

the theory of colours, they are in a good way, and one of their best men comes near the truth. He says that colours are inherent in the things themselves; for as there is in nature an acidulating principle, so also is there a colouring principle. This view, I admit, does not explain the phenomena; but it places the object within the sphere of nature, and frees it from the load of mathematics."

The Berlin papers were brought in, and Goethe sat down to read them. He handed one of them to me, and I found in the theatrical intelligence that at the opera house and the theatre royal they gave just as bad pieces as they gave here. "How should it be otherwise?" said Goethe. "There is no doubt that with the help of good English, French, and Spanish pieces, a repertoire sufficient to furnish a good piece every evening can be formed. But what need to see good pieces continually does a nation feel? When Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides lived, it was different. Then there was mind enough to desire only what was really greatest and best. But in our miserable times, where is felt a need for the best? where are the organs to appreciate it?"

"And then," continued Goethe, "people *will* have something new. In Berlin or Paris, the public is always the same. New pieces are written and brought out in Paris, and you must endure five or six thoroughly bad ones before you are compensated by a single good one. The only expedient to keep up a German theatre at the present time, is that of 'starring' (*Gastrollen*). If I had the direction of the theatre now, the whole winter should be provided with excellent 'stars.' Thus, not only would all the good pieces be represented once more, but the interest of the audience would be led more from the pieces to the acting; a power of comparing and judging would be acquired; the public would gain in penetration, and the superior acting of a distinguished star would maintain our own actors in a state of emulation. Keep on with your starring, and you will be astonished at the benefit both to theatre and to public. I foresee a time when a clever man who understands the matter will take four theatres at once, and provide them with stars by turns. And I am sure he will keep his ground better than if he had only one."

Wednesday, December 27, 1826.

I had been sedulously reflecting at home, on the phenomenon of the blue and yellow shadows; and, although this long

remained a riddle to me, a light gleamed upon me after constant meditation, and I was gradually convinced I understood the phenomenon.

To-day at dinner, I told Goethe I had solved the riddle. "That is saying a great deal," said Goethe; "you shall show me after dinner." "I would rather write my solution down," returned I, "for I want the right words for a verbal explanation." "You may write it down afterwards, but to-day you shall solve the problem before my eyes, and demonstrate it with your own mouth, that I may see whether you are in the right way."

After dinner, when it was still quite light, Goethe said to me, "Can you make the experiment now?" "No," said I. "Why not?" asked Goethe. "It is too light," I replied. "We must have a little dusk, in order that the candle may throw a decided shade, but not so much that daylight cannot fall upon this shadow." "Hm!" said Goethe, "that is not wrong."

The dusk at last set in. Goethe lighted the wax taper, and gave me a sheet of white paper and a stick. I placed the taper on the table near the window, laid the sheet of paper near it; and, when I placed the stick in the middle of the paper, between daylight and candle-light, the phenomenon was there in all its beauty. The shadow towards the candle was a decided yellow, and the one towards the window a perfect blue.

"Now," said Goethe, "how is the blue shadow produced?" "Before I explain this," said I, "I will lay down the fundamental law, from which I deduce both phenomena. Light and darkness are not colours; but they are the two extremes between which, and by the modification of which, all colours are produced. Next to the extremes of light and darkness, arise the two colours yellow and blue. The yellow borders on light, inasmuch as it is produced by seeing light through a dimmed transparency; the blue borders on darkness, inasmuch as it is produced by seeing darkness through an illuminated transparency. If we now come to our phenomena," I continued, "we see that the stick, through the strength of the taper-light, casts a decided shadow. This shadow would appear as so much black darkness if I closed the shutters and shut out the light of day; but here the daylight enters freely by the window, and forms an illuminated medium, through which I see the darkness of the shadow; and thus, in conformity with our law, the blue colour is produced."

Goethe laughed. "Well, that would be the blue, would it?"

said he; "but how do you explain the yellow shadow?" "From the law of the dimmed light," I replied. "The burning taper throws upon the white paper a light which has already a slightly yellowish tinge. The daylight, however, is strong enough to throw a weak shadow; which, as far as it extends, dims the light—and thus, in conformity with our law, the yellow colour is produced. If I lessen the dimness by bringing the shadow as nearly as possible to the candle, a pure clear yellow is produced; but if I increase the dimness by removing the shadow as far as possible from the candle, the yellow is heightened to a reddish yellow, or even to a red."

Goethe again laughed, and looked very mysterious. "Now," said I, "am I right?" "You have observed your phenomenon well, and have described it very prettily," replied Goethe, "but you have not explained it. Your explanation is ingenious, but it is not the right one."

"Help me, then," said I, "and solve the riddle, for I am extremely impatient." "You shall learn the solution," replied Goethe, "but not to-day and not in this manner. I will next show you another phenomenon, which will bring the law plainly before your eyes. You are near the mark, and cannot proceed farther in this direction. When you have once comprehended the new law, you will be transplanted into quite another region. Come some day and dine with me an hour earlier, when the sky is clear; and I will show you a plainer phenomenon, by which you will at once comprehend the law at the foundation of this one. I am very glad," he continued, "that you take this interest in colours; it will prove a source of infinite delight."

When I left Goethe in the evening, I could not get the thought of the phenomenon out of my head, and it occupied my very dreams; but even thus I did not gain a clearer view, and did not advance one step nearer towards the solution of the enigma.

"I am going on, though slowly, with my papers on Natural Science," said Goethe to me lately; "not because I think that I can materially advance science, but on account of the many pleasant associations I maintain by it. Of all occupations, that with nature is the most innocent. As for any connection, or correspondence in æsthetical matters, that is not to be thought of. They now want to know what town on the Rhine is meant in my *Hermann and Dorothea*, as if it were not better to choose according to one's fancy. They want truth—they want actuality; and thus poetry is destroyed."

1827

Wednesday, January 3, 1827.

AT dinner, we talked over Canning's excellent speech for Portugal.¹ "Some people," said Goethe, "call this speech coarse; but these people know not what they want—they have a morbid desire to be grumblers against all greatness. It is no opposition, it is mere grumbling; they must have something great, that they may hate it. When Napoleon was alive they hated him, and he served as a good conduit-pipe. When it was all over with him, they grumbled at the Holy Alliance, and yet nothing greater or more beneficial for mankind was ever devised. Now it is Canning's turn. His speech for Portugal is the result of a grand consciousness. He thoroughly feels his power and the dignity of his position; and he is right to speak as he feels. This the Sansculottes cannot understand; and what to us seems sublime, seems to them coarse. The grand disturbs them; they are not so constituted as to respect it, and cannot endure it."

Thursday evening, January 4, 1827.

Goethe praised highly the poems of Victor Hugo.

"He is," said he, "a man of decided talent, on whom German literature has had an influence. His poetic youth has unfortunately been disturbed by the pedantry of the classic school; but now he has the *Globe* on his side, and is thus sure of his game. I am inclined to compare him with Manzoni. He has much objectivity, and seems to me quite as important as MM. De Lamartine and De la Vigne. On closely observing him, I see the source of this and other fresh talent of the same sort. They all come from Chateaubriand, who has really a distinguished rhetorico-poetical talent. That you may see how Victor Hugo writes, only read this poem upon Napoleon—*Les Deux Isles*."

Goethe gave me the book, and went to the stove. I read the poem. "Has he not excellent images," said Goethe, "and has not he managed his subject with great freedom?" He

¹ House of Commons, December 12, 1826; against the "absolutist" invasion organized on Spanish soil.

came back to me. "Only look at this passage—how fine it is!" He read the passage about the storm-cloud, from which the lightning darts upward and strikes the hero. "That is fine; for the image is correct: as you will find in the mountains, where we often have the storm beneath us, and where the lightning darts upwards."

"I praise this in the French," said I, "that their poetry never deserts the firm ground of reality. We can translate their poems into prose without losing anything essential."

"That," said Goethe, "is because the French poets have knowledge, while our German simpletons think they would lose their talent if they laboured for knowledge; although, in fact, all talent must derive its nutriment from knowledge, and thus only is enabled to use its strength. But let them pass; we cannot help them, and real talent soon finds its way. The many young poets who are now carrying on their trade have no real talent; they only show an impotence which has been excited into productiveness by the high state of German literature."

"That the French," continued Goethe, "have passed from their pedantry into a freer manner is not surprising. Even before the revolution, Diderot and minds like his sought to break open this path. The revolution itself, and the reign of Napoleon, have been favourable to the cause; for if the years of war allowed no real poetical interest to spring up, and were consequently for the moment unfavourable to the Muses, yet there were then formed a multitude of free intellects who now in times of peace attain reflection, and come forward as talents of importance."

I asked Goethe whether the classical party had been opposed to the excellent Béranger. "The genre of Béranger's poetry," said Goethe, "is old and traditional, and people were accustomed to it. However, he has been in many respects freer than his predecessors, and has therefore been attacked by the pedantic party."

The conversation turned upon painting, and on the mischief of the antiquity-worshipping school. "You do not pretend to be a connoisseur," said Goethe; "but I will show you a picture in which, though it has been painted by one of the best living German artists, you will at the first glance be struck by the most glaring offences against the primary laws of art. You will see that details are nicely done, but you will be dissatisfied with the whole and will not know what to make of it: and this not because the painter has not sufficient talent; but because

his mind, which should have directed his talent, is darkened, like that of all the other bigots to antiquity—so that he ignores the perfect masters, and goes back for patterns to their imperfect predecessors.

“Raphael and his contemporaries broke through a limited mannerism, to nature and freedom. And now our artists, instead of being thankful, using these advantages, and proceeding on the good way, return to the state of limitation. This is too bad, and it is hard to understand such darkening of the intellect. And, since in this course they find no support in art itself, they seek one from religion and faction—without these two they could not sustain themselves in their weakness.

“There is,” continued Goethe, “through all art a filiation. If you see a great master, you will always find that he used what was good in his predecessors, and that it was this made him great. Men like Raphael do not spring out of the ground. They took root in the antique and the best which had been done before them. Had they not used the advantages of their time, there would be little to say about them.”

The conversation now turned upon old German poetry: I mentioned Flemming. “Flemming,” said Goethe, “is a very fair talent; a little prosaic and citizen-like, and of no practical use nowadays. It is strange,” he continued, “that with all I have done, there is not one of my poems that would suit the Lutheran hymn-book.” I laughed and assented, while I said to myself that in this odd expression there was more than could be seen at the first glance.

Sunday, January 14, 1827.

I found a musical party at Goethe's. The performers were the Eberwein family and some members of the orchestra. Among the few hearers were General Superintendent Röhr, Hofrath Vogel, and some ladies. Goethe had wished to hear a quartet by a celebrated young composer, and this was played first. Karl Eberwein, a boy twelve years old, played the piano to Goethe's great satisfaction, and indeed admirably—so that the quartet was in every respect well performed.

“It is a strange state,” said Goethe, “to which the great improvements in the technical and mechanical part of the art have brought our newest composers. Their productions are no longer music; they go beyond the level of human feelings, and no response can be given them from the mind and heart. How do *you* feel? I hear with my ears only.”

I replied that I fared no better.

“Yet the Allegro,” said he, “had character; that ceaseless whirling and twirling brought before my mind the witches’ dance on the Blocksberg, and thus I had a picture to illustrate this odd music.”

After a pause, during which the party discoursed and took refreshments, Goethe asked Madame Eberwein to sing some songs. She sang the beautiful song, *Um Mitternacht*, with Zelter’s music, which made the deepest impression.

“That song,” said Goethe, “remains beautiful, however often it is heard! There is something eternal, indestructible, in the melody!”

The *Erlkönig* obtained great applause; and the aria, “Ich hab’s gesagt der guten Mutter,” made everyone remark that the music so happily fitted the words that it could not even be conceived otherwise. Goethe himself was in the highest degree pleased.

By way of conclusion to this pleasant evening, Madame Eberwein, at Goethe’s request, sang some songs from his *Divan*, with her husband’s music. The passage, “Jussuf’s Reize möcht’ ich borgen,” pleased Goethe especially. “Eberwein,” he said, “sometimes surpasses himself.” He then asked for the song, “Ach um deine feuchten Schwingen,” which was also of a kind to excite the deepest emotions.

After the party had left, I remained some moments alone with Goethe. “I have,” said he, “this evening made the remark that these songs in the *Divan* have no further connection with me. Both the Oriental and the impassioned elements have ceased to live in me. I have left them behind, like a cast-off snake-skin on my path. The song, *Um Mitternacht*, on the contrary, has not lost its connection with me; it is a living part of me, and goes on living with me still.

“Often, my own productions seem wholly strange to me. To-day, I read a passage in French, and thought as I read: ‘This man speaks cleverly enough—you would not have said it otherwise’: when I look at it closely, I find it is a passage translated from my own writings!”

Monday evening, January 15, 1827.

After the completion of the *Helena*, Goethe had employed himself last summer with the continuation of the *Wanderjahre*. He often talked to me about the progress of this work.

“The better to use the materials I possess,” said he to me one day, “I have taken the first part entirely to pieces; and I

intend, by mingling the old with the new, to make two parts. I have ordered everything that is printed to be copied entire. The places where I have new matter to introduce are marked; and, when my secretary comes to such a mark, I dictate what is wanting, and thus compel myself never to let my work stop."

Another day he said to me, "All the printed part of the *Wanderjahre* is now completely copied. The places where I am to introduce new matter are filled with blue paper, so that I have always before my eyes what is yet to be done. As I go on at present, the blue spots gradually vanish, to my great delight."

Some weeks ago, I had heard from his secretary that he was at work on a new *novel*. I therefore abstained from evening visits, and satisfied myself with seeing him once a week at dinner. The novel had now been finished for some time, and this evening he showed me the first sheets. I read as far as the important passage where all stand round the dead tiger, and the messenger brings the intelligence that the lion has laid himself in the sun by the ruins.

The going out to hunt, the old ruins of the castle, the fair, the way through the fields to the ruins—were all distinctly painted.

"Your excellency," said I, "must have worked after a very defined plan."

"Yes, indeed," replied Goethe; "I was going to treat the subject thirty years ago, and have carried it in my head ever since. The work went on oddly enough. At that time, immediately after *Hermann and Dorothea*, I meant to treat it in epic form and in hexameters, and had drawn up a complete outline with this view. But when I took up the subject again, not being able to find my old outline, I was obliged to make a new one suitable to the altered form I intended to give the subject. Now my work is ended, the old outline is again found; and I am glad I did not have it earlier, for it would only have confused me. The action and the progress of development were indeed unaltered, but the details were entirely different; it would not have been applicable to this prose form."

"That is a beautiful situation," said I, "where Honorio, opposite to the princess, stands over the dead tiger; when the lamenting woman with her boy comes up, and when the prince too with his retinue of huntsmen hastens to join this singular group; it would make an excellent picture, and I should like to see it painted."

“Yes,” said Goethe, “that would be a fine picture. Yet perhaps,” continued he, after some reflection, “the subject is almost too rich, and the figures are too many; so that it would be very difficult for the artist to group them, and to distribute the light and shade. That earlier moment, where Honorio kneels on the tiger, and the princess is opposite to him on horseback, I have imagined as a picture, and that might be done.”

I felt that Goethe was right, and added that this moment contained in fact the gist of the whole situation. I also remarked that this novel had a character quite distinct from those of the *Wanderjahre*, inasmuch as everything represented the external world—everything was real.

“True,” said Goethe, “you will find in it scarcely anything of the inward world, and in my other things there is almost too much.”

“I am now curious to learn,” said I, “how the lion will be conquered; I almost guess that this will take place in quite a different manner, but *how* I cannot conceive.” “It would not be right for you to guess it,” said Goethe, “and I will not reveal the secret to-day. On Thursday evening I will give you the conclusion. Till then, the lion shall lie in the sun.”

I turned the conversation to the second part of *Faust*; especially the classical Walpurgis Night, which existed as yet only as a sketch, and which Goethe had told me he meant to print in that form. I had ventured to advise him not to do so; for if it were once printed it would be always left in this unfinished state. Goethe must have thought that over in the meantime, for he now told me that he had resolved not to print the sketch.

“I am very glad of it,” said I; “for now I shall hope to see you complete it.”

“It might be done in three months,” said he; “but when am I to get time for it? The day has too many claims on me; it is difficult to isolate myself sufficiently. This morning, the hereditary Grand Duke was with me; to-morrow at noon the Grand Duchess proposes visiting me. I must prize such visits as a high favour; they embellish my life, but they occupy my mind. I am obliged to think what I have new to offer to such dignified personages, and how I can worthily entertain them.”

“And yet,” said I, “you finished *Helena* last winter when you were no less disturbed than now.”

“Why,” he replied, “one goes on, and must go on; but it is difficult.”

“’Tis well,” said I, “that your outline is so complete.”

“The outline is indeed complete,” said Goethe; “but the most difficult part is yet to be done; and, in the execution of parts, everything depends too much on luck. The classic *Walpurgis Night* must be written in rhyme, and yet the whole must have an antique character. It is not easy to find a suitable sort of verse;—and then the dialogue!”

“Is not that also in the plan?” said I.

“The *what* is there,” replied Goethe, “but not the *how*. Then, only think what is to be said on that mad night! Faust’s speech to Proserpine, when he would move her to give him Helena—what a speech should that be, when Proserpine herself is moved to tears! All this is not easy to do, and depends much on good luck; nay, almost entirely on the mood and strength at the moment.”

Wednesday, January 17, 1827.

Lately, during Goethe’s occasional indisposition, we had dined in his work-room, which looks out on the garden. To-day, the cloth was again laid in what is called the Urbino-chamber; this I took as a good omen. When I entered, I found Goethe and his son: both welcomed me in their naïve, affectionate manner; Goethe himself in his happiest mood.

Through the open door of the next room, I saw Chancellor von Müller stooping over a large engraving; he soon came in to us. Frau von Goethe was still absent. The engraving was talked about; and Goethe said that it was a work of the celebrated Parisian Gérard, who had lately sent it to him as a present. “Go you at once,” added he, “and take a peep before the soup comes in.”

I was delighted both with the sight of the admirable work and with the inscription of the artist dedicating it to Goethe. I could not look long; Frau von Goethe came in, and I hastened back to my place.

“Is not that great?” said Goethe. “You may study it days and weeks before you can find out all its rich thoughts and perfections.”

We were very cheerful at table. The Chancellor produced a letter written by an important man at Paris, who had held a difficult post as ambassador here in the time of the French occupation and had from that period kept up a friendly communication with Weimar. He mentioned the Grand Duke and Goethe, and congratulated Weimar for being able to maintain so intimate an alliance between genius and the highest power.

Frau von Goethe teased young Goethe about certain purchases, to which he would not agree.

“We must not spoil fair ladies too much,” said Goethe; “they are so ready to break all bounds. Even at Elba, Napoleon received milliners’ bills, which he had to pay; yet, in such matters, he would as soon do too little as too much. One day, at the Tuileries, in his presence, a *marchand de modes* offered some valuable goods to his consort. As Napoleon showed no disposition to buy, the man gave him to understand that he was doing but little in this way for his wife. Napoleon did not answer a word, but gave the man such a look that he packed up his things at once and never showed his face again.”

“Did he do this when consul?” asked Frau von Goethe.

“Probably when emperor,” replied Goethe, “for otherwise his look would not have been so formidable. I cannot but laugh at the man, pierced through by the glance, who saw himself already beheaded or shot.”

“I wish,” said young Goethe, “that I had good pictures or engravings of all Napoleon’s deeds, to decorate a large room.”

“The room must be very large,” said Goethe; “and even then it would not hold the pictures, so great are the deeds.”

The Chancellor turned the conversation on Luden’s *History of the Germans*; and I had reason to admire the dexterity and penetration which young Goethe displayed in deducing everything the reviewers had found to blame in the book from the time when it was written and the national views and feelings that had animated the author. We arrived at the result that the wars of Napoleon first explained to us those of Cæsar. “Previously,” said Goethe, “Cæsar’s book was really not much more than an exercise for classical schools.”

From the old German time, the conversation turned upon the Gothic. We spoke of a bookcase that had a Gothic character; and from this were led to discuss the late fashion of arranging entire apartments in the old German and Gothic style, and thus living under the influences of a bygone time.

“In a house,” said Goethe, “where there are so many rooms that some are entered only three or four times a year, such a fancy may pass; and I think it a pretty notion of Madame Pankoucke at Paris that she has a Chinese apartment. But I cannot praise the man who fits out the rooms in which he lives with these strange old-fashioned objects. It is a sort of masquerade; which can in the long run do no good in any

respect, but must on the contrary have an unfavourable influence on the man adopting it. Such a fashion is in contradiction to the age in which we live, and will only confirm the empty and hollow way of thinking and feeling in which it originates. It is well enough, on a merry winter's evening, to go to a masquerade as a Turk; but what should we think of a man who wore such a mask all the year round? That he was either crazy, or in a fair way to become so before long."

As the reproof did not even lightly touch any of us, we received the truth with the pleasantest feelings.

Goethe rallied me for having, last Monday evening, sacrificed the theatre to him. "He has now been here three years," said he, turning to the others, "and this is the first evening that he has given up the theatre for my sake. I ought to think a great deal of it. I had invited him, and he had promised to come; yet I doubted whether he would keep his word, especially as he was not here when it struck half-past six. Indeed, I should have rejoiced if he had not come; for then I could have said, 'This is a crazy fellow, who loves the theatre better than his dearest friends, and whom nothing can turn aside from his obstinate partiality.' But did I not make it up to you? have I not shown you fine things?"—alluding to the new novel.

We talked of Schiller's *Fiesco*, acted last Saturday. "I saw it for the first time," said I, "and have been thinking whether those extremely rough scenes could not be softened; but I find very little could be done without spoiling the character of the whole."

"You are right—it cannot be done," replied Goethe. "Schiller often talked with me on the matter; for he himself could not endure his first plays, and would never allow them to be acted while we had the direction of the theatre. At last we were in want of pieces, and would willingly have had those three powerful firstlings for our repertoire. But we found it impossible; all the parts were too closely interwoven one with another, so that Schiller found himself constrained to give it up and leave the pieces just as they were."

"'Tis a pity," said I; "for, notwithstanding all their roughness, I love them a thousand times as well as the weak, forced, and unnatural pieces of some of the best of our later tragic poets. A grand intellect and character is felt in everything of Schiller's."

"Yes," said Goethe; "Schiller might do what he would, he could not make anything that would not come out far greater

than the best things of these later people. Even when he cut his nails, he showed he was greater than these gentlemen.

“But I have known persons who could never be pleased with those first dramas of Schiller. One summer, at a bathing-place, I was walking through a very secluded narrow path which led to a mill. There Prince —— met me; and, as at the same moment some mules laden with meal-sacks came up to us, we were obliged to get out of the way and enter a small house. Here, in a narrow room, we fell into deep discussion about things divine and human; we came to Schiller’s *Robbers*, and the prince expressed himself thus: ‘If I had been the Deity on the point of creating the world, and had foreseen that Schiller’s *Robbers* would be written in it, I would have left the world uncreated.’ What do you say to that? That is a considerable dislike, scarcely comprehensible.”

“There is nothing of this dislike,” I observed, “in our young people, especially our students. The most excellent and matured pieces by Schiller and others may be performed, and we shall see but few young people and students in the theatre; but if Schiller’s *Robbers* or Schiller’s *Fiesco* is given, the house is almost filled by students alone.”

“So it was,” said Goethe, “fifty years ago, and so it will probably be fifty years hence. Let us not imagine that the world will so much advance in culture and good taste that young people will pass over the ruder epoch. What a young man has written is always best enjoyed by young people. Even if the world progresses generally, youth will always begin at the beginning, and the epochs of the world’s cultivation will be repeated in the individual. This has ceased to irritate me, and long ago I made a verse in this fashion:

Still let the bonfire blaze away,
Let pleasure never know decay;
Old brooms to stumps are always worn,
And youngsters every day are born.

“I need only look out of the window to see, in the brooms that sweep the street and the children who run about, a visible symbol of the world: always wearing out and always becoming young again. Children’s games and the diversions of youth are preserved from century to century; for, absurd as these may appear to a more mature age, children are always children, and are at all times alike. Hence we ought not to put down the midsummer bonfires, or spoil the pleasure which the little dears take in them.”

We younger people went into the upper room, while the Chancellor remained with Goethe.

Thursday evening, January 18, 1827.

Goethe had promised me the rest of the novel this evening. I went at half-past six, and found him alone in his comfortable work-room. I sat down with him at table; and, after we had talked over the events of the day, Goethe arose and gave me the last sheets. I began to read, while Goethe walked up and down the room and occasionally stood at the stove.

The sheets of the last evening had ended where the lion is lying in the sun outside the wall of the old ruin, at the foot of an aged beech, and preparations are made to subdue him. The prince is going to send the hunters after him; but the stranger begs him to spare his lion, being confident that he can bring him back into his cage by milder means. "This child," said he, "will do it by pleasant words and the sweet tones of his flute." The prince consents, and, after he has taken precautions, rides back into the town with his men. Honorio, with a number of hunters, occupies the defile; that, in case the lion come down, he may scare him back by kindling a fire. The mother and the child, led by the warder of the castle, ascend the ruin, on the other side of which the lion is lying by the outer wall.

The design is to lure the mighty animal into the spacious castle-yard. The mother and the warder conceal themselves above in the half-ruined hall, while the child goes alone after the lion through the dark opening in the wall of the courtyard. An anxious pause arises. They do not know what has become of the child—his flute gives no sound. The warder reproaches himself for not going also, but the mother is calm.

At last the sounds of the flute are again heard. They approach. The child returns to the castle-yard by the opening in the wall; and the lion, now docile, follows him with heavy step. They go once round the yard. Then the child sits down in a sunny spot; while the lion settles peacefully beside him, and lays one heavy paw in his lap. A thorn has entered it; the child draws it out, and, taking his silk kerchief from his neck, binds the paw.

The mother and the warder, who have witnessed the whole scene from the hall above, are transported with delight. The lion is tamed and in safety; and, as the child, to soothe the monster, alternates with the sounds of his flute his charming

pious songs, he concludes the whole novel by singing the following verses:

Holy angels thus take heed
Of the good and docile child,
Aiding ev'ry worthy deed,
Checking ev'ry impulse wild.
Pious thoughts and melody
Both together work for good,
Luring to the infant's knee
E'en the tyrant of the wood.¹

I had not read without emotion the concluding incident. Still I did not know what to say. I was astonished but not satisfied. It seemed to me that the conclusion was too simple,² too ideal, too lyrical; and that at least some of the other figures should have reappeared, and, by winding up the whole, have given more breadth to the termination. Goethe observed that I had a doubt in my mind, and endeavoured to set me right. Said he, "If I had again brought in some of the other figures at the end, the conclusion would have been prosaic. What could they do and say, when everything is done already? The prince and his men have ridden into the town, where his assistance is needed. Honorio, as soon as he learns that the lion is secured, will follow with his hunters; and the man will soon come from the town with his iron cage and put the lion into it. All these things are foreseen, and therefore should not be detailed. If they were, we should become prosaic. It was necessary that the conclusion should be ideal, lyrical; for, after the pathetic speech of the man, which in itself is poetical prose, a further elevation is required, and I was obliged to have recourse to lyrical poetry—even to a song.

"As a similitude for this novel," continued Goethe, "imagine

¹ Those who know the difficulty of the original will not be too severe on the above translation. The words as they stand in Cotta's editions of Goethe are as follows:

Und so geht mit guten Kindern
Sel'ger Engel gern zu Rath,
Böses Willen zu verhindern,
Zu befördern schöne That.
So beschwören fest zu bannen
Lieben Sohn ans zarte Knie
Ihn des Waldes Hochtyrannen
Frommer Sinn und Melodie.

Unless the most forced construction be adopted, these lines seem to me quite inexplicable. But in the passage as quoted by Eckermann, "liebem" stands in the place of "lieben"; and this reading, which I suspect to be the right one, gives a sense to which my version approximates.—J. O.

² In the sense of a group being *simple*. The German word is "einsam" (solitary).—J. O.

a green plant shooting up from its root, thrusting forth strong green leaves from the sides of its sturdy stem, and at last terminating in a flower. The flower is unexpected and startling, but come it must—nay, the whole foliage has existed only for the sake of that flower, and would be worthless without it.

“The purpose of this novel was to show how the unmanageable and the invincible is often better restrained by love and pious feeling than by force. And this beautiful aim, set forth by the child and the lion, charmed me on to the completion of the work. This is the ideal—this is the flower. The green foliage of the extremely real introduction is only there for the sake of this ideal, and only worth anything on account of it. For what is the real in itself? We take delight in it when it is represented with truth—nay, it may give us a clearer knowledge of certain things; but the proper gain to our higher nature lies alone in the ideal, which proceeds from the heart of the poet.”

[Eckermann signified approval.]

“I am glad,” said Goethe, “that you are satisfied with it; and I am also glad on my own account, that I have got rid of a subject carried about with me for thirty years. Schiller and Humboldt, to whom I formerly communicated my plan, dissuaded me from going on with it, because they could see nothing in it and because the poet alone knows what charms he is capable of giving to his subject. Never ask anybody, if you mean to write anything. If Schiller had asked me about his *Wallenstein* before he had written it, I should surely have advised him against it; for I could never have dreamed that from such a subject so excellent a drama could be made. Schiller was opposed to that treatment of my subject in hexameters to which I was inclined immediately after my *Hermann and Dorothea*, and advised Ottava Rima. You see, however, that I have succeeded, but with prose; for much depended on an accurate description of the locality, and in this I should have been constrained by a verse of the sort recommended. Besides the very real character at the beginning, and the very ideal character at the conclusion of the novel, tell best in prose; while the little songs have a pretty effect, which could not be produced either by hexameters or by Ottava Rima.”

The single tales and novels of the *Wanderjahre* were talked of; and it was observed that each was distinguished from the others in character and tone. “The reason is,” said Goethe, “I went to work like a painter, who, with certain subjects, shuns

certain colours, and makes others predominate. Thus, for a morning landscape, he puts a great deal of blue on his palette, and but little yellow. But, if he is to paint an evening scene, he takes a great deal of yellow, and almost omits the blue. I proceeded in the same way with my different literary productions."

I then, especially with reference to this last novel, admired the detail of scenery.

"I have never observed Nature with a view to poetical production," said Goethe; "but, because my early drawing of landscapes, and my later studies in natural science, led me to a constant close observation, I have gradually learned Nature by heart to the minutest details—so that, when I need anything as a poet, it is at my command; and I cannot easily sin against truth. Schiller had not this observation of Nature. The localities of Switzerland which he used in *William Tell* were all related to him by me; but he had such a wonderful mind that even on hearsay he could make something that possessed reality.

"Schiller's proper productive talent lay in the ideal; and it may be said he has not his equal in German or any other literature. He has almost everything Lord Byron has; but Lord Byron is his superior in knowledge of the world. I wish Schiller had lived to know Lord Byron's works; I wonder what he would have said to so congenial a mind. Did Byron publish anything during Schiller's life?"

I could not say. Goethe took down the *Conversations Lexicon*, and read the article on Byron, making many cursory remarks. It appeared Byron had published nothing before 1807, and therefore Schiller could have seen nothing of his.

"Through all Schiller's works," continued Goethe, "goes the idea of freedom; though this idea assumed a new shape as Schiller advanced in his culture and became another man. In his youth, physical freedom occupied him and influenced his poems; in his later life, ideal freedom.

"Freedom is an odd thing, and every man has enough of it if he only knew how to be satisfied and settled. What avails a superfluity of freedom which we cannot use? Look at this chamber, and the next—in which, through the open door, you see my bed. Neither of them is large; and they are rendered still narrower by furniture, books, manuscripts, and works of art; but they are enough for me. I have lived in them all the winter, scarcely entering my front rooms. What have I

had out of my spacious house and the liberty of going from one room to another, when I have not needed to use them?

“If a man has freedom enough to live healthily, and to work at his craft, he has enough; and so much all can easily obtain. Then all of us are only free under certain conditions, which we must fulfil. The citizen is as free as the nobleman, when he restrains himself within the limits God appointed by placing him in that rank. The nobleman is as free as the prince; for, if he will but observe a few ceremonies at court, he may feel himself his equal. Freedom consists not in refusing to recognize anything above us, but in respecting something which is above us; for, by respecting it, we raise ourselves to it, and, by our very acknowledgment, prove that we bear within ourselves what is higher, and are worthy to be on a level with it.

“I have, on my journeys, often met merchants from the north of Germany, who fancied they were my equals if they rudely seated themselves next me at table. They were, by this method, nothing of the kind; but they would have been so if they had known how to value and treat me.

“That this physical freedom gave Schiller so much trouble in his youthful years, was caused partly by the nature of his mind, but still more by the restraint he endured at the military school. In later days, when he had enough physical freedom, he passed over to the ideal; and I would almost say that this idea killed him, since it led him to make excessive demands on his physical nature.

“The Grand Duke fixed on Schiller, when he was established here, an income of one thousand dollars yearly, and offered to give him twice as much in case he should be hindered by sickness from working. Schiller never availed himself of this last offer. ‘I have talent,’ said he, ‘and must help myself.’ But, as his family enlarged of late years, he was obliged for a livelihood to write two dramas annually; and to accomplish this he forced himself to write days and weeks when he was not well. He would have his talent obey him at any hour. He never drank much—he was very temperate; but, in such hours of bodily weakness, he was obliged to use spirituous liquors. This impaired his health, and his productions. The faults some wiseacres find in his works I deduce from this. All the passages that they say are not what they ought to be I would call pathological passages; for he wrote them on those days when he had not strength to find the right motives. I have every respect for the categorical imperative. I know how much good may

proceed from it; but, carried too far, this idea of ideal freedom leads to no good."

Amid these interesting remarks, and similar discourse: on Lord Byron; and the celebrated German authors, of whom Schiller had said, that he liked Kotzebue best, for he, at any rate, produced something: the hours of evening passed, and Goethe gave me the novel that I might study it at home.

Sunday evening, January 21, 1827.

I went at half-past seven this evening to Goethe, and stayed with him about an hour. He showed me a volume of new French poems, by Mademoiselle Gay, and spoke of them with great praise.

"The French," said he, "push their way, and it is well worth while to look after them. I have lately been striving hard to form a notion of the present state of French literature; and if I succeed I shall express my opinion of it. There are now at work with them, for the first time, those elements that we went through long ago.

"A mediocre talent is indeed always biassed by its epoch, and must be fed by the elements of the age. With the French it is the same as with us, down to the most modern pietism, only that with them this appears more *galant* and *spirituel*."

"What says your excellency to Béranger, and the author of *Clara Gazul*?"

"Those I except," said Goethe; "they are great geniuses, who have a foundation in themselves and keep free from their time's mode of thinking."

"I am glad to hear you say this," said I, "for I have had a similar feeling about them both."

The conversation turned from French to German literature. "I will show you something," said Goethe, "that will be interesting to you. Give me one of those two volumes before you. Solger is known to you?"

"Certainly," said I; "I have his translation of Sophocles, and both this and the preface gave me long since a high opinion of him."

"You know he has been dead several years," said Goethe; "and now a collection of the writings and letters he left is published. He is not so happy in his philosophical inquiries, which he has given us in the form of the Platonic dialogues; but his letters are excellent. In one of them, he writes to Tieck upon the *Wahlverwandtschaften* (Elective Affinities), and

I wish to read it to you; for it would not be easy to say anything better about that novel."

Goethe read me these excellent remarks, and we talked them over point by point, admiring the dignity of the views, and the logical sequence of the reasoning. Although Solger admitted that the facts of the *Wahlverwandtschaften* had their germ in the nature of all the characters, he nevertheless blamed that of Edward.

"I do not quarrel with him," said Goethe, "for being unable to endure Edward. I myself cannot endure him, but was obliged to make him such a man in order to bring out my fact. He is, besides, very true to nature; for you find many people in the higher ranks like him, with whom obstinacy takes the place of character.

"High above all, Solger placed the Architect; because, while all the other persons of the novel show themselves loving and weak, he alone remains strong and free; and the beauty of his nature consists not so much in his not falling into the errors of the other characters, as in the poet's having made him so noble that he *could* not fall into them. That is really very fine."

"I have," said I, "felt the importance and amiability of the Architect's character; but I had never remarked that his excellence was that by his very nature he could not fall into those bewilderments of love."

"No wonder," said Goethe, "for I myself never thought of it when I was creating him; yet Solger is right—this certainly is his character.

"These remarks," continued he, "were written as early as the year 1809. I should then have been much cheered to hear so kind a word about the *Wahlverwandtschaften*; for at that time, and afterwards, not many pleasant remarks were vouchsafed me about that novel.

"I see from these letters that Solger was much attached to me: in one of them, he complains that I have returned no answer about the Sophocles he sent me. Good heavens! how am I placed! It is not to be wondered at. I have known great lords, to whom many presents were sent. These had certain formulas and phrases with which they answered everything; and thus they wrote letters to hundreds, all alike, and all mere phrases. This I never could do. If I could not say to each man something distinct and appropriate to the occasion, I preferred not writing at all. I esteemed superficial phrases

unworthy, and thus I have failed to answer many an excellent man to whom I would willingly have written. You see yourself how it is with me, and what messages and dispatches daily flow in upon me from every quarter; and you must confess that more than one man's life would be required to answer all these, in ever so careless a way. But I am sorry about Solger; he was an admirable being, and deserved a friendly answer better than many."

I turned the conversation to the novel, which I had now frequently read at home. "All the first part," said I, "is only an introduction, but nothing is set forth beyond what is necessary; and this necessary preliminary is executed with such grace, that we cannot fancy it is only for the sake of something else, but would give it a value of its own."

"I am glad that you feel this," said Goethe, "but I must do something yet. According to the laws of a good introduction, the proprietors of the animals must make their appearance in it. When the princess and the uncle ride by the booth, the people must come out and entreat the princess to honour it with a visit." "You are right," said I; "for, since all the rest is indicated in the introduction, so must these people be; and it is perfectly natural that, with their devotion to their treasury, they would not let the princess pass unassailed."

"You see," said Goethe, "that in a work of this kind, even when it is finished as a whole, there is still something to be done."

Goethe then told me of a foreigner who had lately visited him and had talked of translating several of his works.

"He is a good man," said Goethe; "but, as to literature, he shows himself a mere dilettante; for he does not yet know German at all, and is already talking of the translations he will make and of the portraits he will prefix to them. That is the very nature of the dilettanti: they have no idea of the difficulties in a subject, and always wish to undertake something for which they have no capacity."

Thursday, January 25, 1827.

At seven o'clock I went with the manuscript of the novel and a copy of Béranger to Goethe. I found M. Soret in conversation with him upon modern French literature. I listened with interest, and it was observed that the modern writers had learned a great deal from De Lille, as far as good versification was concerned. Since M. Soret, a native of Geneva, did not speak German fluently, while Goethe talks French tolerably

well, the conversation was carried on in French, and only became German when I put in a word. I took my Béranger out of my pocket, and gave it to Goethe, who wished to read his admirable songs again. M. Soret thought the portrait prefixed to the poems was not a good likeness. Goethe was much pleased to have this beautiful copy in his hands.

“These songs,” said he, “may be looked upon as perfect, the best things in their kind—especially when you observe the burden; without which they would be almost too earnest, too pointed, and too epigrammatic, for songs. Béranger reminds me ever of Horace and Hafiz; who stood in the same way above their times, satirically and playfully setting forth the corruption of manners. Béranger has the same relation to his contemporaries; but, as he belongs to the lower class, the licentious and vulgar are not very hateful to him, and he treats them with a sort of partiality.”

Many similar remarks were made upon Béranger and other modern French writers; till M. Soret went to court, and I remained alone with Goethe.

A sealed packet lay upon the table. Goethe laid his hand upon it. “This,” said he, “is *Helena*, which is going to Cotta to be printed.”

I felt the importance of the moment. For, as it is with a newly-built vessel on its first going to sea, whose destiny is hid from us, so is it with the intellectual creation of a great master, going forth into the world.

“I have till now,” said Goethe, “been always finding little things to add or to touch up; but I must finish, and I am glad it is going to the post, so that I can turn to something else. Let it meet its fate. My comfort is, the general culture of Germany stands at an incredibly high point; so I need not fear such a production will long remain misunderstood and without effect.”

“There is a whole antiquity in it,” said I.

“Yes,” said Goethe, “the philologists will find work.”

“I have no fear,” said I, “about the antique part; for there we have the most minute detail, the most thorough development of individuals, and each personage says just what he should. But the modern romantic part is very difficult, for half the history of the world lies behind it; the material is so rich that it can only be lightly indicated, and heavy demands are made upon the reader.”

“Yet,” said Goethe, “it all appeals to the senses, and on

the stage would satisfy the eye: more I did not intend. Let the crowd of spectators take pleasure in the spectacle; the higher import will not escape the initiated—as with the *Magic Flute* and other things.”

“It will produce a most unusual effect on the stage,” said I, “that a piece should begin as a tragedy and end as an opera. But something is required to represent the grandeur of these persons, and to speak the sublime language and verse.”

“The first part,” said Goethe, “requires the first tragic artists; and the operatic part must be sustained by the first vocalists, male and female. That of Helena ought to be played, not by one, but by two great female artists; for we seldom find that a fine vocalist has sufficient talent as a tragic actress.”

“The whole,” said I, “will furnish an occasion for great splendour of scenery and costume. I look forward to its representation. If we could only get a good composer.”

“It should be one,” said Goethe, “who, like Meyerbeer, has lived long in Italy, so that he combines his German nature with the Italian style and manner. However, that will be found somehow or other; I only rejoice that I am rid of it. Of the notion that the chorus does not descend into the lower world, but rather disperses itself among the elements on the cheerful surface of the earth, I am not a little proud.”

“It is a new sort of immortality,” said I.

“Now,” continued Goethe, “how do you go on with the novel?”

“I have brought it with me,” said I. “After reading it again, I find that your excellency must not make the intended alteration. It produces a good effect that the people first appear by the slain tiger as completely new beings, with their outlandish costume and manners, and announce themselves as the owners of the beasts. If you made them first appear in the introduction, this effect would be completely weakened, if not destroyed.”

“You are right,” said Goethe; “I must leave it as it is. It must have been my design, when first I planned the tale, not to bring the people in sooner. The intended alteration was a requisition on the part of the understanding, which would certainly have led me into a fault. This is a remarkable case in æsthetics, that a rule must be departed from if faults are to be avoided.”

We talked over the naming of the novel. Many titles were proposed; some suited the beginning, others the end—but none seemed exactly suitable to the whole.

“I’ll tell you what,” said Goethe, “we will call it *The Novel* (Die Novelle); for what is a novel but a peculiar and as yet unheard-of event? This is the proper meaning of this name; and many a thing that in Germany passes as a novel is no novel at all, but a mere narrative or whatever else you like to call it. In that original sense of an unheard-of event, even the *Wahlverwandtschaften* may be called a ‘novel.’”

“A poem,” said I, “has always originated without a title, and is that which it is without a title; so the title is not really essential to the matter.”

“It is not,” said Goethe; “the ancient poems had no titles; but this is a custom of the moderns, from whom also the poems of the ancients obtained titles at a later period. This custom is the result of a necessity to name things and to distinguish them from each other, when a literature becomes extensive. Here you have something new;—read it.”

He handed to me a translation by Herr Gerhard of a Serbian poem. It was very beautiful, and the translation so simple and clear that there was no disturbance in the contemplation of the object. It was entitled *The Prison-Key*. I say nothing of the course of the action, except that the conclusion seemed to me abrupt and rather unsatisfactory.

“That,” said Goethe, “is the beauty of it; for it thus leaves a sting in the heart, and the imagination of the reader is excited to devise every possible case that can follow. The conclusion leaves untold the material for a whole tragedy, but of a kind that has often been done already. On the contrary, that which is set forth in the poem is really new and beautiful; and the poet acted very wisely in delineating this alone and leaving the rest to the reader. I would willingly insert the poem in *Kunst und Alterthum*, but it is too long: on the other hand, I have asked Herr Gerhard to give me these three in rhyme, which I shall print in the next number. What do you say to this? Only listen.”

Goethe read first the song of the old man who loves a young maiden, then the women’s drinking song, and finally that animated one beginning “Dance for us, Theodore.” He read them admirably, each in a different tone and manner.

We praised Herr Gerhard for having in each instance chosen the most appropriate versification and burden, and for having executed all in such an easy and perfect manner. “There you see,” said Goethe, “what technical practice does for such a talent as Gerhard’s; and it is fortunate for him that he has no actual

literary profession, but one that daily takes him into practical life. He has, moreover, travelled much in England and other countries; and thus, with his sense for the actual, he has many advantages over our learned young poets.

“If he confines himself to making good translations, he is not likely to produce anything bad; but original inventions demand a great deal, and are difficult matters.”

Some reflections were here made upon the productions of our newest young poets, and it was remarked that scarce one of them had come out with good prose. “That is very easily explained,” said Goethe: “to write prose, one must have something to say; but he who has nothing to say can still make verses and rhymes, where one word suggests the other, and at last something comes out which in fact is nothing but looks as if it were something.”

Wednesday, January 31, 1827.

Dined with Goethe. “Within the last few days, since I saw you,” said he, “I have read many things; especially a Chinese novel, which occupies me still and seems to me very remarkable.”

“Chinese novel!” said I; “that must look strange enough.”

“Not so much as you might think,” said Goethe; “the China-men think, act, and feel almost exactly like us; and we soon find that we are perfectly like them, except that all they do is more clear, pure, and decorous, than with us.

“With them all is orderly, citizen-like, without great passion or poetic flight; and there is a strong resemblance to my *Hermann and Dorothea*, as well as to the English novels of Richardson. They likewise differ from us in that with them external nature is always associated with the human figures. You always hear the goldfish splashing in the pond, the birds are always singing on the bough; the day is always serene and sunny, the night is always clear. There is much talk about the moon; but it does not alter the landscape, its light is conceived to be as bright as day itself; and the interior of the houses is as neat and elegant as their pictures. For instance, ‘I heard the lovely girls laughing, and when I got sight of them they were sitting on cane chairs.’ There you have, at once, the prettiest situation; for cane chairs are necessarily associated with the greatest lightness and elegance. Then there is an infinite number of legends which are constantly introduced into the narrative and are applied almost like proverbs: as, for instance, one of a girl who was so light and graceful in the feet that she could balance

herself on a flower without breaking it; and then another, of a young man so virtuous and brave that in his thirtieth year he had the honour to talk with the Emperor; then there is another of two lovers who showed such great purity during a long acquaintance that, when they were on one occasion obliged to pass the night in the same chamber, they occupied the time with conversation and did not approach one another.

“There are innumerable other legends, all turning upon what is moral and proper. It is by this severe moderation in everything that the Chinese Empire has sustained itself for thousands of years, and will endure hereafter.

“I find a highly remarkable contrast to this Chinese novel in the *Chansons de Béranger*, which have, almost every one, some immoral licentious subject for their foundation, and which would be extremely odious to me if managed by a genius inferior to Béranger; he, however, has made them not only tolerable, but pleasing. Tell me yourself, is it not remarkable that the subjects of the Chinese poet should be so thoroughly moral, and those of the first French poet of the present day be exactly the contrary?”

“Such a talent as Béranger’s,” said I, “would find no field in moral subjects.”

“You are right,” said Goethe; “the very perversions of his time have revealed and developed his better nature.”

“But,” said I, “is this Chinese romance one of their best?”

“By no means,” said Goethe; “the Chinese have thousands of them, and had when our forefathers were still living in the woods.

“I am more and more convinced,” he continued, “that poetry is the universal possession of mankind, revealing itself everywhere and at all times in hundreds and hundreds of men. One makes it a little better than another, and swims on the surface a little longer than another—that is all. Herr von Matthisson must not think he is the man, nor must I think that I am the man; but each must say to himself, that the gift of poetry is by no means so very rare, and that nobody need think very much of himself because he has written a good poem.

“But, really, we Germans are very likely to fall too easily into this pedantic conceit, when we do not look beyond the narrow circle that surrounds us. I therefore like to look about me in foreign nations, and advise everyone to do the same. National literature is now rather an unmeaning term; the epoch of World-literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to

hasten its approach. But, while we thus value what is foreign, we must not bind ourselves to some particular thing, and regard it as a model. We must not give this value to the Chinese, or the Serbian, or Calderon, or the *Nibelungen*; but, if we really want a pattern, we must always return to the ancient Greeks, in whose works the beauty of mankind is constantly represented. All the rest we must look at only historically; appropriating to ourselves what is good, so far as it goes."

The bells of passing sledges allured us to the window, as we expected that the long procession which went out to Belvidere this morning would return about this time.

We talked of Alexander Manzoni; and Goethe told me that Count Reinhard not long since saw Manzoni at Paris—where, as a young author of celebrity, he had been well received in society—and that he was now living happily on his estate in the neighbourhood of Milan, with a young family and his mother.

"Manzoni," continued he, "wants nothing except to know what a good poet he is, and what rights belong to him as such. He has too much respect for history, and on this account is always adding notes to his pieces, in which he shows how faithful he has been to detail. Now, though his facts may be historical, his characters are not so—any more than my Thoas and Iphigenia. No poet has ever known the historical characters he has painted; if he had, he could scarcely have made use of them. The poet must know what effects he wishes to produce, and regulate the nature of his characters accordingly. If I had tried to make Egmont as history represents him, the father of a dozen children, his light-minded proceedings would have appeared very absurd. I needed an Egmont more in harmony with his own actions and my poetic views; and this is, as Clara says, *my* Egmont.

"What would be the use of poets, if they only repeated the record of the historian? The poet must go further, and give us if possible something higher and better. All the characters of Sophocles bear something of that great poet's lofty soul; and it is the same with the characters of Shakespeare. This is as it ought to be. Nay, Shakespeare goes further, and makes his Romans Englishmen; and there too he is right; for otherwise his nation would not have understood him.

"Here, again," continued Goethe, "the Greeks were so great that they regarded fidelity to historic facts less than the treatment of them by the poet. We have fortunately a fine example in Philoctetes; which subject has been treated by all three of

the great tragedians, and lastly and best by Sophocles. This poet's excellent play has luckily come down to us entire; while of the *Philoctetes* of Æschylus and Euripides only fragments have been found, although sufficient to show how they have managed the subject. If time permitted, I would restore these pieces, as I did the *Phaethon* of Euripides; it would be to me no unpleasant or useless task.

“In this subject the problem was very simple: namely, to bring Philoctetes with his bow from the island of Lemnos. But the manner of doing this was the business of the poet; and here each could show the power of his invention, and one could excel another. Ulysses must fetch him; but shall he be known by Philoctetes or not? and if not, how shall he be disguised? Shall Ulysses go **alone**, or shall he have companions, and who shall they be? In Æschylus, there is no companion; in Euripides, it is Diomed; in Sophocles, the son of Achilles. Then, in what situation is Philoctetes to be found? Shall the island be inhabited or not? and, if inhabited, shall any sympathetic soul have taken compassion on him or not? And so with a hundred other things; which are all at the discretion of the poet, and in the selection and omission of which one may show his superiority to another in wisdom. Here is the grand point, and our present poets should do like the ancients. They should not be always asking whether a subject has been used before, and look to south and north for unheard-of adventures; which are often barbarous enough, and merely make an impression as incidents. To make something of a simple subject by a masterly treatment requires intellect and great talent, and these we do not find.”

Some passing sledges again allured us to the window; but it was not the expected train from Belvidere. We laughed and talked about trivial matters, and then I asked Goethe how the novel was going on.

“I have not touched it of late,” said he; “but one incident more must take place in the introduction.¹ The lion must roar as the princess passes the booth; upon which some good remarks may be made on the formidable nature of this mighty beast.”

“That is a very happy thought,” said I; “for thus you gain an introduction that is not only good and essential in its place but also gives a greater effect to all that follows. Hitherto the lion has appeared almost too gentle, shown no trace of ferocity;

¹ “Introduction” is Oxenford's translation of the not-very-German word “exposition.”

but by roaring he at least makes us suspect how formidable he is, and the effect when he gently follows the boy's flute is heightened."

"This mode of altering and improving," said Goethe, "where by continued invention the imperfect is heightened to the perfect, is the right one. But the remaking and carrying further what is already complete—as, for instance, Walter Scott has done with my 'Mignon,'¹ whom, in addition to her other qualities, he makes deaf and dumb—this mode of altering I cannot commend."

Thursday evening, February 1, 1827.

Goethe told me of a visit the Crown Prince of Prussia had been making him in company with the Grand Duke. "The princes Charles and William of Prussia," said he, "were also with me this morning. The Crown Prince and Grand Duke stayed nearly three hours, and we had talk about many things, which gave me a high opinion of the intellect, taste, knowledge, and way of thinking of these young princes."

Goethe had a volume of the *Theory of Colours* before him. "I still," said he, "owe you an answer with respect to the phenomenon of the coloured shadows; but as this presupposes a great deal, and is connected with much besides, I will not give you an explanation detached from the rest, but rather think it would be better if, on the evenings when we meet, we read through the whole *Theory of Colours* together. Thus we shall always have a solid subject for discourse; and you yourself will have made the whole theory so much your own that you will hardly know how you have come by it. What you have already learned begins to live and to be productive within you; and hence I foresee this science will soon be your own property. Now read the first section."

With these words Goethe laid the open book before me. I read the first paragraph respecting the physiological colours.

"You see," said Goethe, "that there is nothing without us that is not also within us; and that the eye, like the external world, has its colours. Since a great point in this science is the decided separation of the objective from the subjective, I have properly begun with the colours belonging to the eye; that in all our perceptions we may accurately distinguish whether a colour really exists outside ourselves, or whether it is only a seeming colour produced by the eye itself. I think that I have

¹ This allusion is to Fenella in *Peperil of the Peak*.—J.O.

begun at the right end, by first disposing of the organ by means of which all our perceptions and observations must take place."

I read on as far as those interesting paragraphs where it is taught that the eye has need of change; since it never willingly dwells on the same colour, but always requires another—and that so urgently that it produces colours itself if it does not actually find them.

This remark led our conversation to a great law, which pervades all nature and on which all life and all the joy of life depend. "This," said Goethe, "is the case not only with all our other senses, but also with our higher spiritual nature; and it is because the eye is so eminent a sense that this law of required change (*Gesetz des geforderten Wechsels*) is so striking and so especially clear with respect to colours. We have dances that please us in a high degree on account of the alternation of major and minor, while dances in only one of these modes weary us at once."

"The same law," said I, "seems to lie at the foundation of a good style, where we like to avoid a sound we have just heard. Even on the stage a great deal might be done with this law, if it were well applied. Plays, especially tragedies, in which a uniform tone prevails, are always somewhat wearisome; and if the orchestra plays melancholy depressing music during the *entr'actes* of a melancholy piece, we are tortured and would escape by all possible means."

"Perhaps," said Goethe, "the lively scenes introduced into Shakespeare's plays rest upon this 'law of required change'; but it does not seem applicable to the higher tragedy of the Greeks, where a certain fundamental tone pervades the whole."

"The Greek tragedy," said I, "is not of such a length as to be rendered wearisome by one pervading tone. Then there is an interchange of chorus and dialogue; and the sublime sense is of such a kind that it cannot become fatiguing, since a genuine reality, always of a cheerful nature, lies at the foundation."

"You may be right," said Goethe; "and it would be well worth the trouble to investigate how far the Greek tragedy is subject to the general 'law of required change.' You see how all things are connected with each other, and how a law respecting the theory of colours can lead to an inquiry into Greek tragedy. We must only take care not to push such a law too far, and make it the foundation for much besides. We shall go more safely if we only apply it by analogy."

We talked of the manner in which Goethe had set forth his theory of colours—deducing the whole from great fundamental

laws, and always referring to these the single phenomena; by which method he had made it very comprehensible.

“This may be so,” said Goethe, “and you may praise me on that account; nevertheless, the method requires students who do not live amid distractions, and are capable of getting to the bottom of the matter. Some very clever people have been imbued with my theory of colours; but unfortunately they do not adhere to the straight path—before I am aware of it, they turn aside and follow an idea instead of keeping their eyes properly fixed on the object. Nevertheless, a good head-piece, when really seeking the truth, can always do a great deal.”

We talked about the professors who, after they had found a better theory, still talked of Newton's. “This is not to be wondered at,” said Goethe; “such people continue in error because they are indebted to it for their existence. They would otherwise have to learn everything over again, and that would be very inconvenient.” “But,” said I, “how can their experiments prove the truth when the basis of their doctrine is false?” “They do *not* prove the truth,” said Goethe, “nor is such the intention; the only point with these professors is to prove their own opinion. On this account, they conceal all experiments that would reveal the truth and show their doctrine was untenable. Then, the scholars—what do they care for the truth? They, like the rest, are perfectly satisfied if they can prate away empirically; that is the whole matter. Men are peculiar: as soon as a lake is frozen over, they flock to it by hundreds and amuse themselves on the smooth surface; but which of them thinks of inquiring how deep it is and what sort of fish are swimming about under the ice? Niebuhr has just discovered a very ancient commercial treaty between Rome and Carthage, from which it appears that all Livy's history respecting the early condition of the Roman people is a mere fable and that Rome at a very early period was in a far higher state of civilization than Livy represents; but if you imagine that this treaty will occasion a great reform in the teaching of Roman history, you are mistaken. Think of the frozen lake. I have learned to know mankind: thus it is, and not otherwise.”¹

“Nevertheless,” said I, “you cannot repent of having written your theory of colours, since you have not only laid a firm foundation for this excellent science but also produced a model of scientific treatment which can always be followed in the treatment of similar subjects.”

¹ Compare this with the passage footnoted under date October 12, 1825.

“I do not repent it at all,” said Goethe, “though I have expended half a life upon it. Perhaps I might have written half a dozen tragedies more; that is all, and people enough will come after me to do that.

“After all, you are right; I think, the treatment of the subject is good, there is method in it. I have also written a musical theory, and my metamorphosis of plants is based on the same method of observation and deduction.

“I came to my metamorphosis of plants as Herschel came to his discoveries. Herschel was so poor that he could not buy a telescope but was obliged to make one for himself. In this he was lucky; for the home-made telescope was better than any other, and with it he made his great discoveries. I came to botany by the empirical road. I now know well enough that with respect to the formation of the sexes the theory went so far into detail that I had not courage to grasp it. This impelled me to pursue the subject in my own way, and to find that which was common to all plants without distinction; thus I discovered the law of metamorphosis.

“To pursue botany further in detail is not my purpose; I leave that to my superiors in the matter. My only concern was to reduce the phenomena to a general fundamental law.

“Mineralogy has interested me for two reasons only: first, I valued it for its great practical utility; and then I thought to find a document elucidating the primary formation of the world, of which Werner’s doctrine gave hopes. Since this science has been turned upside down by the death of that excellent man, I do not proceed further in it, but remain quiet with my own convictions.

“In the theory of colours, I have next to develop the formation of the rainbow: an extremely difficult problem; which, however, I hope to solve. On this account, I am glad to go through the theory of colours once more with you; since thus, especially with your interest for the subject, it becomes fresh again.

“I have,” continued Goethe, “attempted natural science in nearly every department; nevertheless, my tendencies have always been confined to such objects as lay terrestrially around me and could be immediately perceived by the senses. On this account, I have never occupied myself with astronomy; because there the senses are not sufficient—instruments, calculations, and mechanics, which require a whole life, are needed, and were not in my line.

“If I have done anything with respect to the subjects that lay in my way, I had this advantage: that my life fell in a time richer than any other in great natural discoveries. As a child I became acquainted with Franklin’s doctrine of electricity, the law of which he had just discovered. Thus through my whole life, down to the present hour, has one great discovery followed another; so that not only was I directed towards nature in my early years, but also my interest in it has been maintained ever since. Advances such as I could never have foreseen are now made even on paths that I opened; and I feel like one who walks towards the dawn, and, when the sun rises, is astonished at its brilliancy.”

Among the Germans, Goethe here mentioned the names of Carus, D’Alton, and Meyer of Königsberg, with admiration.

“If,” continued he, “when the truth was once found, people would not again pervert and obscure it, I should be satisfied; for mankind requires something positive, to be handed down from generation to generation, and it would be well if the positive were also the true. On this account, I should be glad if people came to a clear understanding in natural science, and then adhered to the truth; not *transcending* again after all had been done in the region of the comprehensible. But mankind cannot be at peace, and confusion always returns before we are aware.

“Thus they are now pulling to pieces the five books of Moses; and, if an annihilating criticism is injurious in anything, it is so in matters of religion—for here everything depends upon faith, to which we cannot return when we have once lost it.

“In poetry, an annihilating criticism is not so injurious. Wolf has demolished Homer, but he has not been able to injure the poem; for this poem has a miraculous power like the heroes of Walhalla, who hew one another to pieces in the morning, but sit down to dinner with whole limbs at noon.

“We will quietly keep to the right way, and let others go as they please.”

Wednesday, February 7, 1827.

To-day Goethe spoke severely of certain critics, who were not satisfied with Lessing, and made unjust demands upon him. “When people,” said he, “compare the pieces of Lessing with those of the ancients, and call them paltry and miserable, what do they mean? Rather pity the extraordinary man for being obliged to live in a pitiful time, which afforded him no

better materials than are treated in his pieces; pity him, because in his *Minna von Barnhelm* he found nothing better to do than to meddle with the squabbles of Saxony and Prussia. His constant polemical turn, too, resulted from the badness of his time. In *Emilia Galeotti*, he vented his pique against princes; in *Nathan*, against the priests."

Friday, February 16, 1827.

I told Goethe that I had lately been reading Winckelmann's work upon the imitation of Greek works of art, and I confessed it often seemed to me Winckelmann was not perfectly clear about his subject.

"You are right," said Goethe; "we sometimes find him merely groping about; but, what is the great matter, his groping always leads to something. He is like Columbus, when he had not yet discovered the New World, yet had a presentiment of it in his mind. We learn nothing by reading him, but we *become* something.

"Now, Meyer has gone further, carried the knowledge of art to its highest point. His history of art is an immortal work; but he would not have become what he is, if, in his youth, he had not formed himself on Winckelmann, and walked in the path Winckelmann pointed out.

"You see once again what is done for a man by a great predecessor, and the advantage of making a proper use of him."

(Sup.) Wednesday, February 21, 1827.

Dined with Goethe. He spoke with admiration of Alexander von Humboldt; whose work on Cuba and Colombia he had begun to read, and whose views as to the project for making a passage through the Isthmus of Panama appeared to have a particular interest for him. "Humboldt," said Goethe, "has, with a great knowledge of his subject, given other points where, by making use of some streams that flow into the Gulf of Mexico, the end may be perhaps better attained than at Panama. All this is reserved for the future, and for an enterprising spirit. So much, however, is certain, that, if they succeed in cutting such a canal that ships of any burden and size can be navigated through it from the Mexican Gulf to the Pacific Ocean, innumerable benefits would result to the whole human race. But I should wonder if the United States were to let an opportunity of getting such a work into their own hands escape. It may be foreseen that this young state, with its decided predilection to

the West, will, in thirty or forty years, have occupied and peopled the large tract of land beyond the Rocky Mountains. It may furthermore be foreseen that along the whole coast of the Pacific Ocean, where nature has already formed the most capacious and secure harbours, important commercial towns will gradually arise, for the furtherance of a great intercourse between China and the East Indies and the United States. In such a case, it would not only be desirable but almost necessary that a more rapid communication should be maintained between the eastern and western shores of North America, both by merchant-ships and by men-of-war, than has hitherto been possible with the tedious, disagreeable, and expensive voyage round Cape Horn. So I repeat, it is absolutely indispensable for the United States to effect a passage from the Mexican Gulf to the Pacific Ocean; and I am certain they will do it.

“Would that I might live to see it!—but I shall not. I should like to see another thing—a junction of the Danube and the Rhine. But this undertaking is so gigantic that I have doubts of its completion, particularly when I consider our German resources. And thirdly and lastly, I should wish to see England in possession of a canal through the Isthmus of Suez. Would I could live to see these three great works! it would be well worth the trouble to last some fifty years more for the purpose.”

(Sup.) Thursday, March 1, 1827.

Dined with Goethe. He related to me that he had received a communication from Count Sternberg and Zauper, which had given him great pleasure. We then talked a great deal about the theory of colours, the subjective prismatic experiments, and the laws by which the rainbow is formed. He was pleased with my continually-increasing interest in these difficult subjects.

(Sup.) Wednesday, March 21, 1827.

Goethe showed me a little book, by Hinrichs, on the nature of antique tragedy. “I have read it with great interest,” said he. “Hinrichs has taken the *Ædipus* and *Antigone* of Sophocles as the foundation whereon to develop his views. It is very remarkable; and I will lend it to you that you may read it, and that we may be able to converse upon it. I am by no means of his opinion; but it is highly instructive to see how a man of such thoroughly philosophical culture regards a poetical work of art from the point of view peculiar to his school.¹ I will

¹ That of Hegel.—J. O.

say no more to-day, that I may not influence your opinion. Only read it, and you will find that it suggests all kinds of thoughts."

(Sup.) Wednesday, March 28, 1827.

I brought back to Goethe the book by Hinrichs, which I had read attentively. I had also gone once more through all the plays of Sophocles, to be in complete possession of my subject.

"Now," said Goethe, "how did you like him? He attacks a matter well—does he not?"

"This book affected me very strangely," said I. "No other book has aroused so many thoughts in me as this; and yet there is none I have so often been disposed to contradict."

"That is exactly the point," said Goethe. "What we agree with leaves us inactive, but contradiction makes us productive."

"His intentions," said I, "appear to me in the highest degree laudable, and he by no means confines himself to the surface. But he so often loses himself in refinements and motives—and that in so subjective a manner—that he loses the true aspect of the subject in detail, as well as the survey of the whole; and in such a case it is necessary to do violence to both oneself and the theme to think as he does. Besides, I have often fancied that my organs were not fine enough to apprehend the unusual subtlety of his distinctions."

"If they were philosophically prepared like his," said Goethe, "it would be better. But, to speak frankly, I am sorry that a man of undoubted innate power from the northern coast of Germany, like Hinrichs, should be so spoilt by the philosophy of Hegel as to lose all unbiassed and natural observation and thought, and gradually to get into an artificial and heavy style, of both thought and expression; so that we find passages in his book where our understanding comes to a standstill, and we no longer know what we are reading."

"I have fared no better," said I. "Still I have rejoiced to meet with some passages that appeared perfectly clear and fitted for mankind in general; such, for instance, as his relation of the fable of *Œdipus*."

"Here," said Goethe, "he has been obliged to confine himself strictly to his subject. But there are in his book several passages in which the thought does not progress, but in which the obscure language constantly moves on the same spot and in the same circle, just like the 'Einmaleins'¹ of the witch in my *Faust*.

¹ This word, which signifies "multiplication table," refers to the arithmetical jargon uttered by the witch in her kitchen.—J. O.

Give me the book again. Of his sixth lecture upon the chorus, I scarcely understood anything. What do you say, for instance, to this passage, which occurs near the end:

“This realization [i.e. of popular life] is, as the true signification thereof,¹ on this account alone its true realization; which, as a truth and certainty to itself, therefore constitutes the universally mental certainty; which certainly is at the same time the atoning certainty of the chorus; so that in this certainty alone, which has shown itself as the result of the combined movement of the tragic action, the chorus preserves its fitting relation to the universal popular consciousness, and in this capacity does not merely represent the people, but is that people according to its certainty.’

“I think we have had enough of this. What must the English and French think of the language of our philosophers, when we Germans do not understand them ourselves?” “And in spite of all this,” said I, “we both agree that a noble purpose lies at the foundation of the book, and that it possesses the quality of awakening thoughts.”

“His idea of the relation between family and state,” said Goethe, “and the tragical conflicts that may arise from them, is certainly good and suggestive; yet I cannot allow that it is the only right one, or even the best for tragic art. We are indeed all members both of a family and of a state, and there does not often befall us a tragical fate that does not wound us in both capacities. Still, we might be very good tragical characters, if we were merely members of a family or merely members of a state. For, after all, the only point is to get a conflict that admits of no solution; and this may arise from an antagonistic position in any relation whatever—provided a person has a really natural foundation, and is himself really tragic. Thus Ajax falls a victim to the demon of wounded honour, and Hercules to the demon of jealousy. In neither of these cases is there the least conflict between family piety and political virtue; though this, according to Hinrichs, should be the element of Greek tragedy.”

“Clearly,” said I, “in this theory he merely had *Antigone* in his mind. He also appears to have had before him merely the character and mode of action of this heroine: as he makes the assertion that family piety appears most pure in woman, and

¹ The word “derselben,” in the passage as cited, seems to want an antecedent. The reader is requested not to be too critical with this almost unreadable passage, which Goethe only refers to as an instance of obscurity. —J. O.

especially a sister; and that a sister can love only a brother with perfect purity, and without sexual feeling."

"I should think," returned Goethe, "that the love of sister for sister was still more pure and unsexual. As if we did not know of numerous cases where the most sensual inclinations have existed between brother and sister, both knowingly and unknowingly!"

"You must have remarked generally," continued Goethe, "that Hinrichs, in considering Greek tragedy, sets out from the *idea*; and that he looks upon Sophocles as one who, in the invention and arrangement of his pieces, likewise set out from an idea, and regulated the sex and rank of his characters accordingly. But Sophocles, when he wrote his pieces, by no means started from an *idea*; he seized upon some ancient ready-made popular tradition in which a good idea existed, and then only thought of adapting it in the best manner for the theatre. The Atrides will not allow Ajax to be buried; but as in *Antigone* the sister struggles for the brother, so in *Ajax* the brother struggles for the brother. That the sister takes charge of the unburied Polyneices, and the brother takes charge of the fallen Ajax, is a contingent circumstance, and does not belong to the invention of the poet; but to the tradition, which the poet followed and was obliged to follow."

"What he says about Creon's conduct," replied I, "appears to be equally untenable. He tries to prove that, in prohibiting the burial of Polyneices, Creon acts from pure political virtue; and, since Creon is not merely a man but also a prince, he lays down the proposition that, as a man represents the tragic power of the state, this man can be no other than he who is himself the personification of the state itself—namely, the prince; and that of all persons the man as prince must be just that person who displays the greatest political virtue."

"These are assertions nobody will believe," returned Goethe with a smile. "Besides, Creon by no means acts out of political virtue, but from hatred towards the dead. When Polyneices endeavoured to reconquer his paternal inheritance, from which he had been forcibly expelled, he did not commit such a monstrous crime against the state that his death was insufficient, and that further punishment of the innocent corpse was required."

"An action should never be placed in the category of political virtue which is opposed to virtue in general. When Creon forbids the burial of Polyneices, and not only taints the air with the decaying corpse, but also affords opportunity for dogs and birds

of prey to drag about pieces torn from the dead body and thus to defile the altars—an action so offensive to both gods and men is not politically virtuous, but a political crime. Besides, he has everybody in the play against him. He has the elders of the state, who form the chorus, against him; he has the people at large against him; he has Teiresias against him; he has his own family against him: but he hears not, and obstinately persists in his impiety; until he has brought to ruin all who belong to him, and is himself at last nothing but a shadow.”

“And still,” said I, “when we hear him speak, we cannot help believing he is somewhat in the right.”

“That is the very thing,” said Goethe, “in which Sophocles is a master; and in which consists the very life of the dramatic in general. His characters all possess this gift of eloquence, and know how to explain the motives for their action so convincingly that the hearer is almost always on the side of the last speaker.

“Evidently, in his youth, he enjoyed an excellent rhetorical education, by which he became trained to look for all the reasons and seeming reasons of things. Still, his great talent in this respect betrayed him into faults: he sometimes went too far. There is a passage in *Antigone* which I always look upon as a blemish, and I would give a great deal for an apt philologist to prove that it is interpolated and spurious. After the heroine has explained the noble motives for her action, and displayed the elevated purity of her soul, she at last, when she is led to death, brings forward a motive that is quite unworthy and almost borders upon the comic. She says that, if she had been a mother, she would not have done, either for her dead children or for her dead husband, what she has done for her brother. ‘For,’ says she, ‘if my husband died I could have had another, and if my children died I could have had others by my new husband. But with my brother, the case is different. I cannot have another brother; for, since my mother and father are dead, there is nobody to beget one.’

“This is, at least, the bare sense of this passage, which in my opinion, when placed in the mouth of a heroine going to her death, disturbs the tragic tone and appears to me very far-fetched—to savour too much of dialectical calculation.”

We conversed further upon Sophocles, remarking that in his pieces he always less considered a moral tendency than an apt treatment of the subject, particularly with regard to theatrical effect.

“I do not object,” said Goethe, “to a dramatic poet having a moral influence in view; but, when the point is to bring his subject clearly and effectively before his audience, his moral purpose proves of little use, and he needs much more a faculty for delineation and a familiarity with the stage to know what to do and what to leave undone. If there be a moral in the subject, it will appear, and the poet has nothing to consider but the effective and artistic treatment of his subject. If a poet has as high a soul as Sophocles, his influence will always be moral, let him do what he will. Besides, he knew the stage, and understood his craft thoroughly.”

“How well he knew the theatre,” answered I, “and how much he had in view a theatrical effect, we see in his *Philoctetes*, and the great resemblance this piece bears to *Ædipus in Colonos*, in both arrangement and course of action.

“In each piece we see a hero in a helpless condition; both are old and suffering from bodily infirmities. *Ædipus* has at his side his daughter as a guide and a prop; *Philoctetes* has his bow. The resemblance is carried still further. Both have been thrust aside in their afflictions; but, when the oracle declares that victory can be obtained with their aid alone, endeavour is made to get them back; Ulysses comes to *Philoctetes*, Creon to *Ædipus*. Both begin their discourse with cunning and honeyed words; but when these are of no avail they use violence, and we see *Philoctetes* deprived of his bow, and *Ædipus* of his daughter.”

“Such acts of violence,” said Goethe, “give an opportunity for excellent altercations, and such situations of helplessness excited the emotions of the audience; on which account the poet, whose object it was to produce an effect upon the public, liked to introduce them. In order to strengthen this effect in the *Ædipus*, Sophocles brings him in as a weak old man—whereas, according to all circumstances, he must have been a man still in the prime of life. But, at this vigorous age, the poet could not have used him for his play; he would have produced no effect, and he therefore made him a weak, helpless old man.”

“The resemblance to *Philoctetes*,” continued I, “goes still further. The hero, in both pieces, does not act, but suffers. On the other hand, each of these passive heroes has two active characters against him. *Ædipus* has Creon and Polyneices, *Philoctetes* has Neoptolemus and Ulysses; two such opposing characters were necessary to discuss the subject on all sides, and to gain the necessary body and fulness for the piece.”

“You might add,” interposed Goethe, “that both pieces bear this further resemblance: we see in both the extremely effective situation of a happy change; since one hero, in his disconsolate situation, has his beloved daughter restored to him, and the other his no less beloved bow.”

The happy conclusions of these two pieces are also similar; for both heroes are delivered from their sorrows: Œdipus is blissfully snatched away; and as for Philoctetes, we are forewarned by the oracle of his cure, before Troy, by Æsculapius.

“When we,” continued Goethe, “for our modern purposes, wish to learn how to conduct ourselves upon the theatre, Molière is the man to whom we should apply. Do you know his *Malade Imaginaire*? There is a scene in it that, as often as I read the piece, appears to me the symbol of a perfect knowledge of the boards. I mean the scene where the *Malade Imaginaire* asks his little daughter Louison if there has not been a young man in the chamber of her eldest sister. Now, any other who did not understand his craft so well would have let the little Louison plainly tell the fact at once, and there would have been the end of the matter. But what various motives for delay are introduced by Molière into this examination, for the sake of life and effect! He first makes little Louison act as if she did not understand her father; then she denies that she knows anything; then, threatened with the rod, she falls down as if dead; then, when her father bursts out in despair, she springs up from her feigned swoon with roguish hilarity; and at last, little by little, she confesses all. My explanation can give you only a very meagre notion of the animation of the scene: read it yourself till you become thoroughly impressed with its theatrical worth, and you will confess there is more practical instruction in it than in all the theories in the world.

“I have known and loved Molière,” continued Goethe, “from my youth, and have learned from him during my whole life. I never fail to read some of his plays every year, that I may keep up a constant intercourse with what is excellent. It is not merely the perfectly artistic treatment that delights me; it is the amiable nature, the highly-formed mind, of the poet. There is in him a grace and a feeling for the decorous, and a tone of good society, which his innate beautiful nature could only attain by daily intercourse with the most eminent men of his age. Of Menander, I only know the few fragments; but these give me so high an idea of him, that I look upon this great Greek as the only man who could be compared to Molière.”

"I am happy," returned I, "to hear you speak so highly of Molière. This sounds a little different from Herr von Schlegel! I have to-day with great repugnance swallowed what he says of Molière in his lectures on dramatic poetry. He quite looks down upon him, as a vulgar buffoon who has only seen good society at a distance and whose business it was to invent all sorts of pleasantries for the amusement of his lord. In these low pleasantries, Schlegel admits he was most happy, but he stole the best of them. He was obliged to force himself into the higher school of comedy, and never succeeded in it."

"To a man like Schlegel," returned Goethe, "a genuine nature like Molière's is a veritable eyesore; he feels that he has nothing in common with him, he cannot endure him. The *Misanthrope*, which I read over and over again, as one of my favourite pieces, is repugnant to him; he is forced to praise *Tartuffe* a little, but he lets him down again as much as he can. Schlegel cannot forgive Molière for ridiculing the affectation of learned ladies; he probably feels, as one of my friends has remarked, that he himself would have been ridiculed if he had lived with Molière.

"It is not to be denied," continued Goethe, "that Schlegel knows a great deal: his extraordinary attainments and his extensive reading almost terrify. But this is not enough. All the learning in the world is still no judgment. His criticism is completely one-sided; because in all theatrical pieces he merely regards the skeleton of the plot and arrangement, and only points out small points of resemblance to great predecessors, without troubling himself in the least as to what the author brings forward of graceful life and the culture of a high soul. But of what use are all the arts of a talent, if we do not find in a theatrical piece an amiable or great personality in the author? This alone influences the cultivation of the people.

"I look upon the way Schlegel has treated the French drama as a sort of recipe for the formation of a bad critic, who is wanting in every organ for the veneration of excellence and who passes over a sound nature and a great character as if they were chaff and stubble."

"Shakespeare and Calderon, on the other hand," I replied, "he treats justly, and even with decided affection."

"Both," returned Goethe, "are of a kind that cannot be praised enough, although I should not have wondered if Schlegel had scornfully let them down also. He is also just to Æschylus and Sophocles; but this does not seem to arise so much from a lively conviction of their extraordinary merit as from the

tradition among philologists to place them both very high; for in fact Schlegel's own little person is not sufficient to comprehend and appreciate such lofty natures. If it had been, he would have been just to Euripides too, and would have gone to work with him differently. But he knows that philologists do not estimate him very highly; he therefore feels no little delight that he is permitted upon such high authority to fall foul of this mighty ancient and to schoolmaster him as much as he can. I do not deny that Euripides has faults; but he was always a very respectable competitor with Sophocles and Æschylus. If he did not possess the great earnestness and the severe artistic completeness of his two predecessors, and as a dramatic poet treated things a little more leniently and humanely, he probably knew his Athenians well enough to be aware that the chord he struck was the right one for his contemporaries. A poet whom Socrates called his friend, whom Aristotle lauded, whom Menander admired, and for whom Sophocles and the city of Athens put on mourning at his death, must certainly have been something. If a modern man like Schlegel must pick out faults in so great an ancient, he ought only to do it upon his knees."

(Sup.) Sunday, April 1, 1827.

In the evening with Goethe. I conversed with him upon the yesterday's performance of his *Iphigenia*; in which Herr Krüger, from the Theatre Royal at Berlin, played Orestes with great applause.

"The piece," said Goethe, "has its difficulties. It is rich in internal but poor in external life: the point is to make the internal life come out. It is full of the most effective means, arising from the various horrors that form the foundation of the piece. The printed words are indeed only a faint reflex of the life that stirred within me during the invention; but the actor must bring us back to this first fire which animated the poet with respect to his subject. We wish to see the vigorous Greeks and heroes, with the fresh sea-breezes blowing upon them; who, oppressed and tormented by various ills and dangers, speak out strongly as their hearts prompt them. But we want none of those feeble, sentimental actors who have only just learned their parts by rote; and still less do we want those who are not even perfect in their parts.

"I must confess that I have never succeeded in witnessing a perfect representation of my *Iphigenia*. That was the reason

why I did not go yesterday; for I suffer dreadfully when I have to do with these spectres who do not manifest themselves as they ought."

"You would probably have been satisfied with Orestes as Herr Krüger represented him," said I. "There was such perspicuity in his acting, that nothing could be more comprehensible or tangible than his part: it seemed to comprise everything; and I shall never forget his words and gestures. All that belongs to the higher intuition—to the vision in this part, was so brought forward by his bodily movements, and the varying tones of his voice, that you could fancy you saw it with your own eyes. At the sight of this Orestes, Schiller would certainly not have missed the furies—they were behind him, they were around him.

"The important place where Orestes, awakening from his swoon, believes himself transported to the lower regions, succeeded to astonishment. We saw the rows of ancestors engaged in conversation: we saw Orestes join them, question them, and become one of their number. We felt ourselves transported into the midst of those blessed persons: so pure and deep was the feeling of the artist, and so great was his power of bringing the impalpable before our eyes."

"You are just the people to be worked upon," said Goethe, laughing: "but go on. He appears then to have been really good, his physical capabilities great."

"His organ," said I, "was clear and melodious; besides being well practised, and therefore capable of the highest flexion and variety. He has at command physical strength and activity in the execution of every difficulty. It seemed as if during his whole life he had never neglected to cultivate and exercise his body in every way."

"An actor," said Goethe, "should properly go to school to a sculptor and a painter; for, in order to represent a Greek hero, it is necessary for him to study the antique sculptures that have come down to us, and to impress on his mind the natural grace of their sitting, standing, and going. But the merely bodily is not enough. He must also, by diligent study of the best ancient and modern authors, give great cultivation to his mind. This will not only assist him to understand his part, but will also give a higher tone to his whole being and deportment. But tell me more! What else did you see good in him?"

"It appeared to me," said I, "that he possessed great love

for his subject. He had by diligent study made every detail clear to himself, so that he lived and moved in his hero with the utmost freedom; nothing remained that he had not made entirely his own. A just expression and a just accentuation for every word; such certainty, that the prompter was superfluous."

"I am pleased with this," said Goethe; "this is as it ought to be. Nothing is more dreadful than when the actors are not masters of their parts, and at every new sentence must listen to the prompter. By this their acting becomes a mere nullity, without life or power. When the actors are not perfect in their parts in a piece like my *Iphigenia*, it is better not to play it; the piece can have success only when all goes surely, rapidly, and with animation. I am glad that it went off so well with Krüger. Zelter recommended him to me, and I should have been annoyed if he had not turned out so well. I will have a little joke with him, and will present him with a prettily bound copy of my *Iphigenia*, with some verses inscribed in reference to his acting."

The conversation then turned upon the *Antigone* of Sophocles, and the high moral tone prevailing in it; and, lastly, upon the question—how the moral element came into the world?

"Through God himself," returned Goethe, "like everything else. It is no product of human reflection, but a beautiful nature inherent and inborn. It is, more or less, inherent in mankind generally, but to a high degree in a few eminently gifted minds. These have, by great deeds or doctrines, manifested their divine nature; which then, by the beauty of its appearance, won the love of men, and powerfully attracted them to reverence and emulation.

"A consciousness of the worth of the morally beautiful and good could be attained by experience and wisdom; since the bad showed itself a destroyer of happiness both in individuals and in the whole body, while the noble and right seemed to produce and secure the happiness of one and all. Thus the morally beautiful could become a doctrine, and diffuse itself over whole nations as something plainly expressed."

"I have lately read somewhere," answered I, "the opinion that Greek tragedy had made moral beauty a special object."

"Not so much morality," returned Goethe, "as pure humanity in its whole extent; especially in positions where, by falling into contact with rude power, it could assume a tragic character. In this region, indeed, even the moral stood as a principal part of human nature.

“The morality of Antigone, besides, was not invented by Sophocles, but was contained in the subject, which Sophocles chose the more readily as it united much dramatic effect with moral beauty.”

Goethe then spoke about the characters of Creon and Ismene, and the need for these two persons for the development of the beautiful soul of the heroine.

“All that is noble,” said he, “is in itself of a quiet nature, and appears to sleep until summoned forth by contrast. Such a contrast is Creon; who is brought in partly on account of Antigone, that her noble nature and the right which is on her side may be brought out by him—partly on his own account, that his unhappy error may appear odious to us.

“But, as Sophocles meant to display the elevated soul of his heroine even before the deed, another contrast by which her character might be developed was requisite; and this is her sister Ismene. In this character, the poet has given us a beautiful standard of the commonplace; so that the greatness of Antigone, far above such a standard, is the more strikingly visible.”

The conversation then turned upon dramatic authors in general, and upon the important influence they exerted, and could exert, upon the people.

“A great dramatic poet,” said Goethe, “if he is at the same time productive, and is actuated by a strong noble purpose in all his works, may make the soul of his pieces become the soul of the people. I should think this was something well worth the trouble. From Corneille proceeded an influence capable of forming heroes. This was something for Napoleon, who had need of an heroic people; on which account he said of Corneille, that if he were still living he would make a prince of him. A dramatic poet who knows his vocation should therefore work incessantly at its higher development, so that his influence on the people may be noble and beneficial.

“Not contemporaries and competitors ought to be the objects of study; but the great men of antiquity, whose works have for centuries received equal homage and consideration. Indeed, a man of really superior endowments will feel the necessity of this; need for an intercourse with great predecessors is the sure sign of a higher talent. Study Molière, study Shakespeare; but, above all things, the old Greeks, and always the Greeks.”

“For highly-endowed natures,” remarked I, “the study of the authors of antiquity may be invaluable; but in general it

appears to have little influence upon personal character. If this were the case,¹ all philologists and theologians would be the most excellent of men. But this is by no means so; such connoisseurs of the ancient Greek and Latin authors are able people or pitiful creatures, according to the good or bad qualities given them by God or inherited from their parents."

"There is nothing to be said against that," returned Goethe; "but it must not therefore be said that the study of the authors of antiquity is entirely without effect upon character. A worthless man will always remain worthless; and a little mind will not, by daily intercourse with the great minds of antiquity, become one inch greater. But a noble man, in whose soul God has placed the capability for future greatness of character and elevation of mind, will, through knowledge of and familiar intercourse with the elevated natures of ancient Greeks and Romans, develop to the utmost, and every day make a visible approach to similar greatness."

Wednesday, April 11, 1827.

I went to-day about one o'clock to Goethe, who had invited me to a drive with him before dinner. We took the road to Erfurt. The weather was very fine; the cornfields on both sides of the way refreshed the eye with the liveliest green. Goethe seemed as to his feelings gay and young as the early spring, but as to his words old in wisdom.

"I ever repeat it," he began, "the world could not exist, if it were not so simple. This wretched soil has been tilled a thousand years, yet its powers are always the same; a little rain, a little sun, and each spring it grows green—and so it goes on."

He allowed his eyes to wander over the verdant fields, and then, turning to me, continued thus on other subjects:

"I have been lately reading something odd—the letters of Jacobi and his friends. This is a remarkable book, and you must read it; not to learn anything from it, but to take a glance into the state of education and literature at a time of which people now have no idea. We see men of a certain importance, but with no trace of a similar tendency and a common interest; each one as an isolated being goes his own way, without sympathizing in the exertions of others. They seem to me like billiard balls; which run blindly by one another on the green cover without mutual knowledge, and which, if

¹ "Wenn das wäre." But he obviously means "Otherwise."

they come in contact, only recede so much the farther from one another."

I smiled at this simile. I asked about the corresponding persons; and Goethe named them to me, with some special remark about each.

"Jacobi was really a born diplomatist, a handsome man of slender figure, elegant and noble mien—who, as an ambassador, would have been quite in his place. As a poet, a philosopher, he had deficiencies.

"His relation to me was peculiar. He loved me personally, without taking interest in my endeavours or even approving of them: friendship was necessary to bind us together. But my connection with Schiller was very peculiar; because we found the strongest bond of union in our common efforts, and had no need of what is commonly called friendship."

I asked whether Lessing appeared in this correspondence.

"No," said he, "but Herder and Wieland do. Herder, however, did not enjoy such connections; he stood so high that this hollowness could not fail to weary him in the long run. Hamann, too, treated these people in a markedly superior way.

"Wieland, as usual, appears in these letters quite cheerful and at home. Caring for no opinion in particular, he was adroit enough to enter into all. He was like a reed, moved hither and thither by the wind of opinion, yet always adhering firmly to its root. My personal relation to Wieland was always very pleasant, especially in those earlier days when he belonged to me alone. His little tales were written at my suggestion; but, when Herder came to Weimar, Wieland was false to me. Herder took him away from me, for this man's power of personal attraction was very great."

The carriage now began to return. We saw towards the east many rain-clouds driving one into another.

"These clouds," said I, "threaten to descend in rain every moment. Do you think they could possibly dissipate, if the barometer rose?"

"Yes," said he, "they would be dispersed from the top downwards, and be spun off like a distaff at once. So strong is my faith in the barometer. I always say that if, in the night of the great inundation of Petersburg, the barometer had risen, the waves would not have overflowed.

"My son believes that the moon influences the weather, and you perhaps think the same, and I do not blame you; the moon is so important an orb that we must ascribe to it a decided

influence on our earth. But the change of the weather, the rise and fall of the barometer, are not affected by the changes of the moon; they are purely telluric.

“I compare the earth and her atmosphere to a great living being perpetually inhaling and exhaling. If she inhale, she draws the atmosphere to her, so that, coming near her surface, it is condensed to clouds and rain. This state I call water-affirmative (*Wasser-bejahung*). Should it continue extraordinarily, the earth would be drowned. This the earth does not allow, but exhales again, and sends the watery vapours upwards; whereupon they are dissipated through the whole space of the higher atmosphere, and become so rarefied that not only does the sun penetrate them with his brilliancy but also the eternal darkness of infinite space is seen through as a fresh blue. This state of the atmosphere I call the water-negative (*Wasser-verneinung*). For as, under the contrary influence, not only water comes profusely from above, but also the moisture of the earth cannot be dried and dissipated—so, in this state, not only no moisture comes from above, but the damp of the earth itself flies upwards. If this should continue extraordinarily, the earth, even if the sun did not shine, would be in danger of drying up.”

Thus spoke Goethe on this important subject, and I listened to him with great attention.

“The thing is very simple, and I abide by what is simple and comprehensive, without being disturbed by occasional deviations. High barometer, dry weather, east wind; low barometer, wet weather, and west wind: this is the general rule by which I abide. Should wet clouds blow hither now and then, when the barometer is high and the wind east, or, if we have a blue sky with a west wind—this does not disturb me or make me lose my faith in the general rule. I merely observe that many collateral influences exist, the nature of which we do not yet understand.

“I will tell you something, by which you may abide during your future life. There is in nature an accessible and inaccessible. Be careful to discriminate between the two; be circumspect, and proceed with reverence.

“We have already done something, if we only know this in a general way, though it is always difficult to see where one begins and the other leaves off. He who does not know it torments himself, perhaps his life long, about the inaccessible, without ever coming near the truth. But he who knows it

and is wise, will confine himself to the accessible; and, while he traverses this region in every direction, and confirms himself therein, will be able to win somewhat even from the inaccessible, though he must at last confess that many things can be approached only to a certain degree, and that nature has ever in reserve something problematical which man's faculties are insufficient to fathom."

During this discourse we had returned into the town. Conversation turned upon unimportant subjects, so that those high views could still dwell for a while within me.

We had returned too early for dinner; and Goethe had time to show me a landscape by Rubens, representing a summer's evening. On the left of the foreground, you saw field-labourers going homewards; in the midst of the picture, a flock of sheep followed their shepherd to the hamlet; a little farther back, on the right, stood a hay-cart, which people were busy loading—while the horses, not yet put in, were grazing near; afar off, in the meadow and thickets, mares were grazing with their foals, and appearances indicated that they would remain there all night. Several villages and a town bordered the bright horizon of the picture, in which the ideas of activity and repose were expressed in the most graceful manner.

The whole seemed to me put together with such truth, and the details painted with such fidelity, that I said Rubens must have copied the picture from Nature.

"By no means," said Goethe. "So perfect a picture has never been seen in Nature; but we are indebted for its composition to the poetic mind of the painter. Still, the great Rubens had such an extraordinary memory that he carried all Nature in his head; she was always at his command, in the minutest particulars. Thence comes this truth in the whole and the details, so that we think it is a mere copy from Nature. No such landscapes are painted nowadays. That way of feeling and seeing Nature no longer exists. Our painters are wanting in poetry.

"Then our young talents are left to themselves; they are without living masters to initiate them into the mysteries of art. Something, indeed, may be learned from the dead; but this is rather a catching of details than a penetration into the deep thoughts and method of a master."

Frau and Herr von Goethe came in, and we sat down to dinner. The lively topics of the day, such as the theatre, balls, and the court, were discussed; but soon we found ourselves

deeply engaged in conversation on the religious doctrines of England.

“You ought, like me,” said Goethe, “to have studied church history for fifty years, to understand how all this hangs together. On the other hand, it is highly remarkable to see with what doctrines the Mohammedans begin the work of education. As a religious foundation, they confirm their youth in the conviction that nothing can happen to man except what was long since decreed by an all-ruling divinity. With this they are prepared and satisfied for a whole life, they scarce need anything further.

“I will not inquire what is true or false, useful or pernicious, in this doctrine; but really something of this faith is held in us all, even without being taught. ‘The ball on which my name is not written, cannot hit me,’ says the soldier in the battle-field; and, without such a belief, how could he maintain such courage and cheerfulness in the most imminent perils? The Christian doctrine, ‘No sparrow falls to the ground without the consent of our Father,’ comes from the same source, intimating that there is a Providence that keeps in its eye the smallest things, without whose will and permission nothing can happen.

“Then the Mohammedans begin their instruction in philosophy with the doctrine that there exists nothing of which the contrary may not be affirmed. Thus they practise the minds of youth, by giving them the task of detecting and expressing the opposite of every proposition; from which great adroitness in thinking and speaking is sure to arise. Certainly, after the contrary of any proposition has been maintained, doubt arises as to which is really true. But there is no permanence in doubt; it incites the mind to closer inquiry and experiment—from which, if rightly managed, certainty proceeds; and in this alone can man find thorough satisfaction.

“You see that nothing is wanting in this doctrine: that with all our systems, we have got no further; and that, generally speaking, further progress is impossible.”

“You remind me of the Greeks,” said I, “who made use of a similar mode of philosophical instruction: as is obvious from their tragedy; which, in its course of action, rests wholly upon contradiction—not one of the speakers ever maintaining any opinion of which the other cannot with equal dexterity maintain the contrary.”

“You are perfectly right,” said Goethe; “so comes the inevitable doubt which is awakened in the spectator or reader.

Thus, at the end, we are brought to certainty by fate, which attaches itself to the moral, and espouses its cause."

We rose from table, and Goethe took me down with him into the garden.

"It is remarkable in Lessing," said I, "that in his theoretical writings—for instance, in the *Laocoon*—he never leads us directly to results, but always takes us by the philosophical way of opinion, counter-opinion, and doubt, before he lets us arrive at any sort of certainty. We rather see the operation of thinking and seeking, than obtain great views and great truths that can excite our own powers of thought, and make ourselves productive."

"You are right," said Goethe; "Lessing himself is reported to have said, that if God would give him truth, he would decline the gift, and prefer the labour of seeking it for himself.

"That philosophic system of the Mohammedans is a good standard, which we can apply to ourselves and others, to ascertain the degree of mental progress we have attained.

"Lessing, from his polemical nature, loved best the region of doubt and contradiction. Analysis is his province, and there his fine understanding aided him most nobly. You will find me wholly the reverse. I have always avoided contradictions, have striven to dispel the doubts within me, and have uttered only the results I have discovered."

I asked Goethe which of the new philosophers he thought the highest.

"Kant," said he, "beyond a doubt. He is the one whose doctrines still continue to work, and have penetrated most deeply into our German civilization. He has influenced even you, although you have never read him; now you need him no longer, for what he could give you you possess already. If you wish, by and by, to read something of his, I recommend to you his *Critique on the Power of Judgment*, in which he has written admirably upon rhetoric, tolerably upon poetry, but unsatisfactorily on plastic art."

"Has your excellency ever had any personal connection with Kant?"

"No," he replied; "Kant never took any notice of me, though from my own nature I went a way like his own. I wrote my *Metamorphosis of Plants* before I knew anything about Kant; and yet it is wholly in the spirit of his doctrine. The separation of subject from object, and further, the opinion that each creature exists for its own sake, and that cork-trees

do not grow merely that we may stop our bottles—this Kant shared with me, and I rejoiced to meet him on such ground. Afterwards I wrote my *Doctrine of Experiment*,¹ which is to be regarded as criticism upon subject and object, and a mediation of both.

“Schiller was always wont to advise me against the study of Kant’s philosophy. He usually said Kant could give me nothing; but he himself studied Kant with great zeal; and I have studied him too, and not without profit.”

While talking thus, we walked up and down the garden: the clouds had been gathering; and it began to rain, so that we were obliged to return to the house.

(Sup.) Wednesday, April 18, 1827.

Before dinner, I took a ride with Goethe some distance along the road to Erfurt.

We were met by all sorts of vehicles laden with wares for the fair at Leipzig; also a string of horses, amongst which were some very fine animals.

“I cannot help laughing at the æsthetical folks,” said Goethe, “who torment themselves in endeavouring by some abstract words to reduce to a conception that inexpressible thing to which we give the name of beauty. Beauty is a primeval phenomenon; which itself never makes its appearance, but the reflection of which is visible in a thousand different utterances of the creative mind and is as various as Nature herself.”

“I have often heard it said that Nature is always beautiful,” said I; “that she causes artists to despair, because they are seldom capable of reaching her completely.”

“I know well,” returned Goethe, “that Nature often reveals an unattainable charm; but I am by no means of opinion that she is beautiful in all her aspects. Her intentions are, indeed, always good; but not so the conditions required to make her manifest herself completely.

“Thus, the oak may be very beautiful; but how many favourable circumstances must concur before Nature can succeed in producing one truly beautiful! If an oak grow in the midst of a forest, encompassed by large neighbouring trunks, its tendency will always be upwards, towards free air and light; only small weak branches will grow on its sides, and these will in the course of a century decay and fall off. But

¹ The title of this paper, which appeared in 1793, and is contained in Goethe’s works, is *Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt*.—J. O.

if it has at last succeeded in reaching the free air with its summit, it will then rest in its upward tendency, and begin to spread itself from its sides, and form a crown. But it is by this time already past its middle age: its many years of upward striving have consumed its freshest powers, and its present endeavour to put forth its strength by increasing in breadth will not now have its proper results. When full grown, it will be high, strong, and slender-stemmed, but still without such a proportion between its crown and its stem as would render it beautiful.

“Again; if the oak grow in a moist marshy place, and the earth is too nourishing, it will, with proper space, prematurely shoot forth many branches and twigs on all sides: but it will still want the opposing, retarding influences: it will not show itself gnarled, stubborn, and indented; and, seen from a distance, it will appear a weak tree of the lime species; it will not be beautiful—at least, not as an oak.

“If, lastly, it grow upon a mountainous slope, upon poor stony soil, it will become excessively gnarled and knotty; but it will lack free development: it will become prematurely stunted, and will never attain such perfection that one can say of it, ‘There is in that oak something that creates astonishment.’”

“I saw very beautiful oaks,” said I, “when, some years ago, I made short tours from Göttingen into the valley of the Weser. I found them particularly magnificent in the neighbourhood of Höxter.”

“A sandy soil, or one mixed with sand,” continued Goethe, “where the oak is able to spread its strong roots in every direction, appears to be most favourable; and then it needs a situation with the necessary space to feel the effects on all sides of light, sun, rain, and wind. If it grows up snugly sheltered from wind and weather, it becomes nothing; but a century’s struggle with the elements makes it strong and powerful, so that, at its full growth, its presence inspires us with astonishment and admiration.”

“From these remarks of yours,” returned I, “cannot this conclusion be drawn: ‘A creature is beautiful when it has attained the summit of its natural development’?”

“Certainly,” returned Goethe; “but still what is meant by the summit of its natural development has to be explained.”

“I would by that,” returned I, “signify the period of growth in which the character peculiar to any creature appears perfectly impressed on it.”

“In that sense,” said Goethe, “there would be nothing to object—especially if we add that, for such a perfect development of character, it is likewise requisite that the build of the different members of a creature should be conformable to its natural destination.

“In that case, a marriageable girl, whose natural destiny is to bear and suckle children, will not be beautiful without the proper breadth of the pelvis and the necessary fulness of the breasts. Still, an excess in these respects would not be beautiful, for that would go beyond conformity to an end. On this account, we might call some of the saddle-horses we met a little time ago beautiful, even according to the fitness of their build. It is not merely the elegance, lightness, and grace of their movements; but something more, of which a good horseman and judge of horses alone can speak, and of which we others merely receive the general impression.”

“Might we not, on the other hand,” said I, “call a cart-horse beautiful, like those strong specimens we met a little time ago drawing the wagons of the Brabant carriers?”

“Certainly,” said Goethe; “and why not? A painter would probably find a far more varied display of beauties in the strongly-marked character and powerful development of bone, sinew, and muscle, in such an animal, than in the softer and more equal character of an elegant saddle-horse.

“The main point is,” continued Goethe, “that the race is pure, and that man has not applied his mutilating hand. A horse with his mane and tail cut, a hound with cropped ears, a tree from which the strongest branches have been lopped and the rest cut into a spherical form, and, above all, a young girl whose youthful form has been spoiled and deformed by stays, are things from which good taste revolts, and which occupy a place in the beauty-catechism of the Philistine only.”

With this and similar conversations, we had returned. We walked about a little in the garden of the house before dinner. The weather was very beautiful; the spring sun grew powerful, bringing out all sorts of leaves and blossoms on bushes and hedges. Goethe was full of thought and hopes of a delightful summer.

At dinner we were very cheerful. Young Goethe had read his father's *Helena*, and spoke upon it with much judgment and natural intelligence. He showed decided delight at the part conceived in the antique spirit; while we could see that he had not fully entered into the operatic, romantic half.

“You are right,” said Goethe; “it is something peculiar. The rational cannot be said to be always beautiful; but the beautiful is always rational—at least it ought to be. The antique part pleases you because it is comprehensible; because you can take a survey of the details, and approach my reason with your own. In the second half too, all sorts of understanding and reason are employed; but it requires some study, before the reader can discover the author’s reason.”

Goethe then praised the poems of Madame Tastu, with which he had been lately occupied.

When the rest had departed, and I also prepared to go, he begged of me to remain a little longer. He ordered a portfolio, with engravings and etchings by Dutch masters, to be brought in.

“I will treat you with something good, by way of dessert,” said he. With these words, he placed before me a landscape by Rubens.

“You have already seen this picture,” said he; “but nobody can look often enough at anything really excellent—besides, there is something very particular in this. Will you tell me what you see?”

“I begin from the distance,” said I. “I see in the farthest background a very clear sky, as if after sunset. Then, still in the far distance, a village and a town, in the light of evening. In the middle of the picture there is a road, along which a flock of sheep is hastening to the village. At the right hand of the picture are several haystacks, and a wagon which appears well laden. Unharnessed¹ horses are grazing near. On one side, among the bushes, are several mares with their foals, which appear as if they were going to remain out of doors all night. Then, nearer to the foreground, there is a group of large trees; and lastly, quite in the foreground to the left, there are various labourers returning homewards.”

“Good,” said Goethe, “that is apparently all. But the principal point is still wanting. All these things, which we see represented, the flock of sheep, the wagon with hay, the horses, the returning labourers—on which side are they lighted?”

“They receive light,” said I, “from the side turned to us, and the shadow is thrown into the picture. The returning

¹ The original says “harnessed” (*angeschirrt*), but as this is evidently the same engraving as the one mentioned at p. 189, where the horses are described as “unharnessed” (*abgespannt*), I assume that *angeschirrt* is a misprint for *abgeschirrt*.—J. O.

labourers in the foreground are especially in the light, which produces an excellent effect."

"But how has Rubens produced this beautiful effect?"

"By making these light figures appear on a dark ground," said I.

"But this dark ground," said Goethe, "whence does it arise!"

"It is the powerful shadow thrown by the group of trees towards the figures," said I. "But how?" continued I, with surprise; "the figures cast their shadows into the picture; the group of trees, on the contrary, cast theirs towards the spectator. We have, thus, light from two different sides, which is quite contrary to Nature."

"That is the point," returned Goethe, with a smile. "It is by this that Rubens proves himself great, and shows to the world that he, with a free spirit, stands *above* Nature, and treats her conformably to his high purposes. The double light is certainly a violent expedient, and you certainly say that it is contrary to Nature. But if it is contrary to Nature, I still say it is higher than Nature; I say it is the bold stroke of the master, by which he, in a genial manner, proclaims to the world, that art is not entirely subject to natural necessities, but has laws of its own.

"The artist," continued Goethe, "must, indeed, in his details faithfully and reverently copy Nature; he must not arbitrarily change the structure of the bones, or the position of the muscles and sinews of an animal, so that the peculiar character is destroyed. This would be annihilating Nature. But in the higher regions of artistical production, by which a picture really becomes a picture, he has freer play; and here he may have recourse to *fictions*, as Rubens has done with the double light in this landscape.

"The artist has a twofold relation to Nature; he is at once her master and her slave. He is her slave, inasmuch as he must work with earthly things, in order to be understood; but he is her master, inasmuch as he subjects these earthly means to his higher intentions, and renders them subservient.

"The artist would speak to the world through an entirety; he does not find this entirety in Nature—it is the fruit of his own mind; or, if you like it, of the aspiration of a fructifying divine breath.

"If we observe this landscape by Rubens cursorily, everything appears as natural to us as if it had been copied exactly from Nature. But this is not so. So beautiful a picture has

never been seen in Nature—any more than a landscape by Poussin or Claude Lorraine, which appears very natural to us, but which we vainly seek in the actual world.”

“Are there not,” said I, “bold strokes of artistic fiction, similar to this double light of Rubens, to be found in literature?”

“We need not go far,” said Goethe, after some reflection; “I could show you a dozen of them in Shakespeare. Only take *Macbeth*. When the lady would animate her husband to the deed, she says:

I have given suck, etc.

Whether this be true or not does not appear; but the lady says it, and she must say it, in order to give emphasis to her speech. But in the course of the piece, when Macduff hears of the account of the destruction of his family, he exclaims in wild rage:

He has no children!

These words of Macduff contradict those of Lady Macbeth; but this does not trouble Shakespeare. The grand point with him is the force of each speech; and as the lady, in order to give the highest emphasis to her words, must say ‘I have given suck,’ so, for the same purpose, Macduff must say ‘He has no children.’

“Generally,” continued Goethe, “we must not judge too exactly and narrowly of the pencil touches of a painter, or the words of a poet; we should rather contemplate and enjoy a work of art that has been produced in a bold and free spirit, and if possible with the same spirit.

“Thus it would be foolish, if, from the words of Macbeth:

Bring forth men children only! etc.

it were concluded that the lady was a young creature who had not yet borne any children. It would be equally foolish if we were to go still further, and say that the lady must be represented on the stage as a very youthful person.

“Shakespeare does not make Macbeth say these words to show the youth of the lady. Like those of Lady Macbeth and Macduff, which I quoted just now, they are introduced merely for rhetorical purposes, and prove nothing more than that the poet always makes his character say whatever is proper, effective, and good in each *particular place*, without troubling himself to calculate whether these words may perhaps fall into apparent contradiction with some other passage.

“Shakespeare, in writing his pieces, could hardly have thought that they would appear in print, so as to be told over, and compared one with another; he had rather the stage in view when he wrote¹; he regarded his plays as a lively and moving scene, that would pass rapidly before the eyes and ears upon the stage, not as one that was to be held firmly, and carped at in detail. Hence, his only point was to be effective and significant for the moment.”

(Sup.) Tuesday, April 24, 1827.

August Wilhelm von Schlegel is here. Goethe took a drive with him round the Webicht before dinner, and this evening gave a great tea-party in his honour, at which Schlegel's fellow-traveller Dr. Lassen was present. All in Weimar, of any rank and name, were invited, so that the press in Goethe's room was very great. Herr von Schlegel was surrounded by ladies, to whom he showed thin rolled-up strips with images of Indian gods, as well as the whole text of two great Indian poems of which nobody but himself and Dr. Lassen probably understood anything. Schlegel was dressed with extreme neatness, and had an extremely youthful and blooming appearance, so that some of the assembled guests were pleased to maintain that he appeared not unskilled in the use of cosmetic means.

Goethe drew me to the window. “Now, how does he please you?” “Not better than I expected,” returned I. “He is, in many respects, no true man,” continued Goethe; “still, we must bear with him a little, on account of his extensive knowledge and great deserts.”

(Sup.) Wednesday, April 25, 1827.

Dined with Goethe and Dr. Lassen—Schlegel had once more gone to dine at the court. Here Lassen displayed great knowledge of Indian poetry; which seemed highly acceptable to Goethe, as he could thus complete his own very deficient knowledge of these things.

In the evening I again spent a few moments with Goethe. He related that Schlegel had been with him at twilight, and they had carried on a very important conversation on historical and literary subjects, very instructive to him. “Only,” said

¹ In thus declaring the emancipation of Shakespeare from the bonds of consistency, Goethe exemplifies his own. For it will be seen, on referring back, p. 123, that on December 25, 1825, he said that Shakespeare “is not a theatrical poet; he never thought of the stage.”

he, "one must not expect grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles; for the rest, all is very excellent."

(Sup.) Thursday, May 3, 1827.

The highly successful translation of Goethe's dramatic works, by Stapfer, was noticed by Monsieur J. J. Ampère in the Parisian *Globe* of last year, in a manner no less excellent; and this affected Goethe so agreeably that he very often recurred to it, and expressed his great obligations.

"Ampère's point of view is a very high one," said he. "Whereas German critics on similar occasions start from philosophy, and in the consideration and discussion of a poetical production proceed so that what they intend as an elucidation is intelligible only to philosophers of their own school—while for other people it is far more obscure than the work upon which they intended to throw light—M. Ampère shows himself quite practical and popular. Like one who knows his profession thoroughly, he shows the relation between the production and the producer, and judges the different poetical productions as different fruits of different epochs of the poet's life.

"He has studied most profoundly the changing course of my earthly career, and of my state of mind, and has had the faculty of seeing what I have not expressed and what could only be read between the lines. How truly has he remarked that, during the first ten years of my official and court life at Weimar, I scarcely did anything; that despair drove me to Italy; and that I there, with new delight in producing, seized upon the history of Tasso, in order to free myself, by the treatment of this agreeable subject, from the painful and troublesome impressions and recollections of my life at Weimar! He therefore very happily calls *Tasso* an elevated *Werther*.

"Then, concerning *Faust*, his remarks are no less acute; since he notes not only the gloomy discontented striving of the principal character, but also the scorn and the bitter irony of Mephistopheles, as part of myself."

In this, and a similar spirit of acknowledgment, Goethe often spoke of M. Ampère. We took a decided interest in him: we endeavoured to picture to ourselves his personal appearance; and, if we could not succeed in this, we at least agreed that he must be a man of middle age to understand the reciprocal action of life and poetry. We were therefore extremely surprised when M. Ampère arrived in Weimar a few days ago, and proved to be a lively youth, some twenty years old; and we