acceptance of the premature, and, in many respects, imperfect, system founded on those labours) will be glad to observe that Goethe not only attended Gall's lectures, but in private conversations showed so much sympathy, and such ready appreciation, that Gall visited him in his sick-room, and dissected the brain in his presence, communicating all the new views to which he had been led. Instead of meeting this theory with ridicule, contempt, and the opposition of ancient prejudices—as men of science, no less than men of the world, were and are still wont to meet it—Goethe saw at once the importance of Gall's mode of dissection (since universally adopted), and of his leading views;[1] although he also saw that science was not sufficiently advanced for a correct verdict to be delivered. Gall's doctrine pleased him because it determined the true position of Psychology in the study of man. It pleased him because it connected man with Nature more intimately than was done in the old schools, showing the identity of all mental manifestation of the animal kingdom.[2]

But these profound and delicate investigations were in the following year interrupted by the roar of cannon. On the 14th of October, at seven o'clock in the morning, the thunder of distant artillery alarmed the inhabitants of Weimar. The battle of Jena had begun. Goethe heard the cannon with terrible distinctness; but as it slackened towards noon, he sat down to dinner as usual. Scarcely had he sat down, when the cannon burst over their heads. Immediately the table was cleared. Riemer found him walking up and down the garden. The balls whirled over the house; the bayonets of the Prussians in flight gleamed over the garden wall. The French had planted a few guns on the heights above Weimar, from which they could fire on the town. It was a calm bright day. In the streets everything appeared dead. Every one had retreated under cover. Now and then the boom of a cannon broke silence; the balls, hissing through the air, occasionally struck a house. The birds were singing sweetly on the esplanade; and the deep repose of nature formed an awful contrast to the violence of war.

In the midst of this awful stillness a few French hussars

[1] Compare *Freundschaftliebe Briefe von Goethe und seine Frau, an N. Meyer*, p. 19.

[2] Gall's assertion that Goethe was born for political oratory more than for poetry, has much amused those who knew Goethe's dislike of politics; and does not, indeed, seem a very happy hit.

rode into the city, to ascertain if the enemy were there. Presently a whole troop galloped in. A young officer came to Goethe to assure him that his house would be secure from pillage; it had been selected as the quarters of Marshal Augereau. The young hussar who brought this message was Lili's son! He accompanied Goethe to the palace. Meanwhile several of the troopers had made themselves at home in Goethe's house. Many houses were in flames. Cellars were broken open. The pillage began.

Goethe returned from the palace, but without the Marshal, who had not yet arrived. They waited for him till deep in the night. The doors were bolted, and the family retired to rest. About midnight two tirailleurs knocked at the door, and insisted on admittance. In vain they were told the house was full, and the Marshal expected. They threatened to break in the windows, if the door were not opened. They were admitted. Wine was set before them, which they drank like troopers, and then they insisted on seeing their host. They were told he was in bed. No matter; he must get up; they had a fancy to see him. In such cases, resistance is futile. Riemer went up and told Goethe, who, putting on his dressing-gown, came majestically down stairs, and by his presence considerably awed his drunken guests, who were as polite as French soldiers can be when they please. They talked to him; made him drink with them, with friendly clink of glasses; and suffered him to retire once more to his room. In a little while, however, heated with wine, they insisted on a bed. The other troopers were glad of the floor; but these two would have nothing less than a bed. They stumbled up stairs; broke into Goethe's room, and there a struggle ensued, which had a very serious aspect. Christiane, who throughout displayed great courage and presence of mind, procured a rescue, and the intruders were finally dragged from the room. They then threw themselves on the bed kept for the Marshal; and no threats would move them. In the morning the Marshal arrived, and sentinels protected the house. But even under this protection, the disquiet may be imagined when we read that twelve casks of wine were drunk in three days; that eight-and-twenty beds were made up for officers and soldiers, and that the other costs of this billeting amounted to more than 2000 dollars.

The sun shining with continuous autumnal splendour in these days looked down on terrible scenes in Weimar. The

pillage was prolonged, so that even the palace was almost stripped of the necessaries of life. In this extremity, while houses were in flames close to the palace, the Duchess Luise manifested that dauntless courage which produced a profound impression on Napoleon, as he entered Weimar, surrounded by all the terrors of conquest, and was received at the top of the palace stairs by her,—calm, dignified, unmoved. *Voilà une femme à laquelle même nos deux cent canons n'ont pu faire peur!* he said to Rapp. She pleaded for her people; vindicated her husband; and by her constancy and courage prevailed over the conqueror, who was deeply incensed with the duke, and repeatedly taunted him with the fact that he spared him solely out of respect for the duchess.

The rage of Napoleon against the duke was as unwise as it was intemperate; but I do not allude to it for the purpose of showing how petty the great conqueror could be; I allude to it for the purpose of quoting the characteristic outburst which it drew from Goethe. "Formed by nature to be a calm and impartial spectator of events, even I am exasperated," said Goethe to Falk, "when I see men required to perform the impossible. That the duke assists wounded Prussian officers robbed of their pay; that he lent the lion-hearted Blücher four thousand dollars after the battle of Lübeck—that is what you call a conspiracy!—that seems to you a fit subject for reproach and accusation! Let us suppose that to-day misfortune befalls the grand army; what would a general or a field-marshal be worth in the emperor's eyes, who would act precisely as our duke has acted under these circumstances? I tell you the duke *shall* act as he acts! He *must* act so! He would do great injustice if he ever acted otherwise! Yes; and even were he thus to lose country and subjects, crown and sceptre, like his ancestor, the unfortunate John; yet must he not deviate one hand's breadth from his noble manner of thinking, and from that which the duty of a man and a prince prescribes in the emergency. Misfortune! What is misfortune? This is a misfortune—that a prince should be compelled to endure such things from foreigners. And if it came to the same pass with him as with his ancestor, Duke John; if his ruin were certain and irretrievable, let not that dismay us: we will take our staff in our hands, and accompany our master in adversity, as old Lucas Kranach did: we will never forsake him. The women and children when they meet us in the villages, will cast down

their eyes, and weep, and say to one another, 'That is old Goethe, and the former Duke of Weimar, whom the French Emperor drove from his throne, because he was so true to his friends in misfortune; because he visited his uncle on his death-bed; because he would not let his old comrades and brothers in arms starve!'"

"At this," adds Falk, "the tears rolled in streams down his cheeks. After a pause, having recovered himself a little, he continued: 'I will sing for bread! I will turn strolling ballad singer, and put our misfortunes into verse! I will wander into every village and into every school wherever the name of Goethe is known; I will chaunt the dishonour of Germany, and the children shall learn the song of our shame till they are men; and thus they shall sing my master upon his throne again, and yours off his!'"

I shall have to recur to this outburst on a future occasion, and will now hasten to the important event which is generally supposed to have been directly occasioned by the perils of the battle of Jena. I mean his marriage.

CHAPTER II

GOETHE'S WIFE

The judgments of men are singular. No action in Aristotle's life subjected him to more calumny than his generous marriage with the friendless Phythia; no action in Goethe's life has excited more scandal than his marriage with Christiane. It was thought disgraceful enough in him to have taken her into his house (a *liaison* out of the house seeming, in the eyes of the world, a venial error, which becomes serious directly it approaches nearer to the condition of marriage); but for the great poet, the Geheimrath, actually to complete such an enormity as to crown his connection with Christiane by a legal sanction, *this* was indeed more than society could tolerate.

I have already expressed my opinion of this unfortunate connection, a *mésalliance* in every sense: but I must emphatically declare my belief that the redeeming point in it is precisely that which has created the scandal. Better far had there been no connection at all; but if it was to be, the nearer

it approached a real marriage, and the further it was removed from a fugitive indulgence, the more moral and healthy it became. The fact of the *mésalliance* was not to be got over. Had he married her at first, this would always have existed. But many other and darker influences would have been averted. There would have been no such "skeleton in the closet of his life" as, unfortunately, we know to have existed. Let us for a moment look into that closet.

Since we last caught a glimpse of Christiane Vulpius, some fifteen years have elapsed, in the course of which an unhappy change has taken place. She was then a bright, lively, pleasure-loving girl. Years and self-indulgence have now made havoc with her charms. The evil tendency, which youth and animal spirits kept within excess, has asserted itself with a distinctness which her birth and circumstances may explain, if not excuse, but which can only be contemplated in sadness. Her father, we know, ruined himself by intemperance; her brother impaired fine talents by similar excess; and Christiane, who inherited the fatal disposition, was not saved from it by the checks which refined society imposes, for in Weimar she was shut out from society by her relation to Goethe. Elsewhere, as we learn from her letters to Meyer, she was not quite excluded from female society. Professor Wolff and Kapellmeister Reichardt present her to their daughters; and she dances at public balls. But in Weimar this was impossible. There she lived secluded, shunned; and had to devote herself wholly to her domestic duties, which for one so lively and so eager for society must have had a depressing influence. Fond of gaiety, and especially of dancing, she was often seen at the students' balls at Jena; and she accustomed herself to an indulgence in wine, which rapidly destroyed her beauty, and which was sometimes the cause of serious domestic troubles. I would fain have passed over this episode in silence; but it is too generally known to be ignored; and it suggests a tragedy in Goethe's life little suspected by those who saw how calmly he bore himself in public. The mere mention of such a fact at once suggests the conflict of feelings hidden from public gaze; the struggle of indignation with pity, of resolution with weakness. I have discovered but one printed indication of this domestic grief, and that is in a letter from Schiller to Körner, dated 21st Oct. 1800: "On the whole he produces very little now, rich as he still is in invention and execution. His spirit is not sufficiently at ease; his wretched

domestic circumstances, which he is too weak to alter, make him so unhappy."

Too weak to alter! Yes, there lies the tragedy, and there the explanation. Tender, and always shrinking from inflicting pain, he had not the sternness necessary to put an end to such a condition. He suffered so much because he could not inflict suffering. To the bystander such endurance seems inexplicable; for the bystander knows not how the insidious first steps are passed over, and how endurance strengthens with repeated trials; he knows not the hopes of a change which check violent resolutions, nor how affection prompts and cherishes such hopes against all evidence. The bystander sees certain broad facts, which are inexplicable to him only because he does not see the many subtle links which bind those facts together; he does not see the mind of the sufferer struggling against a growing evil, and finally resigning itself, and trying to put a calm face on the matter. It is easy for us to say, Why did not Goethe part from her at once? But parting was not easy. She was the mother of his child; she had been the mistress of his heart, and still was dear to him. To part from her would not have arrested the fatal tendency; it would only have accelerated it. He was too weak to alter his position. He was strong enough to bear it. Schiller divined this by his own moral instincts. "I wish," he writes in a recently-discovered letter, "that I could justify Goethe in respect to his domestic relations as I can confidently in all points respecting literature and social life. But unfortunately, by some false notions of domestic happiness, and an unlucky aversion to marriage, he has entered upon an engagement which weighs upon him in his domestic circle, and makes him unhappy, yet to shake off which, I am sorry to say, he is too weak and soft-hearted. This is the only shortcoming in him; but even this is closely connected with a very noble part of his character, and he hurts no one but himself."

And thus the years rolled on. Her many good qualities absolved her few bad qualities. He was sincerely attached to her, and she was devoted to him; and now, in his fifty-eighth year, when the troubles following the battle of Jena made him "feel the necessity of drawing all friends closer," who, among those friends, deserved a nearer place than Christiane? He resolved on marrying her.

It is not known whether this thought of marriage had for some time previous been in contemplation, and was now put

in execution when Weimar was too agitated to trouble itself with his doings; or whether the desire of legitimising his son in these troublous days suggested the idea. Riemer thinks the motive was gratitude for her courageous and prudent conduct during the troubles; but I do not think that explanation acceptable, the more so as, according to her own statement, marriage was proposed in the early years of their acquaintance. In the absence of positive testimony, I am disposed to rely on psychological evidence; and, assuming that the idea of marriage *had* been previously entertained, the delay in execution is explicable when we are made aware of one peculiarity in his nature, namely, a singular hesitation in adopting any decisive course of action—singular, in a man so resolute and imperious when once his decision had been made. This is the weakness of imaginative men. However strong the volition, when once it is set going, there is in men of active intellects, and especially in men of imaginative, apprehensive intellects, a fluctuation of motives keeping the volition in abeyance, which practically amounts to weakness; and is only distinguished from weakness by the strength of the volition when let loose. Goethe, who was aware of this peculiarity, used to attribute it to his never having been placed in circumstances which required prompt resolutions, and to his not having educated his will; but I believe the cause lay much deeper, lying in the nature of psychological actions, not in the accidents of education.

But be the cause of the delay this or any other, it is certain that on the 19th of October, *i.e.* five days after the battle of Jena, and *not*, as writers constantly report, "during the cannonade," he was united to Christiane, in the presence of his son, and of his secretary, Riemer.

The scandal which this act of justice excited was immense, as may readily be guessed by those who know the world. His friends, however, loudly applauded his emergence from a false position. From that time forward, no one who did not treat her with proper respect could hope to be well received by him. She bore her new-made honours unobtrusively, and with a quiet good sense, which managed to secure the hearty goodwill of most of those who knew her.

CHAPTER III

BETTINA AND NAPOLEON

It is very characteristic that during the terror and the pillage of Weimar, Goethe's greatest anxiety on his own account was lest his scientific manuscripts should be destroyed. Wine, plate, furniture, could be replaced; but to lose his manuscripts was to lose what was irreparable. Herder's posthumous manuscripts *were* destroyed; Meyer lost everything, even his sketches; but Goethe lost nothing, except wine and money.[1]

The duke, commanded by Prussia to submit to Napoleon, laid down his arms and returned to Weimar, there to be received with the enthusiastic love of his people, as some compensation for the indignities he had endured. Peace was restored. Weimar breathed again. Goethe availed himself of the quiet to print the *Farbenlehre* and *Faust*, that they might be rescued from any future peril. He also began to meditate once more an epic on William Tell; but the death of the Duchess Amalia on the 10th April drove the subject from his mind.

On the 23rd of April Bettina came to Weimar. We must pause awhile to consider this strange figure, who fills a larger space in the literary history of the nineteenth century than any other German woman. Every one knows "the Child" Bettina Brentano,—daughter of the Maximiliane Brentano with whom Goethe flirted at Frankfurt in the Werther days—wife of Achim von Arnim, the fantastic Romanticist—the worshipper of Goethe and Beethoven—for some time the privileged favourite of the King of Prussia—and writer of that wild, but unveracious book, *Goethe's Correspondence with a Child*. She is one of those phantasts to whom everything seems permitted. More elf than woman, yet with flashes of genius which light up in splendour whole chapters of nonsense, she defies criticism, and puts every verdict at fault. If you are grave with her, people shrug their shoulders, and, saying "She is a Brentano," consider all settled. "At the

[1] It is at once ludicrous and sad to mention that even *this* has been the subject of malevolent sneers against him. His antagonists cannot forgive him the good fortune which saved *his* house from pillage, when the houses of others were ransacked. They seem to think it a mysterious result of his selfish calculations!

point where the folly of others ceases the folly of the Brentanos begins," runs the proverb in Germany.

I do not wish to be graver with Bettina than the occasion demands; but while granting phantasy its widest license, while grateful to her for the many picturesque anecdotes she has preserved from the conversation of Goethe's mother, I must consider the history of her relation to Goethe seriously, because out of it has arisen a charge against his memory which is very false and injurious. Many unsuspecting readers of her book, whatever they may think of the passionate expressions of her love for Goethe, whatever they may think of her demeanour towards him, on first coming into his presence, feel greatly hurt at his coldness; while others are still more indignant with him for keeping alive this mad passion, feeding it with poems and compliments, and doing this out of a selfish calculation, in order that *he might gather from her letters materials for his poems!* In both these views there is complete misconception of the actual case. True it is that the *Correspondence* furnishes ample evidence for both opinions; and against that evidence there is but one fact to be opposed, but the fact is decisive: the *Correspondence* is a romance.

A harsher phrase would be applied were the offender a man, or not a Brentano, for the romance is put forward as biographical fact; not as fiction playing around and among fact. How much is true, how much exaggeration, and how much pure invention, I am in no position to explain. But Riemer, the old and trusted friend of Goethe, living in the house with him at the time of Bettina's arrival, has shown the *Correspondence* to be a "romance which has only borrowed from reality the time, place, and circumstances;" and from other sources I have learned enough to see both Goethe's conduct and her own in quite a different light from that presented in her work.

A young, ardent, elfin creature worships the great poet at a distance, writes to tell him so, is attentive to his mother, who gladly hears praises of her son, and is glad to talk of him. He is struck with her extraordinary mind, is grateful to her for the attentions to his mother, and writes as kindly as he can without compromising himself. She comes to Weimar. She falls into his arms, and, according to her not very credible account, goes to sleep in his lap on their first interview; and is ostentatious of her adoration and her jealousy ever afterwards. If true, the position was very embarrassing for Goethe: a man

aged fifty-eight worshipped by a girl who, though a woman in years, looked like a child, and worshipped with the extravagance, partly mad, and partly wilful, of a Brentano—*what* could he do? He could take a base advantage of her passion; he could sternly repress it; or he could smile at it, and pat her head as one pats a whimsical, amusing child. These three courses were open to him, and only these. He adopted the last, until she forced him to adopt the second; forced him by the very impetuosity of her adoration. At first the child's coquettish, capricious ways amused him; her bright-glancing intellect interested him; but when her demonstrations became obtrusive and fatiguing, she had to be "called to order" so often, that at last his patience was fairly worn out. The continuation of such a relation was obviously impossible. She gave herself the license of a child, and would not be treated as a child. She fatigued him.

Riemer relates that during this very visit she complained to him of Goethe's coldness. This coldness, he rightly says, was simply patience; a patience which held out with difficulty against such assaults. Bettina quitted Weimar, to return in 1811, when by her own conduct she gave him a reasonable pretext for breaking off the connection; a pretext, I am assured, he gladly availed himself of. It was this. She went one day with Goethe's wife to the Exhibition of Art, in which Goethe took great interest; and there her satirical remarks, especially on Meyer, offended Christiane, who spoke sharply to her. High words rose, gross insult followed. Goethe took the side of his insulted wife, and forbade Bettina the house. It was in vain that on a subsequent visit to Weimar she begged Goethe to receive her. He was resolute. He had put an end to a relation which could not be a friendship, and was only an embarrassment.[1]

Such being the real story, as far as I can disentangle it, we have now to examine the authenticity of the *Correspondence*, in as far as it gives support to the two charges: 1st, of Goethe's alternate coldness and tenderness; 2nd, of his using her letters as material for his poems. That he was ever tender to her, is denied by Riemer, who pertinently asks how we are to believe that the coldness, of which she complained during her visit to

[1] I give this story as it was told me, by an authority quite unexceptionable; nevertheless, in all such narratives there is generally some inaccuracy, even when relating to contemporary events, and the details above given may not be absolutely precise, although the net result certainly is there expressed.

Weimar, grew in her absence into the lover-like warmth glowing in the sonnets addressed to her? This is not credible; but the mystery is explained by Riemer's distinct denial that the sonnets were addressed to her. They were *sent* to her, as to other friends; but the poems which she says were inspired by her, were in truth written for another. The proof is very simple. These sonnets were written before she came to Weimar, and had already passed through Riemer's hands, like other works, for his supervision. Riemer moreover knew to *whom* these passionate sonnets were addressed, although he did not choose to name her. I have no such cause for concealment, and declare the sonnets to have been addressed to Minna Herzlieb, of whom we shall hear more presently; as indeed the charade on her name, which closes the series (*Herz-Lieb*), plainly indicates. Not only has Bettina appropriated the sonnets which were composed at Jena while Riemer was with Goethe, and inspired by one living at Jena, but she has also appropriated poems known by Riemer to have been written in 1813–19, she then being the wife of Achim von Arnim, and having since 1811 been resolutely excluded from Goethe's house. To shut your door against a woman, and yet write love verses to her; to respond so coldly to her demonstrations that she complains of it, and yet pour forth sonnets throbbing with passion, is a course of conduct certainly not credible on evidence such as the *Correspondence with a Child*. Hence we are the less surprised to find Riemer declaring that some of her letters are "little more than meta- and para- phrases of Goethe's poems, *in which both rhythm and rhyme are still traceable*." So that instead of Goethe turning her letters into poems, Riemer accuses her of turning Goethe's poems into her letters. An accusation so public and so explicit—an accusation which ruined the whole authenticity of the *Correspondence*—should at once have been answered. The production of the originals with their post marks might have silenced accusers. But the accusation has been fourteen years before the world, and no answer attempted.

Although the main facts had already been published, a perfect uproar followed the first appearance of this chapter in Germany. Some ardent friend of Bettina's opened fire upon me in a pamphlet,[1] which called forth several replies in news-

[1] *An G. H. Lewes: Eine Epistel von Heinrich Siegfried.* Berlin, 1858.

papers and journals;[1] and I believe there are few Germans who now hesitate to acknowledge that the whole correspondence has been so tampered with as to have become, from first to last, a romance. For the sake of any still unconvinced partisans in England, a few evidences of the manipulation which the correspondence has undergone may not be without interest.

In the letter bearing date 1st March 1807, we read of the King of Westphalia's court, when, unless History be a liar, the kingdom of Westphalia was not even in existence. Goethe's mother, in another letter, speaks of her delight at Napoleon's appearance,—four months before she is known to have set eyes upon him. The letters of Goethe, from November to September, all imply that he was at Weimar; nay, he invites her to Weimar on the 16th July; she arrives there at the end of the month; visits him, and on the 16th August he writes to her from thence. Düntzer truly says, that these letters *must* be spurious, since Goethe left for Karlsbad on the 25th May, and did not return till September. Not only does Bettina visit Goethe at Weimar at a time when he is known to have been in Bohemia; but she actually receives letters from his mother dated the 21st Sept. and 7th Oct. 1808, although the old lady died on the 13th Sept. One may overlook Bettina's intimating that she was only thirteen, when the parish register proves her to have been two-and-twenty; but it is impossible to place the slightest reliance on the veracity of a book which exhibits flagrant and careless disregard of facts; and if I have been somewhat merciless in the exposure of this fabrication, it is because it has greatly helped to disseminate very false views respecting a very noble nature.

In conclusion, it is but necessary to add that, Bettina's work thus deprived of its authenticity, all those hypotheses which have been built on it respecting Goethe's conduct, fall to the ground. Indeed, when one comes to think of it, the hypothesis of his using her letters as poetic materials does seem the wildest of all figments; for not only was he prodigal in invention and inexhaustible in material, but he was especially remarkable for always expressing his own feelings, his own experience, not the feelings and experience of others.

We part here from Bettina; another and very different figure enters on the scene: Napoleon at the Congress of Erfurt. It was in September 1808 that the meeting of the

[1] See in particular the article by DUENTZER: *Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 20, 1858.

Emperors of France and Russia, with all the minor potentates forming the *cortège*, took place at the little town of Erfurt, a few miles from Weimar. It was a wonderful sight. The theatre was opened with Talma and the Parisian troupe performing the finest tragedies of France before a parterre of Kings. "Exactly in front of the pit sat the two emperors, in arm-chairs, in familiar conversation; a little in their rear, the kings; and then the reigning princes and hereditary princes. Nothing was seen in the whole pit but uniforms, stars, and orders. The lower boxes were filled with staff officers and the most distinguished persons of the imperial bureaux; the upper front with princesses; and at their sides foreign ladies. A strong guard of grenadiers of the imperial guard was posted at the entrance. On the arrival of either emperor the drum beat thrice; on that of any king, twice. On one occasion the sentinel, deceived by the outside of the King of Würtemburg's carriage, ordered the triple salute to be given, on which the officer in command cried out, in an angry tone, *Taisez-vous—ce n'est qu'un roi!*"[1]

Napoleon, on this occasion, gave a friendly reception to the Duke of Weimar, and to Goethe and Wieland, with whom he talked about literature and history. Goethe went to Erfurt on the 29th of September, and that evening saw *Andromaque* performed. On the 30th, there was a grand dinner given by the duke, and in the evening *Britannicus* was performed. In the *Moniteur* of the 8th of October he is mentioned among the illustrious guests: "Il paraît apprécier parfaitement nos acteurs, et admirer surtout les chefs-d'œuvre qu'ils représentent." On the 2nd of October he was summoned to an audience with the emperor, and found him at breakfast, Talleyrand and Daru standing by his side; Berthier and Savary behind. Napoleon, after a fixed look, exclaimed: "*Vous êtes un homme;*" a phrase which produced a profound impression on the flattered poet. "How old are you?" asked the Emperor. "Sixty." "You are very well preserved." After a pause—"You have written tragedies?" Here Daru interposed, and spoke with warmth of Goethe's works, adding that he had translated Voltaire's *Mahomet*. "It is not a good piece," said Napoleon, and commenced a critique on *Mahomet*, especially on the unworthy portrait given of that conqueror of a world. He then turned the conversation to *Werther*, which

[1] Kanzler von Müller in Mrs. AUSTIN'S *Germany from* 1760 *to* 1814, p. 307.

he had read seven times, and which accompanied him to Egypt. "After various remarks, all very just," says Goethe, "he pointed out a passage and asked me why I had written so: it was contrary to Nature. This opinion he developed with great clearness. I listened calmly, and smilingly replied that I did not know whether the objection had ever been made before, but that I found it perfectly just. The passage was unnatural; but perhaps the poet might be pardoned for the artifice which enabled him to reach his end in an easier, simpler way. The Emperor seemed satisfied and returned to the drama, and criticised it like a man who has studied the tragic stage with the attention of a criminal judge, and who was keenly alive to the fault of the French in departing from Nature. He disapproved of all pieces in which fate played a part. 'Ces pièces appartiennent à une époque obscure. Au reste, que veulent-ils dire avec leur fatalité? La politique est la fatalité.'"

The interview lasted nearly an hour. Napoleon inquired after his children and family; was very gracious; and wound up almost every sentence with *qu'en dit M. Goet?* As Goethe left the room, Napoleon repeated to Berthier and Daru, *Voilà un homme!*

A few days after, Napoleon was in Weimar, and great festivities were set on foot to honour him; among them a *chasse* on the battle-field of Jena; a grand ball at court; and *La Mort de César* at the theatre, with Talma as Brutus. During the ball, Napoleon talked at great length with Goethe and Wieland. Speaking of ancient and modern literature, Napoleon touched on Shakspeare, whom he was too French to comprehend, and said to Goethe: "Je suis étonné qu'un grand esprit, comme vous, n'aime pas les genres tranchés." Goethe might have replied that *les grands esprits* have almost universally been the very reverse of *tranchés* in their tastes; but of course it was not for him to controvert the emperor. As Johnson said on a similar occasion: "Sir, it was not for me to bandy words with my sovereign." After speaking magniloquently of tragedy, Napoleon told him he ought to write a *Death of Cæsar*, but in a grander style than the tragedy of Voltaire. "Ce travail pourrait devenir la principale tâche de votre vie. Dans cette tragédie il faudrait montrer au monde comment César aurait pu faire le bonheur de l'humanité si on lui avait laissé le temps d'exécuter ses vastes plans." One cannot help thinking of Goethe's early scheme to write *Julius Cæsar*, and how entirely

opposed it would have been to the *genre tranché* so admired by Napoleon.

A proposition more acceptable than that of writing tragedies at his age, was that of accompanying Napoleon to Paris. "Venez à Paris, je l'exige de vous; là vous trouverez un cercle plus vaste pour votre esprit d'observation; là vous trouverez des matières immenses pour vos créations poétiques." He had never seen a great capital like Paris or London, and there was something very tempting in this invitation. F. von Müller says he often spoke with him on the probable expense of the journey, and of the Parisian usages; but the inconvenience of so long a journey (in those days), and his own advanced age, seemed to have checked his desire.

On the 14th of October he and Wieland received the cross of the Legion of Honour—then an honour; and the two Emperors quitted Erfurt. Goethe preserved complete silence on all that had passed between him and Napoleon. Indeed when he recorded the interviews, many years later, in the annals of his life, he did so in the most skeleton-like manner. To the oft-repeated question, What was the passage in *Werther* indicated by Napoleon as contrary to Nature, he always returned a playful answer, referring the questioner to the book, on which to exercise his own ingenuity in discovery. He would not even tell Eckermann. He was fond, in this later period of his life, of playing hide-and-seek with readers, and enjoyed their efforts to unravel mysteries. The present mystery has been cleared up by the Chancellor von Müller, to whom we owe most of the details respecting this Napoleon interview. The objection raised by Napoleon was none other than the objection raised by Herder (see p. 291) when *Werther* was revised by him in 1782,—viz. that Werther's melancholy, which leads him to suicide, instead of proceeding solely from frustrated love, is complicated by his frustrated ambition. Herder thought this a fault in art, Napoleon thought it contrary to Nature; and, strange to say, Goethe agreed with both, and altered his work in obedience to Herder's criticism, though he forgot all about it when Napoleon once more brought the objection forward. Against Herder, Napoleon, and Goethe himself, it is enough to oppose the simple fact: Werther (*i.e.* Jerusalem) *was* suffering from frustrated ambition, as well as from frustrated love; and what Goethe found him, that he made him. We have only to turn to Kestner's letter, describing Jerusalem and his unhappy story, to see that Goethe,

in *Werther*, followed with the utmost fidelity the narrative which was given him. This anecdote affords a piquant commentary on the value of criticism: three men so illustrious as Napoleon, Goethe, and Herder, pointing to a particular treatment of a subject as contrary to Art and contrary to Nature; the treatment being all the while strictly in accordance with Nature.

That he was extremely flattered by the attentions of Napoleon has been the occasion of a loud outcry from those who, having never been subjected to any flattery of this nature, find it very contemptible. But the attentions of a Napoleon were enough to soften in their flattery even the sternness of a republican; and Goethe, no republican, was all his life very susceptible to the gratification which a Frankfurt citizen must feel in receiving the attention of crowned heads. There is infinite insincerity uttered on this subject; and generally the outcry is loudest from men who would themselves be most dazzled by court favour of any kind. To hear them talk of Goethe's servility and worship of rank, one might fancy that they stood on a moral elevation, looking down upon him with a superior pity which in some sort compensated their inferiority of intellect. There is one anecdote which they are very fond of quoting, and which I will therefore give, that we may calmly consider what is its real significance. Beethoven, writing to Bettina in 1812, when he made Goethe's acquaintance in Töplitz, says: "Kings and princes can to be sure make professors, privy councillors, &c., and confer titles and orders, but they cannot make great men—minds which rise above the common herd—these they must not pretend to make, and therefore must these be held in honour. When two men, such as Goethe and I, come together, even the high and mighty perceive what is to be considered great in men like us. Yesterday, on our way home, we met the whole imperial family. We saw them coming from a distance, and Goethe separated from me to stand aside: say what I would, I could not make him advance another step. *I pressed my hat down upon my head, buttoned up my great coat, and walked with folded arms through the thickest of the throng.* Princes and pages formed a line, the Archduke Rudolph took off his hat and the empress made the first salutation. Those gentry know me. I saw to my real amusement the procession file past Goethe. He stood aside with his hat off, bending lowly. I rallied him smartly for it; I gave him no quarter."[1]

[1] SCHINDLER'S *Life of Beethoven*, edited by Moscheles, vol. i. pp. 133-5.

This anecdote is usually quoted as evidence of Beethoven's independence and Goethe's servility. A very little consideration will make us aware that Beethoven was ostentatiously rude in the assertion of his independence, and that Goethe was simply acting on the dictates of common courtesy, in standing aside and taking off his hat, as all Germans do when Royalty passes them. It is as much a matter of courtesy to stand still, and take off the hat, when a royal personage passes in carriage or on foot, as it is to take off the hat when an acquaintance passes. Beethoven might choose to ignore all such courtesies; indeed his somewhat eccentric nature would not move in conventional orbits; and his disregard of such courtesies might be pardoned as the caprices of an eccentric nature; but Goethe was a man of the world, a man of courtesies, and a minister; to have folded his arms, and pressed down his hat upon his head, would have been a rudeness at variance with his nature, his education, his position, and his sense of propriety.

It is possible, nay probable, that the very education Goethe had received may have given to his salutation a more elaborate air than was noticeable in other bystanders. In bowing, he may have bowed very low, with a certain formality of respect; for I have no wish to deny that he did lay stress on conventional distinctions. Not only was he far from republican sternness, but he placed more value on his star and title of Excellency than his thorough-going partisans are willing to admit. If that be a weakness, let him be credited with it; but if he were as vain of such puerilities as an English duke is of the Garter, I do not see any cause for serious reproach in it. So few poets have been Excellencies, so few have worn stars on their breasts, that we have no means of judging whether Goethe's vanity was greater or less than we have a right to expect. Meanwhile it does seem to me that sneers at his title, and epigrams on his stars, come with a very bad grace from a nation which is laughed at for nothing more frequently than for its inordinate love of titles. Nor are Englishmen so remarkable for their indifference to rank, as to make them the fittest censors of this weakness in a Goethe.

CHAPTER IV

ELECTIVE AFFINITIES

Among the Jena friends whom Goethe saw with constant pleasure was Frommann, the bookseller, in whose family there was an adopted child, by name Minna Herzlieb, strangely interesting to us as the original of Ottilie in the *Wahlverwandtschaften*. As a child she had been a great pet of Goethe's; growing into womanhood, she exercised a fascination over him which his reason in vain resisted. The disparity of years was great: but how frequently are young girls found bestowing the bloom of their affections on men old enough to be their fathers! and how frequently are men at an advanced age found trembling with the passion of youth! In the Sonnets addressed to her, and in the novel of *Elective Affinities*, may be read the fervour of his passion, and the strength with which he resisted it. Speaking of this novel, he says: "No one can fail to recognise in it a deep passionate wound which shrinks from being closed by healing, a heart which dreads to be cured. . . . In it, as in a burial-urn, I have deposited with deep emotion many a sad experience. The 3rd of October 1809 (when the publication was completed) set me free from the work: but the feelings it embodies can never quite depart from me." If we knew as much of the circumstances out of which grew the *Elective Affinities* as we do of those out of which grew *Werther*, we should find his experience as clearly embodied in this novel as it is in *Werther;* but conjecture in such cases being perilous, I will not venture beyond the facts which have been placed at my disposal; and may only add therefore that the growing attachment was seen by all with pain and dismay. At length it was resolved to send Minna to school,[1] and this absolute separation saved them both.

It is very curious to read *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* by this light; to see not only the sources of its inspiration, but the way in which Goethe dramatises the two halves of his own character. Eduard and Charlotte loved each other in youth. Circumstances separated them; and each made a *mariage de convenance* from which, after a time, they were released

[1] In the novel, Ottilie also is sent back to school.

by death. The widower and the widow, now free to choose, naturally determine on fulfilling the dream of their youth. They marry. At the opening of the story we see them placidly happy. Although a few quiet touches make us aware of a certain disparity between their natures not enough to create unhappiness, but enough to prevent perfect sympathy, the keenest eye would detect no signs which threatened the enduring stability of their happiness. Eduard has a friend, almost a brother, always called "The Captain," whom he invites to come and live with them. Charlotte strongly opposes this visit at first, having a dim presentiment of evil; but she yields, the more so as she desires that her adopted daughter, Ottilie, should now be taken from school, and come to live with them.

Thus are the four actors in the drama brought together on the stage; and no sooner are they brought together, than the natural *elective affinities* of their natures come into play. Charlotte and the Captain are drawn together; Eduard and Ottilie are drawn together. This is shown to be as inevitable as the chemical combinations which give the novel its title. A real episode in the tragedy of life is before us; felt to be inevitable; felt to be terrible; felt also to present a dilemma to the moral judgment, on which two parties will pronounce two opposite opinions.

Those critics who look at human life, and consequently at Art, from the abstract point of view, who, disregarding fact and necessity, treat human nature as a chess-board on which any moves may be made which the player chooses, the player himself being considered an impersonal agent untroubled by rashness, incapable of overlooking what is palpable to the bystanders,—those critics, I say, will unhesitatingly pronounce the situation an immoral situation, which the poet should not have presented, and which in real life would at once have been put an end to by the idea of Duty.

Others, again, who look at life as it *is*, not as it might be; who accept its wondrous complexity of impulses, and demand that Art should represent reality—consider this situation as terribly true, and although tragic, by no means immoral; for the tragedy lies in the collision of Passion with Duty—of Impulse with Social Law. Suppose Charlotte and Eduard unmarried, and these "affinities" would have been simple impulses to marriage. But the fact of marriage stands as a barrier to the impulses: the collision is inevitable.

The divergence of opinion, here indicated, must necessarily exist among the two great classes of readers. Accordingly in Germany and in England the novel is alternately pronounced immoral and profoundly moral. I do not think it is either the one or the other. When critics rail at it, and declare it saps the whole foundation of marriage, and when critics enthusiastically declare it is profoundly moral because it sets the sacredness of marriage in so clear a light, I see that both have drawn certain general conclusions from an individual case; but I do not see that they have done more than put *their* interpretations on what the author had no intention of being interpreted at all. Every work of Art has its moral, says Hegel; but the *moral depends on him that draws it.* Both the conclusion against marriage, and the conclusion in favour of marriage, may therefore be drawn from this novel; and yet neither conclusion be correct—except as the private interpretation of the reader. Goethe was an Artist, not an Advocate; he painted a true picture, and because he painted it truly, he necessarily presented it in a form which would permit men to draw from it those opposite conclusions which might be drawn from the reality itself. Suppose the story actually to have passed before our eyes, the judgments passed on it, even among those thoroughly acquainted with all the facts, would have been diametrically opposite. It is not difficult to write a story carrying the moral legible in every page; and if the writer's object be primarily that of illustrating a plain moral, he need not trouble himself about truth of character. And for this reason: he employs character as a *means* to an end, he does not make the delineation of character his end; his purpose is didactic, not artistic. Quite otherwise is the artist's purpose and practice: for him human life is the end and aim; for him the primary object is character, which is, as all know, of a mingled woof, good and evil, virtue and weakness, truth and falsehood, woven inextricably together.

Those who object to such pictures, and think that truth is no warrant, may reasonably consider Goethe blamable for having chosen the subject. But he chose it because he had experienced it. And once grant him the subject, it is difficult to blame his treatment of it, as regards the social problem. He did his utmost to present this truthfully.

There is, it is true, one scene, which, although true to nature, profoundly true, is nevertheless felt to be objectionable on moral and æsthetical grounds. The artist is not justified in

painting every truth; and if we in this nineteenth century often carry our exclusion of subjects to the point of prudery, that error is a virtue compared with the demoralising license exhibited in French literature. The scene I refer to has probably roused more indignation against the *Wahlverwandtschaften* than all the rest of the book.

It is a painful story. Two of the actors represent Passion in its absorbing, reckless, irresistible fervour, rushing onwards to the accomplishment of its aims. The two other actors represent with equal force, and with touching nobleness, the idea of Duty. Eduard and Ottilie love rapidly, vehemently, thoughtlessly. Not a doubt troubles them. Their feeling is so natural, it so completely absorbs them, that they are like two children entering on a first affection. But, vividly as they represent Instinct, Charlotte and the Captain as vividly represent Reason; their love is equally profound, but it is the love of two rational beings, who, because they reason, reason on the circumstances in which they are placed; recognise society, its arrangements and its laws; and sacrifice their own desires to this social necessity. They subdue themselves; upheld by Conscience they face suffering; Conscience dictates to them a line of conduct never dreamt of by the passionate Eduard, and but vaguely apprehended by Ottilie.

Eduard no sooner knows that he is loved than he is impatient for a divorce, which will enable him to marry Ottilie, and enable Charlotte to marry the Captain. Unfortunately Charlotte, who has hitherto had no children by Eduard, feels that she is about to be a mother. This complicates a position which before was comparatively simple. Childless, she might readily have consented to a divorce; she cannot now. Every argument fails to persuade Eduard to relinquish the one purpose of his life; and he only consents to test by absence the durability of his passion.

He joins the army, distinguishes himself in the field, and returns with desires as imperious as ever. Meanwhile the Captain has also absented himself. Charlotte bears her fate, meekly, nobly. Ottilie in silence cherishes her love for Eduard, and devotes herself with intense affection to Charlotte's child. This child, in accordance with a popular superstition (which, by the way, physiology emphatically discredits), resembles in a striking manner both Ottilie and the Captain, thus physically typifying the passion felt by Eduard for Ottilie, and the passion felt by Charlotte for the Captain.

Charlotte, who is strong enough to bear her fate, never relinquishes the hope that Eduard will learn to accept his with like fortitude. But he remains immovable. Opposition only intensifies his desire. At length the child is drowned while under Ottilie's charge. In the depth of her affliction a light breaks in upon her soul; and now, for the first time, Ottilie becomes conscious of being wrong in her desire to be Eduard's wife. With this consciousness comes a resolution never to be his. The tragedy deepens. She wastes away. Eduard, whose passion was his life, lingers awhile in mute sorrow, and then is laid to rest by her side.

Such, in its leading motives, is the terribly tragic drama which Goethe has worked out with indefatigable minuteness in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*. The story moves slowly, as in life, through various episodes and circumstances; but if slow, it is always intelligible.

We need only a hint of the origin of this story to read in it how Goethe has represented himself under the two different masks of the impulsive Eduard, and the reasonable strong-willed Captain. These characters are drawn from the life, drawn from himself. Considered only as characters in a novel, they are masterly creations. Eduard—weak, passionate, and impatient—still preserves our interest even in his weakest moments. How admirable a touch is that where, in the early uneasiness of his position, he hears of the Captain's having criticised his flute playing, and "at once feels himself freed from every obligation of duty"! It is precisely these passionate natures which leap at any excuse, no matter how frivolous, that they may give them the semblance of justification. Charlotte and the Captain stand as representatives of Duty and Reason, in contrast with Ottilie and Eduard, who represent Impulse and Imagination; in the two reasonable personages Goethe has achieved the rare success of making reason lovable.

Rosenkrantz has noticed how well the various forms of marriage are represented in this novel. Eduard and Charlotte each tried *mariage de convenance;* they then tried a *marriage of friendship;* if the former was unhappy, the latter was not sufficing: it was not the *marriage of love.* Moreover, in the *liaison* of the count and the baroness, we see marriage as it is so often found in the world—as a mere convention conventionally respected. Hence the count is painted as a frivolous careless man of fashion, who plays with St. Simonian

theories, and thinks marriage ought to be an apprenticeship terminable every five years.

Besides such points, the critic will note admiringly how the characters present themselves in thought, speech, and act, without any description or explanation from the author. The whole representation is so objective, so simple, and the march of the story is so quiet, moving amid such familiar details, that except in the masterpieces of Miss Austen, I know not where to look for a comparison. And if English and French readers sometimes feel a little wearied by the many small details which encumber the march of the story, and irritate the curiosity which is impatient for the dénouement, no such weariness is felt by German readers, who enjoy the details, and the purpose which they are supposed to serve. A dear friend of mine, whose criticism is always worthy of attention, thinks that the long episodes which interrupt the progress of the story during the interval of Eduard's absence and return, are artistic devices for impressing the reader with a sense of the slow movement of life; and, in truth, it is only in fiction that the dénouement usually lies close to the exposition. I give this opinion, for the reader's consideration; but it seems to me more ingenious than just. I must confess that the stress Goethe lays on the improvements of the park, the erection of the moss hut, the restoration of the chapel, the making of new roads, &c., is out of all proportion, and somewhat tedious. Julian Schmidt calls attention to the inartistic device of dragging in pages of detached aphorisms and reflections on life under the pretence of their being extracts from Ottilie's journal. The pretence of a connection—namely, the "red thread"—which is to run through these extracts, and exhibit the development of her feelings, is entirely lost sight of, and instead of the feelings of an impassioned girl, we have the thoughts of an old man. The original intention was simply to write a *novelle*, a little tale; and for that there was abundant material. In expanding the *novelle* into a novel, he has spoiled a masterpiece. Indeed, I must frankly say that, either from want of constructive instinct, or from an indolent and haughty indifference towards the public, his novels are quite unworthy of a great artist in point of *composition*. He seems to have regarded them as vehicles for the expression of certain views, rather than as organic wholes.

The style of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is greatly admired by Germans; Rosenkrantz pronounces it classical. We must

remember, however, that Germany is not rich in works written with the perfection which France and England demand; we must remember, moreover, that most German opinions on Goethe are to be received with the same caution as English opinions about Shakspeare; and bearing these two facts in mind, we shall lend a more willing ear to those native critics who do not regard the style of the *Wahlverwandtschaften* as classical. It is a delicate point for a foreigner to venture on an opinion in such a case; and if I wrote for Germans, I should simply quote the current verdict; but writing for Englishmen who read German, there may be less temerity in alluding to the signs of age which the style of this novel betrays. Englishmen comparing this prose with the prose of his earlier works, or with the standard of admirable prose—and so great a writer must only be measured by the highest standards—will find it often weak, cold, mechanical in the construction of its sentences, and somewhat lifeless in the abstractness of its diction. There is also a fatiguing recurrence of certain set forms of phrase. Passages of great beauty there are, touches of poetry no reader will overlook. The last chapter is a poem. Its pathos is so simple that one needs to be in robust mood to read it. The page also where Charlotte and the Captain are on the lake together under the faint light of appearing stars, is a poem the music of which approaches that of verse.

CHAPTER V

POLITICS AND RELIGION

MINNA HERZLIEB, to whom we owe the *Wahlverwandtschaften*, lived to be a happy wife. Goethe long carried the arrow in his heart. In 1810, he once more gave poetic expression to his experience in an erotic poem, setting forth the conflict of Love and Duty. The nature of this poem, however, prevented its publication, and it still exists only as a manuscript. In this year also he commenced his *Autobiography*, the first part of which appeared in 1811. The public, anxious for autobiography, received it with a disappointment which is perfectly intelligible; charming as the book is in every other respect, it is tantalising to a reader curious to see the great poet in his youth.

Before writing this *Autobiography* he had to outlive the

sorrow for his mother's death. She died on the 13th of September 1808, in her 78th year. To the last, her love for her son, and his for her, had been the glory and sustainment of her happy old age. He had wished her to come and live with him at Weimar; but the circle of old Frankfurt friends, and the influence of old habits, kept her in her native city, where she was venerated by all.

A volume would be required to record with anything like fulness the details of the remaining years. There is no deficiency of material: in his letters, and the letters of friends and acquaintances, will be found an ample gleaning; but unhappily the materials are abundant precisely at the point where the interest of the story begins to fade. From sixty to eighty-two is a long period; but it is not a period in which persons and events influence a man; his character, already developed, can receive no new direction. At this period biography is at an end, and necrology begins. For Germans, the details to which I allude have interest; but the English reader would receive with mediocre gratitude a circumstantial narrative of all Goethe did and studied; all the excursions he made; every cold and toothache which afflicted him; every person he conversed with.[1]

I may mention, however, his acquaintance with Beethoven, on account of the undying interest attached to the two names. They were together for a few days at Töplitz, with the most profound admiration for each other's genius. The biographer of Beethoven adds: "But though Beethoven has praised Goethe's patience with him (on account of his deafness), still it is a fact, that the great poet, and minister, too soon forgot the great composer; and when, in 1823, he had it in his power to render him an essential service with little trouble to himself, he did not even deign to reply to a very humble epistle from our master." This is the way accusations are made; this is the kind of evidence on which they are believed. The only *facts* here established are, that Beethoven wrote to Goethe, and that Goethe did not reply. Beethoven's letter requested Goethe to recommend the grand-duke to subscribe to his Mass. It was doubtless very mortifying not to receive a reply; such things always are mortifying, and offended self-love is apt to suggest bad motives for the offence. But a

[1] The period which is included in this Seventh Book occupies no less than 563 pages of Viehoff's Biography; yet, while I have added a great many details to those collected by Viehoff, I do not think any of interest have been omitted.

bystander, knowing how many motives may actuate the conduct, and unwilling to suppose a bad motive for which there is no evidence, will at once see that the inferences of Goethe's "not deigning to reply," and of having "forgotten the great composer," are by no means warranted by the facts. We know that Goethe was naturally of an active benevolence; we know that he was constantly recommending to the grand-duke some object of charitable assistance; we know that he profoundly admired Beethoven, and had no cause to be offended with him; and, knowing this, we must accept any interpretation of the fact of silence in preference to that which the angry Beethoven, and his biographer, have inferred.

To pursue our narrative: The year 1813, which began the War of Independence, was to Goethe a year of troubles. It began with an affliction—the death of his old friend Wieland; which shook him more than those who knew him best were prepared for. Herder; Schiller; the Duchess Amalia; his Mother; and now Wieland,—one by one had fallen away, and left him lonely, advancing in years.

Nor was this the only source of unhappiness. Political troubles came to disturb his plans. Germany was rising against the tyranny of Napoleon; rising, as Goethe thought, in vain. "You will not shake off your chains," he said to Körner, "the man is too powerful; you will only press them deeper into your flesh." His doubts were shared by many; but happily the nation shared them not. While patriots were rousing the wrath of the nation into the resistance of despair, he tried to "escape from the present, because it is impossible to live in such circumstances and not go mad;" he took refuge, as he always did, in Art. He wrote the ballads *Der Todtentanz*, *Der getreue Eckart*, and *die wandelnde Glocke*; wrote the essay *Shakspeare und kein Ende*, and finished the third volume of his *Autobiography*. He buried himself in the study of Chinese history. Nay, on the very day of the battle of Leipsic, he wrote the epilogue to the tragedy of *Essex*, for the favourite actress, Madame Wolf.[1]

Patriotic writers are unsparing in sarcasms on a man who could thus seek refuge in Poetry from the bewildering troubles of politics, and they find no other explanation than that he was an Egoist. Other patriotic writers, among them some of

[1] Curiously enough, on that very day of Napoleon's first great defeat, his medallion, which was hung on the wall of Goethe's study, fell from its nail on to the ground.

ultra republicanism, such as Karl Grün, have eloquently defended him. I do not think it necessary to add arguments to those already suggested respecting his relation to politics. Those who are impatient with him for being what he was, and not what they are, will listen to no arguments. It is needless to point out how, at sixty-four, he was not likely to become a politician, having up to that age sedulously avoided politics. It is needless to show that he was not in a position which called upon him to *do* anything. The grievance seems to be that he wrote no war songs, issued no manifestoes, but strove to keep himself as much as possible out of the hearing of contemporary history. If this was a crime, the motive was not criminal. Judge the act as you will, but do not misjudge the motive. To attribute such an act to cowardice, or fear of compromising himself, is unwarrantable, in the face of all the evidence we have of his character.

When the mighty Napoleon threatened the grand-duke, we have seen how Goethe was roused. That was an individual injustice, which he could clearly understand, and was prepared to combat. For the Duke he would turn ballad-singer; for the Nation he had no voice; and why? Because there was no Nation. He saw clearly then, what is now seen clearly, that Germany had no existence as a Nation: it was a geographical fiction; and such it remains in our day. And he failed to see what is now clearly seen, that the German Peoples were, for the time, united by national enthusiasm, united by a common feeling of hatred against France; failing to see this, he thought that a collection of disunited Germans was certain to be destroyed in a struggle with Napoleon. He was wrong; the event has proved his error; but his error of opinion must not be made an accusation against his sincerity. When Luden the historian, whose testimony is the weightier because it is that of a patriot, had that interview with him, after the battle of Leipsic, which he has recorded with so much feeling,[1] the impression left was, he says, "that I was deeply convinced they are in grievous error who blame Goethe for a want of love of country, a want of German feeling, a want of faith in the German people, or of sympathy with its honour and shame, its fortune or misery. His silence about great events was simply a painful resignation, to which he was necessarily led by his position and his knowledge of mankind." Luden came to him to speak of a projected journal, the *Nemesis*, which was

[1] *Luden's Rückblicke in mein Leben*, p. 113 *sq.*

to excite the nation's hatred of France. Goethe dissuaded him. "Do not believe," he said, after a pause, "that I am indifferent to the great ideas—Freedom, Fatherland, and People. No; these ideas are in us; they form a portion of our being which no one can cast off. Germany is dear to my heart. I have often felt a bitter pain at the thought that the German people, so honourable as individuals, should be so miserable as a whole. A comparison of the German people with other peoples awakens a painful feeling, which I try to escape in any way I can; and in Art and Science I have found such escapes; *for they belong to the world at large, and before them vanish all the limits of nationality.* But this consolation is after all but a poor one, and is no compensation for the proud conviction that one belongs to a great, strong, honoured, and dreaded people." He spoke also of Germany's future, but he saw that this future was still far distant. "For us, meanwhile, this alone remains: let every one, according to his talents, according to his tendencies and according to his position, *do his utmost to increase the culture and development of the people*, to strengthen and widen it on all sides, that the people may not lag behind other peoples, but may become competent for every great action when the day of its glories arrives." Very wise words, however unpalatable to enthusiastic patriotism. Turning from such abstract considerations to the question of the journal, and the probability of "awakening" the German People to Freedom. "But *is* the people awakened?" he continued. "Does it know what it wants and what it wills? Have you forgotten what that honest Philister in Jena said to his neighbour, as in his joy he called out, that the French were departed, and his rooms were ready for the reception of the Russians? The sleep has been too deep for a mere shaking to alter it. And is every agitation an elevation? We are not now considering the cultivated youth, but the many, the millions. And what will be won? Freedom, you say; but perhaps it would be more correct to call it a setting free—*not, however, a setting free from the yoke of foreigners, but from a foreign yoke.* True, I no longer see Frenchmen, no longer see Italians; but *in their place I see Cossacks, Baschkirs, Croats, Magyars and other Hussars.*"

He who thought thus, was not likely to be found among the enthusiasts of that day, had he been at the age of enthusiasm. But, as he said to Eckermann, who alluded to the reproaches against him for not having written war songs, "How could I

take up arms without hatred, and how could I hate without youth? If such an emergency had befallen me when twenty years old, I should certainly not have been the last; but it found me past sixty. Besides we cannot all serve our country in the same way, but each does his best according as God has endowed him. I have toiled hard enough during half a century. I can say, that in those things which nature has appointed for my daily work, I have permitted myself no relaxation or repose, but have always striven, investigated, and done as much, and as well, as I could. If every one can say the same of himself, it will prove well with all. To write military songs, and sit in a room! That forsooth was my duty! To have written them in the bivouac when the horses at evening's outposts are heard neighing at night, would have been well enough; that was not my way of life nor my business, but that of Theodore Körner. His war songs suit him perfectly. But to me, who am not of a warlike nature, and who have no warlike sense, war songs would have been a mask which would have fitted my face very badly. I have never affected anything in my poetry. I have never uttered anything which I have not experienced, and which has not urged me to production. I have only composed love songs when I have loved; and how could I write songs of hatred without hating?"

Connected with this political indifference, and mainly the cause of it, was his earnestness in Art; an earnestness which has been made the evidence of this most extraordinary charge against him, namely, that he "looked on life only as an artist." The shallow phrase has become stereotyped. Every one has heard it who has heard anything of him. It is uttered with the confidence of conviction, and is meant to convey a volume of implicit reprobation. When a man devotes himself to a special science, gives to it the greater part of his time, his thoughts and sympathies, we marvel at his energy, and laud his passionate devotion; we do not make his earnestness a crime; we do not say of a Faraday that he "looks at life only as a Chemist;" of an Owen "that he looks at life only as a Zoologist." It is understood that any great pursuit must necessarily draw away the thoughts and activities from other pursuits. Why then is Art to be excluded from the same serious privilege? Why is the Artist, who is in earnest, excluded from the toleration spontaneously awarded to the Philosopher? I know but of one reason, and that is the indisposition in men to accept Art as serious. Because it

ministers directly to our pleasures, Art is looked on as the child of luxury, the product of idleness; and those who cannot rise to the height of the conception which animated a Goethe and a Schiller, are apt to treat it as mere rhetoric and self-importance in men who speak of Art as the noblest form of Culture. Indeed those who regard Painting and Sculpture as means of supplying their dining-rooms and galleries with costly ornaments; Music, as furnishing the excuse for a box at the opera; and Poetry as an agreeable pastime, may be justified in thinking lightly of painters, sculptors, musicians, and poets. But I will not suppose the reader to be one of this class; and may therefore appeal to his truer appreciation for a verdict in favour of the claims made by Art to serious recognition, as one among the many forms of national culture. This granted, it follows that the more earnestly the artist accepts and follows his career, the more honour does he claim from us.

Now Goethe was a man of too profoundly serious a nature not to be in earnest with whatever he undertook; he led an earnest and laborious life, when he might have led one of pleasure and luxurious idleness. "To scorn delights and live laborious days," with no other reward than the reward of activity, the delight of development, was one of the necessities of his nature. He worked at Science with the patient labour of one who had to earn his bread; and he worked in the face of dire discouragement, with no reward in the shape of pence or praise. In Art, which was the main region of his intellectual strivings, he naturally strove after completeness. If the Philosopher is observed drawing materials for his generalisations out of even the frivolities of the passing hour, learning in the theatre, the ball-room, or in the incoherent talk of railway passengers, to detect illustrations of the laws he is silently elaborating, we do not accuse him of looking on life only as a Philosopher, thereby implying that he is deficient in the feelings of his race; yet something like this is done by those who make a crime of Goethe's constant endeavour to collect from life material for Art.

If when it is said "he looked on life only as an artist," the meaning is that he, as an artist, necessarily made Art the principal occupation of his life—the phrase is a truism; and if the meaning is that he isolated himself from the labours and pursuits of his fellow-men, to play with life, and arrange it as an agreeable drama—the phrase is a calumny. It is only through deep sympathy that a man can become a

great artist; those who play with life can only play with art. The great are serious. That Goethe was a great artist all admit. Has the life we have narrated shown him to be deficient in benevolence, in lovingness, in sympathy with others and their pursuits? has it shown any evidence of a nature so wrapped in self-indulgence, and so coldly calculating, that life *could* become a mere playing to it? If the answer be No, then let us hear no more about Goethe's looking on life only as an artist. The vulgar may blame a devotion which they cannot understand; do not let us imitate the vulgar. "Le monde comprend peu un pareil stoïcisme," says a thoughtful and sympathetic writer, "et voit souvent une sorte de sécheresse dans l'âpreté de ces grandes âmes,—dures pour elles-mêmes et par conséquent un peu pour les autres, qui ont l'air de se consoler de tout, pourvu que l'univers reste livré à leur contemplation. Mais au fond c'est là le plus haut degré du désintéressement et le plus beau triomphe de l'âme humaine. Ce que la conscience timorée des âmes tendres et vertueuses appelle l'égoisme du génie, n'est d'ordinaire que le détachement des jouissances personnelles et l'oubli de soi pour l'idéal."[1]

While one party has assailed him for his political indifference, another, and still more ungenerous party, has assailed him for what they call his want of religion. The man who can read Goethe's works and not perceive in them a spirit deeply religious, must limit the word religion to the designation of his own doctrines; and the man who, reading them, discovers that Goethe was not orthodox, is discovering the sun at mid-day. Orthodox he never pretended to be. His religious experiences had begun early, and his doubts began with them. There are those who regard Doubt as criminal in itself; but no human soul that has once struggled, that has once been perplexed with baffling thoughts which it has been too sincere to huddle away and stifle in precipitate conclusions dreading to face the consequences of doubt, will speak thus harshly and unworthily of it.

> There lives more faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half the creeds:
> He fought his doubts and gathered strength;
> He would not make his judgment blind;
> He faced the spectres of the mind,
> And laid them: thus he came at length
> To find a stronger faith his own.[2]

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[1] ERNEST RENAN: *Essais de Morale*, p. 138.

[2] *In Memoriam*.

The course of his opinions, as we have seen, was often altered. At times he approached the strictness of strict sects; at times he went great lengths in scepticism. The Fräulein von Klettenberg taught him to sympathise with the Moravians; but Lavater's unconscious hypocrisy, and the moral degradation of the Italian priesthood, gradually changed his respect for the Christian Churches into open and sometimes sarcastic contempt of priests and priesthoods. In various epochs of his long life he expressed himself so variously that a pietist may claim him, or a Voltairian may claim him: both with equal show of justice. The secret of this contradiction lies in the fact that he had deep religious sentiments, with complete scepticism on most religious doctrines. Thus, whenever the Encyclopedists attacked Christianity he was ready to defend it;[1] but when he was brought in contact with dogmatic Christians, who wanted to force their creed upon him, he resented the attempt, and answered in the spirit of his scepticism. To the Encyclopedists he would say, "Whatever frees the intellect, without at the same time giving us command over ourselves, is pernicious;" or he would utter one of his profound and pregnant aphorisms, such as

Nur das Gesetz kann uns die Freiheit geben,

i.e. only within the circle of Law can there be true Freedom. We are not free when we acknowledge no higher power, but when we acknowledge it, and in reverence raise ourselves by proving that a Higher lives in us.

But against dogmatic teachings he opposed the fundamental rule, that all conceptions of the Deity must necessarily be *our* individual conceptions, valid for us, but not to the same extent for others. Each soul has its own religion; must have it as an individual possession; let each see that he be true to it, which is far more efficacious than trying to accommodate himself to another's!

Im Innern ist ein Universum auch;
Daher der Völker löblicher Gebrauch
Dass Jeglicher das Beste was er kennt
Er Gott, ja seinen Gott benennt.

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[1] ABEKEN was told by a lady that she once heard Goethe soundly rate a respected friend, because she spoke of sacred persons in the tone of vulgar rationalism.

"I *believe* in God" was, he said, "a beautiful and praiseworthy phrase; but to *recognise* God in all his manifestations, *that* is true holiness on earth." He declared himself in the deepest sense of the word a Protestant, and as such claimed "the right of holding his inner being free from all prescribed dogma, the right of developing himself religiously"! With reference to the genuineness of Scripture, he maintained with the modern Spiritualists that nothing is genuine but what is truly excellent, which stands in harmony with the purest nature and reason, and which even now ministers to our highest development. He looked upon the Four Gospels as genuine, "for there is in them a reflection of a greatness which emanated from the person of Jesus, and which was of as divine a kind as was ever seen upon earth. If I am asked whether it is in my nature to pay Him devout reverence, I say—certainly! I bow before Him as the divine manifestation of the highest morality. If I am asked whether it is in my nature to reverence the sun, I again say—certainly! For he is likewise a manifestation of the highest Being. I adore in him the light and the productive power of God; by which we all live, move, and have our being. But if I am asked whether I am inclined to bow before a thumb bone of the apostle Peter or Paul, I say—away with your absurdities! . . . Let mental culture go on advancing, let science go on gaining in depth and breadth, and the human intellect expand as it may, it will never go beyond the elevation and moral culture of Christianity as it shines forth in the Gospels. The mischievous sectarianism of Protestants will one day cease, and with it the hatred between father and son, sister and brother; for as soon as the pure doctrine and love of Christ are comprehended in their true nature, and have become a living principle, we shall feel ourselves great and free as human beings, and not attach special importance to a degree more or less in the outward forms of religion. Besides, we shall all gradually advance from a Christianity of words and faith to a Christianity of feeling and action." He was eighty-two when those words were uttered to Eckermann. Ten years before, he wrote to his old friend the Countess von Stolberg: "I have meant honestly all my life both with myself and others, and in all my earthly strivings have ever looked upwards to the Highest. You and yours have done so likewise. Let us continue to work thus while there is daylight for us; for others another sun will shine by which they will work, while for us a brighter

Light will shine. And so let us remain untroubled about the future! In our Father's kingdom there are many provinces, and as He has given us here so happy a resting place, so will He certainly care for us above; perhaps we shall be blessed with what here on earth has been denied us, to know one another merely by seeing one another, and thence more thoroughly to love one another."

There are two aspects under which religion may be considered: the divine aspect, and the human aspect; in the one it is Theosophy, in the other Ethics. Goethe's Theosophy was that of Spinoza, modified by his own poetical tendencies; it was not a geometrical, but a poetical Pantheism. In it the whole universe was conceived as divine; not as a lifeless mass, but as the living manifestation of Divine Energy ever flowing forth into activity. St. Paul tells us that God lives in everything, and everything in God. Science tells us that the world is always *becoming*. Creation continues. The world was not made, once and for ever, as a thing completed, and afterwards serenely contemplated. The world is still amaking. The primal energies of Life are as young and potent as of old, issuing forth under new forms through metamorphoses higher and ever higher, as dawn broadens into day.

Goethe's religion was eminently concrete, and devout in its worship of realities. He believed in fact; he thought reality in itself holier than any fiction could make it. Human nature was to him a holy fact, and man's body a temple of holiness. This is Hellenic, but its kinship with Spinoza's system is also obvious. Spinoza had no sympathy with those philosophers who deride or vilify human nature: in his opinion it was better to try to understand it; and disregarding the clamours of those who conceived the emotions and actions of human nature to be chaotic and absurd, he analysed its properties as if it had been a mathematical figure. In other words, he inquired without passion, reasoned without foregone conclusions, interrogated the facts as they presented themselves, and recorded the simple answers.[1] And this did Goethe. He strove above all things to understand fact, because fact was divine manifestation. The mystic change of birth and death—the sweet

[1] *Ethices*, Pars iii., præfatio: "Nam ad illos revertere volo, qui hominum affectus et actiones detestari vel ridere malunt, quam intelligere. His sine dubio mirum videbitur, quod hominum vitia et ineptias more geometrico tractare aggrediar, et certa ratione demonstrare velim ea quæ rationi repugnare, quæque vana, absurda, et horrenda esse clamitant. Sed mea hæc ratio est."

influences of opening life and orderly development—the restless strivings and the placid rests—the ever-moving shuttles of the "roaring Loom of Time, which weaves for God the garment we see him by"—were to him the "freshly uttered word of God."

Goethe's moral system was intimately connected with this Theosophy. His worship was Nature worship, his moral system an idealisation of Humanity. The human being was the highest manifestation of the Divine on earth, and the highest manifestation of Humanity was therefore the ideal to which morality tended. We must first learn Renunciation; we must learn to limit ourselves to the Possible; in this first restraint lies the germ of self-sacrifice: in giving up claims too high for attainment, we learn to give up claims for the sake of others. True piety springs from human love. "If certain phenomena of nature," he says, "looked at from the moral standing point, force us to assume the existence of a primitive Evil, so on the other hand many phenomena force us to assume a primitive Good. This spring of goodness, when flowing into life, we name *Piety;* as the ancients did, who regarded it as the basis of all virtue. It is the force which counterbalances egoism; and if by a miracle it could for a moment suddenly be active in all men, the earth would at once be free from evil."

It would be no difficult task to select from his works a series of moral propositions of the noblest character; but indeed his works are saturated with a morality such as speaks to every heart not prejudiced, and are even more remarkable for the absence of any mean, grovelling, selfish, and narrow views than for their direct teaching. The cry of "Immorality" which has been sometimes raised against his works, springs from that uncharitableness which denounces every thought not taught by the denouncing sect. If any one can read Goethe's works and not feel the writer to have been one strengthened by noble sentiments and warmed by the purest love for human nature in its most generous forms, I have nothing to add to the words of the spirit in *Faust*,

Du gleichst dem Geist den du begreifst,—

"You resemble the Spirit which you understand." [1]

[1] I heard a capital story of Carlyle at a dinner party in Berlin, silencing the cant about Goethe's want of religion, by one of his characteristic sarcasms. For some time he sat quiet, but not patient, while certain pietists were throw-

Whatever else he has been accused of, he has never been accused of not having striven incessantly to reach a full development of his own being, and to aid the culture of his nation. There is something truly grand in the picture of his later years; so calm, and yet so active. His sympathy, instead of growing cold with age, seems every year to become more active. Every discovery in Science, every new appearance in Literature, every promise in Art finds him eager as a child to be instructed, and ready with aid or applause to further it.

Old age indeed is a relative term. Goethe at seventy was younger than many men at fifty; and at eighty-two he wrote a scientific review of the great discussion between Cuvier and Geoffroy St. Hilaire on Philosophic Zoology, a review which few men in their prime could write. But there are Physiologists who deny that seventy is old age. M. Flourens, for example, maintains that from fifty-five to seventy, man is at his most virile period; and M. Reveillé Parisse, in his work *La Vieillesse*, declares that between fifty-five and seventy-five, and sometimes beyond, the mind acquires an extension, a consistence, and a solidity truly remarkable,—"c'est véritablement l'homme ayant atteint toute la hauteur de ses facultés." And the history of Science and Literature furnishes several striking examples of intellectual activity in old age—the activity being doubtless a cause of this prolongation of power. Sophocles, who is said to have written his masterpiece at eighty, is an example of great poetic capacity thus prolonged. The reflective powers often retain their capacity, and by increase of material seem to *increase* it; but not so the productive powers. Yet in Goethe we see extraordinary fertility, even in the latest years; the Second Part of *Faust* was completed in his eighty-first year, and the *Westöstliche Divan* was written in his sixty-fifth. Although we cannot by any means consider these works as equal to the works of his earlier days, we must still consider them as marvellous productions to issue under the sunset of a poet.

ing up their eyes, and regretting that so great a genius! so godlike a genius! should not have more purely devoted himself to the service of Christian Truth! and should have had so little, &c., &c. Carlyle sat grim, ominously silent, his hands impatiently twisting his napkin, until at last he broke silence, and in his slow emphatic way said, "*Meine Herren*, did you never hear the story of that man who vilified the sun because it would not light his cigar?" This bombshell completely silenced the enemy's fire. Not a word was spoken in reply. "I could have kissed him!" exclaimed the enthusiastic artist who narrated the anecdote to me.

The *Westöstliche Divan* was a refuge from the troubles of the time. Instead of making himself unhappy with the politics of Europe, he made himself happy studying the history and poetry of the East. He even began to study the Oriental languages, and was delighted to be able to copy the Arabic manuscripts in their peculiar characters. Von Hammer, De Sacy, and other Orientalists had given him abundant material; his poetic activity soon gave that material shape. But while donning the Turban, and throwing the Caftan over his shoulders, he remained a true German. He smoked opium, and drank *Foukah;* but his dreams were German and his songs were German. This forms the peculiarity of the Divan—it is West-Eastern; the images are Eastern; the feeling is Western. Precisely as in the Roman Elegies he had thrown himself into the classical past, reproducing its forms with unsurpassed ease and witchery, yet never for a moment ceasing to be original, never ceasing to be German; so also in this Eastern world we recognise the Western poet. He follows the Caravan slowly across the desert; he hears the melancholy chant of the Bulbul singing on the borders of sparkling fountains; he listens devoutly to the precepts of Mohammed, and rejoices in the strains of Hafis. The combination is most felicitous. It produced an epoch in German Literature. The Lyrists, according to Gervinus, suddenly following this example, at once relinquished their warlike and contemporary tone to sing the songs of the East. Rückert and Platen, following the trace of the German Hafis, wandered among roses and Ghazels; other poets gladly imitated them. Does it not seem as if there were a natural tendency in the German character to turn the back upon active political life, when we see that in the two great crises of history, in the Crusades and in the War of Independence, the poets fled from the stormy contemplation of their time, seeking inspiration in an order of ideas completely opposed to the time? The Minnesingers, amid the clang of knightly achievements, could only sing of Love and Pleasure; the modern poets, amid the storms of an European struggle, could find no inspiration but in Romanticism, or in Orientalism! This is the more noticeable because Goethe has been angrily reproached for his flight into the East; although surely the aged poet might find an excuse when the young poets were applauded?

The *Westöstliche Divan* is divided into twelve Books: the Singer, Hafis, Love, Contemplation, Sadness, Proverbs,

Timour, Suleika, Wine-house, Parables, Persians, and Paradise; very various in contents, and of various excellence. Truly may be applied to Goethe the epigraph he applies to Hafis: "Let us call the Word the Bride, and the Spirit will be the Bridegroom; he who has known Hafis has seen this marriage:"

Sey das Wort die Braut genannt
Bräutigam der Geist;
Diese Hochzeit hat gekannt
Wer Hafisen preis't.

How much of his own experience he has clothed in these Eastern forms we cannot know; but in one case, in the *Buch Suleika*, he has placed the name of Hatem where the rhyme plainly tells us to read Goethe:

Du beschämst, wie Morgenröthe
Jener Gipfel ernste Wand,
Und noch einmal fühlet *Hatem*
Frühlingshauch und Sommerbrand.

The grace with which many of these poems are lightly touched; the admirable wisdom which smiles so serenely under them; the calm, hot, noonday stillness, interchanging with the careless gaiety of the Wine-house mirth, cannot be indicated by translation; nor will I attempt it. For the sake of the German reader, however, here is one brief specimen:

Trunken müssen wir alle seyn!
Jugend ist Trunkenheit ohne Wein;
Trinkt sich das Alter wieder zu Jugend
So ist es wundervolle Tugend.
Für Sorgen sorgt das liebe Leben
Und Sorgenbrecher sind die Reben.

To these poems is added a volume of Historical Notes, which show indeed a conscientious study of the East, but which also show how immeasurably inferior he was in prose to poetry. Age is visible in every page.

In the early chapters of his *Autobiography* he had presented a picture of Frankfurt, which was very gratifying to the people of that city; and when, in the year 1814, he passed through the city he was received with an ovation which recalls the last visit of Voltaire to Paris. *Tasso* was performed at the theatre with great pomp. No sooner did he make his appearance in the box which had been prepared for him, and which was hung with flowers and laurel-crowns, than Haydn's symphony struck

up, and the whole house rose with a burst of enthusiastic cheering. The symphony continued, and the shouts rose tumultuously above it. At length the curtain rolled up, and gradually a solemn stillness settled through the house. A prologue greeted the great poet, and was the signal for more shouting. After *Tasso* came an epilogue, during which the laurel-crowns were taken from the busts of Ariosto and Tasso, and handed to Goethe. And when all was over, the corridors and staircases of the theatre were crowded with admirers, through whom he passed smiling his thanks.

CHAPTER VI

THE ACTIVITY OF AGE

In the year 1816 he began to publish an Art Journel, *Kunst und Alterthum*, which continued till 1828, a curious monument of the old man's studies and activity. It is curious, moreover, as indicating a change in the direction of his ideas. We have seen what his relation was to the Romantic School, and how the tendencies of his nature and education led him to oppose to the characteristics of that school the characteristics of Greek Art. The *Propyleen* represents the Greek tendency: *Kunst und Alterthum* represents a certain leaning towards the Romantic. Gothic Art, the old German and Netherland painters, no longer seemed to him objectionable; but the discovery of the Elgin Marbles once more awakened his enthusiasm for that perfection of form which was the ideal of Greek Art;[1] and I have heard Rauch, the sculptor, humorously narrate Goethe's whimsical outbreaks when the young sculptor Rietschl seemed in danger of perverting his talent by executing designs in the spirit of the Romantic School.

Strong, however, as the opposition was which he felt to the vagaries of the so-called Christian Art, he had too much of the *Faust* spirit to keep entirely aloof from the Romanticists. In his old age the tendency to substitute Reflection for Inspiration naturally assumed greater force; and his love of mystification was now wearing a serious aspect, duping himself perhaps as much as it duped others. The German nation had

[1] See his letter to Haydon in the *Life of Haydon*, vol. ii. p. 295.

persisted in discovering profound meanings in passages which he had written without any recondite meaning at all; finding himself a prophet when he meant only to be a poet, he gradually fell into the snare, and tried to be a prophet now he could no longer be so great a poet as before. Every incident was to be typical. Every phrase was of importance. Whether the lion should roar at a particular time (in the *Novelle*), or whether he should be silent, were subjects of long deliberation. The *Wanderjahre* was one great arsenal of symbols, the Second Part of *Faust* another. He delighted in seeing the philosophic critics outdoing each other in far-fetched ingenuity, "explaining" his *Faust* and *Meister;* and very astutely he refused to come to their aid. He saw libraries filled with discussions as to what he had intended; but no one ever seduced him into an explanation which would have silenced these discussions. Instead of doing so, he seemed disposed to furnish the world with more riddles. In a word, he mystified the public; but he did so in a grave, unconscious way, with a certain belief in his own mystification.

In the year 1816, Saxe-Weimar was made a Grand Duchy; and he received the Falcon Order, together with an increase of salary, which now became three thousand thalers, with extra allowance for his equipage. Two other events made this year memorable. Lotte—Werther's Lotte—now a widow in her sixtieth year, and mother of twelve children, pays him a visit at Weimar. They had not met since her marriage, and what a meeting this must have been for both! how strange a mingling of feelings recurrent to a pleasantly-agitated past, and of feelings perplexed by the surprise at finding each other so much changed!

The second and far more serious event of the year, is the death of his wife. Many affected to consider this "a happy release." People are fond of arranging the lives of others according to their own conceptions, interpreting afflictions like these without regard to the feelings of the afflicted. The blow was heavy to bear. She who for eight-and-twenty years had loved and aided him, who—whatever her faults—had been to him what no other woman was, could not be taken from him without making him deeply feel the loss. His self-mastery was utterly shaken. He kneeled at her bedside, seizing her cold hands, and exclaiming: "Thou wilt not forsake me! No, no; thou must not forsake me!" He has expressed his feelings in two passages only; in the exquisite lines he wrote

on the day of her death, and in a letter to Zelter. These are the lines :—

Du versuchst, O Sonne, vergebens
Durch die düstern Wolken zu scheinen !
Der ganze Gewinn meines Lebens
Ist, ihren Verlust zu beweinen.[1]

And to Zelter the words were these : "When I tell thee, thou rough and sorely-tried son of earth, that my dear little wife has left me, thou wilt know what that means."

In Science he strove to find forgetfulness ; and the loneliness of his house was next year changed into an unaccustomed liveliness by the marriage of his son with Ottilie von Pogwisch, one of the gayest and most brilliant of the Weimar circle. She was always a great favourite with her father-in-law, and during the remainder of his life not only kept his house for him, and received his numerous guests, but became a privileged favourite, to whom everything was permitted. In the year following he sang a cradle song over his first grandchild.

His ministerial duties were not heavy, but were punctiliously performed. Here are two anecdotes which exhibit his imperious and determined character in a strong light. He had long laboured for the improvement of Jena. The library, he told Eckermann, "was in very bad condition. The situation was damp and close, and by no means fit to contain its treasures in a proper manner ; particularly as by purchase of the Büttner library on the part of the grand-duke, an addition had been made of 13,000 volumes, which lay in heaps upon the floor, because there was no room to place them properly. I was really in some distress on that account. An addition should have been made to the building, but for this the means were wanting ; and moreover this addition could easily be avoided, since adjoining the library there was a large room standing empty, and quite calculated to supply our necessities. However, this room was not in possession of the library, but was used by the medical faculty, who sometimes employed it for their conferences. I therefore applied to these gentlemen with the very civil request that they would give up this room for the library. To this they would not agree. They were willing, they said, to give it up if I would have a new room built for their conferences, and that immediately. I replied that I should be very ready to have another place prepared for

[1] "In vain, O Sun, you struggle to shine through the dark clouds ; the whole gain of my life is to bewail her loss."

them, but that I could not promise them a new building immediately. This did not satisfy them, for when next morning I asked them for the key, I was told it could not be found! There now remained no other course but to enter as conqueror. I therefore sent for a bricklayer, and took him into the library before the wall of the adjoining room. 'This wall, my friend,' said I, 'must be very thick, for it separates two different parts of the building: just try how strong it is.' The bricklayer went to work, and scarcely had he given five or six hearty blows, when bricks and mortar fell in, and one could see through the opening some venerable perukes with which the room was decorated. 'Go on, my friend,' said I. 'I cannot yet see clearly enough. Do not restrain yourself, but act as if you were in your own house.' This friendly encouragement so animated the bricklayer, that the opening was soon large enough to serve perfectly for a door; when my library attendants rushed into the room each with an armful of books, which they threw upon the ground as a sign of possession. Benches, chairs, and desks vanished in a moment; and my assistants were so quick and active, that in a few days all the books were arranged along the walls. The doctors, who soon after entered the room through the usual door, were quite confounded at so unexpected a change. They did not know what to say, but retired in silence; but they all harboured a secret grudge against me. When I related this to the grand-duke, he laughed heartily and quite approved me. Afterwards, when on account of the great dampness of the library I wished to take down and remove the whole of the old city wall, which was quite useless, I found no better success. My entreaties, reasons, and representations found no hearing; and I was forced at last to go to work as a conqueror. When the city authorities saw my workmen destroying their old wall, they sent a deputation to the grand-duke, with the humble request that his highness would be pleased, by a word of command, to check my violent destruction of their venerable wall. But the grand-duke, who had secretly authorised me, said: 'I do not intermeddle with Goethe's affairs. He knows what he has to do, and must act as he thinks right. Go to him and speak to him yourself if you have the courage!'"

The other anecdote is recorded by Luden. In 1823 the *Landtag* (or Parliament, to use the nearest English equivalent) assembled, and demanded the finance accounts. Goethe, who was at the head of the Commission for Art and Science, to

which a sum of 11,787 thalers was allotted, at first took no notice of the demand made for his accounts; but was heard to express himself angrily at this Landtag with its pedantic fuss about a paltry sum. At length he was prevailed upon to send in his accounts. What was the surprise of the Landtag to read a few lines to this effect: "Received, so much; Expended, so much; Remains, so much. *Signed* Grossherzogl. Immediatcommission für Wissenschaft und Kunst, *Goethe*"! At this cavalier procedure some of the members burst out laughing; others were indignant, and proposed to refuse the grant for the following year; a proposition which was all the more acceptable because the Landtag had a great idea of economy, and but a small idea of the value of science and art. Luden strove to convince them this was an unwise procedure. He urged indeed the necessity of the Landtag being put in possession of all the details of expenditure, not that any doubt could arise respecting the judicious mode in which the expenditure had been made, but because in public affairs it was indispensable men should see as well as believe. Against him it was argued that the mere statement of every groschen received and expended was not sufficient; it was also necessary that the Landtag should be convinced that the expenditure had been solely for useful and desirable purposes, not permitting any favouritism or luxury to enjoy the benefit of public money.

Although the sittings of the Landtag were strictly private, one cannot be surprised at these debates having oozed out and formed the topic of gossip. Goethe was very indignant. He had been so long accustomed to an imperial sway, before which every one gave way, that the idea of his actions being controlled and questioned by a Landtag was very irritating to him. Nor, although he was obviously in the wrong in this instance, were the grand-duke and duchess inclined to side against him. Karl August himself spoke earnestly to the land marshal, urging on him the impropriety of so offending Goethe; the grand-duchess sent for Luden, who thus reports the interview: "She spoke to me with that dignified simplicity which made her so imposing, and which was imposing even to Napoleon in his anger. It would be a serious evil, she said, if our friendly relations should be disturbed by any misunderstanding. It would be the more unpleasant to me, because I fear it would much annoy the grand-duke. The Landtag is unquestionably in the right; but the Geheimrath Goethe un-

doubtedly thinks he too is in the right. Above or beyond the written laws there is still another law—*the law for poets and women.* The Landtag is assuredly convinced that the whole of the money granted has been truly employed by Goethe? You admit that? Well, then, the only question that now can arise is whether the money has been properly expended. But here one must remember the position held by the Geheimrath in relation to the world, to this country, to our court, and to the grand-duke through a long series of years: this position very naturally has influenced his mode of looking at affairs. I find it perfectly intelligible that he can well believe he has before all others the right of deciding for himself what is the best means of employing the money placed at his disposal. I do not understand these matters, and far be it from me to pretend to set any one right; my only wish is that friendly relations be preserved, and that the old Geheimrath may be spared every annoyance. How this is to be done I do not see. But the Landtag need be under no uneasiness lest this should become a precedent. *We have but one Goethe, and who knows how long we may preserve him;* a second will not perhaps be soon found again."

Is this not very charming? And can we wonder that Luden was conquered, and that in turn the whole Landtag was brought over to a sort of sullen acquiescence? While relating such characteristic anecdotes, place must be found for another, which is indeed less interesting in itself, but which circulates in Germany and England under a very absurd and very injurious form. The first time I heard it gravely stated as a fact, of which proof could be brought, the reader may imagine with what indignation I at once denied it, and insisted on the proof being produced, although proof must have been indeed overwhelming which could make me believe that Goethe had *stolen an ingot of gold.* No proof, however, came. The accusation slipped from my mind, until it was once more gravely adduced, and that too in Weimar. The requisite inquiries having been made, this story emerged as the foundation of the scandal.

The Emperor of Russia had forwarded to Döbereiner, the great chemist, a bar of platinum. It was given to Goethe, who was to examine it, and make any experiment on it he pleased, and then transmit it to Döbereiner. Goethe, whose passion for minerals is well known, and who had the "collector's mania," placed this bar of platinum among his treasures, and delighted himself with contemplating it, till at last he could

not be brought to part with it. Döbereiner, impatient, wrote to him, begging to have it sent. But no answer came. He wrote again, without success. He was, indeed, placed in a position very similar to that in which we saw Professor Büttner, who having lent Goethe his prisms and optical instruments, wrote in vain to have them returned, and was forced to send his servant with an order to bring them away. Goethe delayed and delayed, and could not bring himself to part with the platinum; and when Döbereiner, out of patience, complained to the grand-duke, Karl August laughed and said, "Leave the old donkey in peace! you'll never get it from him. I will write to the emperor for another."

To this may be added, that in the early *genialische* period Goethe carried off a hundred engravings by Albrecht Dürer from Knebel's collection, to study them at leisure at home, and these engravings Knebel never saw in his own house again. Now these cases, although coming under the category of that much abused license which men permit themselves, namely, the license of borrowing books, umbrellas, and money, are not defensible, nor will I palliate them. Let the reader pass any sentence he will upon such infractions of the rule of conscientiousness; but let us not hear such things uttered as that Goethe stole a bar of gold or platinum.

With Döbereiner, he followed all the new phenomena which chemistry was then bringing before the astonished world. He also prepared his own writings on morphology for the press; and studied Greek mythology, English literature, and Gothic art. Byron's *Manfred* he reviewed in the *Kunst und Alterthum*, and enthusiastically welcomed our great poet as the greatest product of modern times. Scott also he read with ever-increasing admiration. Homer, always studied with delight, now reassumed to him that individuality which Wolff had for a time destroyed; Schubarth's *Ideen über Homer* having brought him round once more to the belief in the existence of "the blind old man of Scio's rocky isle."[1] Painting, sculpture, architecture, geology, meteorology, anatomy, optics, Oriental literature, English literature, Calderon, and the romantic school in France—these were the subjects which by turns occupied his inexhaustible activity. "Life," he says, "resembles the Sybilline Books; its becomes dearer the less there remains of it." To one who could so worthily occupy

[1] See the little poem *Homer wider Homer*.

the last remaining years of a long life, they must indeed have been precious. As he grew older, he worked harder. He went less into society. To court he very seldom went. "I wouldn't send the picture," writes the duke to him, "because I hoped it might lure thee out, now Candlemas is over, a day when every bear and badger leaves his lair." But in lieu of his going to court, the court went to him. Once every week the grand-duchess paid him a visit, sometimes bringing with her a princely visitor, such as the late Emperor of Russia, then grand-duke, or the King of Würtemberg. He had always something new and interesting set aside for this visit, which was doubly dear to him, because he had a tender regard for the grand-duchess, and it pleased him to be able to show her a new engraving, medallion, book, poem, or some scientific novelty. Karl August came often, but not on particular days. He used to walk up into the simple study, and chat there as with a brother. One day Goethe had a Jena student paying him a visit; the student saw an elderly gentleman walk unannounced into the room, and quietly seat himself on a chair; the student continued his harangue, and when it was concluded, Goethe quietly said, "But I must introduce the gentlemen: his Royal Highness the Grand-Duke of Saxe-Weimar, Herr ——, student from Jena." Never did the student forget the embarrassment of that moment!

The first edition of *Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre* falls in this period, 1821, and as this edition is the one best known in England through Carlyle's translation, it may now be criticised, the more so, as what was afterwards *thrown into* the book (I will not say worked into it) only made it still more fragmentary and imperfect.

There are pages in the *Wanderjahre* which he alone could have written; but I cannot bring myself to regard the whole book as anything better than a collection of sketches and studies, often incomplete, and sometimes not worth completing. It is very unequal, some parts being as feeble as others are admirable. The story of *The Man of Fifty* has capital points, and the *New Melusina* is a charming fairy tale; but much of what is symbolical seems to me only fantastic; and as a composition the work is feeble, and careless even to impertinence. Not only are the various little stories "dragged in" with the transparent artifice of juvenile productions; not only are these stories for the most part tiresome and sometimes trivial, but there is one story (*Nicht zu weit*) which, beginning with con-

siderable animation, is actually left unfinished in the work, just as it lay unfinished in his portfolio. Observe it is not given as a fragment—the conclusion is promised, but never comes. This is an impertinence to the public; all the more remarkable as coming from a writer who thought so much of Art. He might have published the stories separately, as they were written separately; and if he could not work out the great scheme of the *Wanderjahre*, he might have left it a fragment, or left it unpublished.

It is easy for admirers of this work to cite very beautiful passages; and it is by no means difficult to read under its symbolical dulness any profound meanings the interpreter wishes to read there. But for my own part, greatly as I admire Goethe, and profoundly as his works affect me, I do not recognise in the *Wanderjahre* the old magic, nor can my love for the writer persuade me that it is well written, well conceived, or intelligibly executed. I quarrel with no man who finds delight in the book; but candour compels me to own that I find in it almost every fault a work can have: it is unintelligible, it is tiresome, it is fragmentary, it is dull, and it is often ill-written. When particular passages are cited for their wisdom or their beauty, one is apt to fancy that one has been unjust to a strange work; but a *re*-reading of the work as a whole soon restores the original verdict. Irving said that there was more true religion in the episode of the Three Reverences than in all the theological writings of the day. And Carlyle has on more than one occasion noticed the profound wisdom which shines through many of the pages. How can it be otherwise, when Goethe is the author? But separate passages do not make a book; and to show how this book was made, a passage from Eckermann will suffice. "When he began to remodel and finish this novel, which had previously appeared in one volume,[1] Goethe intended to expand it into two. But as the work progressed the manuscript grew beyond expectation; and as his secretary wrote widely, Goethe was deceived, and thought he had enough for three volumes, and accordingly the manuscript went in three volumes to the publishers. However, when the printing had reached a certain point, it was found that a miscalculation had been made, and that the two last volumes were too small. The publishers sent for more manuscript, and as the course of

[1] This is the volume Carlyle translated. See *German Romance*, vol. iv. It is superior to the expanded work.

the novel could not be altered, and it was impossible to write a new tale in the hurry of the moment, Goethe was really in some perplexity. Under these circumstances he sent for me, told me the state of the case, and mentioned how he thought of helping himself out of the difficulty, laying before me two large bundles of manuscripts. 'In these two parcels,' said he, 'you will find various papers hitherto unpublished, detached pieces finished and unfinished; opinions on natural science, art, literature, and life, all mingled together. Suppose you were to make up from these six or eight printed sheets to fill the gaps in my *Wanderjahre*. Strictly speaking, they have nothing to do with it, but the proceeding may be justified by the fact that mention is made of an archive in Makaria's house in which such detached pieces are preserved. Thus we shall not only get over a difficulty, but find a fitting vehicle for sending a number of interesting things into the world.' I approved of the plan, set to work at once, and completed the desired arrangement in a short time. Goethe seemed well satisfied. I had put together the whole into two principal parts; one under the title 'From Makaria's Archive,' the other under the title 'According to the Views of the Wanderer.' And as Goethe, at this time, had just finished two poems—one on 'Schiller's Skull,' and the other *Kein Wesen kann zu Nichts zerfallen*—he was desirous to bring out these also, and we added them at the close of the two divisions. But when the *Wanderjahre* came out, no one knew what to make of it. The progress of the romance was interrupted by a number of enigmatical sayings, the explanation of which could be expected from men only of special studies, such as artists, literati, men of science; this greatly annoyed all other readers, especially those of the fair sex. Then, as for the two poems, people could as little understand them as they could guess how they got into such a place. Goethe laughed at this."

No other criticism of the *Wanderjahre* is needed after such a story. Had Goethe stood in awe of the public, had he lived in England or France, where "Reviewers" exercise at least the duty of Police, he would not thus have ventured to play with his own reputation and to mystify the public.

Nor did he escape without punishment even in Germany. He had mystified the public, but the public was not pleased. His friends were not pleased. No one accepted the work with satisfaction. It remained for writers of our day to see in it a social Bible—a Sybilline Book. The first symptoms of

dissatisfaction came from his nearest friends; but their objections were of course mild, and were praise compared with the objections raised by his enemies. A certain Pustkuchen, a clergyman of Lieme, imitated Nicolai's parody of *Werther*, but in a serious spirit, bringing out a *Wanderjahre*, in which Goethe's views of life were held up to the execration of all good Christians. It had become the watchword of one party to say Goethe was no Christian; as it afterwards became the watchword of another party to say he was no patriot; and, finally, there came Menzel, who said he was not only no Christian, no Patriot, no Moralist, but also no Genius,—only a man of talent! Goethe contented himself with an epigram or so on Pustkuchen, and continued his way. To his opponents generally he said, "If they could judge me, I should not be the man I am."

Hätten sie mich beurtheilen können
So wär' ich nicht was ich bin.

And the barking of the curs, he said, which follows us as we leave the stable, proves nothing more than that we are on horseback:

Es bellt der Spitz aus unserm Stall
Und will uns stets begleiten.
Und seiner lauten Stimme Schall
Beweist nur dass wir reiten.

While a strong feeling of opposition was growing up in his own nation, a feeling which such works as the *Wanderjahre* were not likely to mitigate, his fame began to extend to Italy, England, and France. His active interest in the important productions of foreign literature, was reciprocated in the admiration expressed for him by men like Manzoni, Scott, Byron, Carlyle, Stapfer, Ampère, Soret, and others. He had written of Manzoni's *Carmagnola*, defending it against adverse criticism, with a fervour which, according to Manzoni, secured his reputation in Europe. "It is certain that I owe to Goethe's admiration all the praise I have received. I was very ill treated until he so nobly defended me, and since then I have not only seen public opinion change, but I myself have learned to look at my productions in a new light." How profound was his admiration for Byron, and how flattered Byron was by it, is well known. The poem he sent to Byron, in answer to the dedication of *Werner*, reached him just as he was setting out on the expedition to Greece.

Nor was his activity confined to reading. Oersted's magnificent discovery of electro-magnetism awakened his keenest interest. He made Döbereiner exhibit the phenomena, and shortly afterwards had Oersted to visit him. D'Alton's anatomical work on the Sloth and Megatherium found him as ready as a young reviewer to proclaim its importance to the world. He wrote also the account of his *Campaign in France;* the *Annals* of his Life; Essays on Art; smaller poems; the epigrams, *Zahme Xenien;* translated modern Greek songs; and sketched a restoration of the lost drama *Phaëton*, by Euripides.

It is evident then that there was abundant life in the old Jupiter, whose frame was still massive and erect; whose brow had scarcely a wrinkle of old age; whose head was still as free from baldness as ever; and whose large brown eyes had still that flashing splendour which distinguished them. Hufeland, the physician, who had made a special study of the human organisation with reference to its powers of vitality, says, that never did he meet with a man in whom bodily and mental organisation were so perfect as in Goethe. Not only was the prodigious strength of vitality remarkable in him, but equally so the perfect *balance* of functions. "One can truly say that his distinguishing characteristic was the harmony with which all mental faculties worked together, so that his creative Imagination was always under the control of his Reason; and the same is true of his physical faculties: no function was predominant, all worked together for the continuance of a marvellous balance. But *productivity* was the fundamental character of his bodily and mental organisation; and the former showed itself in a rich nutritive power, a rapid sanguinification and reproduction. He made much blood even as an old man."

Not only life, but the life of life, the power of loving was still preserved to him. *Quisquis amat, nulla est conditione senex*, says old Pontanus; and the Marquis de Lassay prettily makes the loss of love-dreams a sign of the last sleep:— "Hélas, quand on commence à ne plus rêver, ou plutôt à rêver moins, on est près de s'endormir pour toujours." In the seventy-fourth year of his age, Goethe had still youth enough to love. At Marienbad he met with a Fräulein von Lewezow. A passion grew up between them, which, returned on her side with almost equal vehemence, brought back to him once more the exaltation of the *Werther* period. It was thought he would marry her, and indeed he wished to

do so; but the representations of his friends, and perhaps the fear of ridicule, withheld him. He tore himself away; and the Marienbad Elegy, which he wrote in the carriage as it whirled him away, remains as a token of the passion and his suffering.

Nor does the Fräulein von Lewezow appear to have been the only one captivated by the "old man eloquent." Madame Szymanowska, according to Zelter, was "madly in love" with him; and however figurative such a phrase may be, it indicates, coming from so grave a man as Zelter, a warmth of enthusiasm one does not expect to see excited by a man of seventy-four.

On the 7th of November 1825, Goethe, who had a few weeks before prepared a Jubilee for the fiftieth anniversary of Karl August's reign, was in turn honoured by a Jubilee celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of his arrival at Weimar. "At dawn of day, when he opened the shutters of his bedroom, the first sound that met his ears was a morning song, sung by voices concealed in his garden. His first glance fell on the various tasteful gifts of neat-handed friends. At half-past eight all the carriages in the town were in motion; all persons of consideration in court and city were in pilgrimage to the poet's house. A party of musicians, and fourteen female friends, had assembled in his salon, to perform a morning ode written by Professor Riemer, and set to music by Eberwein. At nine, when Goethe was conducted from his study by a friend and his own son, the crowd in every room was so great that they were obliged to lead him unobserved by a side entrance. Scarcely was that honoured head beheld than the music began, and heightened the emotion which beamed from all eyes. The nymphs of the Ilm greeted the golden day of their faithful poet, and sang his immortality. The whole throng of auditors was deeply affected. The tones melted away in solemn silence. With modest dignity, the venerable man turned to his friends and expressed his thanks by eloquent pressure of the hands and affectionate words. Baron von Fritsch then stepped forward, and delivered the autograph letter of the duke, and the golden medal which had been secretly struck in Berlin; it bore the likeness of Karl August and Luise on one side; on the other the laurel-crowned head of the poet; the names of Karl August and Luise were engraved on the rim.

"Goethe, who expected some memorial worthy of the giver, held both for some time unopened in silent emotion. The various deputations now advanced. There were depu-

tations from Jena, Weimar, Eisenach, and from the Lodge of Freemasons. The Jena students addressed him through two deputies.

"Shortly after ten, Karl August and Luise came to offer their congratulations. They remained with him an hour alone; when the Hereditary Grand-Duke and Grand-Duchess, with their two princesses, arrived. Meanwhile the ministers of state, the chief of the courts of justice, the most distinguished persons of the court, and the deputations had collected together; the principal ladies of Weimar, among whom were the daughters and granddaughters of Wieland and Herder, assembled in an upper room. As soon as all the invited had arrived, they were conducted, two by two, into the great room in which were placed the statue of the grand-duke and Rauch's bust of Goethe, on a handsome pedestal, with a laurel crown beside it. Just as the procession reached the centre of the hall, music was heard from the galleries. The effect of this harmony in the lofty and beautiful hall, decorated with the busts and portraits, was indescribable.

"At two o'clock a banquet was prepared for more than two hundred persons in the hall of the Stadthaus. In the evening *Iphigenia* was performed at the theatre. At the end of the third act, Goethe, warned by his physician, retired; and now a beautiful conclusion to this extraordinary day awaited him. A serenade was performed in front of his house by the orchestral band of the Grand Ducal Chapel. Hummel had with great feeling and taste combined the triumphal March in Titus, Gluck's overture to *Iphigenia*, and a masterly Adagio of his own, with an echo for horns. The opening expressed the triumphant glories of the day, while the melting tones of the Adagio seemed to invite to the tranquillity which follows the accomplishment of work.

"All the houses in the *Frauenplan*, where Goethe lived, were illuminated. A numerous company repaired to his house, where an elegant entertainment awaited them, and Goethe remained one hour with his guests before retiring for the night. This day was likewise celebrated at Leipsic and Frankfurt. In Frankfurt the Consul-General Bethmann marked the day by placing in his museum a statue of Goethe, as large as life, which Rauch had executed for him."[1]

[1] These details and many others are given in *Goethe's Goldener Jubeltag*. Weimar: 1826. I have abridged the abridgment given by Mrs. Austin, *Goethe and his Contemporaries*, vol. iii.

Reading this, and such anecdotes as the one formerly narrated about the Landtag, how can we wonder if the man, who was treated so like a god, adopted something of the imperiousness and assumption of the part thus thrust upon him?

In the following year Germany showed her gratitude to him by a privilege which in itself is the severest sarcasm on German nationality—the privilege, namely, of a protection of his copyright. He announced a complete edition of his works, and the *Bundestag* undertook to secure him from piracy in German cities! Until that time his works had enriched booksellers; but this tardy privilege secured an inheritance for his children.

In the way of honours, he was greatly flattered by the letter which Walter Scott sent to him, in expression of an old admiration; and on the 28th of August 1827, Karl August came into his study accompanied by the King of Bavaria, who brought with him the Order of the Grand Cross as a homage. In strict etiquette a subject was not allowed to accept such an Order without his own sovereign granting permission, and Goethe, ever punctilious, turned to the grand-duke, saying: "If my gracious sovereign permits." Upon which the duke called out: "*Du alter Kerl! mache doch kein dummes Zeug!* Come, old fellow, no nonsense."

On the 6th January 1827, the Frau von Stein died, in her eighty-fifth year.

And now the good old duke was to be taken from him whom he affectionately styled his *Waffenbruder*—his brother in arms. On the 14th of June 1828, he was no more. Humboldt's letter to Goethe contains so interesting an account of the duke's last hours, that some sentences may here be cited: "As if this great brightness, as with the lofty snow-capped Alps, were the forerunner of departing light, never have I seen the great humane prince more animated, more intelligent, more mild, more sympathising with the further development of the people than in the last days when we had him here. I frequently said to my friends, anxiously and full of misgivings, that this animation, this mysterious clearness of intellect, combined with so much bodily weakness, was to me a fearful phenomenon. He himself evidently vacillated between hope of recovery, and expectation of the great catastrophe. In Potsdam I sat many hours with him. He drank and slept alternately, then drank again, then rose to write to his consort, and then slept again. He was cheerful, but much exhausted.

In the intervals he overpowered me with the most difficult questions upon physics, astronomy, meteorology, and geology; upon the atmosphere of the moon; upon the coloured double stars; upon the influence of the spots in the sun upon the temperature; upon the appearance of organised forms in the primitive world; and upon the internal warmth of the earth. He slept at intervals during his discourse and mine, was often restless, and then said, kindly excusing his apparent inattention, 'You see, Humboldt, it is all over with me!' Suddenly he began to talk desultorily upon religious matters. He regretted the increase of pietism, and the connection of this species of fanaticism with a tendency towards political absolutism, and the suppression of all free mental action. 'Then,' he exclaimed, 'there are false-hearted fellows, who think that by means of pietism they can make themselves agreeable to princes, and obtain places and ribbons. They have smuggled themselves in with a poetical predilection for the middle ages.' His anger soon abated, and he said that he had found much consolation in the Christian religion. 'It is a humane doctrine,' said he, 'but has been distorted from the beginning. The first Christians were the free thinkers among the ultras.'"

Knowing Goethe's love for the duke, his friends entertained great fears that the shock of this event would be terrible. He was seated at dinner when the news arrived. It was whispered from one to the other. At length it was gently broken to him. They were breathless with suspense. But his face remained quite calm—a calmness which betrayed him. "Ah! this is very sad," he sighed; "let us change the subject." He might banish the subject from conversation, he could not banish it from his thoughts. It affected him deeply; all the more so, because he did not give expression to his grief. "*Nun ist alles vorbei!* Nothing now remains," he said. When Eckermann came in the evening, he found him utterly prostrate.[1]

Retiring to the pleasant scenes of Dornburg, the old man

[1] The calmness with which he received the announcement recalls those grand scenes in Marston's *Malcontent* and Ford's *Broken Heart*, where the subordination of emotion to the continuance of offices of politeness rises into sublimity. Herodotus has touched the same chord in his narrative of the terrific story of Thyestes (*Clio*, 119). Harpagus on discovering that he has feasted on his own children in the banquet set before him by Thyestes remains quite calm. Shakspeare has expressed the true philosophy of the matter in his usual pregnant language:

"Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak
Whispers the o'erfraught heart, and bids it break."

strove in work and in contemplation of nature to call away his thoughts from his painful loss. The next year—1829—he finished the *Wanderjahre* in the form it now assumes, worked at the Second Part of *Faust*, and in conjunction with a young Frenchman, Soret, who was occupied translating the *Metamorphoses of Plants*, revised his scientific papers.

In February 1830, the death of the grand-duchess once more overshadowed the evening of his life. These clouds gathering so fast are significant warnings of the Night which hurries on for him—"the night in which no man can work!"

Before narrating the last days of his long career, it will be necessary to say something of the *Second Part of Faust*, which was not indeed finally completed until the 20th July 1831, but which may be noticed here to avoid interruption of the closing scene.

CHAPTER VII

THE SECOND PART OF FAUST

In the presence of this poem, I feel more embarrassment than with any other of Goethe's works. Difficult as the task has been in each instance to convey an adequate idea of the work before me, and to give expression to the critical opinions I had formed respecting it, that difficulty becomes complicated in the present instance by the consciousness of the opposition existing between a certain class of admirers and myself, a class not of ignorant, prejudiced, but of enlightened and ingenious intellects. These admirers speak of the *Second Part of Faust* as a work of transcendent merit, surpassing all that Goethe has written, a storehouse of profound and mystic philosophy, a miracle of execution. Others again, and these among Goethe's most loving students, declare it to be of mediocre interest, very far inferior to the *First Part*, and both in conception and execution an elaborate mistake. And of these I am one. I have tried to understand the work; tried to place myself at the right point of view for perfect enjoyment; but repeated trials, instead of clearing up obscurities and deepening enjoyment, as with the other works, have more and more confirmed my first impressions. Now although it needs but little experience to suggest that the fault may be wholly mine, "the most legible hand," as Goethe says, "being