercentra are developed, enclosing

the notocord more or less completely. The cranium never becomes segmented into somatomes; distinct centra and intercentra, like those of the spinal column, and never developed in it. Much of the basis cranii lies beyond the notocord. In the process of ossification there is a certain analogy between the spinal column and the cranium, but the analogy becomes weaker as we proceed towards the anterior end of the skull."

Although Huxley insists, perhaps, too much upon the *differences*, in his impatience at the too great emphasis which has been laid on the *resemblances*, his criticism seems to me conclusive against the vertebral theory as generally understood. It is certainly extending the principles of transcendental anatomy to a hazardous limit when the brain is regarded as a "repetition" of any segments of the spinal cord. The differences between the two are more than differences of volume and shape. In the one the grey matter is inside; in the other it is outside. From the one sensory and motor nerves, symmetrically in pairs, are given off to supply the skin and muscles; in the other the sensory and motor nerves are not only distributed in a very different manner—the optic, olfactory, and acoustic having no corresponding motor nerves—but they are limited to ganglia at the base and in the medulla oblongata: the two most voluminous and important parts of the brain (the cerebrum and cerebellum) having *no* nerves whatever. In the presence of such wide diversities as these, not to mention others, it is surely an abuse of language when Oken calls the brain a more voluminously developed spinal cord, and deduces thence that the brain-case is only a repetition of the spinal column.

Having thus endeavoured to convey some idea of the famous vertebral theory of the skull, I have now to consider a somewhat angrily debated question, affecting Goethe's character more than his intellectual pretensions, namely, the charge of mendacious vanity brought against him by Oken, and, I am sorry to say, very inconsiderately countenanced by Professor Owen,[1] in respect to priority in the discovery.

Fifteen years after Goethe had passed away from this world, and when therefore there was no power of reply, Oken in the *Isis* (1847, *Heft* vii.) made his charge. His statement completely staggered me, suggesting very painful feelings as to Goethe's conduct. Indeed, the similarity in the stories of

[1] Art. OKEN in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 8th edition.

both suggests suspicion. Goethe, during one of his rambles in the Jewish cemetery near Venice, noticed the skull of a ram, which had been cut longitudinally, and on examining it, the idea occurred to him that the face was composed of three vertebræ: "the transition from the anterior sphenoid to the ethmoid was evident at once." Now, compare Oken's story. He narrates how in 1802 in a work on the Senses, he had represented these organs as repetitions of lower organs, although he had not then grasped the idea, which lay so close at hand, respecting the skull as a repetition of the spinal column. In 1803 he identified the jaws of insects as limbs of the head; and in 1806, while rambling in the Harz mountains, he picked up the skull of a deer: on examining it, he exclaimed, "That is a vertebral column!" Virchow admits that the coincidence in the stories is singular, but adds that the discovery is just as probable in the one case as in the other; all that is proved by the coincidence being that both minds were on the verge of the discovery. Goethe by long physiognomical and osteological studies was prepared for the idea; and was naturally led from the Metamorphoses of Plants to those of Insects; and if Oken reversed this order, passing from insects to mammals, he was, nevertheless, many years later than Goethe, as dates unequivocally prove. It is important to bear in mind that the vertebral theory is only another application of those morphological doctrines which Goethe had developed and applied to plants; and although it is quite *possible* that he might have held these views without making the special application to the skull; yet we know as a fact that he at once saw how the morphological laws must necessarily apply to animals, since he expressly states this in announcing his discovery to Herder.[1] Nay, he shortly afterwards wrote, "In Natural History I shall bring you what you little expect. I believe myself to be very near the law of organisation." Still it may be objected, this is no proof; it only shows that Goethe applied his doctrines to the animal organisation, not that he made a special application to the skull. Even this doubt, however, has been finally settled by the recently published correspondence, which gives us a letter from Goethe to Herder's wife, dated 4th May 1790, from Venice. "Through a singular and lucky accident I have been enabled to take a step forwards in my explanation of the

[1] *Italiänische Reise*, ii. p. 5.

animal development (*Thierbildung*). My servant, in jest, took up the fragment of an animal's skull from the Jewish cemetery, pretending to offer it me as a Jew's skull." Now when we remember that Goethe in after years affirmed that it was in 1790, and in the Jewish cemetery of Venice, that the idea of the vertebral structure of the skull flashed upon him, the evidence of this letter is conclusive.

Oken declares he made his discovery in 1806, and that in 1807 he wrote his Academic Programme. He was then a *Privat-Docent* in Göttingen, "at a time, therefore, when Goethe certainly knew nothing of my existence." He sent his dissertation to Jena, where he had just been appointed professor. Of that university Goethe was curator. Oken considers this fact decisive: namely, that Goethe would assuredly have remonstrated against Oken's claim to the discovery had he not recognised its justice. The fact, however, is by no means decisive: we shall see presently that Goethe had his own reasons for silence. "I naturally sent Goethe a copy of my programme. This discovery pleased him so much that he invited me, at Easter, 1808, to spend a week with him at Weimar, which I did. As long as the discovery was ridiculed by men of science Goethe was silent, but no sooner did it attain renown through the works of Meckel, Spix, and others, than there grew up a murmur among Goethe's servile admirers that this idea originated with him. About this time Bojanus went to Weimar, and hearing of Goethe's discovery, half believed it, and sent the rumour to me, which I thoughtlessly printed in the *Isis* (1818, p. 509); whereupon I announced that I made my discovery in the autumn of 1806." This is equivocal. He did *not* throw any doubt on Goethe's claim to priority, he only asserted his own originality. "Now that Bojanus had brought the subject forward," he adds, "Goethe's vanity was piqued, and he came afterwards, thirteen years subsequent to my discovery, and said he had held the opinion for thirty years."

Why was Goethe silent when Oken first announced his discovery? and why did not Oken make the charge of plagiarism during Goethe's lifetime? The first question may be answered from Goethe's own works. In a note entitled *Das Schädelgerüst aus sechs Wirbelknochen auferbaut*, after alluding to his recognition first of three and subsequently of six vertebræ in the skull, which he spoke of among his friends, who set to work to demonstrate it if possible, he says: "In

the year 1807 this theory appeared tumultuously and imperfectly before the public, and naturally awakened great disputes and some applause. How seriously it was damaged by the incomplete and fantastic method of exposition History must relate." This criticism of the exposition will be understood by every one who has read Oken, and who knows Goethe's antipathy to metaphysics.[1] With all his prepossession in favour of a Type, he could not patiently have accepted an exposition which "tumultuously" announced that "The whole man is but a vertebra." Accordingly he took no notice of the tumultuous metaphysician; and in his *Tag und Jahres Hefte* he mentions that while he was working out his theory with two friends, Riemer and Voigt, they brought him, with some surprise, the news that this idea had just been laid before the public in an academic programme, "a fact," he adds, "*which they, being still alive, can testify.*" Why did he not claim priority? "I told my friends to keep quiet, for the idea was not properly worked out in the programme; and that it was not elaborated from original observations would be plain to all scientific men. I was frequently besought to speak plainly on the subject; but I was firm in my silence."

When I first discussed this question, and knew nothing of the decisive evidence which lay unpublished in the letter to Herder's wife, I said that this statement carried complete conviction to my mind. It was published many years before Oken made his charge, and it accused him in the most explicit terms of having prematurely disclosed an idea Goethe was then elaborating with the assistance of his friends. Nor was this all. It appealed to two honourable and respected men, then living, as witnesses of the truth. Oken said nothing when the question could have been peremptorily settled by calling upon Voigt and Riemer. He waited till death rendered an appeal impossible. He says, indeed, that he made no answer to the first passage I have cited, because he was not *named* in it, and he "did not wish to involve himself in a host of disagreeables." But this is no answer to the *second* passage. There he is named as plainly as if the name of Oken were printed in full; and not only is he named, but Goethe's friends speak of Oken's coming forward with Goethe's idea as a matter which "surprised" them. Those to whom this reason-

[1] So also Cuvier's antipathy to this exposition made him blind to the truth which it contained.

ing was not conclusive are now referred to the confirmation it receives from the letter to Herder's wife.

Having vindicated Goethe's character, and shown that *biographically* we are fully justified in assigning to him the honour of having first conceived this theory, it now remains to be added that *historically* the priority of Oken's claim must be admitted. In writing the poet's biography, it is of some importance to show that he was not indebted to Oken for the discovery. In writing the history of science, it would be to Oken that priority would be assigned, simply because, according to the judicious principles of historical appreciation, priority of publication carries off the prize. No man's claim to priority is acknowledged unless he can bring forward the evidence of publication; otherwise every discovery might be claimed by those who have no right to it. Moreover, Oken has another claim: to him undeniably belongs the merit of having introduced the idea into the scientific world, accompanied with sufficient amount of detail to make it acceptable to scientific minds, and to set them to work in verifying the idea. On these grounds I think it indisputable that the vertebral theory must be attributed to Oken, and not to Goethe; although it is not less indisputable that Goethe did anticipate the discovery by sixteen years, and would have earned the right to claim it of History, had he made his discovery public, instead of privately discussing it with his friends. Virchow thinks otherwise; he assigns priority to Goethe; but he would, I am sure, admit the generally received principle that priority of publication is the test upon which alone History can rely.

To conclude this somewhat lengthy chapter on the scientific studies, it must be stated that, for the sake of bringing together his various efforts into a manageable whole, I have not attended strictly to chronology. Nor have I specified the various separate essays he has written. They are all to be found collected in his works. My main object has been to show what were the directions of his mind; what were his achievements and failures in Science; what place Science filled in his life, and how false the supposition is that he was a mere dabbler. What Buffon says of Pliny may truly be said of Goethe, that he had *cette facilité de penser en grand qui multiplie la science;* and it is only as a thinker in this great department that I claim a high place for him.

CHAPTER XI

THE CAMPAIGN IN FRANCE

We now return to the narrative, some points of which have been anticipated in the preceding chapter. In 1790 Goethe undertook the government of all the Institutions for Science and Art, and busied himself with the arrangement of the Museums and Botanical Gardens at Jena. In March of the same year he went once more to Italy to meet the Duchess Amalia and Herder in Venice. There he tried in Science to find refuge from troubled thoughts. Italy on a second visit seemed, however, quite another place to him. He began to suspect there had been considerable illusion in the charm of his first visit. The *Venetian Epigrams*, if compared with the *Roman Elegies*, will indicate the difference of his mood. The yearning regret, the fulness of delight, the newness of wonder which give their accents to the Elegies, are replaced by sarcasms and the bitterness of disappointment. It is true that many of these epigrams were written subsequently, as their contents prove, but the mass of them are products of the Venetian visit. Something of this dissatisfaction must be attributed to his position. He was ill at ease with the world. The troubles of the time, and the troubles of his own domestic affairs, aggravated the dangers which then threatened his aims of self-culture, and increased his difficulty in finding that path in Science and Art whereon the culture of the world might be pursued.

In June he returned to Weimar. In July the duke sent for him at the Prussian Camp in Silesia, "where, instead of stones and flowers, he would see the field sown with troops." He went unwillingly, but compensated himself by active researches into "stones and flowers," leaving to the duke and others such interest as was to be found in soldiers. He lived like a hermit in the camp, and began to write an essay on the development of animals, and a comic opera.

In August they returned. The Duchess Amalia and Herder, impatient at "such waste of time over old bones," plagued him into relinquishing osteology, and urged him to complete *Wilhelm Meister*. He did not, however, proceed far with it. The creative impulse was past; and to disprove Newton was

a more imperious desire. In 1791, which was a year of quiet study and domestic happiness for him, the Court Theatre was established. He undertook the direction with delight. In a future chapter we shall follow his efforts to create a national stage, and by bringing them before the eye in one continuous series, save the tedious repetition of isolated details. In July the Duchess Amalia founded her Friday Evenings. Her palace, between the hours of five and eight, saw the duke, the Duchess Luise, Goethe and his circle, with a few favoured friends from the court, assembled to hear some one of the members read a composition of his own. No sort of etiquette was maintained. Each member, on entering, sat down where he pleased. Only for the Reader was a distinct place allotted. One night Goethe read them the genealogy of Cagliostro, which he had brought from Italy; another night he gave them a lecture on Colours; Herder lectured on Immortality; Bertuch on Chinese Colours and English Gardens; Böttiger on the Vases of the Ancients; Hufeland on his favourite theme of Longevity; and Bode read fragments of his translation of Montaigne. When the reading was over, they all approached a large table in the middle of the room, on which lay some engravings or some novelty of interest, and friendly discussion began. The absence of etiquette made these reunions delightful.

The mention of Cagliostro in the preceding paragraph recalls Goethe's comedy *Der Gross Kophta*, in which he dramatised the story of the Diamond Necklace. It had originally been arranged as an opera; Reichardt was to have composed the music; and if the reader happens to have waded through this dull comedy, he will regret that it was not made an opera, or anything else except what it is. One is really distressed to find such productions among the writings of so great a genius, and exasperated to find critics lavish in their praise of a work which their supersubtle ingenuity cannot rescue from universal neglect. I will not occupy space with an analysis of it.

And now he was to be torn from his quiet studies to follow the fortunes of an unquiet camp. The King of Prussia and the Duke of Brunswick at the head of a large army invaded France, to restore Louis XVI. to his throne, and save legitimacy from the sacrilegious hands of Sansculottism. France, it was said, groaned under the tyranny of factions, and yearned for deliverance. The emigrants made it clear as day that the

allies would be welcomed by the whole nation; and the German rulers willingly lent their arms to the support of legitimacy. Karl August, passionately fond of the army, received the command of a Prussian regiment. And Goethe, passionately fond of Karl August, followed him into the field. But he followed the duke—he had no sympathy with the cause. Indeed, he had no strong feeling either way. Legitimacy was no passion with him; still less was Republicanism. Without interest in passing politics, profoundly convinced that all salvation could only come through inward culture, and dreading disturbances mainly because they rendered culture impossible, he was emphatically the "Child of Peace," and could at no period of his life be brought to sympathise with great struggles. He disliked the Revolution as he disliked the Reformation, because they both thwarted the peaceful progress of development:

> Franzthum drängt in diesen verworrenen Tagen wie ehmals Lutherthum es gethan, ruhige Bildung zurück.

That philosophers and patriots should thunder against such a doctrine, refute its arguments, and proclaim its dangers, is reasonable enough; but how strangely unreasonable in philosophers and patriots to thunder against Goethe, because he, holding this doctrine, wrote and acted in its spirit! We do not need this example to teach us how men transfer their hatred of opinions to the holders of the hated opinions, otherwise we might wonder at the insensate howl which has been raised against the greatest glory of the German name, because he did not share the opinions of the howlers; opinions, too, which they for the most part would not have held, had they not been instructed by the events which have since given approbation to what *then* seemed madness.

It was not in Goethe's nature to be much moved by events, to be deeply interested in the passing troubles of external life. A meditative mind like his naturally sought in the eternal principles of Nature the stimulus and the food, which other minds sought in passing phenomena of the day. A poet and a philosopher is bound to be interested in the great questions of poetry and philosophy; but to rail at him for not also taking part in politics, is as irrational as to rail at the prime minister because he cares not two pins for Greek Art, and has no views on the transmutation of species. It is said, and very foolishly said, that Goethe turned from politics to art and

science, because politics disturbed him, and because he was too *selfish* to interest himself in the affairs of others. But this accusation is on a par with those ungenerous accusations which declare heterodoxy to be the shield of profligacy: as if doubts proceeded only from dissolute habits. How unselfish Goethe was, those best know who know him best; it would be well if we could say so much of many who devote themselves to patriotic schemes. Patriotism may be quite as selfish as Science or Art, even when it is a devout conviction; nor is it likely to be less selfish when, as so often happens, patriotism is only an uneasy pauperism.

That Goethe sincerely desired the good of mankind, and that he laboured for it in his way with a perseverance few have equalled, is surely enough to absolve him from the charge of selfishness, because his labours did not take the special direction of politics? What his opinions were is one thing, another thing his conduct. Jean Paul says, "he was more far-sighted than the rest of the world, for in the beginning of the French Revolution he despised the patriots as much as he did at the end." I do not detect any feeling so deep as contempt, either late or early; but it is certain that while Klopstock and others were madly enthusiastic at the opening of this terrible drama, they were as madly fanatical against it before its close; whereas Goethe seems to have held pretty much the same opinion throughout. It has been finely said: "Toute période historique a deux faces: l'une assez pauvre, assez ridicule, ou assez malheureuse, qui est tournée vers le calendrier du temps; l'autre grande, efficace, et sérieuse, qui regarde celui de l'éternité." Of no epoch is this more strikingly true than of the French Revolution. In it Goethe only saw the temporal aspect; his want of historical philosophy prevented him from seeing the eternal aspect.

There were three principles promulgated by the Republicans, which to him were profound absurdities. The first was the doctrine of equality; not simply of equality in the eye of the law (that he accepted), but of absolute equality. His study of Nature, no less than his study of men, led him, as it could not but lead him, to the conviction that each Individual is perfect in itself, and in so far equals the highest; but that no one Individual is exactly like another.

Gleich sei keiner dem Andern; doch gleich sei Jeder dem Höchsten.
Wie das zu machen? es sei Jeder vollendet in sich.

The second revolutionary principle was the doctrine of government by the people. He believed in no such governmental power. Even when you kill the king, he says, you do not know how to rule in his place.

> Sie gönnten Cäsar'n das Reich nicht,
> Und wussten's nicht zu regieren.

He pointed to the fate of France "as a lesson both to governors and the governed, but more even for the latter than the former. The rulers were destroyed, but who was there to protect the Many *against* the Many? The Mob became the Tyrant."

> Frankreichs traurig Geschick, die Grossen mögen's bedenken;
> Aber bedenken fürwahr sollen es Kleine noch mehr.
> Grosse gingen zu Grunde: doch wer beschützte die Menge
> Gegen die Menge? Da war Menge der Menge Tyrann.

What wonder then if he felt repulsion to all the "Apostles of Freedom," when on close scrutiny he found they all sought nothing but license?

> Alle Freiheits-Apostel, sie waren mir immer zuwider
> Willkür suchte doch nur Jeder am ende für sich.

The third revolutionary principle was, that political freedom is necessary to man. In the early days of authorship he had already spoken his conviction that such freedom was by no means necessary. In *Egmont* it reappears; and through life we find him insisting on the fact that no man *can* be free; the only freedom necessary is that which enables each to go about his business in security, to rear house and children, to move unconstrained in his small circle. It does not seem to occur to him that even this freedom is impossible without political freedom. It does not occur to him that police regulations affect the individual, and governmental regulations affect the nation.[1]

But while he was thus fundamentally opposed to the principles of the Revolution, and the government of the Many, it is equally clear that he had no sympathy with the

[1] This was Dr. Johnson's opinion: "Sir, I would not give a guinea to live under one form of government rather than another. It is of no moment to the happiness of an individual. Sir, the danger of the abuse of power is nothing to a private man. What Frenchman is prevented from passing his life as he pleases?"—BOSWELL, chap xxvi. No one thinks this opinion a proof of Johnson's heartless egoism.

Royalists; that he absolved neither their policy nor their acts. The madness of the Terrorists was to him no excuse for the duplicity of the Royalists. "No, you are not right. No, you must not deceive the Mob, because the Mob is wild and foolish. Wild and foolish are all Mobs which have been duped. Be only *upright* with them, and you will gradually train them to be men."

> Sage, thun wir nicht recht? Wir müssen den Pöbel betrügen.
> Sieh' nur, wie ungeschickt, sieh' nur, wie wild er sich zeigt!—
> Ungeschickt und wild sind alle rohen Betrognen;
> Seid nur *redlich*, und so führt ihn zum Menschlichen an.

Nor was all the wild oratory so irrational in his eyes as the Royalists proclaimed it. "These street orators seem to me also mad; but a madman will speak wisdom in freedom, when in slavery wisdom is dumb."

> Mir auch scheinen sie toll; doch redet ein Toller
> Weise Sprüche, wenn, ach! Weisheit im Sclaven verstummt.

To Eckermann he said: "A revolution is always the fault of the government, never of the people."

I might extend these remarks by showing how such political principles naturally grew up in the course of his education, and how he, in the forty-third year of his age, was not likely to become an apostle of Freedom, or to become deeply interested in political disturbances, especially at this period when he had completely emerged from the rebellious strivings of his youth, and had settled the aims of manhood. But enough has been said to show what his position truly was; and the reader who will not accept it with that impartiality which it claims, will certainly not accept it more readily, because he is told its origin and growth. The American who despises the Negro because he is black, will not despise him less on learning that the blackness is nothing but a peculiar modification of the pigment in the skin.

Goethe has himself written a diary of the "Campaign in France," [1] and if I had any belief in the reader's following the advice, I would advise him to read that work, and save some pages of this volume. In well-grounded suspicion that he will do nothing of the kind, I select a few details of interest, and string them on a thread of narrative.

[1] It has been translated by Mr. Robert Farie. The extracts which follow are from this translation.

The Allies entered France, believing the campaign would be a mere promenade. Longwy they were assured would soon surrender, and the people receive them with open arms. Longwy did surrender; but the people, so far from showing any disposition to welcome them, everywhere manifested the most determined resistance. The following passage will let us pretty clearly into the secret of Goethe's views. "Thus did the Prussians, Austrians, and a portion of the French, come to carry on their warlike operations on the French soil. By whose power and authority did they this? They might have done it in their own name. War had been partly declared against them—their league was no secret; but another pretext was invented. They took the field in the name of Louis XVI.: they exacted nothing, but they borrowed compulsorily. *Bons* had been printed, which the commander signed; but whoever had them in his possession filled them up at his pleasure, according to circumstances, and Louis XVI. was to pay. Perhaps, after the manifesto, nothing had so much exasperated the people against the monarchy as did this treatment. I was myself present at a scene which I remember as a most tragic one. Several shepherds, who had succeeded in uniting their flocks, in order to conceal them for safety in the forests or other retired places, being seized by some active patrols and brought to the army, were at first well received and kindly treated. They were asked who were the different proprietors: the flocks were separated and counted. Anxiety and fear, but still with some hope, fluctuated in the countenances of the worthy people. But when this mode of proceeding ended in the division of the flocks among the regiment and companies, whilst, on the other hand, the pieces of paper drawn on Louis XVI. were handed over quite civilly to their proprietors, and their woolly favourites were slaughtered at their feet by the impatient and hungry soldiers, I confess that my eyes and my soul have seldom witnessed a more cruel spectacle, and more profound manly suffering in all its gradations. The Greek tragedies alone have anything so purely, deeply pathetic."

Throughout these pages he is seen interesting himself in men, in science, in nature,—but not at all in the cause of the war. Soldiers fishing attract him to their side, and he is in ecstasies with the optical phenomena observed in the water. The bombardment of Verdun begins, and he enters a battery which is hard at work, but is driven out by the intolerable roar

of the cannon; on his way out he meets the Prince Reuss. "We walked up and down behind some vineyard walls, protected by them from the cannon-balls. After talking about sundry political matters by which we only got entangled in a labyrinth of hopes and cares, the prince asked me what I was occupied with at present, and was much surprised when, instead of speaking of tragedies and novels, excited by the phenomenon of to-day, I began to speak with great animation of the doctrine of colours." He has been reproached for this "indifference," and by men who extol Archimedes for having prosecuted his studies during the siege of Syracuse. It was as natural for Goethe to have his mind occupied with a curious phenomenon amid the roar of cannon, as it was for the soldiers to sing libertine songs when marching to death. The camp too afforded him, with its opportunities for patience, some good opportunities for observing mankind. He notices the injurious influence of war upon the mind: "You are daring and destructive one day, and humane and creative the next; you accustom yourself to phrases adapted to excite and keep alive hope in the midst of most desperate circumstances; by this means a kind of hypocrisy is produced of an unusual character, and is distinguished from the priestly and courtly kind."

After detailing some of the miseries of the campaigning life, he says: "Happy is he whose bosom is filled with a higher passion. The colour phenomenon observed at the spring never for a moment left me. I thought it over and over again, that I might be able to make experiments on it. I dictated to Vogel a loose sketch of my theory, and drew the figures afterwards. These papers I still possess with all the marks of the rainy weather, as witnesses of the faithful study in the dubious path I had entered." Very characteristic of his thirst for knowledge is this daring exposure of himself: "I had heard much of the cannon fever, and I wanted to know what kind of thing it was. Ennui and a spirit which every kind of danger excited to daring, nay, even to rashness, induced me to ride up quite coolly to the outwork of La Lune. This was again occupied by our people; but it presented the wildest aspect. The roofs were shot to pieces, the cornshocks scattered about, the bodies of men mortally wounded stretched upon them here and there, and occasionally a spent cannon-ball fell and rattled among the ruins of the tile-roofs. Quite alone, and left to myself, I rode away on the heights to the left, and could plainly survey the favourable position of the French: they

were standing in the form of a semicircle, in the greatest quiet and security; Kellermann, on the left wing, being the easiest to reach. . . . I had now arrived quite in the region where the balls were playing across me: the sound of them is curious enough, as if it were composed of the humming of tops, the gurgling of water, and the whistling of birds. They were less dangerous by reason of the wetness of the ground; wherever one fell it stuck fast. And thus my foolish experimental ride was secured against the danger at least of the balls rebounding. In these circumstances, I was soon able to remark that something unusual was taking place within me: I paid close attention to it, and still the sensation can be described only by similitude. It appeared as if you were in some extremely hot place, and at the same time quite penetrated by the heat of it, so that you feel yourself, as it were, quite one with the element in which you are. The eyes lose nothing of their strength or clearness; but it is as if the world had a kind of brown-red tint, which makes the situation, as well as the surrounding objects, more impressive. I was unable to perceive any agitation of the blood, but everything seemed rather to be swallowed up in the glow of which I speak. From this, then, it is clear in what sense this condition can be called a fever. It is remarkable, however, that the horrible uneasy feeling arising from it is produced in us solely through the ears. For the cannon thunder, the howling, whistling, crashing of the balls through the air, is the real cause of these sensations. After I had ridden back, and was in perfect security, I remarked with surprise that the glow was completely extinguished, and not the slightest feverish agitation was left behind. On the whole, this condition is one of the least desirable, as indeed among my dear and noble comrades, I found scarcely one who expressed a really passionate desire to try it. Thus the day had passed away; the French stood immovable, Kellermann having taken also a more advantageous position. Our people were withdrawn out of the fire, and it was exactly as if nothing had taken place. The greatest consternation was diffused among the army. That very morning they had thought of nothing short of spitting the whole of the French and devouring them; nay, I myself had been tempted to take part in this dangerous expedition from the unbounded confidence I felt in such an army and in the Duke of Brunswick; but now every one went about alone, nobody looked at his neighbour, or if it did happen, it was to

curse or to swear. Just as night was coming on, we had accidentally formed ourselves into a circle, in the middle of which the usual fire even could not be kindled: most of them were silent, some spoke, and in fact the power of reflection and judgment was awanting to all. At last I was called upon to say what I thought of it; for I had been in the habit of enlivening and amusing the troop with short sayings. This time I said: From this place and from this day forth commences a new era in the world's history, and you can all say that you were present at its birth."

The night brought rain and wind. They had lain on the ground behind a hill which protected them from the cutting wind, when it was proposed that they should bury themselves in the earth, covered by their cloaks. Holes were dug, and even Karl August himself did not refuse this "premature burial." Goethe wrapped himself in a blanket and slept better than Ulysses. In vain a colonel remonstrated, and pointed out to them that the French had a battery on the opposite hill with which they could bury the sleepers in real earnest. Sleep and warmth for the present were worth more than security against possible danger.

The defeat at Valmy, slight as it was, discouraged the Prussians, and exhilarated the French. The Prussians, startled at the cry of *vive la nation!* with which the republicans charged them, and finding themselves on a foreign territory without magazines, stores, or any preparations for a great conflict, perceived the mistake they had made, and began to retreat. It was doubtless a great relief to Goethe to hear that he had not much longer to endure the hardships of campaigning. He had no interest in the cause, and he had not gained, by closer contact with the leaders, a higher opinion of their characters. "Although I had already found among the diplomatic corps some genuine and valuable friends, I could not refrain, so often as I saw them in the midst of these great movements, from making some odd comparisons which forced themselves irresistibly upon my mind: they appeared to me as so many playhouse directors, who choose the pieces, distribute the parts, and move about unseen; whilst the actors, doing their best, and well prompted, have to commit the result of their exertions to fortune and the humour of the public."

He fell in with a collection of pamphlets, and among them were the instructions of the Notables. "The moderation of the people's demands at this time, the modesty with which

they were put forward, formed a striking contrast to the violence, insolence, and desperation of the present state of things. I read these papers with genuine emotion, and took copies of some of them."

His return was slow. Meanwhile, the arms of the French seemed everywhere victorious. Verdun and Longwy were once more occupied by the republicans. On the Rhine, Treves and Mainz had capitulated to Custine. Goethe says:

"In the midst of this misery and confusion, a missing letter of my mother's found me, and reminded me, in a strange manner, of many peaceful passages of my youth, and circumstances connected with my family and native town. My uncle, the Alderman Textor, had died, whose near relationship had excluded me, during his lifetime, from the honourable and useful post of a Frankfurt councillor; and now, in accordance with an established and laudable custom, they thought immediately of me, I being pretty far advanced among the Frankfurt graduates. My mother had been commissioned to ask me whether I would accept the office of councillor if I were chosen one of those to be balloted for, and the golden ball should fall to me? Such a question could not, perhaps, have arrived at a more singular time than the present; I was taken by surprise, and thrown back upon myself; a thousand images started up before me, and prevented me from forming any connected conclusion. But as a sick person or prisoner forgets for the moment his pains and troubles whilst listening to some tale which is related to him, so was I also carried back to other spheres and other times. I found myself in my grandfather's garden, where the espaliers, richly laden with nectarines, were wont to tempt the grandson's longing appetite; and only the threat of banishment from this paradise, only the hope of receiving from the good old grandfather's own hand the red-cheeked fruit when ripe, could restrain this longing within reasonable bounds till the proper time at length arrived. Then I saw the venerable old man busied with his roses, and carefully protecting his hands from the thorns with the antiquarian gloves, delivered up as tribute by tax-freed cities; like the noble Laertes,—all but in his longings and his sorrows. Afterwards I saw him in his mayor's robes, with gold chain, sitting on the throne-seat under the emperor's portrait; then, last of all, alas! in his dotage, for several years in his sick chair; and, finally, in his grave! On my last journey to Frankfurt, I had found my uncle in possession of the house, court, and garden;

as a worthy son of such a father, he attained, like him, the highest offices in the government of this free town. Here, in this intimate family circle, in this unchanged old well-known place, these boyhood recollections were vividly called forth, and brought with new emphasis before me. They were united also with other youthful feelings which I must not conceal. What citizen of a free city will deny that he has been ambitious of, sooner or later, rising to the dignity of councillor, alderman, or burgomaster; and has industriously and carefully striven, to the best of his ability, to attain to them, or perhaps other less important offices? For the pleasing thought of one day filling some post in the government is awakened early in the breast of every republican, and is liveliest and proudest in the soul of a boy. I could not, however, abandon myself long to these pleasing dreams of my childhood. But, too soon aroused, I surveyed the ominous locality which surrounded me, the melancholy circumstances which hemmed me in, and, at the same time, the cloudy obscured prospect in the direction of my native town. I saw Mentz in the hands of the French; Frankfurt threatened, if not already taken; the way to it obstructed; and within those walls, streets, squares, dwellings, the friends of my youth, and my relations, already overtaken perhaps by the same misfortunes from which I had seen Longwy and Verdun so cruelly suffer: who would have dared to rush headlong into the midst of such a state of things? But even in the happiest days of that venerable corporation, it would have been impossible for me to agree to this proposal; the reasons for which are easily explained. For twelve years I had enjoyed singular good fortune,—the confidence as well as the indulgence of the Duke of Weimar. This highly-gifted and cultivated prince was pleased to approve of my inadequate services, and gave me facilities for developing myself, which would have been possible under no other conditions in my native country. My gratitude was boundless, as well as my attachment to his august consort and mother, to his young family, and to a country to which I had not been altogether unserviceable. And had I not to think also of newly-acquired, highly-cultivated friends, and of so many other domestic enjoyments and advantages which had sprung from my favourable and settled position?"

A pleasant surprise was in store for him on his return to Weimar, in the shape of the house in the *Frauenplan*, which the duke had ordered to be rebuilt during his absence. This

house, considered a palace in those days, was a very munificent gift. It was not so far advanced in the reconstruction but that he could fashion it according to his taste; he arranged the splendid staircase, which was too large for the proportions of the house, but was a pleasant reminiscence of Italy.

The passer-by sees, through the windows, the busts of the Olympian gods, which stand there as symbols of calmness and completeness. On entering the hall, the eye rests upon two noble casts, in niches; or rests on the plan of Rome which decorates the wall, and on Meyer's *Aurora*, which colours the ceiling. The group of Ildefonso stands near the door; and on the threshold, welcome speaks in the word "SALVE." On the first floor we enter the Juno room, so called from the colossal bust of Juno which consecrates it; on the walls are the *Loggie* of Raphael. To the left of this stands the Reception room; in it is the harpsichord which furnished many a musical evening: Hummel and the young Mendelssohn played on it, Catalani and Sontag sang to it. Over the doors were Meyer's mythological cartoons; on the walls a copy of Aldobrandi's Wedding, with sketches of the great masters, and etchings. A large cabinet contained the engravings and gems; a side closet the bronze statuettes, lamps and vases. On the other side, connected with the Juno room and opposite the Reception room, were three small rooms. The first contained sketches of Italian masters, and a picture by Angelica Kaufmann. The second and third contained various specimens of earthenware, and an apparatus to illustrate the *Farbenlehre*. A prolongation of the Juno room backwards was the Bust room, with the busts of Schiller, Herder, Jacobi, Vos, Sterne, Byron, &c. To this succeeded, a few steps lower, and opening on the trellised staircase leading to the garden, a small room in which he was fond of dining with a small party. The garden was tastefully laid out. The summer-houses contained his natural history collections.

But the sanctuary of the house is the study, library, and bedroom. In the rooms just described the visitor sees the tokens of Goethe's position as minister and lover of Art. Compared with the Weimar standard of that day, these rooms were of palatial magnificence; but compared even with the Weimar standard, the rooms into which we now enter are of a more than bourgeois simplicity. Passing through an antechamber, where in cupboards stand his mineralogical collections, we enter the study, a low-roofed narrow room, somewhat

dark, for it is lighted only through two tiny windows, and furnished with a simplicity quite touching to behold.[1] In the centre stands a plain oval table of unpolished oak. No arm-chair is to be seen, no sofa, nothing which speaks of ease. A plain hard chair has beside it the basket in which he used to place his handkerchief. Against the wall, on the right, is a long pear-tree table, with book-shelves, on which stand lexicons and manuals. Here hangs a pincushion, venerable in dust, with the visiting cards, and other trifles, which death has made sacred. Here, also, a medallion of Napoleon, with this circumscription: "Scilicet immenso superest ex nomine multum." On the side wall, again, a bookcase with some works of poets. On the wall to the left is a long desk of soft wood, at which he was wont to write. On it lie the original manuscripts of *Götz* and the *Elegies*, and a bust of Napoleon, in milk-white glass, which in the light shimmers with blue and flame colour; hence prized as an illustration of the *Farbenlehre*. A sheet of paper with notes of contemporary history is fastened near the door, and behind this door schematic tables of music and geology. The same door leads into a bedroom, if bedroom it can be called, which no maid-of-all-work in England would accept without a murmur: it is a closet with a window. A simple bed, an arm-chair by its side, and a tiny washing-table with a small white basin on it, and a sponge, is all the furniture. To enter this room with any feeling for the greatness and goodness of him who slept here, and who here slept his last sleep, brings tears into our eyes, and makes the breathing deep.

From the other side of the study we enter the library; which should rather be called a lumber-room of books. Rough deal shelves hold the books, with paper labels on which are written "philosophy," "history," "poetry," &c., to indicate the classification. It was very interesting to look over this collection, and the English reader will imagine the feelings with which I took down a volume of *Taylor's Historic Survey of German Poetry*, sent by Carlyle, and found, in the piece of paper used as a book-mark, a bit of Carlyle's own handwriting.

Such was Goethe's House, during the many years of his occupation. At the time of which we now write it was of course somewhat different. The pleasure of reconstructing it,

[1] I describe it as it now stands, just as it was on the day of his death.

and the happiness of being once more at home with Christiane and his boy, able to pursue his studies in peace, were agreeable contrasts with his life in the camp. Meyer had returned from Italy, and came to live with him. Meyer's historical knowledge and true friendship made him very valuable. Optical studies alternated with discussions upon Art.

In this year, 1793, much was studied, but little produced. The comedy of the *Bürgergeneral* was written, that of the *Aufgeregten* was commenced, and the *Unterhaltungen der Ausgewanderten* planned. More important was the version of *Reinecke Fuchs*. All these are products of the French Revolution. The *Bürgergeneral* is really an amusing little piece, setting forth the absurdity of loud-mouthed patriotism; but it has greatly incensed all those who are angry with Goethe for not having espoused the cause of the Revolution. It is admitted that there was much in the Revolution which was hollow, foolish, and wicked; but the Revolution was too serious a thing to be treated only with ridicule. I quite agree with this opinion. But considering his sentiments and position, it seems to me quite natural that he who neither sympathised with the Revolution, nor absolved the Royalists; who could therefore neither write dithyrambs of freedom nor cries of indignation; who did not fully appreciate the historical importance of the event, and only saw its temporal and *personal* aspect, should have taken to Comedy, and to Comedy alone. He did not write invectives; he did not write satires. He saw the comic aspect, and he smiled. As events deepened the shadows of the picture, he, too, became more serious. The *Aufgeregten*, which was never completed, would have given a complete expression to his political views. *Reinecke Fuchs* was commenced as a relief; it was turned to as an "unholy World-bible," wherein the human race exhibited its unadorned and unfeigned animal nature with marvellous humour, in contrast to the bloody exhibition which the Reign of Terror then offered as a spectacle to the world.

He was now, May 1794, once more to join the army which was besieging Mainz. The narrative, which is also to be found in Mr. Farie's translation, presents him in no new aspect, and may therefore be passed over with this allusion. The city capitulated on the 24th of July, and on the 28th of August—his forty-fifth birthday—he re-entered Weimar; to finish *Reinecke Fuchs*, and to pursue his scientific researches. "I go home," he wrote to Jacobi, "where I can draw a circle

round me, in which nothing can enter, save Love and Friendship, Science and Art. I will not complain of the past, for I have learnt much that was valuable." Experience is the only schoolmaster; although, as Jean Paul says, "the school-fees are somewhat heavy." Goethe was always willing to pay the fees, if he could but get the instruction.

BOOK THE SIXTH

1794 TO 1805

"Für mich war es ein neuer Frühling, in welchem alles froh neben einander keimte, und aus aufgeschlossenen Samen und Zweigen hervorging."

Denn Er war unser! Mag das stolze Wort
Den lauten Schmerz gewaltig übertönen.
Er mochte sich bei uns, im sichern Port
Nach wildem Sturm zum Dauernden gewöhnen.
Indessen schritt sein Geist gewaltig fort
Ins Ewige des Wahren, Guten, Schönen,
Und hinter ihm, im wesenlosen Scheine
Lag, was uns Alle bändigt, das Gemeine!

GOETHE, OF SCHILLER.

CHAPTER I

GOETHE AND SCHILLER

THERE are few nobler spectacles than the friendship of two great men; and the History of Literature presents nothing comparable to the friendship of Goethe and Schiller. The friendship of Montaigne and Etienne de la Boëtie was, perhaps, more passionate and entire; but it was the union of two kindred natures, which from the first moment discovered their affinity, not the union of two rivals incessantly contrasted by partisans, and originally disposed to hold aloof from each other. Rivals Goethe and Schiller were, and are; natures in many respects directly antagonistic; chiefs of opposing camps, and brought into brotherly union only by what was highest in their natures and their aims.

To look on these great rivals was to see at once their profound dissimilarity. Goethe's beautiful head had the calm victorious grandeur of the Greek ideal; Schiller's the earnest beauty of a Christian looking towards the Future. The massive brow, and large-pupilled eyes,—like those given by Raphael to the infant Christ, in the matchless Madonna di San Sisto,—the strong and well-proportioned features, lined indeed by thought and suffering, yet showing that thought and suffering have troubled, but not vanquished, the strong man, —a certain healthy vigour in the brown skin, and an inde-

scribable something which shines out from the face, make Goethe a striking contrast to Schiller, with his eager eyes, narrow brow,—tense and intense,—his irregular features lined by thought and suffering, and weakened by sickness. The one *looks*, the other *looks out*. Both are majestic; but one has the majesty of repose, the other of conflict. Goethe's frame is massive, imposing; he seems much taller than he is. Schiller's frame is disproportioned, he seems less than he is. Goethe holds himself stiffly erect; the long-necked Schiller "walks like a camel."[1] Goethe's chest is like the torso of the Theseus; Schiller's is bent, and has lost a lung.

A similar difference is traceable in details. "An air that was beneficial to Schiller acted on me like poison," Goethe said to Eckermann. "I called on him one day, and as I did not find him at home, I seated myself at his writing-table to note down various matters. I had not been seated long, before I felt a strange indisposition steal over me, which gradually increased, until at last I nearly fainted. At first I did not know to what cause I should ascribe this wretched and to me unusual state, until I discovered that a dreadful odour issued from a drawer near me. When I opened it, I found to my astonishment that it was full of rotten apples. I immediately went to the window and inhaled the fresh air, by which I was instantly restored. Meanwhile his wife came in, and told me that the drawer was always filled with rotten apples, because the scent was beneficial to Schiller, and he could not live or work without it."

As another and not unimportant detail, characterising the healthy and unhealthy practice of literature, it may be added that Goethe wrote in the freshness of morning, entirely free from stimulus; Schiller worked in the feverish hours of night, stimulating his languid brain with coffee and champagne.

In comparing one to a Greek ideal, the other to a Christian ideal, it has already been implied that one was the representative of Realism, the other of Idealism. Goethe has himself indicated the capital distinction between them: Schiller was animated with the idea of Freedom; Goethe, on the contrary, was animated with the idea of Nature. This distinction runs

[1] This picturesque phrase was uttered by Tieck, the sculptor, to Rauch, from whom I heard it. Let me add that Schiller's brow is called in the text, "narrow," in defiance of Dannecker's bust, with which I compared Schiller's skull, and found that the sculptor, as usual, had grossly departed from truth in his desire to idealise. Artists always believe they know better than Nature.

through their works: Schiller always pining for something greater than Nature, wishing to make men Demigods; Goethe always striving to let Nature have free development, and produce the highest forms of Humanity. The Fall of Man was to Schiller the happiest of all events, because thereby men fell away from pure *instinct* into conscious *freedom;* with this sense of freedom came the possibility of Morality. To Goethe this seemed paying a price for Morality which was higher than Morality was worth; he preferred the ideal of a condition wherein Morality was unnecessary. Much as he might prize a good police, he prized still more a society in which a police would never be needed.

But while the contrast between these two is the contrast of real and ideal, of *objective* and *subjective* tendencies, apparent when we consider the men in their totality, this is only true of them relatively to each other. To speak of Goethe as a Realist, pure and simple, is erroneous; and to speak of Schiller as an Idealist, pure and simple, is not less so. Gervinus strikingly remarks that, compared with Nicolai or Lichtenberg, Goethe appears as an Idealist; compared with Kant and his followers, Schiller appears as a Realist. If Schiller, in comparison with Goethe, must be called a self-conscious poet, in comparison with the Romanticists, he is *naïve* and instinctive. Indeed, all such classifications are necessarily imperfect, and must only be used as artifices of language, by which certain general and predominant characteristics may be briefly indicated. Goethe and Schiller were certainly different natures; but had they been so fundamentally opposed, as it is the fashion to consider them, they could never have become so intimately united. They were opposite and allied, with somewhat of the same differences and resemblances as are traceable in the Greek and Roman Mars. In the Greek Mythology the God of War had not the prominent place he attained in Rome; and the Greek sculptors, when they represented him, represented him as the victor returning, after conflict, to repose: holding in his hand the olive branch, while at his feet sate Eros. The Roman sculptors, or those who worked for Rome, represented Mars as the God of War in all his terrors, in the very act of leading on to victory. But, different as these two conceptions were, they were both conceptions of the God of War; Goethe may be likened to the one, and Schiller to the other: both were kindred spirits united by a common purpose.

Having touched upon the points of contrast, it will now be

needful to say a word on those points of resemblance which served as the basis of their union. It will be unnecessary to instance the obvious points which two such poets must have had in common; the mention of some less obvious will suffice for our present purpose. They were both profoundly convinced that Art was no luxury of leisure, no mere amusement to charm the idle, or relax the careworn; but a mighty influence, serious in its aims although pleasurable in its means; a sister of Religion, by whose aid the great world-scheme was wrought into reality. This was with them no mere sonorous phrase. They were thoroughly in earnest. They believed that Culture would raise Humanity to its full powers; and they, as artists, knew no Culture equal to that of Art. It was probably a perception of this belief that made Karl Grün say, "Goethe was the most ideal Idealist the earth hath ever borne; an *æsthetic* Idealist." And hence the origin of the wide-spread error that Goethe "only looked at life as an artist," *i.e.* cared only for human nature inasmuch as it afforded him materials for Art; a point which will be more fully examined hereafter. (*Book* vii. *ch.* 4.) The phases of their development had been very similar, and had brought them to a similar standing-point. They both began rebelliously; they both emerged from titanic lawlessness in emerging from youth to manhood. In Italy the sight of ancient masterpieces completed Goethe's metamorphosis. Schiller had to work through his in the gloomy north, and under the constant pressure of anxieties. He, too, pined for Italy, and thought the climate of Greece would make him a poet. But his intense and historical mind found neither stimulus nor enjoyment in plastic Art. Noble men and noble deeds were the food which nourished his great soul. "His poetic purification came from moral ideals; whereas in Goethe the moral ideal came from the artistic."[1] Plutarch was his Bible. The ancient masterpieces of poetry came to him in this period of his development, to lead him gently by the hand onwards to the very point where Goethe stood. He read the Greek tragedians in wretched French translations, and with such aid laboriously translated the *Iphigenia* of Euripides. Homer, in Voss's faithful version, became to him what Homer long was to Goethe. And how thoroughly he threw himself into the ancient world may be seen in his poem, *The Gods of Greece*.

[1] *Gervinus*, v. p. 152.

Like Goethe, he had found his religious opinions gradually separating him more and more from the orthodox Christians; and, like Goethe, he had woven for himself a system out of Spinoza, Kant, and the Grecian sages.

At this time, then, that these two men seemed most opposed to each other, and *were* opposed in feeling, they were gradually drawing closer and closer in the very lines of their development, and a firm basis was prepared for solid and enduring union. Goethe was five-and-forty, Schiller five-and-thirty. Goethe had much to give, which Schiller gratefully accepted; and if he could not in return influence the developed mind of his great friend, or add to the vast stores of its knowledge and experience, he could give him that which was even more valuable, *sympathy* and *impulse*. He excited Goethe to work. He withdrew him from the engrossing pursuit of science, and restored him once more to poetry. He urged him to finish what was already commenced, and not to leave his works all fragments. They worked together with the same purpose and with the same earnestness, and their union is the most glorious episode in the lives of both, and remains as an eternal exemplar of a noble friendship.

Of all the tributes to Schiller's greatness which an enthusiastic people has pronounced, there is perhaps nothing which carries a greater weight of tenderness and authority than Goethe's noble praise. It is a very curious fact that in the history of Shakspeare, that he is not known to have written a single line in praise of any contemporary poet. The fashion of those days was for each poet to write verses in eulogy of his friends; and the eulogies written by Shakspeare's friends are such as to satisfy even the idolatry of admirers in our day; but there exists no eulogy, no single verse, from him whose eulogy was more worth having than that of all the rest put together.[1] Had literary gossip, pregnant with literary malice, produced the absurd impression that Shakspeare was cold, selfish, and self-idolatrous, this curious fact would have been made a damning proof. I have so often in these pages used Shakspeare as a contrast to Goethe, that it would be wrong not to contrast him also on this point. Of all the failings

[1] There is, indeed, a couplet in the *Passionate Pilgrim* which names Spenser with high praise; but it is doubtful whether the *Passionate Pilgrim* is anything but the attempt of a bookseller to palm off on the public a work which Shakspeare never wrote; and it is certain that Shakspeare is *not* the author of the sonnet in which Spenser is mentioned, that sonnet having been previously published by a Richard Barnfield.

usually attributed to literary men, Goethe had the least of what could be called jealousy; of all the qualities which sit gracefully on greatness, he had the most of magnanimity. The stream of time will carry down to after ages the memory of several whose names will live only in his praise; and the future students of Literary History will have no fact to note of Goethe similar to that noted of Shakspeare: they will see how enthusiastic was his admiration of his rivals, Schiller, Voss, and Herder, and how quick he was to perceive the genius of Scott, Byron, Béranger, and Manzoni.

But I must quit this attempt to characterise the two rivals, and proceed to narrate their active co-operation in the common work.

While the great world was agitated to its depths by the rapid march of the Revolution, the little world of Weimar pursued the even tenor of its way, very much as if nothing concerning the destinies of mankind were then in action. Because Goethe is the greatest figure in Germany, the eyes of all Germans are turned towards him, anxious to see how he bore himself in those days. They see him—not moving with the current of ideas, not actively sympathising with events; and they find no better explanation of what they see than the brief formula that "he was an Egoist." If they look, however, at his companions and rivals, they will find a similar indifference. Wieland, the avowed enemy of all despotism, was frightened by the Reign of Terror into demanding a dictatorship. Nor—strange as it may appear—was Schiller, the poet of Freedom, the creator of Posa, more favourable to the French than Goethe himself. The Republic had honoured him in a singular way. It had forwarded him the diploma of citizenship; a dignity, conferred at the same time on Washington, Franklin, Tom Paine, Pestalozzi, Campe, and Anacharsis Clootz! The diploma signed by Danton and Roland, dated 6th September 1792, is now preserved in the Library at Weimar, where visitors will notice the characteristic accuracy of the French in the spelling of Schiller's name—*à Monsieur Gille, publiciste allemand.* This honour Schiller owed to his *Robbers*, or as his admirers called it, *Robert, chef de Brigands.* From the very first he had looked with no favourable eye on the Revolution, and the trial of Louis XVI. produced so deep an impression on him, that he commenced an address to the National Convention, which was however outrun by rapid events. Like Wieland, he saw no hope but in a dictatorship.

Such being the position of the leading minds, we are not to wonder if we find them pursuing their avocations just as if nothing were going on in France or elsewhere. Weimar could play no part in European politics. The men of Weimar had their part to play in Literature, through which they saw a possible regeneration. Believing in the potent efficacy of culture, they devoted themselves with patriotism to that. A glance at the condition of German Literature will show how patriotism had noble work to do in such a cause.

The Leipsic Fair was a rival to our Minerva Press: Chivalry romances, Robber-stories and Spectre-romances, old German superstitions, Augustus Lafontaine's sentimental family-pictures, and Plays of the *Sturm und Drang* style, swarmed into the sacred places of Art, like another invasion of the Goths. On the stage Kotzebue was king. The *Stranger* was filling every theatre, and moving the sensibilities of a too readily-moved pit. Klopstock was becoming more and more oracular, less and less poetical. Jean Paul indeed gave signs of power and originality; but except Goethe and Schiller, Voss, who had written his *Luise* and translated *Homer*, alone seemed likely to form the chief of a school of which the nation might be proud.

It was in this state of things that Schiller conceived the plan of a periodical—*Die Horen*,—memorable in many ways to all students of German Literature. Goethe, Herder, Kant, Fichte, the Humboldts, Klopstock, Jacobi, Engel, Meyer, Garve, Matthisson, and others, were to form a phalanx whose irresistible might should speedily give them possession of the land. "The more the narrow interests of the present," says Schiller, in the announcement of this work, "keep the minds of men on the stretch, and subjugate while they narrow, the more imperious is the need to free them through the higher universal interest in that which is purely *human* and removed beyond the influences of time, and thus once more to re-unite the divided political world under the banner of Truth and Beauty."

Such was the undertaking which formed the first link in the friendship of Goethe and Schiller. How they stood towards each other has been seen in the seventh chapter of the preceding Book. One day, in May 1794, they met, coming from a lecture given by Batsch at the Natural History Society in Jena; in talking over the matter, Goethe, with pleased surprise, heard Schiller criticise the fragmentary Method which

teachers of Science uniformly adopted. When they arrived at Schiller's house, Goethe went in with him, expounding the Theory of Metamorphoses with great warmth. Taking up a pen, he made a rapid sketch of the typical plant. Schiller listened with great attention, seizing each point clearly and rapidly, but shaking his head at last, and saying: "This is not an observation, it is an Idea." Goethe adds: "My surprise was painful, for these words clearly indicated the point which separated us. The opinions he had expressed in his essay on *Anmuth und Würde* recurred to me, and my old repulsion was nearly revived. But I mastered myself, and answered that I was delighted to find I had Ideas without knowing it, and to be able to contemplate them with my own eyes." There can be no question of Schiller having been in the right, though perhaps both he and Goethe assigned an exclusively subjective meaning to the phrase. The typical plant, Goethe knew very well, was not to be found in nature; but he thought it was *revealed* in plants.[1] Because he arrived at the belief in a type through direct observation and comparison, and not through *a priori* deduction; he maintained that this type was a perception (*Anschauung*), not an idea. Probably Schiller was more impressed with the metaphysical nature of the conception than with the physical evidence on which it had been formed. The chasm between them was indeed both broad and deep; and Goethe truly says: "It was in a conflict between the Object and the Subject, the greatest and most interminable of all conflicts, that began our friendship, which was eternal." A beginning had been made. Schiller's wife, for whom Goethe had a strong regard, managed to bring them together; and the proposed journal, *Die Horen*, brought their activities and sympathies into friendly union. Rapid was the growth of this friendship, and on both sides beneficial. Schiller paid a fortnight's visit at Weimar; Goethe was frequently in Jena. They found that they agreed not only on subjects, but also on the mode of looking at them. "It will cost me a long time to unravel all the ideas you have awakened in me," writes Schiller, "but I hope none will be lost."

Regretting that he could not give the novel *Wilhelm Meister* for the *Horen*, having already promised it to a publisher, Goethe nevertheless sends Schiller the manuscript from the

[1] Goethe, speaking of his labours in another department, says, "I endeavoured to find the Primitive Animal (Urthier), in other words, the Conception, the Idea of an Animal." *Werke*, xxxvi. p. 14.

third book onwards, and gratefully profits by the friendly criticism with which he reads it. He gave him, however, the two *Epistles*, the *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*, the *Roman Elegies*, and the essay on *Literary Sansculottism*.

The mention of *Wilhelm Meister* leads us to retrace our steps a few months, when the active interest he took in the direction of the Weimar Theatre, revived his interest in this novel, over which he had dawdled so many years. He finished it; but he finished it in quite a different spirit from that in which it was commenced, and I do not at all feel that Schiller's criticisms really were of advantage to it. But of this anon.

Towards the end of July he went to Dessau, and from thence to Dresden, where he strove with Meyer to forget the troubles of the time in contemplation of the treasures of Art. "All Germany," he writes to Fritz von Stein, "is divided into anxious, croaking, or indifferent men. For myself I find nothing better than to play the part of Diogenes, and roll my tub." He returned, and daily grew more and more intimate with Schiller. They began the friendly interchange of letters, which have since been published in six volumes, known to every student. In Goethe's letters to other friends at this time, 1795, is noticed an inward contentment, which he rightly attributes to this new influence. "It was a new spring to me," he says, "in which all seeds shot up, and gaily blossomed in my nature." Contact with Schiller's earnest mind and eager ambition, gave him the stimulus he so long had wanted. The ordinary spurs to an author's activity—the need of money or the need of fame—pricked him not. He had no need of money; of fame he had enough; and there was no nation to be appealed to. But Schiller's restless striving, and the emulation it excited, acted like magic upon him; and the years of their friendship were for both the most productive. In an unpublished letter from Frau von Stein to Charlotte von Lengefeld, dated 1795, there is this noticeable sentence: "I also feel that Goethe is drawing nearer to Schiller, for he has appeared to be now a little more aware of my existence. He seems to me like one who has been shipwrecked for some years on one of the South Sea Islands, and is now beginning to think of returning home." By the shipwreck is of course meant Christiane Vulpius; and by home, the salon of the Frau von Stein. It is possible, however, to reverse these positions.

On the 1st of November another son is born to Goethe. He bids Schiller to bring his contribution in the shape of a daughter, that the poetic family may be united and increased by a marriage. But this child only lives a few days. On the 20th, Schiller writes: "We have deeply grieved for your loss. You can console yourself with the thought that it has come so early, and thus more affects your *hopes* than your love." Goethe replies: "One knows not whether in such cases it is better to let sorrow take its natural course, or to repress it by the various aids which culture offers us. If one decides upon the latter method, *as I always do*, one is only strengthened for a moment; and I have observed that nature always asserts her right through some other crisis."

No other crisis seems to have come in this case. He was active in all directions. Göttling, in Jena, had just come forward with the discovery that phosphorus burns in nitrogen; and this drew Goethe's thoughts to Chemistry, which for a time was his recreation. Anatomy never lost its attraction: and through the snow on bitter mornings he was seen trudging to Loder's lectures, with a diligence young students might have envied. The Humboldts, especially Alexander, with whom he was in active correspondence, kept alive his scientific ardour; and it is to their energetic advice that we owe the essays on Comparative Anatomy. He was constantly talking to them on these subjects, eloquently expounding his ideas, which would probably never have been put to paper had they not urged him to it. True it is that he did not finish the essays; and only in 1820 did he print what he had written.[1] These conversations with the Humboldts embraced a wide field. "It is not perhaps presumptuous to suppose," he says, "that many ideas have thence, through *tradition*, become the common property of science, and have blossomed successfully, although the gardener who scattered the seeds is never named."

Poetical plans were numerous; some of them were carried into execution. A tragedy on the subject of "Prometheus Unbound" was begun, but never continued. The Hymn to Apollo was translated. *Alexis und Dora*, the *Vier Jahres Zeiten*, and several of the smaller poems, were written and

[1] This detail is important, as indeed every question of date must be in science. When the Essays were published, the principal ideas had already been brought before the world; when the Essays were written, the ideas were extraordinary novelties.

given to Schiller for the *Horen* or the *Musen Almanach;* not to mention translations from Madame de Stael, and the "Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini." But the product of this time which made the greatest sensation was the *Xenien.*

It has already been indicated that the state of German Literature was anything but brilliant, and that public taste was very low. The *Horen* was started to raise that degraded taste by an illustrious union of "All the Talents." It came—was seen—and made *no* conquest. Mediocrity in arms assailed it in numerous journals. Stupidity, against which, as Schiller says, "the gods themselves are powerless," was not in the least moved. The *Horen* was a double failure, for it failed to pay its expenses, and it failed to excite any great admiration in the few who purchased it. Articles by the poorest writers were attributed to the greatest. Even Frederick Schlegel attributed a story by Caroline von Wolzogen to Goethe. The public was puzzled—and somewhat *bored.* "All the Talents" have never yet succeeded in producing a successful periodical, and there are some good reasons for supposing that they never will. The *Horen* met with the fate of *The Liberal,* in which Byron, Shelley, Leigh Hunt, Moore, Hazlitt and Peacock were engaged. But the two great poets who had taken the greatest interest in it were not to be ignored with impunity. They resolved on a literary vengeance, and their vengeance was the *Xenien.*

A small library might be collected of the works called forth by these epigrams; but for the English reader the topic necessarily has but slender interest. He is not likely to exclaim with Boas: "On the 31st of October 1517, was commenced the Reformation of the Church in Germany; in October 1796, commenced the Reformation of Literature. As Luther published his Theses in Wittenberg, so Goethe and Schiller published their *Xenien.* No one before had the courage so to confront sacred Dulness, so to lash all Hypocrisy." One sees that some such castigation was needed, by the loud howling which was set up from all quarters; but that any important purification of Literature was thereby effected is not so clear.

The idea was Goethe's. It occurred to him while reading the *Xenia* of Martial; and having thrown off a dozen epigrams, he sent them to Schiller for the *Musen Almanach.* Schiller was delighted, but said there must be a hundred of them, chiefly directed against the journals which had attacked

the *Horen;* the hundred was soon thought too small a number, and it was resolved to have a thousand. They were written in the most thorough spirit of collaboration, the idea being sometimes given by one, and the form by another; one writing the first verse, and leaving the second to the other. There is no accurate separation of their epigrams, giving each to each, although critics have made an approximative selection; and Maltzahn has recently aided this by collation of the original manuscripts.

The sensation was tremendous. All the bad writers in the kingdom, and they were an army, felt themselves personally aggrieved. The pietists and sentimentalists were ridiculed; the pedants and pedagogues were lashed. So many persons and so many opinions were scarified, that no wonder if the public ear was startled at the shrieks of pain. Counterblasts were soon heard, and the *Xenien-Sturm* will remain as a curious episode of the war of the "many foolish heads against the two wise ones." "It is amusing," writes Goethe to Schiller, "to see what has really irritated these fellows, what they believe will irritate us, how empty and low is their conception of others, how they aim their arrows merely at the outworks, and how little they dream of the inaccessible citadel inhabited by men who are in earnest." The sensation produced by the *Dunciad* and by the *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* was mild compared with the sensation produced by the *Xenien;* although the wit and sarcasm of the *Xenien* is as milk and water compared with the vitriol of the *Dunciad* and the *English Bards.*

Read by no stronger light than that which the appreciation of wit *as* wit throws on these epigrams, and not by the strong light of personal indignity, or personal malice, the *Xenien* will appear very weak productions, and the sensation they excited must appear somewhat absurd. But a similar disappointment meets the modern reader of the *Anti-Jacobin.* We know that its pages were the terror of enemies, the malicious joy of friends. We know that it was long held as a repertory of English wit, and the "Days of the *Anti-Jacobin*" are mentioned by Englishmen as the days of the *Xenien* are by Germans. Yet now that the *personal* spice is removed, we read both of them with a feeling of wonder at their enormous influence. In the *Xenien* there are a few epigrams which still titillate the palate, for they have the salt of wit in their lines. There are many also which have no pretension to wit, but are

admirable expressions of critical canons and philosophic ideas. If good taste could not be created by attacks on bad taste, there was at any rate some hope that such a castigation would make certain places sore; and in this sense the *Xenien* did good service.

The publication of *Wilhelm Meister* falls within this period, and we may now proceed to examine it as a work of art.

CHAPTER II

WILHELM MEISTER

A FRENCHMAN, an Englishman, and a German were commissioned, it is said, to give the world the benefit of their views on that interesting animal the Camel. Away went the Frenchman to the *Jardin des Plantes*, spent an hour there in rapid investigation, returned, and wrote a *feuilleton*, in which there was no phrase the Academy could blame, but also no phrase which added to the general knowledge. He was perfectly satisfied, however, and said, *Le voilà, le chameau!* The Englishman packed up his tea-caddy and a magazine of comforts; pitched his tent in the East; remained there two years studying the Camel in its habits; and returned with a thick volume of facts, arranged without order, expounded without philosophy, but serving as valuable materials for all who came after him. The German, despising the frivolity of the Frenchman, and the unphilosophic matter-of-factness of the Englishman, retired to his study, there *to construct the Idea of a Camel from out of the depths of his Moral Consciousness*. And he is still at it.

With this myth the reader is introduced into the very heart of that species of criticism which, flourishing in Germany, is also admired in some English circles, under the guise of Philosophical Criticism, and which has been exercised upon *Wilhelm Meister* almost as mercilessly as upon *Faust*.

My readers, it is hoped, will not generalise this remark so as to include within it all German critics and men of culture; such an extension of the remark would be almost as unfair in Germany as in England. There are many excellent critics in Germany, and excellent judges who are not critics; it would be too bad if our laughter at pedants and pretenders were to

extend to these. But no one acquainted with Germany and German literature can fail to recognise the wide-spread and pernicious influence of a mistaken application of Philosophy to Art: an application which becomes a tyranny on the part of real thinkers, and a hideous absurdity on the part of those who merely echo the jargon of the schools. It is this criticism which has stifled Art in Germany, and ruined many a young artist who showed promise. It is a fundamental mistake to translate Art into the formulas of Philosophy, and then christen the translation the Philosophy of Art. The critic is never easy until he has shifted his ground. He is not content with the work as it presents itself. He endeavours to get *behind* it, beneath it, into the depths of the soul which produced it. He is not satisfied with what the artist has *given*, he wants to know what he *meant*. He guesses at the meaning; the more remote the meaning lies on the wandering tracks of thought, the better pleased is he with the discovery; and he sturdily rejects every simple explanation in favour of this exegetical Idea. Thus the phantom of Philosophy hovers mistily before Art, concealing Art from our eyes. It is true the Idea said to underlie the work was never conceived by any one before, least of all by the Artist; but *that* is the glory of the critic: he is proud of having plunged into the depths. Of all horrors to the German of this school there is no horror like that of the surface—it is more terrible to him than cold water.

Wilhelm Meister has been the occasion of so many ideas constructed out of the depths of moral consciousness, it has been made to *mean* such wondrous (and contradictory) things, that its author must have been astonished at his unsuspecting depth. There is some obvious symbolism in the latter part, which I have little doubt was introduced to flatter the German tendency; as I have no sort of doubt that its introduction has spoiled a masterpiece. The obvious want of unity in the work has given free play to the interpreting imagination of critics. Hildebrand boldly says that the "Idea of *Wilhelm Meister* is precisely this—that it has no Idea,"—which does not greatly further our comprehension.

Instead of trying to discover the Idea, let us stand fast by historical criticism, and see what light may be derived from a consideration of the origin and progress of the work, which, from first to last, occupied him during twenty years. The first six books—beyond all comparison the best and most im-

portant—were written before the journey to Italy: they were written during the active theatrical period when Goethe was manager, poet, and actor. The contents of these books point very clearly to his intention of representing in them the whole nature, aims, and art of the comedian; and in a letter to Merck he expressly states that it is his intention to portray the actor's life. Whether at the same time he meant the actor's life to be symbolical, cannot be positively determined. That may, or may not, have been a *secondary* intention. The primary intention is very clear. Nor had he, at this time, yielded to the seduction of attempting the symbolical in Art. He sang as the bird sings; his delight was in healthy objective fact; he had not yet donned the robes of an Egyptian priest, or learned to speak in hieroglyphs. He was seriously interested in acting, and the actor's art. He thought the life of a player a good framework for certain pictures, and he chose it. Afterwards, the idea of making these pictures symbolical certainly did occur to him, and he concluded the romance upon this after-thought.

Gervinus emphatically records his disbelief of the opinion that Goethe originally intended to make Wilhelm *unfit* for success as an actor; and I think a careful perusal of the novel, even in its present state, will convince the reader that Gervinus is right. Instead of Wilhelm's career being represented as the development of a false tendency—the obstinate cultivation of an imperfect talent, such as was displayed in Goethe's own case with respect to plastic Art—one sees, in spite of some subsequent additions thrown in to modify the work according to an after-thought, that Wilhelm has a true inborn tendency, a talent which ripens through practice. With the performance of *Hamlet* the apogee is reached; and here ends the first plan. Having written so far, Goethe went to Italy. We have seen the changes which came over his views. After a lapse of ten years he resumes the novel; and having in that period lived through the experience of a false tendency —having seen the vanity of cultivating an imperfect talent— he *alters* the plan of his novel, makes it symbolical of the erroneous striving of youth towards culture; invents the cumbrous machinery of a Mysterious Family, whose watchful love has guided all his steps, and who have encouraged him in error that they might lead him through error unto truth. This is what in his old age he declared—in the *Tag und Jahres Hefte*, and in his letters to Schiller—to have been the plan upon

which it was composed. "It sprang," he says, "from a dim feeling of the great truth that Man often seeks that which Nature has rendered impossible to him. All dilettantism and false tendency is of this kind. Yet it is possible that every false step should lead to an inestimable good, and some intimation of this is given in *Meister*." To Eckermann he said: "The work is one of the most incalculable productions; I *myself can scarcely be said to have the key to it.* People seek a central point, and that is difficult to find; nor is it even right. I should think a *rich manifold life brought close to our eyes would be enough in itself without any express tendency*, which, after all, is only for the intellect." This is piercing to the very kernel. The origin of the symbolical matter, however, lies in the demands of the German intellect for such food. "But," he continues, "if anything of the kind is insisted upon, it will, perhaps, be found in the words which Frederic at the end addresses to the hero, when he says: 'Thou seem'st to me like Saul, the son of Kish, who went out to seek his father's asses, and found a kingdom.' Keep only to this; for, in fact, the whole work seems to say nothing more than that man, despite all his follies and errors, being led by a higher hand, reaches some happy goal at last."

Schiller, who knew only the *second* plan, objected, and with justice, to the disproportionate space allotted to the players. "It looks occasionally," he wrote, "as if you were writing *for* players, whereas your purpose is only to write *of* them. The care you bestow on certain little details of this subject and individual excellencies of the art, which although important to the player and manager, are not so to the public, give to your representation the false appearance of a particular design; and even one who does not infer such a design, might accuse you of being too much under the influence of a private preference for these subjects." If we accept the later plan, we must point out the inartistic composition, which allows five books of Introduction, one of disconnected Episode, and only two of Development. This is against all proportion. Yet Frederick Schlegel expressly says that the two last books are properly speaking the whole work; the others are but preparations.[1]

The purpose, or rather purposes, of *Wilhelm Meister* seem first, the rehabilitation of Dramatic Art; and secondly, the

[1] *Charakteristiken und Kritiken*, p. 168. Schlegel's review is well worth reading as an example of ingenious criticism, and praise artfully presented under the guise of analysis.

theory of Education. The last two books are full of Education. Very wise and profound thoughts are expressed, and these thoughts redeem the triviality of the machinery. But otherwise these books are lamentably inferior to the first six books in style, in character, in interest. On the whole, *Wilhelm Meister* is, indeed, "an incalculable work." Several readings have intensified my admiration (which at first was tepid), and intensified also my sense of its defects. The beauties are ever new, ever wonderful; the faults press themselves upon notice more sharply than they did at first.

The story opens with great dramatic vivacity. Mariana and old Barbara stand before us, sketched with Shakspearian sharpness of outline and truth of detail. The whole episode is admirable, if we except the lengthy narrative in which Wilhelm details his early passion for the Marionnettes, which has probably made some readers as drowsy as it made Mariana. There is something painfully trivial in his long narrative; apart from its artistic error as a digression. The contrast between Wilhelm and the prosaic Werner is felicitously touched. But the happiest traits are those which show Wilhelm's want of decision, and incapacity of finishing the work he has begun; traits which indicate his peculiar temperament. Indeed throughout the novel Wilhelm is not the hero, but a creature of the incidents. He is a mere nose-of-wax. And this is artfully designed. Egmont and Goetz are heroes: living in stormy times, they remain altogether uninfluenced by the times. The poet represents noble characters, and he represents them in their strong, clear individuality, superior to circumstance. With Wilhelm, he shows how some characters change, obedient to every external influence. The metamorphoses of Wilhelm would have been impossible with a character such as Egmont. This seems so obvious, that one is surprised to find critics objecting to the vacillating character of Wilhelm, as if it were a fault in art. It would be as reasonable to object to the vacillations of Hamlet. Wilhelm is not only led with ease from one thing to another, but is always oscillating in his views of himself. Even his emotions are not persistent. He passes from love of the passionate Mariana to an inclination for the coquettish Philina; from Philina to the Countess, whom he immediately forgets for the Amazon; he is about to marry Theresa, but relinquishes her as soon as he is accepted, and offers himself to Natalie.

There is in this novel, evidence of sufficient humour to have

made a decidedly humorous writer, had that faculty not been kept in abeyance by other faculties. Wilhelm's unconscious pedantry, and his predominant desire to see the drama illustrated in ordinary life, and to arrange life into a theatre;[1] the Count and his eccentricities; the adventures of the players in the castle where they arrive, and find all the urgent necessaries wanting; the costume in which Wilhelm decks himself; the whole character of Philina and that of Frederic—are instances of this humorous power.

To tell the story of this novel would be too great an injustice to it; the reader has, therefore, it must be presupposed, already some acquaintance with it; in default thereof, let him at once make its acquaintance.[2] The narrative being presupposed as known, my task is easy. I have only to refer to the marvellous art with which the characters unfold themselves. We see them, and see through them. They are never described, they exhibit themselves. Philina, for example, one of the most bewitching and original creations in fiction, whom we know as well as if she had flirted with us and jilted us, is never once described. Even her person is made present to us through the impression it makes on others, not by any direct information. We are not told that she was a strange mixture of carelessness, generosity, caprice, wilfulness, affectionateness, and gaiety; a lively girl, of French disposition, with the smallest possible regard for decorum, but with a true decorum of her own; snapping her fingers at the world, disliking conventions, tediousness and pedantry; without any ideal aspirations, yet also without any affectations; coquetting with all the men, disliked by all the women, turning every one round her finger, yet ready to oblige and befriend even those who had injured her: we are not told this; but as such she lives before us. She is so genuine, and so charming a sinner, that we forgive all her trespasses. On the whole, she is the most original and most difficult creation in the book. Mignon, the great poetical creation, was perhaps less difficult to draw, when once conceived. All the other characters serve as contrasts to Philina. She moves among them and throws them into relief, as they do her. The sentimental sickly Aurelia, and the sentimental Madame Melina, have an earnestness Philina does not comprehend; but they have the faults of their qualities, and

[1] See especially Book I., cap. 15, for his idea of the private life of players, as if they carried *off* the stage something of their parts *on* the stage.

[2] It has been translated by Carlyle.

she has neither. She has no more sense of earnestness than a bird. With bird-like gaiety and bird-like enjoyment of existence, she chirrups through sunshine and rain. One never thinks of demanding morality from her. Morality? she knows it not, nay, has not even a bowing acquaintance with it. Nor can she be called immoral. Contrasting her with Mignon, we see her in contrast with Innocence, Earnestness, Devotion, and vague yearnings for a distant home; for Philina was never innocent, she is as quick and clever as a kitten; she cannot be serious: if she does not laugh she must yawn or cry; devoted she cannot be, although affectionate; and for a distant home, how can that trouble one who knows how to nestle everywhere? It is possible to say very hard words of Philina; but, like many a naughty child, she disarms severity by her grace.

Of Mignon, and her songs, I need say nothing. Painters have tried to give an image of that strange creation which lures the imagination and the heart of every reader; but she defies the power of the pencil. The old Harper is a wild weird figure, bearing a mystery about with him, which his story at the close finely clears up. He not only adds to the variety of the figures in the novel, but by his unforgettable songs gives a depth of passion and suffering to the work which would otherwise move too exclusively in familiar regions. These two poetic figures, rising from the prosaic background, suggest an outlying world of beauty; they have the effect of a rainbow in the London streets. Serlo, Laertes, the selfish Melina, and his sentimental wife, are less devoloped characters, yet drawn with a masterly skill.

But when we quit their company—that is, when we quit the parts which were written before the journey to Italy, and before the plan was altered—we arrive at characters such as Lothario, the Abbé, the Doctor, Teresa, and Natalie, and feel that a totally new style is present. We have quitted the fresh air of Nature, and entered the philosopher's study; life is displaced by abstractions. Not only does the interest of the story seriously fall off, but the handling of the characters is entirely changed. The characters are described; they do not live. The incidents are crowded, have little vraisemblance and less interest. The diction has become weak—sometimes positively bad. As the men and women are without passion, so is the style without colour. Schiller, writing of the first book, says: "The bold poetic passages, which flash up from

the calm current of the whole, have an excellent effect; they elevate and fill the soul." But the style of the last two Books, with the exception of the exquisite Harper's story, is such that in England the novel is almost universally pronounced tedious, in spite of the wonderful truth and variety of character, and the beauty of so many parts. In these later Books the narrative is slow, and carries incidents trivial and improbable. The Mysterious Family in the Tower is an absurd mystification; without the redeeming interest which Mrs. Radcliffe would have thrown into it. With respect to the style, it is enough to open at random, and you are tolerably certain to alight upon a passage which it is difficult to conceive how an artist could have allowed it to pass. The iteration of certain set forms of phrase, and the abstractness of the diction, are very noticeable. Here is a sentence! "Sie können aber hieraus die unglaubliche Toleranz jener Männer sehen, dass sie eben auch mich auf meinem *Wege* gerade *deswegen*, weil es mein *Weg* ist, keines*wegs* stören."

One great peculiarity in this work is that which probably made Novalis call it "artistic Atheism."[1] Such a phrase is easily uttered, sounds well, is open to many interpretations, and is therefore sure to find echoes. I take it to mean that in *Wilhelm Meister* there is a complete absence of all *moral verdict* on the part of the author. Characters tread the stage, events pass before our eyes, things are done and thoughts are expressed; but no word comes from the author respecting the moral bearing of these things. Life forgets in activity all moral verdict. The good is beneficent, but no one praises it; the bad works evil, but no one anathematises it. It is a world in which we see no trace of the preacher, not a glimpse even of his surplice. To many readers this absence is like the absence of salt at dinner. They feel towards such simple objective delineation something of the repugnance felt in Evangelical circles to Miss Edgeworth's Tales. It puts them out. Robert Hall confessed that reading Miss Edgeworth hindered him for a week in his clerical functions; he was completely disturbed by her pictures of a world of happy active people *without* any visible interference of religion—a sensible,

[1] "Das Buch handelt bloss von gewöhnlichen Dingen, die Natur und der Mysticismus sind ganz vergessen. Es ist eine poetisirte bürgerliche und häusliche Geschichte; das Wunderbare darin wird ausdrüklich als Poesie und Schwärmerei behandelt. Künstlerischer Atheismus ist der Geist des Buchs." *Schriften*, ii. p. 367.

and on the whole, healthy world, yet without warnings, without exhortations, without any apparent terrors concerning the state of souls.

Much has been said about the immorality of *Wilhelm Meister*, which need not be repeated here. Schiller hits the mark in his reply to what Jacobi said on this point: "The criticism of Jacobi has not at all surprised me; for it is as inevitable that an individual like him should be offended by the unsparing truth of your pictures, as it is that a mind like yours should give him cause to be so. Jacobi is one of those who seek only their own ideas in the representation of poets, and prize more what *should be* than *what is*; the contest therefore begins in first principles. So soon as a man lets me see that there is anything in poetical representations that interests him more than internal necessity and truth, I give him up. If he could show you that the immorality of your pictures does not proceed from the nature of the subject but from the manner in which you treat it, then indeed would you be accountable, not because you had sinned against moral laws, but against critical laws."

Wilhelm Meister is not a moral story, that is to say not a story written with the express purpose of illustrating some obvious maxim. The consequence is that it is frequently pronounced immoral; which I conceive to be an absurd judgment; for if it have no express moral purpose, guiding and animating all the scenes, neither has it an immoral purpose. It may not be written for the edification of virtue; assuredly it is not written for the propagation of vice. If its author is nowhere a preacher, he cannot by his sternest critics be called a pander. All that can be said is that the Artist has been content to paint scenes of life, *without comment;* and that some of these scenes belong to an extensive class of subjects, familiar indeed to the experience of all but children, yet by general consent not much talked of in society. If any reader can be morally injured by reading such scenes in this novel rather than in the newspaper, his moral constitution is so alarmingly delicate, and so susceptible of injury, that he is truly pitiable. Let us hope the world is peopled with robuster natures; a robuster nature need not be alarmed.

But while asserting *Wilhelm Meister* to be in no respect a Moral Tale, I am bound to declare that deep and healthy moral meaning lies in it, pulses through it, speaking in many tones to him who hath ears to hear it. As Wordsworth says

of *Tam O'Shanter*, "I pity him who cannot perceive that in all this, though there was no moral purpose, there is a moral effect." What each reader will see in it, will depend on his insight and experience. Sometimes this meaning results from the whole course of the narrative; such for example as the influence of life upon Wilhelm in moulding and modifying his character, raising it from mere impulse to the subordination of reason, from dreaming self-indulgence to practical duty, from self-culture to sympathy; but the way this lesson is taught is the artist's not the preacher's way, and therefore may be missed by those who wait for the moral to be pointed before they are awake to its significance.

The "Confessions of a Beautiful Soul," which occupy the Sixth Book, have, in some circles, embalmed what was pronounced the corruption of the other books. Stolberg burned all the rest of the work, and kept these chapters as a treasure. Curious indeed is the picture presented of a quiet mystic, who is at the same time an original and strongly marked character; and the effect of religious convictions on life is subtly delineated in the gradual encroachment and final predominance of mysticism on the mind of one who seemed every way so well fitted for the world. Nevertheless, while duly appreciating the picture, I regret that it was not published separately, for it interrupts the story in a most inartistic manner, and has really nothing to do with the rest of the work.

The criticism on *Hamlet*, which Wilhelm makes, still remains the best criticism we have on that wonderful play. Very artfully is *Hamlet* made as it were a part of the novel; and Rosenkrantz praises its introduction not only because it illustrates the affinity between Hamlet and Wilhelm, both of whom are reflective, vacillating characters, but because Hamlet is further allied to Wilhelm in making the Play a touchstone, whereby to detect the truth, and determine his own actions.

Were space at disposal, the whole of Schiller's criticism on this work might fitly be given here from his enthusiastic letters; but I must content myself with one extract, which is quite delightful to read: "I account it the most fortunate incident in my existence, that I have lived to see the completion of this work; that it has taken place while my faculties are still capable of improvement; that I can yet draw from this pure spring; and the beautiful relation there is between us makes it a kind of religion with me to feel towards what is yours as if it were my own, and so to purify and elevate my

nature that my mind may be a clear mirror, and that I may thus deserve, in a higher sense, the name of your friend. How strongly have I felt on this occasion that the Excellent is a power; that by selfish natures it can be felt only as a power; and that only where there is disinterested love can it be enjoyed. I cannot describe to you how deeply the truth, the beautiful vitality, the simple fulness of this work has affected me. The excitement into which it has thrown my mind will subside when I shall have perfectly mastered it, and that will be an important crisis in my being. This excitement is the effect of the beautiful, and only the beautiful, and proceeds from the fact that my intellect is not yet entirely in accordance with my feelings. I understand now perfectly what you mean when you say that it is strictly the beautiful, the true, that can move you even to tears. Tranquil and deep, clear, and yet, like Nature, unintelligible, is this work; and all, even the most trivial collateral incident, shows the clearness, the equanimity of the mind whence it flowed."

CHAPTER III

THE ROMANTIC SCHOOL

"AFTER the mad challenge of the *Xenien*," writes Goethe to Schiller, "we must busy ourselves only with great and worthy works of Art, and shame our opponents by the manifestation of our poetical natures in forms of the Good and Noble." This trumpet-sound found Schiller alert. The two earnest men went earnestly to work, and produced their matchless ballads, and their great poems, *Hermann und Dorothea* and *Wallenstein*. The influence of these men on each other was very peculiar. It made Goethe, in contradiction to his native tendency, speculative and theoretical. It made Schiller, in contradiction to his native tendency, realistic. Had it not urged Goethe to rapid production, we might have called the influence wholly noxious; but seeing what was produced, we pause ere we condemn. "You have created a new youth for me," writes Goethe, "and once more restored me to Poetry, which I had almost entirely given up." They were both much troubled with Philosophy at this epoch. Kant and Spinoza occupied Schiller; Kant and scientific theories occupied

Goethe. They were both, moreover, becoming more and more imbued with the spirit of ancient Art, and were bent on restoring its principles. They were men of genius, and therefore these two false tendencies—the tendency to Reflection, and the tendency to Imitation—were less hurtful to *their* works than to the national culture. Their genius saved them, in spite of their errors; but their errors misled the nation. It is remarked by Gervinus, that "Philosophy was restored in the year 1781, and profoundly affected all Germany. Let any one draw up a statistical table of our literary productions, and he will be amazed at the decadence of Poetry during the last fifty years in which Philosophy has been supreme." Philosophy has distorted Poetry, and been the curse of Criticism. It has vitiated German Literature; and it produced, in combination with the tendency to Imitation, that brilliant error known as the Romantic School.

A few words on this much talked-of school may not be unacceptable. Like its offspring, *L'École Romantique* in France, it had a critical purpose which was good, and a retrograde purpose which was bad. Both were insurgent against narrow critical canons; both proclaimed the superiority of Mediæval Art; both sought, in Catholicism and in national Legends, meanings profounder than those current in the literature of the day. The desire to get deeper than Life itself led to a disdain of reality and the present. Hence the selection of the Middle Ages and the East as regions for the ideal: they were not present, and they were not classical; the classical had already been tried, and against it the young Romantic School was everywhere in arms. In other respects the German and French schools greatly differed. The Schlegels, Tieck, Novalis, and Werner, had no enemy to combat in the shape of a severe National Taste, such as opposed the tentatives of Victor Hugo, Dumas, and Alfred de Vigny. On the contrary, they were supported by a large body of the nation, for their theories only carried further certain tendencies which had become general. Thus in as far as these theories were critical, they were little more than jubilations over the victorious campaigns won by Lessing, Herder, Goethe, and Schiller. The Schlegels stood upon the battlefield, now silent, and sang a hymn of victory over the bodies of the slain. Frederick Schlegel, by many degrees the most considerable critic of this school, began his career with an Anthology from Lessing's works: *Lessing's Geist: eine Blumenlese seiner Ansichten;* he ended

it with admiration for Philip the Second and the cruel Alva, and with the proclamation that Calderon was a greater poet than Shakspeare. Frederick Schlegel thus represents the whole Romantic School from its origin to its close.

Fichte, Schelling, Schleiermacher, and Solger are the philosophers of this school; from the two former came the most famous, now almost forgotten, principle of "Irony," which Hegel[1] not only disposed of as a principle, but showed that the critics themselves made no use of it. No one, not even Tieck, attempted to exhibit the "irony" of Shakspeare, the god of their idolatry. Among the services rendered by Tieck and A. W. Schlegel, the translation of Shakspeare must never be forgotten, for although that translation is by no means so accurate as is generally believed, being often singularly weak, and sometimes grossly mistaken in its interpretation of the meaning, it is nevertheless a translation which, on the whole, has, perhaps, no rival in literature, and has served to make Shakspeare as familiar to the Germans as to us.

In their crusade against the French, in their naturalisation of Shakspeare, and their furtherance of Herder's efforts towards the restoration of a Ballad Literature and the taste for Gothic Architecture, these Romanticists were with the stream. They also flattered the national tendencies when they proclaimed "Mythology and Poetry, symbolical Legend and Art to be one and indivisible,"[2] whereby it became clear that a new Religion, or at any rate a new Mythology, was needed, for "the deepest want and deficiency of all modern Art lies in the fact that the artists have no Mythology."[3]

While Fichte, Schelling, and Schleiermacher were tormented with the desire to create a new philosophy and a new religion, it soon became evident that a Mythology was not to be created by programme; and as a Mythology was indispensable, the Romanticists betook themselves to Catholicism, with its saintly Legends and saintly Heroes; some of them, as Tieck and A. W. Schlegel, out of nothing more than poetic enthusiasm and dilettantism; others, as F. Schlegel and Werner, with thorough conviction, accepting Catholicism and all its consequences.

Solger had called Irony the daughter of Mysticism; and how highly these Romanticists prized Mysticism is known to all readers of Novalis. To be mystical was to be poetical as

[1] *Æsthetik*, i. pp. 84-90.
[2] F. SCHLEGEL: *Gespräche über Poesie*, p. 263. [3] *Ibid.* p. 274.

well as profound; and critics glorified mediæval monstrosities because of the deep spiritualism which stood in contrast with the pagan materialism of Goethe and Schiller. Once commenced, this movement carried what was true in it rapidly onwards to the confines of nonsense. Art became the handmaid of religion. The canon was laid down that only in the service of Religion had Art ever flourished,—only in that service *could* it flourish: a truth from which strange conclusions were drawn. Art became a propaganda. Fra Angelico and Calderon suddenly became idols. Werner was proclaimed a Colossus, by Wackenroder, who wrote his *Herzensergiessungen eines Kunstliebenden Klosterbruders*, with Tieck's aid, to prove, said Goethe, that because some monks were artists, all artists should turn monks. Then it was that men looked to Faith for miracles in Art. Devout study of the Bible was thought to be the readiest means of rivalling Fra Angelico and Van Eyck; inspiration was sought in a hair-shirt. Catholicism had a Mythology, and painters went over in crowds to the Roman Church. Cornelius and Overbeck lent real genius to the attempt to revive the dead forms of early Christian Art, as Goethe and Schiller did to revive the dead forms of Grecian Art. Overbeck, who painted in a cloister, was so thoroughly penetrated by the ascetic spirit, that he refused to draw from the living model, lest it should make his works too *naturalistic;* for to be true to Nature was tantamount to being false to the higher tendencies of Spiritualism. Some had too much of the artistic instinct to carry their principles into these exaggerations; but others less gifted, and more bigoted, carried the principles into every excess. A band of these reformers established themselves in Rome, and astonished the Catholics quite as much as the Protestants. Cesar Masini in his work *Dei Puristi in Pittura* thus describes them: "Several young men came to Rome from Northern Germany in 1809. They abjured Protestantism, adopted the costume of the Middle Ages, and began to preach the doctrine that painting had died out with Giotto, and to revive it, a recurrence to the old style was necessary. Under such a mask of piety they concealed their nullity. Servile admirers of the rudest periods in Art, they declared the pigmies were giants, and wanted to bring us back to the dry hard style and barbarous imperfection of a Buffalmacco, Calandrino, Paolo Uccello, when we had a Raphael, a Titian, and a Correggio." In spite of their exaggerated admiration of the Trecentisti, in spite of a doctrine

which was fundamentally vicious, the Romanticists made a decided revolution, not only in Literature but in Painting, and above all in our general estimate of painters. If we now learn to look at the exquisite works of Fra Angelico, Ghirlandajo, and Massaccio with intense pleasure; and can even so far divest ourselves of the small prejudices of criticism, as to be deeply interested in Giotto, Gozzoli, or Guido da Arezzo, feeling in them the divine artistic faculty which had not yet mastered artistic expression; it is to the preaching of the Romanticists that we owe this source of noble enjoyment. In poetry the Romanticists were failures, but in painting they achieved marked success. Whatever may be thought of the German School, it must be confessed that before Overbeck, Cornelius, Schadow, Hess, Lessing, Hübner, Sohn, and Kaulbach, the Germans had no painters at all; and they have in these men painters of very remarkable power.

To return to Goethe. He was led by Schiller into endless theoretical discussions. They philosophised on the limits of epic and dramatic poetry; read and discussed Aristotle's Poetics; discussions which resulted in Goethe's essay, *Ueber epische und dramatische Poesie;* and, as we gather from their correspondence, scarcely ventured to take a step until they had seen how Theory justified it. Goethe read with enthusiasm Wolf's *Prolegomena* to Homer, and at once espoused its principles.[1] The train of thought thus excited, led him from the origin of epic songs to the origin of the Hebrew songs, and Eichhorn's *Introduction to the Old Testament* led him to attempt a new explanation of the wanderings of the people of Israel, which he subsequently inserted in the notes to the *Westöstliche Divan.*

Nor was he only busy with epical theories; he also gave himself to the production of epics. *Hermann und Dorothea,* the most perfect of his poems, was written at this time. *Achilleis* was planned and partly executed; *Die Jagd* was also planned, but left unwritten, and subsequently became the prose tale known as *die Novelle.* This year of 1797 is moreover memorable as the year of ballads, in which he and Schiller, in friendly rivalry, gave Germany lyrical masterpieces. His share may be estimated, when we learn that in this year

[1] Later on in life he returned to the old conviction of the unity of Homer. It is to be regretted that in England Wolf's masterly work is seldom read, the critics contenting themselves with second-hand statements of his views, which fail to do them justice.

were written the *Bride of Corinth*, the *Zauberlehrling*, *der Gott und die Bajadere*, and the *Schatzgräber*. In an unpublished letter to Körner, he writes, "You will have learned from Schiller that we are now making attempts in the ballad line. His are, as you know already, very felicitous. I wish that mine may be in some sort worthy to stand beside them; he is, in every sense, more competent to this species of poetry than I am."

In the same year *Faust* was once more taken up. The *Dedication*, the *Prologue in Heaven* and the Intermezzo of *Oberon and Titania's Marriage* were written. But while he was in this mood, Hirt came to Weimar, and in the lively reminiscences of Italy, and the eager discussions of Art which his arrival awakened, all the northern phantoms were exorcised by southern magic. He gave up *Faust*, and wrote an essay on the *Laokoon*. He began once more to pine for Italy. This is characteristic of his insatiable hunger for knowledge; he never seemed to have mastered *material* enough. Whereas Schiller, so much poorer in material, and so much more inclined to production, thought this Italian journey would only embarrass him with fresh objects; and urged Meyer to dissuade him from it. He did not go; and I think Schiller's opinion was correct: at the point now reached he had nothing to do but to give a form to the materials he had accumulated.

In the July of this year he, for the third time, made a journey into Switzerland. In Frankfurt he introduced Christiane and her boy to his Mother, who received them very heartily, and made the few days' stay there very agreeable. It is unnecessary for us to follow him on his journey, which is biographically interesting only in respect to the plan of an epic on *William Tell* which he conceived, and for which he studied the localities. The plan was never executed. He handed it over to Schiller for his drama on that subject, giving him at the same time the idea of the character of Tell, and the studies of localities, which Schiller managed to employ with a mastery quite astonishing to his friend. The same brotherly co-operation is seen in the composition of *Wallenstein*. It is not true, as was currently supposed in Germany, that Goethe wrote any portions of that work. He has told us himself he only wrote two unimportant lines. But his counsel aided Schiller through every scene; and the bringing it on the stage was to him like a triumph of his own.

In the spring of 1798 Schelling's Philosophy of Nature, and

his own plans for a History of the Theory of Colours, lured him from poetry; but Schiller again brought him back to it. *Faust* was resumed, and the last tragic scenes of the First Part were written. In the summer he was much at Jena with Schiller, consequently with poetry. Achilles and Tell, the ancient and the modern world, as Schäfer remarks, struggled for priority, but neither obtained it, because he was still perplexed in his epic theories. The studies of the *Iliad* had "hunted him through the circle of enthusiasm, hope, insight and despair." No sooner did he leave Jena than, as he confessed, he was drawn by another polarity. Accordingly, we see him busy with an art-journal, the *Propyläen*. He was also busy with the alteration of the Theatre, the boards of which, on the 12th of October, 1798, were made for ever memorable by the production of *Wallenstein's Camp* and *Prologue*. On the 30th January, 1799, the birthday of the Duchess Louise, the *Piccolomini* was produced; and, on the 20th of April, *Wallenstein's Tod*.

It was in this year that a young advocate, in Edinburgh, put forth a translation of *Götz von Berlichingen*, and preluded to a fame as great as Goethe's own; and it was in the December of this year that Karl August's generosity enabled Schiller to quit Jena, and come to Weimar for the rest of his life, there in uninterrupted intercourse with Goethe to pursue the plans so dear to both, especially in the formation of a national stage. I will take advantage of this change to insert a chapter on *Hermann und Dorothea*, which was published in 1796–97; and I will afterwards group together the scattered details of the theatrical management, so as to place them before the reader in a continuous narrative.

CHAPTER IV

HERMANN UND DOROTHEA

THE pleasure every one finds in making acquaintance with the original stories from which Shakspeare created his marvellous plays, is the pleasure of detecting how genius can improve upon the merest hint, and how with its own vital forces it converts lifeless material into immortal life. This pleasure also carries the conviction that there is no lack of subjects for an artist, if he have but the eye to see them. It shows us

that great poets are not accustomed to cast about for subjects worthy of treatment; on the contrary, the merest hint is enough to form the nucleus of a splendid work; a random phrase will kindle a magnificent conception.

Very like the material offered by Bandello to Shakspeare is the material offered to Goethe by the old narrative[1] from which he created one of the most faultless of modern poems. Herein we learn how a rich and important citizen of Altmühl has in vain tried to persuade his son to marry. The Saltzburg emigrants pass through the town, and among them the son finds "a maiden who pleases him right well;" he inquires after her family and bringing up, and as all he hears is satisfactory, away he hies to his father, declaring that unless this Saltzburg maiden be given him, he will remain unmarried all his life. The father, aided by the pastor, tries to persuade him from such a resolution. But their efforts being vain, the pastor advises the father to give his consent, which is done. Away goes the son to the maiden, and asks her if she is willing to enter his father's domestic service. She accepts, and is presented to the father. But he, ignorant of his son's *ruse*, and believing he sees before him the betrothed, asks her whether she is fond of his son. The maiden thinks they are laughing at her, but on learning that they are serious in wishing her to belong to the family, declares herself quite ready, and draws from her bosom a purse containing 200 ducats, which she hands to her bridegroom as her dowry.

This is the story out of which grew *Hermann und Dorothea*. An ordinary story, in which the poet alone could see a poem; *what* he has seen, every reader of German literature well knows; and those to whom the poem is unknown must be content with the following analysis.

The epoch is changed to that of the French Revolution. The emigrants are driven from home by political events. The scene is on the right side of the Rhine. The streets of a quiet little village are noisy with unaccustomed movement; every one is crowding to see the sad procession of emigrants passing through, in the heat and dust of a summer afternoon. Mine Host of the Golden Lion, sitting at his doorway, marvels at such curiosity, but applauds the active benevolence of his

[1] *Das Liebthätige Gera gegen die Salzburgischen Emigranten. Das ist: kurze und wahrhaftige Erzählung wie dieselben in der Gräflich Reuss Plauischen Residenz Stadt angekommen, aufgenommen, und versorget, auch was an und von vielen derselben Gutes gesehen und gehöret worden.* Leipsic: 1732.

wife, who has sent their son with linen, food and drink, to bestow upon the sufferers, "for to give is the duty of those who have."

And now are seen returning some of the curious. See how dusty their shoes, and how their faces are burning! They come back wiping the perspiration from their glowing faces; the old couple rejoice at having sat quiet at home, contenting themselves with what will be told them of the sight. Sure enough, here comes the pastor, and with him the apothecary; seating themselves on the wooden bench, they shake the dust off their shoes, and fan their hot faces with their handkerchiefs. They narrate what they have seen; and mine host, sighing, hopes his son will overtake the emigrants, and give them what has been sent. But the heat suggests to him that they should retire into the cool back parlour, and, out of the way of the flies, refresh themselves with a bottle of Rhine wine. There, over the wine, mine host expresses his wish to see his son married. This is the whole of the first canto; and yet, slight as the material is, the wonderful objective treatment gives it substance. The fresh air of the country breathes from the verse.

In the second canto Hermann appears before his father and friends. The pastor's quick eye detects that he is returned an altered man. Hermann narrates how he accomplished his mission. Overtaking the emigrants, he fell in with a cart drawn by oxen, wherein lay a poor woman beside the infant to which she had just given birth. Leading the oxen was a maiden, who came towards him with the calm confidence of a generous soul, and begged his aid for the poor woman whom she had just assisted in her travail. Touched with pity, and feeling at once that this maiden was the best person to distribute justly the aid he had brought, Hermann gave it all into her hands. They parted, she gratefully pursuing her sad journey, he thoughtfully returning home. Love has leaped into his heart, and, by the light of his smile, the pastor sees he is an altered man.

On hearing his tale, the apothecary hugs himself with the consolation of not having wife and children to make him anxious in these anxious times; "the single man escapes the easiest." But Hermann reproves him, asking, "Is it well that a man should feel himself alone in joy and sorrow, not understanding how to share these joys and sorrows? I never was so willing to marry as to-day; for many a good maiden needs

the protection of a husband, and many a man needs the bright consolation of a wife, in the shadow of misfortune." Hereupon the father, smiling, exclaims, "I hear you with pleasure; such a sensible word you have seldom uttered." And his mother also applauds him, referring to her marriage as an example. Memory travels back complacently to the day of her betrothal. It was in the midst of misfortune—a fire had destroyed all their property—but in that hour of misfortune their union was decided. The father here breaks in, and says the story is true, but evidently wishes to warn his son from any imitation of his own venture. With admirable art and humour his fatherly anxiety is depicted. He married a girl who had nothing when he himself had nothing; but now, when he is old and well to do in the world, this idea of beginning life upon no solid foundation of fortune is alarming to him. He paints the difficulties of keeping house, the advantages of fortune, and concludes with a decisive intimation to Hermann that he expects a rich daughter-in-law to be brought into the house. He indicates the daughters of a rich neighbour, and wishes Hermann to select one. But Hermann has not only a new love in his heart, he has an old repugnance to these rich neighbours, who mocked his simplicity, and ridiculed him because he was not as familiar with the personages of an opera as they were. This enrages his father, who upbraids him for being a mere peasant without culture, and who angrily declares he will have no peasant-girl brought into the house as his daughter-in-law, but a girl who can play the piano, and who can draw around her the finest people of the town. Hermann, in silence, quits the room; and thus closes the second canto.

The third canto carries on the story. Mine host continues his angry eloquence. It is his opinion that the son should always rise higher in the social scale than the father: for what would become of the house, or the nation, without this constant progress? "You are always unjust to your son," replies the mother, "and thus frustrate your own wishes. We must not hope to form children after our notions. As God has given them us, so must we have them and love them, bring them up as best we can, and let them have their own disposition. For some have this and others that gift. One is happy in one way, another in another. I won't have my Hermann abused. He is an excellent creature. But with daily snubbing and blame you crush

his spirit." And away she goes to seek her son. "A wonderful race the women," says the host, smiling, as his wife departs, "just like children. They all want to live after their own fashion, and yet be praised and caressed!" The old apothecary, carrying out the host's argument respecting the continual improvement of one's station, happily displays his character by a speech of quiet humour, describing his own anxiety to improve the appearance of his house, and how he has always been hindered by the fear of the expense. The contrast of characters in this poem is of the finest and sharpest: mother and father, pastor and apothecary, all stand before us in distinctive, yet unobtrusive, individuality, such as only the perfection of art achieves.

In the fourth canto, the mother seeks her son. The description of this search is a striking specimen of Goethe's descriptive poetry, being a series of pictures without a metaphor, without an image, without any of the picturesque aids which most poets employ; and yet it is vivid and picturesque in the highest degree. I wish I dared quote it. But the reader of German can seek it in the original; and translation is more than ever unjust to a poet, where style is in question.

In the stable she seeks him, expecting to find him with his favourite stallion; then she goes into the garden (not omitting to set up the tree-props and brush the caterpillars from the cabbages, like a careful housewife as she is!) then through the vineyard until she finds him seated under the pear-tree, in tears. A charming scene takes place between them. Hermann declares his intention of setting off in defence of fatherland; he is eloquent on the duties of citizens to give their blood for their country. But the mother knows very well it is no political enthusiasm thus suddenly moving him to quit his home; she has divined his love for Dorothea, the maiden whom he met among the emigrants; she questions him, and receives his confidence. Yes, it is because he loves Dorothea, and because his father has forbidden him to think of any but a rich bride, that he is about to depart. His father has always been unjust to him. Here interposes the mother; persuades Hermann to make the first advances to his father, certain that the paternal anger is mere hasty words, and that the dearest wish of Hermann's heart will not be disregarded. She brings him back with these hopes.

In the fifth canto the friends are still sipping from green glasses the cool Rhine wine, and arguing the old question.

To them enter mother and son. She reminds her husband how often they have looked forward to the day when Hermann should make choice of a bride. That day has arrived. He has chosen the Emigrant maiden. Mine host hears this in ominous stillness. The Pastor rises, and heartily backs Hermann in his prayer. He looks upon this choice as an inspiration from above, and knows Hermann well enough to trust him in such a choice. The father is still silent. The Apothecary, cautious ever, suggests a middle course. He does not trust implicitly in these inspirations from above. He proposes to inquire into the character of the maiden, and as he is not easily to be deceived, he undertakes to bring back a true report. I need scarcely point out the superiority of this treatment of the old story, wherein the lover first inquires into the character of the maiden, and then makes up his mind to have her. Hermann needs no inquiry—but neither does he shirk it. He urges the Apothecary to set off, and take the Pastor with him, two such experienced men being certain to detect the truth. For himself he is sure of the result. Mine host, finding wife and friends against him, consents, on a worthy report being brought by Pastor and Apothecary, to call Dorothea his daughter. The two commissioners seat themselves in the cart, and Hermann, mounting the box, drives them swiftly to the village. Arriving there, they get out. Hermann describes Dorothea, that they may recognise her; and awaits their return. Very graphic is the picture of this village, where the wanderers are crowded in barns and gardens, the streets blocked up with carts, men noisily attending to the lowing cows and horses, women busily washing and drying on every hedge, while the children dabble in the stream. Through this crowd the two friends wander, and witness a quarrel, which is silenced by an old magistrate, who afterwards gives them satisfactory details about Dorothea. This episode is full of happy touches and thoughtful poetry. The friends return joyful to Hermann, and tell him he may take Dorothea home. But while they have been inquiring about her, he, here on the threshold of his fate, has been torturing himself with doubts as to whether Dorothea will accept him. She may love another; what is more probable? She may refuse to come with them into a strange house. He begs them to drive home without him. He will alone ask Dorothea, and return on foot with her if she consent. The Pastor takes the reins, but the cautious

Apothecary, willing enough to entrust the Pastor with the care of his soul, has misgivings about his power of saving his body. The Pastor reassures him, and they disappear in a cloud of dust, leaving Hermann to gaze after them motionless, fixed in thought.

The next two cantos are exquisitely poetical. As Hermann stands by the spring, he sees Dorothea coming with a water jug in each hand. He approaches her, and she smiles a friendly smile at his approach. He asks why she comes so far from the village to fetch water. She answers that her trouble is well repaid if only because it enables her to see and thank him for the kindness he has shown to the sufferers; but also adds that the improvident men have allowed oxen and horses to walk into the streams, and so disturb all the water of the village. They then pass to the well, and sit upon the wall which protects it. She stoops, and dips a jug in the water; he takes the other jug and dips it also, and they see the image of themselves mirrored in the wavering blue of the reflected heavens, and they nod and greet each other in the friendly mirror. "Let me drink," says the joyous youth. And she holds the jug for him. Then they rest leaning upon the jugs in sweet confidence.[1]

She then asks him what has brought him here. He looks into her eyes, and feels happy, but dares not trust himself with the avowal. He endeavours to make her understand it in an indirect recital of the need there is at home for a young and active woman to look after the house and his parents. She thinks he means to ask her to come as servant in his house, and, being alone in the world, gladly consents. When he perceives her mistake he is afraid to undeceive her, and thinks it better to take her home and gain her affection there. "But let us go," she exclaims, "girls are always blamed who stay long at the fountain in gossip." They stand up, and once more look back into the well to see their images meeting in its water, and "sweet desires possess them."

[1] I cannot resist quoting the original of this charming picture:

Also sprach sie, und war die breiten Stufen hinunter
Mit dem Begleiter gelangt; und auf das Mäuerchen setzten
Beide sich nieder des Quells. Sie beugte sich über, zu schöpfen;
Und er fasste den anderen Krug, und beugte sich über.
Und sie sahen gespiegelt ihr Bild in der Bläue des Himmels
Schwanken, und nickten sich zu, und grüssten sie freundlich im Spiegel.
Lass mich trinken, sagte darauf der heitere Jüngling;
Und sie reicht' ihm den Krug. Dann ruhten sie Beide vertraulich
Auf die Gefässe gelehnt.

He accompanies her to the village, and witnesses, in the affection all bear to Dorothea, the best sign that his heart has judged aright. She takes leave of them all, and sets forth with Hermann, followed by the blessings and handkerchief-wavings of the emigrants. In silence they walk towards the setting sun, which tinges the storm-clouds threatening in the distance. On the way she asks him to describe the characters of those she is going to serve. He sketches father and mother. "And how am I to treat you, you the only son to my future master?" she asks. By this time they have reached the pear-tree, and the moon is shining overhead. He takes her hand, answering, "Ask your heart, and follow all it tells you." But he can go no farther in his declaration, fearing to draw upon himself a refusal. In silence they sit awhile and look upon the moon. She sees a window—it is Hermann's, who hopes it will soon be hers. They rise to continue their course, her foot slips, she falls into his arms; breast against breast, cheek against cheek, they remain a moment, he not daring to press her to him, merely supporting her. In a few minutes more they enter the house.

The charm of these cantos, as indeed of the whole poem, cannot of course be divined from the analysis I am making; the perfume of a violet is not to be found in the description of the violet. But with all drawbacks, the analysis enables a reader of imagination to form a better conception of the poem than he would form from an æsthetical discussion such as philosophical criticism indulges in. With this caveat let our analysis proceed. The mother is uneasy at this long absence of Hermann; comes in and out, noting the appearances of the storm, and is rather sharp in her blame of the two friends for leaving him without securing the maiden. The Apothecary narrates how he was taught patience in youth; and, the door opening, presents the young couple to their glad eyes. Hermann introduces her, but tells the Pastor aside that as yet there has been no talk of marriage; she only supposes her place to be that of servant. The host, wishing to be gallant, goes at once to the point, treats her as his daughter, and compliments her on her taste in having chosen his son. She blushes, is pained, and replies with some reproach that for such a greeting she was unprepared. With tears in her eyes she paints her forlorn condition, and the secret escapes her, that, touched by Hermann's generosity and noble bearing, she really has begun to feel the love for him they twit her with; but having made that confession, of course she can no longer

stay; and she is departing with grief in her heart when the mistake is cleared up; she is accepted, dowerless, by them all, and Hermann, in pressing her to his heart, feels prepared for the noble struggle of life.

Such is the story of *Hermann und Dorothea*, which is written in Homeric hexameters, with Homeric simplicity. In the ordinary course of things, I should be called upon to give some verdict on the much-vexed question as to whether, properly speaking, this poem is an Epic or an Idyll, or, by way of compromise, an Idyllic Epic. The critics are copious in distinctions and classifications. They tell us in what consists the Epos proper, which they distinguish from the Romantic Epos, and from the Bourgeois Epos; and then these heavy batteries are brought to bear on *Hermann und Dorothea*. Well! if these discussions gratify the mind, and further any of the purposes of Literature, let those, whose bent lies that way, occupy themselves therewith. To me it seems idle to trouble oneself whether *Hermann und Dorothea* is or is not an Epic, or what kind of Epic it should be called. It is a poem. One cannot say more for it. If it be unlike all other poems, there is no harm in that; if it resemble some other poems, the resemblance does not enhance its charm. Let us accept it for what it is, a poem full of life, character, and beauty; simple in its materials, astonishingly simple in its handling; written in obvious imitation of Homer, and yet preserving throughout the most modern colour and sentiment. Of all Idylls, it is the most truly idyllic. Of all poems describing country life and country people, it is the most truthful; and on comparing it with Theocritus or Virgil, with Guarini or Tasso, with Florian or Delille, with Gesner or Thomson, the critic will note with interest its absence of poetic ornamentation, its freedom from all "idealisation." Its peasants are not such as have been fashioned in Dresden China, or have solicited the palette of Lancret and Watteau; but are as true as poetry can represent them. The characters are wonderfully drawn, with a few decisive unobtrusive touches. Shakspeare himself is not more dramatic in the presentation of character. The Host, his wife, the Pastor, the old cautious Apothecary, stand before us in all their humours. Hermann, the stalwart peasant, frank, simple, and shy, and Dorothea the healthy, affectionate, robust, simple peasant girl, are ideal characters in the best sense, viz., in the purity of nature. Those "ideal peasants" with Grecian features and

irreproachable linen, so loved of bad painters and poor poets, were not at all the figures Goethe cared to draw; he had faith in nature, which would not allow him to idealise.

Very noteworthy is it that he, like Walter Scott, could find a real pleasure in talking with the common people, such as astonished his daughter-in-law (from whom, among others, I learned the fact), who could not comprehend what pleasure this great intellect found in conversation with an old woman baking her bread, or an old carpenter planing a fir-plank. He would talk with his coachman, pointing out to him the peculiarities of the scenery, and delighting in his remarks. Stately and silent as he often was to travelling bores, and to literary men with no ideas beyond the circle of books, he was loquacious and interested whenever one of the people came in his way; and the secret of this was his abiding interest in every individuality. A carpenter, who was a carpenter, interested him; but the carpenter in Sunday clothes, aping the bourgeois, would have found him as silent and stately as every other pretender found him. What Scott gathered from his intercourse with the people, every one knows who has noticed the rich soil of humour on which Scott's antiquarian fancies are planted; what Goethe gathered from the same source may be read in most of his works, especially in *Hermann und Dorothea*, *Faust*, and *Wilhelm Meister*.

The same objective truth is noticeable in his delineation of the scenes. They are not rhetorically or metaphorically described, they are presented directly to us. Instead of saying what they are like, he says what they *are*. Hence it is that while this poem is essentially *popular* (and on its first appearance produced a deep impression on the people, was reprinted on the coarsest paper, at the lowest prices, such as only occurs with the people's literature), it is also one of the greatest favourites with highly cultured readers. Between these two classes there is a third class, cultivated indeed, but not sufficiently cultivated, which finds the simplicity of this poem undistinguishable from baldness. Such readers desire imagery, and cannot see the art which dispenses with it; they want more stirring incidents, and characters stalking upon stilts.

As I do not enter upon the discussion of whether the poem is or is not an Epic, I may leave undisturbed all the derivative questions respecting the absence of *similes*, *episodes*, and *supernatural machinery* — which the critics assure us are indispensable to the Epic—as also the other subsidiary matters of

action, time, and space. By so doing the bulk of this chapter is materially diminished, and the reader not materially impoverished. Two points only require notice, and those shall be briefly touched.

First of the subject-matter. Taken from the sad experience of the hour, moving amid scenes made desolate by the French Revolution, it was natural that something of political significance should be sought in this story. Schiller would undoubtedly have made it the vehicle of splendid eloquence on Freedom, such as would have made the pulses beat. But that was nowise Goethe's tendency. He told Meyer that he had endeavoured "in an epic crucible to free from its dross the pure human existence of a small German town, and at the same time mirror in a small glass the great movements and changes of the world's stage."[1] While leaving to others the political problem, he confined himself as usual to the purely human and individual interest. Instead of declamations on Freedom, he tried to teach men to be free; and by Freedom he meant the complete healthy development of their own natures, not a change of political institutions. In one of the *Xenien* he says:

> Zur Nation euch zu bilden, ihr hoffet es, Deutsche, vergebens.
> Bildet, ihr könnt es, dafür freier zu Menschen euch aus.[2]

And in this sense *Hermann und Dorothea* may be accepted as a Hymn to the Family, a solemn vindication of the eternal claims which, as a first necessity, should occupy men.

With regard to the second point, that namely of style, Schiller's cordial praise, in a letter to Meyer, may here find place. "Nor have we in the meantime been inactive, as you know, and least of all our friend, who in the last few years has really surpassed himself. His epic poem you have read; you will admit that it is the pinnacle of his and all our modern art. I have seen it grow up, and have wondered almost as much at the manner of its growth as at the completed work. Whilst the rest of us are obliged painfully to collect and to prune, in order slowly to bring forth anything passable, he has only gently to shake the tree, in order to have fall to him the most beautiful fruit, ripe and heavy. It is incredible with what ease he now reaps for himself the fruits of a well-bestowed life and

[1] *Briefe an und von Goethe.*

[2] "Germans, you hope in vain to develop yourselves into a nation; strive, therefore, to develop yourselves all the more freely into men."

a persistent culture; how significant and sure all his steps now are; how the clearness as to himself and as to objects, preserves him from every idle effort and beating about. But you have him now yourself, and can satisfy yourself of all this with your own eyes. But you will agree with me in this, that on the summit where he now stands, he ought to think more of bringing the beautiful form he has given himself to outward exhibition, than to go out in search of new material; in short, that he now ought to live entirely for poetic execution."

The Homeric form is admirably adapted to this kind of narrative; and Voss had already made it popular by his *Luise*. Respecting the style of this poem, I would further beg the reader to compare it with that of the last books of *Wilhelm Meister*, composed about the same period, and he will then see Goethe's immense superiority on quitting prose for poetry. None of the faults of his prose are traceable here. The language is as clear as crystal, and as simple; the details are all, without exception, significant; not a line could be lopped away without injury. One feels that the invigorating breezes of Ilmenau have roused the poet out of the flaccid moods of prose, and given him all his quiet strength.

Before finally dismissing the poem, it may amuse the reader to have a specimen of that ingenious criticism which delights in interpreting the most obvious facts into profound meanings. Hegel, in his *Æsthetik*, and after him Rosenkrantz, in his excellent book *Goethe und seine Werke*, call attention to the fact that Goethe is far truer in his *German* colouring than Voss, whose *Luise* gave the impulse to this poem. Not having read the *Luise* I am unable to judge of this superiority; but the example cited by these critics is assuredly amusing. Voss, they tell us, makes his people drink copiously of coffee; but, however wide-spread the custom of coffee-drinking, we must remember that coffee, and the sugar which sweetens it, are not *German*, they come from Arabia and the West Indies; the very cups in which the coffee is drunk are of Chinese origin, not German. We are miles away from Germany. How different is Goethe! His host of the Golden Lion refreshes guests with a glass of wine; and what wine? Rhine wine; the German wine, *par excellence;* the wine growing on the hill behind his own house! And this Rhine wine, is it not drunk out of green glasses, the genuine German glasses? And upon what do these glasses stand? Upon a tin tray: that is also genuine German!

It would be the merest prosaism to suggest that in *Luise* the pastor drinks coffee, because coffee is habitually drunk in the parsonage; while in *Hermann und Dorothea* the characters drink wine, because they are in the *Golden Lion*, and Rhine wine, because they are in the Rhine country; yet to such prosaisms is the British critic reduced in answering the subtleties of German æsthetics.

CHAPTER V

THE THEATRICAL MANAGER

It will be briefer, and help to convey a more accurate notion of Goethe's efforts in the direction of the Theatre, if, instead of scattering through this biography a number of isolated details, recording small events in chronological order, I endeavour to present some general view of his managerial efforts.

We have already seen how, on his arrival at Weimar, the court was given to theatrical entertainments, and how eagerly he entered into them. The Theatre was in ruin from the fire of the previous year. Theatres were improvised in the Ettersburg woods, and Tiefurt valley, whereon the gay courtiers "strutted their brief hour" by torchlight, to the accompaniment of horns. Actors were improvised from the court circle. Plays were improvised, and sometimes written with elaborate care. The public was the public of private theatricals. All this has been narrated in Book IV. What we have here to do with it is to call attention to the contrast thus presented by the Weimar stage with other German stages, and, above all, with the essential conditions of a stage which is to be anything more than the amusement of a dilettante circle. The drama is essentially a national outgrowth. In Weimar, instead of growing out of a popular tendency, and appealing to the people, it grew out of the idleness of a court, and appealed to dilettantism. The actors, instead of being recruited from runaway clerks, ambitious apprentices, romantic barbers, and scapegrace students, were princes, noblemen, poets, musicians. Instead of playing to a Public,—that heterogeneous, but in dramatic matters indispensable, jury, whose verdicts are in the main always right—they played to courtiers, whose judg-

ment, even when unfettered, would not have had much value; and it never was unfettered. The consequence may be foreseen. As a court amusement, the theatre was a pleasant and not profitless recreation; as an influence, it was pernicious. The starting point was false. Not so can dramatic art flourish; not so are Molières and Shakspeares allowed to manifest their strength. The national co-operation is indispensable. Academies may compile Dictionaries, they cannot create Literature; and Courts may patronise Theatres, they cannot create a Drama. The reason lies deep in the nature of things. Germany has never had a Drama, because she has never had a Stage which could be, or would be, national. Lessing knew what was needed, but he had not the power to create it. Schiller early mistook the path, and all his noble strivings were frustrated.

Goethe and Schiller, profoundly in earnest, and profoundly convinced of the great influences to be exercised by the stage, endeavoured to create a German Drama which should stand high above the miserable productions then vitiating public taste. They aspired to create an Ideal Drama, in which the loftiest forms of Art should be presented. But they made a false step at the outset. Disgusted with the rude productions of the day, and distrusting the instincts of the public, they appealed to the cultivated few. Culture was set above Passion and Humour, Literature above Emotion. The stage was to be literary; which is saying, in other words, that it was not to be popular. Nor did experience enlighten them. During the whole period of their reform, the principal performances were of the old style. At first a wandering troupe, with a wandering repertory, performed opera, drama, and farce, as best it could, with more real success than High Art could boast. Even when Schiller had ennobled the stage with his masterpieces, the ever pressing necessity of *amusing* the public forced the manager to give the vulgar appetite its vulgar food.[1] The dramatic problem is: How to unite the demands of an audience insisting on amusement, with the demands of Art, looking beyond amusement? There are many writers who can amuse, but who reach no higher aim; and there are writers who have lofty aims, but cannot amuse. In the drama the first class is nearer the mark than the second; but the true dramatist is he who can unite the two. Shakspeare and

[1] Goethe confesses so much. See *Eckermann*, vol. i. p. 305; Oxenford's translation.

Molière—to take the greatest examples—are as amusing as they are profound; and they live only because they continue to amuse. *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Tartuffe*, *L'école des Femmes*, and the *Malade Imaginaire*, may be enjoyed by the pit, and by the most cultivated critic. Goethe and Schiller fell into the error which in England, a few years ago, was preached as a gospel by a band of clever writers, who gloried in the title of "Unacted Dramatists"; the error of supposing a magnificent dome could be erected without a basis on our common earth; the error of supposing that a Drama could be more successful as Literature, than as the reflection of national life.

It was in 1790 that the Weimar Theatre was rebuilt and reopened. Goethe undertook the direction with powers more absolute than any other director ever had; for he was independent even of success. The court paid all expenses; the stage was left free for him to make experiments upon. He made them, and they all failed. He superintended rehearsals with great care. Shakspeare's *King John* and *Henry IV.*, his own *Gross-Kophta*, *Bürgergeneral*, *Clavigo*, *Die Geschwister*, were produced, but without any great effect; for the actors were mediocre and ill paid, and there was no audience to stimulate actors by enthusiasm and criticism. The audience was chilled by the presence of the court, and could rarely be emboldened into rapture, which is the life, the pulse, the stimulus of acting. The pit was cowed by the court, and the court was cowed by Goethe. His contempt of public opinion was undisguised. "The direction," he wrote to his second in command, "acts according to its own views, and not in the least according to the demands of the public. Once for all, understand that the public must be controlled—*will determinirt seyn.*" To Schiller, who was quite of this opinion, he said: "No one can serve two masters, and of all masters the last that I would select is the public which sits in a German theatre." It is all very well for a poet or a philosopher to scorn the fleeting fashions of the day, and to rely on the verdict of posterity; but the Drama appeals to the public of the day, and while the manager keeps his eye on posterity, the theatre is empty.

Wer machte denn der Mitwelt Spass?

"Who is to amuse the present?" asks the sensible Merry Andrew, in the Theatre-Prologue to *Faust*. A dramatist appealing to posterity, is like an orator hoping to convince the

descendants of his audience instead of persuading the listening crowd.

The Weimar audiences might be treated despotically, but they could not be forced into enthusiasm for that which wearied them. They submitted in silence. The riotous gallery and dogged pit of France and England only tolerate the absurdities which delight *them;* they admit no arbiter but their own amusement. An infusion of this rebellious element would have aided Goethe and Schiller in their efforts, by warning them from many a mistake. The Jena students might have supplied this element, had they been more constant visitors, and less controlled. The student is by nature and profession a rebel; and the Jena student had this tendency cultivated into a system. To be a roaring swashbuckler, with profound contempt for all *Philistines*, and a vast capacity for beer, was not, indeed, enough to constitute a pure judge of art; but to be young, full of life and impulse, and above all to be independent, were primary qualities in a dramatic audience; and the students brought such qualities into the pit. "Without them," says the worthy Klebe in his description of Weimar, "the house would often be empty. They generally come in the afternoon, and ride or drive back after the play." If they enlivened the Theatre, they scandalised the town. Imagination pictures them arriving covered with dust, in garbs of varied and eccentric device, ambitious of appearing as different from "humdrum" citizens as might be: adorned with tower-shaped caps, with motley ornaments of tassel, lace, &c., from under which escape flowing locks quite innocent of comb, which mingle with beard and moustache. Their short jackets are lined with stuffs of different colour. Their legs are cased in riding trousers, the inner sides of which are of leather. In their hands is the famous long whip, which they crack as they pour from the Webicht over the bridge into the town, startling its provincial dulness with an uproar by them called "singing"—a musical entertainment which they vary by insulting the not imposing soldiers, whom they christen "tree-frogs," on account of the green and yellow uniform. They push to the utmost the license and pride of the "Renomist," namely, to be ill-mannered.

When these students poured into the theatre, they carried there something like enthusiasm; but they were controlled by one who had a very mediocre admiration of their wild ways—the Geheimrath Goethe, who was not only *Geheim-*

rath and Manager, but their idol.[1] Of him Edward Devrient, in his excellent history of the German stage,[2] says: "He sat in the centre of the pit; his powerful glance governed and directed the circle around him, and bridled the dissatisfied or neutral. On one occasion, when the Jena students, whose arbitrary judgment was very unseasonable to him, expressed their opinion too tumultuously, he rose, commanded silence, and threatened to have the disturbers turned out by the hussars on guard. A similar scene took place in 1802 on the representation of Fr. Schlegel's *Alarcos*, which appeared to the public too daring an attempt, and the approbation given by the loyal party provoked a loud laugh of opposition. Goethe rose and called out with a voice of thunder: 'Let no one laugh!' At last he went so far as for some time to forbid any audible expression on the part of the public, whether of approval or disapproval. He would suffer no kind of disturbance in what he held to be suitable. Over criticism he kept a tight rein; hearing that Böttticher was writing an essay on his direction of the theatre, he declared that if it appeared he would resign his post; and Böttticher left the article unprinted."

Holding this despotic position towards the public, it may be imagined that he was imperious enough with the actors. Both he and Schiller were of opinion that nothing short of the "brief imperative" was of any use with actors—*denn durch Vernunft und Gefälligkeit ist nichts auszurichten*, said Schiller. Goethe as director would hear of no opposition, would listen to none of the egotistical claims which usually torment managers; he insisted on each doing what was allotted to him. Resistance was at once followed by punishment; he sent the men to the guard-house, and had sentinels placed before the doors of the women, confining them to their rooms. With the leading actors he employed other means: once when Becker refused to play a small part in *Wallenstein's Lager*, Goethe informed him that if he did not undertake the part, he, Goethe, would play it himself—a threat which at once vanquished Becker, who knew it would be fulfilled.

Nevertheless with all this despotism he was still the great, high-minded, lovable Goethe, and was reverenced by the

[1] See HEINRICH SCHMIDT: *Erinnerungen eines Weimarischen Veteranen*, p. 46, describing the enthusiasm with which he and DE WETTE and their friends read Goethe's poems, and wrote poems in his praise.

[2] *Geschichte der deutschen Schauspiel-Kunst.*

actors who were under him. Chancellor von Müller says that "Nowhere did he more freely exercise the spell of his imposing presence; rigorous and earnest in his demands, unalterable in his determinations, prompt and delighted to acknowledge every successful attempt, attentive to the smallest as to the greatest, and calling forth in every one his most hidden powers—in a narrow circle, and often with slender means, he accomplished what appeared incredible; his encouraging glance was a rich reward; his kind word an invaluable gift. Every one felt himself greater and more powerful in the place which he had assigned to him, and the stamp of his approbation seemed to be a sort of consecration for life. No one who has not seen and heard with what pious fidelity the veterans of that time of Goethe's and Schiller's cheerful spirited co-operation, treasured every recollection of these their heroes; with what transport they dwelt on every detail of their proceedings; and how the mere mention of their names called forth the flash of youthful pleasure from their eyes; can have an idea of the affectionate attachment and enthusiastic veneration those great men inspired."

It appears from Edward Devrient's account that the actors were miserably paid. Even Caroline Jagemann—the duke's mistress—who was prima donna, as well as leading actress, received only six hundred thalers a year, with a retiring pension of three hundred; and six hundred thalers is about one hundred pounds sterling. Moreover, the actors were not allowed a *congé*, as at other theatres; so that no money could be made by them beyond their salaries.[1] Except to confessed mediocrity, Weimar could scarcely have offered a temptation; nevertheless, the magic names of Goethe and Schiller did attract a few good actors.

The shifts to which the management was forced to have recourse, with so small and insufficient a troupe, may be gathered from this anecdote. The opera of *Die Zauberflöte* was performed, but the Queen of Night was so far advanced in pregnancy, that it was impossible to let her appear in that condition. Another singer was not to be had. In this dilemma Goethe actually made her sing the music behind the scenes, while an actress on the stage pantomimically represented the character.

When the connection between Schiller and Goethe grew

[1] On the various salaries paid to actors at Weimar, see PASQUE: *Goethe's Theaterleitung in Weimar*, i.

closer, the Theatre began to assume a really earnest aspect. With his natural tendency to interest himself in whatever deeply interested his friends, Goethe caught some of Schiller's dramatic enthusiasm, and began to treat the stage as a means of artistic education for the nation. *Don Carlos* was performed; somewhat later *Egmont* was adapted to the stage by Schiller (in a melodramatic style which revealed his love of material effects), and the greatest undertaking of all was achieved, namely, the performance of *Wallenstein*. The effect was prodigious, and the Weimar stage seemed really to have achieved something like the establishment of a new and grandiose style of dramatic representation. It was, however, but a flash. The strivings of the two poets were misdirected, as the event soon proved. No drama could so be founded. The dramatic age had passed, and could not be restored—not at least in such forms.

"The Weimar School," says Devrient,[1] who is here speaking *ex professo*, and is worth attending to, "although it demanded of the artist 'to produce something resembling nature,'[2] nevertheless set up a new standard of nobleness and beauty, by which every phenomenon in the region of Art was to be tested. The tendency hitherto dominant had by no means neglected the beautiful, but it had sought only a *beautiful reality*,—now, with subtle distinction, *beautiful truth* was demanded from it. Hitherto *living nature* had served as the standard, now an *enlightened taste* was to be the rule. The actors were to disaccustom themselves to the native German manner, and find a freer, a more universal conception; they were to raise themselves out of the narrow limits of the special, of the individual, to the contemplation of the general, of the Ideal.

"These were astoundingly new and hard demands on the actor. Hitherto a plain understanding, with vivid and sensitive feelings, had tolerably well sufficed to make this natural talent tell; for the problems lay within the actor's circle of vision. Now, appeal was principally made to his taste; he was required to have a refined instinct, and ennobled sentiments, which, to a certain degree, presupposed scientific and antiquarian culture; for instead of *nature*, as hitherto, the antique was now the model of speech and feature. The actual culture of the histrionic class was not in the remotest degree adequate to these demands; what then was to be done? The Weimar

[1] *Geschichte der deutschen Schauspiel-Kunst*, p. 255.
[2] *Goethe's Vorrede zu den Propyläen.*

School must content itself with *training:* it must seek to supply by external drilling what ought properly to have proceeded from a higher intellectual life, from an intrinsically ennobled nature. Nothing else remained to it. The spirit of our literature was pressing forward with unexampled power to that summit on which it could from thenceforth measure itself with that of all other nations; it carried along with it theatrical art, such as it was. If the attempt had been made to advance the culture of actors as far as was necessary in order to bring it even with the victorious march of our literature, the moment would have been lost in which the stage could render immeasurable service to the national culture.

"Goethe and Schiller had essentially this mission: to elevate poetry; to carry the intellectual life of the nation into higher ideal regions; literature was their *immediate* object, the stage only a secondary one; nay, it was with them only a means to an end. To work with entire devotion to dramatic art, solely for it and through it, as Molière and Shakspeare did, never occurred to them; nor would they imitate Lessing, who attached himself closely to art, to what it achieved, and could achieve. They placed themselves and their poems on the stand-point of the independent *literary* drama. The old schism between the *genres* again presented itself; the scholarly in opposition to the popular drama; and poetic art again won the supremacy over dramatic. *Don Carlos* and *Wallenstein* were not conceived for the actual stage, and could only be adapted to it with great labour and sacrifice; in writing *Faust*, *Tasso*, and the *Natürliche Tochter*, Goethe did not contemplate their representation, which must be considered purely as a theatrical experiment. It was a natural consequence that, since the two great poets adapted their works to the theatre just as it was, and were by no means excessively fastidious in their mode of doing it, they, with the same sort of violence, pushed forward the art of representation, and here also had to content themselves with what could be achieved by merely external discipline. Dramatic art had not reached that point of culture which could prepare it perfectly to comprehend and master their poems, and reproduce them independently. . . . Now if this new school was to make its authority in taste acknowledged, that authority must necessarily be exercised with a certain despotism. With despotism towards the actors and the public, since both were deeply imbued with naturalism. Like the unfortunate Neuber, like Schroeder in his eightieth

year, Schiller and Goethe placed themselves in decided opposition to the taste of the majority. They maintained a thoroughly aristocratic position with respect to the public, and defended the ideal principle with all the power of their pre-eminent genius; nay, they did not scorn to attack the prevalent taste with the sharpest weapons of satire. Their correspondence exhibits their contempt for the masses, and for the champions of the popular taste, in all that rudeness which seems inseparable from the enthusiasm of great souls for a more exalted humanity. Nowhere did they sue for the approbation of the multitude; nowhere did they accommodate themselves to the ruling taste, or even flatter it.

"The despotic energy with which Goethe carried out the ideal principle, in spite of all difficulties, necessarily made itself felt in his direction of the theatre. He had to urge forward dramatic art, and to wring from the public a formal respect for the experiments of his school; a double task, which obliged him to surpass even Schroeder in the peremptoriness of his commands."

Not only were there difficulties of rhythm, but also of pronunciation, to be overcome. The German language, harsh as it is at the best, becomes hideous in the careless licenses of pronunciation which various cities and classes adopt—as people who are too ugly to hope for any admiration, come at last entirely to neglect their appearance. The Suabians, Austrians, and especially the Weimarians, plagued Goethe terribly with their peculiarities of speech. "One would scarcely believe that *b*, *p*, *d*, and *t*, are generally considered to be *four* different letters," said the poet to Eckermann, "for they only speak of a hard and a soft *b*, and of a hard and a soft *d*, and thus seem tacitly to intimate that *p* and *t* do not exist.[1] With such people *Pein* (pain) is like *Bein* (leg), *Pass* (pass) like *Bass* (bass), and *Teckel* (a terrier) like *Deckel* (cover)." Thus an actor, in an impassioned moment bidding his mistress cease her reproaches, exclaimed *O ente* (Oh, duck!) meaning *O ende* (Oh, cease!)

The success of *Wallenstein*, which was a theatrical no less than an artistic success, seemed to have decided the battle in favour of the Ideal school; seemed, but did not. Art was henceforth to be everything. So far did Goethe carry out his

[1] LUDECUS in his book, *Aus Goethe's Leben: Wahrheit und keine Dichtung*, tells a story of GRAF, Schiller's favourite actor, who on seeing the great TALMA exclaimed, "*Dalma ist ein Gott!*"

principle of placing Art foremost,[1] that he would not suffer the actors to "forget the audience"; his maxim was, that in a scene between two actors, the presence of the spectator should constantly be felt. Consequently the actors were not allowed to stand in profile, or to turn their backs upon the audience, or to speak at the back of the stage, under any pretext. They were to *recite*, not to *be* the characters represented. Heinrich Schmidt narrates how Goethe in giving him lessons in acting, entered into the minutest details. In the celebrated monologue of Hamlet, "To be or not to be," he allowed Schmidt to place his right hand upon his chin, while the left hand supported the right elbow; but would not permit this left hand to be closed like a fist, insisting that the two middle fingers should be held together, the thumb and the other two fingers kept apart.[2] In acting, he reversed his old artistic maxim, and insisted on Beauty first, Truth afterwards: *erst schön dann wahr*.[3]

It will surprise no one that this tendency, this preoccupation with the Ideal, should result in the rehabilitation of the most perfect form of drama which that tendency has produced—I mean the French Tragedy, so pitilessly ridiculed by Lessing. Nay, Goethe himself translated Voltaire's *Mahomet*, which was played in 1800, and afterwards *Tancred*. The *Adelphi* of Terence, translated by Einsiedel; the *Ion* of Schlegel; the *Phèdre* of Racine; translated by Schiller; and finally Schiller's own *Braut von Messina*, sufficiently show the wide departure from anything like a modern national drama into which the Weimar school had wandered. Nay, even Shakspeare had to suffer the indignity of being elevated by this classical mania. Schiller translated his *Macbeth*—how he travestied it may be seen by the curious reader; enough to mention here that he changes the Witches into Fates; and we learn from Heinrich Voss that these terrible sisters were represented by young girls beautifully dressed! We need not, therefore, be surprised on hearing that Terence's comedy was actually represented by actors in Roman Masks,—thus entirely getting rid of Expression, which forms the basis of modern acting. So deplorable a mistake needs only to be mentioned to be appreciated. One

[1] See his *Rules for Actors* in *Werke*, xxxv. pp. 435-459.
[2] *Erinnerungen*, p. 110
[3] Remnants of the old Weimar school still talk of these days, and of the drilling which it was necessary to give the actors. From one, to whom Goethe was very kind, I heard full confirmation of what is said in the text.

step alone remained for dilettantism; and that step was to give the actors the cothurnus, and make them spout Latin and Greek.

During these antique restorations, experiments were made with Shakspeare, Calderon, Gozzi—with everything but the life of the people—and Weimar was proclaimed a great school of Art, in which the *literary* public religiously believed. But the other public? Goethe himself shall answer. "Here in Weimar they have done me the honour to perform my *Iphigenia* and my *Tasso*," he said to Eckermann in his old age. "But how often? Scarcely once in three or four years. The public finds them tedious. Very probably. . . . I really had the notion once that it was possible to found a German Drama; but there was no emotion or excitement—all remained as it was before."

To found a German Drama by means of poetic works, and antique restorations, was the delusion of one who was essentially *not* a dramatist. I have more than once denied to Goethe the peculiar genius which makes the dramatist; and my denial is not only supported by the evidence of his own works, it is, I think, conclusively established by his critical reflections on Shakspeare, and his theatrical treatment of Shakspeare's works. Profoundly as he appreciated the poet, he seems to me wholly to have misunderstood the dramatist. He actually asserts that *Hamlet's* Ghost, and the Witches in *Macbeth*, are examples of Shakspeare's "representing what would better be imagined"; that in the reading, these figures are acceptable, but in the acting they disturb, nay repel, our emotion. So radical a misconception need not be dwelt on. The reader, who does not at once perceive it, may rest assured that he is wholly unacquainted with the secrets of dramatic art. As an example of Goethe's entire misunderstanding of Shakspeare's art, I will cite the version he made of *Romeo and Juliet*, of which he was not a little proud. The subject is of sufficient literary interest—considering the two names implicated—to warrant a digression.

It was in 1811 that he undertook to recast *Romeo and Juliet* for the stage; and as this version has recently been recovered, and printed by Boas,[1] we can examine it at leisure. There is scarcely any Shakspearian play which a great poet and dramatist might so reasonably undertake to recast as *Romeo*

[1] *Nachträge zu Goethe's Werken.*

and Juliet; for while it is instinct with life, character, and dramatic movement, it is in some respects among the worst of Shakspeare's fine plays. Juvenility of style is apparent in almost every scene. The frequence of rhyme, the forced rhetoric and conceits, the lame expression, and the deficiency in that passionate and profound poetry which illuminates the great plays, prove it to be an early work. In most of the great situations we find long tirades of rhetorical *concetti* in place of the nervous language, strongly coloured by passion, which Shakspeare afterwards knew so well how to employ. Thus when Juliet is in agony of suspense as to whether Romeo is dead, she says:

> This torture should be roared in dismal hell.
> Hath Romeo slain himself? Say thou but *I*,
> And that bare vowel, *I*, shall poison more
> Than the death-darting *eye* of cockatrice:
> I am not I, if there be such an *I*.

There are critics who will defend this (what will they not defend in Shakspeare?) and find plausible arguments to show that it is true passion; but I do not advise any modern poet to write thus, if he would win the admiration of these critics.

It will not be supposed, however, that I am dead to the beauty of this work, which, because of its pre-eminent qualities, is an universal favourite. It is the work of Shakspeare *young*, but indisputably Shakspeare. He has not only presented the story with wonderful vividness and variety, but he has crowded it with *characters*, and animated those characters with true dramatic motives. Think of old Capulet, Tybalt, the Nurse, Peter, Gregory and Sampson, and the Apothecary,—all episodical figures, yet each having his well-marked individuality. By touches brief yet free and masterly the figures stand out from the canvas.

One would imagine that a dramatist who undertook to remedy the defects of this work, would throw all his labour into those parts where the work is weakest, and thus free the rich harvest of dramatic thought from all the chaff and stubble; one would certainly never expect him to remove any of those vivid touches which give life to the characters, or any of those dramatic presentations of the subject which animate the scene. Yet this, and this only, has Goethe done.[1]

Shakspeare opens with one of his life-like expositions,

[1] *Nachträge zu Goethe's Werken.*

pregnant with purpose, and arresting attention at the outset. The Capulet servants are swaggering in the streets of Verona, and no sooner do they meet the servants of the Montagues than at once they come to blows. Tybalt and Benvolio quickly join the fray: old Capulet and old Montague are not long behind. The whole feud of the two houses—that which forms the *nodus* of the piece—lives before us. The entrance of the Prince, threatening death to the man who next disturbs the peace of Verona, introduces another tragic motive. The whole exposition is a masterly specimen of dramatic art. But Goethe had so little sense of what was dramatic, that he strikes out this exposition, and opens his version like a comic opera, with a chorus of servants who are arranging lamps and garlands before Capulet's house:

Zündet die Lampen an
Windet auch Kränze dran
Hell sey das Haus!
&c. &c.

Maskers pass into the house. Romeo and Benvolio enter and *talk*. They *tell* us of that family feud, which Shakspeare made us *see*. Rosalind is alluded to by Romeo, but all the fantastic hyperbole of desire which Shakspeare's Romeo expresses (in direct contrast with the expression of his *passion* for Juliet), is struck out. The two enter Capulet's house, where Benvolio promises to show him a lovelier face than Rosalind's. Before they enter, however, Mercutio arrives; and at this point the student of Shakspeare will uplift his eyebrows when he sees how Goethe has contrived to destroy this poetic creation. Not only is the celebrated Mab speech omitted, but Mercutio declares he will keep out of the ball-room, lest he should be discovered—by his handsome figure! The whole of this must be translated, or my readers may withhold their credence.[1]

Romeo. Come with us.
Get you a mantle, get a stranger's mask.
Mercutio. In vain I don the mask, it helps me not.
I'm known by every child, and must be known.
I am a distinguished man; there is a character in my figure and voice, in my walk, in my every movement.

[1] In a letter to Frau von Wolzogen, he speaks of his recently completed version thus: "The maxim which I followed, was to concentrate all that was most interesting, and bring it into harmony; for Shakspeare, following the bent of his genius, his time, and his public, was forced to bring together much that was not harmonious, to flatter the reigning taste." *Literarischer Nachlass der Frau von Wolzogen*, vol. i. p. 437.

Benvolio. Truly! thy paunch has a charming look.
Mercutio. It is easy for you to talk—toothpicks, beanstalks as you are! You hang rag after rag upon you: who will unpack you? But I with the heaviest mantle, with the most outrageous nose, I have only to appear, and some one directly whispers behind, "There goes Mercutio! By my faith, it is Mercutio!" That indeed would be immensely vexatious were it no glory. And since I am Mercutio, let me be Mercutio, and always Mercutio! Now, good-bye to you. Do your business as well as you can, I seek my adventures on my pillow. An airy dream shall delight me, while you run after your dreams, and can no more catch them than I can.

I shall be brisk when o'er you weeps the dawn,
While you for weariness, or love, will yawn. *Exit.*

Into *this* has Mercutio been metamorphosed! The ball scene follows. The Nurse, indeed, is introduced, but all her individuality is destroyed; every one of the characteristic touches is washed out by an unsparing sponge. In his essay on Shakspeare he gives us the clue to these omissions; for he says "that the Nurse and Mercutio almost entirely destroy the tragic meaning of the story, and are to be regarded as farcical additions, which the modern stage repudiates."[1] The alterations in this scene are not important, and are chiefly the presence of the Prince, who comes to the ball with Mercutio, his object being to mix in the society of Capulet and Montague, and so bring about amity between the houses. The old feud is again *talked* of: as if talking could take the place of doing! The rest of the piece follows the original pretty closely; there are only two alterations which call for notice; one an improvement, and one an extraordinary and inexplicable blunder.

To begin with the blunder: The reader knows with what sharpness Shakspeare has contrasted the calm respectable Paris, who woos Juliet through her parents, and the fervid Romeo, who goes direct to Juliet herself; one seeks the father's consent, without troubling himself about the maid; the other seeks the maid's consent, and braves the enmity of the father. What will the reader think of Goethe's dramatic ideas, on hearing that this contrast is entirely effaced: Paris makes love to Juliet; has long adored her in silence, before he ventured to ask her parent's consent!

The second alteration is a dramatic improvement; although it will certainly make the Shakspeare bigots cry out. It is the closing of the piece with Juliet's death, the Friar in a short soliloquy pointing the moral. Nothing can be more undramatic or more tiresome than the long recapitulation of

[1] *Werke*, xxxv. 379.

facts perfectly familiar to the audience, with which Shakspeare ends the piece.

This *Romeo and Juliet* was not only produced at Weimar, but it kept the stage in Berlin until within the last few years! The Berlin critics on its original production were by no means favourably inclined to it—the dénouement, we learn from Zelter, especially displeased them. Did they resent being robbed of their ennui?

Enough has been said to characterise the attempt of Goethe and Schiller to create a German Drama; which attempt, although its failure was inevitable, cannot be regarded without sympathy, were it only for the noble aim animating it. That aim was misdirected; but it was the error of lofty minds, who saw *above* the exigencies of the age. They could not bring themselves to believe that the Drama, which they held to be so grand a form of Art, had ceased to be the lay-pulpit, and had become a mere amusement.

With Schiller's death Goethe's active interest in the theatre ceased. The Obermarschall Graf von Edeling was adjoined to him, as acting superintendent, but without absolute power, which still remained in Goethe's hands. This was towards the end of 1813. And in 1817 his son, August von Goethe, was added to the direction. Thus was the theatre burdened with a Geheimrath, absolute but inactive, an Obermarschall, and a court page. Nor were matters better behind the scenes. An intrigue had long been forming, under the direction of Caroline Jagemann, to force Goethe's resignation. Between the duke's mistress and the duke's friend there had never been a very pleasant feeling. She was naturally jealous of Goethe's power. As an actress under his direction, she must have had endless little causes of complaint. Had the poet been less firmly fixed in the duke's affections and interests, this rivalry could not have endured so long. At last a crisis came.

There was at that period, 1817, a comedian named Karsten, whose poodle performed the leading part in the well-known melodrame of *The Dog of Montargis* with such perfection that he carried the public everywhere with him, in Paris as in Germany. It may be imagined with what sorrowing scorn Goethe heard of this. The dramatic art to give place to a poodle! He, who detested dogs, to hear of a dog performing on all the stages of Germany with greater success than the best of actors! The occasion was not one to be lost. The

duke, whose fondness for dogs was as marked as Goethe's aversion to them, was craftily assailed, from various sides, to invite Karsten and his poodle to Weimar. When Goethe heard of this, he haughtily answered, "In our Theatre regulations stands: *no dogs admitted on the stage*"—and paid no more attention to it. As the duke had already written to invite Karsten and his dog, Goethe's opposition was set down to systematic arbitrariness, and people artfully "wondered" how a prince's wishes could be opposed for such trifles. The dog came. After the first rehearsal, Goethe declared that he would have nothing more to do with a theatre on which a dog was allowed to perform; and at once started for Jena. Princes ill brook opposition; and the duke, after all, was a duke. In an unworthy moment, he wrote the following, which was posted in the theatre, and forwarded to Goethe:

"From the expressed opinions which have reached me, I have come to the conviction that the Herr Geheimrath von Goethe wishes to be released from his functions as Intendent, which I hereby accord. KARL AUGUST."

A more offensive dismissal could scarcely have been suggested by malice. In the duke it was only a spurt of the imperious temper and coarseness which roughened his fine qualities. On Goethe the blow fell heavily. "Karl August never understood me," he exclaimed, with a deep sigh. Such an insult to the greatest man of his age, coming from his old friend and brother in arms, who had been more friend than monarch to him during two-and-forty years, and who had declared that one grave should hold their bodies—and all about a dog, behind which was a miserable green-room cabal! The thought of leaving Weimar for ever, and of accepting the magnificent offers made him from Vienna, pressed urgently on his mind.

But, to his credit be it said, the duke quickly became sensible of his unworthy outbreak of temper, and wrote to Goethe in a tone of conciliation: "Dear Friend," he wrote, "From several expressions thou hast let fall, I gather that thou wouldst be pleased to be released from the vexations of theatrical management, but that thou wouldst willingly aid it by thy counsel and countenance, when, as will doubtless often be the case, thou art specially appealed to by the manager. I gladly fall in with thy desire, thanking thee for the great good thou hast effected in this

troublesome business, begging thee to retain thy interest in its artistic prosperity, and hoping that the release will better thy health. I enclose an official letter notifying this change, and with best wishes for your health, &c." The cloud passed over; but no entreaty could make Goethe resume the direction of the theatre, and he withdrew his son also from his post in the direction. He could pardon the hasty act and unconsidered word of his friend; but he was prouder than the duke, and held firmly to his resolution of having nothing to do with a theatre which had once prostituted itself to the exhibition of a clever poodle.

What a sarcasm, and in the sarcasm what a moral, lies in this story. Art, which Weimar will not have, gives place to a poodle!

CHAPTER VI

SCHILLER'S LAST YEARS

THE current of narrative in the preceding chapter has flowed onwards into years and events from which we must now return. Instead of the year 1817, we must recall the year 1800. Schiller has just come to settle at Weimar, there to end his days in noble work with his great friend. It may interest the reader to have a glimpse of Goethe's daily routine; the more so, as such a glimpse is not to be had from any published works.

He rose at seven, sometimes earlier, after a sound and prolonged sleep; for, like Thorwaldsen, he had a "talent for sleeping," only surpassed by his talent for continuous work. Till eleven he worked without interruption. A cup of chocolate was then brought, and he resumed work till one. At two he dined. This meal was the important meal of the day. His appetite was immense. Even on the days when he complained of not being hungry, he ate much more than most men. Puddings, sweets, and cakes were always welcome. He sat a long while over his wine, chatting gaily to some friend or other (for he never dined alone), or to one of the actors, whom he often had with him, after dinner, to read over their parts, and to take his instructions. He was fond of wine, and drank daily his two or three bottles.

Lest this statement should convey a false impression, I hasten to recall to the reader's recollection the habits of our

fathers in respect of drinking. It was no unusual thing to be a "three bottle man" in those days in England, when the three bottles were of Port or Burgundy; and Goethe, a Rhinelander, accustomed from boyhood to wine, drank a wine which his English contemporaries would have called water. The amount he drank never did more than exhilarate him; never made him unfit for work or for society.[1]

Over his wine he sat some hours: no such thing as dessert was seen upon his table in those days: not even the customary coffee after dinner. His mode of living was extremely simple; and even when persons of very modest circumstances burned wax, two poor tallow candles were all that could be seen in his rooms. In the evening he went often to the theatre, and there his customary glass of punch was brought at six o'clock. When he was not at the theatre, he received friends at home. Between eight and nine a frugal supper was laid, but he never ate anything except a little salad or preserves. By ten o'clock he was usually in bed.

Many visitors came to him. From the letters of Christiane to Meyer we gather that he must have exercised hospitality on a large scale, since about every month 50 lbs. of butter are ordered from Bremen, and the cases of wine have frequently to be renewed. It was the pleasure and the penalty of his fame, that all persons who came near Weimar made an effort to see him. Sometimes these visitors were persons of great interest; oftener they were fatiguing bores, or men with pretensions more offensive than dulness. To those who pleased him he was inexpressibly charming; to the others he was stately, even to stiffness. While, therefore, we hear some speak of him with an enthusiasm such as genius alone can excite: we hear others giving vent to the feelings of disappointment, and even of offence, created by his manners. The stately minister exasperated those who went to see the impassioned poet. As these visitors were frequently authors, it was natural they should avenge their wounded self-love in

[1] "For the last thousand years, the life of the Rhinelander is as it were steeped in wine; he has become like the good old wine-casks, tinted with the vinous green. Wine is the creed of the Rhinelander in everything. As in England, in the days of Cromwell, the Royalists were known by the meat pasties, the Papists by their raisin soup, the Atheists by their roast beef; so is the man of the Rhinegau known by his wine-flask. A jolly companion drinks his seven bottles every day, and with it grows as old as Methuselah, is seldom drunk, and has at most the Bardolph mark of a red nose." LIEBIG: *Letters on Chemistry*, Appendix.

criticisms and epigrams. To cite but one example among many: Bürger, whom Goethe had assisted in a pecuniary way, came to Weimar, and announced himself in this preposterous style: "You are Goethe—I am Bürger," evidently believing he was thereby maintaining his own greatness, and offering a brotherly alliance. Goethe received him with the most diplomatic politeness, and the most diplomatic formality; instead of plunging into discussions of poetry, he would be brought to talk of nothing but the condition of the Göttingen University, and the number of its students. Bürger went away furious, avenged this reception in an epigram, and related to all comers the experience he had had of the proud, cold, diplomatic Geheimrath. Others had the like experience to recount; and a public, ever greedy of scandal, ever willing to believe a great man is a small man, echoed these voices in swelling chorus. Something of offence lay in the very nature of Goethe's bearing, which was stiff, even to haughtiness. His appearance was so imposing, that Heine humorously relates how, on the occasion of his first interview with him, an elaborately prepared speech was entirely driven from his memory by the Jupiter-like presence, and he could only stammer forth "a remark on the excellence of the plums which grew on the road from Jena to Weimar." An imposing presence is irritating to mean natures; and Goethe might have gained universal applause, if, like Jean Paul, he had worn no cravat, and had let his hair hang loose upon his shoulders.

The mention of Jean Paul leads me to quote *his* impression of Goethe. "I went timidly to meet him. Every one had described him as cold to everything upon earth. Frau von Kalb said he no longer admires anything, not even himself. Every word is ice. Nothing but curiosities warm the fibres of his heart; so I asked Knebel if he could petrify me, or encrust me in some mineral spring that I might present myself as a statue or a fossil." How one hears the accents of village gossip in these sentences! To Weimarian ignorance Goethe's enthusiasm for statues and natural products seemed monstrous. "His house," Jean Paul continues, "or rather his palace, pleased me; it is the only one in Weimar in the Italian style; with such a staircase! A Pantheon full of pictures and statues. Fresh anxiety oppressed me. At last the god entered, cold, monosyllabic. 'The French are drawing towards Paris,' said Knebel. 'Hm!' said the god. His face is massive and animated; his eye a ball of light! At last, as conversation

turned on art, he warmed, and was himself. His conversation was not so rich and flowing as Herder's, but penetrating, acute, and calm. Finally, he read, or rather performed, an unpublished poem, in which the flames of his heart burst through the external crust of ice; so that he greeted my enthusiasm with a pressure of the hand. He did it again as I took leave, and urged me to call. By heaven! we shall love each other! He considers his poetic career closed. There is nothing comparable to his reading. It is like deep-toned thunder, blended with whispering rain-drops."

Now let us hear what Jean Paul says of Schiller. "I went yesterday to see the stony Schiller, from whom all strangers spring back as from a precipice. His form is wasted, yet severely powerful, and very angular. He is full of acumen, but without love. His conversation is as excellent as his writings." He never repeated this visit to Schiller, who doubtless quite subscribed to what Goethe wrote. "I am glad you have seen Richter. His love of truth, and his wish for self-improvement, have prepossessed me in his favour; but the social man is a sort of theoretical man, and I doubt if he will approach us in a practical way."

If to pretenders and to *strangers* Goethe was cold and repellent, he was warm and attractive enough to all with whom he could sympathise. Brotherly to Schiller and Herder, he was fatherly in his loving discernment and protection to such men as Hegel, then an unknown teacher, and Voss, the son of the translator of Homer.[1] He excited passionate attachments in all who lived in his intimacy; and passionate hatred in many whom he would not admit to intimacy.

The opening of this century found Schiller active, and anxious to stimulate the activity of his friend. But theories hampered the genius of Goethe; and various occupations disturbed it. He was not like Schiller a reflective, critical poet, but a spontaneous instinctive poet. The consequence was, that Reflection not only retarded, but misled him into Symbolism—the dark corner of that otherwise sunny palace of Art which he has reared. He took up *Faust*, and wrote the classic intermezzo of *Helena*. He was very busy with the theatre, and with science; and at the close of the year fell into a dangerous illness, which created much anxiety in the duke and the Weimar circle, and of which the Frau von Stein wrote in

[1] Note Voss's enthusiastic gratitude in his *Mittheilungen über Goethe und Schiller.*

that letter quoted p. 334. He recovered in a few weeks, and busied himself with the translation of *Theophrastus on Colours*, with *Faust*, and the *Natürliche Tochter*.

While the two chiefs of Literature were, in noble emulation and brotherly love, working together, each anxious for the success of the other, the nation divided itself into two parties, disputing which was the greater poet of the two; as in Rome the artists dispute about Raphael and Michael Angelo. "It is difficult to appreciate one such genius," says Goethe of the two painters, "still more difficult to appreciate both. Hence people lighten the task by partisanship." The partisanship in the present case was fierce, and has continued. Instead of following Goethe's advice, and rejoicing that it had two such poets to boast of, the public has gone on crying up one at the expense of the other. Schiller himself with charming modesty confessed his inferiority; and in one of his letters to Körner he says: "Compared with Goethe I am but a poetical bungler —*gegen Goethe bin und bleib' ich ein poetischer Lump.*" But the majority have placed him higher than his rival, at least higher in their hearts. Gervinus has remarked a curious contradiction in the fate of their works. Schiller, who wrote for men, is the favourite of women and youths; Goethe, who remained in perpetual youth, is only relished by men. The secret of this is, that Schiller had those passions and enthusiasms which Goethe wanted. Goethe told Eckermann that his works never could be popular; and, except the minor poems and *Faust*, there are none of his productions which equal the popularity of Schiller's.

To make an instrument of vengeance out of this partisanship, seemed an excellent idea to Kotzebue, who, after being crowned at Berlin, and saluted all over Germany with tributes of tears, now came to his native city of Weimar. He was invited to court, but he was not admitted into the select Goethe-Schiller circle; which irritated his vanity the more, because a joke of Goethe's had been repeated to him. In Japan, besides the temporal court of the emperor, there is the spiritual court of the Dalai-Lama, which exercises a superior though secret influence. Goethe, alluding to this, said: "It is of no use to Kotzebue that he has been received at the temporal court of Japan, if he cannot get admitted to the spiritual court." Kotzebue thought he could destroy that court, and set up one of his own, of which Schiller should be the Dalai-Lama.

There was at this time a select little circle, composed of Goethe, Schiller, Meyer, and several distinguished women, the Countess von Einsiedel, Fraülein von Imhoff, Frau von Wolzogen, and others. The great preponderance of women in this circle gave a romantic tinge to the laws they imposed on themselves. On Kotzebue's arrival, one of Amalia's maids of honour used her utmost to obtain his admission; but Schiller and Goethe, resolved on his exclusion, got a bye-law enacted, that "no member should have the power of introducing another person, native or stranger, without the previously expressed unanimous consent of the other members. A certain coolness had sprung up between some of the members of the circle, and Goethe, pestered by the iteration of the request that Kotzebue should be admitted, at last said, "Laws once recognised should be upheld; if not, it would be better to break up the society altogether; which, perhaps, would be the more advisable, as constancy is always difficult, if not tedious, to ladies." The ladies were naturally enough irritated. Kotzebue was ready to inflame them. Schiller had just gone to Leipsic; and Kotzebue, taking advantage of this absence, organised a fête to celebrate the coronation of Frederick Schiller in the Stadthouse of Weimar. Scenes from *Don Carlos*, the *Maid of Orleans*, and *Maria Stuart*, were to come first. Goethe's favourite, the Countess von Einsiedel (now his foe), was to represent the Joan of Arc; the Fräulein von Imhoff the Queen of Scots; Sophie Moreau was to recite the Song of the Bell. Kotzebue was to appear as Father Thibaut in the *Maid of Orleans* and as the Bell Founder, in which latter character he was to strike the mould of the bell (made of pasteboard), and breaking it in pieces, disclose the bust of Schiller, which was to be crowned by the ladies. The preparations for this fête were eagerly carried forward. Weimar was in a state of excitement. The cabal looked prosperous. The Princess Caroline had consented to be present. Schiller was most pressingly invited, but said, in Goethe's house, a few days before, "I shall send word I am ill." To this Goethe made no reply. He heard of all the arrangements in perfect silence.

"It was thought," says Falk, to whom we owe this story, "that a coolness between the two great men would spring out of this cabal; especially if the simple, unsuspecting Schiller should fall into the toils laid for him. But they who suspected this, knew not the men. Fortunately, however, the whole

scheme fell to pieces. The directors of the Library refused to lend Schiller's bust; the Burgomaster refused to lend the Stadthouse. Rarely has so melancholy, so disastrous a day risen on the gay world of Weimar. To see the fairest, most brilliant hopes thus crushed at a blow when so near their fulfilment, what was it but to be wrecked in sight of port? Let the reader but imagine the now utterly useless expenditure of crape, gauze, ribbons, lace, beads, flowers which the fair creatures had made; not to mention the pasteboard for the bell, the canvas colours, brushes for the scenes, the wax candles for lighting, &c. Let him think of the still greater outlay of time and trouble requisite for the learning so many and such various parts; let him figure to himself a majestic Maid of Orleans, a captivating Queen of Scots, a lovely Agnes, so suddenly compelled to descend from the pinnacle of glory, and in evil moment to lay aside the crown and sceptre, helm, dress and ornament, and he will admit there never was fate more cruel."

Shortly after this—on the 13th June 1802—Goethe's son was confirmed. Herder officiated on the occasion; and this brought him once more into that friendly relation with Goethe, which of late had been cooled by his jealousy of Schiller. Herder had been jealous of the growing friendship of Goethe and Merck; he was still more embittered by the growing friendship of Goethe and Schiller. He was bitter against Schiller's idol, Kant, and all Kant's admirers, declaring the new philosophy destructive of Christian morals. He was growing old, and the bitterness of his youth was intensified by age and sickness. Schiller was in every way antagonistic to him; and the representation of *Wallenstein* "made him ill." Goethe, whose marvellous tolerance he had so sorely tried, and who never ceased to admire his fine qualities, said, "one could not go to him without rejoicing in his mildness, one could not quit him without having been hurt by his bitterness." For some time Goethe was never mentioned in the Herder family, except in an almost inimical tone; and yet Herder's wife wrote to Knebel: "Let us thank God that Goethe still lives. Weimar would be intolerable without him." They lived together in Jena for a few days, and parted never to see each other again. In December 1803, Herder was no more.

While discussing Physical Science with Ritter, Comparative Anatomy with Loder, Optics with Himly, and making observations on the Moon, the plan of a great poem, *De Natura*

Rerum, rose in Goethe's mind, and like so many other plans, remained a plan. Intercourse with the great philologist Wolff led him a willing student into Antiquity; and from Voss he tried to master the whole principles of Metre with the zeal of a philologist. There is something very piquant in the idea of the greatest poet of his nation, the most musical master of verse in all possible forms, trying to acquire a theoretic knowledge of that which on instinct he did to perfection. It is characteristic of his new tendency to theorise on poetry.

Whoever reads the *Natürliche Tochter*, which was completed at this period, will probably attribute to this theorising tendency the absence of all life and vigour which makes it "marble smooth and marble cold." But although it appears marble cold to us, it was the marble urn in which the poet had buried real feelings; and Abeken relates that the actress who originally performed the Heroine, told him how, on one occasion, when she was rehearsing the part in Goethe's room, he was so overcome with emotion, that with tears in his eyes he bade her pause.[1] This may seem more strange than the fact that Schiller admired the work, and wrote to Humboldt: "The high symbolism with which it is handled, so that all the crude material is neutralised, and everything becomes portion of an ideal Whole, is truly wonderful. It is entirely Art, and thereby reaches the innermost Nature, through the power of truth." And Fichte—who, Varnhagen tells me, was with him in the box at the Theatre when the play was performed at Berlin, and was greatly moved by it—declared it to be Goethe's masterpiece. Rosenkrantz is amazed at the almost universal condemnation of the work. "What pathos, what warmth, what tragic pain!" he exclaims. Others would echo the exclamation—in irony. It seems to me that the very praise of Schiller and Fichte is a justification of the general verdict. A drama which is *so* praised, *i.e.* for its high symbolism, is a drama philosophers and critics may glorify, but which Art abjures. A drama, or any other poem, may carry with it material which admits of symbolical interpretation; but the poet who makes symbolism the substance and the purpose of his work, has mistaken his vocation. The whole Greek Drama has been *interpreted* into symbols by some modern scholars; but if the Greek Dramatists had written with any such purpose as that detected by these interpreters, they would

[1] ABEKEN: *Goethe in den Jahren* 1771-75, p. 21.

never have survived to give interpreters the trouble. The *Iliad* has quite recently been once more interpreted into an allegory; Dante's *Divine Comedy* has been interpreted into an allegory; Shakspeare's plays have, by Ulrici, been interpreted into moral platitudes; the *Wahlverwandtschaften* has been interpreted into a "world history." Indeed symbolism being in its very nature *arbitrary*—the indication of a meaning not directly expressed, but arbitrarily thrust *under* the expression—there is no limit to the power of *interpretation*. It is, however, quite certain that the poets had not the meanings which their commentators find; and equally certain that if poets wrote for commentators they would never produce masterpieces.

In December 1803 Weimar had a visitor whose rank is high among its illustrious guests: Madame de Stael. Napoleon would not suffer her to remain in France; she was brought by Benjamin Constant to the German Athens, that she might see and know something of the men her work *De l'Allemagne* was to reveal to her countrymen. It is easy to ridicule Madame de Stael; to call her, as Heine does, "a whirlwind in petticoats," and a "Sultana of mind." But Germans should be grateful to her for that book, which still remains one of the best books written about Germany; and the lover of letters will not forget that her genius has, in various departments of literature, rendered for ever illustrious the power of the womanly intellect. Goethe and Schiller, whom she stormed with cannonades of talk, spoke of her intellect with great admiration. Of all living creatures he had seen, Schiller said, she was "the most talkative, the most combative, the most gesticulative;" but she was "also the most cultivated, and the most gifted." The contrast between her French culture and his German culture, and the difficulty he had in expressing himself in French, did not prevent his being much interested. In the sketch of her he sent to Goethe it is well said: "She insists on explaining everything; understanding everything; measuring everything. She admits of no Darkness; nothing Incommensurable; and where her torch throws no light, there nothing can exist. Hence her horror for the Ideal Philosophy, which she thinks leads to mysticism and superstition. For what we call poetry she has no sense; she can only appreciate what is passionate, rhetorical, universal. She does not prize what is false, but does not always perceive what is true."

The Duchess Amalia was enchanted with her, and the duke wrote to Goethe, who was at Jena, begging him to come over,

and be seen by her; which Goethe very positively declined. He said, if she wished very much to see him, and would come to Jena, she should be very heartily welcomed; a comfortable lodging and a bourgeoise table would be offered her, and every day they could have some hours together when his business was over; but he could not undertake to go to court, and into society; he did not feel himself strong enough. In the beginning of 1804, however, he came to Weimar, and there he made her acquaintance; that is to say, he received her in his own house, at first *tête-à-tête*, and afterwards in small circles of friends.

Except when she managed to animate him by her paradoxes or wit, he was cold and formal to her, even more so than to other remarkable people; and he has told us the reason. Rousseau had been drawn into a correspondence with two women, who addressed themselves to him as admirers; he had shown himself in this correspondence by no means to his advantage, now (1803) that the letters appeared in print.[1] Goethe had heard or read of this correspondence; and Madame de Stael had frankly told him she intended to print his conversation. This was enough to make him ill at ease in her society; and although she said he was "un homme d'un esprit prodigieux en conversation . . . quand on le sait faire parler il est admirable," she never saw the real, but a factitious Goethe. By dint of provocation—and champagne—she managed to make him talk brilliantly; she never got him to talk to her seriously. On the 29th of February she left Weimar, to the great relief both of Goethe and Schiller.[2]

Nothing calls for notice during the rest of this year, except the translation of an unpublished work by Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew*, and the commencement of the admirable work on *Winckelmann and his Age*. The beginning of 1805 found him troubled with a presentiment that either he or Schiller would die in this year. Both were dangerously ill. Christiane, writing to her friend Nicolaus Meyer, says, that for the last three months the Geheimrath has scarcely had a day's health, and at times it seemed as if he must die. It was a touching

[1] The correspondence alluded to can be no other than that of Rousseau with Madame de la Tour-Franqueville and her friend, whose name is still unknown; it is one of the most interesting among the many interesting correspondences of women with celebrated men. A charming notice of it may be found in STE.-BEUVE'S *Causeries du Lundi*, vol. ii.

[2] In the *Tag und Jahres Hefte*, 1804 (*Werke*, xxvii. p. 143), the reader will find Goethe's account of Madame de Stael and her relation to him.

scene when Schiller, a little recovered from his last attack, entered the sick room of his friend. They walked up to each other, and, without speaking a word, expressed their joy at meeting in a long and manly kiss. Both hoped with the return of spring for return of health and power. Schiller meanwhile was translating the *Phèdre* of Racine; Goethe was translating the *Rameau's Nephew*, and writing the history of the *Farbenlehre*.

The spring was coming, but on its blossoms Schiller's eyes were not to rest. On the 30th of April the friends parted for the last time. Schiller was going to the theatre. Goethe, too unwell to accompany him, said good-bye at the door of Schiller's house. During Schiller's illness Goethe was much depressed. Voss found him once pacing up and down his garden, crying by himself. He mastered his emotion as Voss told him of Schiller's state, and only said, "Fate is pitiless, and man but little."

It really seemed as if the two friends were to be united in the grave as they had been in life. Goethe grew worse. From Schiller, life was fast ebbing. On the 8th of May he was given over. "His sleep that night was disturbed; his mind again wandered; with the morning he had lost all consciousness. He spoke incoherently and chiefly in Latin. His last drink was champagne. Towards three in the afternoon came on the last exhaustion; the breath began to fail. Towards four he would have called for naphtha, but the last syllable died upon his lips; finding himself speechless, he motioned that he wished to write something; but his hand could only trace three letters, in which was yet recognisable the distinct character of his writing. His wife knelt by his side; he pressed her hand. His sister-in-law stood with the physician at the foot of the bed, applying warm cushions to the cold feet. Suddenly a sort of electric shock came over his countenance; the head fell back; the deepest calm settled on his face. His features were as those of one in a soft sleep.

"The news of Schiller's death soon spread through Weimar. The theatre was closed; men gathered into groups. Each felt as if he had lost his dearest friend. To Goethe, enfeebled himself by long illness, and again stricken by some relapse, no one had the courage to mention the death of his beloved rival. When the tidings came to Henry Meyer, who was with him, Meyer left the house abruptly lest his grief might escape him. No one else had courage to break the intelligence.

Goethe perceived that the members of his household seemed embarrassed and anxious to avoid him. He divined something of the fact, and said at last, 'I see—Schiller must be very ill.' That night they overheard him—the serene man who seemed almost above human affection, who disdained to reveal to others whatever grief he felt when his son died—they overheard Goethe weep! In the morning he said to a friend, 'Is it not true that Schiller was very ill yesterday?' The friend (it was a woman) sobbed. 'He is dead,' said Goethe faintly. 'You have said it,' was the answer. 'He is dead,' repeated Goethe, and covered his face with hands."[1]

"The half of my existence is gone from me," he wrote to Zelter. His first thoughts were to continue the *Demetrius* in the spirit in which Schiller had planned it, so that Schiller's mind might still be with him, still working at his side. But the effort was vain. He could do nothing. "My diary," he says, "is a blank at this period; the white pages intimate the blank in my existence. In those days I took no interest in anything."

CHAPTER VII

FAUST

ALTHOUGH the first part of *Faust* was not published until 1806, it was already completed before Schiller's death, and may therefore be fitly noticed in this place. For more than thirty years had the work been growing in its author's mind, and although its precise chronology is not ascertainable, yet an approximation is possible which will not be without service to the student.

The Faust-fable was familiar to Goethe as a child. In Strasburg, during 1770–71, he conceived the idea of fusing his personal experience into the mould of the old legend; but he wrote nothing of the work until 1774–5, when the ballad of the King of Thule, the first monologue, and the first scene with Wagner, were written; and during his love affair with Lili, he sketched Gretchen's catastrophe, the scene in the street, the scene in Gretchen's bedroom, the scenes between Faust and Mephisto during the walk, and in the street, and

[1] BULWER'S *Life of Schiller*.

the garden scene. In his Swiss journey, he sketched the first interview with Mephisto, and the compact; also the scene before the city gates, the plan of Helena (subsequently much modified), the scene between the student and Mephisto, and Auerbach's cellar. When in Italy, he read over the old manuscript, and wrote the scenes of the witches' kitchen and the cathedral; also the monologue in the forest. In 1797, *the whole was remodelled.* Then were added the two Prologues, the Walpurgis night, and the dedication. In 1801, he completed it, as it now stands, retouching it perhaps in 1806, when it was published. Let us now with some carefulness examine this child of so much care.

The cock in Esop scratched a pearl into the light of day, and declared that to him it was less valuable than a grain of millet seed. The pearl is only a pearl to him who knows its value. And so it is with fine subjects: they are only fine in the hands of great artists. Where the requisite power exists, a happy subject is a fortune; without that power, it only serves to place the artist's incompetence in broader light. Mediocre poets have tried their prentice hands at Faust; poets of undeniable genius have tried to master it; Goethe alone has seen in it the subject to which his genius was fully adequate; and has produced from it the greatest poem of modern times:

> "An Orphic tale indeed,—
> A tale divine, of high and passionate thoughts,
> To their own music chaunted."

Although genius can find material in the trifles which ordinary minds pass heedlessly by, it is only a very few subjects which permit the full display of genius. The peculiarities of a man's organisation and education invest certain subjects with a charm and a significance. Such was *Der Freischütz* for Weber; the maternity of the Madonna for Raphael; *Faust* for Goethe. Thus it is that a fine subject becomes the marble out of which a lasting monument is carved.

Quite beyond my purpose, and my limits, would be any account of the various materials, historical and æsthetical, which German literature has gathered into one vast section on Faust, and the Faust legend. There is not a single detail which has not exercised the industry and ingenuity of commentators; so that the curious need complain of no lack of informants. English readers will find in the translations by Hayward and Blackie a reasonable amount of such informa-

tion pleasantly given; German readers will only have the embarrassment of a choice. Far more important than all learned apparatus, is the attempt to place ourselves at the right point of view for studying and enjoying this wondrous poem, the popularity of which is almost unexampled. It appeals to all minds with the irresistible fascination of an eternal problem, and with the charm of endless variety. It has every element: wit, pathos, wisdom, farce, mystery, melody, reverence, doubt, magic, and irony; not a chord of the lyre is unstrung, not a fibre of the heart untouched. Students earnestly wrestling with doubt, striving to solve the solemn riddles of life, feel their pulses strangely agitated by this poem; and not students alone, but as Heine, with allowable exaggeration, says, every billiard-marker in Germany puzzles himself over it. In *Faust* we see, as in a mirror, the eternal problem of our intellectual existence; and, beside it, varied lineaments of our social existence. It is at once a problem and a picture. Therein lies its fascination. The problem embraces questions of vital importance; the picture represents opinions, sentiments, classes, moving on the stage of life. The great problem is stated in all its nudity; the picture is painted in all its variety.

This twofold nature of the work explains its popularity; and, what is more to our purpose, gives the clue to its secret of composition; a clue which all the critics I am acquainted with have overlooked; and although I cannot but feel that considerable suspicion must attach itself to any opinion claiming novelty on so old a subject, I hope the contents of this chapter will furnish sufficient evidence to justify its acceptance. The conviction first arose in my mind as the result of an inquiry into the causes of the popularity of *Hamlet*. The two works are so allied, and so associated together in every mind, that the criticism of the one will be certain to throw light on the other.

Hamlet, in spite of a prejudice current in certain circles that if now produced for the first time it would fail, is the most popular play in our language. It *amuses* thousands annually, and it stimulates the minds of millions. Performed in barns and minor theatres oftener than in Theatres Royal, it is always and everywhere attractive. The lowest and most ignorant audiences delight in it. The source of the delight is twofold: First, its reach of thought on topics the most profound; for the dullest soul can *feel* a grandeur which it cannot *understand*,

and will listen with hushed awe to the outpourings of a great meditative mind obstinately questioning fate; Secondly, its wondrous dramatic variety. Only consider for a moment the striking effects it has in the Ghost; the tyrant murderer; the terrible adulterous queen; the melancholy hero, doomed to so awful a fate; the poor Ophelia, broken-hearted and dying in madness; the play within a play, entrapping the conscience of the King; the ghastly mirth of gravediggers; the funeral of Ophelia interrupted by a quarrel over her grave betwixt her brother and her lover; and finally, the hurried bloody dénouement. Such are the figures woven in the tapestry by passion and poetry. Add thereto the absorbing fascination of profound thoughts. It may indeed be called the tragedy of thought, for there is as much reflection as action in it; but the reflection itself is made dramatic, and hurries the breathless audience along, with an interest which knows no pause. Strange it is to notice in this work the indissoluble union of refinement with horrors, of reflection with tumult, of high and delicate poetry with broad, palpable, theatrical effects. The machinery is a machinery of horrors, physical and mental: ghostly apparitions—hideous revelations of incestuous adultery and murder—madness—Polonius killed like a rat while listening behind the arras—gravediggers casting skulls upon the stage and desecrating the churchyard with their mirth—these and other horrors form the machinery by which moves the highest, the grandest, and the most philosophic of tragedies.

It is not difficult to see how a work so various should become so popular. *Faust*, which rivals it in popularity, rivals it also in prodigality. Almost every typical aspect of life is touched upon; almost every subject of interest finds an expression in almost every variety of rhythm. It gains a large audience because it appeals to a large audience:

> Die Mass könnt ihr nur durch Masse zwingen,
> Ein jeder sucht sich endlich selbst was aus.
> Wer Vieles bringt wird manchem Etwas bringen,
> Und jeder geht zufrieden aus dem Haus.[1]

Critics usually devote their whole attention to an exposition of the Idea of Faust; and it seems to me that in this laborious

[1] The mass can be compelled by mass alone,
Each one at length seeks out what is his own.
Bring much, and every one is sure to find
From out your nosegay something to his mind.
BLACKIE.

search after a remote explanation they have overlooked the more obvious and natural explanation furnished by the work itself. The reader who has followed me thus far will be aware that I have little sympathy with that Philosophy of Art which consists in translating Art into Philosophy, and that I trouble myself, and him, very little with "considerations on the Idea." Experience tells me that the Artists themselves had quite other objects in view than that of developing an Idea; and experience further says that the Artist's public is by no means primarily anxious about the Idea, but leaves that entirely to the critics,—who cannot agree among themselves. In studying a work of Art, we should proceed as in studying a work of nature: after delighting in the effect, we should try to ascertain what are the *means* by which the effect is produced, and not at all what is the Idea lying behind the means. If in dissecting an animal we get clear conceptions of the mechanism by which certain functions are performed, we do not derive any increase of real knowledge from being told that the functions are the final causes of the mechanism; while, on the other hand, if an *a priori* conception of purpose is made to do the work of actual inspection of the mechanism, we find ourselves in a swamp of conjectural metaphysics where no dry land is to be found.

The Theatre Prologue. This opening of the work shows a strolling company of Players about to exhibit themselves in the market-place, to please the motley crowd with some rude image of the Comedy and Tragedy of Life. The personages are three: The Manager, the Poet, and the Merry Andrew: three types representing the question of Dramatic Art in reference to poets and the public. The Manager opposes his hard practical sense to the vague yearnings and unworldly aspirings of the Poet; he thinks of receipts, the poet thinks of fame. But here, as ever, hard practical sense is not the best judge; the arbitration of a third is needed, and we have it in the Merry Andrew, who corrects both disputants by looking to the real issue, namely, the *amusement of the public.* When the poet flies off in declamations about Posterity, this wise and merry arbiter slily asks: Who then is to amuse the present? A question we feel repeatedly tempted to ask those lofty writers who, despising a success they have striven in vain to achieve, throw themselves with greater confidence on the Future; as if the Future in *its* turn would not also be a Present, having its despisers and its Jeremiahs.

The Theatre Prologue, brief though it is, indicates the whole question of poets, managers, and public. It is the wisest word yet uttered on the topic, and seems as fresh and applicable as if written yesterday. No consideration of importance is omitted, and there are no superfluities. Every line is thrown off with the utmost ease, and with the perfect clearness of perfect strength. One might say without exaggeration that the mastery of genius is as distinctly traceable in these easy felicitous touches, as in any other part of the work; for it is perhaps in the treatment of such trifles that power is most decisively seen: inferior writers always overdo or underdo such things; they are inflated or flat. All bodies at a certain degree of heat become luminous, and in the exaltation of passion even an inferior mind will have inspirations of felicitous thought; but, reduced to normal temperatures, that which before was luminous becomes opaque, and the inferior mind, being neither exalted by passion nor moved towards new issues by the pressure of crowding thoughts, exhibits its normal strength. And that is why the paradox is true, of real mastery being most clearly discernible in trifles. When the wind is furiously sweeping the surface, we cannot distinguish the shallowest from the deepest stream; it is only when the winds are at rest that we can see to the bottom of the shallow stream, and perceive the deep stream to be beyond our fathom.

We may still call upon the wisdom of this Prologue. The Manager wants to know how best to attract the public:

> Sie sitzen schon, mit hohen Augenbraunen
> Gelassen da, und möchten gern erstaunen.
> Ich weiss wie man den Geist des Volks versöhnt;
> Doch so verlegen bin ich nie gewesen;
> Zwar sind sie an das Beste nichte gewöhnt
> *Allein sie haben schrecklich viel gelesen.*[1]

The Poet, who never drifts towards Utilitarianism, replies in rhapsodies about his Art; whereupon the Merry Andrew bids

> [1] With eyebrows arch'd already they sit there,
> And gape for something new to make them stare.
> I know how to conciliate the mob,
> But ne'er yet felt it such a ticklish job:
> 'Tis true what they have read is not the best,
> But that they much have read must be confessed.
> BLACKIE'S *Translation.*

I shall generally follow this translation; but the passage just cited is not of the usual excellence. The last couplet of the original is one of those couplets which, in their ease, familiarity, and felicity, are the despair of translators.

him prove himself a master of his Art, by *amusing* the public.

> Let Fancy with her many-sounding chorus,
> Reason, Sense, Feeling, Passion, move before us;
> But mark you well! a spice of Folly too.

The Manager insists upon "incidents" above all things:

> They come to see, you must engage their eyes.

And he adds, with true managerial instinct,

> You give a piece—give it at once in pieces!
> In vain into an artful whole you glue it,—
> The public, in the long run, will undo it.

So the dispute runs on, till the Manager settles it by resolving to give a grand and motley spectacle, "From heaven to earth, and thence thro' earth to hell." This sentence gives us the clue to the composition of the work; a clue which has usually been taken only as a guide through the mental labyrinth, through the phases of the psychological problem, instead of through that, and *also* through the scenes of life represented.

The *Prologue in Heaven* succeeds. In many quarters this Prologue has been strangely misunderstood. It has been called a parody of the Book of Job, and censured as a parody. It has been stigmatised as irrelevant and irreverent, out of keeping with the rest, and gratuitously blasphemous. Some translators have omitted it "as unfit for publication." Coleridge debated with himself, "whether it became his moral character to render into English, and so far certainly to lend his countenance to, language much of which he thought vulgar, licentious, and blasphemous."[1] And I will confess that my first impression was strongly against it; an impression which was only removed by considering the legendary nature of the poem, and the legendary style adopted. It is only organic analysis which can truly seize the meaning of organic elements; so long as we judge an organism *ab extra*, according to the Idea, or according to *our* Ideas, and not according to *its* nature, we shall never rightly understand structure and function; and this is as true of poems as of animals. Madame de Stael admirably says of the whole work, "il serait véritablement trop naïf de supposer qu'un tel homme ne sache pas toutes les fautes de goût qu'on peut reprocher à sa pièce;

[1] *Table Talk*, vol. ii. p. 118.

mais il est curieux de connaître les motifs qui l'ont déterminé à les y laisser, ou plutôt à les y mettre." And in trying to understand what were the motives which induced Goethe to introduce this prologue, and to treat it in this style, we must dismiss at once the supposition that he meant to be blasphemous, and the supposition that he could not have been as grave and decorous as Klopstock, had he deemed it fitting. Let us look a little closer.

The wager between Mephistopheles and the Deity was part and parcel of the Legend. In adopting the Legend, Goethe could not well omit this part, and his treatment of it is in the true mediæval style, as all who are familiar with mediæval legends, and especially those who are familiar with the Miracle-plays of Europe, will recognise at once. In these Miracle-plays we are startled by the coarsest buffoonery, and what to modern ears sounds like blasphemy, side by side with the most serious lessons; things the most sacred are dragged through the dirt of popular wit; persons the most sacred are made the subject of jests and stories which would send a shudder through the pious reader of our times. As a specimen of the lengths to which this jesting spirit went, in the works of priests, performed by priests, and used for religious instruction, the following bit of buffoonery may be cited. In one of the plays God the Father is seen sleeping on his throne during the Crucifixion. An Angel appears to him; and this dialogue takes place:

"*Angel.* Eternal Father, you are doing what is not right, and will cover yourself with shame. Your much beloved son is just dead, and you sleep like a drunkard.

"*God the Father.* Is he then dead?

"*Angel.* Ay, that he is.

"*God the Father.* Devil take me if I knew anything about it."[1]

Nothing is more certain than that such things were not intended as blasphemous; they were the naïve representations which uncultured minds naïvely accepted. In treating a mediæval legend, Goethe therefore gave it something of the

[1] Quoted in SCHERR: *Geschichte der Deutschen Cultur*, p. 171. In the early forms of the drama, I remember nothing so irreverent as this passage, but many of extreme coarseness and ignoble buffoonery. Nor is this strange perversion of the religious ceremony unexampled. In Greece, where the Drama was a religious festival, the same comic license flourished unrestricted; the very stage trodden by the Eumenides and solemnised by the presence of the gods, was, in the after-piece, the scene of gross buffoonery, in which the gods were buffoons.

mediæval colouring—a faint tint, just enough to effect his purpose, when the real colour would have been an offence. In adopting the idea of the Prologue he followed the old puppet-play of *Faust*, of which there are many versions.[1] An inferior artist would assuredly have made this Prologue as grand and metaphysical as possible. Goethe intentionally made it naïve. We cannot suppose him unable to treat it otherwise had he so willed; but he did not will it so. He was led to write this scene by his study of the older literature, and the source of its inspiration is traceable in this naïveté.[2] Consider the whole tenor of the work, and see how great a want of keeping there would have been in a prologue which represented Mephistopheles and the Deity according to modern conceptions of severe propriety, when the rest of the work was treated according to legendary belief; scenes like that with the poodle, the Walpurgis Night, and the Witches' Kitchen, would have been in open contradiction with a Prologue in the modern spirit. It seems to me that the Prologue is just what it should be: poetical, with a touch of mediæval colouring. It strikes the key note; it opens the world of wonder and legendary belief, wherein you are to see transacted the great and mystic drama of life; it is the threshold at which you are bidden to lay aside your garments soiled with the dust of the work-day world; fairy garments are given in exchange, and you enter a new region, where a drama is acted, dream-like in form, in spirit terribly real.

Then, again, the language put into the month of Mephistopheles,—which is so irreverent as to make the unreflecting reader regard the whole Prologue as blasphemous,—is it not strictly in keeping? Here we see the "spirit that denies" so utterly and essentially irreverent, that even in the presence of the Creator, he feels no awe; the grander emotions are not excitable within his soul; and, like all his species, he will not believe that others feel such emotions: "Pardon me," he says, "I cannot utter fine phrases." To such spirits, all grandeur of phrase is grandiloquence. Mephisto is not a hypocrite: he cannot pay even *that* homage to virtue. He is a sceptic, pure and simple. In the presence of the Lord he demeans himself much as we may imagine a "fast" young man behaving when introduced into the presence of a Goethe, without brains

[1] See MAGNIN: *Histoire des Marionnettes*, p. 325.

[2] It was probably this feeling of its naïveté which made him say that it ought to be translated into the French of Marot.

enough to be aware of his own insignificance. He offers to lay a wager just as the fast youth would offer to "back" any opinion of his own; and the brief soliloquy in which he expresses his feelings on the result of the interview has a levity and a tinge of sarcasm intensely devilish.

There are, it will be observed, two Prologues: one on the Stage, the other in Heaven. The reason of this I take to lie in the twofold nature of the poem, in the two leading subjects to be worked out. The world and the world's ways are to be depicted; the individual soul and its struggles are to be portrayed. For the former we have the theatre-prologue, because "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." For the latter we have the prologue in heaven, because heaven is the centre and the goal of all struggles, doubts, and reverence; and because Faust is struggling heavenward:

> Nicht irdisch ist des Thoren Trank noch Speise,
> Ihn treibt die Gährung in die Ferne.

"This fool's meat and drink are not earthly," says Mephisto. "The ferment of his spirit impels him towards the for ever distant."

There is also another organic necessity for these two prologues: in the first we see the Manager and his Poet moving the puppets of the scene; in the second, we see the Lord and Mephistopheles moving the puppets of the drama within a drama. It is from strolling players that the cause of the whole representation proceeds; it is from heaven that the drama of the temptation issues. These two prologues were both written in the same year, and long after the conception of the Faust-legend had taken shape in Goethe's mind. They were after-thoughts, and it becomes us to inquire what purpose they were intended to subserve. I believe that in his first conception he only intended the *individual* element of the work to be developed; and that the world-picture was an after-thought, the product of reflection. In this subsequent conception the *Second Part* was more or less forecast; and the two prologues are introductory to the whole poem in this new conception.

But to proceed with our analysis. The first scene is that of *Faust in his study*. The drama here begins. Faust sits amid his books and instruments, vain appliances of vain inquiry. Pale, and worn with midnight toil, he feels his efforts have been vain, feels that science is impotent, feels that no answer

to his questions can be extorted by mortal wisdom, and gives himself to magic.

> That I, with bitter-sweating brow,
> No more may teach what I do not know;
> That I with piercing ken may see
> The world's in-dwelling energy,
> The hidden seeds of life explore,
> And deal in words and forms no more.

The moon, which shines in upon him, recalls him to a sense of the Life without, which he has neglected in his study of parchments and old bones: *Und fragst du noch warum dein Herz*, he exclaims in the well-known lines, and opens the magic book to summon a spirit to his aid:

(*He seizes the book, and pronounces with a mysterious air the sign of the Spirit. A red flame darts forth, and the Spirit appears in the flame.*)

Spirit. Who calls me?
Faust (*turning away*). Vision of affright!
Spirit. Thou hast with mighty spells invoked me,
And to obey thy call provoked me,
And now—
Faust. Hence from my sight!
Spirit. Thy panting prayer besought my form to view,
To hear my voice, and know my semblance too;
Now bending from my lofty sphere to please thee,
Here am I!—ha! what shuddering terrors seize thee,
And overpower thee quite! where now is gone
The soul's proud call? the breast that scorn'd to own
Earth's thrall, a world in itself created,
And bore and cherish'd? with its fellow sated
That swell'd with throbbing joy to leave its sphere
And vie with spirits, their exalted peer.
Where art thou, Faust? whose invocation rung
Upon mine ear, whose powers all round me clung?
Art *thou* that Faust? whom melts my breath away,
Trembling ev'n to the life-depths of thy frame,
Now shrunk into a piteous worm of clay!
Faust. Shall I then yield to thee, thou thing of flame?
I am thy peer, am Faust, am still the same!
Spirit. Where life's floods flow,
And its tempests rave,
Up and down I wave,
Flit I to and fro:
Birth and the grave,
Life's secret glow,
A changing motion,
A boundless ocean,
Whose waters heave
Eternally;
Thus on the noisy loom of Time I weave
The living mantle of the Deity.
Faust. Thou who round the wide world wendest,
Thou busy sprite, how near I feel to thee!

Spirit. Thou'rt like the spirit whom thou comprehendest,
Not me! *(vanishes.)*
Faust (astounded). Not thee!
Whom, then?
I, image of the Godhead,
Not like thee! *(knocking is heard.)*
Oh, death!—'tis Wagner's knock—he comes to break
The charm that bound me while the Spirit spake!
Thus my supremest bliss ends in delusion
Marr'd by a sneaking pedant-slave's intrusion!

How fine is this transition, the breaking in of prose reality upon the visions of the poet,—the entrance of Wagner, who, hearing voices, fancied Faust was declaiming from a Greek drama, and comes to profit by the declamation. Wagner is a type of the Philister, and pedant; he sacrifices himself to Books as Faust does to Knowledge. He adores the letter. The dust of folios is his element; parchment is the source of his inspiration.

Left once more to himself, Faust continues his sad soliloquy of despair. The thoughts, and the music in which they are uttered, must be sought in the original, no translation can be adequate. He resolves to die; and seizing the phial which contains the poison, says:—

I look on thee, and soothed is my heart's pain;
I grasp thee, straight is lulled my racking brain,
And wave by wave my soul's flood ebbs away.
I see the ocean wide before me rise,
And at my feet her sparkling mirror lies;
To brighter shores invites a brighter day.

He raises the cup to his lips, when suddenly a sound of bells is heard, accompanied by the distant singing of the choir. It is Easter. And with these solemn sounds are borne the memories of his early youth, awaking the feelings of early devotion. Life retains him upon earth; Memory vanquishes despair.

This opening scene was *suggested* by the old puppet-play in which Faust appears, surrounded with compasses, spheres, and cabalistic instruments, wavering between theology, the divine science, philosophy, the human science, and magic, the infernal science. But Goethe has enriched the suggestion from his own wealth of thought and experience.

The scene before the gate. We quit the gloomy study, and the solitary struggles of the individual, to breathe the fresh air, and contemplate everyday life, and everyday joyousness.

It is Sunday; students and maid-servants, soldiers and shop-keepers, are thronging out of the city gates on their way to various suburban beerhouses which line the high road. Clouds of dust and smoke accompany the throng; joyous laughter, incipient flirtations, merry song, and eager debates, give us glimpses of the common world. This truly German picture is wonderfully painted, and its place in the poem is significant, showing how life is accepted by the common mind, in contrast with the previous scene which showed life pressing on the student, demanding from him an interpretation of its solemn significance. Faust has wasted his days in questioning; the people spend theirs in frivolous pursuits, or sensual enjoyment; the great riddle of the world never troubles them, for to them the world is a familiarity and no mystery. They are more anxious about good tobacco and frothy beer, about whether this one will dance with that one, and about the new official dignitaries, than about all that the heavens above or earth beneath can have of mystery. Upon this scene Faust, the struggler, and Wagner, the pedant, come to gaze. It affects Faust deeply, and makes him feel how much wiser these simple people are than he is—for they enjoy.

> Hier ist des Volkes wahrer Himmel
> Zufrieden jauchzet gross und Klein:
> *Hier bin ich Mensch, hier darf ich's seyn.*

Yes, here he feels himself a man, one of the common brotherhood, for here he yearns after the enjoyments which he sees them pursuing. But Wagner, true pedant, feels nothing of the kind; he is only there because he wishes to be with Faust. He is one of those who, in the presence of Niagara, would vex you with questions about arrow-headed inscriptions, and in the tumult of a village festival would discuss the origin of the Pelasgi.

The people crowd round Faust, paying him the reverence always paid by the illiterate to the "scholar." Wagner sees it with envy; Faust feels it to be a mockery. Reverence to him, who feels profoundly his own insignificance! He seats himself upon a stone, and, gazing on the setting sun, pours forth melancholy reflections on the worthlessness of life, and the inanity of his struggles. The old peasant has recalled to him the scenes of his youth, when while the fever raged he was always tending the sick, and saved so many lives, "helping,

helped by the Father of Good." Seated on that stone, the visions of his youth come back upon his mind:

> Here sat I oft, plunged in deep thought, alone,
> And wore me out with fasting and with prayer.
> Rich then in hope, in faith then strong,
> With tears and sobs my hands I wrung,
> And weened the end of that dire pest,
> From the will of Heaven to rest.

His means were unholy.

> Here was the medicine, and the patient died,
> But no one questioned—who survived?
> And thus have we, with drugs more curst than hell,
> Within these vales, these mountains here,
> Raged than the very pest more fell!
> I have myself to thousands poisons given;
> They pin'd away, and I must live to hear
> Men for the reckless murd'rers thanking heaven!

Wagner does not understand such scruples. He is not troubled, like Faust, with a consciousness of a double nature. The Poodle appears, to interrupt their dialogue, and Wagner, with characteristic stupidity, sees nothing but a *Poodle* in the apparition:

> Ich sah ihn lange schon, nicht wichtig schien er mir.

The spiritual insight of Faust is more discerning. They quit the scene, the Poodle following.

Faust's Study. The student and the poodle enter. The thoughts of Faust are solemn; this makes the poodle restless; this restlessness becomes greater and greater as Faust begins to translate the Bible—an act which is enough to agitate the best-disposed devil. A bit of incantation follows, and Mephistopheles appears. I must not linger over the details of the scene, tempting as they are, but come to the compact between Faust and Mephistopheles. The state of mind which induces this compact has been artfully prepared. Faust has been led to despair of attaining the high ambition of his life; he has seen the folly of his struggles; seen that Knowledge is a will-o'-the-wisp to which he has sacrificed Happiness. He now pines for Happiness, though he disbelieves in it as he disbelieves in Knowledge. In utter scepticism he consents to sell his soul *if* ever he shall realise Happiness. What profound sadness is implied in the compact, that if ever he shall

say to the passing moment, "Stay, thou art fair," he is willing to perish eternally!

This scene of the compact has also its origin in the old puppet play, and very curious is it to trace how the old hints are developed by Goethe. In the Augsburg version there is one condition among those stipulated by Mephistopheles to the effect that Faust shall never again ascend the theological chair. "But what will the public say?" asks Faust. "Leave that to me," Mephisto replies; "I will take your place; and believe me I shall add to the reputation you have gained in biblical learning."[1] Had Goethe known this version, he would probably not have omitted such a sarcastic touch.

I must pass over the inimitable scene which follows between Mephisto and the young Student newly arrived at the University, with boundless desire for knowledge. Every line is a sarcasm, or a touch of wisdom. The *position* of this scene in its relation to the whole, deserves, however, a remark. What is the scene, but a withering satire on every branch of Knowledge? and where does it occur, but precisely at that juncture when Knowledge has by the hero been renounced, when Books are closed for ever, and Life is to be enjoyed? Thus the words of Mephisto, that Theory is a greybeard, and Life a fresh tree, green and golden—

> Grau, theurer Freund, ist alle Theorie,
> Und grün des Lebens goldner Baum—

prepare us for the utter abjuration of Theory, and the eager pursuit of Enjoyment. This leads to

Auerbach's Cellar, and its scene of Aristophanic buffoonery. The cellar reeks with the fumes of bad wine and stale tobacco; its blackened arches ring with the sound of boisterous mirth and noisy songs. The sots display themselves in all their sottishness. And *this* is one form of human enjoyment! A thing still unhappily to be seen in every city of Europe. Faust looks on with a sort of bewildered disgust, which soon wearies him; and then away! away! to the other scene as foul, as hideous—to—

The Witches' Kitchen. Here Faust passes from bestiality to bestiality, from material grossness to spiritual grossness, from the impurity of sots to the impurity of witches. In this den of sorcery he drinks of the witch's potion, which will make him,

[1] *Das Closter*, vol. v. p. 326.

as Mephisto says, see a Helen in the first woman he meets. Rejuvenescence is accompanied by desires hitherto unknown to him; he is young, and young passions hurry him into the "roaring flood of time."

Meeting with Margaret. The simple girl, returning from church, is accosted by Faust, and answers him somewhat curtly; here commences the love-episode which gives to the poem a magic none can resist. Shakspeare himself has drawn no such portrait as that of Margaret: no such peculiar union of passion, simplicity, homeliness, and witchery. The poverty and inferior social position of Margaret are never lost sight of; she never becomes an abstraction; it is Love alone which exalts her above her lowly station, and it is only *in* passion that she is so exalted. Very artful and very amusing is the contrast between this simple girl and her friend Martha, who makes love to Mephisto with direct worldly shrewdness. The effect of this contrast in the celebrated garden scene is very fine; and what a scene that is! I have no language in which to express its intense and overpowering effect: the picture is one which remains indelible in the memory; certain lines linger in the mind, and stir it like the memory of deep pathetic music. For instance, Margaret's asking him to think of her, even if it be for a moment,—she will have time enough to think of *him:*

> Denkt ihr an mich ein Augenblickchen nur,
> *Ich werde Zeit genug an euch zu denken haben:*

What a picture of woman's lonely life, in which the thoughts, not called out by the busy needs of the hour, centre in one object! And then that exquisite episode of her plucking the flower, "He loves me—loves me not;" followed by this charming reflection when Faust has departed:

> Du lieber Gott! was so ein Mann
> Nicht alles alles denken kann!
> Beschämt nur steh' ich vor ihm da,
> Und sag' zu allen Sachen ja.
> Bin doch ein arm unwissend Kind
> Begreife nicht was er an mir find't.[1]

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[1] The naïveté of expression is not to be translated. Blackie has given the sense:

> Dear God! what such a man as this
> Can think on any thing you may!
> I stand ashamed, and answer yes
> To every word that he may say.
> I wonder what a man so learned as he
> Can find in a poor simple girl like me.

Wood and Cavern. I do not understand the relation of this scene to the whole. Faust is alone among the solitudes of Nature, pouring out his rapture and his despair:

Faust. Alas! that man enjoys no perfect bliss,
I feel it now. Thou gavest me with this joy,
Which brings me near and nearer to the gods,
A fellow, whom I cannot do without;
Though, cold and heartless, he debases me
Before myself, and, with a single breath
Blows all the bounties of thy love to nought.
He fans within my breast a raging fire
For that fair image, busy to do ill.
Thus reel I from desire on to enjoyment,
And in enjoyment languish for desire.

Mephisto enters, and the two wrangle. The scene is full of fine things, but its position in the work is not clear to me. It is followed by that scene in Margaret's room which exhibits her at the spinning-wheel, singing *Mein Ruh' ist hin*—"My peace is gone, my heart is sad;" and is succeeded by the second Garden scene, in which she questions Faust about his religion. I must give the famous confession of Faith, though more literally than Blackie renders it:

Misunderstand me not, thou lovely one.
Who dare name Him?
And who confess:
"I believe in Him"?
Who can feel
And force himself
To say: "I believe not in Him"?
The All-encompasser,
The All-sustainer
Encompasses, sustains he not
Thee, Me, Himself?
Does not the Heaven arch itself above?
Lies not the earth firm here below?
And rise not the eternal stars
Looking downwards friendly?
Gaze not our eyes into each other,
And is not all thronging
To thy head and heart,
Weaving in eternal mystery
Invisibly visibly about thee?
Fill up thy heart therewith, in all its greatness,
And when thou'rt wholly blest in this emotion,
Then call it what thou wilt,
Call it Joy! Heart! Love! God!
I have no name for it,
Feeling is all-in-all.
Name is sound and smoke,
Clouding the glow of Heaven.

Margaret feels this confession to be the same in substance as that the Priest tells her, only in somewhat different language:

Nur mit ein bischen andern Worten.

There is something inexpressibly touching in her solicitude about her lover's faith; it serves to bring out one element of her character; as her instinctive aversion to Mephisto brings out another element: she sees on his forehead that he feels no sympathy, that "He never yet hath loved a human soul." In his presence she almost feels that her own love vanishes; certain it is that in his presence she cannot pray.

The guileless innocence which prattles thus, prepares us for the naïve readiness with which she expresses her willingness to admit her lover to her apartment, and consents to give her mother the sleeping draught. This scene is, with terrible significance, followed by that brief scene at the Well, where Margaret hears her friend Bessy triumph, feminine-wise, over the fall of one of their companions. Women, in all other things so compassionate, are merciless to each other precisely in those situations where feminine sympathy would be most grateful, where feminine tenderness should be most suggestive. Bessy says not a word against the seducer; her wrath falls entirely on the victim, who has been "rightly served." Margaret—taught compassion by experience—cannot *now* triumph as formerly she would have triumphed. But now she too is become what she chid, she too is a sinner, and cannot chide! The closing words of this soliloquy have never been translated; there is a something in the simplicity and intensity of the expression which defies translation.

Doch—alles was dazu mich trieb,
Gott! war so gut! ach war so lieb![1]

The next scene shows her praying to the Virgin, the Mother of Sorrows; and this is succeeded by the return of her brother Valentine, suffering greatly from his sister's shame; he interrupts the serenade of Faust, attacks him, and is stabbed by Mephisto, falls, and expires uttering vehement reproaches against Margaret. From this bloodshed and horror we are led to the Cathedral. Margaret prays amid the crowd—the evil spirit at her side. A solemn, almost stifling sense of awe

[1] The meaning is, "Yet if I sinned, the sin came to me in shape so good, so lovely, that I loved it."

rises through the mind at this picture of the harassed sinner seeking refuge, and finding fresh despair. Around her kneel in silence those who hear with comfort the words to her so terrible:

Dies iræ, dies illa,
Solvet sæclum in favilla!

and when the choir bursts forth—

Judex ergo cum sedebit
Quidquid latet apparebit,
Nil inultum remanebit—

she is overpowered by remorse, for the Evil Spirit interprets these words in their most appalling sense.

The Walpurgis Nacht. The introduction of this scene in this place would be a great error if *Faust* were simply a drama. The mind resents being snatched away from the contemplation of human passion, and plunged into the vagaries of dreamland. After shuddering with Margaret, we are in no mood for the Blocksberg. But *Faust* is not a drama; its purpose is not mainly that of unfolding before our eyes the various evolutions of an episode of life; its object is not to rivet attention through a story. It is a grand legendary spectacle, in which all phases of life are represented. The scene on the Blocksberg is part of the old Legend, and is to be found in many versions of the puppet-play.[1] Note how Goethe introduces the scene immediately after that in the Cathedral—thus representing the wizard-element in contrast with the religious element; just as previously he contrasted the Witches' Kitchen and its orgies with the orgies of Auerbach's cellar.

We must not linger on the Blocksberg, but return to earth, and the tragic drama there hastening to its dénouement. Seduction has led to infanticide; infanticide has led to the condemnation of Margaret. Faust learns it all; learns that a triple murder lies to his account—Valentine, Margaret, and her child. In his despair he reproaches Mephisto for having concealed this from him, and wasted his time in insipid fooleries. Mephisto coldly says that Margaret is not the first who has so died. Upon which Faust breaks forth: "Not the first! Misery! Misery! by no human soul to be conceived! that more than one creature of God should ever have been

[1] In the Strasburg version, Mephisto promises Hanswurst a steed on which he may gallop through the air; but, instead of a winged horse, there comes an old goat with a light under his tail.

plunged into the depth of this woe! that the first, in the writhing agony of her death, should not have atoned for the guilt of all the rest before the eyes of the eternally Merciful!"

One peculiarity is noticeable in this scene: it is the only bit of prose in the whole work;—what could have determined him to write it in prose? At first I thought it might be the nature of the scene; but the intensity of language seems to demand verse, and surely the scene in Auerbach's cellar is more prosaic in its nature than this? The question then remains, and on it the critic may exert his ingenuity.

What painting in the six brief lines which make up the succeeding scene! Faust and Mephisto are riding over a wild and dreary plain; the sound of carpenters at work on the gibbet informs them of the preparations for the execution of Margaret.

And now the final scene opens. Faust enters the dungeon where Margaret lies huddled on a bed of straw, singing wild snatches of ancient ballads, her reason gone, her end approaching. The terrible pathos of this interview draws tears into our eyes after twenty readings. As the passion rises to a climax, the grim, passionless face of Mephistopheles appears—thus completing the circle of irony which runs throughout the poem. Every one feels this scene to be untranslatable. The witchery of such lines as

Sag' niemand dass du schon bei Gretchen warst,

Mr. Hayward has already pointed out as beyond translation; "indeed it is only by a lucky chance that a succession of simple, heartfelt expressions or idiomatic felicities are ever capable of exact representation in another language."[1]

The survey just taken, disclosing a succession of varied scenes representative of Life, will not only help to explain the popularity of Faust, but may help also to explain the secret of its composition. The rapidity and variety of the scenes give the work an air of formlessness, until we have seized the principle of organic unity binding these scenes into a whole. The reader who first approaches it is generally disappointed: the want of visible connection makes it appear more like a Nightmare than a work of Art. Even accomplished critics have been thus misled. Thus Coleridge, who battled so ingeniously for Shakspeare's Art, was utterly at a

[1] *Translation of Faust:* Preface, p. xxxi, 3rd Edition.

loss to recognise any unity in Faust. "There is no whole in the poem," he said, "the scenes are mere magic-lantern pictures, and a large part of the work is to me very flat."[1] Coleridge, combating French critics, proclaimed (in language slightly altered from Schlegel) that the unity of a work of Art is "organic, not mechanic;" and he was held to have done signal service by pointing out the unity of Shakspeare's conception underlying variety of detail; but when he came to Goethe, whom he disliked, and of whom he always spoke unworthily, he could see nothing but magic-lantern scenes in variety of detail. If *Hamlet* is not a magic-lantern, *Faust* is not. The successive scenes of a magic-lantern have no connection with a general plan; have no dependence one upon the other. In the analysis just submitted to the reader, both the general plan and the interdependence of the scenes have, it is hoped, been made manifest. A closer familiarity with the work removes the first feeling of disappointment. We learn to understand it, and our admiration grows with our enlightenment. The picture is painted with so cunning a hand, and yet with so careless an air, that Strength is veiled by Grace, and nowhere seems straining itself in Effort.

I believe few persons have read *Faust* without disappointment. There are works which, on a first acquaintance, ravish us with delight: the ideas are new; the form is new; the execution striking. In the glow of enthusiasm we pronounce the new work a masterpiece. We study it, learn it by heart, and somewhat weary our acquaintances by the emphasis of enthusiasm. In a few years, or it may be months, the work has become unreadable, and we marvel at our old admiration. The ideas are no longer novel; they appear truisms or perhaps falsisms. The execution is no longer admirable, for we have discovered its trick. In familiarising our minds with the work, our admiration has been slowly strangled by the contempt which familiarity is said to breed, but which familiarity only breeds in contemptible minds, or for things contemptible. The work then was no masterpiece? Not in the least.[2] A masterpiece excites no sudden enthusiasm; it must be studied much and long, before it is fully comprehended; we must

[1] *Table Talk*, vol. ii. p. 114.

[2] "A deduction must be made from the opinion which even the wise express of a new book or occurrence. Their opinion gives me tidings of their mood, and some vague guess at the new fact, but is nowise to be trusted as the lasting relation between that intellect and that thing."—*Emerson*.

grow up to it, for it will not descend to us. Its influence is less sudden, more lasting. Its emphasis grows with familiarity. We never become disenchanted; we grow more and more awestruck at its infinite wealth. We discover no trick, for there is none to discover. Homer, Shakspeare, Raphael, Beethoven, Mozart, never storm the judgment; but, once fairly in possession, they retain it with increasing influence. I remember looking at the Elgin Marbles with an indifference which I was ashamed to avow; and since then I have stood before them with a rapture almost rising into tears. On the other hand, works which now cannot detain me a minute before them, excited sudden enthusiasm such as in retrospection seems like the boyish taste for unripe apples. With *Faust* my first feeling was disappointment. Not understanding the real nature of the work, I thought Goethe had missed his aim, because he did not fulfil my conceptions. It is the arrogance of criticism to demand that the artist, who never thought of us, should work in the direction of our thoughts. As I grew older, and began to read *Faust* in the original (helped by the dictionary), its glory gradually dawned upon my mind. It is now one of those works which exercise a fascination to be compared only to the minute and inexhaustible love we feel for those long dear to us, every expression having a peculiar and, by association, quite mystic influence.

A masterpiece like *Faust*, because it is a masterpiece, will be almost certain to create disappointment, in proportion to the expectations formed of it. Sir Joshua Reynolds, on his first visit to the Vatican, could not conceal his mortification at not relishing the works of Raphael, and was only relieved from it on discovering that others had experienced the same feeling. "The truth is," he adds, "that if these works had been really what I expected, they would have contained beauties superficial and alluring, but by no means such as would have entitled them to their great reputation." We need not be surprised therefore to hear even distinguished men express unfavourable opinions of *Faust*. Charles Lamb, for instance, thought it a vulgar melodrame in comparison with Marlowe's *Faustus;* an opinion he never could have formed had he read *Faust* in the original. He read it in a translation, and no work suffers more from translation. However unwilling a reader may be that his competence to pronounce a judgment should be called in question, it must be said in all seriousness and with the most complete absence of exaggera-

tion and prejudice, that in translation he really has not the work before him.

Several times in these pages I have felt called upon to protest against the adequacy of all translation of poetry. In its happiest efforts, translation is but approximation; and its efforts are not often happy. A translation may be good *as* translation, but it cannot be an adequate reproduction of the original. It may be a good poem; it may be a good imitation of another poem; it may be better than the original; but it cannot be an adequate reproduction; it cannot be the same thing in another language, producing the same effect on the mind. And the cause lies deep in the nature of poetry. "Melody," as Beethoven said to Bettina, "gives a *sensuous existence to poetry;* for does not the meaning of a poem become embodied in melody?" The meanings of a poem and the meanings of the individual words may be produced; but in a poem meaning and form are as indissoluble as soul and body; and the form cannot be reproduced. The effect of poetry is a compound of music and suggestion; this music and this suggestion are intermingled in words, to alter which is to alter the effect. For words in poetry are not, as in prose, simple representatives of objects and ideas: they are parts of an organic whole—they are tones in the harmony; substitute *other* parts, and the result is a monstrosity, as if an arm were substituted for a wing; substitute *other* tones or semitones, and you produce a discord. Words have their music and their shades of meaning too delicate for accurate reproduction in any other form; the suggestiveness of one word cannot be conveyed by another. Now all translation is of necessity a substitution of one word for another: the substitute may express the meaning, but it cannot accurately reproduce the music, nor those precise shades of suggestiveness on which the delicacy and beauty of the original depend. Words are not only symbols of objects, but centres of associations; and their suggestiveness depends partly on their sound. Thus there is not the slightest difference in the meaning expressed when I say

The dews of night began to fall,

or

The nightly dews commenced to fall.

Meaning and metre are the same; but one is poetry, the other prose. Wordsworth paints a landscape in this line:

The river wanders at its own sweet will.

Let us translate it into other words:

> The river runneth free from all restraint.

We preserve the meaning, but where is the landscape? Or we may turn it thus:

> The river flows, now here, now there, at will,

which is a very close translation, much closer than any usually found in a foreign language, where indeed it would in all probability assume some such form as this:

> The river self-impelled pursues its course.

In these examples we have what is seldom found in translations, accuracy of meaning expressed in similar metre; yet the music and the poetry are gone; because the music and the poetry are organically dependent on certain peculiar arrangements of sound and suggestion. Walter Scott speaks of the verse of a ballad by Mickle which haunted his boyhood; it is this:

> The dews of summer night did fall;
> The moon, sweet regent of the sky,
> Silvered the walls of Cumnor Hall,
> And many an oak that grew thereby.

This verse we will re-arrange as a translator would arrange it:

> The nightly dews commenced to fall;
> The moon, whose empire is the sky,
> Shone on the sides of Cumnor Hall,
> And all the oaks that stood thereby.

Here is a verse which certainly would never have haunted any one; and yet upon what apparently slight variations the difference of effect depends! The meaning, metre, rhymes, and most of the words, are the same; yet the difference in the result is infinite. Let us translate it a little more freely:

> Sweetly did fall the dews of night;
> The moon, of heaven the lovely queen,
> On Cumnor Hall shone silver bright,
> And glanced the oaks' broad boughs between.

I appeal to the reader's experience whether this is not a translation which in another language would pass for excellent; and nevertheless it is not more like the original than a wax rose is like a garden rose. To conclude these illustrations, I will give one which may serve to bring into relief the havoc made by

translators who adopt a *different* metre from that of the original.[1] Wordsworth begin his famous Ode:

> There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
> The earth, and every common sight,
> To me did seem
> Apparelled in celestial light,
> The glory and the freshness of a dream.
> It is not now as it hath been of yore;
> Turn wheresoe'er I may,
> By night or day,
> The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

The translator, fully possessed with the sense of the passage, makes no mistake, but adopting another metre, we will suppose, paraphrases it thus:

> A time there was when wood, and stream, and field,
> The earth, and every common sight, did yield
> To me a pure and heavenly delight,
> Such as is seen in dream and vision bright.
> That time is past; no longer can I see
> The things which charmed my youthful reverie.

These are specimens of translating from English into English,[2] and show what effects are produced by a change of music and a change of suggestion. It is clear that in a foreign language the music must incessantly be changed, and as no complex words are precisely equivalent in two languages, the suggestions must also be different. Idioms are of course untranslatable. Felicities of expression are the idioms of the poet; but as on the one hand these felicities are essential to the poem, and on the other hand untranslatable, the vanity of translation becomes apparent. I do not say that a translator cannot produce a fine poem in imitation of an original poem; but I utterly disbelieve in the possibility of his giving us a work which can be to us what the original is to those who read it. If, therefore, we reflect what a poem *Faust* is, and that it contains almost every variety of style and metre, it will be tolerably evident that no one unacquainted with the original can form an *adequate* idea of it from translation; and if this is true, it will explain why Charles Lamb should prefer Marlowe's *Faustus*, and why many other readers should speak slightingly of the *Faust*.

[1] "Goethe's poems," said Beethoven, "exercise a great sway over me, not only by their meaning, but by their rhythm also. It is a language which urges me on to composition."

[2] Aristotle has a very similar argument and mode of illustration in the *De Poetica*.

As useful memoranda for comparison, I will here analyse Marlowe's *Faustus* and Calderon's *El Magico Prodigioso*.

Doctor Faustus has many magnificent passages, such as Marlowe of the "mighty line" could not fail to write; but on the whole it is wearisome, vulgar, and ill-conceived. The lowest buffoonery, destitute of wit, fills a large portion of the scenes; and the serious parts want dramatic evolution. There is no character well drawn. The melancholy figure of Mephistopholis has a certain grandeur, but he is not the Tempter, according to the common conception, creeping to his purpose with the cunning of the serpent; nor is he the cold, ironical "spirit that denies;" he is more like the Satan of Byron, with a touch of piety and much repentance. The language he addresses to Faustus is such as would rather frighten than seduce him.

The reader who opens *Faustus* under the impression that he is about to see a philosophical subject treated philosophically, will have mistaken both the character of Marlowe's genius and of Marlowe's epoch. *Faustus* is no more philosophical in intention than the *Jew of Malta*, or *Tamburlaine the Great*. It is simply the theatrical treatment of a popular legend,—a legend admirably characteristic of the spirit of those ages in which men, believing in the agency of the devil, would willingly have bartered their future existence for the satisfaction of present desires. Here undoubtedly is a philosophical problem, which even in the present day is constantly presenting itself to the speculative mind. Yes, even in the present day, since human nature does not change: forms only change, the spirit remains; nothing perishes,—it only manifests itself differently. Men, it is true, no longer believe in the devil's agency; at least, they no longer believe in the power of calling up the devil and transacting business with him; otherwise there would be hundreds of such stories as that of Faust. But the spirit which created that story and rendered it credible to all Europe remains unchanged. The sacrifice of the future to the present is the spirit of that legend. The blindness to consequences caused by the imperiousness of desire; the recklessness with which inevitable and terrible results are braved in perfect consciousness of their being inevitable, provided that a temporary pleasure can be obtained, is the spirit which dictated Faust's barter of his soul, which daily dictates the barter of men's souls. We do not make compacts, but we throw away our lives; we have no Tempter face to face with us, offering

illimitable power in exchange for our futurity: but we have our own Desires, imperious, insidious, and for them we barter our existence,—for one moment's pleasure risking years of anguish.

The story of Faustus suggests many modes of philosophical treatment, but Marlowe has not availed himself of any: he has taken the popular view of the legend, and given his hero the vulgarest motives. This is not meant as a criticism, but as a statement. I am not sure that Marlowe was wrong in so treating his subject; I am only sure that he treated it so. Faustus is disappointed with logic, because it teaches him nothing but debate,—with physic, because he cannot with it bring dead men back to life,—with law, because it concerns only the "external trash,"—and with divinity, because it teaches that the reward of sin is death, and that we are all sinners. Seeing advantage in none of these studies he takes to necromancy, and there finds content; and how?

Faust. How am I glutted with conceit of this!
Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please?
Resolve me of all ambiguities?
Perform what desperate enterprise I will?
I'll have them fly to India for gold,
Ransack the ocean for orient pearl,
And search all corners of the new-found world
For pleasant fruits and princely delicates.
I'll have them read me strange philosophy;
And tell the secrets of all foreign kings:
I'll have them wall all Germany with brass,
And make swift Rhine circle fair Wittenburg:
I'll have them fill the public schools with skill,
Wherewith the students shall be bravely clad:
I'll levy soldiers with the coin they bring,
And chase the prince of Parma from our land,
And reign sole king of all the provinces:
Yea, stranger engines for the brunt of war,
Than was the fiery keel at Antwerp bridge,
I'll make my servile spirits to invent.

There may in this seem something trivial to modern apprehensions, yet Marlowe's audience sympathised with it, having the feelings of an age when witches were burned, when men were commonly supposed to hold communication with infernal spirits, when the price of damnation was present enjoyment.

The compact signed, Faustus makes use of his power by scampering over the world, performing practical jokes and vulgar incantations,—knocking down the Pope, making horns sprout on the heads of noblemen, cheating a jockey by selling him a horse of straw, and other equally vulgar tricks, which

were just the things the audience would have done had they possessed the power. Tired of his buffooneries he calls up the vision of Helen; his rapture at the sight is a fine specimen of how Marlowe can write on a fitting occasion.

His last hour now arrives: he is smitten with remorse, like many of his modern imitators, when it is too late; sated with his power, he now shudders at the price. After some tragical raving, and powerfully depicted despair, he is carried off by devils. The close is in keeping with the commencement: Faustus is damned because he made the compact. Each part of the bargain is fulfilled; it is a tale of sorcery, and Faustus meets the fate of a sorcerer.

The vulgar conception of this play is partly the fault of Marlowe, and partly of his age. It might have been treated quite in conformity with the general belief; it might have been a tale of sorcery, and yet magnificently impressive. What would not Shakspeare have made of it? Nevertheless, we must in justice to Marlowe look also to the state of opinion in his time; and we shall then admit that another and higher mode of treatment would perhaps have been less acceptable to the audience. Had it been metaphysical, they would not have understood it; had the motives of Faustus been more elevated, the audience would not have believed in them. To have saved him at last, would have been to violate the legend, and to outrage their moral sense. For, why should the black arts be unpunished? why should not the sorcerer be damned? The legend was understood in its literal sense, in perfect accordance with the credulity of the audience. The symbolical significance of the legend is entirely a modern creation.

Let us now turn to Calderon's *El Magico Prodigioso*, often said to have furnished Goethe with the leading idea of his *Faust*, which, however, does *not* resemble *El Magico* in plot, incidents, situations, characters, or ideas. The *Faustus* of Marlowe has a certain superficial resemblance to the *Faust*, because the same legend is adopted in both; but in *El Magico* the legend is altogether different; the treatment different. Calderon's latest editor, Don Eugenio de Ochoa, is quite puzzled to conceive how the notion of resemblance got into circulation, and gravely declares that it is *enteramente infundada*.

The scene lies in the neighbourhood of Antioch, where, with "glorious festival and song," a temple is being consecrated to Jupiter. Cyprian, a young student, perplexing him-

self with the dogmas of his religion (polytheism), has retired from the turmoil of the town to enjoy himself in quiet study. Pliny's definition of God is unsatisfactory, and Cyprian is determined on finding a better. A rustling among the leaves disturbs him, caused by the demon, who appears in the dress of a cavalier. They commence an argument, Cyprian pointing out the error of polytheism, the demon maintaining its truth. We see that Cyprian has been converted to monotheism—a step towards his conversion to Christianity; and this conversion operated by the mere force of truth, this change of opinion resulting from an examination of polytheism, was doubtless flattering to Calderon's audience,—a flattery carried to its acme in the feeble defence of the demon, who on his entrance declares, aside, that Cyprian shall never find the truth. Calderon would not let the devil have the best of the argument even for a moment. Instead of the "spirit that denies," he presents us with a malignant fiend, as impotent as he is malignant,—a fiend who acknowledges himself worsted in the argument, and who resolves to conquer by lust the student whom he cannot delude by sophisms. He has power given him to wage enmity against Justina's soul; he will make Justina captivate Cyprian, and with one blow effect two vengeances. We need not point out the dissimilarity between such a fiend and the fiend Mephistopheles.

Cyprian is left alone to study, but is again interrupted by the quarrel of Lelio and Floro, two of his friends, who, both enamoured of Justina, have resolved to decide their rivalry by the sword. Cyprian parts them, and consents to become arbiter. He then undertakes to visit Justina, in order to ascertain to whom she gives the preference. In this visit he falls in love with her himself. There is an under-plot, in which Moscon, Clarin, and Libia, according to the usual style of Spanish comedies, parody the actions and sentiments of their masters; I omit it, as well as the other scenes which do not bear on the subject matter of the drama.

Justina, a recent convert to Christianity, is the type of Christian innocence. She rejects Cyprian's love, as she had rejected that of her former admirers. The coldness exasperates him:

> So beautiful she was—and I,
> Between my love and jealousy,
> And so convulsed with hope and fear,
> Unworthy as it may appear,—

So bitter is the life I live
That, hear me, Hell! I now would give
To thy most detested spirit
My soul, for ever, to inherit,
To suffer punishment and pine,
So this woman may be mine.
Hear'st thou, Hell? Dost thou reject it?
My soul is offered.
Demon (*unseen*). I accept it.
(*Tempest, with thunder and lightning.*)

In another writer we might pause to remark on the "want of keeping" in making a polytheist address such a prayer to hell; but Calderon is too full of such things to cause surprise at any individual instance. The storm rages,—a ship goes down at sea; the demon enters as a shipwrecked passenger, and says aside:

It was essential to my purposes
To wake a tumult on the sapphire ocean,
That in this unknown form I might at length
Wipe out the blot of the discomfiture
Sustained upon the mountain, and assail
With a new war the soul of Cyprian,
Forging the instruments of his destruction
Even from his love and from his wisdom.

Cyprian addresses words of comfort to him on his misfortune; the demon says it is in vain to hope for comfort, since all is lost that gave life value. He then tells his story; describing, by means of a very transparent equivocation, the history of his rebellion in heaven and his chastisement. In the course of his narrative he insinuates his power of magic, hoping to awaken in Cyprian's breast a love of the art. Cyprian offers him the hospitality due to a stranger, and they quit the scene.

In their next scene the demon asks Cyprian the reason of his constant melancholy. This is an opportunity for the display of fustian, never let slip by a Spanish dramatist. Cyprian describes his mistress and his passion for her with the volubility of a lover, and the taste of an Ossian. He very circumstantially informs the demon that the "partes que componen a esta divina muger"—the charms which adorn this paragon—are the charms of Aurora, of fleecy clouds and pearly dews, of balmy gales and early roses, of meandering rivulets and glittering stars, of warbling birds and crystal rocks, of laurels and of sunbeams; and so forth through the space of more than fifty lines, in a style to captivate magazine poets, and to make other

readers yawn. Having described her, he declares that he is so entranced with this creature as to have entirely forsaken philosophy; he is willing to give away his soul for her. The demon accepts the offer, splits open a rock and shows Justina reclining asleep. Cyprian rushes towards her, but the rock closes again, and the demon demands that the compact shall be signed before the maiden is delivered. Cyprian draws blood from his arm, and with his dagger writes the agreement on some linen. The demon then consents to instruct him in magic, by which, at the expiration of one year, he will be able to possess Justina.

This temptation-scene is very trivial,—feeble in conception and bungling in execution. Remark the gross want of artistic keeping in it: Cyprian had before addressed a vow to hell that he would give his soul for Justina; the demon answered, "I accept it!" Thunder and lightning followed,—effective enough as a melo-dramatic *coup de théâtre*, utterly useless to the play; for although the demon appears, it is not to make a compact with Cyprian, it is not even to tempt him; it is simply to become acquainted with him, gain his confidence, and *afterwards* tempt him. The time elapses, and the demon then tempts Cyprian as we have seen. How poor, feeble, and staggering these outlines! What makes the feebleness of this scene stand out still more clearly, is the gross and senseless parody of Clarin, the *gracioso*. Like his master, he too is in love; like his master he offers to sell his soul to the demon, and strikes his nose, that with the blood he may write the compact on his handkerchief.

It is in this temptation-scene, however, that the single point of resemblance occurs between the plays of Calderon and Goethe. It is extremely slight, as every one will observe; but slight as it is, some critics have made it the basis of their notion of plagiarism. The compact is the point which the legend of St. Cyprian and the legend of Faust have in common. In all other respects the legends differ and the poems differ. It is curious however to compare the motives of the three heroes, Faustus, Cyprian, and Faust; to compare what each demands in return for his soul; and in this comparison Calderon "shows least bravely;" his hero is the most pitiful of the three.

To return to our analysis: The year's probation has expired, and Cyprian is impatient for his reward. He has learned the arts of necromancy, in which he is almost as proficient as his

master; boasts of being able to call the dead from out their graves, and of possessing many other equally wonderful powers. Yet with this science he does nothing, attempts nothing. Of what use then was the year's probation? of what use this necromantic proficiency? Had the question been put to Calderon he would probably have smiled, and answered, "to prolong the play and give it variety,"—a sensible answer from a rapid playwright, but one which ill accords with the modern notion of his being a profound artist. Perhaps it is too much to expect that a man who wrote between one and two hundred plays should have produced one that could be regarded as a work of art; nor should we have judged him by any higher standard than that of a rapid and effective playwright, had not the Germans been so hyperbolical in criticism, which the English, who seldom read the poet, take for granted must be just.

The demon calls upon the spirits of hell to instil into Justina's mind impure thoughts, so that she may incline to Cyprian. But this could have been done at first, and so have spared Cyprian his year's probation and his necromantic studies, — studies which are never brought to bear upon Justina herself, though undertaken expressly for her conquest. Justina enters in a state of violent agitation: a portion of the scene will serve as a specimen. I borrow from the translation of this scene which appeared in the *Monthly Chronicle*, vi. p. 346.

The demon enters and Justina asks him:

Say if thou a phantom art,
Formed by terror and dismay?
Dæm. No; but one call'd by the thought
That now rules, with tyrant sway,
O'er thy faltering heart,—a man
Whom compassion hither brought,
That he might point out the way
Whither fled thy Cyprian.
Just. And so shalt thou fail. This storm
Which afflicts my frenzied soul
May imagination form
To its wish, but ne'er shall warm
Reason to its mad control.
Dæm. If thou hast the thought permitted,
Half the sin is almost done!
Wilt thou, since 't is all committed,
Linger ere the joy be won?
Just. In our power abides not thought,
(Thought, alas! how vain to fly);
But the deed is, and 't is one
That we sin in mind have sought

And another to have done:
I'll not move my foot to try.
Dæm. If a mortal power assail
Justina with all its might,
Say will not the victory fail
When thy wish will not avail,
But inclines thee in despite?
Just. By opposing to thee now
My free will and liberty.
Dæm. To my power they soon shall bow.
Just. If it could such power avow,
Would our free will then be free?
Dæm. Come, 'tis bliss that thou wilt prove.
Just. Dearly would I gain it so.
Dæm. It is peace, and calm, and love. (*Draws, but cannot*
Just. It is misery, death, despair! *move her.*)
Dæm. Heavenly joy!
Just. 'Tis bitter woe!
Dæm. Lost and shamed, forsaken one!
Who in thy defence shall dare?
Just. My defence is God alone.
Dæm. Virgin, virgin, thou hast won! (*Loosens his hold.*)

How delighted must the audience have been at this victory over the demon, by the mere announcement of a faith in God! Unable to give Cyprian the real Justina, the demon determines on deceiving him with a phantom. A figure enveloped in a cloak appears, and bids Cyprian follow. In the next scene Cyprian enters with the fancied Justina in his arms. In his transport he takes off the cloak, and instead of Justina discovers a Skeleton, who replies to his exclamation of horror:

Así, Cipriano, son
Todas las glorias del mundo!

"Such are the glories of this world." In this terrific situation we recognise the inquisitor and the playwright, but the artist we do not recognise. As a piece of stage effect this skeleton is powerfully conceived; as a religious warning it is equally powerful; as art it is detestable. It is a fine situation, though he has used it twice elsewhere; but the consistency of the play is violated by it. If the demon wished to seduce Cyprian, would he have attempted to do so by *such* means? No. But Calderon here, as elsewhere, sacrifices everything to a *coup de théâtre*.

Cyprian, exasperated at the deception, demands an explanation. The demon confesses that he is unable to force Justina, as she is under the protection of a superior power. Cyprian asks who that power is. The demon hesitates, but is at length obliged to own that it is the God of the Christians.

Cyprian seeing that God protects those who believe in him, refuses to own allegiance to any other. The demon is furious, and demands Cyprian's soul, who contends that the demon has not fulfilled his share of the compact. Words run high: Cyprian draws his sword and stabs the demon, of course without avail,—another stage effect. The demon drags him away, but, like Justina, he calls God to his aid, and the demon rushes off discomfited.

Cyprian becomes a Christian, and Justina assures him of his salvation in spite of his sins, for—

> . . . . no tiene
> Tantas estrellas el cielo,
> Tantas arenes el mar,
> Tantas centelles el fuego,
> Tantos átomes el dia,
> Como él perdona pecados.

Justina and Cyprian are condemned as heretics, and burned at Antioch, martyrs of the Christian faith. The demon appears riding on a serpent in the air, and addresses the audience, telling them that God has forced him to declare the innocence of Justina, and the freedom of Cyprian from his rash engagement. Both now repose in the realms of the blessed.

These analyses will enable the reader to perceive how Marlowe and Calderon have treated the old story, each in a spirit conformable with his genius and his age; the one presenting a legend in its naïveté, the other a legend as the vehicle for religious instruction. Goethe taking up the legend in an age when the naïve belief could no longer be accepted, treated it likewise in a way conformable with his genius and his age. The age demanded that it should be no simple legend, but a symbolical legend; not a story to be credited as *fact*, but a story to be credited as *representative* of fact; for although the rudest intellect would reject the notion of any such actual compact with Satan, the rudest and the loftiest would see in that compact a symbol of their own desires and struggles.

To adapt the legend to his age, Goethe was forced to treat it symbolically, and his own genius gave the peculiar direction to that treatment. We shall see in the Second Part, how his waning vigour sought inspiration more in symbolism than in poetry, more in reflection than in emotion; but for the present, confining ourselves to the First Part, we note in his treatment a marvellous mingling of the legendary and the symbolical, of

the mediæval and the modern. The depth of wisdom, the exquisite poetry, the clear bright painting, the wit, humour, and pathos, every reader will distinguish; and if this chapter were not already too long, I should be glad to linger over many details, but must now content myself with the briefest indication of the general aspects of the poem.

And first of the main theme: "The intended theme of Faust," says Coleridge, "is the consequences of a misology or hatred and depreciation of knowledge caused by an originally intense thirst for knowledge baffled. But a love of knowledge for itself and for pure ends would never produce such a misology, but only a love of it for base and unworthy purposes." Having stated this to be the theme, Coleridge thus criticises the execution: "There is neither causation nor proportion in Faust; he is a ready-made conjuror from the beginning; the *incredulus odi* is felt from the first line. The sensuality and thirst after knowledge are unconnected with each other."[1] Here we have an example of that criticism before alluded to, which imposes the conceptions of the critic as the true end and aim of the artist. Coleridge had formed the plan of a Faust of his own, and blames Goethe for not treating the topic in the way Coleridge conceived it should be treated. A closer scrutiny would have convinced him that misology is not the intended theme. After the first two scenes knowledge is never mentioned; misology is exhausted as a topic in the initial stages of the work. And what says Goethe himself? "The marionnette fable of Faust murmured with *many voices* in my soul. I too had wandered into every department of knowledge, and had returned early enough satisfied with the vanity of science. And life, too, I had tried under various aspects, and always came back sorrowing and unsatisfied." Here, if anywhere, we have the key to *Faust*. It is a reflex of the struggles of his soul. Experience had taught him the vanity of philosophy; experience had early taught him to detect the corruption underlying civilisation, the dark under-currents of crime concealed beneath smooth outward conformity. If then we distinguish for a moment one of the two aspects of the poem—if we set aside the picture, to consider only the problem—we come to the conclusion that the theme of *Faust* is the cry of despair over the nothingness of life. Misology forms a portion, but only a

[1] *Table Talk*, vol. ii. p. 111.

portion of the theme. Baffled in his attempts to penetrate the *mystery* of Life, Faust yields himself to the Tempter, who promises that he shall penetrate the *enjoyment* of Life. He runs the round of pleasure, as he had run the round of science, and fails. The orgies of Auerbach's cellar, the fancies of the Blocksberg, are unable to satisfy his cravings. The passion he feels for Gretchen is vehement, but feverish, transitory; she has no power to make him say to the passing moment, "Stay, thou art fair." He is restless because he seeks,—seeks the Absolute, which can never be found. This is the doom of humanity:

Es irrt der Mensch so lang' er strebt.

It has been said reproachfully that in *Faust* the problem is stated but not solved. I do not think this reproach valid, because I do not think a poem was the fit vehicle for a solution. When the Singer becomes a Demonstrator, he abdicates his proper office, to bungle in the performance of another. But very noticeable it is that Goethe, who has so clearly stated the problem, has also, both practically, in his life, and theoretically, in his writings, given us the nearest approach to a solution by showing how the "heavy and the weary weight" of this great burden may be wisely borne. His doctrine of Renunciation—*das wir entsagen müssen*—applied by him with fertile results in so many directions, both in life and theory, will be found to approach a solution, or at any rate to leave the insoluble mystery without its perplexing and tormenting influence. Activity and sincerity carry us far, if we begin by Renunciation, if we at the outset content ourselves with the Knowable and Attainable, and give up the wild impatience of desire for the Unknowable and Unattainable. The mystery of existence is an awful problem, but it *is* a mystery and placed beyond the boundaries of human faculty. Recognise it as such, and renounce! Knowledge can only be relative, never absolute. But this relative knowledge is infinite, and to us infinitely important: in that wide sphere let each work according to ability. Happiness, ideal and absolute, is equally unattainable: renounce it! The sphere of active Duty is wide, sufficing, ennobling to all who strenuously work in it. In the very sweat of labour there is stimulus which gives energy to life; and a consciousness that our labour tends in some way to the lasting benefit of others, makes the rolling years endurable.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LYRICAL POEMS

THE *Faust* and the Lyrics suffice to give Goethe pre-eminence among the poets of modern times, Shakspeare excepted; and had they stood alone as representatives of his genius, no one would ever have disputed his rank. But he has given the world many other works: in other words, he has thrown open many avenues through which the citadel of his fame may be attacked. His fame is lessened by his wealth; the fact of his doing so much, has lessened the belief in his power; for as the strength of a beam is measured by its weakest part, so, but unjustly, are poets tested by their weakest works, whenever enthusiasm does not drown criticism. Thus does mere wealth endanger reputation; for when many targets are ranged side by side, the clumsiest archer will succeed in striking one; and that writer has the best chance with the critics who presents the smallest surface. Greek Literature is so grand to us mainly because it is the fragment of fragments; the masterpieces have survived, and no failures are left to bear counter-witness. Our own contemporary Literature seems so poor to us, not because there are no good books, but because there are so many bad, that even the good are hidden behind the mass of mediocrity which obtrudes itself upon the eye. Goethe has written forty volumes on widely different subjects. He has written with a perfection no German ever achieved before, and he has also written with a feebleness which it would be gratifying to think no German would ever emulate again. But the weak pages are prose. In verse he is always a *singer;* even the poorest poems have something of that grace which captivates us in his finest. The gift of Song, which is the especial gift of the poet, and which no other talents can replace, makes his trifles pleasant, and his best lyrics matchless.

The lyrics are the best known of his works, and have by their witchery gained the admiration even of antagonists. One hears very strange opinions about him and his works; but one never hears anything except praise of the minor poems. They are instinct with life and beauty, against which no prejudice can stand. They give musical form to feelings the most