

the studies of future statesmen, of so much theoretically-learned knowledge, by which young people are ruined before their time, in both mind and body. When they enter into practical service, they possess indeed an immense stock of philosophy and learning; but in the narrow circle of their calling this cannot be practically applied and must therefore be forgotten as useless. On the other hand, what they most needed they have lost; they are deficient in mental and bodily energy, which is quite indispensable in practical life.

“And then, are not love and benevolence also needed in the life of a statesman—in the management of men? And how can anyone feel and exercise benevolence towards another, when he is ill at ease with himself?”

“But all these people are in a dreadfully bad case. The third part of the learned men and statesmen, shackled to the desk, are ruined in body and consigned to the demon of hypochondria. Here there should be action from above, that future generations may at least be preserved from a like destruction.

“In the meantime,” he continued, smiling, “let us remain in a state of hopeful expectation as to the condition of us Germans a century hence, and whether we shall then have advanced so far as to be no longer savants and philosophers, but men.”

Sunday, June 15, 1828.

We had not been long at table before Herr Seidel, accompanied by the Tyrolese, was announced. The singers remained in the garden-room, so that we could see them perfectly through the open doors, and their song was heard to advantage from that distance. Herr Seidel sat down with us. These songs and the yodelling of the cheerful Tyrolese, with their peculiar burden, delighted us young people. Fräulein Ulrica and I were particularly pleased with the *Strauss*, and *Du, du, liegst mir im Herzen*, and asked for a copy of them. Goethe seemed by no means so much delighted as we.

“To know how cherries and strawberries taste,” said he, “ask children and birds.”

Between the songs, the Tyrolese played national dances on a sort of horizontal guitar accompanied by a clear-toned German flute.

Young Goethe was called out, but soon returned and dismissed the Tyrolese. He sat down with us again. We talked of *Oberon*, and the great concourse of people who had come

together from all quarters to see that opera; so that even at noon there were no more tickets to be got. Young Goethe proposed we should leave the table.

"Dear father," said he, "our friends will wish to go somewhat earlier to the theatre this evening."

Goethe thought such haste very odd, as it was scarcely four o'clock; however, he made no opposition, and we dispersed through the apartments. Seidel came to me and some others, and said softly and with a troubled brow:

"You need anticipate no pleasure at the theatre; there will be no performance; the Grand Duke is dead; he died on his journey hither from Berlin."

A shock went through the company. Goethe came in; we went on as if nothing had happened, and talked of indifferent things. Goethe called me to the window, and talked about the Tyrolese and the theatre.

"You have my box to-day," said he, "and need not go till six; stay after the others, that we may have a little chat."

Young Goethe was trying to send the guests away, that he might break the news to his father before the return of the Chancellor, who had brought it to him. Goethe could not understand his son's conduct, and seemed annoyed.

"Will you not stay for coffee?" said he; "it is scarcely four o'clock."

The others all departed; and I, too, took my hat.

"What! are you going too?" said he, astonished.

"Yes," said young Goethe; "Eckermann has something to do before going to the theatre." "Yes," said I, "I have something to do." "Go along then," said Goethe, shaking his head with a suspicious air; "still, I do not understand you."

We went with Fräulein Ulrica into the upper rooms, while young Goethe remained below, and broke the sad tidings to his father.

I saw Goethe late in the evening. Before I entered his chamber, I heard him sighing and talking aloud to himself: he seemed to feel that an irreparable rent had been torn in his existence. He refused all consolation.

"I thought," said he, "that I should depart before him; but God disposes as He thinks best; and all that we poor mortals have to do is to endure and keep ourselves upright as well and as long as we can."

The Dowager Grand Duchess received the melancholy news at her summer residence of Wilhelmsthal, the younger members of the family received it in Russia. Goethe went soon to Dornburg, to withdraw himself from daily saddening impressions and to restore himself by fresh activity in a new scene. By important literary incitements on the part of the French, he had been once more impelled to his theory of plants; and this rural abode, where at every step into the pure air he was surrounded by the most luxurious vegetation, twining vines and sprouting flowers, was very favourable to such studies.

I sometimes visited him there, in company with his daughter-in-law and grandchildren. He seemed very happy, and repeatedly expressed his delight at the beautiful situation of the castle and gardens.

And indeed there was, from windows at such a height, an enchanting prospect. Beneath was the variegated valley, with the Saale meandering through the meadows. On the opposite side, toward the east, were woody hills, in the daytime passing showers losing themselves in the distance, and at night the eastern starry host and the rising sun.

“I enjoy here,” said Goethe, “both good days and good nights. Often before dawn I am awake, and lie down by the open window to enjoy the splendour of the three planets at present visible together, and to refresh myself with the increasing brilliance of the morning-red. I then pass almost the whole day in the open air, and hold spiritual communion with the tendrils of the vine, which say good things to me and of which I could tell you wonders. I also write poems again—which are not bad—and, if it were permitted, I should like always to remain here.”

Thursday, September 11, 1828.

At two o'clock to-day, in the very finest weather, Goethe returned from Dornburg. He looked very well, and was quite browned by the sun. We soon sat down to dinner in the chamber next the garden, the doors of which stood open. He told us of many visits and presents he had received, and indulged in light jests. Closer observation, however, revealed a certain embarrassment, such as is felt by a person returning to a former situation that is conditioned by manifold relations, views, and requirements.

During the first course, a message came from the Dowager

Grand Duchess, expressing her pleasure at Goethe's return and announcing that she would visit him on the following Tuesday.

Since the death of the Grand Duke, Goethe had seen no member of the reigning family. He had indeed corresponded constantly with the Dowager Grand Duchess, so that they had sufficiently expressed their feelings upon their common loss. Neither had Goethe yet seen the young Duke and Duchess, nor paid his homage to them as new rulers of the land. All this he had now to undergo; and, even though it could not disturb him as an accomplished man of the world, it was an impediment to his talent, which always loved to move in its own way. Visits, too, threatened him from all parts. The meeting at Berlin of celebrated scientists had set in motion many important personages; some of whom, passing through Weimar, had announced themselves, and were soon expected. Whole weeks of disturbance, which would take the inner self out of its usual track, and other annoyances connected with visits otherwise so valuable—all this was anticipated like a coming spectre by Goethe. What made all these coming evils still worse was that, the fifth section of his works, to contain the *Wanderjahre*, having been promised for the press at Christmas, Goethe had begun an entire remodelling of this novel, which originally appeared in one volume—combining so much new matter with the old that in the new edition it would occupy three volumes.

Much is done, but there is also much to do. The manuscript has everywhere gaps of white paper, yet to be filled up.

Last spring Goethe gave me this manuscript to look over. We then both by voice and in writing discussed the subject at great length. I advised him to devote the whole summer to the completion, and to lay aside all other work. He was convinced of the necessity, and had resolved to do so; but the death of the Grand Duke had caused a gap in his existence; the tranquillity and cheerfulness necessary to such a composition were not now to be thought of, and he needed all his strength merely to sustain the blow and to revive from it. Now, when, with the commencement of autumn, returning from Dornburg, he again paced the rooms of his Weimar residence, the thought of completing his *Wanderjahre*, for which he had now only the space of a few months, came vividly before his mind. So Goethe was ill at ease within himself, although he jested lightly at dinner. I have another reason for men-

tioning these circumstances, they are connected with an observation of Goethe's, of which I will now speak.

Professor Abeken of Osnaburg had sent me, shortly before the 28th of August, an enclosure, requesting me to give it to Goethe on his birthday, and saying it was a memorial relating to Schiller. When Goethe was speaking to-day at dinner of the presents sent to him at Dornburg in honour of his birthday, I asked him what Abeken's packet contained.

"It was a remarkable present," said Goethe, "which gave me great pleasure. An amiable lady with whom Schiller took tea conceived the happy idea of writing down all he said. She comprehended it well, and related it with accuracy; and, after so long a time, it still reads well: transplanting you immediately into a situation now past—with a thousand others as interesting, while the living spirit of this one only has been happily caught and fixed upon paper.

"Schiller appears here in as perfect possession of his sublime nature at the tea-table as he would have been in a council of state. Nothing constrains him, nothing narrows him, nothing draws downward the flight of his thoughts; the great views that lie within him are ever expressed freely and fearlessly. He was a true man, such as one ought to be. We others always feel ourselves subject to conditions. The persons, the objects that surround us, have their influence. The tea-spoon constrains us, if it is of gold, when it should be of silver; and so, paralysed by a thousand considerations, we fail in expressing freely whatever may be great in our nature. We are the slaves of environment, and appear little or important according as this contracts or gives us room to expand."

Wednesday, October 1, 1828.

Herr Hönninghausen of Crefeld, head of a great mercantile house, and also an amateur of natural science, especially mineralogy—a man possessed of varied information, through extensive travels and studies—dined with Goethe to-day. He had returned from the meeting of scientists at Berlin; and a great deal was said about things scientific, especially mineralogical.

There was also some talk about the Vulcanists, and the way in which men arrive at views and hypotheses about Nature. On this occasion, several great scientists were mentioned, including Aristotle, concerning whom Goethe spoke thus:

"Aristotle observed Nature better than any modern, but he

was too hasty with his opinions. We must go slowly and gently to work with Nature, if we would get anything out of her.

“If, on investigating natural objects, I formed an opinion, I did not expect Nature to concede the point at once; but I pursued her with observations and experiments, and was satisfied if she were kind enough to confirm my opinion when occasion offered. If she did not do this, she at any rate brought me to some other view, which I followed out and which I perhaps found her more willing to confirm.”

Friday, October 3, 1828.

To-day, at dinner, I talked with Goethe about Fouqué's *Sängerkrieg auf der Wartburg*,¹ which I had read in compliance with his wish. We agreed that this poet had spent his life in old-German studies, without drawing from them any real culture in the end.

“From these old-German gloomy times,” said Goethe, “we can obtain as little as from the Serbian songs and similar barbaric popular poetry. We can read it and be interested for a while, but merely to cast it aside and to let it lie behind us. Generally speaking, a man is sufficiently saddened by his own passions and destiny, and need not make himself more so by the darkness of a barbaric past. He needs illuminating and cheering influences, and should turn to those eras in art and literature when remarkable men obtained perfect culture so that they were satisfied with themselves and able to impart the blessing to others.

“But if you would have a good opinion of Fouqué, read his *Undine*, which is charming. The subject is indeed very good; the writer has scarcely done with it all that was possible.”

“I have been unfortunate in my acquaintance with the most modern German literature,” said I. “I came to the poems of Egon Ebert from Voltaire, whose acquaintance I had just made through those little poems addressed to individuals, which certainly belong to the best he ever wrote. And now, I have fared no better with Fouqué. While deeply engaged in Walter Scott's *Fair Maid of Perth*, the first work of this great writer which I had ever read, I am induced to put it aside, and to give myself up to the *Sängerkrieg auf der Wartburg*.”

“Against these great foreigners,” said Goethe, “the modern Germans certainly cannot keep their ground; but it is desirable

¹ The *War of the Singers of the Wartburg* was a famous poetical contest in the days of the old Minnesängers.—J. O.

you should by degrees make yourself acquainted with all writers, foreign and domestic, that you may see how that higher world-culture which the poet needs is to be obtained."

Frau von Goethe came in and sat down to the table with us.

"But," continued Goethe, with animation, "Walter Scott's *Fair Maid of Perth* is excellent, is it not? There is finish! there is a hand! What a firm foundation for the whole, and in particulars not a touch which does not lead to the catastrophe! Then, what details of dialogue and description, both of which are excellent.

"His scenes and situations are like pictures by Teniers; in the arrangement they show the summit of art, the individual figures have a speaking truth, and the execution is extended with artistic love to the minutest details, so that not a stroke is lost. How far have you read?"

"I have come," said I, "to the passage where Henry Smith carries the pretty minstrel girl home through the streets, and round about lanes; and where, to his great vexation, Proudfoot and Dwining meet him."

"Ah," said Goethe, "that is excellent; that the obstinate honest blacksmith should be brought at last to take with him not only the suspicious maiden, but even the little dog, is one of the finest things to be found in any novel. It shows a knowledge of human nature, to which the deepest mysteries are revealed."

"It was also," said I, "an admirable notion to make the heroine's father a glover, who, by his trade in skins, must have been long in communication with the Highlanders."

"Yes," said Goethe, "that is a touch of the highest order. From this spring the book's best settings and situations; which thus obtain a real basis, an air of convincing truth. You find everywhere in Walter Scott a remarkable security and thoroughness in his delineation; which proceeds from his comprehensive knowledge of the real world, obtained by lifelong studies and observations and a daily discussion of the most important settings. Then come his great talent and his comprehensive nature. You remember the English critic who compares the poets to the voices of male singers, of which some can command only a few fine tones—while others have the whole compass, from the highest to the lowest, completely in their power. Walter Scott is one of this last sort. In the *Fair Maid of Perth* you will not find a single weak passage to make you feel as if his knowledge and talent were insufficient. He is equal

to his subject in every direction: the king, the royal brother, the prince, the head of the clergy, the nobles, the magistracy, the citizens and mechanics, the Highlanders—are all drawn with the same sure hand, and hit off with equal truth.”

“The English,” said Frau von Goethe, “particularly like the character of Henry Smith, and Walter Scott seems to have made him the hero of the book: however, he is not my favourite; I like the prince.”

“The prince,” said I, “is indeed amiable enough with all his wildness, and is as well drawn as any of the rest.”

“The passage,” said Goethe, “where, sitting on horseback, he makes the pretty minstrel girl step upon his foot, that he may raise her up for a kiss, is in the boldest English style. But you ladies are wrong always to take sides. Usually, you read a book to find nutrition for the heart; to find a hero whom you could love. This is not the way to read; the great point is, not whether this or that character pleases, but whether the whole book pleases.”

“We women were made so, dear father,” said she, affectionately leaning over the table to press his hand.

“Well, we must let you have your own way in your amiability,” replied Goethe.

The last number of the *Globe* lay by him, and he took it up. I talked meanwhile with Frau von Goethe, about some young Englishmen whose acquaintance I had made at the theatre.

“What men these writers in the *Globe* are!” resumed Goethe, with animation. “How they become greater and more remarkable every day, and how much imbued with one spirit! Such a paper would be utterly impossible in Germany. We are mere individuals; harmony and concert are not to be thought of: each has the opinions of his province, his city, and his own idiosyncrasy; it will be long before we have attained a universal culture.”

Tuesday, October 7, 1828.

There was the most lively party at dinner to-day. Besides the Weimar friends, there were some scientists returned from Berlin; among whom Herr von Martius, from Munich, who sat next Goethe, was known to me. Goethe was good-humoured and communicative. The theatre was talked about, and much was said of the opera last given—Rossini’s *Moses*. They found fault with the subject, and both praised and found fault with the music.

Goethe said, "I do not understand how you can separate the subject from the music and enjoy each by itself. You say the subject is not a good one; but you can set that aside and enjoy the excellent music. I really admire this arrangement in your natures, by which your ears are able to listen to pleasant sounds, while the most powerful sense—vision—is tormented by the absurdest objects. And that this *Moses* is absurd, you will not deny. When the curtain rises you see the people standing at prayer. This is very wrong. It is written, 'When thou prayest, go into thy closet, and shut the door.'¹ But there ought to be no praying on the stage.

"I would have made a wholly different *Moses*, and have begun the piece quite otherwise. I would have first shown you how the children of Israel suffered from the tyranny of the Egyptian task-masters, in order to render more conspicuous the merit of Moses in freeing them."

Goethe then cheerfully went through the whole opera step by step, through all the scenes and acts, with a historical feeling for the subject, to the delighted astonishment of the whole company. It passed too quickly for me to seize it; but I remember the dance of the Egyptians, which Goethe introduced to express their joy at the return of light, after the darkness had been overcome.

The conversation turned from Moses to the deluge, and took a scientific turn.

"It is said," observed Herr von Martius, "they have found on Ararat a petrified piece of Noah's ark, and I shall be surprised if they do not also find petrified skulls of the first men."

This remark led to others of a similar kind, and the conversation turned upon the various races of men—how as black, brown, yellow, and white, they inhabit the different countries of the earth. Finally arose the question whether we ought to assume that all men are descended from the single pair, Adam and Eve.

Von Martius was for the biblical account, which he sought to confirm by the maxim that Nature goes to work as economically as possible in her productions.

"I cannot agree," said Goethe. "Nature is always lavish, even prodigal; and it would show more acquaintance with her to believe she has, instead of one paltry pair, produced men by dozens or hundreds.

"When the earth had arrived at a certain point of maturity,

¹ If Goethe said this, he had his Bible-dates sadly mixed up.

when the water had ebbed away and the dry land was verdant enough, came the epoch for the creation of man; and men arose, through the omnipotence of God, wherever the ground permitted—perhaps on the heights first.

“To believe that this happened is reasonable; but to attempt to decide *how* it happened is useless trouble, which we will leave to those who like to busy themselves with insoluble problems and have nothing better to do.”

“Even,” said Herr von Martius, archly, “if I could, as a naturalist, willingly yield to your excellency’s opinion, I should as a good Christian find some difficulty in adopting a view that cannot well be reconciled with the account given us in the Bible.”

“Holy writ,” replied Goethe, “certainly speaks only of one pair of human beings, whom God made on the sixth day. But the gifted men who wrote down the Word of God, as recorded in the Bible, had first in view their own chosen people; and, as far as that people is concerned, we will not dispute the honour of a descent from Adam and Eve. But we, as well as the Negroes and Laplanders, and slender men, who are handsomer than any of us, had certainly different ancestors; and this worthy company must confess that we at present differ in a variety of particulars from the genuine descendants of Adam, and that they — especially where money is concerned — are superior to us all.”

We laughed. Goethe, excited by von Martius to argument, said many things which, under the appearance of jesting, had a deeper meaning at bottom.

After dinner, the Prussian minister, Herr von Jordan, was announced, and we went into the next room.

Wednesday, October 8, 1828.

Tieck, returning from a journey to the Rhine, with his wife, his daughters, and Countess Finkenstein, was to dine with Goethe to-day. I met them in the ante-room.

Professor Götting came in, fresh from his Italian tour. I was extremely glad to see him again, and drew him to a window that he might tell me what he had seen.

[The burden of Götting was that he had to leave Rome because his money was spent.]

Goethe came in, and greeted his guests. He talked on

various subjects with Tieck and his family, and then offered the Countess his arm to take her to the dining-room.

After dinner, the Princes von Oldenburg were announced. We then went up to Frau von Goethe's apartment, where Fräulein Agnes Tieck seated herself at the piano, and gave us the song *Im Felde schleich' ich still und wild*, with a fine alto voice, and thoroughly in the spirit of the situation.

Thursday, October 9, 1828.

I dined to-day with Goethe and Frau von Goethe alone; and, as often happens, a conversation begun on one day was continued on another. Rossini's *Moses* was again spoken of, and we recalled Goethe's lively invention the day before yesterday.

"What I said, in the merriment and good-humour of the moment, about *Moses*," said he, "I cannot recall; for such things are done unconsciously. But of this I am certain: I cannot enjoy an opera unless the story is as perfect as the music, so that the two may keep pace. If you ask what opera I consider good, I would name the *Wasserträger* (Water-Carrier); for here the subject is so perfect that, if given as a mere drama without music, it could be seen with pleasure. Composers either do not understand the importance of a good foundation, or have not intelligent poets to assist them with good stories. If *Der Freischütz* had not been so good a subject, the mere music would hardly have drawn such crowds; so Herr Kind should have some share in the honour."

We spoke of Professor Götting and his travels in Italy.

"I cannot blame the good man," said Goethe, "for speaking of Italy with such enthusiasm; I well know what I experienced myself. Indeed, I may say that only in Rome have I felt what it really is to be a man. To this elevation, to this happiness of feeling, I have never since arisen; indeed, compared with my situation at Rome, I have never since felt real gladness.

"But," he continued, "we will not give ourselves up to melancholy thoughts. How do you get on with your *Fair Maid of Perth*?"

"I read slowly," said I. "However, I am now as far as the scene where Proudfoot, when in Henry Smith's armour he imitates his walk and whistle, is slain, and on the following morning is found in the streets of Perth by the citizens; who, taking him for Smith, raise a great alarm."

"Aye," said Goethe, "that scene is remarkable; it is one of the best."

"I have been struck," said I, "with Walter Scott's great talent for disentangling confused situations; so that the whole separates itself into masses and quiet pictures, which leave on our minds an impression as if, like omniscient beings, we had looked down and seen events occurring at the same time in various places."

"All round," said Goethe, "he shows great understanding of art; so that people like us, who always look to see how things are done, find a double interest in his works."

"I will not anticipate, but you will find in the third volume an admirable contrivance. You have already seen how the prince in council makes the wise proposal to let the rebel Highlanders destroy one another in combat, and how Palm Sunday is appointed for the hostile clans to come down to Perth and to fight for life or death—thirty against thirty. You will see with admiration how Scott manages to make one man fail on one side on the decisive day, and with what art he contrives to bring his hero Smith from a distance into the vacant place among the combatants. This is admirably done; and you will be delighted when you come to it."

"But, when you have finished the *Fair Maid of Perth*, you must at once read *Waverley*; which is indeed from quite a different point of view, but which may without hesitation be set beside the best works that have ever been written in this world. We see that it is the same man who wrote the *Fair Maid of Perth*, but that he had yet to gain the favour of the public, and therefore collected his forces so that he might not give a touch that is short of excellence. The *Fair Maid of Perth*, on the other hand, is from a freer pen; the author is now sure of his public, and proceeds more at liberty. After reading *Waverley*, you will understand why Walter Scott still designates himself the author of that work; for there he showed what he could do; and he has never since written anything to surpass, or even equal, that first-published novel."

Thursday evening, October 9, 1828.

In honour of Tieck, a very pleasant tea-party was given this evening in the apartments of Frau von Goethe. I made the acquaintance of Count and Countess Medem. The latter told me that she had seen Goethe to-day and had been highly delighted. The Count was especially interested in *Faust* and its continuation, and animatedly conversed with me about it.

We had hoped that Tieck would read something aloud, and he did. The party retired into a more remote room, and

after all had comfortably seated themselves in a wide circle on chairs and sofas, he read *Clavigo*.

I had often read and felt this drama; but now it appeared to me quite new. It seemed as if I heard it from the stage, only better; every character and situation was more perfectly felt: as in a theatrical representation in which each part is well performed.

It would be hard to say what parts Tieck read best—those in which the powers and passions of the male characters are developed, or the quiet clear scenes addressed to the understanding, or the moments of tortured love. For giving expression to passages of this last sort, he had especial qualifications. The scene between Marie and Clavigo is still ringing in my ears: the oppressed bosom; the faltering and trembling of the voice; the broken half-stifled words and sounds; the panting and sighing of a hot breath, accompanied with tears—all is still present with me, and will never be forgotten. Everyone was absorbed and wholly carried away. The lights burned dim; nobody thought of that or ventured to snuff them, for fear of the slightest interruption. Tears constantly dropping from the eyes of the ladies showed the deep effect of the piece, and were the most hearty tribute that could be paid to the reader or the poet.

Tieck had finished, and rose, wiping the perspiration from his forehead; but the hearers seemed still fettered to their chairs. Each man appeared too deeply engaged with what had just been passing through his soul, to have ready the suitable words of gratitude for him who had produced so wonderful an effect upon us all. Gradually, however, we recovered ourselves. The company arose, and talked cheerfully. Then we partook of a supper that stood ready on little tables in the adjoining rooms.

Goethe himself was not present this evening; but his spirit and a remembrance of him were living among us all. He sent an apology to Tieck; and to his daughters, Agnes and Dorothea, two handkerchief-pins with his own picture and red ribbons, which Frau von Goethe gave them and fastened to their dresses like little orders.

Friday, October 10, 1828.

From Mr. William Frazer of London, editor of the *Foreign Review*, I received this morning two copies of the third number of that periodical. I gave one to Goethe at dinner.

I found again a pleasant dinner-party, invited in honour of Tieck and the Countess; who, at the urgent request of Goethe and their other friends, had remained another day, the rest of the family having set off in the morning for Dresden.

A special subject of conversation was English literature, and particularly Walter Scott; on which occasion Tieck said *he* brought to Germany the first copy of *Waverley*, ten years ago.

Saturday, October 11, 1828.

The above-mentioned number of the *Foreign Review* contained, with a variety of other important and interesting articles, a very fine essay by Carlyle, upon Goethe, which I studied this morning.

I went to Goethe a little earlier to dinner, that I might have an opportunity of talking this over with him before the arrival of the other guests. I found him, as I wished, still alone, expecting the company. He wore his black coat and star, with which I so much like to see him. He appeared to-day in quite youthful spirits, and told me he likewise had been looking at Carlyle's article this morning, so that we were in a position to exchange commendations of these foreign attempts.

"It is pleasant to see," said Goethe, "how the earlier pedantry of the Scotch has changed into earnestness and profundity. When I recollect how the *Edinburgh* reviewers treated my works not many years since, and when I now consider Carlyle's merits with respect to German literature, I am astonished at the important step for the better."

"In Carlyle," said I, "I venerate most the mind and character at the foundation of his tendencies. The chief point with him is the culture of his own nation; and, in the literary productions of other countries which he wishes to make known to his contemporaries, he pays less attention to the arts of talent, than to the moral elevation that can be attained through such works."

"Yes," said Goethe, "the temper in which he works is always admirable. What an earnest man he is! and how he has studied us Germans! He is almost more at home in our literature than we are. At any rate, we cannot vie with him in our researches in English literature."

"The article," said I, "is written with a fire and impressiveness which show that there are many prejudices and contradictions to contend with in England. *Wilhelm Meister* especially seems to have been placed in an unfavourable light by malevolent critics and bad translators. Carlyle, on the contrary,

opposes to the stupid objection that no virtuous lady could read *Wilhelm Meister*, the example of the late Queen of Prussia, who made herself familiar with the book, and was rightly esteemed one of the first women of her time."

There now came in some of the guests, whom Goethe received. He then turned to me again.

"Carlyle has, indeed," said I, "studied *Meister*; and being so thoroughly penetrated with its value, he would like to see it universally circulated."

Goethe drew me to a window to answer me.

"My dear young friend," said he, "I will confide to you something that may help you on a great deal. My works cannot be popular. He who thinks and strives to make them so is in error. They are written, not for the multitude, but only for individuals who desire something congenial, whose aims are like my own."

He wished to say more; but a young lady who came up interrupted him and drew him into conversation. I turned to the others, and soon afterwards we sat down to table.

I could pay no attention to the conversation that was going on; Goethe's words entirely occupied my mind.

[Eckermann here puts in words a longish reverie he fell into at this point, concerning the intellectual aristocraticalness necessary to qualify anybody to be an admirer of Goethe.]

Meanwhile, all around me were jesting and talking, and partaking of the good fare. I spoke now and then a word, but without exactly knowing what I said. A lady put a question to me; to which, it seems, I did not render a very appropriate answer: they all laughed at me.

"Leave Eckermann alone," said Goethe. "He is always absent, except when he is at the theatre."

Biscuits and some very fine grapes were brought for dessert. The latter had been sent from a distance, and Goethe would not say whence they came. He divided them, and handed me a very ripe branch across the table.

I highly enjoyed the grapes from Goethe's hand, and was now quite near him in both body and soul.

They talked of the theatre, and of Wolff's great merits, and of what had been done by that excellent artist.

"I know very well," said Goethe, "that our earlier actors learned much from me, but I can properly call none but Wolff my pupil. I will give you an instance, which I am very fond

of repeating; to show how thoroughly he was penetrated with my principles, and how fully he acted in my spirit. I was once very angry with Wolff for various reasons. He played one evening, and I was sitting in my box. 'Now,' thought I, 'you can keep a sharp look out upon him; for there is not to-day a spark of affection within you which can speak out for him and excuse him.' Wolff acted, and I kept my eye fixed upon him. And how he did act! How safe—how firm he was! It was impossible to find even the shadow of an offence against the rules I had implanted, and I saw that a reconciliation with him was inevitable."

Monday, October 20, 1828.

Oberberggrath¹ Nœggerath of Bonn, on his return from the meeting of scientists at Berlin, was a very welcome guest to-day at Goethe's table. He gave us sound information about the mineralogy of the neighbourhood of Bonn.

After dinner we went into the room where there is the colossal bust of Juno. Goethe showed the guests a long slip of paper, with outlines of the frieze of the temple at Phigalia. While we were looking at these, somebody remarked that the Greeks, in representing animals, adhered less to nature than to certain conventional rules; and there was an attempt to prove, that in representations of this kind they are inferior to nature and that their rams, oxen, and horses, as they appear in bas-relief, are often very stiff, shapeless, and imperfect creatures.

"I will not dispute that point," said Goethe; "but before all, we must distinguish the time and the artist from which such works proceed. Plenty of masterpieces have been found, in which the Greek artists, in representing animals, have not only equalled, but far surpassed nature. Even the English, who understand horses better than any nation in the world, are compelled to acknowledge that there exist two antique heads of horses more perfect in their form than those of any race now on earth.

"These heads are from the best Greek period; and our astonishment at such works ought not to lead us to infer that the artists copied from a more perfect nature than we have now. Rather, they themselves had become of some value in the progress of art, so that they confronted nature with their own personal greatness."

¹ Literally "Upper-Mine-Councillor"—a superior officer in a mining office.—J. O.

While all this was said, I stood looking at an engraving with a lady at one of the tables, and could only lend half an ear to Goethe's words; but so much the deeper did they sink into my mind.

After the company had gradually departed, and I was alone with Goethe, who stood by the stove, I approached him.

"Your excellency," said I, "made an excellent remark a little while ago, when you said that the Greeks confronted nature with their own greatness, and I think that we cannot be too deeply penetrated with this maxim."

"Yes," said Goethe, "all depends on this: one must *be* something in order to *do* something. Dante seems to us great; but he had the culture of centuries behind him. The house of Rothschild is rich; but it has taken more than one generation to accumulate such treasures. These things lie deeper than is thought.

"Our worthy artists who imitate the old German school know nothing of this; they imitate nature with their own weakness and artistic incapacity, and fancy they are doing something. They stand *below* nature. But whoever will produce anything great must have so improved his culture that, like the Greeks, he can elevate the trivial actualities of nature to the level of his own mind, and really carry out what remains a mere intention in natural phenomena—from either internal weakness or external obstacles."

Wednesday, October 22, 1828.

To-day at dinner we talked about ladies. "Women," said Goethe, "are silver dishes into which we put golden apples. My idea of women is not abstracted from the phenomena of actual life; but has been born with me, or arisen in me, God knows how. The female characters I have drawn have therefore all turned out well; they are all better than could be found in reality."

(Sup.) Thursday, October 23, 1828.

Goethe spoke to-day with great respect of a little paper of the Chancellor's on the Grand Duke Charles Augustus; which reviews, in short compass, the active life of this remarkable prince.

"He has been very happy with this little work," said Goethe; "the materials are carefully gathered; all is animated by the heartiest love, while at the same time the style is so close that

one act follows immediately upon another, and we almost feel a mental giddiness in the contemplation of such fulness of life. The Chancellor has sent his work to Berlin, and received some time ago a letter from Alexander von Humboldt, which I could not read without deep emotion. Humboldt was on the most intimate terms with the Grand Duke during a long life—which certainly is not to be wondered at, since the highly endowed nature of the Prince was always athirst for fresh knowledge; and Humboldt, with his universality, was just the man to be always ready with the best answer to every question.

“Now, it is singular that the Grand Duke passed his very last days at Berlin in almost constant intercourse with Humboldt, and that he was at last able to obtain from his friend the solution of many important problems that lay near his heart. Further, for one of the greatest princes Germany ever possessed to have had such a man as Humboldt as witness of his last days and hours was most fortunate. I have made a copy of the letter, and will show you some passages.”

Goethe went to his desk, whence he took the letter, and then reseated himself at the table. He read for some time in silence. I saw tears in his eyes. “Read it for yourself,” said he, whilst he handed it to me. He rose and walked up and down the room whilst I read:

[Humboldt’s letter praised the cheerfulness of the Grand Duke’s last days. Within twenty-four hours of death he was asking about the granite of the shores of the Baltic (just brought from Sweden), the possibility of a comet tail’s dimming our atmosphere, the cause of the severity of winters on eastern coasts, and whether hot springs (such as Töplitz—whither he was going) were just like water artificially heated. At Potsdam, Humboldt sat many hours beside his couch while he alternately drank, slept, and wrote to his wife—at intervals propounding difficult questions in physics, astronomy, meteorology, and geognosy; upon the first appearance of organized forms; and upon the earth’s internal heat.]

“He slept at intervals during his discourse and mine; was often restless; and then said, mildly and kindly excusing his apparent inattention, ‘You see, Humboldt, it is all over with me!’

“Suddenly, he began to talk desultorily upon religious matters. He regretted the increase of pietism, and the connection of this species of fanaticism with a tendency towards political absolutism and a suppression of all free mental action. ‘Then,’ he exclaimed, ‘there are false-hearted fellows who think

that by means of pietism they can make themselves agreeable to princes and obtain places and ribbons. They have smuggled themselves in with a poetical predilection for the Middle Ages.'

"His anger soon abated, and he said that he now found much consolation in the Christian religion. 'It is a humane doctrine,' said he, 'but has been distorted from the beginning. The first Christians were the free-thinkers among the ultras.'"

I expressed to Goethe my delight at this noble letter. "You see," said Goethe, "what an extraordinary man he was. But how good it is of Humboldt to have taken up these last few traits, in which the whole nature of this eminent prince is reflected. Yes, such he was!—I can say it better than anyone, for nobody knew him so thoroughly as I did. But is it not lamentable that there is no distinction, and that such a man must depart from us so early! Had he stayed with us only a poor century more, how, in his high position, he could have advanced his age! But mark this. The world will not attain its goal so speedily as we expect and desire. There are always retarding dæmons, who start in opposition at every point; so that, although the whole progresses, it is but slowly. Only live on, and you will find that I am right."

"The development of mankind," said I, "appears to be laid out as a work for thousands of years."

"Perhaps millions," said Goethe—"who knows? But let mankind last as long as it may, it will never lack obstacles to give it trouble, and never lack the pressure of necessity to develop its powers.

"Men will become more clever and more acute; but not better, happier, and stronger in action—or at least only at epochs. I foresee the time when God will have no more joy in them, but will break up everything for a renewed creation. I am certain that everything is planned to this end, and that the time and hour in the distant future for the occurrence of this renovating epoch are already fixed. But a long time will elapse first, and we may still for thousands and thousands of years amuse ourselves on this dear old surface."

Goethe was in a particularly good and elevated mood. He ordered a bottle of wine, and filled for himself and me. Our conversation again turned upon the Grand Duke Charles Augustus.

"You see," said Goethe, "how his extraordinary mind embraced all nature. Physics, astronomy, geognosy, meteorology, vegetable and animal formations of the primitive world

—he had a mind for all. He was eighteen when I came to Weimar; but even then the buds showed what the tree would one day become. He soon attached himself to me, and took a deep interest in all I did. It was advantageous to our intercourse that I was ten years older than he. He sat whole evenings with me, in earnest conversation on art and nature and other excellent topics. We often sat together deep into the night, and not unfrequently we both fell asleep on one sofa. We worked together for fifty years, and it is no wonder that we at last achieved something.”

“So thorough a cultivation as the Grand Duke seems to have received is probably rare among princes.”

“Very rare!” returned Goethe. “There are indeed many capable of conversing cleverly on every subject; but they have it not at heart, and only dabble on the surface. And it is no wonder, if we consider the frightful dissipations and distractions that accompany a court life, to which a young prince is exposed. He must take notice of everything; he must know a bit of this and a bit of that: nothing can take root; and it requires a strong natural foundation not to end in smoke. The Grand Duke was indeed a born great man; in this all is said, and all is done.”

“With all his highly scientific and intellectual tendencies,” said I, “he appears to have understood the art of government.”

“He was a man of one piece,” said Goethe; “with him everything flowed from one great source. As the whole was good, the individual parts were good, let him do as he might. But he possessed three especially useful qualities for carrying on a government. He had the talent of discriminating between minds and characters, and of placing everyone in his proper place. Then—another gift as great, if not greater: he was animated by the noblest benevolence, by the purest philanthropy, and with his whole soul aimed only at what was best. He always thought first of the happiness of his country, and only at last a little of himself. His hand was always ready and open to meet worthy men, and to promote worthy objects. There was a great deal that was divine in him. He would have liked to promote the happiness of all mankind. Love engenders love, and one who is loved can easily govern.”

“Thirdly, he was greater than those who surrounded him. After ten voices heard, he perceived an eleventh and a better one, in himself. Strange whispers passed him unheeded, and he was not easily led to commit anything unprincely by setting aside real merit on which a doubt had been cast and taking

worthless ragamuffins under his protection. He surveyed everything himself, judged for himself, and had in all cases the surest basis in himself. Moreover, he was of a silent nature, and his words were always followed by action."

"How it grieves me," said I, "that I knew nothing of him but his exterior! Still, that made a deep impression. I see him still in his old droshky, in a worn-out grey cloak and military cap, smoking a cigar, as he drove to the chase, with his favourite hound by his side. I have never seen him drive otherwise than in that ugly old droshky. And never with more than two horses. An equipage with six horses, and coats with orders, do not seem to have been to his taste."

"That sort of thing," returned Goethe, "is now almost out of date with princes generally. The only point now is what a man weighs in the scale of humanity; all the rest is nothing. A coat with a star, and a chariot with six horses, at all events, impose on the rudest multitude only, and scarcely that. The Grand Duke's old droshky barely hung upon springs. Whoever drove with him had to put up with some desperate shocks. But that was his way; he liked the rough and inconvenient, and was an enemy to effeminacy."

"We see traces of that in your poem of *Ilmenau*," said I, "in which you appear to have drawn him to the life."

"He was then very young," returned Goethe, "and we certainly led rather a mad life. He was like a fine wine, still in a high state of fermentation. He did not know how to expend his powers, and we often nearly broke our necks. Fagging all day long on horseback, over hedges and ditches, through rivers, up hill and down hill; and then at night encamping in the open air, by a fire in the wood—this was what he liked. To have inherited a dukedom was in him nothing; but to have taken one by storm he would have considered something."

"The poem of *Ilmenau* contains, as an episode, an epoch which, in the year 1783, when I wrote it, lay many years behind us; so that I could describe myself in it as a historical personage, and could hold a conversation with the self of former years. There occurs in it, as you know, a night-scene after one of the break-neck chases on the mountain. We had built ourselves at the foot of a rock some little huts and covered them with fir branches, that we might pass the night on dry ground. Before the huts we burned several fires, and we cooked and spread out the produce of the chase. Knebel,

whose tobacco pipe was not then cold, sat next to the fire and enlivened the company with dry jokes, while the wine-flask passed from hand to hand. Sechendorf the slender, with his long thin limbs, had comfortably stretched himself out by the trunk of a tree, and was humming all sorts of poetics. On one side, in a similar little hut, lay the Grand Duke, in a deep slumber. I myself sat before him, by the glimmering light of the coals, absorbed in grave thoughts, suffering accessions of regret for the mischief done by my writings. Knebel and Sechendorf do not appear to me to be badly drawn, neither is the young prince, in the gloomy impetuosity of his twentieth year.

He hurries onwards, inconsiderate,
 No rock appears too steep, no bridge too small,
 Ghastly mischances ever on him wait,
 And into Pain's hard arms he oft must fall.
 The wild unruly impulse in his breast,
 Now here, now there, still sets him roving;
 At last he takes his gloomy rest,
 When weary of his gloomy moving.
 Joyless, though feeling no control,
 Sullen, though wild in happiest days,
 Wounded and fagged in body and in soul,
 On a hard couch his frame he lays.

"That is he exactly. Not the slightest touch is exaggerated. Nevertheless, the Duke soon worked himself out of this 'storm-and-pressure period,'¹ into a state of useful serenity; so that on his birthday in the year 1783 I could well remind him of this image of his earlier days.

"I will not deny that in the beginning he caused me much trouble and anxiety. Yet his noble nature soon cleared itself and formed itself to the highest degree of perfection, so that it was a pleasure to live and act with him."

"In these early times you made a tour with him through Switzerland," remarked I.

"He was fond of travelling," returned Goethe, "not so much to amuse himself as to have his eyes and ears open and to notice whatever was good and useful, in order to introduce it into his own country. On this account, agriculture, cattle-breeding, and industry altogether, are infinitely indebted to him. His tendencies were not generally personal or egotistical, but of a purely productive kind; indeed, productive for the

¹ The "storm-and-pressure [*Sturm und Drang*] period" of German literature, which takes its name from one of Klinger's plays, is that period of unfettered impulse which is particularly represented by Schiller's *Robbers*.—J. O.

general good. He has thus acquired a name far beyond this little country."

"His careless, simple exterior," said I, "appeared to intimate that he did not seek renown and set little store by it. It seemed as if he had become renowned without any effort of his own, merely by means of his own quiet excellence."

"There is something peculiar in that," returned Goethe. "Wood burns because it has the proper stuff for that purpose in it; and a man becomes renowned because he has the necessary stuff in him. Renown is not to be sought, and all pursuit of it is vain. A person may indeed by skilful conduct and various artificial means make a sort of name for himself. But if the inner jewel is wanting, all is vanity and will not last a day. Just the same is it with popular favour. He did not seek it, and he by no means flattered people; but the nation loved him, because it felt he had a heart for it."

Goethe mentioned the other members of the Grand Duke's family, and how the mark of a noble character ran through them all. He spoke of the benevolence of the present Regent, and of the great hopes entertained of the young Prince; and expatiated with evident love upon the rare qualities of the now-reigning Princess; who, in the noblest spirit, was applying great means to alleviate sufferings and to make seeds of good germinate. "She has at all times been a good angel to her country," said he, "and she becomes so more and more. I have known the Grand Duchess since the year 1805, and have had many opportunities of admiring her mind and character. She is one of the best and most distinguished women of our time, and would be so if she were not a princess. And this is the great point: that even when the purple has been laid aside, much that is great—nay, what is really the best—still remains."

We then spoke of the unity of Germany, and in what sense it was possible and desirable.

"I am not uneasy," said Goethe, "about the unity of Germany; our good high roads and future railroads will of themselves do their part. But, above all, may Germany be one in mutual love! and may it always be one against the foreign foe! May it be one, so that German dollars and groschen may be of equal value throughout the whole empire! one, so that my travelling-chest may pass unopened through all the six-and-thirty states! May it be one, so that the town passport of a citizen of Weimar may not be considered insufficient, like

that of a *foreigner*, by the frontier officer of a large neighbouring state! May there be no more talk about inland and outland among the German states! In fine, may Germany be one in weight and measure, in trade and commerce, and a hundred similar things!

“But if we imagine that the unity of Germany consists in this very great empire having a single great capital, and that this one great capital would conduce to the development of great individual talent, or to the welfare of the great mass of the people—we are in error. A state has been justly compared to a living body with many limbs; and the capital may be compared to the heart, from which life and prosperity flow to the individual members, near and far. But, if the members be very distant from the heart, the life that flows to them will become weaker and weaker. A clever Frenchman, I think Dupin, has sketched a chart of the state of culture in France, and has exhibited the greater or less enlightenment of the different departments by a lighter or darker colour. Now, some departments, particularly in the southern provinces remote from the capital, are represented by a perfectly black colour, as a sign of the great darkness prevailing there. But would that be so if *la belle France*, instead of one great focus, had ten foci, whence life and light might proceed?

“Whence is Germany great, but by the admirable culture of the people, which equally pervades all parts of the kingdom? But does not this proceed from the various seats of government? and do not these foster and support it? Suppose, for centuries past, we had had in Germany only the two capitals, Vienna and Berlin, or only one of these: I should like to see how it would have fared with German culture, or even with generally diffused opulence that goes hand in hand with culture. Germany has about twenty universities distributed about the whole empire, and about a hundred public libraries similarly distributed. There are also a great many collections of art and collections of objects belonging to all the kingdoms of nature; for every prince has taken care to bring around him these useful and beautiful objects. There are gymnasia and schools for arts and industry in abundance—nay, there is scarcely a German village without its school. And how does France stand with respect to this last point!

“Then look at the German theatres, exceeding seventy, and not to be despised as supporters and promoters of a higher cultivation of the people. In no country are the taste for

and the practice of music and singing so widely spread as in Germany; and even that is something!

“And now think of such cities as Dresden, Munich, Stuttgart, Cassel, Brunswick, Hanover; think of the great elements of life comprised within these cities; think of the effect they have on neighbouring provinces; and ask yourself if all this would have been, if they had not for a long time been residences of princes?”

“Frankfort, Bremen, Hamburg, and Lübeck, are great and brilliant; their effect on the prosperity of Germany is incalculable. But would they remain what they are, if they lost their own sovereignty and became incorporated with any great German kingdom as provincial towns? I see reason to doubt.”

Tuesday, November 18, 1828.

Goethe spoke of a new article in the *Edinburgh Review*. “It is a pleasure to me,” said he, “to see the elevation and excellence to which the English critics now rise. There is not a trace of their former pedantry, its place is occupied by great qualities. In the last article—the one on German literature—you will find this remark: ‘There are people among poets who have a tendency always to occupy themselves with things which another likes to drive from his mind.’ What say you to this? There we know at once where we are, and how we have to classify a great number of our most modern literati.”

Tuesday, December 16, 1828.

I dined to-day with Goethe alone, in his work-room. We talked on various literary topics.

“The Germans,” said he, “cannot cease to be Philistines. They are now squabbling about some verses printed both in Schiller’s works and in mine, and fancy it is important to ascertain which really belong to Schiller and which to me: as if anything could be gained by the investigation—as if the existence of the things were not enough. Friends, such as Schiller and I, intimate for years, with the same interests, in habits of daily intercourse, and under reciprocal obligations, live so completely *into* one another, that it is hardly possible to decide to which of the two the particular thoughts belong. We have made many distichs together; sometimes I gave the thought and Schiller made the verse; sometimes the contrary; sometimes he made one line, and I the other. What matters

the mine and thine? Only a thorough Philistine would attach the slightest importance to the solution of such questions.”

“Something similar,” said I, “often happens in the literary world; for instance, when people doubt the originality of this or that celebrated man, and seek to trace out the sources whence he obtained his cultivation.”

“Ridiculous!” said Goethe; “we might as well question a strong man about the oxen, sheep, and swine, he has eaten, which have given him strength.”

“We are indeed born with faculties; but we owe our development to a thousand influences of the great world, from which we appropriate what we can and what is suitable. I owe much to the Greeks and French; I am infinitely indebted to Shakespeare, Sterne, and Goldsmith; but in saying this I do not show the sources of my culture—that would be an endless as well as an unnecessary task. What is important is to have a soul that loves truth and assimilates it wherever found.”

“Besides, the world is now so old, so many eminent men have lived and thought for thousands of years, that there is little new to be discovered or expressed. Even my theory of colours is not entirely new. Plato, Leonardo da Vinci, and many other excellent men, have before me found and expressed the same thing in a detached form; my merit is, that I have found it also, that I have said it again, and that I have striven to bring the truth once more into a confused world.”

“The truth must be repeated over and over again; because error is repeatedly preached among us, not only by individuals, but by the masses. In periodicals and cyclopædias, in schools and universities—everywhere, in fact, error prevails, and is quite easy in the feeling that it has a decided majority on its side.”

“Often, too, people teach truth and error together, and stick to the latter. Thus, a short time ago, I read in an English cyclopædia the doctrine of the origin of Blue. First came the correct view of Leonardo da Vinci; but then followed, as quietly as possible, the error of Newton, coupled with remarks that this was to be adhered to because it was the view generally adopted.”

I could not help laughing. “Every wax-taper,” I said, “every illuminated cloud of kitchen-smoke that has anything dark behind it, every morning mist when it lies before a steady spot, daily convinces me of the origin of blue colour, and makes me comprehend the blueness of the sky. What the Newtonians

mean when they say that the air has the property of absorbing other colours, and of repelling blue alone, I cannot at all understand, nor do I see what use or pleasure is to be derived from a doctrine in which all thought stands still and all sound observation completely vanishes."

"My good innocent friend," said Goethe, "these people do not care a jot about thoughts and observations. They are satisfied if they have only words they can pass as current, as was well shown by my own Mephistopheles:

Mind, above all, you stick to words,
Thus through the safe gate you will go
Into the fane of certainty;
For when ideas begin to fail
A word will aptly serve your turn, [etc.]"

Goethe recited this passage laughing. "It is a good thing," said he, "that all is already in print; and I shall go on printing as long as I have anything to say against false doctrine and its disseminators.

"We have now excellent men rising up in natural science," he continued, after a pause, "and I am glad to see them. Others begin well, but afterwards fall off; their predominating subjectivity leads them astray. Others, again, dwell too much on facts, and collect a vast number by which nothing is proved. On the whole, there is a want of originating mind to penetrate to original phenomena and to master particular appearances."

A short visit interrupted our discourse. When we were again alone, the conversation returned to poetry; and I told Goethe I had of late been once more studying his little poems, and had dwelt especially on two of them—the ballad¹ about the children and the old man, and the *Happy Couple* (die glücklichen Gatten).

"I myself set some value on these two poems," said Goethe, "although the German public have hitherto not been able to make much out of them."

"In the ballad," I said, "a very copious subject is brought into a very limited compass, by means of all sorts of poetical forms and artifices. I especially praise the expedient of making the old man tell the children's past history down to the present, the rest being developed before our eyes."

"I carried the ballad a long time in my head," said Goethe,

¹This poem is simply entitled *Ballade*, and begins "Herein, O du Guter! du Alter herein!"—J. O.

“before I wrote it down. Whole years of reflection are comprised in it, and I made three or four trials before I could reduce it to its present shape.

“The poem of the *Happy Couple*,” continued Goethe, “is likewise rich in *motifs*; whole landscapes and passages of human life appear in it, warmed by the sunlight of a charming spring sky, which is diffused over the whole. I have always liked that poem, and I am glad you are interested. The ending of the whole pleasantry with a double christening is, I think, pretty enough.”

We then came to the *Citizen-General* (*Bürger-General*); with respect to which I said I had been lately reading this piece with an Englishman and we had both felt the strongest desire to see it on the stage. “In the spirit of the work,” said I, “there is nothing antiquated; and in the details of dramatic development there is not a touch that does not seem designed for the stage.”

“It was a very good piece in its time,” said Goethe, “and caused us many a pleasant evening. It was, indeed, excellently cast, and had been so admirably studied that the dialogue moved along as glibly as possible. Malcomi played Märten; nothing could be more perfect.”

“The part of Schnaps,” said I, “seems to me no less felicitous. Indeed, I should not think there were many better or more thankful parts in the repertoire. There is in this personage, as in the whole piece, a clearness, an actual presence, to the utmost extent that can be desired for a theatre. The scene where he comes in with the knapsack and produces the things one after another, where he puts the moustache on Märten, and decks himself with the cap of liberty, uniform, and sword, is among the best.”

“That scene,” said Goethe, “used to be very successful on our stage. The knapsack, with the articles in it, had really a historical existence. I found it in the time of the Revolution, on my travels along the French border, when the emigrants on their flight had passed through, and one of them might have lost it or thrown it away. The articles it contained were just the same as in the piece. I wrote the scene upon it; and the knapsack, with all its appurtenances, was always introduced, to the delight of our actors.”

The question whether the *Citizen-General* could still be played with any interest or profit was discussed.

Goethe then asked about my progress in French literature;

and I told him I still from time to time took up Voltaire, whose great talent delighted me.

“I still know but little of him,” said I; “I keep to his short poems addressed to persons, which I read over and over again, and which I cannot lay aside.”

“Indeed,” said Goethe, “all is good that is written by so great a genius as Voltaire, though I cannot excuse all his profanity. But you are right to give time to those little poems addressed to persons; they are among the most charming of his works. Not a line but is full of thought: clear, bright, and graceful.”

“And we see his relations to all the great and mighty of the world, and notice with pleasure the distinguished position taken by himself: he seems to feel equal to the highest, and we never find that any majesty can embarrass his free mind even for a moment.”

“Yes,” said Goethe, “he bore himself like a man of rank. And with all his freedom and audacity, he ever kept within the limits of propriety, which is perhaps saying still more. I may cite the Empress of Austria as an authority in such matters; she has repeatedly assured me that in those poems of Voltaire’s there is no trace of crossing the line of *convenance*.”

“Does your excellency remember the short poem in which he makes to the Princess of Prussia, afterwards Queen of Sweden, a pretty declaration of love, by saying that he dreamed of being elevated to the royal dignity?”

“It is one of his best,” said Goethe, and he recited the lines:

Je vous aimais, princesse, et j’osais vous le dire;
Les Dieux à mon reveil ne m’ont pas tout oté,
Je n’ai perdu que mon empire.

“How pretty that is! And never had poet his talent so completely at command every moment. I remember an anecdote of his visit to Madame du Châtelet. Just as he was going away, and the carriage was standing at the door, he received a letter from a great number of young girls in a neighbouring convent, who wished to play the *Death of Julius Cæsar* on the birthday of their abbess, and begged him to write them a prologue. The case was too delicate for a refusal; so Voltaire at once called for pen and paper, and, standing, wrote the desired prologue upon the mantelpiece. It is a poem of perhaps twenty lines, thoroughly digested, finished, perfectly suited to the occasion; in short, of the very best.”

“I am very desirous to read it,” said I.

"I doubt," said Goethe, "whether you will find it in your collection: it has only lately come to light. Indeed, he wrote hundreds of such poems, of which many may still be scattered about among private persons."

"I found, of late, a passage in Lord Byron," said I, "by which I was pleased to see that even Byron had an extraordinary esteem for Voltaire. We may see in his works how much he liked to read, study, and make use of Voltaire."

"Byron," said Goethe, "knew too well where anything was to be got, and was too clever not to draw from this universal source of light."

The conversation then turned entirely upon Byron, and several of his works; and Goethe repeated many of his former expressions of admiration.

"To all your excellency says of Byron," said I, "I agree from the bottom of my heart; but, however great and remarkable he may be as a talent, I much doubt whether a decided gain for *pure human culture* is to be derived from his writings."

"There, I must contradict you," said Goethe; "the audacity and grandeur of Byron must certainly tend towards culture. We should take care not to be always looking for it in the decidedly pure and moral. Everything that is great promotes cultivation as soon as we are aware of it."

(Sup.) Sunday, December 21, 1828.

[Eckermann relates another of his dreams: how in a foreign town two fiery points fell out of a bright yellow mist, and, on his coming up amid a crowd, proved to be Mephistopheles and Faust—the former gentlemanlike and without malice, his devilhood indicated only by the graceful curve of two little horns like the curve of hair on a forehead; Faust with astonishing nobility of expression: both of them youthful. He walked away conversing with these two, the crowd dispersing.]

1829

Wednesday, February 4, 1829.

"I HAVE continued to read Schubart," said Goethe. "He is a remarkable man, and says much that is excellent if we translate it into our own language. The chief tendency of his book is to show that there is a point of view beyond the sphere of philosophy—namely, that of common sense; and that art and science, apart from philosophy, and by means of a free action of natural human powers, have always thriven best. This is grist for our mill. I have always kept myself free from philosophy. The common-sense point of view was also mine; Schubart confirms what I have been saying and doing all my life.

"The only thing I cannot commend in him is this: he knows certain things better than he will confess, and so does not go quite honestly to work. Like Hegel, he would bring the Christian religion into philosophy, though it really has nothing to do with it. Christianity has a might of its own, by which dejected suffering humanity is re-elevated from time to time; when we grant it this power, it is raised above all philosophy and needs no support therefrom. Neither does the philosopher need the countenance of religion to prove such doctrines as eternal duration. Man should believe in immortality; he has a right to this belief; it corresponds with the wants of his nature, and he may believe in the promises of religion. But if the philosopher tries to deduce the immortality of the soul from a legend, that is very weak and inefficient. To me, the eternal existence of my soul is proved from my idea of activity; if I work on incessantly till my death, nature is bound to give me another form of existence when the present one can no longer sustain my spirit."¹

Goethe had a portfolio, full of drawings and engravings, brought. After he had looked at some, he showed me a fine engraving after a picture of Ostade's.

"Here," said he, "you have the scene of our goodman and goodwife."

¹ A curious conclusion, for a champion of common sense as against philosophy!

I saw the interior of a peasant's dwelling; with kitchen, parlour, and bedroom, all in one. Man and wife sat opposite one another; the wife spinning, the husband winding yarn, a child at their feet. In the background was a bed, and everywhere there was nothing but the rudest and most necessary household utensils. The door led at once into the open air. This idea of a happy marriage in a humble condition was perfectly conveyed by this engraving; comfort, content, and a certain luxuriance in the loving emotions of matrimony, were expressed in the faces of both man and wife as they looked upon one another.

"The longer we look at this picture," said I, "the happier we feel."

"It is the charm of sensuousness," said Goethe, "with which no art can dispense, and which reigns in subjects of this kind. In works of a higher kind, when the artist goes into the ideal, it is difficult to keep up the proper degree of sensuousness, so as not to become dry and cold. Youth or age may be favourable or impeding; hence the artist should reflect on his age, and select his subjects accordingly. I succeeded with my *Iphigenia* and *Tasso*, because I was young enough to penetrate and animate the ideal of the stuff with sensuous feeling. Now, such ideal subjects would no longer be suited to me, and I do right in selecting those whose material already contains some sensuousness. If the Genasts stay here, I shall write two pieces for you, both in one act and in prose. One will be of the most cheerful kind, and end with a wedding; the other will be shocking and terrible, and two corpses will be on the stage at the end—this one dates from the time of Schiller, who wrote a scene of it at my request. I have long thought over both these subjects, and they are so completely present to my mind that I could dictate either of them in a week, as I did my *Citizen-General*."

"Do so," said I. "Write the two pieces at all events; it will be a recreation to you after the *Wanderjahre*, and will operate like a little journey. And how pleased the world would be, if, against everybody's expectation, you did something more for the stage."

"As I said," continued Goethe, "if the Genasts stay here, I am not sure that I shall not indulge in this little pleasantry. But without this prospect there is little inducement; a play on paper is nothing. The poet must know the means he has to work with, and must adapt his characters to the actors who

are to play them. If I can reckon upon Genast and his wife, and take also La Roche, Herr Winterberger, and Madame Seidel, I know what I have to do, and can be certain my intentions will be carried out.

“Writing for the stage,” he continued, “is peculiar, and he that does not understand it thoroughly had better leave it alone. Everyone thinks an interesting fact will appear interesting on the boards—nothing of the kind! Things may be very pretty to read and very pretty to think about, and yet yield a very different effect on the stage: what has charmed us in the closet will probably fall flat on the boards. If anyone reads my *Hermann and Dorothea*, he thinks it might be brought out at the theatre. Töpfer has been inveigled into the experiment; but what is it, what effect does it produce, especially if not played in a first-rate manner? and who can say that it is in every respect a good piece? Writing for the stage is a trade to be understood, requiring possession of a talent. Both are uncommon, and where they are not combined we shall scarcely have any good result.”

Monday, February 9, 1829.

Goethe talked of the *Wahlverwandtschaften*: remarking that a person whom he had never seen or known in his life had supposed the character of Mittler to be meant for himself.

“There must be some truth in the character,” said he, “and it must have existed more than once in the world. Indeed, there is not a line in the *Wahlverwandtschaften* that is not taken from my own experience; and there is more in it than can be gathered from a first reading.”

Tuesday, February 10, 1829.

I found Goethe surrounded by maps and plans referring to the building of the Bremen harbour, in which he took an interest.

There was then much talk about Merck; and Goethe read me a poetical epistle written from Merck to Wieland in 1776, in very spirited but somewhat hard doggerel verse (*Knüttelverse*). The lively production is especially directed against Jacobi, whom Wieland seems to have over-estimated in a critique in the *Merkur*—a fault Merck cannot pardon.

We talked of the state of culture at the time, and how difficult it was to emerge from the so-called storm-and-pressure period to a higher culture; of his first years in Weimar; of the poetic talent's conflict with that reality which he was for his own higher advantage obliged to encounter, through his position at

court and the various services demanded of him. Hence nothing poetical of importance was produced during the first ten years. He read several fragments; and showed how he was saddened by love-affairs, and how his father was always impatient of the court life.

Then we came to the advantage that he did not change his place of abode and was not obliged to go twice through the same experience; then came his flight to Italy to revive his poetic power—the superstitious fancy that he would not succeed if anyone knew about it, and the profound secrecy in consequence; how he wrote to the Grand Duke from Rome, and returned from Italy with great claims upon him.

Next we talked of the Duchess Amelia—a perfect princess, with perfectly sound sense and a taste for the joy of life. She was very fond of Goethe's mother, and wished her to come to Weimar; but he opposed it.

Then about the first beginnings of *Faust*.—“*Faust* sprang up at the same time as *Werther*. I brought it with me in 1775 to Weimar; I had written it on letter-paper; and had not made an erasure, for I took care not to write down a line that was not worthy to remain.”

Wednesday, February 11, 1829.

Oberbau-Director Coudray dined with me at Goethe's house. He spoke much of the Female School of Industry and the Orphan's Institute, as the best establishments of their kind in this country. The former was founded by the Grand Duchess; the latter by the Grand Duke Charles Augustus. Much was said about theatrical decoration and road-making. Coudray showed Goethe a sketch for a prince's chapel. With respect to the place of the ducal chair, Goethe made some objections, to which Coudray yielded.

Soret came after dinner. Goethe showed us once more the pictures of Herr von Reutern.

Thursday, February 12, 1829.

Goethe read me the thoroughly noble poem, *Kein Wesen kann zu nichts zerfallen* (No being can dissolve to nothing), which he had lately written.

“I wrote this poem,” said he, “in contradiction to my lines:

*Denn alles muss zu nichts zerfallen
Wenn es im Seyn beharren will, etc.*

For all must melt away to nothing
Would it continue still to be.

—which are stupid; and which my Berlin friends, at the late assembly of scientists, set up in golden letters, to my annoyance.”

The conversation turned on the great mathematician Lagrange, whose character Goethe extolled.

“He was a good man,” said he, “and on that very account a great man. For when a good man is gifted with talent, he always works morally for the salvation of the world—as poet, philosopher, artist, or what not.

“I am glad you had an opportunity yesterday of knowing Coudray better. He says little in general society; but, here among ourselves, you have seen the excellent mind and character of the man. He had at first much opposition to encounter; but he has now fought through it all, and enjoys the entire confidence and favour of the court. Coudray is one of the most skilful architects of our time. He has adhered to me and I to him, and this has been of service to us both. If I had but known him fifty years ago!”

We then talked about Goethe’s own architectural knowledge. I remarked that he must have acquired much in Italy.

“Italy gave me an idea of earnestness and greatness,” said he, “but no practical skill. The building of the castle here in Weimar advanced me more than anything. I was obliged to assist, and even to make drawings of entablatures. I had a certain advantage over the professional people, because I was superior to them in intention.”

We talked of Zelter.

“I have a letter from him,” said Goethe, “complaining that the performance of the oratorio of the *Messiah* was spoiled for him by one of his female scholars, who sang an aria too weakly and sentimentally. Weakness is a characteristic of our age. My hypothesis is, that it is a consequence of the efforts made in Germany to get rid of the French. Painters, scientists, sculptors, musicians, poets—with but few exceptions, all are weak, and the general mass is no better.”

“Yet I do not give up hope,” said I, “of seeing suitable music composed for *Faust*.”

“Quite impossible!” said Goethe. “The awful and repulsive passages that must occasionally occur are not in the style of the time. The music should be like that of *Don Juan*. Mozart should have composed for *Faust*. Meyerbeer would perhaps be capable; but he would not touch anything

of the kind¹; he is too much engaged with the Italian theatres.”

Afterwards—I do not recollect in what connection—Goethe made the following important remark:

“All that is great and skilful exists with the minority. There have been ministers who have had both king and people against them, and have carried out their great plans alone. It is not to be imagined that reason can ever be popular. Passions and feelings may become popular; reason always remains the sole property of a few eminent individuals.”

Friday, February 13, 1829.

Dined with Goethe alone.

“After I have finished the *Wanderjahre*,” said he, “I shall turn to botany again to continue the translation with Soret; I only fear it may lead me too far, and at last prove an incubus. Great secrets still lie hidden; much I know, and of much I have an intimation. I will confide to you something that will sound odd.

“The plant goes from knot to knot, closing at last with the flower and the seed. In the animal kingdom it is the same. The caterpillar and the tape-worm go from knot to knot, and at last form heads. With the higher animals and man, the vertebral bones grow one upon another, and terminate with the head, in which the powers are concentrated.

“With corporations it is the same as with individuals. The bees, a series of individuals, connected one with another at least as a community, produce something that is the conclusion and may be regarded as the head of the whole—the queen-bee. How this is managed is a mystery hard to be expressed, but I have my thoughts upon it.

“Thus does a nation bring forth its heroes, who stand at the head like demigods to protect and save.² Thus were the poetic powers of the French concentrated in Voltaire. Such heads of a nation are great in the generation in which they work; many last longer, but the greater part have their places supplied by others and are forgotten by posterity.”

¹ It must be borne in mind that this was said before the appearance of *Robert le Diable*, which was first produced in Paris in November 1831.—J. O.

² The logic of this is extremely loose. If the hero is analogous to the seed of the plant and the queen of the hive, he must be the protected rather than the protector—the object of solicitude rather than the saviour.

Goethe then spoke of the scientists, with whom the great point was to prove their opinion.

“Herr von Buch,” said he, “has published a new book, which contains a hypothesis in its very title. He has to treat of the blocks of granite that are scattered about in various directions without our knowing how or whence they came. But as Herr von Buch entertains the hypothesis that such blocks have been cast forth, and shivered by some internal force, he indicates this in his title, by making mention of dispersed (*Zerstreut*) granite-blocks, so that the step to dispersion (*Zerstreuung*) is very short, and the unsuspecting reader finds himself in the toils of error he does not know how.

“You must be old to see all this, and have money enough to pay for your experience. Every *bon mot* I utter costs me a purseful of money; half a million of my private fortune has passed through my hands that I might learn what I know now—not only the whole of my father’s fortune; but also my own salary, and my large literary income for more than fifty years. I have also seen a million and a half expended for great objects by the princes with whom I have been intimately connected, and in whose progress, success, and failure, I have been interested.

“More than mere talent is required to become a proficient. The person must also live amid important circumstances, and have an opportunity of watching the cards held by the players of the age, and of participating in their gain and loss.

“Without my attempts in natural science, I should never have learned to know mankind as it is. In nothing else can we so closely approach pure contemplation and thought, so closely observe the errors of the senses and of the understanding, the weak and the strong points of character. All is more or less pliant and wavering, is more or less manageable; but Nature understands no jesting; she is always true, always serious, always severe; she is always right, and the errors and faults are always those of man. The man incapable of appreciating her she despises; and only to the apt, the pure, and the true, does she resign herself, and reveal her secrets.

“The Understanding will not reach her; man must be capable of elevating himself to the highest Reason, to come into contact with the Divinity, which manifests itself in the primitive

phenomena (*Urphänomenen*), which dwells behind them, and from which they proceed.¹

“The Divinity works in the living, not in the dead; in the becoming and changing, not in the become and the fixed. Therefore Reason, with its tendency towards the divine, has only to do with the becoming, the living; but Understanding with the become, the already fixed, that it may make use of it.

“Hence, mineralogy is a science for the Understanding, for practical life; for its subjects are something dead which cannot rise again, and there is no room for synthesis.

“The subjects of meteorology are, indeed, something living, which we daily see working and producing; they presuppose a synthesis—only the co-operating circumstances are so many that man is not equal to this synthesis and therefore uselessly wearies himself in observations and inquiries. We steer by hypotheses to imaginary islands; but the proper synthesis will probably remain an undiscovered country; and I do not wonder at this, when I consider how difficult it is to obtain any synthesis even in such simple things as plants and colours.”

Sunday, February 15, 1829.

Goethe received me with much praise, on account of my arrangement of the natural-historical aphorisms for the *Wanderjahre*. “Devote yourself to nature,” said he; “you are born for that purpose; and, as the next task, write a compendium of the *Theory of Colours*.” We spoke much on this subject.

A chest arrived from the Lower Rhine, containing some antique coins that had been dug up, minerals, small cathedral-figures, and carnival-poems—all of which were unpacked after dinner.

¹ This paragraph and the next presume knowledge of the philosophical distinction between Reason and Understanding. Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy* says: “To those who hold this distinction, the understanding is the instrument of scientific knowledge, the reason the instrument of the philosophic [i.e. metaphysical]. . . . The understanding is thought working according to the schematized categories, and so having validity in relation to experience; reason is thought working without reference to the application of concepts to the material of sense, hence soaring into the supersensuous, and so, while giving us certain ideals of a regulative value, sharing no positive (or constitutive) worth.” Elsewhere, Baldwin, apparently recognizing that this involves a special faculty of Reason, says: “The term is still applied to the mind, in so far as it is supposed to exercise this function [of apprehending “the real nature of the world”—i.e. of the universe], although the doctrine of particular faculties has been generally given up.”

The distinction was due to Kant.

Tuesday, February 17, 1829.

We talked a great deal about Goethe's *Grosskopfta*.

"Lavater," said Goethe, "believed in Cagliostro and his wonders. When the impostor was unmasked, Lavater maintained, 'This is another Cagliostro, the Cagliostro who did the wonders was a holy person.'

"Lavater was a truly good man, but subject to strong delusions; the whole sole truth was not to his mind, he deceived himself and others. This made a perfect breach between him and me. The last time I saw him was in Zurich; and he did not see me. I was coming in disguise down an avenue; seeing him approach, I stepped aside, and he passed without recognizing me. He walked like a crane, and therefore figures as a crane on the Blocksberg."¹

I asked whether Lavater observed nature, as we might almost infer from the *Physiognomy*.

"Not in the least," said Goethe. "His tendency was wholly towards the moral—the religious. That part of his *Physiognomy* which relates to the skulls of animals he got from me."

The conversation turned upon the French—upon the lectures of Guizot, Villemain, and Cousin. Goethe spoke with high esteem of the point of view taken by these men; saying that they observed everything on a free and new side, and always went straight to their mark.

"It is," said Goethe, "as if till now we had reached a garden through roundabout crooked ways; these men, however, have been bold and free enough to pull down a wall, and to put a door so that we get at once into the broadest walk of the garden."

From Cousin we passed to Indian philosophy.

"This philosophy," said Goethe, "if what the Englishman tells us is true, has nothing foreign; on the contrary, the epochs through which we all pass are repeated in it. When we are children, we are sensualists; idealists when we love, and attribute to the beloved object qualities she does not naturally possess. Love wavers; we doubt her fidelity, and are sceptics before we think of it. The rest of life is indifferent; we let it go as it will, and end, like the Indian philosophers, with quietism.

"In the German philosophy there are still two great works to do. Kant did an infinite deal, by writing the *Critique of Pure Reason*; but the circle is not yet complete. Now, some able man should write the *Critique of the Senses and*

¹ That is to say, in the intermezzo in *Faust*.—J. O.

Understanding of Man; and, if this could be as well done, we should have little more to desire in German philosophy.

“Hegel,” continued Goethe, “has written, in the *Berlin Jahrbücher*, a criticism upon Hamann, which I of late have read over and over again, and must highly praise. Hegel’s judgments as a critic have always been excellent.

“Villemain, too, stands very high in criticism. The French will indeed never see another talent to cope with Voltaire; but Villemain is so far elevated above Voltaire by his intellectual point of view as to be able to judge him in his virtues and his faults.”

Wednesday, February 18, 1829.

We talked of the Theory of Colours; and among other things about drinking-glasses, the dull figures on which appear yellow against the light, and blue against the dark, and therefore allow the observation of a primitive phenomenon.

“The highest that man can attain in these matters,” said Goethe, “is astonishment; if the primary phenomenon causes this, let him be satisfied; more it cannot bring; and he should forbear to seek for anything further behind it: here is the limit. But the sight of a primitive phenomenon is generally not enough for people. They think they must go still further; and are thus like children, who, after peeping into a mirror, turn it round directly to see what is on the other side.”

The conversation turned upon Merck, and I asked whether he had ever meddled with natural science.

“Yes,” said Goethe, “he had even fine collections. Merck was an extremely many-sided man. He loved art also; and if he saw a good work in the hands of a Philistine whom he suspected of not knowing its value, he used every means to get it for his own collection. In such matters he had no conscience; he considered all means fair, and did not despise even a sort of sublime fraud, if he could not attain his object otherwise.”

Goethe related some interesting examples of this peculiarity.

“A man like Merck,” continued he, “will not again be born; and if he were, the world would model him into a very different person. That was a good time when Merck and I were young! German literature was yet a clean tablet, on which it was hoped to paint good things with pleasure. Now, it is so scribbled over and soiled that there is no pleasure in looking at it, and a wise man does not know whereabouts he can inscribe anything.”

Thursday, February 19, 1829.

Dined with Goethe *tête-à-tête* in his work-room. He was very cheerful, and told me that much good had lately befallen him, and that an affair with Artaria¹ and the court had come to a happy termination.

We then talked a great deal about *Egmont*, which had been represented according to Schiller's version on the preceding evening. The injury done to the piece by this version was brought under discussion.

"For many reasons," said I, "the Regent should not have been omitted; she is thoroughly necessary to the piece. Not only does this princess impart to the whole a higher, nobler character; but moreover the political relations, especially of the Spanish court, are brought much more clearly to view by her conversation with Machiavelli."

"Unquestionably," said Goethe. "And then Egmont gains in dignity from the lustre that the partiality of this princess casts upon him; while Clara also seems exalted when we see that, vanquishing even princesses, she alone has all Egmont's love. These are very delicate effects, which cannot be obliterated without compromising the whole."

"It seems to me, too, that, where there are so many important male parts, a single female personage like Clara appears weak and overpowered. By means of the Regent the picture is better balanced. It is not enough that the Regent is talked of; her personal entrance makes the impression."

"You judge rightly," said Goethe. "When I wrote the piece I weighed everything well, as you may imagine; hence it is no wonder that the whole materially suffers, when there is torn out of it a principal figure conceived for the sake of the whole—through which the whole exists. But Schiller had something violent in his nature; he often acted too much according to a preconceived idea, without sufficient regard to the subject he had to treat."

"You may be blamed also, for allowing the alteration and granting him such unlimited liberty in so important a matter."

"We often act more from indifference than from kindness," replied Goethe. "Then, at that time, I was deeply occupied with other things. I had no interest for Egmont or for the stage, so I let Schiller have his own way. Now, it is at any rate a consolation for me that the work exists in print, and

¹ The Index to Houben's reissue describes Artaria as a Mannheim art-dealer.

that there are theatres where people are wise enough to perform it as it is written, without abbreviation.”

Goethe then asked me about the *Theory of Colours*, and whether I had thought any more of his proposal to write a compendium. I told him how the matter stood, and we fell unadvisedly into a difference of opinion; which I will describe, on account of the importance of the subject.

On a clear winter's day, and in the sunlight, the shadows cast upon the snow frequently appear blue. This is classed by Goethe, in his *Theory of Colours*, under the subjective phenomena: for he assumes as a principle that the sunlight comes down to us—who do not live on high mountain-tops—not perfectly white; but, penetrating through an atmosphere more or less misty, yellowish: so that the snow, when the sun shines upon it, is not perfectly white, but tinged with yellow, which charms the eye to opposition production of blue. The blue shadow is, according to this view, a *demanded colour*.¹ Goethe then very consistently explains the observations made by Saussure on Mont Blanc.

When of late I again looked over the first chapters of the *Theory of Colours*, to try whether I could write a compendium, I found that Goethe's inference was founded on error. I will explain.

The windows of my apartment look due south upon a garden, bounded by a building which in winter casts towards me a shadow long enough to cover half the garden. I looked upon this broad shadow on the snow some days ago, while the sky was quite blue and the sun bright, and was astonished to see the whole surface perfectly blue. “This,” said I, “cannot be a ‘demanded colour’; for my eye is not brought into contact with any surface of snow illumined by the sun so that the required contrast could be produced.” However, to be quite certain, and to prevent the dazzling light of the neighbouring houses from affecting my eye, I rolled up a sheet of paper, and looked through it on the shaded surface, when I found that the blue remained unaltered. That this blue shadow could be nothing subjective was now established in my mind beyond a doubt.

I looked once more; and, behold, the riddle was solved! “What can it be,” said I, “but the reflection of the blue sky, which is brought down by the shade, and has an inclination to

¹ “Geforderte Farbe,” that is to say, a colour called forth by the eye itself, according to Goethe's peculiar theory, as explained above.—J. O.

settle there? For it is written—Colour is akin to shade, readily combines with it, and readily appears to us in it.”

The following days gave me opportunity to confirm my hypothesis. I walked about the fields; there was no blue sky, the sun shone through foggy mists, and spread a perfectly yellow light over the snow. It was strong enough to cast a decided shadow; and in this case, according to Goethe's doctrine, the brightest blue should have been produced. However, there was no blue; the shadows remained grey.

On the following forenoon, when the atmosphere was cloudy, the sun peeped out from time to time, and cast decided shadows upon the snow. Again, they were not blue, but grey. In both cases the reflection of the blue sky was wanting to give the shadow its colour.

I was thus sufficiently convinced that Goethe's deduction of this natural phenomenon was proved to be fallacious, and that the paragraphs in the *Theory of Colours* that treated of this subject were much in need of modification.

Something similar occurred to me with the coloured double shadows seen to advantage by taperlight at break of day or at the beginning of evening twilight, as well as by a clear moonlight. That one of the shadows, the yellow one shone upon by the taperlight, is objective and belongs to the doctrine of dense media, Goethe has not expressly said, although such is the case; the other, the bluish or bluish-green shadow, shone upon by the purest light of day or moon, he declares to be subjective—a “demanded colour,” produced in the eye by the yellow light of the taper diffused over the white paper.

Now, on a careful observation, I did not find this doctrine thoroughly confirmed. On the contrary, it appeared that the weak daylight or moonlight, acting from without, already brought with it a bluish tone; which is strengthened partly by the shadow, partly by the “demanding” (*fordernd*) yellow light of the taper—and that therefore we have an objective foundation here also.

That the dawning day and the moon cast a pale light is well known. A countenance seen at break of day, or by moonlight, appears pale. Shakespeare seems to have been aware of this; for in that remarkable passage where Romeo leaves his beloved at daybreak, and he and Juliet suddenly appear so pale to each other, the observation of it must have served as a foundation. The operation of this light in producing paleness would of itself be a sufficient indication that it must bring with

it a greenish or bluish tinge, since it has precisely the same effect as a mirror of bluish or greenish glass. The following may serve as a further confirmation:

Light, as seen by the mind's eye, may be conceived as completely white; but the empirical light, as perceived by the corporeal eye, is seldom seen in such purity. It has a tendency to take either the *plus* or the *minus* side, and to appear either yellowish or bluish. Direct sunlight, as well as taper-light, inclines decidedly to the plus side—the yellowish; but the light of the moon, as well as that of dawn and evening twilight, neither of which is direct, but only reflected, and which are further modified by twilight and night, incline to the minus side, and have a bluish tone.

Place a sheet of white paper in the twilight or moonlight, so that one-half of it may be shone upon by the light of day or moon, and the other by the taperlight; then one-half will have a bluish, the other a yellowish tone; and both lights, without any addition of shade, or any subjective heightening, will have already ranged themselves on the active or the passive side.

The result of my observations, therefore, was, that even Goethe's doctrine of the coloured double-shadow was not thoroughly correct; that in the production of this phenomenon there was more of the objective than he had observed, and that the law of subjective "demand" (*Forderung*) could be but secondary.

If the human eye were so sensitive that at the slightest contact of one colour it had an immediate tendency to produce the opposite, it would be constantly transferring one colour into another, so that the most unpleasant mixture would arise. Fortunately, however, a healthy eye is so organized that it either does not observe the "demanded" colours, or, if its attention is directed towards them, produces them with difficulty; indeed this operation requires some practice and dexterity before it can succeed even in favourable circumstances. What is really characteristic in such subjective phenomena, viz. that the eye to a certain extent requires a strong incitement to produce them, and that when they are produced they have no permanence, has been too little regarded by Goethe, both in the case of the blue shadow in the snow, and in that of the coloured double-shadow; for in both cases the surface in question has a scarcely perceptible tinge, and in both cases the "demanded" colour appears decidedly marked at the very first glance.

But Goethe, with his adherence to a law he had once recognized, and with his maxim of applying it even in cases where it seems concealed, could easily be tempted to extend a synthesis too far and to discern a favourite law even in cases where a totally different influence is at work.

When to-day he spoke of his *Theory of Colours*, and asked how the proposed compendium was going on, I would willingly have passed over my new discoveries in silence, for I felt in some perplexity as to how I should tell him the truth without offending him. Nevertheless, as I was really in earnest with respect to the compendium, it was necessary to remove all errors and to rectify all misunderstandings. All that I could do was to make the frank confession that, after careful observation, I found myself compelled to differ with him in some points; as I found that neither his deduction of the blue shadow in the snow, nor his doctrine of the coloured double-shadow, was completely confirmed.

I communicated to him my thoughts and observations; but, as I have not the gift of describing objects clearly by word of mouth, I confined myself to a statement of the results of my observation, without going into a more minute explanation of details, intending to do this in writing.

However, I had scarcely opened my mouth, when Goethe's sublimely-serene countenance became clouded over, and I saw but too clearly that he did not approve of my objections.

"Truly," said I, "he who would get the better of your excellency must rise early in the morning; but yet it is possible that the wise may go too far, and the foolish find the spoil."

"As if, forsooth, you had found it," returned Goethe, with an ironical laugh; "with your idea of coloured light you belong to the fourteenth century, and with all the rest you are in the very abyss of dialectics. The only thing good about you is that you are, at any rate, honest enough to speak out plainly what you think.

"My Theory of Colours," he continued, "fares just the same as the Christian religion. It seems for a while as if there were faithful disciples; but very soon they fall off and form a new sect. You are a heretic like the rest, for you are not the first that has apostatized. I have fallen out with the most excellent men about contested points in the Theory of Colours, viz. with — about —, and with — about —." Here he mentioned some names of eminence.

We had now finished eating; conversation came to a stand-

still, and Goethe rose and placed himself against the window. I went up to him and pressed his hand; for I loved him in spite of his taunts, and I felt moreover that I was right, and that he was the suffering party.

Before long, we were again talking and joking about indifferent subjects; but when I went to him, and told him that he should have my objections in writing for a closer examination, and that the only reason he did not agree with me lay in the clumsiness of my verbal statement, he could not help, with a half-laugh and half-sneer, throwing in my teeth at the very doorway something about heretics and heresy.

If it should appear strange that Goethe could not readily bear contradiction with respect to his *Theory of Colours*, while with respect to his poetical works he always showed himself perfectly easy and heard every well-founded objection with thanks, we may perhaps solve the riddle by reflecting that as a poet he received the most perfect satisfaction from without; while, by the *Theory of Colours*, the greatest and most difficult of his works, he had gained nothing but censure and disapproval. During half a life he had been annoyed by the most senseless opposition on every side, and it was natural enough that he should always find himself in a sort of irritable polemic position, and be always fully armed for a passionate conflict.

His feeling for the *Theory of Colours* was like that of a mother who all the more loves an excellent child the less it is esteemed by others.

“As for what I have done as a poet,” he would repeatedly say to me, “I take no pride whatever in it. Excellent poets have lived at the same time with myself; poets more excellent have lived before me, and others will come after me. But that in my century I am the only person who knows the truth in the difficult science of colours—of that, I say, I am not a little proud, and here I have a consciousness of a superiority to many.”

Friday, February 20, 1829.

Dined with Goethe. He is pleased at having finished the *Wanderjahre*, which he will send off to-morrow. In the *Theory of Colours* he is coming over a little to my opinion concerning the blue shadow in the snow. He talked of his “Italian journey,” which he had again taken under consideration.

"It is with us as with wives," said he: "when they are brought to bed they for ever renounce sleeping with men; and then, before you know where you are, they are in the family-way again!"

He then talked about the fourth volume of his *Life*, and the way he would treat it; saying that my notes on the year 1824, concerning what he had already executed and planned, would be highly useful.

He read aloud Götting's journal, which treats of the former fencing-masters at Jena in a very kindly spirit. Goethe speaks very well of Götting.

Monday, March 23, 1829.

"I have found a paper of mine among some others," said Goethe to-day, "in which I call architecture 'petrified music.'¹ Really there is something in this; the tone of mind produced by architecture approaches the effect of music.

"Splendid edifices and apartments are for princes and kingdoms. Those who live in them feel at ease and contented, and desire nothing further.

"To me this is quite repugnant. In a splendid abode like that which I had at Carlsbad, I am instantly lazy and inactive. On the contrary, a small residence, like this poor apartment, where a sort of disorderly order—a sort of gipsy fashion—prevails, suits me exactly. It allows my inner nature full liberty to act, and to create from itself alone."

We talked of Schiller's letters, the life he and Goethe had led together, and how the two had daily incited each other to activity.

"Even in *Faust*," said I, "Schiller seems to have taken great interest; it is pleasant to see how he urges you, or allows himself to be misled by his idea of continuing *Faust* himself. I see by this that there was something precipitate in him."

"You are right," said Goethe, "he was like all men who proceed too much from the idea. Then he was never in repose, and could never have done; as you may see by his letters on *Wilhelm Meister*, which he would have now this way, and now that way. I had enough to do to stand my ground, and keep his works and mine free from such influences."

"I have," said I, "been reading this morning his *Indian Death Dirge*, and have been delighted with its excellence."

¹ Schelling, in *Philosophie der Kunst*, calls architecture "frozen music." It seems uncertain which "said it first."

“You see,” said Goethe, “what a great artist Schiller was, and how he could manage even the objective when brought traditionally before his eyes. That Indian Death Song is certainly one of his very best poems, and I only wish he had made a dozen like it. And yet—can you believe it!—his nearest friends found fault with this poem, thinking it was not sufficiently tinctured with his ideality. Yes, my good fellow, such things one has to suffer from one’s friends. Humboldt¹ found fault with my Dorothea, because, when assailed by the soldiers, she took up arms and fought. And yet, without that trait, the character of the extraordinary girl, so adapted to the time and circumstances, is at once destroyed, and she sinks into commonplace. But the longer you live, the more you will see how few men are capable of appreciating what *must* be, and how on the contrary they only praise and would only have what is suitable to themselves. These of whom I spoke were the first and best; so you may judge what was the opinion of the multitude, and how in fact I always stood alone.

“Had I not had some solid foundation in the plastic arts and natural science, I should scarce have kept myself up in that evil time and its daily influences; but this was my protection, and enabled me to aid Schiller also.”

Tuesday, March 24, 1829.

“The higher a man is,” said Goethe, “the more he is under the influence of dæmons, and he must take heed lest his guiding will counsel him to a wrong path.

“There was altogether something dæmonic in my acquaintance with Schiller; we might have been brought together earlier or later; but that we met just at the time when I had finished my Italian journey, and Schiller began to be weary of philosophical speculation—this led to very important consequences for us both.”

Thursday, April 2, 1829.

“I will discover to you,” said Goethe to-day at dinner, “a political secret, which will sooner or later be made public. Capo d’Istria cannot long continue to be at the head of Grecian affairs, for he wants one quality indispensable for such a position; *he is no soldier*. There is no instance of a mere cabinet statesman being able to organize a revolutionary state, and to bring the military and their leaders under his control. With

¹ Wilhelm von Humboldt.—J. O.

the sabre in his hand, at the head of an army, a man may command and give laws, secure of being obeyed; but without this the attempt is hazardous. Napoleon, if he had not been a soldier, could never have attained the highest power; and Capo d'Istria will not long keep the first place, but will very soon play a secondary part. I tell you this beforehand, and you will see it come. It lies in the nature of things, and must happen."

Goethe then talked much about the French, especially Cousin, Villemain, and Guizot.

"These men," said he, "look into, through, and round¹ a subject, with great success. They combine perfect knowledge of the past with the spirit of the nineteenth century; and the result is wonderful."

We then came to the newest French poets, and the meaning of the terms "classic" and "romantic."

"A new expression occurs to me," said Goethe, "which does not ill define the state of the case. I call the classic *healthy*, the romantic *sickly*. In this sense, the *Nibelungenlied* is as classic as the *Iliad*, for both are vigorous and healthy. Most modern productions are romantic—not because they are new; but because they are weak, morbid, and sickly. And the antique is classic—not because it is old; but because it is strong, fresh, joyous, and healthy. If we distinguish 'classic' and 'romantic' by these qualities, it will be easy to see our way."

The conversation turned upon the imprisonment of Béranger.

"He is rightly served," said Goethe. "His late poems are really contrary to all order; and he has fully deserved punishment by his offences against king, state, and peaceful citizenship. His early poems, on the contrary, are cheerful and harmless, and are well adapted to make a circle of gay and happy people; which, indeed, is the best that can be said of songs."

"I am sure," said I, "he has been injured by the society he lives in, and, to please his revolutionary friends, has said many things he otherwise would not have said. Your excellency should fulfil your intention of writing a chapter on influences; the subject is the richer and more important the more it is thought of."

"It is only too rich," said Goethe; "for in truth all is influence except ourselves."

"We have only to see," said I, "whether an influence is

¹ This felicitous rendering of "Einsicht, Umsicht, und Durchsicht," is by Mrs. Fuller.—J. O.

injurious or beneficial—whether it is suitable or repugnant to our nature.”

“That is indeed the point,” said Goethe, “but the difficulty is for our better nature to maintain itself vigorously, and not to allow the dæmons more power than is due.”

At dessert, Goethe had a laurel, in full flower, and a Japanese plant, placed before us on the table. I remarked what different feelings were excited by the two plants—that the sight of the laurel produced a cheerful, light, mild, and tranquil mood; but that of the Japanese plant, one of barbaric melancholy.

“You are not wrong,” said Goethe; “and hence great influence over the inhabitants of a country has been conceded to its vegetation. And surely, he who passes his life surrounded by solemn lofty oaks must be a different man from him who lives among airy birches. Still we must remember that men in general have not such sensitive natures as we, but vigorously pursue their own course of life without allowing so much power to external impressions. Nevertheless, this much is certain: not only the inborn peculiarities of a race, but also soil and climate, aliment and occupation, combine to form the character of a people. Moreover the primitive races mostly took possession of a soil that pleased them; where, consequently, the country was already in harmony with their own inborn character.

“Just look round,” continued Goethe; “behind you on the desk there is a paper I wish you to look at.”

“This blue envelope?” said I.

“Yes,” said he. “Now, what do you say to the handwriting? Is it not that of a man who felt himself noble and free, as he wrote the address? Whose do you think it is?”

I was attracted by the paper. The hand was indeed free and imposing. “Merck might have written so,” said I.

“No,” said Goethe; “he was not noble and positive enough. It is from Zelter. Pen and paper were favourable to him in the case of this envelope; so that the writing perfectly expresses his great character. I shall put the paper into my collection of autographs.”

Friday, April 3, 1829.

Dined with Coudray at Goethe's. Coudray gave an account of a staircase in the grand-ducal palace at Belvedere, found inconvenient for many years, which the old master had always

despaired of improving, and which had now been completely rectified under the young prince.

Coudray also gave an account of the progress of several highways, saying the road over the mountains had to be taken round a little on account of a rise of two feet to the rood (*Ruthe*), while in some places there were eighteen inches to the rood.

I asked Coudray how many inches constituted the proper standard for road-making in hilly districts. "Ten inches to the rood," said he, "is a convenient measure." "But," said I, "when we go from Weimar along any road—east, south, west, or north—we find some places where the highway has a rise of far more than ten inches to the rood." "Those are short unimportant distances," replied Coudray; "and in road-making we often pass over such spots in the vicinity of a place, that we may not deprive it of its little income from relays." We laughed at this honest fraud. "And in fact," continued Coudray, "it is a mere trifle; the carriages get easily over the ground, and the passengers are for once inured to a little hardship. Besides, as the relays are usually put on at inns, the drivers have an opportunity of taking something to drink, and they would not thank anyone for spoiling their sport."

"I should like to know," said Goethe, "whether in perfectly flat countries it would not be better to interrupt the straight line of road, so as to allow it to rise and fall a little. This would not prevent comfortable travelling; and there would be this advantage, that the road would be always kept dry by the draining."

"That might be done," replied Coudray, "and would probably be very useful."

Coudray then produced a paper—the scheme of instructions for a young architect whom the Upper Building Board (*Ober-Baubehörde*) was about to send to Paris to complete his education. He read the instructions, of which Goethe approved. Goethe had obtained the necessary assistance from the minister; we were pleased at the success of the affair, and talked of the precautions to be adopted that the money might be really of use to the young man and last him a year. The intention was, on his return, to place him as a teacher at the industrial school to be established; by which means the clever young man would at once have a suitable sphere of action.

Plans and studies for carpenters, drawn by Schindel, were then produced and looked over. Coudray considered them of

importance, and perfectly fitted for the use of the industrial school.

There was then some talk about buildings: the means of avoiding echo, and the great firmness of the edifices belonging to the Jesuits. "At Messina," said Goethe, "all the buildings were thrown down by an earthquake except the church and convent of the Jesuits; which stood unharmed, as if they had been built the day before. There was no sign that the earthquake had had the slightest effect upon them."

From the Jesuits and their wealth, conversation turned upon the Catholics and Irish emancipation. "Emancipation will, we see, be granted," said Coudray, "but Parliament will so fence it round with clauses that it cannot in any way be dangerous to England."

"All preventive measures," said Goethe, "are ineffectual with Catholics. The Papal See has interests of which we never dream, and means to carry them out quietly. If I were a member of Parliament, I would not hinder emancipation; but I would have it added to the protocol, that when the first distinguished Protestant head fell by a Catholic vote, people should think of me."

Conversation then turned on the newest French literature; and Goethe spoke again with admiration of the lectures of MM. Cousin, Villemain, and Guizot.

"Instead of the superficial lightness of Voltaire," said he, "they have an erudition such as in earlier days was unknown out of Germany. And such intellect! such searching and pressing out of the subject! superb! It is as if they trod the wine-press. All three are excellent, but I would give the preference to Guizot; he is my favourite."

Speaking on topics of universal history, Goethe spoke thus on the subject of rulers:

"To be popular, a great ruler needs only his greatness. If he has striven and succeeded in making his realm happy at home and honoured abroad, it matters not whether he ride about in a state coach, dressed in all his orders, or in a bear-skin, with his cigar in his mouth, in a miserable droshky—he is sure of love and esteem from his people.

"But if a prince lacks personal greatness, and does not know how to conciliate his subjects by good deeds, he must think of other means; and there is none better and more effective than religion, and a sympathy with the customs of his people. To appear at church every Sunday; to look down upon, and let

himself be looked at for an hour by, the congregation—is the best means of becoming popular which can be recommended to a young sovereign; and one which, with all his greatness, Napoleon himself did not disdain.”

Conversation again turned upon the Catholics, and it was remarked how great were the silent operation and influence of the ecclesiastics. An anecdote was related of a young writer of Henault, who had made somewhat merry with the rosary in a periodical he edited. The paper was immediately bought up through the influence of the priests over their several congregations.

“An Italian translation of my *Werther*,” said Goethe, “very soon appeared at Milan. Not a single copy of it was to be seen a short time afterwards. The bishop had caused the whole edition to be bought up by the clergy in the various districts. I was not vexed, but pleased with the shrewd gentlemen, who saw at once that *Werther* was a bad book for the Catholics; and I could not but commend him for at once taking the most effective measures to suppress it quietly.”

Sunday, April 5, 1829.

Goethe said he had driven out to Belvedere this morning to look at Coudray's new staircase in the castle, which he found excellent. He also told me a great petrified log, which he would show me, had been sent him.

“Such petrified trunks,” said he, “are found about the fifty-first degree round about the earth, as far as America, like a girdle. We must always go on wondering. We have no idea whatever of the early organization of the earth, and I cannot blame Herr von Buch for trying to *indoctrinate* mankind for the sake of spreading his hypothesis. He knows nothing, but nobody knows more; and, after all, it does not matter what is taught if it has only some show of reason.”

Goethe told me that Zelter desired to be remembered to me, at which I was greatly pleased. We then talked of his *Travels in Italy*; and he told me that in one of his letters from that country he had found a song he would show me. He looked out the poem, and read:

“Cupid, thou wanton, thou self-will'd boy,” etc.¹

¹ “Cupido, loser, eigensinniger Knabe.” The poem in its complete form will be found in the letters relating to the *Second Stay at Rome* (Zweyter Römischer Aufenthalt), under the head of “January 1788.”—J. O.

This poem seemed to me perfectly new.

"It cannot be strange to you," said Goethe, "for it is in *Claudine von Villa Bella*, where it is sung by Rugantino. I have, however, given it there in such a fragmentary state that it is passed over without its meaning being observed. I think, however, it stands well. It prettily expresses the situation, and is in the anacreontic vein. This song, and others of the kind from my operas, should properly be reprinted among my *Poems*, that the composer may have them all together."

Goethe had read the poem very beautifully. I could not get it out of my head, and it seemed to have made a lasting impression upon him also. The last lines:

So rude thy sport, I fear my poor little soul will
Haste away to escape thee, and flee her dwelling,

he uttered from time to time, as if in a dream.

He then told me of a book about Napoleon lately published, written by one who had known the hero in his youth, and containing the most remarkable disclosures. "The book is very dry," said he, "written without any enthusiasm; but it shows how grand truth is when anybody dares to speak it."

Goethe also told me about a tragedy by a young poet. "It is a pathological work," said he; "a superfluity of sap is bestowed on some parts that do not require it, and drawn out of those standing in need of it. The subject was good, but the scenes I expected were not there; while others that I did not expect were elaborated with assiduity and love. This is what I call pathological, or even 'romantic'—if you would rather speak after our new theory."

We remained together a little longer very cheerfully, and at last Goethe gave me some honey—also some dates, which I took with me.

Monday, April 6, 1829.

Goethe gave me a letter from Egon Ebert, which I read at dinner, and which highly pleased me. We said a great deal in praise of Egon Ebert and Bohemia, and also mentioned Professor Zauper with affection.

"Bohemia is a strange country," said Goethe. "I have always liked to be there. In the culture of the *literati* there is still something pure—which begins to be rare in the north of Germany; since here every vagabond, with whom moral basis or higher views are not to be thought of, writes."

Goethe then spoke of Ebert's newest epic poem, of the early female government in Bohemia, and of the origin of the tradition of the Amazons. This brought conversation to the epic of another poet, who had taken great pains to get favourable notices of his work in the public prints.

"Such notices," said Goethe, "have appeared in various papers. But at last comes the *Halle Literary Gazette*, telling plainly what the poem is really worth, and thus all the compliments of the other papers are nullified. He who nowadays will not have the truth, is discovered; the time for deluding and misleading the public is past."

"I wonder," said I, "that man can toil so for a little fame, and even stoop to falsities."

"Dear child!" said Goethe, "a name is no despicable matter. Napoleon, for the sake of a great name, broke in pieces almost half a world."

After a short pause, Goethe told me more of the new book about Napoleon, adding:

"The power of truth is great. Every halo, every illusion which journalists, historians, and poets have conjured up about Napoleon, vanishes before the terrible reality of this book; but the hero becomes no less than before—on the contrary, he grows in stature as he increases in truth."

"His personal influence," said I, "must have had a peculiar magic, that men should so attach themselves to him at once, adhere to him, and suffer themselves to be wholly governed by him."

"Certainly," said Goethe, "his personal influence was immense. Yet the chief reason was that men under him were sure of attaining their object. On this account they were drawn towards him, as they are to everyone who gives them a like certainty. Thus actors attach themselves to a new manager, who they think will assign them good parts. This is an old story constantly repeated; so is human nature constituted. No man serves another disinterestedly, but he does it willingly if he knows he can thus serve himself. Napoleon knew men well; he knew how to make use of their weaknesses."

The conversation turned upon Zelter.

"You know," said Goethe, "that Zelter received the Prussian Order. But he had no coat of arms; while, from his large family, he might hope for a long continuance of his name. A coat of arms was therefore necessary as an honourable basis, and I have taken the fancy to make him one. I wrote to him;

and he was pleased, but insisted on having a horse. 'Good,' said I, 'a horse you shall have, but it shall be one with wings.' But turn your head; a paper lies behind you; there I have made the sketch with pencil."

I took up the paper, and examined the drawing. The arms looked very stately, and I could not but praise the invention. In the lower field were the battlements of a city wall, intimating that Zelter had been in early days a skilful mason. A winged horse rose from behind, indicating his genius and high aspirations. Above the escutcheon was a lyre, over which shone a star; as a symbol of the art by which our excellent friend, under the influence and protection of favouring stars, had won his fame. Beneath was annexed the Order his king had bestowed upon him in recognition of his great merits.

"I have had it engraved by Facius," said Goethe, "and you shall see an impression. Is it not pleasant for one friend to make a coat of arms for another, and thus, as it were, bestow nobility upon him?"

We sat a while longer at table, taking some glasses of old Rhenish wine, with some good biscuits. Goethe hummed to himself unintelligibly. The poem of yesterday came into my head again. I recited the lines:

My goods and chattels hast thou knock'd about sadly;
I seek, and only seem to wander in blindness.

"I cannot get that poem out of my head," said I. "It is unique, and most admirably expresses the disorder love occasions in our life."

"It brings a gloomy condition before our eyes," said Goethe.

"On me," said I, "it makes the impression of a Dutch picture."

"There is something in it of the *Good man and good wife*," said Goethe.

"You have just anticipated me; for I have been forced to keep on thinking of that Scottish subject, and Ostade's picture was before my eyes."

"Yet, strange to say," observed Goethe, "neither of these two poems could be painted; they convey the impression of a picture—they produce a similar mood; but, once painted, they would be nothing."

"It is poetry verging as nearly as possible on painting. Such poems are my favourites; they inspire both contemplation and

feeling. But the poem is as if from another time and another world."

"I shall not write such another," said Goethe; "and know not how it came to me, as is often the way."

"One peculiarity is, that it has the effect of rhyme, and yet it is not in rhyme. How is this?"

"That is the result of the rhythm," he replied. "The lines begin with a short syllable, and then proceed in trochees till the dactyl near the close; which has a peculiar effect, and gives a sad, bewailing character to the poem."

He took a pencil, and divided the line:

Võn | mēinēm | brēitēn | Lāgēr | bīn ich vēr | triebēn.

We then talked of rhythm in general, and came to the conclusion that no certain rules can be laid down.

"The measure," said Goethe, "flows unconsciously from the mood of the poet. If he thought about it while writing the poem, he would go mad and produce nothing of value."

I was waiting for the impression of the seal.¹ Goethe began to speak of Guizot.

"I am going on with his lectures, which continue excellent. Those of the present year go about as far as the eighth century. I know no historian more profound or more penetrating. Things of which nobody thinks have the greatest meaning for him, as sources of important events. For instance, what influence certain religious opinions have had upon history—how the doctrine of original sin, grace, and good works, has given this or that form to certain epochs—is deduced most clearly. Then the enduring life of Roman law (which, like a diving-duck, hides itself at times; but is never quite lost, always coming up again alive) is well set forth; on which occasion full acknowledgment is due to our excellent Savigny.

"Where Guizot speaks of the influence other nations exercised on the Gauls, I was particularly struck by this:

"'The Germans,' says he, 'brought us the idea of personal freedom, which was possessed by that nation more than any other.'

"Is he not perfectly right? and does not this idea work upon us even to the present day? The Reformation is as much attributable to this source as the *Burschen* conspiracy on the Wartburg—wise as well as foolish enterprises. Even the motley character of our literature; the thirst of our poets for

¹ Of Zelter's coat of arms.

originality—the belief of each that he must strike out a new path; the isolation among our learned men, each one working from a point of his own—all comes from this source.

“The French and English, on the other hand, keep far more together, and guide themselves one by another. They harmonize in dress and manners. They fear to differ from one another, lest they should be remarkable, or even ridiculous. But with the Germans each one goes his own way, and strives to satisfy himself; he does not ask about others, for, as Guizot rightly observes, he has within him the idea of personal freedom—from which comes much excellence, but also much absurdity.”

Tuesday, April 7, 1829.

As I entered, I found Hofrath Meyer, who had been ill of late, sitting with Goethe at table; I was rejoiced to see him so much better. They spoke of art—of Peel, who has given four thousand pounds for a Claude Lorraine, and has thus found especial favour in the eyes of Meyer.

The newspapers were brought in, and we looked over them while waiting for the soup. The emancipation of the Irish was now discussed.

“It is instructive,” said Goethe, “to see how things of which nobody ever thought and which would never have been spoken of but for the present crisis, come to light on this occasion. Though we cannot get a clear notion of the state of Ireland (the subject is too intricate), this we can see: she suffers from evils that will not be removed by any means—not by emancipation. If it has hitherto been unfortunate for Ireland to endure her evils alone, it is now unfortunate that England is also drawn into them. Then, no confidence can be put in the Catholics. We see with what difficulty the two million Protestants in Ireland have kept their ground hitherto against the preponderating five million Catholics; how for instance the poor Protestant farmers have been oppressed, tricked, and tormented, when among Catholic neighbours. The Catholics do not agree among themselves, but they always unite against a Protestant. They are like a pack of hounds; which bite one another, but, when a stag comes in view, all unite immediately to run it down.”

From Ireland conversation turned to the affairs of Turkey. Surprise was expressed that the Russians, with their preponderating power, did not effect more in the late campaign.

“The fact is,” said Goethe, “the means were inadequate, and therefore over-great requisitions were made upon individuals; this produced great personal deeds and sacrifices, without advancing the cause on the whole.”

“It may be a cursed spot,” said Meyer. “We see, in the earliest times, that, in this region, if an enemy attempted to penetrate anywhere from the Danube to the northern mountains, he always encountered obstinate resistance, and almost invariably failed. If the Russians could only keep the sea-side open, to furnish themselves with stores in that way!”

“That is yet to be hoped,” said Goethe; “I am now reading Napoleon’s campaign in Egypt—what is related by the hero’s everyday companion Bourrienne, which destroys the romantic cast of many scenes and displays facts in their naked sublime truth. It is evident that he undertook this expedition merely to fill up an epoch when he could do nothing in France to make himself ruler. He was at first undecided what to do; he visited all the French harbours on the Atlantic coast, to inspect the fleets and to see whether an expedition against England were practicable. He found it was not, and then decided on going to Egypt.”

“It raises my admiration,” said I, “that Napoleon, at that early age, could play with the great affairs of the world as easily and securely as if he had had many years’ practice and experience.”

“That, dear child,” said Goethe, “is an inborn quality with great talents. Napoleon managed the world as Hummel his piano; both achievements appear wonderful, we do not understand one more than the other: so it is, and the whole is done before our eyes. Napoleon was especially great in that he was at all hours the same. Before a battle, during a battle, after a victory, after a defeat: he stood always firm, was always clear and decided. He was equal to each situation and each moment; just as it is all alike to Hummel whether he plays an *adagio* or an *allegro*, bass or treble. This facility we find everywhere where there is real talent: in the arts of peace as well as in war; at the harpsichord as behind the cannon.

“We see, by this book,” continued Goethe, “how many fables have been invented about the Egyptian campaign. Much, indeed, is corroborated; but much is not, and most that has been said is contradicted. That he had eight hundred Turkish prisoners shot is true; but the act appears as the mature determination of a long council of war, on the