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GOETHE

THE HISTORY OF A MAN

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The History of a Man

by

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To G. B. S.

DEAR MR. SHAW,

If I ask you to accept the English edition of this book I have three motives for so doing. In the first place you are—I beg your pardon—an Englishman after all, and the most eminent among the authors of your country. Moreover, there was a swifter and deeper understanding of Goethe among English authors than among those of any other nation. He himself was led by this English comprehension into some bitter reflections on the incomprehension of his own people—sentiments which are not, perhaps, entirely unknown to yourself. Carlyle was, properly speaking, the first to perceive the significance and dimensions of the drama which, for the first time in centuries, was once more being unfolded in the breast of a mortal; at the time of the Master's death he anticipated what the course of a hundred years has revealed to posterity at large.

A second link between this book and yourself lies in its purpose of reconstructing the genuine man, who really lived, from the artificial idol. In a succession of splendid plays you have convinced our age that such a reconsideration is worth making, as attempted by Goethe a hundred years ago. It is because the Germans had so long nourished the idea of a young Apollo and an old Zeus that he always remained at an Olympian distance which precluded any direct influence upon his nation. And so this century has gone by as though he had never existed. Our present generation has been the first to love him for the sake of

that inward conflict, to depict his temptations and inconsistencies as the motive-forces of his endeavour. The following pages embody this new conception. Here you will be a spectator of the sixty-yeared battle which his Genius fought with his Daemon, and from which he finally wrested a kind of tragic victory. If Goethe's incessant effort is made plain in this way, he may well become a more potent influence than he ever could be through an apotheosis of his life or an analysis of his work—more potent, indeed, than *Faust* itself.

That Goethe's was neither a happy nor an harmonious nature, but one in the highest degree enigmatic—that he was neither a Don Juan nor a sycophant of princes—that as observer and sage he was no less great than as poet—is known to you, though not to the mass of men. Hence I can offer you no more than these various confirmations of your own presentiment. To that end this book will display in a slowly moving panorama the landscapes of his soul. (I have, in regard for my foreign readers, abridged the German edition by half.) He will thus be lifted above the sphere of national and moral prejudices—just as you have shown the world some historical figures who have not thereby been diminished, but only made more comprehensible. Goethe himself wished to be seen in this way; for he inveighed against all delineations "which weigh merits and demerits with feigned impartiality, and thus are far worse than death in obscuring a personality, which can only be made to live through uniting such contradictory traits of character."

To conclude—I see between the veteran Goethe and the veteran Shaw some similarities which both will kindly permit me to enumerate. In London I see a man who, during the War, held himself aloof from the strife of the

nations, who in particular was the first to distinguish Potsdam from Weimar, the obsolete from the immortal Germany, and who repeatedly acknowledged his debt to German civilization. Not otherwise, to the dismay of his nation, did Goethe hold himself during the war with France, and in his intercourse with foreign civilizations. When at the conclusion of the War I wrote this book, the existence of some few Europeans of this sort acted as a stimulus.

Further, I see two fearless spirits who have always prized the idea above art, and the truth above the idea; two great realists in life, because both are idealists in thought, innovators, and critics: two moralists, two preceptors. In this respect Shaw more strongly resembles the old Voltaire. But I hope that the following delineation may make it clearer that Goethe as a political and social observer, as a biologist and a teacher, as a sceptic and a prophet, not only surveyed his century, but transcended it. You will see with admiration how, for that striving nature, work was never the aim of life, but only one of the means to keep alive. Hence in this book a slow and vegetative evolution is shown as the reward of his active patience; and to this end portraits, conversations, and letters are assuredly no less important than works.

That Goethe wrote, besides, the most magnificent poems which the German language has produced, and that even in his advanced old age he could not shake off the habit, you will very cordially forgive in view of his great merits as a prosaist. You have, dear Mr. Shaw, a profound understanding of German music. Accept me now as your guide to Goethe; he was a brother of our great musicians.

Yours,

EMIL LUDWIG.

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CHAP.

I. 1710. Johann Caspar Goethe born (father).
1731. Elisabeth Textor born (mother).
1749. 28th August: Goethe born.
1750. His sister Cornelia born.
1765-68. Leipzig. *Die Laune des Verliebten. Die Mitschuldigen.* Käthchen.
1768-70. Frankfurt. *Neue Lieder.*

II. 1770-71. Strassburg. Herder. Friederike.
1771-72. Frankfurt. *Götz von Berlichingen.* Merck.

III. 1772. Wetzlar. Lotte.

IV. 1772-75. Frankfurt. Farces and Satires. *Werthers Leiden. Faust. Clavigo. Prometheus. Mahomet.* Lavater. Tour on the Rhine.
1775. Engagement to Lili Schönemann. First Swiss Tour. *Claudine. Stella.* 7th Nov.: Arrival in Weimar.

V. 1775-79. Weimar.
1776. Frau von Stein. Appointed Councillor of Legation. Corona Schröter. *Die Geschwister.*
1777. First Harzreise. *Wilhelm Meisters Theatralische Sendung.*
1778. *An den Mond. Der Fischer.* Potsdam, Berlin.
1779. War-Commission. First *Iphigenie.* Appointed Privy Councillor. Second Swiss Tour. *Gesang der Geister über den Wassern.*

VI. 1780-86. Weimar.

CHAP.

1780. *Briefe aus der Schweiz*, 2nd series. *Die Vögel. Tasso.*

1781. *Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt. Elpenor.* Anatomy and Osteology.

1782. Geological work. President of the Cabinet. Ennobled. His father's death.

1783. *Ilmenau. Über allen Gipfeln.* Second Harzreise. *Mignon.*

1784. Intermaxillary bone. *Geheimnisse.*

1785. Botany, mineralogy, osteology.

1786. 3rd September: Flight from Carlsbad.

VII. 1786-88. Italy.

1786. 29th October: Rome. *Iphigenie.*

1787. February to June: Naples, Sicily. *Nausicaa. Egmont* finished. Trippel's bust Tischbein's portraits.

VIII. 1788. April to June: Rome, then Weimar. 18th July: Return to Weimar. Christiane. *Roman Elegies.*

1789. *Tasso* finished. Christmas: Birth of August.

1789 to 1832. Friendship with Heinrich Meyer.

1790. Minister of Education. *Metamorphosis of Plants. Faust*, as a fragment. *Venetian Epigrams.* Venice. Silesia. Galicia.

1791 to 1817. Director of the Court Theatre.

1792. The French Campaign. Valmy. *Gross-Cophta.*

1793. *Bürgergeneral. Aufgeregten. Ausgewanderten. Reineke Fuchs.* Optics. Mainz.

PART I

GENIUS AND DAEMON

All your ideals shall not prevent me from being genuine, and good and bad—like Nature.

GOETHE

THE HISTORY OF A MAN

CHAPTER I

Rococo

These ravings and rhapsodies will give you some idea of the young fellow.

IN a fancy shop at Leipzig stands a sixteen-year-old student, choosing among powder puffs and hair ribbons; and as he turns them over he glances at a graceful gilt-framed mirror, and does not soon look away. Two dark eyes look back at him, complacently if critically; the nose is a little too prominent, seeming to bear the full weight of the lofty brow; a mouth lifted charmingly at the corners smiles mockingly and sceptically, and if he turns slightly to the left he can see his powdered side-curls. He pulls at his lace cravat, polishes one of his buttons with his glove; then, turning again to the counter, sets his left hand on his hip, plays with his dagger as if it were an epigram, and looks very well pleased with himself.

When this young gentleman, on leaving the shop, encounters a fellow student and begins to talk, the charming mouth emits phrases of precocious wisdom, the outcome more of vanity than conviction, and full of a confident omniscience alert to bring everything—God, universe, and art—down to a level whereon nothing need be venerated. Through the old streets they wander; and as they go, the admiring or wanton glance of every girl they greet is a mark for their disillusioned ribaldry, as are also the faces, figures, and teaching capacities of all their professors, to say nothing of the German State and King

Frederick. Young cynicism, early resigned to a malicious outlook, must have its gibe at any price; the young lips curl as though beneath the laces pulsed an elderly heart. Insatiable without ardour, sensual without the least illusion, our witty student trifles with his own desires; and if he puts them into verse, the rhymes are as stiffly corsetted as is the bosom of the girl to whom they are addressed.

"As for our Goethe!" writes a school friend. "He is the same conceited coxcomb as ever. . . . If you were to see him, you'd either fly into a rage or burst with laughter. . . . For all his self-assurance, he's nothing but a fop, and no matter how handsome his clothes are, there's a kind of absurdity about them which makes him the talk of the school. . . . Everywhere he goes, he makes himself more laughed at than liked. . . . The way he goes on is simply unbearable."

Had he not lately—on his sixteenth birthday—poured out the wisdom of a lifetime in his friend's album?

Dieses ist das Bild der Welt,
Die man für die beste hält:—
Fast wie eine Mördergrube,
Fast wie eines Burschen Stube,
Fast so wie ein Opernhaus,
Fast wie ein Magisterschmaus,
Fast wie Köpfe von Poeten,
Fast wie schöne Raritäten,
Fast wie abgehatztes Geld,
Sieht sie aus, die beste Welt![1]

[1] Here I would the world portray,
"Best of all," as people say:—
Something like a robbers' den
Or the "digs" of first-year men;
Something like an opera-house
Or a stuffy dons' carouse;
Something like a poet's hair
Or a bibelot rich and rare;
Something like your cash "gone west"—
That's the world you call the best.

With a forbearing smile he enters the lecture-room. Are his stockings properly pulled up? What is the Professor talking about to-day? Supreme Courts, Presidents, and Assessors. Interminable—and it's all printed in the compendium! Well, the book has a white margin—the best thing about it, and one can sketch the gentlemen of this tedious speech. The clock strikes, he stretches himself, free to get off to a lecture on Physics—perhaps that will be more interesting. Monads—quaint little beggars! And he writes to his sister:

"We scientists look upon you girls as so many monads. Really, since I've learnt that a sunbeam consists of some thousands of atoms . . . I feel ashamed of ever having bothered my head about a girl who most likely had no idea that there are little animals which could dance a minuet upon the point of a needle."

He is always owing some old friend a letter. And when he does write:

"I am in two minds! Shall I stay here with you, or go to the theatre? I declare I'll throw dice for it. No, I can't, for I have no dice. I'm off—good-bye. Wait a moment, though—I'll stay where I am. And to-morrow I shan't be able to get away, for I must go to College, and then pay visits and sup out in the evening. . . . Imagine a little bird on a leafy green branch in full ecstasy, and you have me—society, concerts, plays, parties, suppers, picnics, when this weather permits of them. Oh, it's mighty fine, and costs a mighty fine lot of money!"

But before very long the Leipzig families drop him; and we see why when he writes: "Another reason why they can't stand me in the great world is this—I have a little more taste and knowledge of what is beautiful than our smart folk, and often I could not help showing them, *coram publico*, how despicable their opinions were." No, he was not cut out for a society favourite, though he was making foolish sacrifices to that end.

Nor was it the Leipzig atmosphere which first developed

this vein in him. The earliest letter which contains an allusion to Goethe—a letter from a nobleman, to whose influence the young student (incidentally offering a false reference) had presumptuously and vainly appealed for election to a certain club—commends him " more as an amusing chatterbox than a person to be taken seriously "; and in his old age Goethe speaks of his early self-conceit, when he imagined that all eyes were fixed on him.

In his letters to the sister at home, who was only a year younger and every bit as accomplished, the tone is contemptuously playful or pedantically dogmatic: " To-day is your birthday, and I ought to be lyrical in my wishes for you, but I haven't time, nor room either. . . . Write your letters on alternate pages, and then I'll answer and criticize them on the blank ones. Further, I want you to become a perfect dancer, to learn the card-games most in vogue, and thoroughly master the art of dress. . . . These latter demands will strike you as very singular, coming from so stern a moralist as I am, especially as I'm hopelessly bad at all three myself." And no sooner has he sealed the letter than the stern moralist hurries off to his mistress, with whose " art of dress " he is very intimately concerned. Thus does he fritter away his time—will nothing induce this young dilettante to take a grip on himself?

One fancy he does take more seriously, because it really takes a grip on *him*. This is Art, both the painter's and the writer's. Sometimes he goes of a morning to the Academy, there to resume his boyish studies. There he is simpler, more single-minded; there he has no inclination to gibe or dogmatize—he wants only to learn. And why? Because a natural aptitude makes the work easy to him—for he enjoys nothing which does not, so to speak, drop into his mouth; and also because the man who instructs him had charmed him at first sight. So it will be with him all his life long—with him and the world about him; scarcely anyone who does not at once charm him will later, when he is powerful, have any chance at all of his favour.

This, too, was adumbrated in the boy: "I was generally either too vivacious or too silent, and appeared forward or sullen, according as people attracted or repelled me. . . . I was often accused in a friendly way, but often derisively too, of putting on a certain amount of airs."

And now this painter and professor of painting, the gentle dignified Oeser, with his delicate feminine features, captivated the volatile young gentleman, because he encouraged him without either over-praising or over-criticizing. He alone divined beneath the youth's flippant attitude an underlying vein of energy; and far too wise to hector him, he let him drift, he gave him scarcely anything but his own example, unurged, unspoken of; he suffered him to play at etching with an engraver, and before long to try his hand at wood cuts too.

Was it not this silent, subtle Oeser who had shown Winckelmann the way? Italy was the supreme influence; and when Oeser showed his pupils that the Southern antique was the model for the North, the youthful Goethe produced his earliest Greek outline studies—but quickly abandoned them, as if he felt: "It is too soon." Indeed, he even avoided the Classic Gallery at Dresden, for just then his genius forbade him a direct approach to those divinities who were later on to regain life through him. It was written that the decisive experiences of his long life should be fruitful only after wide circumlocutions.

Susceptible to personality as he was, Goethe was now on the point of contact with Winckelmann. The master was coming home, and the Leipzig students were preparing a grand reception for him, when there came the news of his assassination at Trieste. This was the first side-tracking of Italy, and Goethe was then eighteen; there were to be three more such delays, and not for twenty years was that door to be opened to him.

His life grew as a tree grows; and standing at the end before that eighty-yeared stem, one feels that nourishment

and refreshment, wind and weather, obeyed some organic law in nearly always coming to him at the right moment.

Wieland was still the lode-star. Every novice stood spellbound before those gossamer verses; and Goethe, from boyhood remarkably facile, imitated him like the rest—disporting himself pliantly and buoyantly on the surface of graceful rhyming, so much so that his very earliest lyrics have been set to music. He had a dangerously quick ear for measures, and used much variety of rhythm in his rhymed letters; while as a boy he had been apt at reproducing the style and speech of women and actors. In these days he would write one friend an English poem and another a French one, would translate Italian madrigals for this correspondent and copy a graceful myth for that, all the while deriding these exercises, warning his sister, to whom he would send them, against such parroting, ironizing his own little artistries:

> Von kalten Weisen rings umgeben,
> Sing' ich, was heisse Liebe sei;
> Ich sing' vom süssen Saft der Reben,
> Und Wasser trink' ich oft dabei.[1]

Was he, then, self-critical and scornful of his own attempts? Not always; and woe to anyone else who might take that tone! If his Professor found fault with a poem, Goethe would resent it for six months; when he dedicated one to his grandfather for New Year's Day, he demanded an exact report of its effect upon the audience. He spent months over his pastoral, he was indefatigable in re-writing *Die Laune des Verliebten*. But when a friend compared that piece with a renowned contemporary model, Goethe was much offended and wanted to burn every scene that could be said to resemble those in the other play.

[1] Circled around by frigid sages,
Of Love's impetuous warmth I sing;
Juice of the vine my Muse engages,
While I gulp water from the spring.

In truth, these were no more than porcelain toys—these lyrics and plays—baked in the most modish ovens and polished till they shone again, and were fit to be put in the glass case which would protect them from a breath of wind. Children of the brain, they treat of things gone by; artificial creations without any real background, they usually end with an epigram; even when he addresses a mistress, she must figure as Chloe or Ziblis. Whether he depicted art as a lure for the prudish, or sang the triumph of virtue, in these Leipzig songs Nature always appears as a smooth green lawn, the maiden ventures to its utmost limits, then she flies, then pleads and vows and (according to the mood of her piquant poet) is led by her shepherd either into the temple of Venus or round and round its precincts. For Venus lives in a well-pruned garden, and the very waters of the brook are seen by this son of the Muses as no more than a symbol of sweet inconstancy:

> Und buhlerisch drückt sie die sehnende Brust,
> Dann trägt sie ihr Leichtsinn im Strome darnieder,
> Schon naht sich die zweite und streichelt mich wieder,
> Da fühl' ich die Freuden der wechselnden Lust.[1]

What has Nature to do with that? Sometimes he does betake his poetic self to the woods "on the hunt for similes," but mostly he stays indoors or strolls to a beer-cellar. Even riding is abandoned; and afterwards he called the Leipzig years a sedentary, slinking existence, and said that "my very restricted means, the indifference of my companions, the reserve shown by my tutor, the total lack of any cultivated society, and the extremely uninteresting country that surrounded me, obliged me to look into myself for everything I needed."

What did he find there?

[1] She wantonly presses her passion-stirred breast,
Then down in the water the hussy has vanished;
But here comes the next—at her touch grief is banished,
And mine are the pleasures of change that is best.

Were there seething emotions, biding their time for attack, hidden behind in his over-intellectualized spirit? What sign can we detect of the daemonic force that soon was to set this perilous life aflame? If at twenty-two he was to shape the earliest tumultuous image of the vastness in his soul, it would seem miraculous—had there been nothing to foreshadow such an issue.

Three odes and a dozen letters to a friend: these reveal in a flash the daemonic, gifted youth whose demeanour, tastes, and intellectual activities served but to disguise him. For while in these years he was " merely groping among the things of Art and Nature," in some remoter region of the spirit there had broken a mysterious storm, a tempest undefined, which spent itself in a supreme appeal to a vocation, and was confided to no song, no play, but only to his one close friend.

At first, amid this new strange tumult, he took refuge in the planning of great works, long acts of which he toiled at—only to burn them. These were all torsos; he felt that it was too soon for anything of the sort. " But I wish people would leave me alone! If I have genius I shall be a poet, whether they correct my stuff or not. If I haven't, their criticisms can do me no good. My *Belshazzar* is finished, but I can say no more for that than for any of the other mammoths which I, an impotent dwarf, have attacked." A little later: " So there's my life—scarcely a friend or a girl in it, and I'm half despairing. A very little more, and I shall be entirely so."

But in fact he *had* a friend, and a girl.

Who was the friend to whom these strange gloomy letters, and these odes, went streaming? Was the touchy sensitive trying to find an admirer—the dogmatic novice a disciple—the high-spirited youth an aristocratic patron? He who received them was a poverty-stricken man of nearly thirty, private tutor to a nobleman's son; a haggard man with a long nose and sharp features, decently but quaintly attired, true to the buckled shoes, the hat, the little rapier, as an old Frenchman might have been. He

was a man whose greatest delight it was to investigate absurdities with the utmost gravity, to follow up some crazy proposition to the bitter end. An intellectual grotesque, in short, but not in the least malign or brutal; a mournful cynic, a ribald philosopher, a singularly touching donkey. This is Behrisch, who demolished every author alive but took Goethe's poems seriously, and (among meticulous comments upon lettering and ink, paper and binding) set about making a fair copy of the finished pieces, despite the author's one condition—that nothing should be printed.

Such was the eccentric with whom he would spend whole nights in Auerbach's cellar, caricaturing, spinning verses, "as if we were in an invested fortress . . . whence two misanthropic philosophers shoot down the Leipzigers with pellets of derision." But when it became known that young Goethe had exalted a confectioner at the expense of a Professor, Behrisch was dismissed from his tutorship on account of having such a friend.

Was it really the same hand which wrote the odes to that friend, and some of the other verses? To-day that hand writes this:

Ich sah, wie Doris bei Damoeten stand,
Er nahm sie zärtlich bei der Hand;
Lang sahen sie einander an
Und sahn sich um, ob nicht die Eltern wachen,
Und da sie niemand sahn, geschwind—
Genug, sie machten's, wie wir's machen![1]

And to-morrow, when his friend is leaving the city, it writes this:

Sei gefühllos!
Ein leichtbewegtes Herz

[1] I saw fair Doris with Damoetas stand,
He took her gently by the hand,
They looked in one another's eyes,
Then looked around—did parents watch this wooing?
And seeing no one nigh, quick, quick—
Enough, they did as we are doing!

Ist ein elend Gut
Auf der wankenden Erde.
Behrisch, des Frühlings Lacheln
Erheitre deine Stirne nie;
Nie trübt sie dann mit Verdruss
Des Winters stürmischen Ernst . . .
Du gehst, ich bleibe.
Aber schon drehen
Des letzten Jahres Flügelspeichen
Sich um die rauchende Achse.
Ich zahle die Schläge
Des donnernden Rads,
Segne den letzten—
Da springen die Riegel,
Frei bin ich wie du.[1]

What is left of all the lyric rapture—where have the charm of rhyme, the magic of half-confessed joys disappeared to? Here is a heart oppressed with the sadness of autumn, throbbing with the bitter sense of being left behind, yet no less with a chaotic impulse towards liberty, symbolized in the anarchic rhythms. Some obscure strife of the spirit forbids the victim to resign himself too soon—*his* harbour gleams afar. In letters, often resembling a diary, the absent friend was now besieged with laments

[1] Banish feeling!
A too-responsive heart
Is not worth its keep
On this ramshackle cosmos.
Behrisch, may April's laughter
Illume thy brow no day that dawns,
For never then shall it cloud
'Mid winter's tumult and gloom . . .
You go, I linger.
Ah, but already
Last year's winged spokes are revolving
Swift round the blistering axle;
I count its pulsations,
That thundering wheel's,
Blessing the last ones—
The staples are giving,
I'm free as you're free.

and objurgations; the long-stemmed ardour of a hitherto unawakened heart broke out for the first time—for Goethe was in love.

He had "ranted" before then, when he was robbed (in tragi-comic circumstances) of his first fancy, a Frankfurt Gretchen; but that was a boy's defiant fury. It had been like wounding a sleeper, for the relation was an idealistic one, to be classed among youth's morning dreams. But in Leipzig there were pitfalls, and the lover's feet were sore beset. What did she look like, this being for whom he contended? Was she a passionate experienced woman of thirty, formed to attract the sensual worldling in him—an artist, an Egeria for the budding poet—or a dazzling coquette, amusing herself with a raw boy?

She was Käthchen Schönkopf, a vintner's daughter, twenty years old, "well grown, but not very tall, with a round, pleasant, though not remarkably pretty face, a frank winning gentle manner, very ingenuous and not in the least coquettish; and she is gracefully intelligent though by no means highly educated." Other women of Goethe's adolescence were to resemble her; at no time, indeed, was he apt to be attracted by beauty or intellect; it was always a sweet nature which charmed him most. The law of polarity ordained that his prodigious temperament should seek a soothing influence.

But she was an innkeeper's daughter, and at first the Councillor's son was torn between pride and inclination. Away from her, he dressed more extravagantly than ever and made love to his girl acquaintances, so as to avert curiosity from the wine-shop. He was still the prey of social conventions, his bringing-up prevailed against Nature; it was but slowly that he threw off such prepossessions.

Soon, however, he did grow more urgent, for every sensual impulse he possessed was stirred by the girl's vitality, and eagerly demanded the semi-surrender by which at that period maidens were wont to allow themselves to play with danger. Some rococo verses, dedicated

to her under her other name of Annette, are unmistakably coloured by the delights of satisfying hours which were not hours of dream.

He was her suitor, and her servant. For though his soul was but gradually to flower into a reverence which should extirpate its early cynicism, it was instinctively subservient with women; and hence he was always the one to suffer most from the complexities of love.

Goethe was never the handsome seducer, never proud of his conquests, never a Don Juan; he was always the suppliant, always the giver of thanks—and much oftener a rejected than an accepted suitor! It is only when we regard him as utterly self-surrendering, and recognize how unquenchable was the will-to-love which ultimately subdued itself to the facts of existence, that we shall clearly understand the legend of his passions, the cosmogony of his work, the history of his soul.

But behind the blissful lover's gratitude there hovered even then, at seventeen, such doubts as Faust might have cherished. Half-submissive, half-morbid was his attitude; and the irony he had toyed with became a quivering experience:

> Das reinste Glück, das wir empfunden,
> Die Wollust mancher reichen Stunden
> Floh wie die Zeit mit dem Genuss.
> Was hilft es mir, das ich geniesse?
> Wie Träume fliehn die warmsten Küsse,
> Und alle Freude wie ein Kuss![1]

Here for the first time appears the tragic problem of his life. At every period he was to ask himself anew, and at eighty-two inexorably to reiterate in the words of his centenarian Faust: "What gain is mine, though mine

[1] The purest joy that e'er was given,
Hours that were rich in gifts from heaven,
Like time and happiness are fled.
What gain is mine, though mine were blisses?
Vanished like dreams the warmest kisses,
And as a kiss my rapture dead.

were blisses?" Goethe's recoil from the immediate, the momentary, which nevertheless he ceaselessly pursued, began at eighteen.

And yet again it was too soon! He knew it, and he and his were to pay a heavy price for that consciousness. His tempestuous spirit could not yet strike the balance between insight and experience, and so there came trouble for all concerned.

His genius guided him better in the sphere of art, in that it made him abandon his "mammoths." But in actual life he was unable to distinguish between time-worn generalities and a personal distrust of this Käthchen. He was a poet, born with a soul whose gift and penalty it was to universalize every experience; and his difficulty was to reconcile his insight with the course of daily life. Moreover, he was now left entirely to himself, for his friend was far away; and he was neurotic and sensitive, an exacting lover.

With his own hands he destroyed the tranquillity of this earliest attachment. He refused his troubled senses their instinctive confidence in the girl he loved; it was not long before she threw him over—and so, for the first time, he unconsciously set himself free for his destined task.

For it had been his definite intention to marry Käthchen. Her mother was a Frankfurt woman; her father, too, favoured his suit; and he, sensuously steeping himself in the beloved's atmosphere—hearth and home, taproom and billiard-room—and temperamentally attracted by its orderliness and security, dreamed of himself as her husband. But then, after he had been more than a year in love with her, he began to torment her; restless as he was, he could not suffer his heart to rest where it listed.

His letters to the absent friend reveal such a degree and variety of passionate emotions as were only once again to colour Goethe's life; ferocity and scepticism, sensual and spiritual chaos, moralities and cynicisms—Faust and Mephistopheles, in a word. In these letters, written at eighteen, the mighty forces warring in his heart are first

made manifest. The duality of that spirit is laid bare in these upheavals of the restless senses.

"One more night like last night, Behrisch, and for all my sins I shall never have to go to hell! . . . A jealous lover, who had drunk quite as much champagne as was good for him, so as to enkindle his imagination to the utmost! At first I couldn't sleep, tossed about my bed, jumped up and raved; and then I tired myself out and did get off. But idiotic dreams arrived before long. . . . They woke me up, and I consigned everything to the devil. Afterwards I had an hour of peace, and pleasant dreams—of her looking like herself, waving her hand from the doorway, giving me a fleeting kiss; and then all of a sudden—she had thrust me into a sack. . . . I philosophized in my sack, and bayed out a dozen or so of allegories in the Shakespearean manner, when he went in for rhyming. . . . Then suddenly it struck me that I should never see you again, and that gave me a sort of feverish paroxysm, for I was light-headed, you see. I flung my bedclothes to the winds, gnawed a handkerchief or two, and then slept till eight o'clock amid the ruins of my palatial couch."

Erotic struggles with Käthchen were probably the origin of this state of mind, and of its later aggravation.

A few days later he suddenly explodes again: "Well, Behrisch, this is one of my bad moments! You are away, and my paper is but a chilly substitute for your arms. O God, God! If I could only be my own man again. Behrisch, may love be damned! Oh, if you could see me, see this raving wretch who knows not at what he raves, you would be sorry for me. Friend, friend, why have I only *one*?" Then, in a sort of diary-letter extending over four days and more than eight pages, he gives a frenzied description of the fever into which her coldness has driven him: "Well—but oh, Behrisch, don't expect me to tell you in cold blood! My God! This evening I sent down a message. . . . My servant . . . came back to say that she was at the theatre with her mother. I had

just had a shivering fit, and this news set my blood on fire. At the theatre! When she knows that her lover is ill! Good God. . . . Could she possibly be at the theatre with *him*? That thought shattered me. I *had* to know. I dressed myself, and tore like a lunatic to the Comedy.

"And now listen! Behind her seat was Herr Ryden, in a very tender attitude. Ha! Picture me. In the gallery—seeing that through my opera-glasses. Curse them! O Behrisch, I thought my brain would burst with fury. . . . Sometimes he would lean forward . . . then sit back, then bend over her chair again and say something. I had to gnash my teeth and watch it. Tears came into my eyes, but they were tears of eye-strain, for I haven't been able to cry this whole evening. . . . All of a sudden the fever took full possession of me, and I thought I should die that very instant. . . . Do you know of a more unhappy mortal, with such abilities, such views, such advantages, than I am? . . . Another new pen. A few moments' rest. . . . But I love her. I believe I would take poison from her hand. . . . What am I to do to-morrow? . . . If I once lay eyes on her, I know I shall think, 'God forgive you as I forgive you, and grant you as many years as you have robbed from my life. . . .' Ha! All our delights are in ourselves. We are our own devils, we drive ourselves out of our Edens."

By next evening all was well—her innocence established. Reconciliation scene. Nevertheless he finishes his letter, but "would tear it up if I *could* feel any shame at your seeing me as I really am. This violent desire, and this equally violent detestation, these ravings and rhapsodies, will give you some idea of the young fellow. . . . Yesterday the world was made a hell by the very thing that makes it a heaven to-day. . . . The remembrance of sufferings survived is bliss. And such a compensation! My all of happiness in my arms!"

This is the earliest Goethe. Passion, which mostly tends to obscure a character, in him was illuminative of every trait. Sensuous and contemplative, hot-headed and

shrewd, daemonic and naïve, self-reliant and subservient: it was a chaos of emotions, all of equal intensity, clamouring undisciplined, unguided.

In this last Leipzig winter it would seem that after two years of courtship he had the girl completely in his power. The confidences to his friend are less outspoken, rarer too; the lovers seem to meet more regularly, his nerves are in better order, he toys with the drama, sketches, visits a few families—and then in March he makes this remarkable avowal to his friend.

" Listen, Behrisch. I never can or will desert the girl, and yet I must and will get away from here—but she shall *not* be unhappy. If she goes on being as sweet to me as she is now! She ought to be happy. And yet I have grown so cruel that I drive her to despair. . . . If she could get hold of the right man, if she could be happy without me, how delighted I should be! I know my duty towards her; my hand and fortune are hers by right; she ought to have all that I can give her. A curse on the man who thinks of himself rather than of the girl whom he has made miserable! She shall never know the pain of seeing me in another's arms until I have felt that pain for her."

This is a new tone—the unmistakable tone of the young men possessive, who has had his pleasure and cooled off, who has a vague sense of indebtedness, but decks his resolution to be free with moral platitudes.

A few weeks later the tone is a free man's. They have parted, and he loves her better than ever, for " passion grows stronger when it is calmer, and so it is with mine. O Behrisch, I have begun to live! If I could only tell you all—but I can't; it would be too much for me. Enough that we have parted, and are happy. It was a business; but now I sit like Hercules when he had finished all his labours, looking at the glorious reward. It was a dreadful time, until we understood one another. . . . We began with love, and we end with friendship. But not for me! I love her still—how dearly, O God, how dearly! O that you were here to comfort me and love me! "

This letter, full as it is of reservations, evasions, and untruthfulness of every kind—though the writer was more taken in than the recipient—reveals an increasing violence and instability of temperament. He hovers like a feckless phantom about the love that is supposed to be over and yet not over; pretends he will be satisfied with a problematic future outcome, is very sorry for himself and not particularly sorry for her—impossible to say whether it is the heart or the senses which prevails. Thus it never occurs to him that the girl, who is older than he and is without social standing or fortune, has much more at stake and so must look after herself—no, he is shocked beyond measure when, her liberty regained, she does what he professes to desire for her, and becomes engaged to another man.

And now again Goethe's heart was as a seething volcano with passion and jealousy. " My passion grew stronger " (so he wrote afterwards in his Reminiscences), " but it was too late, I had really lost her; and I reproached myself so bitterly for my mistake, and wrought such havoc in my physical constitution, merely to scout the moral law, that it contributed greatly to the bodily ills which wasted the best years of my life. . . . I put such a strain on the organism with which I was blessed that every separate element in it was bound to conspire in violent rebellion, if the whole were to escape destruction."

Does he mean erotic excesses? Unquestionably his life in that last Leipzig year was licentious. Even if this were not the natural consequence of his general temperamental trend, a few words to his friend would drive us to the same conclusion: " I'm going downhill faster every day. Three months will see the end of me, Behrisch. Good-night—I hope I shall know nothing about it." This short epilogue brings the curtain down sensationally; for here ends the correspondence with his friend.

His collapse came sooner than the apocalyptic hint at suicide had arranged for. Two months after this letter—

in July—he woke one night to find himself bathed in blood. It was a haemorrhage. He retained sufficient consciousness to awake the man in the next room to his; then was confined to bed for weeks, and for six months was in a state so critical as only once again he was to experience, and that a generation later. He calls the attack consumption first, then quinsy, then dysentery. We can arrive at no certain conclusion. The one thing that signifies is that this illness, important as it was for his spiritual development, was the result of an abandoned way of life, to which he was driven by a spiritual conflict. It was a concatenation of psychic causes and effects.

Nervously, when he was convalescent, did he approach the tavern. He met the beloved with outward composure, but was alert for indications of her intercourse with the new possessor. True, he had handed her over; and this admirer, older and quieter, would know better how to treat her. But the sight of him was too much for the invalid; he fled, with no farewell, from the girl who had long ceased to be his.

This was Goethe's first flight from a woman whom he loved. It was to be repeated, and now proved an instinct which gradually became an experience, teaching him how far he could trust his heart, and what he must spare it, in the catastrophes which convulsed his early years. Here we see the beginning of Goethe's spiritual hygiene, whereby he found salvation in each successive development.

It was a depressing household to which the invalid son came home after three years' absence. An embittered father, whose own long-shattered hopes of rank and influence were now centred on his children, and who had lost four of them in swift succession, to see but two grow up. On his only son he had fastened all his ambition, and three years ago had sent a gifted youth, the product of his anxious personal training, out into the world of men.

Was that father a born misanthrope? His essential traits were pride and energy; his suffering was the outcome of disappointed ambition. His aim was now to obtain rank for his son. Goethe's father—son of a ladies' tailor—had, thirty years before, lost all hope of the eagerly desired position on the Council of his native town, because of the absurd pretensions he had put forward; and now had lived for a generation, unemployed, upon an inherited income. He had been the heir of his own far-seeing father's hardly earned fortune; and that he might extend his knowledge of the world and obtain a wider outlook, had been permitted, at so early a period as the beginning of the century, to take his education in the shape of prolonged tours both southward and northward.

And in precisely the same spirit he had given his son an extraordinarily complete education—such learning and such training as would fit him to be either a great dilettante or a universal genius. Three living, and three dead, languages had the boy acquired from his father and his father's chosen tutors; he could play the piano and the 'cello, could sketch and paint, was acquainted with the history of the world and of the arts. He knew something about exploration and cartography, he could ride and fence and dance, had come into personal contact with municipal and governmental affairs, with painters and diamond-cutters at their work, with the stage both before and behind the footlights—nay, his father was actually the first to induce him to make verses.

. . . But now that hard-featured face clouds over, as the father stands near the staircase in the broad vestibule, and sees the object of all his anxiety transformed into a pale-faced, languid, dissipated-looking student, devoid of all energy, all vitality.

Not, indeed, that there is much harmony to be disturbed by this home-coming; his aspect merely serves to increase the discord in a joyless household. She who stands beside the grim old master, that mother of just thirty-eight, has always looked forward to her son's return

as a relief from the dullness of her home life. For Goethe was the child of an unhappy marriage. The father who could be so kind to his son showed little kindness to his vivacious wife. Stinginess and distrust made a gloomy atmosphere round the unoccupied, embittered husband; with increasing age there came indications of pathological disturbance, the outcome of his inward unrest.

When in the past the mature, reclusive bachelor had courted the magistrate's daughter, who was only half his age, he could not but have been tempted by the much desired connection with the Town Council; and his father-in-law, Textor, heir of an old-established legal family, was equally of course attracted by the fortune of the tailor's son. When the event proved that the ambitious elder Goethe was not to get what he wanted out of his purchased title of Councillor, his coldness to the young wife grew more marked than ever, for her innate gaiety of disposition had from the first been uncongenial to him. Soon he fell out with his father-in-law as well, and it ended in his accusing him of having betrayed the city to the French. The conduct of such debates between Goethe's father and grandfather is depicted by a constant witness of them, in these casual words: "Textor threw a knife at him, whereupon Goethe whipped out his dagger."

Even in his old age Goethe could not bring himself to reveal more than the most superficial aspect of all this to the world at large—yet the revelation is far-reaching enough when he describes his father as a stern man who, "because his nature was essentially of the tenderest, assumed, and kept up with amazing consistency, an adamantine severity of manner. . . . On the other hand, my mother, still little more than a young girl, could hardly be said to mature in any sense until her two eldest children were old enough to be companions to her. . . . She was full of vitality, eager to enjoy the passing moment. The atmosphere created in a family by such incompatibility grows more and more trying as years go on; my father went his way relentlessly and uninterruptedly;

my mother and her children could not sacrifice their every feeling, claim, and aspiration."

Goethe, who in extreme old age wrote some good-humoured rhymes about his inheritance of both parents' attributes, derived all his passion, scepticism, and ambition from his father, but from his mother the correctives of these three elements—blitheness, *joie de vivre*, and even, in a sense, imagination. The chiaroscuro of his temperament, so strangely commingled as to be the source of all his joys and pains, originated in this heritage from parents so disparate as his; but genius is never of mortal provenance—"the mind is always autochthonous." So he summed up in his old age.

If, however, we measure the formative influence of such experiences as his father alone subjected him to, we shall find that the credit for his development in this period must be given to the paternal side; and that for the next seven years the elder Goethe's genuine interest in his son's career did much to heighten his influence by its untiring helpfulness. The mother, with her charm and spontaneity, was like an elder sister to him, and to her he drew much closer than to the father. But he learnt nothing from her; she added in no way to his experience. Neither in Goethe's own narratives nor in those of his friends is any deep influence attributed to his mother during the formative years, which henceforth were mostly spent at home. If the mother did take the son's side against the father, it was only in matters of the passing hour; she was never his confidante, his refuge, or his solace. Even in his Reminiscences, so constantly eloquent of gratitude to his unloved father, he characterizes his mother only once, calling her "a good woman, never without some mental interest," who found her dearest solace in her religion.

. . . Now, on his home-coming, she stood in the hall and welcomed her son as a deliverer from strife and ennui. Still more ardently, because her heart was heavier, had his sister set all her hopes on him; she had borne much in

the last three years. Her father had wreaked his pedagogic enthusiasm, her brother his self-conceit, on her; while the mother, with her craving for amusement, was entirely alien to the girl's nature. Perhaps she was already mentally affected.

This brother and sister strongly resembled one another in the elements of their characters, but were totally dissimilar in the combination of those elements—and this it was which decided their respective destinies. When Goethe, in later life, called his sister an inextricable mixture of strength and weakness, he might have said the same thing of himself without thereby revealing the essential. Those moods of depression which at all times, but especially in his adolescence, were wont to attack him, he could always overcome by the virile cheerful elements in his nature, and this up to the ninth decade of his life. In Cornelia there was nothing to redress them, and Goethe went so far as to call her a creature devoid of faith, love, and hope. It is written in both their faces: the same forces which convulsed her inharmonious nature were, by a colossal lifelong effort, fused into unity in him. Though the physical likeness between them was so marked that they were sometimes taken for twins, the traits which in the brother were attractive, even beautiful at times, were in her repellently masculine; moreover, she stooped and had an unhealthy complexion. Goethe was rescued from the perils of his nature by the grace of his senses, which inspired him with devotion for men and deeds; his sister's morbid lack of sensuality was fatal to her happiness in love, and marriage, and daily life.

Never were the two more alike than in this moment, when the suffering youth of nineteen was greeted by the disillusioned girl of a year younger, who had no admirers such as her girl-friends had, and " showed terrible bitterness towards my father." To such a stormy atmosphere, which the mother's native kindliness was but seldom able to dispel, the shipwrecked adventurer returned. There

was a violent scene at the very moment of his arrival. " I suppose I looked worse than I knew."

Then they settled down as best they could. The three younger members of the household breathed again, though cautiously, and left the old man to his grumbles. The student had to tell the women all about Leipzig; he collected his Leipzig verses, published them anonymously, though he utterly scorned them, and began on a one-act play, first entitled *Lustspiel in Leipzig*, and then *Die Mitschuldigen*.

It is a remarkably gloomy sort of comedy, closely allied to a tragedy. A cynical, daemonic man of feeling is depicted from the ludicrous point of view, and the misanthropic attitude adopted by him is evidently that of the author, for he is undeniably the most interesting figure in the piece. For neither here nor in his later plays is Goethe's character to be deduced from the hero only; his dual nature shed the same light on the hero's antagonist —whence the entire absence of the " villain " from Goethe's works.

His illness was not quite over. It was hanging about him still and now attacked his throat, so that with bandaged head he would sit in his dressing-gown on the sofa in his attic-room, under the eaves of the old house. He would usually be reading. What musty old folio had he got hold of? Paracelsus? How came the scoffer to hit upon the old alchemist's work?

Suffering as he was in heart and limb, the youth had seemed a good subject for the Moravian teaching; and when Fräulein von Klettenberg, an aristocratic old maid, his mother's confidante in the many sorrows of her marriage, drew the sceptic into her circle in the hope of converting him, he went obediently like a good son, and listened quietly for a while, concealing his amusement. For in his view he was now " on very good terms with my God. Indeed, I considered that, after my many and various experiences, he really owed me some amends, and I was impudent enough to think that I had something to forgive him."

So it was in vain that the gentle cheerful lady, whose soul had more purity than depth, cast her net for this disciple of Voltaire. But Goethe was attracted by the transparency of her nature; and so he lent an ear when her doctor and friend, in their transcendental conversations, pointed him to certain occult writings, to the practice of alchemy, and hinted that he had found such useful in his medical work. At nineteen, one had read so much—why not a mystical book into the bargain? And without perceiving its significance, the reflective patient took his first step—more out of curiosity than for his soul's sake—towards an approach to that mystic world; having closed the other door, the Bible of his childhood, with a gesture saying, " I know too much about this."

There he would sit, reading the old mystics; even Swedenborg's name had ceased to be a mere legend for him. So close had his tireless genius drawn him to the source of things. But since the scholar in him was still obdurate, it went hard with him. In December he had a serious relapse, so alarming that he was convinced by his sufferings that he must be on the point of death, and that no power could save him. And then, when it was touch-and-go, his distracted parents begged the mystical doctor to use his magic panacea. His refusal increased their anguish; at last he did rush home one night, and returned with a little phial of crystallized salts, which he administered to the patient. There was an immediate improvement; the illness took a favourable turn; convalescence soon followed. " I need not say how greatly this enhanced my confidence in our doctor."

The great crisis, which had begun five months before in Leipzig, was at its height. To-day we call this sort of thing " suggestion," which after all is only a word. The important point is that Goethe's psychical life took a turn precisely synchronizing with the physical one.

For when after weeks of misery he rose from his bed of fever, something had awakened in him which gave his unsettled nature the first clear note of stability. We

might call it belief, which does not mean the faith of his childhood; rather it was but readiness for belief. That this should have originated in the means which he believed to have cured his physical body could not deter his searching intellect from following. The thing that matters is that he found a support.

Such a psychic evolution, regarded not as a miracle but merely as the result of much that had gone before, is not likely to achieve wonders over-night, as one might say. In the mind as in the body we perceive a general alleviation, a gradually growing sense of clearer air. The incident as a whole—physical crisis and psychical deliverance—is the significant fact. This illness (so he wrote in his old age) " made me a different man. For I had attained a wonderful lightness of heart. . . . I was happy, conscious of my spiritual emancipation, though threatened by a period of tedious physical suffering."

Tied by the leg, he sat there at his table, sketching the room, his furniture, his visitors, and everyone the visitors gossiped about. And while the convalescent's spontaneity and other charming characteristics struggled with his former arrogance, he felt an increasing reverence for those magic forces which had drawn him back into the light. But at the same time his curiosity was aroused—it kept a parallel course with belief throughout the life of Goethe; and he made himself a little blast-furnace and a sand-bath, and tried, by some eccentric method of his own invention, to produce medicinal salts—in a word, was definitely busying himself with the craft. In this way the quasi-adept got a general idea of it; it was by this circuitous path that he reached the confines of pure physics. Bodily torment, originating in that of the spirit, led the nineteen-yeared Goethe to the alchemy he made use of in *Faust*, and to that scientific chemistry which he was not to pursue seriously until decades had gone by.

His thirst for universal knowledge was now renewed, and on a higher level. During his long convalescence he made a drastic clearance among his books, and banished

Manilius and Voltaire, Propertius and Quintilian, from the shelves in his room. Well prepared by education, and by the progressive though undisciplined Leipzig period, this great dilettante was ready for a much wider flight.

And now the darkness which had so perpetually enshrouded his prehensile brain began very slowly to lift. The clouds dispersed, and he could write: "O my dear lady, light is truth, and though the sun is not itself the truth, yet from the sun streams light. It is night which is the unreality. And what is beauty? It is neither the light nor the night. A twilight, born of truth and untruth, a something intermediate. In beauty's realm there is a parting of the ways, so deceptive, so sinuous, that a Hercules among philosophers might lose the track. . . . Once I begin on this sort of speculation I don't know where I am; and yet I like it better than any other."

How he rises and sinks upon the quivering waves of light that come and go, now strives to shake off his insensibility, now pantingly, desperately, grasps at every ray! The utterances of his scepticism are more restrained, more tentative; and he continues this letter to Oeser's daughter in a totally new strain, wherein we hear the modulations of a panic-stricken soul: "He who takes the strait path should follow it in silence absolute. Humility and circumspection are the indispensable accompaniments of our steps thereon, and we shall have our reward in the end. I owe it to your dear father that my soul was ever touched to such an issue. Time will bless my labours, and grant them to accomplish what has been begun."

Can this be the same Goethe—are these the words of a boy scarce twenty? Has he who began by being omniscient turned diffident all of a sudden? Nay, rather call this the earliest perception of himself. For the flickering insight of his confidences to his Leipzig friend is now a still flame burning upward from the deeper stillness within. One of Goethe's fundamental beliefs was that we should feel ourselves to be organisms, accepting our

seasons as they pass, silently bearing all they bring us, even as the tree does. His self-consciousness was now, without a tinge of vanity, transmuting itself into consciousness of his vocation; and the loftier his flight was to be, the longer he must take to prepare himself for it. At this time he spoke of himself, quite frankly, as a poet in the germ, and said with equal candour that no very young man could expect to be a master.

In those years he wrote scarcely anything—the surest indication that he was meditating new modes of expression. He burnt the plays and verses he had begun on, burnt his letters too, and while "verses refused to flow" he was exploring the field of criticism. So that now we have our first tangible evidence for the way in which critical insight and plastic powers, cool perceptions and glowing emotions, worked on equal terms in the depths of his spirit; for before his poetry was inspired by the pantheistic impulse, he had recognized that impulse as indispensable. Such self-recognition vehemently turns against its own endeavours. That was why he burnt most of the Leipzig lyrics, and abandoned that phase once for all.

Käthchen alone survived for him; and while Leipzig became a thing of the past, the bitter-sweet aftertaste of that first passion remained with him for years. After a few letters which hovered between friendliness and love-making, with a tendency to exaggerate the portentousness of the past, he heard of her formal betrothal to his successor in her favour; and instead of exchanging his tender avowals for the phrases of ceremony, all the painfully repressed passion broke out afresh. His sensual male imagination was stirred to picture the beloved in another's arms, and a malign compulsion kept his eyes perpetually fixed upon that vision.

Soon memory distorted the truth, and he persuaded himself that she had refused him; three years later, even, he told his friends so; and—long after his next love-affair—his grief for Käthchen was so poignant that no one thought he could possibly fall in love, so obsessed

did he seem by the Leipzig episode. And forty years later he reiterated this falsification of a biographical fact, and that with full conviction: Käthchen had thrown *him* over!

He felt now that her betrothal had shattered his last secret hope. Bridal songs he could not send her—those he had attempted were all either too intimate or too cold; and when shortly before his twentieth birthday he was seized by bitter resentment for his wasted years, it is as though he were seeking to atone for the pain he had given her when in the Hamletian manner, but with a challenge underlying the self-reproach, he laments: "Three years ago I would have sworn that things should be very different. . . . There was a time when I never could have my fill of talk with you, and now all the wits that I possess are insufficient to cover a page of letter-paper. . . . If you could write me a line . . . to say that you are happy in every possible way, I should be glad. . . . Oh, if I could call back these last two and a half years! Käthchen, dear Käthchen, I swear to you that I should show more wisdom!" Thus did his lovelorn heart, which for more than two years of his adolescence turned to no other woman, find sustenance in its dreams of the past.

A year and a half after their amicable separation, he suddenly begged her not to write to him again. "A sad request, my dearest, my one and only love, whom I cannot call my friend. . . . I would rather not see your handwriting again, just as I would rather not hear your voice; it is bad enough to have my dreams so taken up with you."

But no less suddenly he pulled himself together, and concluded as with a wakening prescience of great things to come: "You are always a dear girl to me, and you will be a dear woman too. And I—I shall always be Goethe. You know what that means. When I say my name, I say all that I am."



AGED 21

CHAPTER II

PROMETHEUS

> When you stand boldly erect in the chariot, and four fresh horses are tugging frantically at the reins, and you control their energies . . . till all sixteen hoofs are taking you at a measured pace to where you want to go —that is mastery!

"ENLARGE the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitation. . . . For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left." On his first day in Strasburg, in the small room near the Fishmarket, Goethe opened the little prayer-book, his mother's gift, at random, seeking a sign; and when he saw that the Book was Isaiah and the passage that quoted above, he was strangely moved. Was the new-old book to prove a "lively blessing" after all, and could that heart of his, purged of its thirst for knowledge, recapture the one and only radiance, in his childhood so familiar and so bright? His endangered life and all his disappointments did, in the beginning, lead him to a resumption of the childish faith which he had hastily abandoned, rather from perplexity than from conviction. True, what Fräulein von Klettenberg had instilled at home seemed no less problematical than the worthy doctor's alchemy. But behind it all, behind it, there must be something—and that sense was urgent in appeal.

And while, that evening, he installed himself, arranging clothes and ink-bottle and pens (for everything must be in good order); while he compared the pleasant new quarters with his Leipzig workshop, he suddenly remembered the man in the next room there, who had nursed him so kindly. Was he still prayerful, that purblind theologian? It was the night of Good-Friday. What about writing him a religious letter? Money would be more welcome, for he was badly off. And he sent some,

and wrote: "When I remember what an intolerable creature I was last summer, I am filled with amazement that anyone could put up with me. . . . If things are as they were—if you are still in twilight while others enjoy the light of day, you don't lose much. It is twilight everywhere in this world, a little more or a little less; some comfort in that. . . . I am changed, much changed, and I thank my Saviour for it; that I am not now what I threatened to become is another cause for thankfulness. Luther says: 'I fear myself more for my good works than for my sins.' And when one is young, one is nothing—nothing."

The old effusiveness, the old ardours, here in this strange Good-Friday outpouring from the believer dubious of his belief, the sceptic dubious of his scepticism! If in the first weeks at Strasburg he sometimes consorted with religious people, he soon found them tiresome, narrow-minded. Vacillating between the allurements of a haven of rest, and a yearning for the splendours of the perilous ocean, Goethe cruised for a while along the coast.

He was still looking sallow and haggard; still clinging to the God of his childhood, "whom we call Lord, until we can call him Our Lord." But within new sap was rising, and it broke forth into Spring.

At that time Strasburg was a French town, its inhabitants were called *sujets allemands du Roi de France*. Society aped Paris more eagerly even than in Leipzig, which was the reason why the shrewd father had chosen these two universities, for once the boy had got his doctor's degree he was to go to Paris and behold the sun. Only among the French could he learn to be a man of the world; then he would come home to dazzle his native town. What a pity he wasn't a born patrician! But this was at any rate the best chance of his touching the fringe of society; he would have to make good therein himself. Would he bring it off this time?

He was unchangingly eccentric, more inclined to be reclusive than to look up successful people. With youthful contrariness he now disdained the ladders which it had cost

him so much to climb, he passionately abjured the tastes which had once absorbed him, and accused civilization as a whole of having led him astray. This young aesthete seemed to abominate everything that was French, though in fact he was only disgusted with his own recent behaviour.

And besides, he had been hit on the raw. French, which as a child he had mastered, he now spoke badly, for he had too often imitated servants and sentries, actors and parsons; and so the Strasburghers laughed at his *patois*, as the Leipzigers had of yore at his Frankfurt accent. Proud and offended, he resolved to abjure French; he would make it his business to speak his mother tongue and show them how forcible and expressive it was. The German Goethe had to tread French soil before a trace of German instinct woke in him; but still stronger incentives were needed to arouse him from mere passive emotion to productive ardour.

He never led the student's life. The academic forms and ceremonies bored not only the young dandy, but the eccentric, in him. Some violent prejudices, however, began to give way; for now, at twenty, he no longer declined to play cards, but learnt whist and piquet. Though he was more sociable than in Leipzig, he was very tenacious of his liberty; and this alternation between sociability and reclusiveness, which went on until he was quite an old man, was—like all the paradoxes in his conduct—no more than reflex action. During his adolescence Goethe went from the scholarly to the amusing, and slowly retraced his steps in his old age.

In Strasburg, where his too-sophisticated young heart was longing to beat high once more, he strove against his misanthropic tendencies—and not until he was nearly sixty was he ever again so amiable a creature as in those three college-terms. Returning health, a new faith, his surroundings and sympathies, forbade him any intellectual affectations; he was gradually arriving at a spontaneity which gave play to the best part of his nature, and was before long to inspire his genius. But for Goethe's

responsive temperament a human relation was indispensable if he were to disentangle himself from his conflicts.

Before any such relation could bear fruit, Nature demanded a whole summer season for the ripening of her disciple. In those early Strasburg months fresh energies were developing at every point; and when he felt himself unequal to their urgency, he took to a régime. He sought to render himself immune from noises, morbid sensations, giddiness, and adopted violent measures to that end. He would stand close to the drummer at a tattoo; he climbed the neck of the Minster tower right up to the crown; in the evenings he frequented graveyards and in the mornings the schools of anatomy—until he could face their implications and be sure that henceforth nothing of the kind would upset him.

This nerve-régime was the outcome of much latent struggle of a deeper kind. It may be regarded as the earliest evidence of that stringent preservative method to which he afterwards devoted half his powers, so as to keep the other half at liberty to take their highest flight. For if the adolescent Goethe took his daemon in hand, it was in the daemonic manner; the older man was to go about it more systematically. At this time it was all blind instinct; later it was conscious technique. He had succeeded in the initial probation, fortifying his mind and his body—a sleep-walker guided by his genius—by the time he was one-and-twenty.

For these summer months—which went by between irregular attendance at lectures, drives, and rides, no work done, no verses or plays attempted—there are fewer letters than in any subsequent year of his life. We have only a few rough drafts which witness, as a diary might, to the mute exaltations of an expectant soul. "Yesterday we rode the whole day long; night fell upon us, riding still, and we got as far as the Lorraine mountain region. . . . When I looked to the right, far across the green depths, and saw the river flowing, silvery and still, and on my left the massive darkness of the beech-forest, hanging

over me from the mountain's flank . . . my heart was filled with tranquillity. . . . What joy it is to have a light, free heart! The mettle in us urges us to the difficult, the dangerous; but great joys are not to be attained without great effort, and that is perhaps my chief quarrel with love. People say it gives us courage. It never does. Once the heart is soft, it is weak. When it beats —oh, how warmly!—in the breast, and one's throat is as if constricted, and one longs for tears and sits there in a sort of incomprehensible ecstasy, when they have risen to one's eyes—are we not weak, so weak that chains of flowers could bind us?"

Can we not discern there the tremulous, submissive element which was part of his craving, of his self-culture? That heart, an embittered convalescent from its first passion, was floating sentimentally on a tide of vague desires; the sapling was patiently and presciently awaiting the fructifying rain.

One September day, running up the steps of the hotel, he brushed against a young clergyman whose black silk gown was caught up at one corner and stuck in his pocket, while his powdered hair was clubbed. Foppish, but elegant and attractive. Goethe recognized Herder; he spoke to the renowned young man, mentioning his own obscure name, and saying he would like to come and see him. The elder cordially assented. What made our student address him? He had heard at dinner that the author of *Kritische Wälder* had arrived, and was undergoing treatment from the Strasburg oculists. And was the young *littérateur* an admirer of that work? On the contrary, he had written a year ago that the all-conquering Lessing would turn Herder's little thicket into firewood.

But personality always attracted him; and since it was the only lure a live instructor had for him, he could for its sake put aside any prejudices he might cherish against the new arrival's teaching and publications. It was the strange indolent charm of the man's aspect, the distinguished carriage of his head, which marked him

out on the steps of that hotel. Had it not been for this, Goethe would have avoided Herder in Strasburg as he had avoided Lessing in Leipzig. He was ripe for Herder's teaching—that was why he met him, and that was why he spoke to him.

For it was only by the law of contraries that these two natures could attract one another. When Goethe visited Herder, swiftly establishing a relation which he would not suffer to escape him, and followed the first visit by a second and a third, soon to make this a daily morning and evening habit—in those early weeks of their intercourse, in the little darkened room of the Strasburg Eye Hospital, two characters came into contact, so diametrically opposed to each other that they could only have been allied through their respective attitudes of teacher and disciple, never by adjustment and interchange of ideas. They stopped short at this pedagogic relation; friendship was not for them.

Here were two young men, one of whom was fond of teaching, tied by the leg, and in his loneliness very glad of a gifted disciple; while the other, always anxious to learn, had never yet found the right teacher and in a swift flash of insight had now grasped eagerly at what this stranger might have to offer him. And so in these weeks, whose results were incalculable for Goethe and for German culture, the unexpected happened—Herder, born for domination, with every day surrendered himself more completely, though much against his will; while Goethe, born for self-surrender, took all he wanted and gave the lonely invalid little more than the pleasure of his company in return.

For Herder's nature never wanted to yield, to know repose. His first impulse was towards knowledge; his second towards display. It was the effort which primarily attracted him; ambition came next. There he sat in the half-light with one eye bandaged; his features sharp, his forehead high, his nose somewhat blunt, his mouth perhaps too sensual for such a thinker . . . there sat Herder, pedagogue and preacher, tutor of princes and

discoverer of new connecting links in folk-lore; twenty-six years old, renowned, a subject of controversy—in the darkened room, waiting to see if the lachrymal gland would open. His genius was in his brain; his eye was diseased. He who sat before him, his visitor, had just begun to escape from over-exercise of the brain to exercise of the eye—a young student, not dazzling, of middle height, well built, nicely dressed, his hair carefully curled, with a head whose beauty might have been spoilt by a large nose if a nobly curved mouth and a high clear brow had not made it attractive. But the dominating features of that head were two dark eyes that could light up with ardour, could sparkle, muse, enkindle, probe. For eight decades these, and only these, betrayed the stirrings in a mighty spirit, and all the more when they sought to conceal them.

And where was the point of contact between these two—Herder and Goethe—sitting in front of one another? True, they had mockery in common; and if we figure its degrees as steps of a staircase, there they could meet, Herder going up and Goethe coming down. But it was only the elder of the pair who expressed himself in ribaldry; the younger was withheld from it by two other feelings. Reverence and gratitude made Goethe the inquiring disciple. Herder's critical comments were eagerly snapped up by him; what the one scattered freely about him in his conflict with himself and the surrounding world, the other was earnest to make the most of. What, then, did Goethe give Herder?

He gave him the ideal listener. For Herder's spell for others was his talk. Goethe, during the next few years, developed great narrative power; Herder talked. He preached, guided, convinced. Meanwhile, what of the young man before him? "You're all for the eye!" said Herder more than once to him, and in those cavilling words he summed up the difference in their natures. Was it his to perceive the genius in this student? Even two years later, when his personality and his work made the prognosis easier, only two persons really grasped what the

youth was; and at this time Herder merely wrote to his betrothed: "Goethe is really a good fellow, only somewhat light and superficial [*spatzenmässig*], for which I everlastingly rebuke him. . . . He is a good noble-hearted boy, full of feeling—too full indeed; and, as is proper and best for us in this charming existence of ours, the half of it will resolve itself into the rosy dreams of dawn."

Herder undoubtedly saw Goethe at his most unsophisticated, as did none other in those years; for he saw the enraptured disciple. But the outward frivolity, the nonchalance of such an adolescence, which his own struggles made still more obnoxious to him, awakened his distrust; in his view this young man had neither suffered nor struggled enough—nor had he learnt enough, for at twenty Herder had had his doctor's degree.

Hence his sarcastic temper made him the more insistent to take back with one hand what he gave with the other. Yesterday, for instance, Herder would have written a lampoon on Goethe's name; to-day he would rally him about a flirtation; to-morrow rebuke him for having been so overwhelmed by *The Vicar of Wakefield*, which Herder was reading aloud to him. Directly he felt that he had got hold of the boy, he wanted to master him completely. And yet Goethe, nervous, proud, and defiant as he was, would not let go; every day he clung closer to this vexatious sort of a teacher, feeling spellbound as by a Mephisto—whom Herder resembled in some respects, without being a Mephisto at all.

Goethe was not only learning a new aesthetic, but also its moral foundations. Herder had already decided on his own life-work. He was to preach intuition, and exalt it above observation—thus, in obedience to a biogenetic law, glorifying his own temperament. Creative intuition was what he loved, and preached to the world; he had just written a history of the mind, based upon that hitherto unheard-of thesis. In this unprinted piece upon the origin of language he put before his disciple not only the historical side—he showed the nursling of the rococo

that the art of poetry is a universal gift, a folk-gift, not the private property of educated people. In proof of this he led him to the fountain-heads of poetry, urging him to regard Homer and the Bible as a succession of pictures, as the rhapsodies of shepherds, warriors, and hunters; he introduced him to Ossian and made him translate from him—but at the end of it all, he showed him perfection in the work of Shakespeare.

All this was fruitful for the disciple because it did not really astonish him, only confirmed what he had already surmised. True, no one else in Germany could have given the twenty-yeared Goethe so far-reaching, so weighty and largely conceived an exposition. But educative influence has the same effect upon genius as dramatic treatment has upon an audience—the more powerful it is the less it surprises, the better it has been prepared-for. In these weeks Herder confirmed, deepened, accelerated the perceptions germinating in Goethe, who secretly related every pronouncement on genius to himself and his future works. Herder was all for emancipation from the Parisian-Attic tyranny, for the primitive force of natural language, for folk-legends—these were to furnish the forms and materials for a revival of the drama.

From the sick-room Herder exercised a spell like this upon Goethe; even his handwriting had such "magic power" that Goethe never destroyed a single note, nor even an envelope of his. And yet he never loved him. At first he admired him, then avoided him, then again sought him out; but in the following decades there was only one really intimate passage between them. As long as Goethe lived, he learnt something from every type of individual, not only from humanity in general; but this was the last of his definite instructors.

When Herder, at this time, wrote a satirical poem in which he compared Goethe to a woodpecker, Goethe politely retorted that a woodpecker was far from being a common bird. He seems to have grown more and more reserved. Goethe, who as a lad had been filled with a

desire to surrender himself to others' influence, was now more reticent; and was nearly always, throughout his life, misunderstood by other men. With this man he was quick to conceal his real self. It amazingly came about that the sarcastic teacher, renowned and misanthropic, read to the disciple his treasure, the scarce-finished manuscript; while this latter, listening and saying nothing, kept from the teacher his own recently begun drafts of *Götz* and *Faust*, which he owed indirectly to Herder.

While Goethe was learning, his heart was in pain; while Herder was teaching, his eye was. The lachrymal gland would not open; he left the clinic and the town, an angry man. He felt that all his weeks there had been wasted. His disciple, issuing from the darkened room into the light of every day, was conscious of a sense of relief. He had laid his veneration at Herder's feet, and yet felt that he had but received what he already possessed. For under the snow-mantle of fashion Goethe had it all in him, soon to break through as does the earth from its glittering veil.

But as yet his mind was in a state of chaos. A poet through and through, a research-student not at all, what charmed him in Herder's poetically inspired investigations was to see how thought and intuition imposed their own manner of expression.

This first Strasburg experience, which was not only Goethe's own but soon to be that of a generation—this awakening to the primitive, the natural, in style—began with a negation. The first return to the primitive is apt to be the outcome of a revolt against the artificial; and as in Goethe's life everything was of slow growth, so with this apparently most violent of revolutions. For years it had been silently preparing, and did not even now spring to light so abruptly as his friends and imitators boasted.

This epoch, then, begins with an emphatic No. Nature instead of convention; spontaneous diction instead of Alexandrines—the landscape which gave one birth, in which one moves at large: such were the urgencies,

emotional rather than intellectual, which made this young German wish to prove himself a German. Not till then did Goethe find the Strasburg Minster impressive; hitherto it had baffled his classifying eye.

But since these recognitions are always the outcome of vital emotions, Goethe's first written confession of faith was dithyrambic in form. In his pamphlet, *Von deutscher Baukunst* (*On German Architecture*)—a collection, made a few years later, of notes taken in Strasburg—the inspiring influence is Erwin von Steinbach, that master to whose name he constantly appeals.

" Admirable man, before I again put out to sea in my cobbled skiff, more probably to perish than to reach the desired haven, behold how in this grove where the names of those I cherish encircle me with vernal beauty, I now carve out thine own upon a beech as slender and as strong as one of thy tall towers; and from its four crests suspend this kerchief filled with offerings—with flowers, buds, and leaves."

Did the art-experts call this Minster Gothic? They ought to " thank God that they can tell the world: ' This is German architecture, *our* architecture, for the Italians can boast of none like it, still less the French. . . .' The more rapturous the sense of those proportions which alone are beautiful and rooted in eternity, whose grandest harmonies, whose deepest secrets, man may do no more than feel, in whose celestial rhythms alone the God-like genius circles like the stars of heaven . . . the more fortunate, the more glorious is the artist, and the more reverently do we bow our heads in prayer to God's Anointed!"

That might be Goethe before Shakespeare. Very much like this are his flamboyant stammerings in presence of the poet of whom in Leipzig he had thought no more than of many others. This adolescent, roving where he listed, found in Shakespeare alone (not even in Homer) and only now was finding, such an inspiring source of energy " as one born blind might be conscious of, if a wonder-working hand should cause him, in a single moment, to see like other men. . . . I rushed out into

the open air, and felt, as though for the first time, that I had hands and feet."

A poet, feeling the lightning of a poet strike across the centuries! Is it surprising that Goethe's worship, in a speech on Shakespeare's birthday, was mingled with a proud sense of affinity? The boy's heart, kindling, tumultuous, fearless, holds equal speech with the high gods in this discourse.

"This life, gentlemen, is far too short for our souls. . . . For let our course be ever so long and ever so fortunate, at the end we must fall out . . . and be as nothing. As nothing! I! I who am everything to myself, who know everything through myself! Such is the cry of all who are self-aware, and take this life in giant strides. . . . Shakespeare, my friend, wert thou still with us, I could live nowhere but with thee. How gladly would I play the subordinate part of Pylades, if thou wert the Orestes!"

In such a rhapsody from genius to genius did his soul first soar above the clouds, for every day seemed more confidently to assure him of what lived within and would in time be manifested. In the group of young people who now began to draw together, diffidence was a thing unknown; every one of them claimed the laurel for his mere enthusiasm. But none put forth such unbounded pretensions to genius as did Goethe, who had as yet done nothing. At the conclusion of *Deutsche Baukunst* he invokes himself thus, in a sort of cosmic rapture:

"All hail, thou boy endowed at birth with a keen eye for the relations of things, with a prehensile grasp of form! When the day shall come for wakening to the joy of life, to the sense of exultation in man's works, his apprehensions, and his hopes . . . oh, lift him in thine arms, thou heavenly fairness, mediatrix between gods and men, and may he bring down to this earth the happiness of those Olympians, a Prometheus more triumphant than he of old!"

This comes from the depths—it is at once humility and pride. Here is the high-mettled heart of budding genius, and here, no less, the yearning of the earth-born;

here are desire and impulse for which no achievement, no rapture, can be too exalted, but here too is the prescience of pain and disappointment, upheld by a manly hopefulness towards the Olympian Powers, though patiently seeking sustenance on earth below. We have Prometheus here.

But though the artist thus anticipated his future, there were to be long days in which he dragged the burden of his earlier experiences, striving to make them, too, productive. The fruit of these Promethean ecstasies is not perceptible for two years to come. The mirage of his childhood's teaching gently dissolved before the eyes of twenty-one; and though when his sophisticated scepticism was shattered he had striven to regain that faith, if not to any certain end, all vestiges of orthodoxy now vanished in the light of an ardently accepted Pantheistic impulse.

Pan was reborn in him; Pantheism had transformed his faith.

Wie herrlich leuchtet,
Mir die Natur!
Wie glänzt die Sonne,
Wie lacht die Flur!
Es dringen Blüten
Aus jedem Zweig,
Und tausend Stimmen
Aus dem Gesträuch,
Und Freud und Wonne
Aus jeder Brust.
O Erd', o Sonne,
O Glück, o Lust![1]

[1] How bright, how glorious
The world I see!
The sun how radiant,
How glad the lea!
The buds are thrusting
On branches tall,
And myriad voices
From thickets call,
And joy and rapture
From every breast—
O earth, O sunlight,
O bliss, O zest!

Goethe's faith had opened its eyes. Virile, paternal was the Immanence to which now, and even as a white-haired man, he confidingly submitted his spirit.

He was then translating Ossian. Everything that was rhapsodic in him had to find its outlet; and when intoxicated by words, he wanted to intoxicate others by them. If in Leipzig Goethe had always been alone with his eccentric friend, it was very different now—a circle of young people had " put their shirts " on his originality; and since the really gifted are known to invent their own uniforms, one of these fervents regarded the revolution in Goethe's attire as emblematic of his development.

" When the consciousness of his genius awoke in him, he took to going about in a slouch hat with his hair out of curl; he wore the same suit every day, and very remarkable it was. He would wander about the woods, fields, hills, and valleys just as the fancy took him. His look, his gait, his speech, his very walking-stick were those of an extraordinary personality." One of his Professors records that " Herr Goethe behaved himself here in a way which caused him to be regarded as a meretricious pretender to scholarship, a frantic opponent of all religious teaching. . . . It was the wellnigh universal opinion that he had a slate loose in the upper storey."

This may be true, but it is of no importance. His panache of " frenzy " was important to his circle—not to him. The effect he could make at that time on an unprejudiced observer is best conveyed by Jung-Stilling, who at his first dinner with the group " was particularly struck by one man, who had large, bright eyes, a magnificent brow, and a beautiful figure. He came in with such an air! "

But the friend whom he singled out from all others was no contemporary, but a man of fifty, another bachelor and another pernickety eccentric in buckled shoes, breeches, and three-cornered hat. To this clever oddity of a Salzmann, who founded the first German Club, all his letters were now written, as of yore to Behrisch.

What in those earlier days had been spurious ardour was now the authentic outpouring of a youth's fervent heart.

He accepted his friends and their atmosphere; and yet there was a warning voice within—the voice of that unconquerable perplexity of mind which made him seem older than his years, and questioned whether he and those around him were not mistaken in establishing this mutual admiration society. He wrote to one of them who was living at a distance: "I don't get any good at all out of the much too favourable view you've all chosen to take of me. . . . We love our friends as we love our sweethearts . . . so keen on having the best there is. . . . We find that we've deceived ourselves—but we won't admit it, and flatter ourselves that on the contrary the other person deceived us."

How mature—and how wise, as well, never to have sent this letter! We have only the draft of it. Goethe was always sociable, but always reserved: it was devotion, with daemons lurking in the background.

Only to women did he wholly surrender himself, and so he always gave them more than they gave him. The love-affair which marks these months was neither *Sturm* nor *Drang*, though this period has been so characterized. It was idyllic. This experience of the heart is an oddly tranquil interlude between the shocks of the same year, and seems to have scarcely any connection with them. Nothing that we know of it implies the kind of passion which he had felt in Leipzig, and which was ere long to make havoc in his heart no less than thrice. Three women were epoch-making in Goethe's adolescence; Friederike was not. She was the mildly radiant star of the moment; in his work of this year one immortal poem scintillates. The ending of that love was productive for him; but even Weislingen and Clavigo (in whose weaknesses he masked and unmasked his own) are of no importance in Goethe's life-work.

Goethe did not frequent the parsonage at Sesenheim in quite so literary a spirit as he afterwards represented.

He was always something of the condescending visitor with these worthy folk—the intellectual attempting a return to Nature in art, in scenery, and consequently in love. But there were at any rate some literary results of his nine months' attraction. Anyhow, he captivated the blonde maiden at first sight, on a ride through the mountain region, and captivated her once for all. Her rustic style of dress—so German!—was refreshing to the young man from town; moreover, she too was his type: "Slender and light, she walked as if she had no weight at all to carry; and her dainty little head looked almost too delicate for the big blonde plaits. She gazed very frankly out of her mirthful blue eyes."

His quest of the primitive, soon to set him collecting folk-songs from the old wives of Alsace, made him rejoice in Friederike's incapacity for the drawing-room ballad, though she could warble the most delicious old country ditties in the open air. She was cheerful, even-tempered, tranquil; and so had everything that Goethe then and always wanted from women, because he had himself so uncertain a hold on it.

It took only a few days to attract him in the way that women often did—by her whole environment, her parents, her brothers and sisters, the farmyard, trees, and animals. There was always a trace of *amour goût* in Goethe's infatuations, though *amour passion* might be the original magnet.

"I have been spending some days in the country with most agreeable people," he wrote to one of his other hostesses the day of, or the day after, his return. "The companionship of the charming daughter of the house, the lovely neighbourhood, and the exquisite weather stirred in my heart every slumbering sense, every memory, of the things I love best."

In the tranquil warmth, the sympathetic thrill, which gently touched his nerves on this first evening after their first encounter, we perceive the idyllic amorist in the youth who nevertheless was now, as a poet and thinker, vehe-

mently, boldly casting his earlier skin. He thankfully lingered in her little world, precisely because an infinite world was beginning to reveal itself to him; Nature-worship and Love were seeking mutual completion. The girl was one of those who look particularly well out of doors; he had a picturesque vision of her on a path high above his head. "I was immensely happy with Friederike. I was talkative, gay, witty, impudent, yet all this was modified by emotion, respect, and attachment."

Is this the insensate, gloomy Goethe, who had so recently driven a girl to despair? Here we have a tame sort of affection, out of which his essential nature plucked no fruit. He wrote her some verses. Only sixteen poems of this Strasburg year and a half survive, and probably but few are lost to us. Half of these were for the girl, but he retained no more than two in the subsequent collection of his verse. One of these is world renowned.

It was not till after his meeting with Herder that this *Willkommen und Abschied* (*Welcome and Farewell*) was written. This is Goethe's earliest "Goethean" poem —the harbinger of a new lyric, a new German, a new literature. For while the odes to Behrisch were visionary and stiff-jointed, here the vision has subdued the material to its plastic purpose. With these verses, which were the first to depict Goethe's passional life, begins the long succession of mystifications by which, to the detriment of his work, he shielded the women concerned, throughout the whole course of his life.

> Ich ging, du standst und sahst zur Erden,
> Und sahst mir nach mit nassen Blick. . . .[1]

It ends thus; and even if we did not also possess a sheet of paper on which the text of this poem is headed

[1] I went, and you stood looking downward,
Then looked at me with tearful eyes. . . .

" Den . . . Abend " and the story is completely revealed, the whole would sufficiently vouch for a ride to a night of love and the parting in the morning. But Goethe, with this, began his precautions; and the poem was thus printed in a newspaper—

Du gingst, ich stund und sah zur Erden.[1]

—which ruins the entire conclusion; and not for twenty years did he set it right again in the more callous mood of a " collected edition."

During these summer months Goethe almost lived at Sesenheim. The idyll lasted too long, grew faded, lamentable. " Things are not very bright with me," he wrote in May to Salzmann. " The little girl is still out of spirits and health, and that makes everything go wrong. To say nothing of the *conscia mens*, but unfortunately not *recti*, that I carry about with me. . . . If you would send me a two-pound box of confectionery, there would be sweeter lips, at any rate, than the faces we have been seeing lately. . . . I danced with the elder girl last Whit-monday, from after dinner to twelve o'clock at night. . . . I gave myself up to it body and bones. And yet if I could say I was happy, it would be far better than that sort of thing."

A few days later: " The world is so beautiful! So beautiful! For a man who could enjoy it! . . . It is difficult to punctuate it as one should. Girls never use commas or full-stops, and it is no wonder if I am turning into a species of girl."

At the end of June: " It is high time for me to come back, and I want to, and mean to; but what good is ' meaning to ' against the faces that surround me! My heart is in a strange state. . . . The most delightful neighbourhood, people who love me, a circle of friends! ' Have not the dreams of your childhood all come true? ' I often ask myself, when my eyes are feasting on this

[1] You went, and I stood looking downward.

blissful horizon. 'Isn't this the magic garden you longed for?' It is, it is! I feel it, dear friend, and feel too that one isn't an atom happier when one gets what one wanted. The counterpoise! The counterpoise that fate always weighs in with our blisses! Dear friend, it takes a lot of courage not to lose heart in this world."

So there we have Goethe at Sesenheim. We can read between the lines—the girl's condition and the mute looks of a family, which plead when they would do well to be angry; the boredom, impatience, and remorse of the young man who is longing to get away from the sweet maiden: it is Faust and Mephistopheles. What could he do? He fled the place.

This is Goethe's second flight, but only stupidity could call it cowardice. Every time that gentle and strong nature, that heart of devotion, forced by the law of evolution to inflict pain upon others, was driven to confess its inner conflicts, he avoided scenes and explanations, and withdrew into himself to save himself. A strange mixture of fear and courage.

When he was about to ride off, leaving his beloved in her deplorable situation, he leant down from the saddle to shake hands with her again. "The tears stood in her eyes, and I felt anything but comfortable." But he bade her the real farewell in a letter. She answered it with one "which rent my heart," for it was written "at a moment which wellnigh cost her her life."

Is it necessary to point out what drove the seducer to this conscience-stricken flight? He could do no other—that is all. In Leipzig such a vehement passion had enchained the idling student that he felt himself cheated of lifelong happiness. In Strasburg it was not from dreams of happiness that he fled; by that time his passion was concentrated on the strenuous future. In Leipzig he fled from a passion; in Strasburg from an idyll. On the day before his departure he drew a picture of himself which is very different from the cool confessions of his old age.

" Last night I was sentimental, but early this morning I was in such a pother about my arrangements that I leaped out of bed. Oh, my head is as disordered as my room. . . . Nor is my soul precisely cheerful; I am far too wide-awake not to feel that I may be grasping at shadows. And yet—to-morrow at seven o'clock the horse shall be saddled, and then adieu! "

One seems to see his agitation, the fevered sparkle in his eyes. How utterly he ignores the girl, whose fate was afterwards to haunt him as a symbol! " Send it to the good Friederike, with or without a note, as you like." So he wrote a few weeks later to his friend, enclosing a sketch. Eight months after their parting, he was telling his intimates in Darmstadt that he *had* been in love once before—but it was only of Käthchen that he spoke.

Once more the law of love, as creative spirits know it, was affirmed. The girl he could not win turned the adolescent Goethe into a poet; her whom he won too easily he soon forgot.

While Goethe, by his flight, broke through the obstacles set up by his heart, he was simultaneously in flight from the prescribed course of study; for though officially speaking he finished it, his sensuous temperament—involved, moreover, as it was in the general upheaval—was alien to theoretical jurisprudence, in Strasburg as elsewhere.

Thus his graduation at the end of the term was merely a form demanded of him by his father; and in his dissertation on canon law, which set forth that the law-maker is entitled to ordain the form of worship, the only interesting passage is the tolerant afterthought that there should be no question of what anyone present might be thinking, feeling, or imagining. This specimen of logic was returned to him by the Dean, with a cold word of praise, for private printing; and one of his Professors was only partly wrong when he wrote that Goethe's insanity was

plainly shown by this dissertation—for, apart from the attacks on the Christian religion, if any one of the Doctors had approved it he would have been obliged to resign his office.

Ultimately Goethe discussed some uncontroversial question of the sort which provided after-dinner mirth; and by so doing displayed for the first time that submission of genius to recognized authority which afterwards distinguished him, and was unlike so many of his colleagues. It was because he then and there perceived that the external forms of revolt are not of any real importance.

For Goethe always, even in this year, kept apart from the indiscriminate revolutionaries, the mere hotheads, among his fellow students. His "storm and stress" was never concerned with politics or law; the anarchism of his period was alien to him. As a critic his quarrel was with spurious forms of literature; as a poet he used the symbols of all time to frame man's wrathful challenge to the gods.

If it be said that these are but forms, was it not for the formulation of existence, of thought, that his soul strenuously sought? It was indicative not only of the well-bred young gentleman, but of the poet, when soon after this he was disgusted by Basedow's bad tobacco and soggy sponges. And besides these manifestations we must set the reiterated comments from friends and strangers; "The kind fellow; the kind-hearted boy; his kindness."

About this time Goethe began to think with his eyes. Already he had surprised a Strasburg connoisseur by the just remark that the Minster tower was not really finished, for there ought to be four slender spires to contrast with the four squat arches. "But that was always to be the way with me. It was only after a long process of observation and reflection that I could form any real conception of things; and perhaps this would not have been so fruitful in its effect upon me if I had gained it from others." That henceforth Goethe's eyes were to be the principal factors in his artistic evolution was one of the reasons why

he was attracted to the classic, as opposed to the German, world.

He was still in a state of chaotic unrest when he left Strasburg; but his internal development had little in common with his external life. A like contrast between his inner self and his production will now and again recur. Though Goethe himself enjoins us to regard his work as one prolonged confession, but its successive phases rather as a means of living-down his experiences, this should be taken as a mere summary. The creative spirit would at one time keep step with that which determined his daily life, and at another be far in advance, occasionally expressing itself in images which the more actual side of him had either left behind, or had still to attain. To foresee and prophetically embody, in moments of insight, the phases of his own experience was Goethe's appointed destiny; but nothing was further from his native impulse than any idea of consciously making his life a work of art.

In these early days he displayed all the accepted marks of genius. On his first home-coming after three years' absence he had been a pale, broken-down invalid. Now he arrived in good health, it is true, but in so nervous a condition that he owned to not being mentally at his best. Nor did he come alone; the astonished parents beheld at his side a boy-harpist, to whom he had taken a fancy in Mainz the day before, and for whom he now proposed to find employment during the Fair.

So there he was, back in Frankfurt, the gifted son of an Imperial Councillor, caged again, and now as it seemed for good and all; for when on his twenty-second birthday he applied for a post as advocate, his idea was to become a useful citizen of the Free—but unemancipated, narrow—Town, which he never really liked. In fact that stormy nature was never in any sense outwardly revolutionary. In the new journal for which he then wrote his social confession of faith soon appeared.

"When we find a place in the world where we can settle down among our possessions, with a field to grow

food in and a roof to cover us, have we not found a Fatherland? . . . And do not thousands live happily under such limitations? Why then strive after an emotion which we neither feel nor want to feel? . . . The Roman sense of patriotism! God preserve us from that, as from an ogre! We should find no chair to sit on, no bed to sleep in, in that country of the mind." It might be an old man speaking, and it is a boy of twenty-three.

Inwardly, however, that boyish mind was restlessly vacillating, under obscure urgencies, between its desire for tranquillity and its determination towards the vortex. Domesticated in the comfortable confines of his father's house, by no means desirous to confront the world at large, yet with a soul so agitated that it could not know rest in such an atmosphere, he devoted himself to imaginative work. What made the little attic-room that he inhabited now as in his boyhood a pleasant place for him?

> Hier meine Welt, mein All!
> Hier fühl' ich mich,
> Hier alle meine Wünsche,
> In körperlichen Gestalten.
> Mein Geist so tausendfach
> Geteilt und ganz in meinen teuren Kindern.[1]

Prometheus, shaping his inward visions, longing for them to take life! There Goethe sits, foreseeing the figures of which as yet not one is more than adumbrated, but which will in time grow definite before his inward eye. . . . "If only I had not so many forebodings, or more often only vague hauntings, if I could really hope, if beauty and greatness were more vital elements of thine emotion, then thou mightst do, speak, write something good, something beautiful, without knowing it!"

[1] Here is my world, my all!
Here I am I,
Here every wish is with me,
Incarnate, visibly present.
My myriad-minded self
Dispersed and whole in these my well-loved children.

Aspiring thus towards greatness, he sought his subjects among great men. He wanted a hero, and tried Caesar, Socrates, Prometheus first; then Götz and Mahomet, who succeed one another as examples of his hero-worship; and for the guiding conception he shaped this phrase from his own intimate foreknowledge: "All that genius, through the character and the mind, can do for humanity . . . and what it gains and loses thereby."

With such prescience, such prophetic knowledge of his own destiny, he roved among the great figures of legend and history, conceiving himself, experimenting on himself, in the characters of prophet and demi-god, while room and town and period hemmed him in. Only a few fragments of his *Caesar* survive, nor are many lost to us. For Socrates, whom he shortly attempted, he took Herder as model; he himself was to be Alcibiades!

But again it was all fragmentary. His soul was too deeply stirred to find its outlet in a well-made drama; the flame of his intellect consumed every formula. But the more these dramatic torsos are embedded, as it were, in the block from which they spring, the more they seem to issue from the depths of his inarticulate emotion. Only in a work like *Götz*, where a consecutive artistic purpose has made of a similar kind of sketch a finished stage-play, are we in some degree unconscious of the inward stress.

And *Götz* itself was begun by accident, so to speak. When Goethe was reading Berlichingen's Life he invented some scenes for Cornelia out of his own head, and was finally tempted to write them down. So he began one morning, without any sort of a plan, wrote a few scenes, and read them to Cornelia in the evening. Her praise was tempered by doubts of his perseverance; this piqued him, and he pushed on. But of this period he confesses that he would never have cherished such schemes and fancies if he had had a sweetheart, though in the same breath he describes work as an "unexpected" passion.

At the end of six weeks he called the piles of manuscript

that lay before him " a sketch," and decided on a drastic overhauling. But none the less he perceived that this was like all his writings in being " a milestone, whence one starts on a long walk, knowing one will have to rest for hours at a time."

Here we have the earliest exposition of Goethe's method—a perpetual sense of probation, together with as perpetual a sense of responsibility for giving every attempt as high a finish as it would take; so that ultimately sixty volumes of rewritten pieces survive, and fragments in even greater numbers.

This first *Götz* he revised at the end of six months—distilling, clarifying, recasting, transposing, till a new play lay before him, to be in its turn regarded as practice, and subsequently rejected for yet another re-modelling.

Götz was written three times, the third rendering after a generation had gone by; and *Götz* did more to make Goethe famous in his lifetime than any one of his later dramas. Is it therefore in the canon of masterpieces? What experience informed it—since experience remains the open sesame for all Goethe's works? Was impulsive pity for the oppressed, as in the drama as a whole—was active Christianity, as in the knight—a characteristic of Goethe's youth? Where—since all the documents have been searched and carefully analysed — where, in earlier sketches or later works, do we find any indication of such a characteristic? In which letters, which poems, of this period? Renowned for things which are not the essential marks of either Goethe's nature or his poetry, this brilliantly coloured picture occupies a place apart in the gallery of his works—not as an achievement never again reached, but rather as a lesson learnt and swiftly left behind.

The personages shaped in his own image are, and were bound to be, the antagonists of *Götz*. Goethe's vacillating spirit lives again in Weislingen, his ardour in Franz, his radiance in Adelheid. And these are by far the best realized figures in the drama. Weislingen, with his good heart but his weak will, is definitely Goethe—so well

comprehended, partly by experience, partly by prescience, that he was continually to crop up again in subsequent works, first of all as Clavigo.

But whence came his vision of that heroic, non-moral Adelheid? Here is a new feature in his poetry; for with that commingling of male and female elements without which genius cannot be, Goethe is no less present in his feminine than in his masculine figures—often indeed more so; and sometimes he needed two women for the subtlest refinements in presentation of the duality within himself. Hence there is more of him in Adelheid than in Götz, and afterwards he expressed this by saying that while he was at work, he fell so much in love with Adelheid that she cut out Götz.

He was Adelheid's prototype, and Franz's too. His fierce sense of power, his lust for experience, burn in the woman; in the boy blazes his own young dream of love, hovering between sensuality and devotion. "A thousand years are but half a night!" cries Franz in Adelheid's arms—the Franz of the first *Götz*. "How I hate the day.... Oh, that on thy breast I were one of the immortal gods, who lived self-centred in their passionate brooding ardour, and in a single moment engendered myriad teeming worlds, and felt the raptures of those myriad worlds in one swift instant touch themselves. . . . I would slay my father, if he disputed this place with me!"

Fantasies of the daemonic youth who for years had scarce known actualities of this kind!

When Goethe diffidently sent the play to Herder, the latter criticized it sharply and accused the author of having been utterly ruined by Shakespeare. It took Goethe only a few months to know all about himself and his work. But to save this play, he had to do it violence. When shortly afterwards he wrote the second *Götz*, the most powerful passages—Franz in Adelheid's arms, the murder of Adelheid, Sickingen's love-affair, the symbolical opening to the fifth act—were cut out; a great deal was toned down in the interest of economy of material and

pointed dialogue—the story, in short, was thoroughly pulled together.

But Goethe did all this reluctantly, in defiance of his passion for divagations. He felt that spontaneous inspiration was being sacrificed to stage-craft, and wrote of his second *Götz* to a friend:

> . . . und bring, da hast du meinen Dank,
> Mich vor die Weiblein ohn' Gestank,
> Musst all die garstigen Wörter lindern . . .[1]

He was twenty-three when he wrote the first *Götz*. In the year which he then spent at home he was sometimes sociable, sometimes reclusive, but the " storm and stress " was far more vehement in the latter mood. At first there were difficulties; his moods were unaccountable, he was fond of taking long walks at dead of night, and moreover his people looked upon poetical activities as a protest against the civic sphere. The mother had to smooth things down—no easy task; the father was from the first a good deal disappointed, perceiving that though the advocate's robe was worn—and worn becomingly, successfully, and with dignity, by his son—it was regarded as being nothing to be proud of. The elder did what he could; and indeed even more lavish hands than his might have hesitated to bestow the surprising amount of 700 dollars for nine months of life at Frankfurt.

The first literary triumph altered the family atmosphere. The proud embittered man wanted fame and success for his son, though it were only through writing verses! And so, with all his eccentric overbearing zeal, he sought to further the youth's worldly interests. But now a friend stepped forward, more sophisticated than the father, experienced both in things of the mind and of business, and willing to be a buffer in the assault of genius on the

[1] . . . and bring me to the fair ones' feet—
For this I'll thank you—smelling sweet;
Not one coarse word may you leave unsoftened . . .

public; and he succeeded in keeping the elder Goethe within the bounds of moderation. This is Merck, to whom Goethe afterwards ascribed the greatest influence.

Again an oddity, again older, again long-limbed and haggard with a pointed nose, and grey-blue eyes which glanced about him watchfully, giving his aspect something of the tigerish. Just thirty, and if not precisely a man of the world at any rate a man who knew something about it, resolute, free-handed, with much literary perception and critical instinct, something of the publisher type, though companionable only for those "whom he did not intimidate by his irrepressible sarcasm. . . . By nature a gallant, noble-hearted, reliable man, he had become embittered with the world, and gave his spleen such free vent that he could never resist the temptation of purposely playing the fool, not to say the knave."

Merck was a dilettante in verse and prose, he had even published; and whenever one scheme turned out badly, he would instantly meditate fresh undertakings which were not only to enrich but amuse him. He was prone to infatuations for the sentimental ladies whose circle was dominated by the Herder influence; would be tender as long as might be, but was at the mercy of his malignity, when he would suddenly write impertinent spiteful verses of which Goethe says that he could not possibly reproduce them. And yet Merck detested himself for these ebullitions, and told his friend that he envied him his "harmless choice of subjects."

A silhouette seems to dawn on us. This is Mephistopheles. Faust always seeks Mephisto—and especially when he is not only Faust.

Merck, on practical things intent, advised Goethe to get something ready for the press. Goethe, hitherto discouraged by Behrisch's serio-comic adjurations against all publication, and then by Herder's criticism, now—in the business-like Frankfurt atmosphere—allowed himself to be persuaded, printed a few fugitive pieces at his own expense, gave some copies away, and at the same time

put several on sale in a book-shop, as a better means of "getting rid of them."

To take money for verses had not long since been regarded as simony. But when Goethe published for the first time, he yielded to his bourgeois blood and made up his mind that talent, intellect, and industry ought to be paid for by the world. In the course of his sixty years of authorship he was to become the most richly remunerated of German authors, and this long before any of the few "booms" made by his books.

Merck's practical good sense influenced Goethe to the recasting of *Götz*. Merck paid for the printing, Goethe for the paper. Then the two friends launched the novice's drama.

It made a great sensation. The edition was soon sold out, a second appeared; and though the author was much congratulated, he was much embarrassed too by the huge bill for paper, due to irregular payment for the copies sold.

Götz was the only play of Goethe's which made a great success on the stage—and yet, even with this most easily comprehended of his dramas, the effect was partly due to misunderstanding. Young people thought that turbulence was there glorified, their elders quarrelled with such commendation of "might is right," many believed the author to be a *savant* and wished there had been erudite notes.

He himself soon came to regard the work with indifference. He left the second edition unaltered, on the ground that this was his trial essay and must remain as it was. "If I ever again write a German drama, which I very much doubt, I want the truly critical spirits to perceive how much I have improved."

So clearly did he grasp the experimental nature of this play; and at the same time showed how he could stand back from his work, while claiming from his readers the same unusual form of contemplation, even at this early stage. The inviolable conviction that his was to be a long

and patiently accepted evolution was persistent in him from the days of his youthful self-absorption to those in which the veteran sank slowly to his rest in the bosom of mother-earth. In these years, especially, when his companions were rhapsodizing over his emergence, Goethe's self-restraint was so remarkable as really to seem imposed by a higher hand. " Meanwhile the drama has shown you that the aims I cherish are dearer to me than ever, and I hope they may gradually inspire me to some purpose. I see more to be done every day, and my way grows clearer. . . . There may be many a day of schooling still to put through. For I tell you once for all: one *cannot* overleap one's adolescence."

Confined to a côterie of adoring young *literati*, who were lavish of the praise which they hoped would be mutual, he felt at this time that he was in danger of taking things too easily, of accepting the barren adulation which might well be destructive of self-discipline; and while he shunned all clubs and associations, it was for Herder's voice that his ear was stretched.

He had scarcely abandoned this captious friend before instinct drove him to begin a correspondence which might forge the link afresh. His attitude hovered between pride and veneration—whenever Goethe turned towards Herder, his heart quivered. It was a secret rivalry, a mute measuring of himself with one who was to be overborne.

" I am making myself write to you in the first rush of my feeling. I *won't* be stiff-necked! Your withering letter is worth three years of any experience I can get here. . . . My whole ego is convulsed, man, as you may suppose, and I'm still in such a fever that I can hardly put pen to paper. Apollo Belvedere, why dost thou show us thy nakedness but that we may be ashamed of our own. . . . Herder, Herder, go on being what you are to me! If I am born to be your satellite, I accept my fate, and gladly, loyally. A moon that loves its earth! But—make no mistake about this—I would rather be Mercury, the

last, the least of the Seven that revolve with you round the Sole Sun, than the first of the five that belong to Saturn! Adieu, dear man; I will not let you go. I hold fast to you. Jacob wrestled with the angel of the Lord. And though it cripple me, so will I!"

Never before or afterwards did Goethe write thus to a man, and only to one woman—and this after Herder's contemptuous attacks! There was fever in his blood; he clutched at the man as in a walking dream, and yet his pride revolted tremulously at this bending of the neck. We can catch the arrogant intonation as the storm-tossed youth, set on his own proud course, flings down the gauntlet: "I am electrified by those words of Pindar's: ἐπικρατεῖν δυνασθά. When you stand boldly erect in the chariot, and four fresh horses are tugging frantically at the reins, and you control their energies, whipping the fiery ones in, the unruly ones down, urging and guiding with a turn of the wrist, a flick of the lash, pulling them up and then giving them their heads, till all sixteen hoofs are taking you at a measured pace to where you want to go—that's mastery!"

Goethe had sent the first *Götz* to Herder, frankly confessing that the best powers of his soul had been expended on it, but adding that Herder's judgment would open his eyes to its real value. After reading it, Herder wrote to his betrothed: "You have hours of enchantment before you. There is an uncommon degree of authentically German power, depth, and sincerity in the piece, though now and again it is merely an intellectual exercise." But all he vouchsafed to the author was some satirical verses. What was the explanation? About this time he said to his betrothed: "I love Goethe as my own soul; only—shall I, *ought* I to let him see it?"

It was the rivalry of master and disciple; and the disciple's soul is laid bare when in the *Caesar* fragment he makes an elder man say of the young hero: "It's an atrocious thing to have a boy growing up beside one in whose every limb one can see that he's going to overtop

one by a head!" It was thus that Goethe heard Herder's soul speak to him of Goethe; and Herder's uneasiness would have been comprehensible indeed if Goethe had read the enraptured letters about *Götz* which came from Herder's betrothed.

This girl, Caroline Flachsland—whom Goethe often met in their *al fresco* gatherings during these months—was never tired of saying what a kind pleasant boy he was, what a thoroughly good-hearted companion of their walks, not a bit erudite, and very fond of playing with children.

Schlosser—afterwards his brother-in-law—saw more clearly, and thought Goethe was to be honoured for his efforts "to purge his soul without emasculating himself." In those seven words almost the whole history of that soul is foretold.

He took up several sociable pursuits; he rode, fenced, and—not omitting the literary touch which was then so fashionable—he began a new art with his twenty-third year. For it was with Klopstock's verses on his lips that he leaped out of bed one frosty morning, and hurried to the ice that he might learn skating without spectators. He got on so fast that this soon became a mental resource, for he felt that the swinging motion vaguely inspired him, so that his thoughts ripened as it were of themselves.

But it was when walking that he got nearest to himself. He would disappear without a word; the pleasant friendly companion would withdraw himself that the stirrings in a soul which was preparing for so mighty a stretch of the pinions should not suffer enervating dispersal. These solitary rovings through forests, up mountain sides, often at night, often in rain, were Goethe's most characteristic manifestations of storm and stress. One day he braved a threatening tempest, and when it caught him, he sang passionately to himself:

Wen du nicht verlässest, Genius,
Nicht der Regen, nicht der Sturm,
Haucht ihm Schauer übers Herz.
Wen du nicht verlässest, Genius,

Wird dem Regengewölk,
Wird dem Schlossensturm
Entgegensingen,
Wie die Lerche—
Du da droben. . . .[1]

And in long sweeping dithyrambs he invokes in this ode, which is akin to those written to Behrisch, the Muses and the tutelary spirits (*Charitinnen*), and feels near, ever nearer, to Nature.

But suddenly the god-like poet, lustily singing, pulls up the chariot with a jerk and thus concludes:

Glühte?
Armes Herz?
Dort auf dem Hügel,
Himmlische Macht!
Nur so viel Glut:
Dort meine Hütte,
Dorthin zu waten![2]

There it is again—the young Goethe turning aside from ecstasy, leaving the storm for the calm, a tranquil observer hand-in-hand with a restless rover; no unity as yet between the contrasting traits. And in his one successful attempt, at this time, to portray these paradoxes of the

[1] He with whom thou bidest, Genius,
Not in rain and not in storm,
Ever knows dismay of heart?
He with whom thou bidest, Genius,
Shall to threatening cloud,
Shall to pelting hail,
Bid sweet defiance,
Like the skylark --
There, above me!

[2] Soul-stirred?
Ah, poor heart,
There on the hill-top,
Touching high Heaven!
One pulse, no more:
Low lies my dwelling,
Thither we stumble!

spirit, he used the dramatic form, dividing (in *The Wanderer*) his emotions between the pilgrim and the woman. In this piece, how exquisite is the passage where, on the mountain-crag, his wanderer meets the woman with her nursling at her breast, coming from the antique temple where she dwells, and takes the sleeping boy in his arms—but when she invites him to linger in this freedom, this vast, narrow sphere, he passes resolutely onward, saying to himself:

Leb wohl!
O leite meinen Gang, Natur!
Und kehr' ich dann
Am Abend heim
Zur Hütte,
Vergoldet vom letzten Sonnenstrahl,
Lass mich empfangen solch ein Weib,
Den Knaben auf dem Arm![1]

[1] Farewell!
O lead me, Nature, guide my steps!
And coming home
To some roof-tree
At evening,
All golden with dying sunset-rays,
May she await me—such a wife,
Our boy upon her arm!



AGED 21

CHAPTER III

Eros

Mir gaben die Götter
Auf Erden Elysium—
Ach, warum nur Elysium![1]

. . . Sie nähert sich mir,
Himmlische Lippe!
Und ich wanke, nahe mich,
Blicke, seufze, wanke—
Seligkeit, Seligkeit!
Eines Kusses Gefühl![2]

A FAINT sigh runs through the elect little group of ladies under the beech-trees; and Urania, to whom the young Goethe dedicated these verses, may have blushed. It is a small gathering which awaits the spring under the fresh foliage of the mountain-path. Each of the ladies bears a good German name, most indeed an aristocratic one; but all have assumed romantic pseudonyms, and the one called Psyche is Herder's betrothed. A wave of mystic fervour, a transcendental atmosphere of aesthetic maidenhood (for though none of the girls is in her first youth, there are no married women among them), a virginal world where latent ardours may be smouldering, but where decorum rules the scene—all this has its very special effect upon the wanderer, whenever he visits his soul-

[1] The gods did accord me
On earth an elysium—
Ah, why elysium only!

[2] . . . Close, closer they come,
Lips like an angel's!
And I tremble, nearing them,
Gaze and sigh and tremble—
Ecstasy, ecstasy!
Oh, the sense of a kiss!

mates at Darmstadt. The storm and stress is modulated into a minor key:

Morgennebel, Lila, hüllen deinen Turm um.[1]

This wondrous little côterie reads and recites amid the moss-grown boulders, the high-souled girls uncertain whether to be rapturous or analytical; and as Herder is far away and Merck—though in true Mephistophelean fashion particularly captivated by these ladies—is not a real poet, the ardent sisterhood bestows its suffrages on Goethe. His adolescent heart stirs in this chaste company, to which he is drawn neither by his own internal flame nor their fresh beauty, but simply by a common zest for culture, and the aspirations of youth. It is an Atlantis of the mind, a plane of contemplative ardours, a tranquil return to Nature, somewhat feminine in feeling; and in this period of vehement self-absorption he is soothed by such intercourse with sympathetic women.

At this time Goethe was, like many of his contemporaries, extremely impressionable. His feeling for religion, too, was hovering between paganism and Christianity. He harked back more than once. He consented to attend the Synod of the Moravian Brotherhood, but his interest quickly cooled. The strenuous young man could not resign his will and "await the blessing," for he was too profoundly penetrated by a sense of Nature's potent influence upon the human spirit. This springtime was to make her votary something more than the enthusiast of landscape, the plastic recipient of impressions. He became the Goethe who could love her—and hence, the solitary. Those around him could not read the riddle of his heart. "I've had many another blow," he wrote at this time, "but I came here with whole-hearted ardour, and it's like the torments of hell to be received in a spirit so unlike my own. . . . People say that the curse of Cain is upon me. What brother have *I* slain! And so

[1] Mists of morning, Lila, shroud thy turret-window . . .

I say to myself that people are fools. . . . To be so utterly alone!" Such was his mood. "Love me—*you*!" His letters would end thus.

More remote from his fellow-men than his expanding soul desired, yet perforce reserved with the crowd whose pioneers were in touch with him; not specially desirous of cultivating the Muse, but still less so of living a practical life; contemplative, expectant, hovering between two worlds as it were—at the end of May Goethe spent some time in a smiling region, where the thrusting shoulders of the hills were like the side-scenes of a theatre, and the valley was always hazy, and the crests of the impenetrable forest tempered the sunlight. Here he would lie in the tall grass by the leaping brook, where "I observed a great many different kinds of grasses. . . . When I listen to that susurrant little world which has its being amid the green blades . . . and feel it grow dearer to my heart, and feel the presence of the Almighty who made us after His own image, and the breath of the All-loving who lifts us and sustains us in an infinity of rapture . . . then I think longingly: 'Oh, if you could but utter it, if you could but breathe on to the paper all that in yourself has such abundant pulsing life, so that it should be the very mirror of your soul!'"

Or else he would sit in the open air and drink the wine of the country, reading Tibullus and seeing a girl by the brook, who looked round for someone to help her lift the brimming vessel to her head. And he went and helped her, smilingly; or played with some children on the hillside and sketched them, and then the young mother arrived and told him how her husband had gone on a journey and hadn't written for a long time; and he gave the children a kreutzer and passed on, at peace and happy.

Was this retreat a watering-place? Or a mountain village? It lay outside the gates of a town; and Wetzlar, dirty and confined, was nevertheless illustrious because in its heart there stood a large building which was the Court of Appeal of the Holy Roman Empire, whither the

German Princes and Cities sent ambassadors. There young jurists acquired the final polish—so tradition said; but in truth the teaching was far too vague and diffuse. Goethe put down his name on the list—hardly more—at his father's desire. With those whom he liked there he would foregather at the inn, where they instituted a parody of the Round Table and baptized him, the youngest, as "Götz the Honest Man."

The Embassy folk did not dine at this table; and as Goethe did not go to the Supreme Court, it was some time before he made the acquaintance of the serious-minded, intelligent Secretary from Bremen. This gentleman had merely heard that a young doctor from Frankfurt had arrived in the place—eccentric, a writer, a philosopher. A *bel-esprit*? Sceptically he repeated the unknown name: "Goethe?" And then, after two or three weeks had gone by and people could meet in the open air, he beheld the new arrival.

He saw a pale, thin young person lying on the grass, with a long face, rather a big beaky nose, dark hair and eyes; he was leaning on one soft and not very beautiful hand, and arguing vehemently with some other young fellows. A few minutes' listening revealed that these were philosophers in dispute—one was Epicurean, another Stoical, a third neither one thing nor the other. When the introductions were made, Kestner, who was just thirty and a man of the world, looked searchingly at Goethe as he shook hands.

Near by stood Kestner's colleague from Brunswick, still graver-looking than he, a man of few words, punctiliously attired in the English fashion—blue frock-coat, buff waistcoat, boots with brown tops. His name was Jerusalem. Goethe and he seldom met; all Goethe knew of him was what everyone said—that he was passionately in love with the wife of a friend. The young diplomat and philosopher who bore so pregnant a name was prejudiced against this Goethe who was holding forth so vehemently; and when he got home he wrote to a friend:

" Goethe was at Leipzig in our time, and was an ass. Now he's a writer on the *Frankfurter Zeitung* into the bargain." The youth in the grass was soon to make these two diplomatic personages immortal, but one was never to suspect it and the other to know it only too well. There was nothing to forewarn them that a woman and a genius were to make such a marvellous link between the three.

A week later they were all at a party, and so was a girl who danced a great deal with the young doctor from Frankfurt. The slender blooming creature, in her simple summer frock, moved like a sylph, if less yieldingly than Friederike, less ardently than Käthchen; a girl of the middle class, accustomed to society and quick-witted. " No faultless beauty; " so Kestner, to whom she had been engaged since she was sixteen, describes her, " but a pretty girl. Her greatest external attraction for me is her sweet engaging expression. She has plenty of sense besides, and a pleasure-loving disposition. She is amusing and can say witty things. Not forgetting her heart, which is of the first order—noble, affectionate, kind, and generous." And so, too, after forty years had gone by, she was to be described by the poet with whom she danced that evening.

Lotte Buff was his type, once more. The women of his adolescence were all slender and airy, all light-hearted—the sedative influences which his daemonic nature required.

That summer night saw the poet over head and ears in love; and he was not slow to display the qualities which were sure to attract her to him. Had he not almost everything which Kestner lacked—passion, ingenuousness, and the charm of novelty besides? On the other hand, Kestner had much that was lacking in Goethe—knowledge of the world, cool judgment, impeccability, and such tact that he contrived to bring his betrothed, himself, and his new friend unscathed out of the three months' romance which was then beginning. For nothing speaks better for Kestner than the fact that he could become Goethe's friend, despite jealousy, envy—the whole impossible

situation. Soon he came to know him so well that he could deliver the following verdict:

" He has a great deal of talent, is a real genius and a man of character; he possesses an extraordinarily lively imagination, which is the reason why he usually expresses himself in images and symbols. He often declares that he cannot help using figurative language, that he never can express himself literally, but that when he is older he hopes to be able to utter the idea as it really is. He is extremely impressionable, but often shows great self-control. He has fine ideals, is quite unprejudiced, and does as he likes without caring whether other people like it or not, or whether it's the fashion, or generally accepted in society. He hates constraint of any kind. He loves children and will play with them for hours. He's bizarre, and there's something about his manner which might easily make him disliked. . . . He has a very great reverence for women. His principles are unsettled as yet, and he's beginning to long for some definite system of belief. . . . It is only to a few that he will talk about certain vital matters—he avoids upsetting other people's peace of mind. . . . He hates scepticism; it is the truth that he's after. . . . He doesn't go to church, not even to the Lord's Supper, nor does he often pray. . . . Sometimes he takes these things lightly, sometimes quite the reverse. . . . He believes in a future life, and a better one. . . . In short, he is a very remarkable fellow."

Kestner's understanding of Goethe—for this letter is the best contemporary portrait of his adolescence—was equalled by that which he displayed in the affair now brewing. He acted wisely all along. Kestner's was the active part, Goethe's the passive.

In Lotte's home there were her father and several brothers and sisters—children to be played with and older ones before whom caution had to be observed; and Lotte's hands were full, for she was at once housewife, mother, and betrothed. The poet's eye, accustomed to observe domestic details and always attracted by an idyllic picture,

was rested and cheered; and moreover this was good material. The restrictions of that respectable household, effective in warding off many of the risks attendant on actual romance, were no less so in lending a charm to the written narrative.

Passion was soon at its height, and the sentimentality of the time would lead us to anticipate such a climax as the following: conflict between love and duty in the hero's heart, victory for his friendship with the fiancé, self-sacrifice and withdrawal, then the final conflict between mortal ennui and love of life. Little consonant with Goethe's nature, it is true; yet the atmosphere surrounding the young people would seem to answer for it.

But no. Goethe, yielding to his passion and more and more intimately drawn in spirit to the girl, neither transgressed against friendship nor wallowed in self-sacrifice. He wanted a wife like any other young man. As always, he was thinking less of passion and romance than of home and marriage. But the girl—restrained by respectability and prudence, faithful to her four years' engagement, too prosaic and much too timid to yield to the vehement wooing of this stormy genius and let the whisper of the senses urge her heart to a choice which would endanger her own happiness, her father's peace of mind, and the credit of the family name—the girl drew back, keeping him at a distance with kindly tact and remaining her own sensible, cheerful self. So little overwhelmed was she that the alternative never really presented itself at all; and she had only to think quietly, weighing habit and common-sense against the new prospect, to decide, as her equable nature bade her, in Kestner's favour.

Goethe soon made preparations for flight from this situation, but he did not carry them out. Kestner, of course, admired Lotte all the more for the way she kept the other man in check. "His peace of mind" (so he was soon writing to a friend about Goethe) "was much disturbed; there were several extraordinary scenes, which made me think all the more of Löttchen, and of him too

as a friend. Usually I felt very sorry for him and was much perturbed in spirit. . . . He began to see that he must pull himself together, for his own sake."

The cardinal point is this. Our lover never entirely lost his head; or rather he found it again in the moment when Lotte, called upon by him after eight weeks of courtship to decide the question once for all, chose—at the cost of one sleepless night—not him, but Kestner. Genius, battering at the door of a maiden's heart, had to learn that a mere human being was already in possession. And genius drew the sleep-walker away from the inhospitable threshold. The heart which could contain the flood of inexpressible emotions, old as time, that surged within it—was that heart likely to break for a Lotte? Nothing we know of this incident points even indirectly to the girl's refusal having sapped her young lover's prodigious vitality.

Disdained by the woman he loved, and rejected for a lesser man, his daemonic nature asserted itself. He accepted the position and took the strongest line—to go, and go at once, no matter what it cost him. Had not Merck invited him to join a party on the Rhine? That would be a good pretext.

Goethe went, and made no scene at all; he did not even say good-bye.

And then—the swift revulsion! From the moment he left her neighbourhood, from the very night on which he packed his trunk, his soul was possessed by a sense of fatality. Once an incident was closed, Goethe's heart was prone to feel in all its manifold anguish the inexorable determinism of all experience, the stern law of nature which decreed his course. The environment and the girl's sweet gaiety, the intimate daily intercourse, the joy of loving service had until that evening blinded him to the possibility of a final renunciation. But now, when he had left her, when kindly chance could do no more for him, the elemental forces in his heart broke bounds. In the farewell notes which he left for the two lovers we hear the first mutterings of the tempest in his soul.

"He is gone, Kestner; when you get this note, he will be gone. . . . I felt composed, but your conversation was too much for me. . . . If I had stayed one instant longer, I could not have controlled myself. Now I am alone, and to-morrow I depart. Oh, my poor head!" And early next morning: "Packed up, Lotte, and the dawn is breaking; in another quarter of an hour I shall be gone. . . . You know all, you know how happy I have been throughout these days. And I am going to the dearest and best of people, but why away from you? So it is, and this is my destiny. . . . Adieu, a thousand times adieu. Goethe."

This is Goethe's third flight from a girl, and again it is only when his love is coming to an end that he regards it as fatality. That is the way with daemonic natures. If he had won and possessed the girl he would have been intoxicated for a little while; renunciation and flight let loose the mysterious forces within him.

His passion grew with absence, and he indulged in raptures of renunciation. Goethe's love for Lotte Buff—an idyll of two summer months, with a third month of rivalry and rejection—was now to increase throughout the course of twenty months. For thenceforth the ruler of his spirit was not so much Lotte as Eros; and never was he more the prey of Eros than just now—like Romeo, who loved because he *had* loved.

A week after his flight Goethe was sitting in a charming villa on the Rhine, where people of many interests lived in luxury, with a hostess who was responsive, intelligent, full of sensibility, and in the early forties. This was Sophie Laroche, at one time the beloved of Wieland, and now becoming known as an authoress. She had a daughter too. The sixteen-yeared Maximiliane was not so tall as Lotte Buff, but hers was the same kind of open countenance and clear complexion, and she too had the darkest of dark eyes.

It was the rhythmic quality in Goethe's nature which at regular and recurrent intervals attracted him towards

definite groups of women. He spent five days in this house. Fifty years afterwards he had not lost sight of the mother, daughter, and grand-daughter.

But no sooner had he returned to Frankfurt than he immersed himself afresh in Lotte's world, and began to bombard her with letters, full of yearning and relinquishment, half adoring and half teasing, charming and challenging, much tinged (at that safe distance) with sensuality, charged with memories of all he had resigned—and always, always pleading for her love, her remembrance, as though he had no dearer wish than to be unforgettable for the heart which had rejected him.

"So Lotte didn't dream of me. I am offended at that, and insist on her dreaming of me to-night, and not telling you anything about it, either. . . . Here I can only go on as best I may, and I don't want to see Lotte again until I can tell her in *confidence* that I've fallen in love. . . . It would be better if I didn't write to you, and left my imagination in peace—yet there hangs the silhouette, and that's the worst of all. . . . It's very much the same rose-coloured ribbon, only paler, I think, than the one she wore out driving that day."

Eight weeks of this was as much as he could stand, and he went to Wetzlar, ostensibly on business. There he stayed a few days in a state of ecstatic friendship; when he was going he regretted not having made his formal good-byes: "I came short of a kiss which she could not have denied me. I very nearly went over there this morning. . . . Indeed, Kestner, it was time I took myself off. Last night, on the sofa, my thoughts were concerned with hanging, and very hangworthy they were."

His passion and his enjoyment of his own pangs were both increasing. And if now, when he could have kissed his friend under the eyes of his friend, there was audible—so many weeks after the decision and the earlier parting—a sigh over the futility of existence, it was no more than a momentary mood of dejection.

For Goethe, so long as he drove the chariot of his life, was conscious of the mastery within him; and the nearer, the dizzier the abyss that yawned beneath—the abyss upon whose edge almost the entire eighty-yeared course was run—the more firmly did he grip the reins, rejecting the thought that the goal might be unsatisfactory, and loyally fulfilling the day's demand. In this spirit he now became an advocate at Frankfurt, and so remained during the three succeeding years of the last and longest stay he was obliged to make at home.

He had twenty-eight cases, most of them for Frankfurt Jews: not a remarkable number. Although Goethe was not an excellent speaker (and never a persuasive one), no fighter either, and although he was entirely devoid of worldly ambition or desire for a popular success, thus lacking all the stimulations which go to make great advocates, his feeling for actualities might have kept him in this sphere, if the formulae, conventions, and hair-splitting, the whole pedantic procedure of the calling, had not scared him off.

His début was quite in the manner of a fierce poetic diatribe, and the Court snubbed him on the spot! Goethe was practical enough to keep for his poetic workshop that dispassionate attitude towards both parties which distinguishes the dramatist from the advocate, and to aim at cumulative effect in his first case for the defence. He was representing a son whose father refused to grant him undisturbed possession of a porcelain factory. Goethe's ten-paged brief, in answer to the indictment, began with such extravagant periods as the following:

"If blustering self-sufficiency can affect the decision of a learned judge, and the most malignant of invectives prevail against a well-established verity . . . in such circumstances as these, how could I, how should I, be expected to add fuel to the fire which is to consume me? When jurisprudence, that mysterious veiled goddess, after long grievous travail has brought forth—what do we see? A couple of ridiculous mice that creep from the pages

of some compendium of definitions, and proclaim themselves her children. Run away, little mice!"

While this speech was in progress the lawyers, sitting among their arid briefs, shook their heads and smiled forbearingly; and the opposing counsel, in his reply, observed that all the clever fooling they had just been listening to proceeded from a man whom even in their school-days he had perceived to be an arrogant type of person.

But Goethe, never a revolutionary in the narrow sphere of established custom, changed his tactics after this first effort; and thenceforth it was only very rarely that his briefs had to suffer the irruption of epigram. We can follow the process of getting into line in his successive cases—the phrasemonger gradually becomes an advocate. The father must have had some influence here. He was an accomplished lawyer; and though as an Imperial Councillor unable to practise, he was often helpful as a confidential intermediary, and he now frequently lent a controlling hand.

But directly the son became known as an author, the old gentleman resolutely altered his course. It was Goethe's father who cleared the way for his son's imaginative life. When he wanted to travel, he could hand over his work to his father—and to his brother-in-law as well, for at this time Cornelia married Schlosser, who was a lawyer.

Soon after their engagement, Goethe turned jealous. He was used to this confidante, he liked to tell her about his schemes for work, his letters, and even his answers to them; and the conservative side of him was vexed by any intrusion from without. A sort of hypochondria of the spirit set in; he complained of being deserted, and although the sister had never been anything more than an echo, or possibly a timorous ally against the father, he wanted to find her always there when he came home and needed a confidante.

This year brought one of those nervous crises which at fairly regular intervals—usually every seven years—would run their course with Goethe. Eros, languishing

for a distant heart, sought a substitute in sentimental friendship. A distant female relative became his mother-confessor—one Johanna Fahlmer, not young, a single woman but safe. For her nephew, the poet Fritz Jacobi, Goethe cherished a prejudice; he refused to make any approaches to him and his brother, would not even contribute to their new magazine. But a sudden fancy took him, after all, to pay Jacobi a visit on a trip up the Rhine; and he found him an idealistic, delightful-looking man. From the first moment he was conscious of the closest kind of affinity, and the ice was melted by words of flame. It was as if two ardent spirits had rushed into one another's arms—but there was a definitely literary atmosphere about it all, with recitations by moonlight, soon to be followed by incoherent letters which might have been those of lovers.

Götz had made his name famous; in North Germany and Vienna it was tried on the stage, and though it had no run, this measure of success was useful in selling the book. Goethe looked upon it all as a lark. He wanted the suffrage of the few, while the applause of the many-headed was heaped on him. "I wish Lotte cared a little about my play. I have all sorts of laurels, and flowers too—even Italian flowers—and I try my wreaths on by turns and grin at myself in the glass."

He himself was a reviewer at this time. The *Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen*, organ of the literary revolt, had accepted contributions from Goethe before *Götz* appeared, and it was there that he began his critical career. But always as a poet condescending to criticism—or, as Herder said, an arrogant young cock of the walk with very formidable spurs. In these writings his mocking spirit coruscates through the critical comments, a malign sort of wit after Mephisto's heart. The chaotic youth had scarce one attribute of the true critic.

One day there came strange tidings from Kestner.

Jerusalem had killed himself—that singular visionary, philosopher, and anglicized lover of literature, who was also something of an artist and a collector of lonely landscape-scenes. He was the son of rich parents and was cultured, independent. He had a love affair with a friend's wife, it was true. . . .

"Unfortunate man," wrote Goethe, "the poor, poor fellow! Once, when I was coming back from a walk and he met me in the moonlight, I said to myself immediately: 'He is in love.' Lotte must remember how I used to laugh about it. Loneliness played the mischief with his heart, God help him, and—I've known him by sight for seven years; we never saw much of each other, but when I was leaving Wetzlar I borrowed a book from him. I shall keep it, and remember him as long as I live."

A vague sense of shortcoming—the unfortunate man—a sad ending—poor fellow—and a dash. . . . That represented all Goethe felt on hearing of Jerusalem's suicide, yet he himself was living in a rising tide of passion, seven weeks after his parting from Lotte.

It was because he divined how different his nature was from Jerusalem's. This latter had once written an essay to prove that complete surrender to passion was despicable; but when it did get hold of him he made the greatest of all surrenders—self-murder. Goethe, who had never moralized on the subject, who defended every manifestation of passion, and who moreover was emancipated from all semi-religious scruples, yet had a safety-valve in his daemonic temperament; and in his spirit such instinctive, life-giving lowliness before destiny and Nature that to his tempestuous soul the thought of death by his own hand could never seriously present itself. At that time he had been wont to lay a valuable dagger from his collection of weapons on his bed-table every night; "and before I put out the light I used to try if I could bring myself to plunge the sharp point a couple of inches in my breast. But as I never could, I finally laughed myself out of the

attempt, got rid of all such mumpish affectations, and made up my mind to live."

But what manner of life did he then adopt? Where was the fire, the craving to learn, to shape a course, which had been so intense the year before? He now stood remote from the world around him; Eros possessed his fervid, lonely heart; his walks were almost all he had to cling to. The winter season in Frankfurt was in full swing; he was young, brilliant, famous, good-looking; he could go into society, he did help to dress a girl for a ball, but would not join in the carnival. "You complain of loneliness," he wrote. "Alas! That is the fate of the noblest spirits, to sigh in vain for a reflection of themselves. . . . Ye sacred Muses, pour the *aurum potabile* . . . from your chalices for me, for indeed I languish! What a price we pay for sinking wells in the desert and building a house there. . . . One strand snapped! And all your seven-ply ropes are of no avail."

"Perfectly aimless and planless"—such were Goethe's manifold activities at this time; a life, an art, directed to no central point. He knew he was drifting all the time between sceptical waiting and curious expectancy, wholly passive. "Since I am playing no part in the world as yet, I devote my best hours to shaping forth my phantasies, and my greatest delight is when somebody I respect and love will take an interest in them."

Phantasies—sometimes they took form under his pencil. White and black on grey paper, profiles of his friends; but as they never satisfied him he would take to verse once more.

Let us look at one of these drawings. It represents three people—his sister and her friends in a group, in everyday attire, the treatment academic. We turn the paper and read:

> Wer half mir gegen der Titanen Übermut?
> Wer rettete vom Tode mich,
> Von Sklaverei?

Hast du nicht alles selbst vollendet,
Heilig glühend Herz.

With its tame drawing and its fiery verses this sheet is an epigram on the poet's plastic ambitions, which were then beginning, and were to prove wellnigh a tragedy for many years. For Goethe had no plastic talent; and when he took to the pencil it can scarcely be said to have been from a genuine plastic impulse, though it was to take him thirty years to realize this. That one great mistake about himself casts light upon a hundred other impulses; and thus the barren effort was fruitful for posterity's understanding of the man.

"My heart is beating high to-day. This afternoon I am to use the paint-brush for the first time. With what lowliness, reverence, and hope I can't express—my fate hangs on that moment." In such a high-flown mood did Goethe begin a new art, for which nevertheless he had been preparing throughout years of sketching, etching, and silhouette-drawing. And yet as a poet he had never once trembled before the blank sheet which awaited his hand, nor taken the beginning of any such task with a like solemnity. Why then for painting? Was it a case of the impotent coveting the master's throne? Was his hand not a painter's at all?

Not so. His line was firm, he caught good likenesses (especially in profile), his tones were transparent—he *had* learnt something, and his best drawings are no worse than the trivial lyric dramas he was presently to write. But the impulse of his soul was not to be denied. To give form and verisimilitude to things of the imagination was the at first unconscious aim of his writings; and because he had an eye which could discern the particular in the universal, Goethe ranks as the pioneer of

[1] Against the Titans' overweening pride of rule,
Who helped me, rescued me from death,
From slavery?
Hast thou not done it all unaided,
Heart of sacred fire?

imaginative realism. His vision was as a dove sent forth by his genius to survey the universe and bring back tidings of the terra firma, rising above the tumultuous flood of dreams, which would afford a base for the constructive mind. Never was it his aim merely to find words for what he saw; his insight had already revealed that to him; but such was his reverent love for the thing seen that he could not but express it in phrases of clairvoyant tenderness.

Since in plastic art he was no more than the amateur whose aim it was precisely to reproduce the object, his efforts in that sort are futile soulless imitations, often devoid of any sensibility whatever; and nothing better proves the subordinacy of this aim than the fact that when on his rambles a landscape tempted him to sketch it, he was wont to scribble notes on the margin, pointing out his inadequacies in form and colour. "How we long to find expression for what we feel! . . . Blessed be the good impulse which told me to sketch my room for you, just as it stands before me, instead of writing any more about it!" As a painter Goethe aimed only at veracity, while the poet's eye was "in fine frenzy rolling."

This chiaroscuro of the spirit held him from any surrender to absolute beauty. Though plaster-casts of classic heads, bought from itinerant Italians at the Fair, lit up his attic room, he was possessed by that love for the fantastic and untamed which is a trait of solitary natures, and in him found an outlet in screaming farce. A visitor describes at this time "his grave, sad look, in which nevertheless there was a gleam of mockery and satire. He is very eloquent, and full of extremely witty notions. He turns everything into a sort of drama." He loved to talk in images, and here again the duality of his experience is made manifest; for his impassioned searching vision, all-embracing as it was, supplied him with images at every turn, while the poet's eye beheld each particular as symbolic of the universal—and at the end of eighty years it was to be no different with him.

Sometimes, waking in the night, he would find verses running in his head; and then he would rush to his desk and write, obeying his inspiration, without a pause and straggling anyhow across the paper, so as to preserve the somnambulistic mood. Mostly he wrote in the very early morning, often after having had a dream. "Anything with real stuff in it would set me off."

One day he read in Wieland's magazine that Wieland had critically defended his own *Alcestis* against that of Euripides. This wakened the spirit of derision; he sat down with a bottle of Burgundy beside him and on that afternoon wrote—in such haste that he used initials to designate the characters in the play—*Götter, Helden und Wieland.* Did he hate Wieland? Not at all. He kept a sharp ear for the verdict of that pope of literature. In attacking Wieland now, he was once more attacking his own outgrown rococo-phase; and with a characteristic flash of self-illumination he instantly asked himself in a letter: "Do I hate Wieland or love him? It's all one, really—I take an interest in him."

Soon chance was to put him to the proof. Pride and good manners, the self-consciousness and the detachment of a budding poet, veneration, audacity—all were involved. For Goethe's friend Lenz, out of either malice or impudence, printed this farcical piece on his own responsibility, thus turning a private lark into a literary scandal; and it was Wieland who, with a man of the world's shrewd chivalry, laid his young opponent in the dust. For he chose this moment to write an eulogy on *Götz*—a somewhat feline amenity, it is true. The post brought it to Goethe—the latest number of Wieland's magazine; and a friend who was present testifies emphatically to the mutterings she could hear while Goethe read.

"Well, Wieland, you're a decent fellow! A thorough good chap! What? Is this what he's after? . . . Wasn't I always kindly disposed to him? I always did say he was a good fellow, a kind fellow. . . I wrote that damnable muck when I was drunk. . . . There—that's what always

annoys me about Wieland . . . that tone he takes. . . . I don't mean to say that I was right and Wieland wrong, for one takes different views according to one's age and period. . . . Perhaps when I'm Wieland's age, or even sooner, I shall think precisely as he does. . . . 'In time.' Oh, of course—just the way my father talks. . . . Awfully decent! Well, Wieland, our feud is over—I'm done with attacking you!" All this while he was reading the critique on *Götz*. Then he turned to Wieland's retort to the comic piece. He flushed up; his friend could see that he was agitated; he exclaimed: "He couldn't have been cleverer! . . . Wieland gains enormously with the public, and I lose. I've prostituted myself!"

But he wrote another satire at this time—less genial and less gay, but deeper and more personal: *Satyros*. Here he was mocking at another man, but also at himself and the phase he had recently outgrown. The duality of Goethe's nature always made him quick to watch himself upon the stage, as might one behind the scenes who had been taking part in the performance. In this deified satyr he was ridiculing not only Herder whom he venerated, but also *Sturm und Drang*, and Rousseau, and the Return to Nature.

But lo, before the mocking author quite realized it, Herder's potent spirit had possessed him, breaking through the limitations of farce! And this quite against Goethe's will. He had just been making Satyros, the apostle of Nature, ridicule the flowing vesture worn by Hermes, when the ironic side of him suddenly turned upside down, revealing the sentimental—and Herder's ideas about the instinctive method flashed through the Goat-foot's diatribe.

Goethe was more careful with this piece; he allowed only a few friends to read it, and it was not for forty years, when all the prototypes were dead, that he suffered it to see the light. When he was writing it, he was on fire—not against, but *with* Herder; and likewise "with" himself,

who was toying with the Return to Nature and yet recoiling from it.

For here was the extraordinary thing—Goethe's dual perception was parodying himself as he then was. The farce of *Satyros* dates from the same summer months which saw the birth of *Prometheus*.

In no work of his adolescence are the daemon and the genius, who disputed Goethe's soul for eighty years, so completely fused in a single figure as in this Prometheus, at once rebel and artist. His very first words are defiant of the gods: "Tell them I will not! Once for all, I will not!" And his last are no less bold a challenge: "To heed thee never, as myself not heeds thee!"

Yet this rebel is likewise a constructive spirit. Nowhere can we more plainly perceive the distinction between Goethe's "Storm and Stress" and that of his comrades. The latter revel in the chaotic; for Goethe it is a primitive state to be escaped from as soon as possible.

For while Goethe, all defiance and indignation, surveying the round earth, feels like his Prometheus, the defiant shaping spirit who to Destiny alone is subject . . . suddenly the artist in him, ever haunted by his veneration for the higher powers, bends the knee before his genius, and he makes Prometheus answer Minerva:

> Durch dich, o meine Göttin,
> Leben, frei sich fühlen,
> Leben! Ihre Freude wird dein Dank sein![1]

All these poems seemed play to him; he regarded them as practice, not as finished work; he scarcely has a word to say about them. . . . Disporting himself thus in challenge and mockery, the toys of his passion-tossed spirit, Goethe sought to pacify that Eros whose sad eyes were ever present to imagination. When Lotte was preparing for her wedding and Kestner was transferred to a post in

[1] Through thee, O thou my goddess,
Thus to live, enfranchised,
Live! Thy guerdon shall be in their rapture!

Hanover, Goethe's neuroticism reached its climax; and just as, four years earlier, he had brooded with all the sensual ardour of a lover upon Käthchen's nuptials, so now his erotic excitement rose to fever-point after the wedding-day. His letters during these weeks are unparalleled throughout the whole course of his adolescence.

He refused to go to the wedding; personally he wished to be as far away as possible, though in spirit nearer than ever before.

Why would they not let him buy the wedding-ring? he demanded. "And her silhouette . . . shall be cast out of my room on her wedding-day, never to hang there again until I hear she is in childbed."

Later he was perpetually imagining his rival's blisses, and wrote of them with classical outspokenness, a week after the wedding:

". . . So good-night, Mr. and Mrs. Kestner. I would have ended my letter there if I had anything better to expect in bed than my dear brother Sleep. Just look at that bed of mine—it's as sterile as the desert-sands. How I could leave Lotte I have never yet been able to understand . . . and tell me, was it heroic or what? I'm proud and not proud of myself. It cost me little, and yet I can't imagine how I could do it. . . . But one thing I know, and that is that our Lord God must be a very cold-blooded fellow to let *you* have Lotte."

Evidently his nerves were all of a twitter during those honeymoon-days, seven months after the parting. This letter is, unlike all others, written in a shaky hand, untidy and straggling. After some days: "But I do think it unkind to pull a face at me and lie down beside your wife. . . . And to call me an envious fellow! . . . O Kestner, when did I ever grudge you Lotte in the human sense—for if I didn't grudge her to you in the sacred sense, I should have to be an angel without lungs or liver. . . . My poor existence is petrifying into barren rock."

In these weeks—not in the year before, when he was wooing her, and still less in that to come, when he depicted

her—Goethe's heart was convulsed by the anguish of a young lover compelled by the beloved herself to relinquish all hope, and in imagination perpetually seeing her in the arms of another man.

In the summer he dreamt of her sometimes, and wrote: "And so I dream, and dawdle through life, conducting beastly law-suits, writing dramas and novels and such-like." Towards autumn he sent her a loose gown. She would want one shortly, he supposed.

But while the stormy sea was gradually growing calm above the passion drowned, a new ship with gaily coloured flags was appearing on the horizon; and perhaps the abandoned lover unconsciously let the earlier infatuation sink the sooner below the surface because he felt the new one drawing near. That Maximiliane Laroche who had charmed him at the time of his flight from Wetzlar, now arrived in the nick of time at Frankfurt as a fascinating young woman and moreover a wife "misunderstood." At this period Goethe had broken away from the asceticism which he had long preserved in memory of Lotte; he had written some erotic poems to a certain Christel, of whom we know nothing, and this makes a healthy interlude among the letters of that year.

He was ready, in short; and it is no wonder that the pretty, warm-blooded creature, just become the wife of a rich elderly merchant (and a stepmother into the bargain), and brought from the high-souled atmosphere of the charming villa on the Rhine to a gloomy ancestral house in Frankfurt, should have in a fortnight renewed her full intimacy with Goethe. By that time he was talking of the "joy of his life"; but now he did not mean the woman herself, but his feeling for her, and the difference is profoundly significant. At first the husband, Herr Brentano—who was supposed to have no cause for jealousy—seemed to him a worthy man, a strong character, the motive-power of his great business.

Mephisto knew better. "*Goethe est déjà l'ami de la maison,*" wrote Merck to his wife. "*Il accompagne le*

clavecin de Madame avec ta basse. M. B., quoique assez jaloux pour un italien, l'aime . . . G. a la petite Mme. B. à consoler sur l'odeur de l'huile, du fromage, et des manières de son mari."

This passion of Goethe's was brief and violent. He returned her letters and she must have burnt his, for all that remains is an unfinished copy of a single sheet, where he sentimentalizes about one of her dark curls: "When I am in the mood I have the hair to gaze at, and reflect that it represents my possession in all the other curls which are not actually in my power. For to which of the many with whom we consort has she given anything so intimate! . . . A spade will push through the earth and bring to light what had been consigned to darkness, and the earth does not resent it. I suppose that symbolizes all the happiness I can wish you. And if you had it, I should be as happy as you."

In a few weeks all was over. Mme. Laroche made no concealment of her grief about her daughter's marriage. Goethe was malicious about the sharp nose of the husband—roughly awakened from his brief dream of love. The Brentanos had arrived at New Year; by February Brentano had forbidden Goethe the house.

Even in the summer, when the mother, who was on a visit in Frankfurt, begged him to come and see her, he answered in a gloomy strain: "If you knew what I went through before I ceased to go to the house, you would not want to lure me back, dear Mamma. In those frightful weeks I suffered enough for all my future; now I am calm, and let me remain so!"

Is not this little lady the third from whom Goethe had to tear himself in the full tide of passion? And was it not always for the woman's sake—for her peace of mind or security—that he left her? That was Goethe's appointed rôle with the women of his adolescence—unlimited surrender, and in the midst of his surrender, flight, to protect the woman.

But himself as well. For behind these women—whom

he never wanted to possess for the moment only, but always wholly and for life—stood the stern form of his genius, driving away the daemon with invisible hands lest blisses should enervate that temperament. Never in his life is this more evident than in those agitated winter weeks. For then, on fire once more and once more driven from the loved one's house—then, once more a fugitive, once more established in his attic-room at home . . . the memory of his last parting leaped to life, and he thought how different it was, since then he had been driven out by the beloved woman's own free choice.

How different—and yet there might be some resemblance between his mood of to-day and that of the unhappy man, the young diplomat and philosopher from Brunswick, who had likewise been forbidden his mistress's house by her husband. Had he not blown out his brains that very night . . . Ah, *now* I understand you, Jerusalem—*now* I can show how you felt! Show—yes! There are the white sheets of paper, whose fellows have received the raptures and the agonies of my soul year after year!

And Goethe sits down, and without a plan, without a preliminary draft, writes *Werthers Leiden*. The whole work, begun as by a sleep-walker, shut away from all his friends, was finished in a month; but no sooner had he written the first of Werther's letters than the constructive impulse took a hand, so that in full tide of work he could write to one friend: " I never had any idea of making a coherent whole of this subject," and soon afterwards to another: " The sufferings of this precious youth . . . and now I have put my own feelings into his story, and it makes a marvellous whole."

That *Werther* survives to this day, although the spirit of the age was accountable for its immediate success, is due to the wealth of circumstantial detail, the spontaneity and freshness which inform it; and this was enhanced by a master-stroke of Goethe's. It is almost certain that he got Merck to give him back his letters

from Wetzlar, with the intention of making use of them; and this is the more probable because in those days letters were composed as literary exercises, which explains the vogue then beginning for novels written in that form.

So strong is the similarity between Goethe's and Werther's letters, even in dates and punctuation, that in the first part of the book we can read Goethe's soul through the medium of Werther's—although the work was written a year and a half after the parting and Jerusalem's death, when the passion had long been got over—nay, in the midst of a new one, so that it is but a semi-relapse, as it were.

Goethe to Kestner: "The morning is so splendid and I feel so happy that I can't stick in the town, and intend going to Garbenheim. Lotte said yesterday that she would like to take a longer walk than usual to-day. . . . Not that I shall expect you both out there—but wish? *That*, with my whole heart, and I shall hope . . . just enough to make up for the uncertainty. So I shall spend my day in uncertainty, hoping and hoping."

Werther to Wilhelm: "I shall see her to-day—so I say every morning, and look as gladly at the glorious sunshine as it looks at me. I shall see her! And that's the one wish I have all day. That prospect swallows up every other."

Goethe must even have looked up Kestner's letter about Jerusalem's death, for he used whole sentences from it word for word. Apparently he re-read all Kestner's letters while he was at work on *Werther*. And then he felt impelled to write to him and Lotte more fully, more intimately, than of late. The consciousness of having concealed his new love and his flight, together with a secret fear that this book might impair their friendship, made him insist ambiguously, but with ever-increasing emphasis, upon his affection. Suddenly a piece of news relieved the situation—Lotte had given birth to a son, immediately after Goethe had brought *Werther* into the world.

And now every instinct that is part of Eros sprang to life in Goethe. He was lover, friend, and sponsor; and it was a touch of the paternal too which caused him to make the impossible suggestion: "I wish Lotte . . . might have said, 'His name is to be Wolfgang' . . . and I want him to have that name, because it is mine. . . . Tell me at once what you decide upon. . . ." At the same time the day for the novel's publication was approaching, and the author was feeling nervous about it.

"I shall very shortly be sending you a friend who resembles me a good deal, and I hope you will like him. His name is Werther, and he is and was—well, let him tell you himself!"

Meanwhile, rejuvenated, revivified, he plunged into manifold activities, till at last—it was then more than two years after his departure from Wetzlar—he was able to dispatch the book. "And this copy is as precious to me as if it were the only one in the world. It shall be yours, Lotte; I have kissed it a hundred times, I have locked it up so that no one else should touch it. O Lotte!" But after all he forgot to enclose this note in the book. "I live in such a racket! The Fair is at its noisiest, my friends are with me, and past and future are strangely mingled. What will be the end of me? . . . Go on loving the live man, and respect the dead one."

How remote he was at heart, already!

But then fell a blow. Kestner felt injured—and justly, in so far as he stood for Albert; but his resentment was for Lotte as well. His limitations were now made evident. The sensation created by the book was certainly trying enough for an official; we cannot blame him. And what was to be Goethe's attitude? The earliest scintillations of prodigious fame were flashing through his father's house, his own little attic-room. Would he not retort: "You don't understand—these are all questions of art"?

No—he pleaded, expounded, coaxed. "You have cut the ground under my feet—what can I say in excuse?

I can only hold out this hope of requital . . . that Fate may grant me to have done what will ultimately draw us closer than ever before. . . . But even then I must be your debtor, and your children's, for the bad moments that my—call it what you like—has caused you."

When Kestner, before long, changed his tone, Goethe's pen could not keep pace with his emotion. " Thank you, thank you! . . . Oh, if I could fall on your neck, could fling myself at Lotte's feet. . . . O ye of little faith! If you could feel the thousandth part of what *Werther* is to a thousand hearts, you would not reckon with the cost you now deplore. . . . Give Lotte my hand—warm with affection, and say to her, ' To know that your name is uttered in reverence by thousands of adoring lips —is not that an equivalent for any uneasiness? ' . . . If you're both good, and don't carp at me, I'll send you some of the letters, rumours, suspirations about *Werther*. . . . Farewell, Lotte, and Kestner too—go on loving me—and *don't* carp at me—! "

Tender, pleading—yes; but half-withdrawn from these two, already borne from Eros to Eros on the mighty wing-beats of his daemon.

CHAPTER IV

DAEMONIC

Accurséd destiny, that will never
suffer me to be in equilibrium!

Mir ist das liebe Wertherische Blut
Immer zu einem Probierhengst gut,
Den lass ich mit meinem Weib spazieren,
Vor ihren Augen sich abbranliren,
Und hintendrein komm' ich bei Nacht. . . .[1]

AND if one could quote further, readers would be strengthened in the conviction that here is a cynical pot-bellied jester invading Werther's high-flown sphere, and tearing down the veils of illusion. Nothing surprising in a worthy citizen's writing this doggerel as the protest of all healthy-minded folk against Werther's tear-dimmed universe. But the verses are by Goethe, introduced—immediately after the publication of *Werther*—into the crazy orchestration of *Hanswursts Hochzeit*, which he thought well to eliminate from the list of his works, but which we need as a document.

For here, more strikingly than anywhere else, we are shown the immense reaction in Goethe's dual nature after the writing of *Werther*.

It was the fate of this passionate young man to love five women in his adolescence, four of whom he either failed to win or lost too soon to others. In this period of sheer eroticism he surrendered himself so completely to the luxuries of relinquishment and the spell of imagination that all his vital forces, repressed for more than a whole

[1] That dear old strain of Werther in my blood
I always can trot out when in the mood;
It sometimes takes my wife out driving
And goes to pieces, myself conniving,
Then I slink home at night somehow. . . .

year, were bound to break out in full force directly such passivity had sown its wild oats in *Werther*.

Goethe's genius, whose task it had hitherto been to combat his daemon, in that one instance gave it free rein. His prodigious temperament blazed out uncontrollably, and his genius had to follow those flames whither they would.

It was reaction, too, from the sensation caused by the work. At twenty-five, astounded and alarmed, he was confronted by such success as he never again either achieved or desired. In sceptical moments he clearly perceived that it was not so much his self-revelation as the coincidence with a national sensation—the mysterious suicide of a German diplomatist—which had caused the multitudinous success.

For fifty years Goethe was for most Europeans the author of *Werther*. Since the novel responded to a contemporary phase which Goethe himself quickly outgrew, it did as much harm to its readers as it had done good to him. Every young man was wearing a blue frock-coat and a buff waistcoat, many tears were shed, there were some suicides. Though in Leipzig the book was prohibited and a fine of ten dollars imposed on sales, there were sixteen editions in Germany and more in France and England; it penetrated to China, was dramatized, imitated —and parodied.

In his attitude towards these parodies, Goethe was something like a wandering minstrel who should willingly suffer his adventures to be derided, but not his songs. When Nicolai in his *Freuden des jungen Werthers* depicted an abortive attempt at suicide with a pistol full of hen's blood, and Werther's subsequent wedding with Lotte, Goethe was at first delighted with the charming vignettes. He cut them out, and that evening went tranquilly on with his new lyric drama. But he could not get the parody out of his head; in three poems and many letters he gave utterance to his wrath, and finally travestied the travesty in a dramatic scena.

Nor was it only the uproar itself which spoilt his triumph. It showed him too plainly the spuriousness of contemporary fame. He had flung his book into the world on an impulse of reaction from a strain which had shaken him to the remotest depths of his being; and the world, with its tactless, shrewd curiosity, was chiefly intent on discovering how much of the story was actual fact.

On that point he was so susceptible that one of his friends, writing about Lotte Kestner's view of Goethe's delineation of herself, warned his correspondent not to tell Goethe, lest he should fall upon him tooth and nail.

Goethe, whose own experience coloured all his works, was always afterwards desirous to obliterate any trace of this, and suffer no one to detect the connecting-links between his life and his publications. When to that was added the further necessity of concealing any incoherence caused by frequent re-writing, he took great pride in accomplishing the feat.

No one earlier perceived, or at any time better expressed, this peculiar correlation between the work and the experience of Goethe than did Merck, who wrote him these pregnant words: "Your irresistible tendency is to give poetic form to the actual, while others seek to give actuality to the so-called poetic." Even after fifty years the veteran was freshly struck by his worldly old friend's profound comment, made so long ago. And now, with *Werther*, he had to bear the consequences of this tendency, as imposed by the world at large.

Nevertheless, despite the offensive curiosity, despite the uncomprehending nature of the applause, the youth who scorned the outward show was having his first glimpse of what real glory might mean for his soul; and though he reiterated, to himself and his friends, his view of the earlier writings as not worth considering, he did feel that the present uproar was a confirmation of loftier hopes, in that his melodious name was ringing through all the nations. For the first time he beheld himself as *called*—the unattainable dream was visibly nearer. The

stream of homage, pouring in from unknown readers, moved him to the core; and he, who in utter tranquillity of spirit had laid aside his pen in March, now in the autumn, when the book appeared, wrote in a kind of ecstasy: "If my life were at stake, I would not suppress Werther!"

He gained greatly in self-confidence that year. When an anonymous farce appeared, which both copied and made fun of him, Goethe published in a newspaper a manifesto "for those who love me and trust my word"; and to this public declaration he added the lordly remark: "For the rest, I was very glad to have an opportunity of quietly obtaining a better knowledge of various people, by their behaviour towards myself. Goethe."

He even caused a play to be offered to a Berlin bookseller, without revealing more than the title. Renowned older poets, whom he had not before known, he now met as on equal terms. He asked a friend to say to Lessing that he had always felt sure of him, and was seldom deceived in people.

And as to the most illustrious of all: "Why should I not write to Klopstock? . . . Why not address myself to the live man, when I would make a pilgrimage to his grave?" When the master did visit the young author, they talked of little but some new type of skate which Klopstock recommended. Even to Salzmann he now first used the phrase which as an old man he was often to repeat: "Maintain your kind interest in me and mine." These words sound very arrogant from the lips of twenty-five, suddenly become unapproachable!

Praise of his universality reached him in a very exaggerated form, as a consequence of this renown. It was not to be really his until a lifetime of hard work had gone by. Women were foremost in this; and his native town was so full of gossip about him that Merck declared he could have made a book out of the secrets entrusted to him on the subject of Goethe. He received many begging-letters, adventurers borrowed money from him, and his funds began to run low.

A fateful year for Goethe had begun—his twenty-sixth. How far he could be divined from his outward appearance we learn from the greatest physiognomist of the period. Lavater writes in this fervent strain: "Intelligence is here, with sensibility to kindle it; and sensibility, with intelligence to illumine it. Observe . . . the form of the energetic brow; observe the eye, so swiftly penetrating, searching, enamoured, narrowing so gradually, not very deep-set, clear, quick, mobile . . . and the nose, in itself enough to proclaim the poet, with that lyrical transition to the full-lipped . . . mouth. With its virile chin, its well-opened, vigorous ear—who could question the genius in this head?"

There was one peculiarity in that head, which henceforth becomes noticeable in the full-face portraits and busts of Goethe. The right side of the forehead was a little contracted, so that the right eye was deeper set than the left, and smaller too. How self-conscious he was about this disparity, which he called "a pinch from old Nick," we know from some remarks of his later years. But in his youth, at any rate, the physical irregularity may be regarded in a less material light.

For never was Goethe's daemonic nature, perpetually rent by its own contradictions, more vehemently displayed than in this twenty-sixth year, when his genius assumed control in the battle of life.

His existence was one long self-contradiction. He was sensual and transcendental, non-moral and Spinozaistic, all egotism and all self-surrender, now delighting in companionship, now imperious in his demand for solitude; to-day religiously, to-morrow cynically, inclined; misanthropic, philanthropic, arrogant and kindly, patient and impatient, sentimental and pornographic, absorbed in form or intent on act, untamed and pedantic, a far-reaching thinker but an instinctive doer, coldly objective yet essentially and passionately erratic, entirely masculine yet very feminine—a dual being, if ever there was one; and so unlimited in scope that circumstance would have

its way with him whose avid thirst for all experience, intent though it was on form and measure, found satisfaction in one faith alone, and that the faith he now shaped into verse:

> Nenn's Glück! Herz! Liebe! Gott!
> Ich habe keinen Namen
> Dafür. Gefühl ist alles.[1]

The few who knew anything of him confirm this view, in their letters of the period: " You would idolize Doctor Goethe. He is the most terrible and the most lovable of men " (Lavater). " He is pure energy, sensibility, imagination. But he acts, on the other hand, without knowing why or wherefore, as though borne on a current " (Lavater). " How often did I see him, in the course of one quarter-of-an-hour, all tenderness and all fury! " (Stolberg). " Goethe is too much for me. You are right —he is womanish; but if he doesn't go to pieces in the next few years, we shall probably become better friends " (Schlosser).

" ' Give all for love,' says Goethe; and everyone who sees him knows how by his charm he conceals the energy of his mind, and the gravity of his solitary hours " (Zimmermann). " Goethe is a man possessed, who is hardly ever able to act voluntarily. . . . It is utterly absurd to require him to think and act as others do. . . . I don't mean to suggest by this that there is no possibility of a change to better, lovelier things; but he can only expand like a flower, ripen like a seed " (Jacobi).

Such was the radiance of the rising star. Let us analyse that iridescence.

At this time, when Goethe conceived his greatest works and made his most vital decisions, his duality was never more arresting. His whole being, ardently seizing, critically examining, the content of the passing moment,

[1] Call it Joy! Heart! Love! God!
For me there is no naming
Of this. We can but feel it.

and productive in every breath it drew, was at the mercy of its manifold antitheses; but though tempestuous passions stirred the surface, a harmonizing energy was at work in the "dark backward and abysm" of that unfathomable soul. It was to take him forty years to sail into God's sunlight, on a tranquil surface with a halcyon breeze around his head. For the present we can but hear the ever-conflicting voices.

Here is the non-moral Goethe: "And so the word of men is to me the word of God, whether parsons or whores . . . have promulgated it. I embrace my brother-man with my inmost soul. Moses! Prophet! Evangelist! Apostle, whether Spinoza or Machiavelli! But I take leave to say to every one of them: 'Dear friend, we're all alike!'"

In *Clavigo* he puts into Carlos' mouth the doctrine of genius exempt from the moral law; but none the less there is evident, in the original draft of *Faust* (which he wrote in the last two Frankfurt years) some conflict of conscience. May a genius forsake a maiden in her need?

His unconquerable faith in his genius kept him ever intent, as though for comparison, on personality. The teaching of Spinoza could only have attracted him by the law of contraries—as a nobly conceived system, nothing more.

Thus concentrated on personality, he was all for deeds. Lavater's impeachment of a provincial governor set him aflame; he insisted on being told all about it, without any false modesty, "so that I may fully appreciate your action. . . . A deed like that is worth a hundred books; and if such days could come again, I would compose my quarrel with the world."

He was alert for movement, activity: "I am not weary; so long as I live on earth, I intend to conquer at least my own little foot of territory afresh every day." Much of this found an outlet in satires, critical writings, duels of the mind; but at other times he would scorn that kind of thing as second-rate, and exclaim: "Why do we judge by works? . . . Are they our real fruits—these soilings of paper, whether written or printed?"

It was a propensity for kindly deeds which drew him to children, friends, and strangers. He would send books to Lotte's brothers, so that they should not buy newspapers; a falling-out with her little sister worried him for a long time; to another child he sent a new Frankfurt penny; for a musician he tried to obtain publication and performance, defrayed the expense of Klinger's entire course of study, twice pressed his assistance on him, and finally supported him for an indefinite period.

But this was not pure philanthropy. Scorn and mockery were more native to him, and hence his desire for friendship and intimacy was always at war with his nervous craving for solitude. This explains his behaviour to acquaintances, which was at once charming and repellent; and the constant marked alternations between gaiety and dejection.

He instituted poetic gatherings of a few fervents in his attic-room—they would read aloud, open their hearts to one another, cultivate enthusiasms. On a trip up the Rhine, immediately after *Werther*, he was positively boisterous, calling himself "the worldling"; and when guests were invited, he could not sit still, but would go dancing round the table.

But there was no radiance in this gaiety—it was daemonic. "When one's in company," he confessed at this time, "one takes the key out of one's heart and puts it in one's pocket. Those who leave it in its place are simpletons. . . . I should have lots to say if you didn't let everyone see my letters. . . . I can't bear a man, to whom I wouldn't tell the tenth part of them by word of mouth, to see my letters." When the Freemasons approached him, he drew back "from love of independence"; and after a stay in Zurich Goethe was reproached with having made no friends, because he had been too haughty and self-opinionated.

To the crowd he was alien. Humanity in the lump he pronounced intolerable; and in the tumult of the Fair he recalled Ariosto's phrase about the mob: "They should have been killed at birth."

Nevertheless his dual spirit could comprehend the two spheres. "The magnet attracts filings from the dust and chaff; and at bottom it is much the same with the aristocrat. He uses his active beneficence as a magnet, ferreting out from the mob the few kindred souls he can attract. But can you blame the mob if it revolts against the ferreting and the beneficences which disturb and unsettle such elements as are not susceptible to the special influence?"

That defines, twenty years beforehand, Goethe's attitude towards the Revolution. He liked the idea of the people and studied it in individuals; but by the mob as a phenomenon he was alternately repelled and bored.

And now, at twenty-five, Goethe was becoming aware of an encircling desert-region where his soul could find no pasture; and in this period of ardently creative adolescence he was driven to a woman-friend. "For hours I have been lying self-absorbed, turning over and over in my mind the question whether I possess the fortitude which will enable me to bear what inexorable destiny may design for me and mine—whether I shall ever find within me the rock on which to build a stronghold, where in the last resort I can betake myself with all I cling to." Such were the nocturnal agitations of his being, though its activities were manifold, and friends and foes and fame came in full measure. In that midnight hour, writing to his woman-friend, the youth who was renowned, courted, wealthy, with good prospects, chose the symbol of the Wandering Jew to represent himself.

He wanted everything and all things, wanted to feel and exist to the uttermost; yet none the less, though time was hurrying on, he was possessed by that inviolable consciousness of a vocation which would only very slowly ripen to fulfilment. "The amazing fellow," he wrote of a colleague, "actually thinks that he need only trust to luck—the Lord God will do the rest."

And then again his spirit would soar high, and he would

see life as a post-chaise speeding up hill and down dale, and from that image frame his vision of Circumstance. Time sat upon the driver's box, but though he might invoke his "Postilion Chronos," the four horses were not now the Pindaric simile for passions held in check—it was the conflict known to Faust which alone absorbed him.

The pendulum of his senses oscillated in like manner between *Werther* and *Hanswursts Hochzeit*—say, between Petrarch and Aretino! Thus, in the first *Faust*, Gretchen's song "Meine Ruh ist hin" is made more burning by the use of a single word, for there it runs: "Mein Schoss! Gott! drängt sich nach ihm hin!"[1] And in her cell she says, in that version: "Wie sonst ein ganzer Himmel mit deiner Umarmung gewaltig über mich eindrang! Wie du küsstest, als wolltest du mich in wollüstigem Tod ersticken!"[2]

This enigmatic duality was usually confined to his private moods of excitement; it was but very seldom perceptible to outward view. Once when he was sitting with some friends in Mainz, he said very gloomily, after a gossip about some literary enmities: "And now I'm good friends with everyone . . . and I don't quite like it. It is a condition of my nature that just as I must have something which I can regard as a lifelong ideal of the admirable, so I must have something as an ideal object of indignation. I know they're all the most worthy folk; but precisely *because* they are—I want to know what sort of harm I can do them."

Even from the look of his letters, their punctuation and handwriting, we can divine the pursuing Furies; and when he sent his manuscripts to the press, the printers had to interpret mere hieroglyphics and even correct the spelling. And his papers were in utter confusion; a visitor tells us that he would fetch them from every corner

[1] O God! My womb that throbs for him!

[2] How all heaven would rush upon me when I lay in your embrace! How you would kiss, as though you fain would stifle me in that voluptuous death!

of the room. But on the other hand, he could be so finical that in sending a sketch to his woman-friend he begged her "by all that is holy to take the greatest possible care of it, for slovenly as I am in other respects, the slightest crease in a thing like this infuriates me."

Trivial as they are, such symptoms are suggestive of the vast convulsions in that antithetical nature. The two souls, of which Faust was to speak in later days, symbolize but in part the inner conflict. Goethe never put all his duality into any single figure; not one of Goethe's characters stands for Goethe. He always split up his own personality, dividing it between two antagonists, or even two women; and that is perhaps the cardinal reason why a poet whose sensibility was chiefly of the lyrical and epical order should have turned to the dramatic form, and never entirely abandoned it. That was also the reason why in this youthful period, when the conflict was at its keenest, he found the dramatic dialogue so congenial, and would make a miniature play out of the most trifling of parodies. So, too, he almost entirely abstained from writing poems. In this most agitated of all phases two lyric dramas, besides *Clavigo* and *Stella*, were completed, and long passages of the *Urfaust* "fired off."

But the completion of these short works, while *Faust* (like *Prometheus*, *Mahomet*, and *Caesar*) remained a fragment, is not to be regarded either as caprice or self-discipline.

Claudine von Villa Bella was composed, with sure dramatic instinct, by the same hand which, after writing four lines, would reject a scene for *Faust*. And the very man who would finish his operettas down to the indications for the orchestra, and was perpetually ordering additional fair copies, kept the first draft of *Faust* a dead secret; and when he wanted to go on with it twenty-five years later, could find nothing but a yellowed, dog-eared, long-relegated bundle of sheets, which had quite the effect of one of Faust's old books.

Clavigo and Carlos are the first unmistakable examples

of his dual portraiture. Indeed, Carlos the man of the world came easier to the youthful Goethe's hand than did Clavigo the poet. It is as though he had some prescience that the spiritual side of him, in its perpetual self-contradiction, was shortly to take on a worldly disguise.

But it was in *Faust* that Goethe's duality was first fully revealed. True, in the original draft he was only approaching the daemonic dialectic which was so peculiarly his own, and in that sense the fragment has more the effect of a monologue than has the later work. But otherwise the *Urfaust*, because the fable is less overlaid with intellectualities (and also because it is shorter) seems more dramatic than the later First Part. He was then well-nigh solely absorbed in the tragedy of Gretchen.

Is this girl Friederike? Since Goethe in all his works, and particularly those of his youth, was skilled in and enamoured of the portrayal of familiar figures, our question naturally is—why are none of Friederike's personal attributes presented here? A love-affair which to Goethe was only an idyll, not a passion, is here so universalized that (as in *Werther*) the issue is almost the reverse of the actual truth. But in *Faust*, is not everything universalized —were not Merck and Herder mere suggestions for Mephisto? In *Faust* we are given, not a Faust-like Goethe withstanding the caustic Merck, not a constructive, striving spirit who with untroubled upward gaze can meet the feline fascination in those tigerish eyes; but a man who felt the deep affinity which drew him to such natures, and in portraying them shed light upon that consciousness.

Both figures, Faust and Mephisto, are daemonic through and through; but it is only by adding them together that they can stand for an exhaustive symbol of the daemonical in Goethe's self. Their dialogues are the stormy dialogues in his own heart. Neither of the two is pure goodness or pure malignity. Mephisto, in the original draft, is not by any means the Devil; he is merely the cleverer, the more far-sighted, of the two—a stronger Carlos.

Which is Goethe's part in these dialogues—which is his portrait? On both sides.

To another problem of his duality Goethe gave expression in the opening monologue of Faust. His fluctuation between the contemplative and the active life informs the long introductory passage in the original draft. First he exclaims:

> Bin ich ein Gott? Mir wird so licht![1]

Then:

> Du, Geist der Erde, bist mir näher![2]

Repulsed, he loses heart and cries:

> Ich, Ebenbild der Gottheit! Und nicht einmal du![3]

At this moment Wagner enters; the question is left unsolved. It was to torment him all his days, and never be more than half-answered.

And yet it was this self-confession of a nature rent in twain which lit the path to one way of escape. When in the character of Faust the disillusioned Goethe, surveying symbols of the macrocosm, exclaims: "Welch Schauspiel! Aber ach! ein Schauspiel nur!" ("Vast drama! But alas, no more—no more!"), it is but a metaphor, after all; for he goes on to ask:

> Wo fass' ich dich, unendliche Natur?
> Euch Bruste wo? Ihr Quellen alles Lebens![4]

Nature—the focussing-point of his faith, the solitary polar-star, unerring guide for this chaotically storm-tossed youth! If there had been left some glimmers of his early faith to light some segments of the universe, those church-

[1] Am I a God? I see so clear!

[2] Earth-Spirit, thou art nearer to me!

[3] I, image of the Godhead! And not even thou!

[4] Thou Infinite, O Nature, where art thou?
Ye mother-breasts, ye sources, where abide ye?

candles were now put out. Two of his friends were clergymen; but one said to him: "You are no Christian"; and to the other, to Herder, he wrote himself in these unseemly words: "If only the whole teaching of Christ were not such bilge that I, as a human being, a poor limited creature of desires and needs, am infuriated by it!"

In this darkness and perplexity Goethe found nothing he could cling to, except Nature—but now not so much as an idyllic luminary as "the incoherent stammering expression of our submission to an overpowering sense of the Infinite."

The same idea, rhapsodically conceived in the form of a hymn, all yearning and yet harmonious in the loftiest sense of the word, it was his to grasp for a brief while just then:

Wie in Morgenglanze
Du rings mich anglühst,
Frühling, Geliebter!
Mit tausendfacher Liebeswonne
Sich an mein Herz drängt
Deiner ewigen Wärme
Heilig Gefühl,
Unendliche Schöne! . . .
Das ich dich fassen möcht
In diesen Arm![1]

In this twenty-sixth year, when the passionate lightnings flashed fiercest, Goethe was no more than the servant, not yet the master, of his life. That agitated lonely soul was always desirous of comprehension, friendship, love. His first impulse was towards writers, and he found and

[1] Like the morning radiance
Around me thy sheen,
Spring, my beloved!
A thousand thrills of loving rapture,
Heartfelt, thou bringest—
Children they of thine ardour,
Deathless, divine,
Thou infinite fairness! . . .
Oh, in these longing arms
To clasp thee once!

kept a few of these as friends. Never again did Goethe mix so freely in literary society as at this time; and just as the world and he were periodically attracted to and repelled by one another, so it was with the literary groups.

As regards those who were influenced by him and copied him, it is easy to understand Goethe's isolation, even when there was an instinctive sense of fellowship. Klinger venerated and envied him; Lenz hated and loved him. Klinger's perceptiveness is sufficiently established by one monumental phrase which he, at twenty-one, wrote of the Goethe of twenty-four, then scarce to be divined for what he was: "A marvellous fellow . . . the things he has in him! Posterity will learn with amazement that there ever could be such a man!"

With Jacobi Goethe did not get on too well; and the lightnings played dangerously between him and Herder. The ardour of his first impression was indelible in Goethe's feeling; but the further he advanced—he who had the world before him!—the more captious was the attitude of Herder, aware that his best days were behind him. Their original relation had been so high-flown—was it now to take a more everyday aspect? Two years of estrangement went by, without meetings or letters; then Herder—married, well placed, an important personage—got over his soreness and was the first to re-open correspondence. Five years had passed since the meetings in the sick-room at Strasburg. Quickly and warmly, yet with a curious aloofness in his cordiality, almost like that of a stranger, Goethe answered: "I had just been recalling vividly the ups-and-downs of our intercourse—and behold, you walk in and stretch out your hand! Here's mine; and let us begin a new life together."

Yet aloof he was; and when he offered his hand it was really no more than a gesture. But even Herder understood Goethe better with his heart than with his head —sufficiently remarkable in a man who all his life had fought against his heart!

Goethe's nerves were tried to the uttermost by one

of his new friends, for truly we can only wonder at his patience during the prolonged intercourse of this year with Lavater. This is the first example—of which there were few, and those much later—of Goethe's being attracted to another man by the mere fact of his proficiency. Since as a poet he could not be taught anything, it could only be some science thoroughly understood which cast the spell. But to attach him really closely, mere knowledge did not suffice; there had to be something purely personal, a something by which one temperament could affect another, before he succumbed. And certainly physiognomy, which Lavater had just brought to Germany like a new discovery, for the moment almost as his patented invention—that something between an art and a science —demanded as much intuition as observation, as much of the poet's fervent apprehension of psychic elements as of the scientist's objective scrutiny of material ones. The two men could meet on this quasi-scientific ground, Goethe learning and in learning producing, under his teacher's forcible influence.

There are pages in Lavater's great work on physiognomy where one can study both authors, side by side, in their tempers and handwritings. In the text, Goethe's hurried, slanting, violent characters reveal his swift prehensile mind; Lavater's dainty upright script encircles this fiery core with its sage comments.

"You're all for the eye!" So Herder had said to Goethe in Strasburg, and said it with all the captious arrogance of an intellectual whose own eyes were in danger. But now, with physiognomy the matter in hand, who should reign with more of a right divine than he who was all for the eye? Knowledge of human nature and observation here went hand-in-hand to make Goethe the first of physiognomists; and while he subdued his intuitive powers of perception to the scientific method, he was entering quite unconsciously upon another line of activity as the man with eyes to see—and that line he pursued to the end of his life.

For while Lavater raved or depreciated, Goethe always looked for, and found, the law. Instead of seeking, in the traits of an historical head, those things which would confirm his prepossession, Goethe was able to say at once to whom an unnamed head could alone belong. This was intuition; and it is as though one heard him improvising at ease over a glass of wine, when we read this of a bust conjectured to be Homer's:

"This man is not an observer, or a hearer, or a questioner, or a combatant, or a doer. In this head the focus of all the senses is the upper portion of the flattened, slightly hollowed forehead—which is the seat of memory. There everything is retained as a *picture*; and the muscles are strained upward, as though their function were to carry those vivid images down to the eloquent cheek—that of expressive genius. These brows were never knit in speculation over the relations of things; there was no attempt to comprehend them apart from their tangible forms. All experience, in that head, is gladly reconciled—at peace with itself in all its manifestations. This is Homer!"

This warmly personal sense of personality, this ardent, piercing insight into human nature, tender and ironic, compassionate and mocking—but never malignant—and as a consequence quite without sentimentality, this highly temperamental perceptiveness led him (and that in his most neurotic period) to study the soul in its physical aspect. That was why he was so particularly interested in the skulls of animals, whose habits and natures are so infinitely various. Moreover, they afforded him indications, *points d'appui*, even justifications, for the impressionism of his method.

Because Lavater was for a while his instructor in these matters, he forgave him many things throughout many years.

Lavater's quietism soon got on his nerves. At the very first Goethe had written in four plain words: "I am no Christian." On this, Lavater declared him to be an

atheist who would at once, and inevitably, seek to make *him* one too.

Lavater's letters were of many pages, on large paper, interspersed with scraps of verse, frequent dashes (a habit which infected Goethe for a short time), headings, divisions, exclamation-marks—all in miniature script, all feeble, uncritical. Lavater's ambition was to force the confidence of Goethe and all other men, not really out of tactlessness, but solely from his thirst for anything psychical, which might give depth and significance to physical things.

Goethe answered this bombardment at ever longer intervals, much more briefly, much more reticently, but always fraternally—often warning Lavater, on the subject of their collaboration, that he must not print or engrave everything, must not let everything be seen.

It was with peculiar sensations that friends and students of human nature looked about them in Goethe's house at Frankfurt, while strangers were full of excited curiosity. This was the frame which to-day would reveal him to, to-morrow conceal him from, the world at large; and in that frame the young illustrious son was king, sometimes a delightful, sometimes a tyrannical one; inviting his friends to his father's table, and sometimes to stay—so that " Frau Aja " (as the two Counts Stolberg nicknamed his mother) had frequently to fetch from the cellar a bottle of her oldest and best.

Now at last the vital instincts of this unchangeably young-hearted woman were satisfied by her son. His renown entitled her to idolize him without reserve, and forget all the discontents of her joyless marriage. The father's love, based as it was on ambition, was certainly more actively serviceable than hers; but the son, though his intercourse with the blithe mother was more cordial than that with the cross-grained father, found in neither a confidant for the spiritual agitations of this storm-tossed

period. Neither in his letters to her (which in his absence would surely have testified to it), nor in his journal-letters to friends, nor in the accounts given by visitors to the house, do we find any hint of that complete mutual comprehension which creates unreserved confidence.

The house was his haven of refuge. It was a pity that his sister should just then have left it. For her it was well —better, indeed; since her inharmonious temperament had, to her, made it insufferable. Would she draw clearer breath in the little town in Baden, where a good appointment had called her difficult-natured husband?

Once more we are led to compare her ravaged countenance with Goethe's strenuous one. Cornelia's rounded forehead, to which the then fashionable mode of hair-dressing was horribly unbecoming, is far from attractive. The erotic instincts of this pathologically sexless girl were still further repressed by the intellectual intercourse with her brother; and he himself in his old age depicted their relation in these remarkable words: "Frank, pleasant, though often rather bold."

A wife of twenty-three, she now went forth with Schlosser, a man of thirty-four, the son of an Imperial Councillor of Frankfurt. Goethe called him his own antipodes. His was a gloomy, sensual nature, oppressive to the girl. The destiny of this second fusion of Goethe blood both illumines and obscures—and that as much retrospectively as prospectively—the physical conditions in which the battle of Goethe's life was fought.

And now another passion was to be the first real revelation of its intensity. For none of Goethe's love-affairs was without its effect upon his inward development; were it otherwise, they might—for him and for our presentment of him—have afforded a mere background to our encounter with a mighty intellect, a re-born nation, a new philosophy. It is because Eros represents the most powerful element and the motive-force for his highest flights in character and work—it is because Eros could so possess him and

therefore so inspire him—that we can interpret Goethe best through these experiences.

A year so spiritually disturbed was bound to have its external conflicts also. Since, at eighteen, he had lost his Käthchen at Leipzig, Goethe had but seldom been actually and obviously in love—perhaps only during the few weeks of his affair with the youthful Mme. Brentano. Now, seven years after the Leipzig parting, he was ripe and ready for a different and more brilliant recipient of his surging temperament. The world was open to him now; the glamour of his young renown enhanced the dreams of a tirelessly energetic spirit; and loveliness—such loveliness as he had never before had to do with, for none of Goethe's women had been lovely—to-day smiled on him, all allurement, captivating and capturable, and well worth keeping when once caught. From its golden frame it called imperiously until, obeying it, he sought to climb those heights of freedom and escape from his daemonic haunts.

Something infinitely blithe he tried to grasp at in his love for Lili. "Magic": such was the attribute he ascribed to the slim fair girl. The word incessantly recurs in all the verses and letters which for the next nine months were inspired by her; and when he said she was as lovely as an angel, and declared, after half a century had gone by, that in reality she was the only woman he had ever loved, each statement needs the other for full confirmation.

This year saw him for the first, and last, time a young society-man—of Frankfurt society—in the full sense of the word. On the ice, at the carnival, at balls, he mixed with the young patricians and Englishmen of the town as an equal among equals—though his companions no more reckoned him as a member of the Upper Ten than he did them as the friends of his heart. For it was more the brilliant oddity of whom the papers were writing than the son of the retired Imperial Councillor who was invited, and it was more curiosity than social ambition which attracted *him*. Thus he could be forgiven even the

unceremonious way in which he invaded the fashionably furnished drawing-room of a Frankfurt banker. There was an evening party, and a friend persuaded him to "come along."

"It was quite late in the evening. . . . There was a big party; in the middle of the room stood a piano, at which the only daughter of the house was just sitting down to play. She played with great facility and charm. I was standing at the end of the piano, so that I had a good view of her figure and attitudes; there was something childlike about her, and her movements in playing were graceful and easy. When the sonata was finished she came towards where I stood. She said a few words of welcome, but we could not talk, for a quartette was just beginning. . . . I noticed that she looked at me closely, and that I was quite literally 'on show.'"

This was Lili Schönemann; and that the scene was not invented for *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, we can tell by the preliminary drafts. It was a *coup de foudre*. In those first minutes he stared at her until, with a naïve sensuality which was almost Olympian, his eyes were holding hers; and if it was her tall blonde blue-eyed brilliancy which first attracted him, there was that in her whole personality—the way her hair was dressed, her gowns, her fans, her riding-horse, her carriage, the park and the balcony, the whole arsenal of fashionable allurements—which gripped his imagination; and from which, in the early days at any rate, he would not have wished to separate her.

This was the real thing! For what he always wanted from women—something lasting, binding, a community of interests, a haven, house and home, conjugal life—he thought to see awaiting him here. She was free, rich, a fellow townswoman; his constant craving for a home where he might shelter from his inward unrest seemed to have found its earthly goal. Enchanted by the lovely seventeen-yeared girl, he wanted to make her his own; he was dazzled by the glitter and glow of her setting; the inward conflicts, he obscurely felt, might be resolved

by paternity . . . in short, everything combined to carry away a young man (in the full swing, moreover, of the carnival season) and draw him into these opulent civic circles, there to assert himself as Lili's lord and loyal servitor.

Let us look at his account-book:

" Flowers, drawing-paper, horse, a little golden heart, eight boxes of tin soldiers, countermanding horse, 100 Dutch quill-pens, wig-maker; flowers, dagger-ornaments, boot-buckles, cleaning leather gloves, brass labels, an ounce of Italian chalks, tongues for silver buckles, half a pound of shot, half a pound of powder, hair-ribbon; flowers, a white Venetian mask, a pair of white gloves, thirty-two copper-plate illustrations of Klopstock, a pound of bonbons, tailor's bill, flowers. . . ."

Such were the requisites of Goethe's one society love-affair, which filled him with delight and drove him distracted, and which he never forgot. But for all that, he did not really ape the other young exquisites. This bourgeois luxury and elegance soon repelled him, for he felt from the first the difference between the real and the mock Upper Ten.

Here, among the rich citizens of his native town—whose stereotyped witticisms upon his own personality he was conscious of and despised—he often purposely played the part of " Nature's gentleman."

This spirit of opposition issued in an ambiguity of conduct which went hand-in-hand with his secret uncertainty. He, who was wont to embrace the whole environment of the loved woman and make it a part of his passion, took up the sanctioned attitude of the brilliant middle-class young man, and vehemently defied the world to which he belonged—yet all the while was fully conscious that it was precisely this setting which made Lili so entrancing! But it was not until he had spent six months of such torment that his distrust of these circles became a feeling which demanded action.

It was a strangely profound distrust, which over-

shadowed his love in the very moment of complete surrender to her charm. We can hear its undertones even in the three songs, light as her own footsteps, which were inspired by her. A new love, a new life—yes; but he was at heart an alien in that life, and cried in a sort of terror:

Muss in ihrem Zauberkreise,
Leben nun auf ihre Weise—
Die Verändrung, ach wie gross!
Liebe! Liebe! lass mich los![1]

Can this be the same heart which always hitherto had called to Love, had needed it and grasped at it, and never let it go until, so strangely, it was reft from him?

He gives us a kind of answer in the second song, where he poses as the poor obscure dreamer who has never seen the world at all. But the passionate duets between Stella and Fernando are the first real revelation of how the poet, throwing aside his many masks, could long for Lili, ignoring all the glitter which had dazzled him but yesterday and was to-day despised; for in a quarter of an hour of dream his genius showed him greater splendours than the Schönemann family and their Offenbach friends could ever find in all their parks and villas.

He knew himself very well. The dual part which he now felt compelled to play, he could regard with an eye as coldly clairvoyant as the heart within was hot. And he expressed his feeling, though not to the lovely girl, to whom he showed only so much of his enigmatic nature as she was capable of understanding. At this time he loved, in a totally different fashion—as of the moth for the star—a woman of the aristocracy whom he knew only through her letters to her brothers.

To this young Augusta, Countess Stolberg—wholly unknown to him, on whose sympathy he relied from her letters—Goethe wrote, in the perplexity of his heart, the

[1] From her magic breaking never,
Living as she lives for ever—
Oh, too great the change for me!
Bid me go, Love! Set me free!

most intimate letters of his youth; and the more remote she was from him on her North German estate, the more vehemently and unreservedly did he pour out upon her his dialogues with himself—as though, thus separated, he felt safe from all the disillusions of actuality. It is as if, with trembling hands, he were building himself a distant stronghold, to which he could flee in all dejections of the heart, which indeed might come to be the only hope he possessed.

"If you can imagine a Goethe, in a frogged coat and otherwise quite consistently arrayed from head to foot for conquest, with the meaningless glitter of girandoles and chandeliers about him, surrounded by crowds of people, and kept chained to the card-table by a pair of lovely eyes—a Goethe hunted from concert to ball by the alternating demands of social amusement, and making love to a dainty blonde with all the fervour of a fribble—you have the Goethe of this very Shrove Tuesday, who lately blurted out to you some deep confused emotions, who has no right to address you, who often sets himself to forget you, because in your presence he feels himself to be quite insupportable.

"But there is another Goethe, in a rough grey overcoat, with a brown silk muffler and strong boots, who can scent the spring in the soft February breezes, to whom the dear wide world he loves will soon be reopening, who tries—for ever living an internal life of effort and achievement—as best he can to express the guileless emotions of youth in little poems, the stronger savours of life in dramas many and various, and to portray his friends and his environment and his familiar surroundings on grey paper with a morsel of chalk . . . because he seems to climb a step higher on the ladder when at work, because he is not clutching prematurely at his ideal, but seeking to develop his emotions half in fiercest earnest, half in play, until they can be used as trusty instruments. . . . That is the Goethe . . . whose greatest happiness it is to live with the best men of his time."

" God knows, I am a luckless young man—on the 28th we danced till Shrove Tuesday was a thing of the past . . . and then—much gaiety and affection surrounding me—in the morning, getting home, I felt I must write to you. . . . What am I to say to you, since I can't tell you quite all about my present state of mind. . . . Go on being kind to me—I wish I could hold your hand, could rest under your gaze. Great God, what a thing is the heart of man! Good-night. I thought I should feel better when I had written. But it's no good; my brain is overwrought.

" To-day was wonderful. I have sketched a little, and written a scene [of *Stella*]. Oh, if I didn't write plays in these days, I should perish. Soon I shall send you one. —This is another period of joy and woe for me, so that I don't know whether I'm on the solid earth or in heaven itself. . . . Thanks for the description of yourself and your life—how truly I had divined it beforehand! Hold me in your heart. . . . Now good-night, and no fever-dreams! But whenever you are ill, tell me—I want to share everything with you—oh, promise you won't forsake me in the time of trouble, which may come, when I shall flee from you and all whom I love! Pursue me then, I implore you—pursue me with your letters and save me from myself! "

Such frantic cries had never issued from that breast since he had loved seven years ago and confided in Behrisch; nor was he ever again to find such tones. The chaotic emotions which had been so painfully repressed seemed now to be breaking forth once more, and far more perilously—for these seven years had been devoted to the building of a dam, and there had even been moments when he could think himself secure against them.

Goethe became engaged to Lili—and all the details of his future domesticity began to obsess his imagination in the very moment when his being was so riven with contradictions that it could but bend before the storm. The only result was sheer terror lest his wishes should reach fulfilment. The first external opposition came from

his father, who made himself extremely disagreeable, saying that his house was quite fit for a daughter-in-law, but not for a " fine lady " like this, and he would have to build a new storey. And the respective parents, when brought together, could not get on at all, the tragic reason being that the Schönemanns were Reformed Church people, and the Goethes Lutherans!

Between parents and friends, all disapproving in their different spheres, the future bridegroom led distracted days as a lawyer, a cavalier, a courted celebrity, obedient to Lili's wishes when she wanted him to be " sensible "—for in reality she was a cold beauty, and when she took it into her head to coquet with other men, this man with his prodigious capacity for feeling must indeed have known the stings of jealousy as he looked on at the wiles of her superficial upbringing.

He eased his heart in poetry; and if *Stella* loses something by having been written in the full tide of a passion—instead of, like *Werther*, after it was over—the piece is but the more ardently conceived for that, and is justly described as " a drama for lovers." Simultaneously, under Lili's spell, he finished and altered the lyric play called *Erwin und Elmire*. In this he again puts Lili on her defence; and although in both works he affects discretion, he makes us witnesses of a probably authentic scene. " If he had not been so . . . reverential," says Stella, " I should not have loved him so much, and he would not have been unhappy. . . . Oh, when he brought me the two peaches which he had watched over so carefully, borne by a tree he had propagated himself—its first-fruits! He brought them to me, and my heart beat fast, for I knew all he thought of his gift, and I knew what it *was*. And yet I was frivolous enough—no, not frivolous, but malicious. . . . I presented them to some other people who were there. I saw him wince and turn pale—I had trodden his heart underfoot."

A sample of Lili's provocations, coquetries—a summary of her heart-breaking devilry!

But between the scenes and the misunderstandings—what hours of blithe happiness, what abandonment in her arms! "Lovely as an angel, and I had not seen her for four days! . . . Yesterday we were out riding. You should have seen the angel in her riding-dress on horseback! . . . I am full of wonderful things, new things; in three hours I hope to see Lili."

Round Lili hovered alternately, incessantly, hope and despair. On the same day that he cried to his other friend, "Save me from myself!" he told Herder that he hoped everything would soon go well, and the twin threads of his destiny be united. "For the rest, many circumstances are rather paralysing, but they don't destroy my fine youthful spirits." Immediately before this: "Daily I strive and labour to be more courageous, and thank God I *have* been able to get fresh horses to go on with." Or to a stranger, in the middle of a first ceremonious letter: "I live, as I always do, in an immoderate turmoil of pleasure and pain."

When he was writing that sentence, in the beginning of May, the immoderate pain was at its worst; and it was Spring, and the two Counts Stolberg were announced —they wanted him to travel with them. What the lovers' intimate relations were at that period is not known to us, nor is it of great importance. She may have been all his, on rare occasions; for from the nature of their intercourse and Lili's temperament, it could only have been a brief, snatched episode. His later biographical notes, very extensive about Lili, contain these words: "Episode with Lili. Prelude. Seduction. Offenbach."

There seems then to have been a semi-rupture. "I am in the same boat with you, dear brother," he writes to Herder. "I am sending my balls against the wall and playing at battledore and shuttlecock with the women. A short while ago I fancied I was approaching the haven of domestic felicity and a firm footing in the authentic world of pain and bliss; but I have been distressfully swept out again upon the weltering sea."

Goethe's fourth flight from a woman, again without a farewell, though this time not without "some indications." No sooner is he gone than he feels himself emancipated! He calls himself the bear out of the cage, the escaping cat; he no longer feels the slender golden chain with which he had desired to be bound, and "everything is better than I thought it would be. Perhaps it's because I love that I find everything sweet and kind."

In this mood, definitely as a man in love, he entered his sister's house for the first time.

At once the happy turn of mind was overshadowed. Had marriage proved a fatality to his sister? His keen eyes instantly divined what Schlosser wrote of himself to an intimate: "She sickens at my love." He saw his brother-in-law at work in the forenoon as a high official, then at gardening and turnery after the midday meal, then off to the office again, then for an hour at Greek, and in the evenings with his wife. He heard Cornelia complain about her housekeeping, which she disliked, saw her ailing, never going out. And when, as of old, he made his confession to her and set forth the case for and against Lili, he felt the whole disaster of this marriage in the quiver of her voice as she implored him never to marry Lili—never to marry anyone! He half agreed; but she wanted a promise, and that he refused.

When a year later Cornelia gave birth to a child, she would not keep it with her, but gave it into the care of strangers because it was "noisy." Her mind became diseased; a cure was tried, with short-lived success, followed by collapse. Her brother wrote to her but seldom.

Goethe left her house at this time with body and soul oppressed and anxious. Her misery weighed upon his spirits; he went to Switzerland, but in less than a fortnight he complained that his journey had failed to do what he had hoped for him.

The farther he got from Lili, the more vehemently he longed for the familiar charm of her presence. He learnt and enjoyed a good deal, for all that; he interested himself

in people and things; and on this summer tour with his friends among the lakes and peaks of Northern Switzerland, we hear of "festivities that lasted till midnight," or else of "rude health and projects." Only his heart refused to beat in tune with the rest; at bottom, Goethe was always alone in the company of others.

To Lili herself he did not write; and it was only once, when gazing at a splendid view, that his verse remembered her:

> Wenn ich, liebe Lili, dich nicht liebte,
> Welche Wonne gäb mir dieser Blick!
> Und doch, wenn ich, Lili, dich nicht liebte,
> Wär, was wär mein Glück? [1]

At a convent he took a little coronet out of the casket and held it aloft—how well it would become Lili, if he could lead her to the mirror! Never again did such a fancy occur to Goethe, not with any princess. Lili alone among his women was to him the princess; at her side he thought he could have worn the other crown . . . but all this was condemned to exist in imagination only. At Frankfurt her smiles would have made him forget the invisible diadem. Ought he to have eloped with her? When he was over eighty he described this period of his life, and still declared emphatically that she would have gone with him to America. But Goethe was never an adventurer, any more than he was a Don Juan. And that he was to prove once more, in these very weeks.

For at last he had climbed St. Gothard with a friend; and there he sat in the Pass and sketched (with more feeling than skill) himself and his friend, the hills and the valley—at first so precipitously, and then so smilingly, opening to the South.

To the South—to Italy. He saw it at his feet—that Italy to which even his old father wanted him to go.

[1] If I, dearest Lili, did not love you,
What a joy this landscape were for me!
Yet if I, O Lili, did not love you,
Whence my ecstasy?

And when the saintly host of the hospice came riding up the path, having only a few days back bent the knee amid the rose-flushed marbles of Milan Cathedral, and when his companion urged him to do likewise and behold the flowering islands in the long blue lake—he, Goethe, sat irresolute upon the Gothard Pass, his look turned southward, powerless to decide, though he suffered his companion to make ready for the road. But he remained on his rocky promontory—alone. Germany, dear and familiar, was at his back—and yet his every thought must have drawn him whence the Prior had come.

But, pondering the project, he felt around his neck the chain of Lili's gift—a golden heart; and quickly he stood up, took leave of the Prior, and turned northward without a word.

No sooner was he back in Frankfurt, no sooner had he rapturously held her in his arms again—she smiling at him as a somewhat crazy sort of fiancé—than he regretted his weak-minded return, than perplexity, doubt, desire for solitude, invaded his two-sided being, and far more violently than before!

A fortnight after the return, to Friend Merck: "I am . . . stranded, and should like to box my own ears because I didn't go to the devil when I was well on the way there. I am ready for print again, on the first opportunity; only I should like to know if you would stand by me in the matter of funds. . . . Anyhow you might . . . make my father see that early next year he must let me go to Italy—that means I must be off again by the end of this year." Like a hunted creature he strayed among the various bourgeois families, who kept him closely to Lili's side, for still (or again) they were supposed to be engaged. He felt like a bear chained at her feet by silken bonds; but the numerous relatives and friends were continually with them, and Lili's park, where he had a sense of being in a trap, exasperated him.

His whole being longed for her blithe light nature; his whole being drove him away from her. Outside the

town, where Lili's relatives, after the manner of rich bourgeois, had metamorphosed the country into another sort of town, Goethe's heart went through a long series of convulsions amid the luxurious setting of the fashionable rococo. But now he had become a stranger in a world left behind. To Countess Stolberg he turned for confession from his fiancée's writing-table, Lili unaware of the other woman's existence; and the outpourings were scrawled anyhow, left lying for days, then dashed at again, and finished in a sudden spasm.

". . . That's the only way, when I write at such odd moments. . . . At a desk of inlaid cane, bright and frivolous—that's where these letters . . . are written, these tears are shed, these torments endured. What an anomaly! Oh, that I could say all! Here in the room of the girl who is making me wretched, not by her fault, who has the soul of an angel, whose bright days I am troubling—I! . . .

"Accursed destiny, that will never suffer me to be in equilibrium! Either clutching at some point and holding on to it like grim death, or drifting to the four winds of heaven. . . . On the table here are a handkerchief, a basket covered with a scarf; and over there the dear girl's riding-boots are hanging. (N.B. We are to ride out to-day.) Here lies a gown, there hangs a watch, there are ever so many bandboxes for caps and hats. . . . I hear her voice—I may stay; she will want to dress in here. . . . I have described all this to you, so as to drive away my spectres by the things I can see. . . . The man who cannot rest."

With autumn came the climax. The Fair brought a troop of business friends to her father's house, all of whom Lili welcomed as old acquaintances. Each had some claim on her; her eccentric fiancé was taken seriously by none of them. His way with them was half-comic, half-sentimental: "Here is some cheese, dear lady, and may it soon disappear to the pantry! The stuff is like myself: as long as it doesn't see the sun, and I don't see

Lili, we are sturdy, gallant chaps. . . . Yesterday an evil spirit led me to Lili in an hour when she could so very well do without me that my heart felt as if it were being mangled, and I hastily made off." A note to a woman-friend: "I've just come from Offenbach! I can't give you any sort of an idea of that household. My heart is still like a stocking turned inside out. Please, please, find something at the Fair for Lili. Some trifle, a trinket, the newest, smartest! You alone know how to find it—and give her my love with it. But this is between ourselves, a sacred secret—not a word to her Mamma. And let me know what it costs!"

Meanwhile, his utter longing was for that high tranquillity which he imagined to dwell in the young Countess Stolberg's heart. To her went his dreams, he called his hours with her his blessed ones. "Unfortunately the distance she keeps me at only tightens the bond which enthralls me. . . . Can it be anything but excessive arrogance which insists that I must know the girl through and through, and so knowing love her? Perhaps I don't know her in the very least? And being different from me, may she not therefore be better than I?

"However, the moment I saw the sun I hopped out of bed and ran up and down the room, and my heart pulsed so warmly and I felt so gay, and had a sort of assurance that I should be saved and make something of myself after all. . . . It is *here* and *now* that we need happiness. . . .

"18*th September*. Is my heart at last to feel in its full intensity of joy and pain such happiness as is permitted to humanity, and not be for ever . . . driven from the heights of heaven to the depths of hell? . . . I saw Lili to-day after dinner. . . . Couldn't get in a word with her—and so said nothing to anyone! I wish I could get away from it all. . . . And yet I tremble to think of a time when she might be indifferent, and I hopeless. . . . Seven o'clock in the morning! Off somewhere! Gussy! I am drifting, and grip the helm only to prevent myself

from being stranded. But I *am* stranded, I can't leave this girl—early this morning my heart was all for her. . . . I am a wretched, distracted, good-for-nothing fellow. I ponder this of nights. Just out of the theatre, and now I must dress for the ball. . . . If I feel like that again—feel that in the midst of all this nothingness so many husks are peeling from off my heart, so many convulsive tensions yielding in my silly little composition—if I feel that I can look more cheerfully at the world and make my human relations more assured, more steadfast, more broad-minded, and yet know that in my inmost soul I am for ever dedicated to that sacred thing called Love which gradually drives out, by its own pure influence, the alien elements within, so that at last the whole is pure as virgin gold . . . I will just let things go on as they are, deceiving myself maybe—and thank my God. Good-night."

In all that long life there is no other document which so unreservedly sets forth the dialogue in Goethe's heart; and hence this letter, regarded as the reflection of his inward conflict, is as valuable to posterity as are *Werther* and *Tasso*. For while *Stella*, a finished drama, suffers from its immediacy, this letter, of vague moods all compact, is more than a passage from the man's history—it shows how a daemonic heart can quiver at its contact with the world. And yet that world, that girl who drove him crazy, were no more than the flint at which the element takes fire. Again, as seven years ago, his senses were ablaze from intimacy with one of those *demi-vierges* of the rococo age; but now the syncopations of the battle were fiercer in their alternation between melody and droning bass, between ecstasies and energies, between pleasures and predestination.

In these very weeks of fooling about the pretty girl, he wrote " much " at *Faust*—translated the Song of Solomon in the very hours which saw Eros held at bay!

During the days referred to in that letter the crisis

reached its climax; it may have been the night of that ball which decided Goethe's more obvious fate. Henceforward the tone is harder, there is a more manly note of defiance, emotion deepens, time is preparing changes—and like a herald from the great world which lies beyond the renunciation of Lili's kisses, a Prince steps forth for Goethe.

"Dined, rather worried, dressed, the Prince of Meiningen introduced to me, went as far as the town-gate, then to the theatre. Said half a dozen words to Lili. And now here." "21*st*. I took it into my head to be smart to-day, and am expecting a new coat from the tailor—which I have had embroidered in Lyons, grey with a blue border—with more impatience than the acquaintance of a man of intellect, who has this very hour announced himself as arriving. . . . My wig-maker spent an hour curling my hair, and as soon as he was gone I tore it all down and sent for another whom I sometimes employ." "23*rd*. There has been mad work. I haven't had a moment for writing. Yesterday nothing but Dukes."

Dukes? And some interest in tailors and barbers, which no former note had hinted at, and which was only half ironical in this one. Mad work? And the way he relegates the Prince of Meiningen to a place between a worry and a walk, casually divided by a comma! Was something fresh looming up? And he was conscious of it—and suddenly came to a pause of fifteen days in the passionate confessions which had been wont to cover weeks. Then he continued, on the same sheet: "*October* 8*th*. A long pause till now. I in a queer state between coldness and fervour. Soon there will be a still longer pause. I am expecting the Duke of Weimar." Exactly like a Prince. Exactly as in a novel.

It was nearly a year since the sudden apparition of a stranger in the half-light of Goethe's room, announcing himself as Knebel, from the Ducal Court at Weimar; and a few days later Knebel had escorted Goethe to his sovereign's hotel. A boy of eighteen, Carl August had

just come to the Ducal throne—and when at the door of the hotel-room the poet bowed deeply to the Prince and then raised his head again, two pairs of eyes encountered, but with their owners' traditional rôles exchanged—for the Prince's were curious, the poet's searching; the former asked questions, the latter perceived at a glance.

Captain von Knebel, of the Ducal suite, quickly made friends with Goethe; but Goethe's letters to him, for all their cordial intimacy, were full of uncertainties. The air of courts was unfamiliar to him, but he was not in the least the dreamy poet (a part which he brilliantly assumed in a few words of gratefully surprised acknowledgment). His eye had instantly fastened on the flowers which might possibly bloom for him in those unknown gardens.

This was the first time Goethe had thought an indirect relation with the great world worth a spontaneous effort—it was indeed the first time he had ever resumed correspondence with a man, after a few weeks of silence, in such a strain as this: "I do most earnestly beg you for a word. . . . Am I kindly remembered among you all?" And for the third time: "Do you still care for me? Write me a lot about yourselves. And about the dear Duke. Give him my fond remembrance." There had been small sign of such sudden affection when the two had met in the Frankfurt hotel, or later in Mainz. Goethe was simply feeling: "In case . . ."

He had met Carl August again at the Margrave's and had received a cordial invitation to Weimar. On this his first appearance at a Court, he had made a good impression on the Margrave of Baden: "Quite tolerable for a novice. Besides, one was in some sort challenged to be natural and yet striking." He soon fathomed the young sovereign, choosing from his works for Carl August the lyric drama *Claudine*, which would just suit his taste—light, somewhat conventional, romantic, with bandits in it.

Goethe had mixed with the aristocracy, though never with princes; but a close and lifelong relation, or a mar-

riage, was in those times denied to a member of the middle classes, a tailor's grandson.

Now, at the climax of his inward crisis, in spirit continually at flight from Lili, he met the Duke again, and the invitation to Weimar was pressingly repeated; now it was wellnigh a " call " with which he had to deal.

To Goethe's ear it sounded as a clarion note through the fog. Everything had urged him to yet another flight—the fifth of his youth. The engagement had grown more and more stormy, his love more and more tormented. That long letter to Augusta was nothing but a cry for deliverance; a flight to North or South was, if not exactly arranged, continually pondered as a means of salvation . . . when suddenly there fell a word from a Prince, a friendly steadfast word; the smiles of a young Princess summoned him to a Court which his imagination saw with widely opened doors, and lit by Wieland's genius. Moreover, it would lend him prestige with Lili's parents, while with his own it supplied a long-desired pretext for leaving Frankfurt. Was he really expected to grow grey in the narrow old town, to remain an advocate, shut up in the old gabled house—and all this only for Lili's sake? All this, that her blonde, blue-eyed loveliness, her slimness and freshness, might be his to the end of time?

" A pleasant afternoon, which is unusual—and with great folk, which is more unusual still. I could make love to two Princesses, both in one room. . . . For a fortnight now I've been positively wrapt up in studying the great world." But right on top of this comes the self-assertion: " If I can get to Weimar I certainly will, but not . . . for love of anyone whatever, for I have a crow to pick with the whole world. . . . My heart is sick because of this. It's autumn weather there too, neither warm nor cold."

The Ducal pair departed, but a travelling-carriage and an escort were soon to come for Goethe. He packed up, said good-bye to everyone, dressed for the road—the carriage failed to arrive. His father made fun of the Court-equipage; trying (as he had done before) to influence his

son against the scheme, he offered to send him to Italy, and pointed out how much more useful this would be to his art than a journey in a carriage—which had not come—to a small, unimportant capital.

Well, should he yield? It was all uncomfortable enough; his kind friends were grinning, and he never went out till evening, muffled in his cloak like a stranger in his native town. Lili, to whom again he could say nothing decisive, for they had fallen out with one another, he never visited at all. But one night, slinking past her home, he heard her singing one of his songs, he saw her slender silhouette upon the blind, and it haunted him all the way back. He sat down at his desk, wrote the opening scene of *Egmont*, read it aloud to his father, went out again, came home again—it was as though he were his own ghost.

Yet there was something in him of confidence, of manly acceptance of the moment, of faith that all would be well somehow. For as the carriage still failed to arrive and to travel privately to Weimar would be unsuitable, and all the while his father was urging and Italy beckoning, Goethe found a middle course. He travelled southward, whence the carriage must come—to Heidelberg first, where at any rate one could talk about Lili with Lili's friends; and, halting for a while on the mountain-road, he looked things in the face. It was good-bye to Lili—good-bye for the second time. . . .

". . . And you! How shall I name you, whom I bear in my heart as a flower of spring! Fair-Flower should be your name. . . . What may be the actual political, moral, epical, or dramatical purpose of all this? The only answer to that, gentlemen, is . . . that there is no purpose at all. One thing is certain—it's glorious weather, stars and a crescent-moon are shining. . . . And I throw my cap over the windmill!"

This is a new note. Daemon has given place to Tyche. And, "in case," one leaves word at the post-office in Heidelberg that if a carriage *should* come. . . . It comes.

A polite Court-Marshal, with many apologies, carries off the guest. The guest writes a half-obliterated scrawl in pencil to a friend:

"These nights . . . when one soars into Our Father's vast and glorious firmament—the infinite ocean of the sky. Oh, my brother! I am tossed upon a sea of emotions—there are words for them, but they are past my telling. . . . That lamentable 'dust to dust,' Fritz! And the fretting of the worm—I swear to you by the heart in my breast that it's nothing but old wives' tales, but childish prattle, like *Werther* and all that stuff—I call to witness the soul I have within me!"

And, sitting beside the polite Court-marshal, Goethe drives to Weimar.

CHAPTER V

Activity

The joy of life darkens my spirit.

"MY life is like a sledge, slipping along to the sound of tinkling bells. God only knows what I'm meant for, to be put through such schools as I have been. This one gives existence a new turn, and it will be all right. . . . I am quite like one of the family, and the Duke grows dearer to me, and our friendship closer, every day. . . . I hope you may soon hear that I know how to take the stage on the *Theatro mundi*, and cut a decent figure in all its tragi-comic farces."

On a loose rein, jocund, nimble, and assured, Goethe rode into the new arena; and whatever the above words, written during the first two months, may have signified, it was not so terrible as outsiders believed. The new Duke of Weimar had made a housemate of that outrageous young Goethe (so they said and wrote in Germany), and they threw plates out of the castle-windows, and had holes cut in the ice that they might bathe at New Year; they kept boys for their pleasures and shared the same mistress, and the poor young Duchess spent her days in tears. The bourgeois found a good pretext for his dual distrust of sovereigns and geniuses; and when Goethe's old friends came to see him, Germany was soon provided with the desired catchword of "Weimar and its new *mode à la bohémien*."

In reality this kind of thing lasted barely three months. They tired themselves out with shooting and hunting, noisy riding-parties, drinking and burlesque theatricals, and a few peasant-girls may have been hugged by Prince and Poet. This eighteen-yeared ruler, volcanic of temperament and married to a shy girl, felt strongly attracted



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to the poet of twenty-seven, two of whose books he had devoured, wherein tenderness was veiled in strength and strength in tenderness. The personality he actually had to deal with, it was beyond his age or his capacity to divine. Goethe's splendid German, his spirited aspect, his natural virility, together with a certain romance surrounding his name (which he did not seek for), so captivated the Duke that he set himself to defy the training and tradition from which he had so recently emerged. An instinct of rebellion drew him to the townsman's son, and he may have hoped in secret for a clash with the old-fashioned elements in the Court he had inherited.

That did not occur. Court, nobility, and society took off their hats to the parvenu, and saw to it that the door was shut before they confided the least disapproval of this genius's ways to one another. Was he not the young ruler's favourite? But how long would *that* last, even if reasons of State should not separate Prince and Poet? Anyhow, he was charming. Why did people say that the author of *Götz* was a "Nature's gentleman," who looked indulgently on every kind of barbarianism? He was easy-going enough, but knew how to behave in this novel sphere. The majority of courtiers soon agreed that—*salva nobilitate*, of course—they could get on with him all right, for he would never presume to emulate them. And the ladies too were soon confiding to one another that this savage, whose extravagances in the Thuringian Forests they were never weary of relating in the speech of boudoirs, was after all an acquisition to Weimar—always gallant, always witty, only seldom eccentric, and then not impossibly so.

At last they had an elegant *maître de plaisir*. There were balls and masquerades innumerable; everyone adopted the Wertherian mode of dress, and if anybody was too poor to afford it, the Duke provided the costume as though it were a uniform. There was a new theme for Court-gossip. And who else could, like this young author, add an appendix out of his own head to the *Muses' Almanack*,

as it circulated round the tea-tables, and make fun of absent and present in verses of every kind?

In a corner would sit the principal Minister in the country, and think: "May he always be able to amuse as he does now—for the Duke is fully occupied and doesn't any longer pester me with his youthful absurdities. This poet certainly doesn't trouble himself with affairs; if he ever *was* a lawyer, he seems to have forgotten all about it."

Wieland, for some years now the intellectual leader at Court and in the town—he who was really menaced, since his had hitherto been the prevailing influence with the youthful ruler—Wieland was enchanted. With his infinitely subtle critical perception, he had long divined from a distance that the man who was coming to Weimar was the greater poet. In the next number of his *Merkur* he printed an ode on Goethe.

For the present, then, Wieland with his powerful name had "legitimized" Goethe in Weimar—and his years counted too. At forty-two, he was the senior in this youthful circle. The Master of the Horse, von Stein, was forty, his wife thirty-three; Knebel was thirty-two, the Dowager Duchess thirty-six; the Duke and Duchess were both under twenty. Goethe stood between; he was seven years older than the Duke, and seven years younger than the wife of Stein.

But his spirit was the oldest by far, and his intellect had a wider grasp of experience than his twenty-six years seemed to warrant. Did no one at this juvenile Court perceive that the young favourite could discriminate shrewdly between people and things at Weimar—or at any rate that his vision and purpose far transcended anything that the place could offer? Was the feather-brained Goethe really so feather-brained, after all?

All of a sudden the whole thing, which to a bourgeois should have meant such glory, got on his nerves. He turned his back upon Duke and Court, and the man who had appeared in the town at the beginning of November,

had by Christmas-time fled, with a few others, to the hills. He wrote to the Duke—a high-spirited, confused sort of letter, telling about his having seen the portrait of a former Duke of Weimar. " There is something stiff, shrinking about it—it represents a man who never really reflects, but rather obeys his first impressions . . . yet there's a distinct touch of the tyrant. . . ." And he added these lines:

Gehab dich wohl bei den hundert Lichtern
Die dich umglänzen,
Und all die Gesichtern,
Die dich umschwänzen
Und umkredenzen.
Findst doch nur wahre Freud und Ruh
Bei Seelen grad und treu wie du.[1]

Thus subtly, so as not to startle the Duke (who would pore upon the livelier passages of the letter, with a longing to be there too)—thus subtly did the mentor from the mountains convey his prescient warning to the young ruler, between tales of pranks and laughter. And looking at the morning-star in the wintry sky (which he proposed to adopt as his blazon), he was tormented by one question: " It's confoundedly present both to my head and heart that I don't know whether I shall stay or go."

In the course of ten weeks he seems to have made up his mind, but only to one person did Goethe confide the reason for his wish to stay. " I am so mixed up now with all the Court and political affairs," he wrote to his worldly old friend Merck, " that I scarcely see how I can ever get away. My position is advantageous enough, and the Duchies of Weimar and Eisenach are certainly good places for discovering what sort of a part one is likely to bring off

[1] Thou farest well; and around thee gleaming
Are lights and faces,
And friendly seeming
And courtly graces.
Yet happiness, peace shalt find alone
With hearts as true as is thine own.

in the great world. So I'm in no hurry; and liberty and a sufficiency of means will be the cardinal conditions for any new orientation, though I am more capable now than I ever was before of judging how utterly despicable is all this temporal splendour."

The Duke spared no pains to keep him. He gave him a summer villa outside the town, wrote to his parents, summoned (against the advice of most of the Weimar clergymen) the free-thinking Herder to the chief place in his church, because Goethe wished it. Four months after Goethe's arrival, in the beginning of March, we find this: "I have now tried Court life. I shall do the same with the Government, and so on." Again his most intimate words went to Mephisto. *Were* they the most intimate? What was Faust thinking of the scheme?

Faust knew well enough what he was giving up, nor was he in the least intoxicated by his position. He accepted it in the spirit of one who proposed to treat it in the grand manner. He knew all about the Duke, and intended to serve him affectionately, but was not blind to the dangers in so unequal a relation. Those, however, he was ready to risk. To train a petty ruler to some greatness, to shed upon a petty realm the illumination of a vaster sense of human destiny, to do by means of intellect what hitherto had been done only through exalted birth or from interested motives—these were contributory motives, half-hidden even from himself.

When Goethe made up his mind to stay, his conscious motives were to find a wider field for his energies, to open a far-flung sphere of influence, to fight the fight against men with that unwearied valour which had hitherto been his against invisible spectres of imagination. His daemon, so inspired, urged him onward as it were in a consuming flame of energy. In the very whirl of the introductory excitements—"when I have to screw myself up afresh every day, when there are a thousand big things and little things to be put through, and I am struggling, brain and heart, with love and hatred, rascality and des-

potic power "—in the very week of that salutary turmoil, Goethe, on one of his long walks, wrote down these words.

Der du von dem Himmel bist,
Alles Leid und Schmerzen stillest. . . .
Ach, ich bin des Treibens müde.
Was soll all die Qual und Lust?
Süsser Friede,
Komm, ach komm in meine Brust![1]

There was only one man in Weimar who could understand what was secretly brewing. "But oh," wrote Wieland, after three months, to Lavater, "how much more could and would that glorious intellect achieve, if he had not let himself go under in this chaos of ours! I was not thirty-eight when I suffered myself to be drawn to this Court, to this dangerous . . . and (looked at in the broad light of day) this eternally impossible experiment. I was led away by the spell of imagination, and the still more irresistible spell of the seductive idea that I might accomplish some great and enduring good. Goethe is only just twenty-six. How should he, conscious as he is of such powers, have withstood a still greater temptation? . . . His existence here reminds me of a game of faro. The Duke keeps the bank, and Goethe bets against him. Goethe stakes 1, 2, 3, 4 and often eight or more days upon a card, and frequently loses; but as he plays high, he only needs one good win . . . to recoup himself. . . .

"But having entered on this new career, he won't rest until he has reached the goal, and is as great a Minister as he was an author."

Wieland's powerful insight thus predicted Goethe's

[1] Thou that dost from Heaven fall,
Every pain and sorrow stilling. . . .
I am weary now of ferments.
What shall pangs and thrills betide?
Sweetly soothing,
Come, O Peace, with me to bide!

course and way of escape. No one else grasped the position with like mastery.

Weimar took a more commonplace view. When the Duke decided to appoint Goethe to his Privy Council—that is to say, to the centre of his Government—two parties immediately sprang up. The minority consisted of courtiers who sided with the favourite and Modernists who sided with Goethe; the majority, of the Traditionalists and the Diehard nobility, who resented the advent of a middle-class amateur. At their head stood the Prime Minister, von Fritsch, who on account of his loyal services during the Regency could not be allowed to go; and so even Anna Amelia, the Dowager-Duchess (who in other ways encouraged her son's choice of Goethe) had to thank her stars that Carl August (desirous above all things to rule alone) was for the moment content with offering him the most subordinate place in his Council of Six—namely, that of a Privy Councillor of Legation with a salary of 1,200 thalers.

For all that, Fritsch was on the war-path. Was he not ten years older than this poet, coming in as it were like a thief in the night? Had he not long been of the Council, and its chief for the last four years?

And he risked all. Suppose he *was* dismissed. . . . He pointed out that "he could not any longer sit on a committee of which the said Dr. Goethe was henceforth to be a member, since he could not hope to be of any further service to His Highness, and should feel it dishonouring to himself; hence he resigned the position he had held and laid it at His Highness's feet . . . feeling himself superseded."

The Duke stood up stoutly for his friend. "The world takes a prejudiced view of these matters, but I . . . am not ambitious of glory; my only desire is to justify myself before God and my own conscience. . . . Goethe is an upright man, with an unusually kind and sympathetic nature." Fritsch exacted further proofs of confidence, but finally stayed where he was—and Goethe was his colleague in office for the next ten years.

The poet took the great step resolutely and wholeheartedly. Those outlets which he had hitherto kept open to himself—lingering, hesitating, for three months on the threshold—he now shut with a bang, excluding the young man from Frankfurt, the literary leader, the lover of a girl, the friend of many friends, and even the son and brother.

He wrote often to his father and mother, but few of his letters remain. They were always affectionate but remote, always full of commissions and business matters, reticent, uncommunicative. The most heartfelt was that on his sister's death: " I can feel nothing but the natural human grief, and I rely on Nature, who never suffers us long to endure extreme sorrow and sense of bereavement. . . . With my sister something so radical . . . has been uprooted that the upper branches . . . can but wither and die." And he added for his mother that Bible text of fire and ice: " I am too accustomed now to the idea: ' These are my mother and my brethren.' "

This was, and continued to be, Goethe's relation to his people, once he had left them. In the some thousand letters of these ten years, there are scarcely ten references to his mother. When the Dowager-Duchess wanted to ask her to Weimar, Goethe prevented it.

So recently as February he had sent two messages to Lili. By April it was: " Nothing more of Lili; that is over and done with." Soon afterwards his servant one evening brought him a letter. He was half asleep. " I read in a sort of stupor—that Lili is married! Then I turned round and went to sleep. How I blessed Fate's dealings! Everything at the right moment, that's it! "

When he wanted to set up house, he sent a message through Johanna Fahlmer to his mother. " My father owes me a trousseau and a dowry, and mother must manage this in her own way, but she mustn't be childish about it, when I am brother and everything else to a Prince. The Duke has conferred on me a hundred ducats. *Given* them to me, if you like."

Then, taking leave of his youth, he found a fine symbol for the farewell, and set it in verse before the die was cast for good and all. In his *Seefahrt* he depicts his friends sitting at the quay on his departure, rejoicing in the idea of the treasure-trove he will bring home when he comes back; but when contrary winds endanger the seafarer, they cry in instant anguish from the shore:

> Ach, der Sturm! Verschlagen weg vom Glücke!
> Soll der Gute so zu Grunde gehen?
> Ach, er sollte, ach, er könnte?—Götter!
> Doch er stehet männlich an dem Steuer:
> Mit dem Schiffe spielen Wind and Wellen,
> Wind und Wellen nicht mit seinem Herzen.
> Herrschend blickt er auf die grimme Tiefe
> Und vertrauet, scheiternd oder landend,
> Seinen Göttern.[1]

Imperious? This was not a time for deeds, but merely for getting busy. It was not the world, not power, which were opening their massive portals to that giant intellect; for even if one is to regard the Duchies of Weimar and Eisenach as samples of the great world, it was surely indispensable to be master in them! But Goethe was entering the Council of State in a petty realm as the youngest and least of Ministers, without any special office beyond that of backing up the Duke against his strait-laced old officials. He was at first wholly, and afterwards in great measure, excluded from foreign affairs. He was not sufficiently master of the chessboard to be entrusted with those.

Only the things he could tangibly grasp fascinated that

[1] See the storm! Oh, driven back from fortune!
Shall our dear one thus be baffled, ruined?
Shall he—oh, it may be . . . Gods above us!
Nay, he stands intrepid—see, he steers her!
Sport, ye winds and waters, with the vessel,
With his heart ye sport not, winds and waters.
On the angry deep he looks imperious;
In his gods, for shipwreck or for haven,
Trusting fearless. . . .

humane intelligence. He hoped to influence home affairs, to improve and deepen the outlook. To achieve the greatest of tasks in the most restricted of spheres, to identify himself more fully with people and territory, was inevitably a stronger attraction for a temperament like his than to take his place at the green table with the so-called great ones of the earth. Goethe was neither desirous of, nor born to, domination; in this place he had still to learn his first lessons both in command and obedience. He took up office in that spirit, wishful to develop himself, to stimulate himself, not reckoning much with his potential usefulness to the Duke of Weimar and Eisenach. And so it was only fair that he should sacrifice something.

But in the first four years (which we shall here summarize) his genius took care that he should, generally speaking, fasten only on the matters which were useful to himself, though in everything he had to do with he proved valuable to others. The mines at Ilmenau had lain unworked for forty years; to open them up again was an old ambition of the dynasty. Goethe undertook to do this. He accepted, and thenceforth carried on, an Office of Works which he was the first to entrust with the reconstruction of the Ilmenau mines. Three years later he was appointed to select, maintain, and arm recruits, and superintend the making of roads throughout the region—so that at thirty he was a lesser Minister of War and of Public Works.

In the countless documents of that first decade there is scarcely a single instance of Goethe's view having needed supplementing. He owed this insight to the far-reaching dilettantism which had ruled him from his boyhood. Had not his ten years of research, which were now being dovetailed into ten years of activity, been full of unremitting efforts to attain to an unsystematic, as it were accidental, mastery of art and science?

The village of Apolda was in flames—the wooden villages of that time often went on fire. The *Herr Geheimrat* galloped to the place, and " was roasted and

boiled all day long. . . . And so were many of my plans, ideas, and the arrangement of my time. That's how life will always go on, and others will come after us and have the same experience. . . . My ideas about fire-brigades found fresh confirmation. Especially in places like this, where they take their chance in that as in everything else. The Duke will believe me at last. My eyes are smarting from the blaze and the smoke, and the soles of my feet are sore. It's all becoming as much a matter of course as the fire in one's grate. But I cling to my ideas, and wrestle with the unknown angel—aye, even to the dislocation of my loins. No one has any idea of what I'm doing, and the foes I have to contend with before I can accomplish the least little thing. I implore ye not to mock me, watchful deities, as I strive and contend and labour. But after all ye may smile, so long as ye stand by me."

A wooden village is gutted. Usually, in such an event, Ministers demand a report, an investigation into who was to blame, relative statistics of the sufferers and the amount of compensation required, and then disbursement. Goethe, being a poet, helped to put out the fire; and while the flames were singeing him, he was considering how best to organize the fire-brigade, for he was a Minister too. But meanwhile from the smoke and blaze emerged the symbol. That very angel with whom at twenty he had reverentially wrestled in the shape of Herder's captious spirit, " though it should lame me for life," now appeared to him as, at thirty, he fought the stupid world around him; and he meant to wrestle with this one too—" aye, to the dislocation of my loins." But over the whole scene there hovered the beneficent gods, and they might smile at the champion if it so pleased them.

For this contemplative intellect, desirous to work and learn, had now to turn combative—a state it had never known. In a few months he was exclaiming inwardly: "*Aequam memento!*" And though he increasingly felt that here he had done something fine and well worth doing, in a few more years he was penetrated by the sense

of having distilled from it all it could give towards his development. Imperceptibly a course of study had been transformed into a duty; as imperceptibly, that duty came to stand for a symbol.

When three years afterwards he was made Minister of War, he thus recorded the event: "Impending fresh disgusts, as a member of the War Commission." And soon: "Nothing but that business to-day. I steeped myself in it, and am now pregnant with ideas and certain I can stick it out. Pressure of business is very good for the soul; when it's got rid of, the spirit has freer play and enjoys life. No one is more wretched than a prosperous man with nothing to do; the fairest of gifts is dust and ashes to him. Strenuous work, this setting earthly machines going and keeping them going! Text-books and histories are alike absurdities to the busy man. But there is no more arrogant prayer than that for wisdom, since the gods have once for all refused it to mortal men. They do hand out some common-sense." A few weeks later: "I stand well with the War Commission, because I keep imagination out of the business, never by any chance suggest anything, and only want to know what there is to know and get things going. And it's the same with road-making."

These notes are vividly representative of the atmosphere in which Goethe's soul could best breathe, when head and hand were making ready for new activities. One clearly perceives how science, sense of duty, and symbolism traced his path for him. During these years of endeavour to strike a balance between his conflicting faculties, he used each task as a stimulus for the next. Fatigue evoked fresh energies, he made up his mind to be one-sided, and the consciousness of leaving a minor office a cleaner place than he had found it became to him a symbol of our earthly limitations. Hence it is less important for posterity to consider what he did than the typical way he did it; and since our portrait, as a whole, is designed as a picture of what a man can make of himself,

we shall not here dwell upon the details of the administration he belonged to, but on the manner of his personal administration.

Recruiting-work soon leads to politics; and so his little world of uniforms and discipline served him as a bridge to the great art of statesmanship, which is so individual. Goethe never saw "Old Fritz." He had been respectfully silent when the King who dabbled in poetry made a senile attack on *Götz*, but the War-Minister and Poet did not spare that King when he tried to grab his recruits! When the militarist Duke showed a desire to grant his ideal, the soldier-king, recruiting-facilities in his Duchy, Goethe warned him in a long report of the political consequences in Vienna, which his knowledge of human nature enabled him to foresee.

These practical concerns inspired him with the idea of a Confederation of the Princes, which might be useful to Central Germany, situated as she was between two hostile great powers. It was not an abstract historical view which led him to this idea of an alliance, but the direct pressure of events. Otherwise the whole trend of his spiritual development, as we shall here follow it, kept him aloof from diplomatic experiments.

Nevertheless, Goethe's letters to Fritsch were even then masterpieces of diplomacy. He would give the home-keeping President nost courtly snubs, in the course of his own shooting-trips—cool and friendly, kindly and respectful, as from a subordinate who was none the less the better man, a Divisional Commander but the Duke's friend, a Councillor of Legation—but Goethe.

He practised this art with ever-increasing subtlety. Even before he became an official personage, he had sometimes touched up the Duke's drafts with his own hand, smoothing down too plain-spoken passages. The style of Goethe's own letters is evidence of how, as he mixed with the great world, he learnt the art of being all things to all men; for just as he would always find a few robust adjectives for the Duke, or for Merck some cynical

aperçu, so for his mother he would affect the simple bourgeois outlook which to her seemed natural in him, though it did not seem so to himself.

Yet there was no dissimulation in all this—and least of all at Court, where in the early days his " tone " was epoch-making. " You need only be what you are—that's the policy for this place," he wrote ironically to Herder. But though the chosen attitude of Weimar society—their spontaneous affectation, so to speak—made his initiation easier for him, the Court soon got used to him and he to the Court; and by the time the first strain was over, he was an adept in the privileges of aristocracy—indeed he was sometimes held to be over-punctilious.

When after something like a year he became a recognized official rather than a recognized appanage of the Duke, he was obliged to frequent three ducal Saxon Courts instead of only one. That is to say, he frequented the Duke's, the Duchess's, and the Dowager-Duchess's.

But these three reigning heads were all equally attracted by the stranger; and that this lasted for decades is the more remarkable because all three were periodically at odds with one another. True, he made it his principle never to let anything he heard in confidence go any further at Court. Goethe's dual nature, consciously disciplined to these social ends, made life easier for him; for he could give Anna Amalia the benefit of his satirical moods, his prehensile intelligence, and his musical proclivities; for the young Duchess he kept the melancholy and reserve of his spirit, " communing only in looks and monosyllables "; while for the Duke he lavished all the ardours which had been the cause of his election. It was all genuine; but the balance kept was his art and his secret—a secret more profound than the Weimar courtiers could at all have dreamed.

With regard to the Court his feeling was of this kind:

" After dinner I played up to the Prince-Boy. Chasing each other in the garden. Ball at night. Was incapable of any sense of Nature. . . . To Tiefurt, where every

soul I saw annoyed me. So I made my way home. Couldn't enjoy anything. . . . I pitied these courtiers—I wonder the majority don't turn into toads or basilisks. . . . Four or five Dukes of Saxony in one room are not the best of company. Except the Duke himself, not one has the breath of life in him; the others are like wooden dolls turned out by the dozen, and most of them not even coloured."

What manner of man was it for whom a poet endured all this—who could know him and not know him, and was to bear with him here for fifty years? What manner of man was the Duke?

Carl August was shorter, more thick-set than Goethe, who was of good middle-height and slenderly built; his eye was dark like Goethe's, but not so keen as it was fierce; his mouth, in complete contrast to Goethe's nobly curving lips, was somewhat crooked. What held them to one another, what made the elder a model for the younger and the younger a sort of reflection of himself for the elder, was the daemonic element in Carl August's nature. The stormy enigmatic strain in the Duke might have made him seem a younger brother of Goethe's, if he had had genius instead of only having many gifts. But he lacked the corrective supplied by a creative nature; and as the idea of self-discipline was uncongenial to him, he remained essentially inharmonious. It was only time, not reflection nor riper judgment, which gradually calmed him down, and made him appear better balanced. He was often a victim to self-reproach—a sensation wholly unknown to Goethe; and while Goethe's emotional capacity was unlimited because his heart was impassioned to the core, the Duke was unbridled because he was dissatisfied with himself. *Daemonia activa—passiva.*

Goethe's daemon urged him to activity, Carl August's to perpetual movement. Goethe recognized the privilege of princely birth, Carl August that of royal intellect—each with the secret reservation that that which he himself possessed was after all the higher of the two. The Duke

was drawn to the poet by personality, the poet to the Duke by the opportunity of playing the latter-day Voltaire and instilling Rousseau's ideas into a real live Prince. But if the Duke was also influenced by the desire to deck his Court with the poet's renown, this latter was wholly devoid of courtly ambition. We must remember that at that time even the most liberal-minded of Princes would quite naturally speak of his Ministers as "servants," and of Goethe as a man on the "possession" of whom he was to be congratulated.

Carl August, who felt that Goethe's nature and his own were akin, perceived that in him he had found an older friend and mentor; and as he exaggerated their points of resemblance while taking their relation as a whole somewhat superficially, he was merely preparing for himself a moderate sort of disappointment. The poet, who beheld in the Duke's impetuosity a reflection of his own without the corrective of genius, saw him in the light of a friend so much younger as to be easily influenced, and was quite ready to defer to his authority if by so doing he could find scope for his own energies. But as his connection with the Prince involved him in a vital decision, he would be proportionately disappointed if the Prince should fail him.

Thus an easygoing ruler was making an experiment with a poet who took his fancy, and was at first but little concerned for his State, in whose interest he did not immediately utilize the newcomer. Goethe was making his experiment with a Prince and that Prince's realm, but was soon absorbed in the realm to the neglect of the Prince. Both began their connection in a spirit of adventure. For both it proved fateful.

From the first day Goethe tried to influence him, more in the way of training than of culture. As he himself could never learn anything from books, he did not offer his friend books, but a living model; he thought it more important to form his heart than his intellect, for the heart was more accessible and more nearly akin to his own.

Certainly the young man was sagacious, nimble-witted, quick to understand, with fewer prejudices than most Princes; but he was vain as well. His intellect played scarcely any part in his friendship with Goethe. In the first ten years we hear nothing of the Duke's studies; even Goethe's works made little real impression on him. Like all Germans, Carl August had raved about *Götz*, which appealed by its power to his own crudity. The great works which were to come left him entirely uncomprehending.

In his efforts to develop him as a Prince, Goethe did not lose sight of the mere man. He described the daemonic young ruler retrospectively in later years:

> Noch ist, bei tiefer Neigung für das Wahre,
> Ihm Irrtum eine Leidenschaft.
> Der Vorwitz lockt ihm in die Weite,
> Kein Fels ist ihm zu schroff, kein Steg zu schmal;
> Der Unfall lauert an der Seite,
> Und stürzt ihn in den Arm der Qual.
> Dann treibt die schmerzlich überspannte Regung
> Gewaltsam ihn bald da, bald dort, hinaus,
> Und von unmutiger Bewegung,
> Ruht er unmutig wieder aus.
> Und düstrer wild an heitren Tagen,
> Unbändig ohne froh zu sein,
> Schlaft er, an Seel' und Leib verwunden und zerschlagen,
> Auf einen harten Lager ein.[1]

[1] And yet this love of truth in him is mingled
With error, ardently pursued.
His active mind thus onward urges—
No height too tall for him, no path too steep;
The giddy precipice then emerges,
And panic terrors on him leap.
So, in a mood of woebegone distraction,
To find escape he rushes here and there;
Soon in as reasonless reaction,
Will sink to earth as in despair.
His mirth will change to savage sorrow;
Unruly he, and yet not glad;
On some hard couch he sleeps, oblivion thus to borrow,
Heartsick, and wounded sore, and sad.

Shooting and boar-hunting and camping at night in the open, high jinks with country-girls of easy virtue, were the favourite excesses of the young Prince; for the desire of his heart—campaigning—was as yet refused to him. Goethe, who was neither a sportsman nor a libertine, joined in these amusements only at first. Sometimes, in the tumultuous initiatory summer, he was obliged to take part in them three times a week. But in a few months his contribution to the shooting-trips took the form of sketching the various incidents and places.

At first he tried to accomplish many things by gentle lectures. Sometimes he spoke out: "I want to give you another talking-to about that! For on my way here I was thinking about your very excessive impetuosity on such occasions" (he was referring to a conflagration), "which always exposes you to the risk of doing something which, if not mistaken, is at any rate unnecessary, and a useless expenditure of your own energy and that of your officials."

After the early weeks of wild excitement the Duke seemed to calm down a little, and Goethe could adopt more courtly methods. If the young monarch had been too eloquent at the Council-table, Goethe would take an opportunity, after dinner, of letting fall some remarks on moderation of speech, on giving one's self away, on heated orations. If he found him reactionary, he would give an allegorical turn to his own ideas on politics and jurisdiction. His constant aim was to be a lively example of how a man could be adventurous without being eccentric, and to warn the Prince against taking eccentricity as the mark of an adventurous nature.

The Court stood amazed. They saw their monarch acting upon suddenly acquired convictions; "and when he is really all out for them, making such a to-do about it that people get exasperated." At such moments Goethe's hopes for the Prince rose high; these were his brightest days, for in upholding the youth he felt that he was proving his own worth as a man, and that was the first and the abiding aim of his genius.

Goethe taught his Prince to despise the forms of authority, while reverencing the spirit. In a letter written in collaboration with him, he derided "the Council's sublime session" under the Duke's very nose. But shortly afterwards Goethe wrote this *Königliche Gebet* (*Royal Prayer*), which might have been dedicated to his Prince's temper:

Ha, ich bin Herr der Welt! Mich lieben
Die Edlen, die mir dienen.
Ha, ich bin Herr der Welt! Ich liebe
Die Edlen, denen ich gebiete!
O gib mir, Gott im Himmel! dass ich mich
Der Höh' und Liebe nicht überhebe.[1]

Moreover, at this time he became a mediator between the Duchess and the Duke. His duality enabled him to win the confidence of both the disunited couple. When he could not prevail with words, he had recourse to poetry. In the curious lyric drama, *Lila*, he designed to cheer the Duchess's melancholy by figuring it forth, to cure fantasy by fantasy; and when in a later farce he made the ladies of the Court comment upon the gallantries of the Fairy-Prince, he could venture on it simply because he was the favourite of both parties.

In this restless medium Goethe's nature craved a place of repose—he found it in his garden. Beyond the city gate, near the Castle but removed from its bustle, stands an old-fashioned little house, with only four rooms:

Übermütig sieht's nicht aus,
Hohes Dach und niedres Haus.[2]

[1] Lord of the world am I! They love me,
My nobles, they that serve me.
Lord of the world am I! I love them,
My nobles, sworn to my allegiance.
O grant me, God in Heaven! ne'er to set
On rank and love unbefitting value.

[2] Nothing here for pride or show,
Roof is high and house is low.

But a large garden surrounds it, and the neighbouring park is extensive. For nearly seven years this was Goethe's abode, and it was a place where his spiritual growth could proceed amid all the outward activities; the soil of his garden did that for him. There he planted his affections deep; thence his happiness flowered high. Had he not, pent in the narrow streets of towns, for years craved such a plot of ground? And now he devoted a good part of his time to the garden, for this too he had to learn to tend—it was as new a thing to him as affairs were. Whole days of the early bustling period were spent in the mere preliminaries of installation, in tending, planning, enlarging; and then his diary says: "These most exquisite days continue."

If, in his solitude, he woke early after a night spent between dancing, talking, and riding, he would feel as if enwrapped in an atmosphere of celestial peace, and was never weary of saying what a delightful sensation it was. For Goethe never worked at night, in any period of his life; and in his old age requested that the lamp as a symbol of industry might be omitted from the first of the memorials to him, for he had never written except in the mornings, "when I skimmed the cream off the day, and used the rest of the time for cheese-making."

In that garden he steeled his frame, bathing in the brook by the hedge on November evenings and December mornings, and on snowy January days, "so as to freshen up my deplorably stagnant wits." And he gave up drinking coffee and took less wine, that he might get the very most out of himself. He speaks of his thinness at that period, and his servant declared that he could easily carry him. Moreover, he ceased to wear a wig—that badge of the rococo.

He was inclined to utilitarianism at that time; and so he kept bees, grafted young fruit-trees, wrote "love-letters with fingers greasy from grafting-wax," and told how he had gone exterminating caterpillars too late in the day, "and so I always failed to see them. A poet and an amateur are bad managers, both."

But now and again there are hints at more inward things. "I am planting trees now, like the children of Israel setting up pillars of witness." In this third year Wieland could already say that planting and sketching were Goethe's favourite occupations. A mind so speculative that "in the evenings my whole being seems to be concentrated between my eye-sockets" needed sedatives like these.

This garden life was not in the least sentimentalized, and so he could take an interest in his little house as well. But he never wanted more space; it was on interior order that he concentrated. "To live within limits, to want one thing, or a very few things, very much and love them very dearly, cling to them, survey them from every angle, become one with them—that is what makes the poet, the artist, the human being." And while this illimitable spirit strove to concentrate on some definite aim, while the giant intellect confined itself to narrow activities, he found that garden and house inevitably kept his mind fixed on their economy—and this too was a new thing for him. Till then he had never had much, and only seldom enough, money; he had repeatedly borrowed, and as a young man had in fact lived like one who knew there was a heritage behind him. Now, with money and house of his own, he began to keep accounts with very much greater care, and continued to do so for fifty years. "Ever-increasing pleasure in housekeeping, saving, making both ends meet. Delightful tranquillity in my home-life. A certain sense of restriction, resulting in a sense of real liberation."

The man whom in these years he most heartily admired was Batty, a farmer recommended by Merck, whom he now employed as land-agent. The practical, straightforward procedure of this man struck the poet, in this his first real contact with the soil, as a pattern of efficiency; for Batty "doesn't indulge in vague dreams, as we used to do about creative art. When he has to get something done, he sees at a glance what is necessary to his purpose.

Agriculture is a very fine thing, because you get such an unmistakable answer as to whether you're making a fool of yourself or hitting the mark."

In these first four years he acquired a thorough elementary knowledge of husbandry as practised in the Weimar region. It was even with a view to making economies in favour of the land that he undertook the War Commission; thenceforward he was set on reforming Weimar's finances.

As a youth he had been alternately Bohemian and pedantic in his dealings with documents and money; now he trained himself to exactitude and sought by such methods to clear away the confusion in his mind. "Since in my position it is so easy to obtain money" (he wrote to a *protégé*), "I must be all the stricter in my household management." And he asked for an account of what his correspondent had received, for there was an entry missing in his account-book. Once, when away, he wrote to Weimar ordering twelve plain frames for the Academy, as he was bringing back some drawings; and they were to use the glass they already had. If this was large, the frames might be made to suit it.

Even in his literary schemes he did not forget economies. From Merck, who was writing a novel, he demanded the full dramatic rights, for he himself proposed to dramatize the book. When, during his visits to the German Courts, he made an ironic list of Court types, he begged the recipient of his letter to keep it a secret, lest someone should plagiarize the idea.

The documents to which he entrusted these weighty trifles soon waxed into a series of 1,700 letters and notes, kept in a woman's casket, and covering ten years. Goethe was more devoted to this woman than to any who preceded or followed her; he gave her all himself. She was as a reservoir in which he could concentrate the flood of imagination and thought which was Goethe, and find all clarified when he was ready to direct it elsewhere. The superhuman attempt to unify his antithetic nature in the course of three short years is as it were symbolized in

this woman; and what he and posterity had and have to thank her for is the nobility of the measures she adopted with him. It was not her fault that the experiment was premature, and that it was not until long after the tremendous tension which his soul underwent in this battle for chastity had been relaxed, that liberty and harmony could ensue. Her merit is that, nevertheless, she represented as it were a shore whose tranquil harbours can withstand the fierce tempestuous sea.

She loved the idea of Goethe, not Goethe himself. He loved the idea of her, not the woman herself. In that resides all which was fine, all which was fruitful, in their relation. They could not hold communion like celestial spirits; they divined each other visually, through the senses, in their daily contact, knowing one another too late, and yet (as it proved) too soon; they were constrained to live for these ten years apart yet not apart, two temperaments which differed widely in their conception of surrender to feeling, pent in a narrow circle, a restricted space, with prejudice and intrigue around them—and from *that* sprang all the bitterness and distrust they mutually suffered from. Their romance is no tale of bliss that ended in tragedy, but a long, unequal story with a hundred moments of exaltation and a thousand hours of torment.

Charlotte von Stein was small, graceful, slender, at no time beautiful but always attractive with the tranquil oval of her countenance; and when Goethe first met her she was, at thirty-three, more sensitive, more delicate, more transcendental and oftener ailing than she became in later years—not a woman in her bloom, at her zenith, but a resigned and melancholy being. Her voice is said to have been soft and low; she was a type of suffering virtue, of gentle seriousness, a mistress of court-etiquette, but (so they said of her) with a frankness which was all her own. A friend writes of her that no one would have imagined, from her exquisite dancing, that quiet moonlit hours and midnight musings were as the peace of God to her heart.

Finely curved, rather thin lips, dark hair, and great Italian eyes she had in common with Goethe; but

while his eyes gleamed or pierced, hers seemed to swim in flame which never wholly kindled, never wholly went out. Not sensual as Goethe was, nor sexless as his sister was, the best pictures of her give the impression of a disillusioned rather than of a cold-natured woman.

She was well provided for by her marriage with the good-naturedly unaffected, unintellectual, robust-minded Master of Horse, von Stein, who was of a type completely alien to her; and when Goethe left school at sixteen, she was twenty-three and the mother of a son. But in the course of the next eight years she had seven children, and her health had seriously suffered.

In December Goethe was still lamenting Lili in verse. In January he wrote his first letter to Frau von Stein; and even this earliest one reveals the half-unconscious, but at bottom very definite, prevision of a breaking-point which haunted his love for her. His earliest written word to her is concerned with a falling-out. She had given him a seal, he had passed it on to his sister, and Frau von Stein was offended. Goethe wrote : " That is the reason, then! . . . What I give to my sister is mine, in more than one sense mine! But that is the reason—*I* shall never seal with it. And I should not be worthy of it, if I had not felt that."

However, not more than a couple of notes had passed between them before he was calling her his balm in Gilead. His feeling, in the first few months, hovered between love-sickness and an attempt at Platonic friendship, between *Du* and *Sie*; he did not write tempestuously, but restlessly, pleadingly; and yet these early love-letters reveal something of disappointment in her. " It vexed me to find no word that came from *thee*. . . . Dear lady, let me love you. If I ever find anyone I can love better, I will . . . leave you in peace. . . . Perhaps it's all imagination—no matter. For the present, it is so with me; and if it changes, that will soon be evident. . . . And yet it troubles me that I love thee so much, and just *thee*! "

But then his troubled spirit lectured itself into a celestial frame of mind towards the adored one.

" O, you the one woman who has breathed a love into my heart that makes me happy! . . . The one woman I can love without suffering torments—and yet I live in a state of terror half the time. . . . What a sister I have in you. Think of me, and press your hand to your lips. . . . Good-night. Once more I could see nothing but your eyes throughout the whole masquerade." Written at midnight, after he had known her two months—a conflict between desire and renunciation, a massacre of longings, with doubts of his own constancy.

But the letters immediately following are panting, distracted. " O peerless among women! . . . who would wish me to be happy if I could love anything better than you! How happy I should have to be, in that case! Or how unhappy! . . . Fritz " (her three-years-old boy) " has been with us. I gave him a great many kisses. . . . Good-night, angel, I think of you asleep at this moment. . . . You who are so saintly I cannot make into a saint, and can do nothing but torment myself because I would so much rather not torment myself."

Out of these fragments—all from one voice, for we have none of her answers—we can reconstruct the erotic conflicts of the pair, in which the older, calmer woman imposed upon the younger, stormier man a friendship of the soul. Once more this poet—sought after, renowned, full of fire and charm, a childlike suppliant, a fierce desirous lover—had to recognize that he stood before a half-closed door, the door of her whom he loved.

What prevented this worshipped woman from now becoming Goethe's mistress? Did she think the enigmatic poet unworthy of such surrender? " The greater a man's grasp, it seems to me " (so she confided to a doctor) " the more he is perplexed and repelled by the totality of things, the more easily he misses the way to tranquillity. We know that the fallen angels were more intelligent than the others. . . . What will be the end of me, with him? For when he is here, he never leaves my side. I call him my saint now."

Did she love her husband? He was as a stranger to her. Did she dread Weimar's opinion? They had been gossiping from Goethe's earliest visits; and Weimar society was almost more accustomed to marriages *à trois* than to normal ones.

Did she, or did she not, perceive that by the refusal of herself she made her friend as restless as by her caustic or gentle comments, her broad outlook upon men and things, she soothed his inward conflict? An ideal of chastity haunted her soul—to that she sacrificed her lover's equilibrium.

After three months of this he put his secret longing into verse. Only that once did he tell himself and the woman, in poetry, of the mysterious bond between their souls, though there were many little love-songs throughout the following ten years.

Sag, was will das Schicksal uns bereiten?
Sag, wie band es uns so rein genau?
Ach, du warst in abgelebten Zeiten
Meine Schwester oder meine Frau.
Kanntest jeden Zug in meinem Wesen,
Spähtest, wie die reinste Nerve klingt,
Konntest mich mit Einem Blicke lesen,
Den so schwer ein sterblich Aug durchdringt.
Tropftest Mässigung dem heissen Blute,
Richtetest den wilden irren Lauf,
Und in deinen Engelsarmen ruhte
Die zerstörte Brust sich wieder auf.[1]

Tell me, what is Destiny preparing?
Tell me why we two have drawn so near?
Aeons since, were you a sister, sharing
Kin with me, or else a wife most dear?
Everything I am, my every feature,
You divined, my every nerve could thrill,
Read me at a glance—no other creature
Knows me as you know, nor ever will.
You could claim my fevered blood, could guide me
Better than my erring will has led;
In your angel-arms I ran to hide me,
Care from out my troubled bosom fled.

Such was Goethe's avowal of the tragic intimacy felt by both to be a part of that relation which denied them the sorcery of the unexpected, the immunities of a fool's paradise. But in their closeness he perceived a call to something higher, more inspiring; and forcibly restraining the earthlier elements in his nature, he entered thenceforth upon a losing battle.

She was for renunciation, for a vaguely spiritualized friendship; he was and remained the young ardent man, intent on possession. His only course was to make renunciation a form of sensuous pleasure; and (as when Lotte had married) he steeped himself in that inverted joy. " If only you were thinking of me, as I am of you! . . . No, I don't wish that! I intend to feast upon the melancholy of my well-known destiny—not to be loved, when I love."

But on the back of his letter she wrote these lines:

Ob's unrecht ist, was ich empfinde—
Und ob ich büssen muss die mir so liebe Sünde,
Will mein Gewissen mir nicht sagen.
Vernicht es, Himmel, du, wenn mich's je könnt anklagen.[1]

Such was her saintly eroticism, fleeing from its own passion.

And yet she was fully conscious of her submissive friend's desires, for ever at her side, for ever stirred afresh —and that for years! It was precisely this—this wholly uncharacteristic vacillation between spiritual longings and sensual desire, this division (so utterly alien to Goethe) between the beast and the God in man—which to Frau von Stein appeared as a stage on the road to purity of soul. And Goethe followed that path for years, his feet entangled in his lady's Web of Maya.

But though she racked his senses by these ecstasies of

[1] Can it be wrong, this deep emotion—
Shall I repent of this my sinful dear devotion?
Conscience all answer doth refuse me.
Oh then, destroy it, Heaven, if ever it accuse me.

earthly renunciation, she did by her ripe wisdom in some other things allay the tempest in his soul. When two years had gone by, he was one evening, after he had left her side, moved to such thoughts as this: "I wonder if I really do love you, or whether to be near you is no more than being near a mirror so crystal-clear that it is delightful to look at one's self therein." And he gives neither himself nor her any conclusive answer to the question, which indeed may be said to answer itself.

Nowhere more plainly than in *Iphigenie* can we perceive the soothing influence which her soul could exercise on his. He wrote it in his fourth year at Weimar.

In this play he delineated the most untroubled moments of their friendship; and he afterwards said that the passage where Orestes finds himself again in his sister's presence was the turning-point of the drama. But in Thoas walking in darkness, Goethe likewise appealed to his friend's beneficent lucidity of spirit; and we are listening to his dialogues with Charlotte when we read the opening scene of the first *Iphigenie*:

Iphigenie. [Die Götter] reden nur durch unser Herz zu uns.
Thoas. Hab ich kein Recht, sie auch zu hören?
Iphigenie. Es überbraust der Sturm der Leidenschaft die zarte Stimme.
Thoas. Die Priesterin ernimmt sie wohl allein?
Iphigenie. Der Konig sollte sie vor allem andren merken. . . . Ich trage nun die Schuld von dem Vertraun zu dir.
Thoas. Ich bin ein Mensch, und besser ist's, wir enden.[1]

Never was Goethe's capacity for suffering more manifest

[1] *Iphigenie:* [The gods] speak to us only through our hearts.
Thoas: Have I no claim to hear them too?
Iphigenie: The storm of passion drowns that gentle voice.
Thoas: And the priestess hears it only?
Iphigenie: The King should heed it more than any other. . . . I am now bearing the penalty for my trust in thee.
Thoas: I am a man, and it is better we should say no more.

than in his relation to this generous but extortionate woman. He was devoted to her without possessing her; she wanted to possess his heart, without being devoted to him. He suffered in silence; she vehemently bewailed herself. Then he would write to her tenderly.

At other times pride would have its way, when she had attempted to banish him from her presence. "I don't wish to see you. Your presence would make me sad. If I am not to live near you, your love is of as little good to me as that of any of those absent friends in whom I am so rich. Proximity in our moment of need is what matters—it resolves our doubts, soothes our distresses, fortifies us in every way. . . . I am, alas, so dependent on your love that, often as I try to break loose, it gives me such pain that I would rather let it be." Thus he wrote eight years before the end—foreshadowed in this outburst.

She often suddenly betrayed her arbitrary nature by keeping apart from him socially. It had scarcely been decided that he was to remain at Weimar (a decision to which she must have contributed), when she departed for a cure of some weeks and left the unfortunate man to himself at the very moment when she ought to have stood by him. The Duke, and many other gentlemen of the Court, visited her in Kochberg; Goethe alone was left to fume in Weimar, forbidden all access to her. His reproach is a foreshadowing of Tasso's: "Oh, you can torment a man as Fate does; he dare not complain or cry out, it goes too deep. . . . Of me you shall hear nothing more. . . . If you could but imagine how I felt when the Duke took leave of me, and Einsiedel dressed for the journey in my uniform!"

The innumerable things he sent her from his garden she would dispense to her household as though they had been bought in the market-place, and he constantly had to remind her that they were love-tokens and meant for her alone. When he asked her to return a little poem for copying, she wrote on the back of the sheet: "I don't

like returning anything that I have from you." As all her letters to Goethe were demanded back and destroyed, by herself, some value attaches to so rare a piece of evidence. The little sentence expresses, prettily enough, the jealous sense of possession by which she grappled her ethereal affection to the earth she thought so slightly of. With all her tranquil wisdom, all her dignity—Charlotte had but little sweetness of disposition.

Now as always Goethe included the woman's environment in his love for herself. Even this attachment, with its accepted mystic decrees, was extended to her house and children. Food and its preparation, gifts of and requests for things to eat, play a large part in his letters to his friend.

The desire for offspring was stronger in his heart than ever before. The " little monkeys " make their appearance in a hundred letters, getting presents—and instruction. He would let little Fritz play and pick flowers and fruit in his garden all day long, would toss pancakes for him, and invite him in to look for Easter-eggs.

Amid his innumerable studies, duties, activities, and speculations Goethe laid all the tenderness of his nature, fresh as in his adolescence, at the beloved woman's feet. " I've spent this whole week in tending the flowers for your bouquet to-morrow. . . . If I ever return to earth after death, I mean to implore the gods to let me love but once; and if you were not an enemy of this world I should ask for *you* as that dear companion." And even when four years had gone by he hid himself in the bushes near the street, just to see her drive past to the town. " That you should think of me or write to me, I do not ask. . . . I take everything as a favour."

Her favours consisted in being always ready for him when *he* was ready to be reverential, to instruct her, to spend himself for her. He dictated to her, sketched and read with her, taught her English and physics—he was always the giver. Her tranquil spirit poured oil upon the troubled waters of his dual nature. It never stimulated

his intellect. Nowhere do we read of her judgment's having influenced him in art or literary work; and if at first she could so judge for him in social matters, he soon surpassed her in that field.

But Charlotte von Stein did stimulate Goethe's imagination in a deeper sense than any of the women who came before her. To them he owed idyllic figures only. Two of the masterpieces of his dramatic creation were drawn from her—or more precisely, from his idea of her. These excepted, all he wrote for her in those first four years was that one elegy and some few short pieces which are not in his collected works. The first half of Goethe's life was filled with passions and is almost empty of love-poems—a very few for Friederike and Lili are all that we have, as against the hundred love-songs of the second half. And this, too, is symbolic.

But even his urgent impulse to confess himself to his friend was singularly intermittent. When he withdrew for weeks to the Wartburg—there to hearken, remote from men and business, for the strenuous inward voice—he (who once had written her diaries in his absences) now for nearly a month, and for long after his return as well, wrote never a word to her.

In the spring and at the end of the third year such absences became frequent; and by this time it was unmistakable that though he thought her more charming than ever, she seemed less of an affinity. And at the end of these weeks, though he saw her every day, he did not tell her of his resolve to go to Switzerland. She did not know of it until a few days before he left, and even then he did not tell her why he was going.

Charlotte von Stein, who figures as the sun in Goethe's sketch-books, was in her mild grave radiance much more like the moon. The beauty of Corona Schröter was to break upon Goethe like the rising sun. When soon after the beginning of his friendship with Frau von Stein

he called, with an introduction from the Duke (who had himself wooed her in the past), upon this artist in Leipzig, he wrote to Carl August: "May I be preserved, soul and body, from that angel of a Schröter woman, of whom God forbid that I should say a word of any kind. . . . For the last twenty-four hours I have scarcely been in my right senses—which means that I am in my senses a good deal too much. . . . I'll leave the actual details till I come back, as in them there are pp. . . ." These were their erotic hieroglyphics.

In the autumn he brought her to Weimar. Before that he wrote a great many letters to one of her most devoted friends: "Console the angel! If I could only spend an hour with her. . . . Never mind the handkerchiefs! And buy only the dress." With this he sent twenty *louis d'or*, and commended the middleman. Only a few of these letters (whose numbers are known) have been preserved, and none of those which he enclosed for herself; but the few we have give a picture of a headlong love affair in which a poet finds himself reflected in an artist, and the courtier lavishes presents on the singer. To the intermediary: "Send me my bill when the Fair opens. . . . I have no fears for the Schröter, her destiny is bound up with my own."

From the first day she appeared in Weimar, there to be the crowning attraction of her lover's theatre, Corona ranked as the most beautiful woman in the town. Tall, slender, and yet Junoesque, with her refined simplicity and her favourite Grecian attire, she was soon the Muse of all the masquerades. Her head (she was only twenty-five), with its tawny colouring and long curling hair, was like that of an archaically sculptured young lioness; the wonderful hand, of which the mere plaster-cast can enchant us to this day, could play upon the zither, flute, and pianoforte. Her voice, pure, soft, and slightly veiled, had the thrill of an inspired priestess's, yet its pathos was never wearying. She was as yet much too timid, too sensitive, to appear upon the public stage; quite unworldly, and not

in the least of the actress type, she had no ambition for a Court existence. She soon took her place in the little circle which was ruled by Goethe's influence, but rarely consented to join in the festivities to which she was eagerly invited. A lucid intelligence, wide culture, the mastery of three languages, skill in drawing and composition, raised her far above the level of the theatrical world; and she was never ill, she was able for anything.

How should this beautiful gifted being, the like of whom Goethe had never beheld till now, have failed to take the poet by storm? And when the figures of his imagination were actually incarnated by her, how irresistible must have been this Muse with her morning freshness! Had she not everything that the eight-years-older Charlotte lacked, and a great deal too of what Charlotte could offer? Never again was Goethe to meet a woman who, like Corona, summed up all that beauty and art had meant to him; to her alone could he have chanted those dedicatory lines:

> Es gönnten ihr die Musen jede Gunst,
> Und die Natur erschuf in ihr die Kunst.[1]

As unhesitatingly as he had courted her in Leipzig, he now appropriated the lovely creature. Frau von Stein, who would not allow him to visit her at her country-seat, had left him languishing in Weimar for two months. When she returned to the town in early November, Corona had just arrived and was beginning to rehearse *Die Mitschuldigen*, with its author in one of the parts. There are no letters from Goethe; but his diary, though by way of keeping the secret, gives it away by indications clear as daylight: "*16th November.* Rehearsal. Corona at night! . . ." A suspensive punctuation which does not reappear for decades. "*17th.* . . . Love-making. Rehearsal! . . . Corona." And yet he writes to Charlotte of her remoteness: "Ah, these eight weeks have played havoc with me, and I am still the completely sensual man."

[1] The Muses showered favours on her head,
And Art in her by Nature's self was bred.

The most remarkable symptom is that instead of exulting in his natural attraction towards a beautiful and gifted woman, Goethe—he who prostrated himself before the laws of Nature—felt remorseful, and confessed his remorse to the other, from whom nevertheless he concealed his *bonne fortune*. His friend had jealously forbidden him to yield to the seductions of other women, while refusing to yield to him herself; she stayed away from the performances because Corona was acting with Goethe, and for that reason actually refused to witness the first night of *Iphigenie*! Was she really the poet's Muse? Their relation was falsified in a way which was utterly unlike him. For Goethe was immensely reticent, but he never lied.

The swift passion was soon to be complicated by the Duke's rivalry with Goethe.

Possibly Goethe, remorseful and unhappy between these two strangely constituted women, was inclined to welcome the rival as one who would serve as an occasional substitute for himself, especially as his increasing melancholy may have made him feel unequal to Corona's brilliant personality. Only one word relating to the situation between these three young people has been preserved to us. In February Goethe's diary says: "In the evening I caught Corona and the Duke at L." Such scanty indications also throw some light upon the difficult days he must have had with his idolized friend; and it is vain to seek expression for all that is unexpressed in the situation.

Corona's share in the character of Iphigenia can only be divined. When Goethe wrote this work in his fourth year at Weimar—though its theme must surely belong to the first—he was wholly under the more intimate spell of Frau von Stein. All that is spiritual in Iphigenia is certainly drawn from her, as he knew her in their best days; the dramatic presentment and the outward semblance reflect Corona's influence.

During the six weeks of mere manual labour at this play, the division of Goethe's energies is made manifest.

" I've brooded all day long on *Iphigenie*, until my head is spinning. . . . It will be very difficult to get it finished at all, so interrupted as I am, with only one foot in the stirrup of my hippogryph's saddle. I've sent for musicians to soothe my spirit and free the phantoms of my brain." A week later: " My spirit is gradually escaping, through those lovely sounds, from the red tape of documents and protocols. A quartette is going on in the green room next door, and I am sitting and gently summoning the distant phantoms to my side."

Then again four days of " attendance at the Council and the War-Commission, of recruiting and street-surveying work."

From Apolda sounded lamentations about fuss and everlasting calls upon his time. " No chance for the play here; it's damnable. The King of Tauris ought to be holding forth, as if there were no starving stocking-weavers in Apolda." There are lengthy notes about the weavers of the town, and how the overseers cheated them in the weighing-out of goods. " *9th March.* . . . Alone in the evening. Pulled the three acts together."

Goethe's rendering of Orestes was a rendering of himself, at one remove as it were; that was why he was so good in the part of that daemonic personage. These years, this very point of time, saw him set foot upon a path which was to be his way of escape from his innate duality—but this was only the first step.

In *Iphigenie* Goethe chose a tragic way of soaring above the chaos within; a year earlier, when he was in a state no less susceptible, he had administered a kick to himself by means of a farce. In the *Triumph der Empfindsamkeit* (*The Triumph of Sensibility*) the dolorous Prince, who travels about with a mechanical imitation of Nature and adores a doll, is made to ask: " Are my pistols loaded? " " As usual," is the answer, " but . . . for God's sake don't shoot yourself! " And hidden within his doll, among straw and shavings, they find copies of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Werthers Leiden*!

But immediately after this the same Prince breaks out into the splendid lines, beginning:

> Dich ehr' ich, heiliges Licht,
> Reiner, hoher Gefühle Freund![1]

This amazing farce is a testimony to the confusion of styles arising from Goethe's duality; and as it was written in his third Weimar year, it is plain proof that the author of *Iphigenie*, when he let himself go, could still express the contrasted sides of his nature as uproariously as he could tragically.

Drawing served him as a sedative. It was one way of compelling his soul to tranquillity; and it was no less precious to him as a means of perpetuating the memory of such hours of quietude.

But then, once more, his critical spirit would be vexed by his own inadequacy, and he complained that he would never be an artist. This, too, was quite a Faustean situation; and in these particular years it made him now melancholy, now happy, and then furious with himself again. A hundred letters testify to this; and thus, while he was striving towards unity, the problem of his state assailed him as it were from every side.

His worldly activities inevitably made the spiritual struggle still more complicated. To wear himself out in the daily round of work, which had once been represented by the exaltations of literary production, now became his definite purpose—he regarded it as his destiny, and it *was* his danger. Writing took a secondary place; he looked upon his genius as a beautiful, irrelevant gift.

In those first four years he wrote only seven or eight longer poems; for the rest, we have but a quantity of brief quasi-axiomatic verses—exhortations to himself and his friends.

Again and again we ask ourselves: "Why all this? Why all the road-making and recruiting, wire-pulling and

[1] I praise thee, holiest light,
Of pure, exalted emotions friend!

spiritual discipline at Court? Why did he learn to command and obey, to wear himself out in actualities for which another would have served as well, and let his incomparable poetic powers lie fallow?" And from the hills he loved we seem to hear these Faust-like lines to Destiny resound:

> Mein Carl und ich vergessen hier,
> Wie seltsam uns ein tiefes Schicksal leitet,
> Und ach, ich fühl's, im Stillen werden wir
> Zu neuen Szenen vorbereitet.
> Du hast uns lieb, du gabst uns das Gefühl:
> Dass ohne dich wir nur vergebens sinnen,
> Durch Ungeduld und glaubensleer Gewühl
> Voreilig dir niemals was abgewinnen.
> Du hast für uns das rechte Mass getroffen,
> In reine Dumpfheit uns gehüllt,
> Das wir, von Lebenskraft erfüllt,
> In holden Gegenwart der lieben Zukunft hoffen.[1]

And still more audible was the inward voice to himself, when he praised the country at a later period, "where you continue to lead a tintinnabulating sort of existence between enjoyment and its contrary."

In his fourth year there, he felt on an official trip "like someone coming out of a town where he has long drunk the water from a well in the market-place, to which all the streams of the neighbourhood were conducted. And then he arrives, after walking and walking, at the source of one of those streams; and is never tired of

[1] Here do my Carl and I forget
Our sense of thee, O stern Predestination;
And yet methinks the stage is set
E'en now for some supreme initiation.
Thou lik'st us well—hast taught us both to feel
That thou art lord, and we but prematurely
Strain to the goal, nor ever know it surely.
And thou hast known the measure best befitting—
Kept us in passive trust enwrapped,
Aware of energies untapped,
Our future hopes to present bliss submitting.

gazing at the ceaseless ripple of the water, and delights in every weed and pebble."

In all these reflections about his work there is never a word of its value or helpfulness, little either of its management or efficiency—he is scantly concerned with anything but what stimulates or absorbs his moral sense. Everywhere we can discern that flight from his illimitable self to a restricted, definite sphere of activity, that humble faith in a slow process of evolution, that proud aloofness from the turmoils of the world—which when all was said but came and went before his poet's eye as do the changes of scene in a theatre.

This symbolic way of looking at his work gave rise to a more concentrated mood; he became more self-confident than he had been for years, and his tone was more virile:

> Schaff, das Tagwerk meiner Hände,
> Hohes Glück, dass ich's vollende!
> Lass, o lass mich nicht ermatten!
> Nein, es sind nicht leere Träume:
> Jetzt nur Stangen, diese Bäume
> Geben einst noch Frucht und Schatten.[1]

He saw more clearly, and avoided, the suicidal results of his former irresolute way of life, and strove for concentration and reposefulness.

This dread of spiritual disintegration stood like a stern incorruptible sentinel in the background of Goethe's worldly life; and—fifty years before he made his dying Faust perceive the phantom form of Care—he implored it, if it must disturb his equilibrium at moments, at least to enlighten him:

> Kehre nicht in diesem Kreise
> Neu und immer neu zurück!

[1] Yield, O thou my daily striving,
Best of all the joys of living,
This—to see the consummation!
Empty dreams? Nay, never, never!
Naked boughs, but not for ever:
Fruit and foliage—my creation!

Lass, o lass mir meine Weise,
Gönn, o gönne mir mein Glück!
Soll ich fliehen? Soll ich's fassen?
Nun, gezweifelt ist genug.
Willst du mich nicht glücklich lassen,
Sorge, nun, so mach mich klug.[1]

But he remained the victim of his duality. When he was thirty Wieland could still describe him as a man who was nearly always in a state of exasperation, though he (Wieland) had happened to hit on a good-tempered day.

So, in creating his Orestes, he had not overcome him; and when Goethe was twenty-seven Lavater was to hear this striking declaration: "All your ideals shall not prevent me from being genuine, and good and bad—like Nature!"

At that time he would still write inflammatory farces, the attacks on the Court being merely toned down a little. All the dualism of his youth flames forth in his words, at thirty, to the actor Iffland: "Take my advice and do your damnedest, never anything less, whether in the lowest farce or the loftiest tragedy! The fellow who is fit for anything worth speaking of is contemptible if he's content with mediocrity. Ugh!" (and he got into a highly excited state). "Excelsior, Excelsior—or you'll stick in the mud!"

It is clear that no one could really influence this man. It was not Frau von Stein who formed that spirit—at most she was the harder diamond which could often grind down Goethe's angles. Like Herder before her, she was symbolic of an epoch on whose threshold he had entered before he met her.

But since he did not meet her at so propitious a moment,

[1] Nay, thou shalt not haunt me ever,
Coming back and back to me!
Let me live—I willed thee never,
Grant me rest at last from thee!
Shall I fly? Or boldly grasp it?
He who questions thus replies.
Joy—if never I may clasp it,
Troubled spirit, make me wise!

since he never was (generally speaking) so intent on self-development and so able to go the right way about it as in the ten years of his first Ministerial work, the influence of this woman was more transient than Herder's. For the chaos in his soul was still far too immanent for any attainment of that celestial harmony, her ideal of which he reverenced and strove to realize in himself.

His nerves were rent in the attempt: " Feverish depression. . . . Strain, depression, and religiosity. . . . Fever at night. . . . Strange swift melancholy alternations of feeling." Such were the repeated entries in his diary. Or else he would be " very sad without knowing why. . . . I sent for the woman clarinet-player. . . . It was all splendid, but my heart was like a log." Bad weather put him out of temper; he began to be his own weather-prophet.

And yet the passage of those years, in which for the first time he could feel as one transferred from a boat upon the high seas to a steady-going vessel, was richer than any earlier period in happy prospects and sensations. Ἀγαθὴ τύχη was his favourite motto for a while: a happy dispensation, blissful hours—so familiar to his thought was the wellnigh untranslatable phrase that in his diary he used the Greek abbreviation.

This epoch, from twenty-six to thirty, held fewer disappointments for Goethe than any that went before. " Strivings of the heart. . . . Vague ardencies. . . . For I am so happy. . . . I must accept good fortune as my mistress—and recognize that that is why she is always urging me on, as one whom she loves." And once, all of a sudden, quite irrelevantly, he sums up this period in a note of four lines to Frau von Stein. The words are Rembrandtesque in their chiaroscuro: " The joy of life darkens my spirit."

Everything he enjoyed was for Goethe a gift from the gods; he always knew that they might bereave him of it. At first he still felt as though wandering reluctantly: " Suppose I had to leave this land, with my staff in my

hand," he asked himself, and burst into tears; yet felt in himself "the force even to bear that. The force—that means the passivity." To brace himself for suffering —in thoughtful moments that seemed to him the aim of all his discipline; unlike Prometheus, who in truth was never the only symbol of that nature, always aiming at self-control as it was.

Wonderful—how henceforth Goethe sought to reconcile his faith in an appointed destiny with the most strenuous form of endeavour, striving in its flexible vigour against immovable force. It was as though he sought to wrest a favourable intention from the Olympian decree, though it were but by the faintest of indications. For the next fifty years this was to him the dearest of all his spiritual processes; and as his daemon clung to the idea of destiny, but his genius to that of relentless self-mastery, the drama now beginning seemed sometimes to be paving the way to the equilibrium which would reconcile all dualities. His self-discipline in holding the balance true between desires and energies becomes more and more evident from this time forward.

Signs of superstition multiply; certain days of the year are looked upon as propitious or ominous; his esoteric speculations lead him to secrecy, as also his greater worldly wisdom and growing distrust for men. He seeks oracular answers in the brightening or obscuring of the constellations, believes in omens, and at the end of this epoch he listens to the sound of a waterfall and cries:

> Seele des Menschen, wie gleichst du dem Wasser,
> Schicksal des Menschen, wie gleichst du dem Wind![1]

During these years of his most pronounced phase of worldliness Goethe always resorted to seclusion from social life when he wanted to commune with himself.

[1] Spirit of man, thou art like to the water,
Fortune of man, thou art like to the wind!

His garden, his friend, his drawing were only the daily sedatives. Though he frequented society to fortify himself and measure himself with others, he was conscious of some uneasiness at the rarity of his solitary hours, and could write half-ironically, half-sadly: "Then for a wonder I stayed at home, alone. Sat down in my chimney-corner and read." At another time: "I have . . . nothing in common with these people, nor they with me; some actually imagine they are fond of me, but they aren't in the least." Or else: "My destiny is completely hidden from my fellow-creatures—they can hear and see nothing of it." At the end of two years he withdrew quite alone to the Wartburg, leaving the Duke and his companions "to their boar-hunting" below in Eisenach. Even Knebel's arrival worried him. For weeks he abode there in solitude, completely idle. A stranger who forced an entry compared his taciturnity to that of an Englishman, "who should stand before one, glum and cold, as if in a fit of spleen."

At this time he wrote to a friend that he was "dead to the world," though people were amusing themselves with fables about him, as of yore with the *Werther* fables.

And he was twenty-eight, world-renowned, a Minister, the friend of a Prince, of remarkable women, of distinguished men!

The deeper his absorption in worldly affairs, the more he avoided the intrigues connected with them. "Formerly my soul was like a city with low walls, which had a mountain-fortress at its back. I guarded the fortress, and left the town defenceless both in peace and war; but in these days I am beginning to make that stronger too. . . . Alas! the iron bands around my heart grow more and more constrictive, till at last it will be completely impenetrable. . . . The higher the sphere of society the more contemptible is its comedy; and I will take my oath that no clowning at a country-fair is as revolting as the attitude of the classes, from the highest to the lowest, towards each other. I worship the high gods, and yet I feel it is in me

to bid them eternal defiance if they should ever choose to behave towards us mortals as do their human prototypes."

What with his official life, his reclusiveness, his friend, and the Duke, there was little room for other friends. Many of them were already out of sight, as it were. "Remember me to Lotte," he wrote to Kestner, "and if I occasionally put on the official manner, the rest of me is very much the same old Goethe. . . . Apropos—is Lotte still as cheeky as ever?" Four years after *Werther*!

Lenz and Klinger, the friends of his youth, soon followed Goethe to Weimar, not by his request. He did not wish to be reminded of what he had been—and still less to remind the Weimar folk. Both men quickly left the place.

Even Merck got it hot, when it was a question of Goethe's dexterous establishment of his position at Weimar. He was prevented from writing about the Court and social conditions at Weimar. But Merck was undoubtedly the one who knew most about Goethe's real opinions, because he alone could understand the active side of Goethe's life.

In two decades Goethe made only one friend in that new world of Court and society. This was Major von Knebel; and their intimacy was of slow growth. Besides Wieland—with whom his relation was a cordial but not a very intimate one—there was Herder once again; when he came to Weimar at Goethe's request Goethe superintended the furnishing of a house for him. No sooner had Herder arrived than his capricious temper brought him into collision with the Court and society in general; and so the younger man involuntarily became a sort of protector to the elder. But Herder got over these difficulties, and at that time laid the foundation for his second masterpiece. He and his wife (who soon, it is true, developed some jealousy of Goethe's other friends), together with Knebel, Wieland, and Frau von Stein, were in those years the sole members of Goethe's "little public," to whom he would read scenes or chapters from the works he was engaged upon.

As to Lavater, Goethe's liking kept equal pace with his exasperation. Already Lavater's intolerance was greatly endangering their friendship, for he was increasingly persistent in urging his pagan friend to adopt the path to salvation which *he* believed in.

Despite all this, Goethe loved Lavater's active benevolence, called him the most humane of human beings; and when at last he set forth to meet him, begged him beforehand—but in friendly words—not to talk about religion.

For at the end of this epoch he again went on a journey, and again to Switzerland. But it was no flight this time. With his thirtieth year Goethe's vitality was growing in force, and he felt its inspiration. On his twenty-ninth birthday we have this: "A queer sensation, this entering on one's thirtieth year. And many points of view are changed." Goethe, who combined the passive patience of a plant with the analytic spirit of a botanist, was unerring in his perception of the periodical ebb and flow of his vitality. This knowledge he gradually developed into a source of strength.

Just then he must have felt something like a farewell to youth. And he also believed the Duke's development to be proceeding more rapidly.

After innumerable talks between the two in the course of these four years, upon every topic under the sun, from the complexities of the heart to the finances of Weimar, we now find indications of a crisis. Some of Goethe's notes point to his having adopted a new plan, that of trying the influence of change of scene upon the Duke, which signified new duties for himself—though he too felt desirous of a temporary escape from the limitations of Weimar.

In the early days of August he began a serious review of the decade which had just expired; he sorted and burnt his papers, and with remarkable brevity summed up his youth in this modest outline sketch:

"A quiet retrospect on my life, on the perplexity, restlessness, curiosity of my adolescence, drifting in every direction, intent on finding something satisfactory. The peculiar pleasure I took in the mysterious, in the dimly divined relations of things. My inadequate grasp of all scientific matters, and the way I would then let them drop; the sort of modest complacency which ran through everything I wrote in those days. My narrow-minded gyrations in matters human and divine. The barrenness of my activity, and even of my practical ideas and writings; the time thrown away in vague sensations and nebulous passions, which were of so very little service to me; and here is my life half-over, and there is no turning back. Nay, rather I am like a man who has saved himself from drowning, and whom the beneficent sun is drying and warming. The time I have spent in the turmoil of the great world, since October '75, I dare not as yet envisage as a whole. . . . May the idea of purity, which embraces the very food I eat, become ever clearer to my spirit!"

Yet at the same time he told his people at home to expect him and the Duke on a visit; and from his letter there plainly emerges the remoteness and reserve of his chosen isolation—in the part of Goethe—from his parents. The letter is cool, and begins without personal invocation: "My wish to see you once again has hitherto been only restrained by circumstances. But now an opportunity seems to offer. . . . I want to find you [his mother] in the best of spirits, and wish you such a good-day as never before. I have everything that a man could wish for—a life in which I daily exert myself and daily develop; and this time I come to you in good health, untroubled by a passion or a perplexity, free from vague restlessness, like one beloved of the gods who has reached the meridian of his life and hopes that past sufferings will work to his future good, and has moreover steeled his heart against all sufferings that may be to come."

There was a purpose in this. The man who, conscious of standing on the watershed of youth, on the heights of his

material and spiritual existence, had but now held the most humble-minded dialogue with his soul, a dialogue which might have been that of a vanquished creature . . . that very man strides like a conqueror into the house and land of his fathers, where once he had known himself to be completely misunderstood. Not a word of the son's own joy at coming home—nothing but formality, pride, biography. And yet that son loved his parents in his own way. But here is the first monumental sign of that double life which for so long could obscure the picture of Goethe's old age for contemporaries and posterity.

In his next letter he gave orders about their quarters in his father's house—all in the imperative tone of an Imperial Court-Marshal.

However, on the birthday itself he felt " frolicsome and free." Then: " I got my nomination as Privy-Councillor. The turmoil of terrestrial affairs, and also all sorts of similar private feelings, take possession of me. It is better not to write down these inward agitations."

By this comment, which has no parallel in Goethe's diaries, we perceive that he could be reserved with himself, or at any rate with his pen.

The impending trip turned into a sort of review of his youth. A good-humoured, yet rather derisive, glance was cast upon Frankfurt. At Strasburg he left the rest of the party and took his way to Sesenheim. " The second daughter of the house had loved me in days gone by, better than I deserved. . . . I had been obliged to leave her at a moment when my departure wellnigh cost her her life; and her reference to the delicacy which had never since left her was tactfully slight. But she was extremely cordial and friendly to me from the first moment of my arrival, when I startled her by suddenly appearing on the threshold." Only eight years since he had ridden away! The soul can travel far.

Immediately after this, Strasburg and Lili. " And I found the lovely minx playing with a doll-like creature of seven weeks old, and her mother with them. There

too . . . I asked after everybody and looked into every corner. And I found, to my delight, that the dear girl is very happily married."

Soon he was standing on the glaciers which were the aim of the trip; and his spirit was untroubled as the light on the snowy mountain-side, and cold as the ice-forms around him, "unperturbed by circumscribing passion." At heart he was sad in that saddening landscape—he saw in its colourlessness the reflection of himself. "One dimly guesses at the origin and life of these strange shapes," he wrote of a ravine. "However and whenever such things come to be, these masses have fused into large, simple forms, according to the weight and similarity of their parts." And we perceive how self-contemplation amid the mountains can take Nature in its stride.

In this exalted mood he was sometimes annoyed by the Duke's boisterous conception of "playing up," and when once they were rolling stones down a glacier and the Duke was inclined to overdo it, "I told him that that would do, and we couldn't get any more fun out of it!"

On their way back they visited some of the South German Courts; and Goethe, who knew only the unusually cultured Weimar one, was filled with contempt for heirs-apparent and princelings, turned the cold shoulder to everyone, and was bored to extinction. "They are badly organized, and consist chiefly of noodles and rascals. . . . My endeavour now is to find out what these so-called men of the world are really made of"; and he drew up a satirical list of such typical courtiers, which he once tried to dramatize—it wound up with the description of a lackey "who has more to say than most of them."

Such was the confidence he now felt in himself, such the pilgrim's incorruptible outlook on Nature and humanity. Only once was the self-conscious young man exposed to temptation. In Lausanne he paid a visit to the Marchesa Branconi.

This was Goethe's first encounter with a renowned society-beauty. Few European women and scarce one

German—for the Marchesa was German—of those with whom Goethe came into contact seem to have been of so rare a quality as this flawless creature, who as the one-time mistress of a Duke was no less notorious in her day than Lady Hamilton in hers.

But he, in her presence, asked himself "whether she really *is* so beautiful. A mind—a way of life—a frankness . . . one positively doesn't know where one is"; but he was unaffectedly relieved to find that he was not going to assume the execrable position of one of her adorers, "and melt like butter in the sun all the year round, *par devoir*."

That was all the impression made by a fascinating woman upon the thirty-yeared Goethe, who never possessed any beauty but Corona. Yet perhaps not all. On his departure he was struck by what he was abandoning of his own free will, and said to one of her cavaliers: "What could not that woman make of a man!" It was Goethe's destiny always to chase the moment, yet hesitate to grasp it. Was she not more dazzling in every way than Charlotte at home? Had she not made advances to him? And yet there was that dread of losing himself, which lies at the heart of all the renunciations in an artist's life.

So that when he finally stood on the Gothard Pass he was cooled-down in more than one sense. For the second time he gazed southward from the Pass, but "even now Italy does not draw me to her. This trip is not going to be of any service to the Duke, I can see; there is no sense in staying away any longer; I shall see *you* again—all this turns my eyes for the second time from the Land of Promise (which I hope I shall behold before I die) and draws my spirit homeward to my own humble roof, where I shall be happier than ever to see you by my hearth and give you a good dinner."

Extremely sensible and even Philistine are these remarks—and for the jealous friend to whom he writes not one word of intimate longing, merely *Ihr* and *Euch*! At the same time he wrote to Knebel, grimly saying that

casting one's skin was always a hellish business; and if he were to turn savage again, Knebel could not say he had not been warned by this letter.

A new note of all-embracing self-restraint had become audible, passion of every kind was to be strenuously kept at bay, his youth seemed to have flickered out. When Lavater sent him a disciple Goethe wrote these memorable words: " He is indeed akin to me, and trusts me. But alas, I am conscious of my thirty years and worldly-mindedness. Far as I have travelled from this state of germination, of burgeoning, I know it when I see it, and rejoice; in spirit I am with it, but my heart is far away. My soul is filled with vast conceptions of which this boy cannot so much as dream; a new realm opens to my energies; and so I cannot turn back, vicariously as it were, into the dewy vale where the sweet turtle-doves coo to their morning-mates."



AGED 32

CHAPTER VI

Duty

> The daily work which is laid upon me, and which daily becomes at once easier and harder, demands my waking and dreaming consciousness.

THERE were three gods to whose images Goethe, in his thirty-first year, offered praise and prayer. Tyche, the "happy dispensation," occupied the central place; at her right stood Terminus, the setter of boundaries, the moderate-minded counsellor; but on the left was Genius with the torch, striding steadfastly forward, urgent and eager. Such was the strange Ex Voto which, after the return from Switzerland, Goethe erected in the shady park at Weimar—more as a monitory than a reminiscent symbol.

Goethe entered upon his fourth decade in a mood of buoyant seriousness. He was clearer about himself, less imaginative—a thorough man of the world. He observed with amusement that his adversaries at Court were full of congratulations upon the trip with the Duke, for Weimar found the home-coming ruler quieter and more sober-minded.

Tyche was the central star in Goethe's firmament. He was intent on complete submission to the happy fate which had drawn him from afar to this sphere of activity; he meant to hearken to the voice of worldly wisdom; and his genius, though it stood on the left side, the side of the heart, was to be near him only in the capacity of a mute, beloved presence. The daemon seems to have vanished. We are in contemplation of the most highly organized of attempts—initiated by a man who demanded from his nature the very utmost of which it was capable—to attain, by means of forced labour, the clearer atmosphere in which he could draw as full a breath as mortals may,

the atmosphere for which his native turbulence had craved through fifteen years. He hoped that he was entering on an epoch—and could not know that it was to last but a year.

His first sensation was of a refreshing satisfaction in his exertions. "The greatest gift I have to thank the gods for is the swiftness and variety of my ideas. This enables me to divide a good day into a million parts and make of it a lesser eternity. . . . No one who doesn't deny himself in every possible way is fit or able to rule. . . . *Nemo coronatur nisi qui certaverit ante.* So I take the rough with the smooth. . . . I succeed in everything I put my hand to."

Nowhere in the whole course of Goethe's confessions do we retrieve so cheerful a tune, underscored though it is with some unrest, as in this thirty-first year. It is a well-made—one might say a well-invented—melody, which has not yet the staying-power to develop; and so it occasionally breaks off while its tones are still in possession of our ears.

For all of a sudden, from one day to another—or indeed within the compass of a single day—this happy mood would change; and Tyche, who had smiled on him a moment ago, would turn her Janus-head and like one of the Dark Sisters gaze wide-eyed and sombre into Goethe's own dark eyes. Then in a flash would rise that isolating sheet of glass which he must always have beside him as a shield against the world. "If only men were not so poor in spirit, and those who are rich so helpless!"

And the man engaged in social activities felt an ever-growing contempt for the men he laboured for. "In our youth we are confident that we can build palaces for our fellow creatures, and when it comes to the point we find it as much as we can do to get their dung-hills out of the way."

Even in this year of chosen submission to the actualities of the present, Goethe found a refuge in his confident sense of a future. "New mysteries are being revealed

to me. Some day I shall have a good time. I am drilling myself to be ready for the biggest possibilities. . . . What I intend for myself and others is hidden from every eye. The best thing I have is the unbroken silence which I preserve with the world at large; in that I live and grow, and what I gain thereby not fire nor sword can take from me."

He used his intellect like a violin; and the more stringently he manipulated the bow, the more closely he kept his eye upon the strings he touched. And as in more tranquil periods he studied the laws of his being, taking the lull in the tempest, with its resulting depths and shallows, as an opportunity for diagnosis of the storm that should next blow up, so he was particularly attentive to his bodily health when he was feeling particularly well. In this year of accentuated self-control there are very many notes about the laws of his constitution.

For some time now he had taken to dictating, because he found that the manual labour of writing got on his nerves and made him lose the thread; and though he would make a rough draft beforehand, his verse, prose, and letters thenceforth assumed something of an oral tone, so much so that in his old age he once made a list of odd mistakes occasioned by his amanuensis having heard him wrong. This year he resolved to do more dictation than ever, because all his best ideas and images occurred to him when he was walking up and down.

He was at all times so dependent on light and warmth that he said his nature was like a flower which closes when the sun sets. He was intent on studying the cyclic alternation of good and bad days to which he was subject; he was conscious that conception, execution, arrangement —to say nothing of enthusiasms and impulses—kept a regular rhythm, no less than cheerfulness and depression, strain, elasticity and lassitude, composure and excitement; and "as I live by a strict regimen, the pace is even; and now I must work out the time and measure of my own rotation."

Still more astonishing is the dispassionate lucidity of a note made, immediately after the above, in days of volcanic energy: "This was my day for conceptions. Dullish at first, and I clung to business-matters; but soon things got livelier. . . . Walked to Tiefurt. A good idea for *Tasso*. . . . In the evening a few moments of lassitude. I must look into this. Why was it?" Next day: "The lethargy of sleep was soon banished by fresh air and water. My soul was longing for rest, even at that hour, and I should have liked to make a bolt. Pulled myself together, and dictated some of the Swiss trip. . . . No wine these last three days. I must be careful about that English beer. If I could knock off wine altogether I should be very glad."

Again Goethe was watching over the Duke as in the earlier phase; again he was ascribing all his absurd ideas to his youth; and he only smiled when Carl August, imitating him, introduced short hair at Court. He helped him with his diet-sheet, and through an awkward affair about a miscarried love-letter. His hopes for ruler and friend were renewed; some ideas of the Duke's were noted down by Goethe as worth having. He was still counting on Carl August for the self-control he had resolved on for himself.

The more he concealed his inward self from others, the more skilful he became in the management of them. He cut down his social engagements; and though he consented to join the Freemasons on the somewhat arrogant ground that he was desirous of good-fellowship, every detail of his private and public life proves that this was but a pretext concealing deeper motives.

When he visited the neighbouring Court he complained that he never felt at ease nor could be open-hearted with people unless he had lived with them for some time. But at his own Court he was tenacious of his standing, though he began to feel more and more of an alien there. When the Duke's brother met him on a walk, Goethe thought him discourteous not to have offered him hospitality. As

Court-poet he did only what he was obliged to do, rather automatically—the pageants he arranged for the winter festivities were put together bit by bit, so that when the parts were assigned he could note: "All departments fixed up."

He used ministerial changes and chances as material for his art, studying the life of a Duke of Weimar so as to dramatize it later on; and seems to have touched bottom in the paradox of this existence when he wrote these extraordinary words: "My writing is subordinated to this life—nevertheless I do permit myself, like the great King who devoted some hours daily to the flute, a frequent exercise of the talent which is peculiar to me. I have a mass of writing . . . but I need concentration and a sense of ennui before I can do anything with it."

At such moments this chosen Art of Life reduces itself *ad absurdum*; and he who had constructed it for himself realized that in a flash of insight. "Yet I feel," he writes in the middle of an outburst about this satisfaction with his work, "like a bird caught in a snare. I feel that I have wings and cannot use them." Another time he had been actually praising Marcus Antonius for not allowing himself to be absorbed in authorship—yet how did he continue? "I am, so far as in me lies, withdrawing the water from these fountains and cascades, and turning it on to the mills and irrigations; but before I can look round some evil genius turns the tap and it all runs away in a splutter. And when I think that I'm sitting on my hack and riding to the station I am in duty bound for, all of a sudden the mare under me will turn into a glorious creature with uncontrollable desires and wings, and run right away with me."

In this thirty-first year Goethe wrote nothing to speak of, beyond a burlesque on critics and literature. "This week I have something to do to it; if I can work it in between Saturday and Sunday it may be all right . . . and as I have it well in my head, twelve hours, inclusive of eating and drinking, ought to see me through. . . .

I want to snare my birds. . . . After all, it brings people together, amuses the Duke (who is to play a big part), and gets him away from Tiefurt." And so he dictated it on Sundays, just like an overworked official to whom authorship is a recreation.

Must not his unquiet nature have brooded on death in the midst of such organized drudgery? At the close of this year we have the first tangible evidence of Goethe's presentiments. If, from his youth, he had been familiar with death and always haunted by the thought of it, he now gave practical shape to these ideas. In good health and a tranquil frame of mind, he made the draft of a will, and in a curiously agitated letter struck out this arresting metaphor for his endeavour as a whole: " The daily work which is laid upon me, and which daily becomes at once easier and harder, demands my waking and dreaming consciousness. This duty grows dearer to me every day, and my aspiration is to equal the greatest men in that sphere, and in no wider one. This ardent desire to build my existence, on the basis assigned me, into a pyramid which shall cleave the upper air, outweighs all others; and I can scarcely ever for a moment forget it. I dare not delay, I am far from being a young man now, and Fate may perhaps break me in the midst of my endeavour, and the Babylonian tower survive as an unfinished stump. At any rate men shall be able to say it was a gallant attempt."

And about the same time, a few days after his thirty-first birthday, Goethe wrote on the wooden wall of a belvedere in the Thuringian forest:

Warte nur, balde
Ruhest du auch.[1]

Was Eros doing nothing, amid this labyrinth of toil, to turn the poet's thoughts aside from death?

[1] Wait but a little—
Thou too shalt rest.

When he returned from Switzerland, he visited Frau von Stein and Corona by turns; but in a week the latter's moods became a source of torment to him, and depressed him greatly. Two months later, it appears, he broke off the relation with her.

The songs he afterwards sang in her praise for contemporaries and posterity, may possibly have consoled the artist in her, but not the mistress. For he who always gave thanks for love would as invariably seek an occasion to pay tribute when he could love no longer; and immediately after their parting Goethe apotheosized Corona in an ode. Her heart can have taken no pleasure in it. It may have been six months after the rupture that he wrote the only letter from him to her which we possess:

"How often I have taken up my pen to explain myself to you! How often that explanation has hovered on my lips. . . . I cannot excuse myself without touching upon strings which may not again be sounded between us. Would to God that you would make peace without explanation, and forgive me. . . . I feel no anger against you now—don't repulse me and spoil the hours I can still spend with you. . . . If you demand more, I am ready to tell you all. Adieu! If only our relation, so long uncertain, could be clear and steadfast again! G. Thanks for the cakes and the song, and I am sending in return a gay little bird."

The weight upon his spirits lies heavy in these lines, which no one would attribute to a man of thirty. They come from the man with the furrowed brow and darkly-musing countenance whom we behold in the five busts of him by Klauer; and that man indeed has little in common with the flame of erotic life which was probably the atmosphere of this beautiful woman. The short postscript alone breathes the blither, simpler air of her artist's life; and for that Goethe was not fit, until a decade later.

And when in the summer the Marchesa Branconi arrived for a few days—and assuredly she came to see Goethe—he was more like a sculptor enraptured by her

beauty than a poet; and we get a good idea of her coquetry when we hear him make this intimate confession: "I behaved to her as I would to a Saint or a Princess. And if that was only my illusion, I could not have wished to sully such an image by the delights of a passing desire. But God defend us from a serious tie, for she would drag my soul out of my body with it."

Never was there greater evidence for Goethe's effort, at this time, to escape from the sensual spell of women that he might breathe a presumably clearer air in a more ethereal atmosphere.

In the melancholy Court-lady our disabused worldling had the idol he really wanted during this year of strenuous self-control. His letters are tenderer, calmer, more fraternal in tone. The more he immersed himself in work, the farther he stood from poetry, the closer did Charlotte von Stein draw to him, for only in worldly things was she ever his counsellor. The rare quality of her spirit, early ripened by sorrow, made her an ideal figure for Goethe; but as the Minister's companion this older woman, with her twenty years' experience of Court, could be no more than a friend, a sister.

And that was what she preferred. Instead of playing the Egeria and urging the poet back to his natural sphere, she sedulously bound him to the world. The end of their relation will demonstrate what she meant for him at this period.

He was lighter-handed in making up their quarrels. He sent her a tiny broom to brush away the things she did not like in him; and when she became jealous about his writing verses to her youthful cousins, he promised never to do it again. Though he confided all his interests to her, he felt none of the earlier need to unburden himself in poetry.

Yet we have a witness to how much, in this very year, he withheld from his friend. Never again was Goethe's diary, which had been wont to resemble a mere calendar of the passing months, so heavily scored with self-con-

fessions. But his numerous letters to Charlotte, written in the most critical moments of development, are devoid of any real revelations of his deeper self. He was sternly teaching himself to be reticent about almost everything.

With this new, this thirty-second year, began a new era for Goethe's soul. It was to last for six years. At its beginning his love, for all its fondness, was preparing a change of front.

Throughout the five years he had lived in Weimar Goethe had loved his friend; but with the new turn in his life, which was always moving round hers, she was obliged to adopt a new form of devotion to the man who for five years had been the centre, the very sum and substance, of her days.

The crisis was brought on by Goethe, in an impassioned appeal. It was the first outbreak of all the darkling energies which had been so long kept under; Eros was merely the messenger on whom was laid the task of proclaiming the new dispensation. He wrote, suddenly, from his house to hers, rent by some erotic conflict of which we know nothing.

"What you ended by saying to-day has hurt me very much; and if the Duke had not been with me as I climbed the hill I should have wept out my pain. . . . But it has had the result of turning me, with all my thronging ideas, into a child again—utterly perplexed, quite in the dark about myself, though I can judge for others as by some all-consuming flame of fire. . . . If this must be so, I shall have to avoid you at the moments when I need you most. It terrifies me to have to destroy my best hours with you, for before I could be so complaisant I should have to rend every individual hair from my head. And then to be so blind, so callous! Have pity on me!"

She read this, and her heart stood still. In a flash the Platonic soul-mate saw her five years' work threatened. Goethe's conquest of the senses, chastening of the spirit,

had been purely artificial; and now the Greek pagan in him was defying her asceticism.

He tried at first to conform to her wishes and hold himself in: "Only I implore you to tell yourself daily that everything which may displease you in me comes from a source of which I am not master." They were reconciled; but the erotic spark had flashed out afresh, and was no longer to be extinguished. In his diary that symbol of the sun becomes more and more frequent . . . then suddenly the book breaks off, is mute for eight months, and not until August is it resumed with the words: "This half-year has been a very significant one for me."

A physical crisis, at this time, testifies to the spiritual one; he says he is "mostly ailing," but helping on the cause of social life.

During these weeks his wooing became more urgent than ever before. He had no sooner left her neighbourhood and gone to the Countess Werther's castle (she was the Duke's mistress) than he drew a grand composite picture of their five years' conflict—but not as one who tenderly pleaded with her. No, as a proud antagonist; and he implied conditions in his chosen metaphor! "I have been comparing my heart to a robbers' stronghold, of which you have now taken possession. The rabble has been driven forth, and now it's your business to guard it. We can keep our possessions only by taking a jealous pride in them. . . . You hold it now, and gained it neither by force nor craft; in a case of voluntary surrender people are bound to be extremely magnanimous, and reward the confidence shown them!"

Guardianship and jealousy; obligations and rewards—quite new words. And simultaneously he reinforced his attack by singing the praises of another woman, prettier and younger, in whose hourly company he was living. This gave him a weapon against his friend. Why otherwise should he have made such a point of admitting his weakness for the lovely lady to her?

"She seems to give everyone just what he wants . . .

to live her life in other people's. The reason why the tune she plays is so lovely is that she doesn't touch every note, but only the special one desired. . . . What genius does in all the arts, she does in the art of life. . . . I have still three days with nothing to do but look at her; in that time I propose to master many more of her attributes."

And so on for pages, affecting to be merely the psychologist intent on analysing a new phenomenon, but most artfully choosing every phrase so as to show his friend where *she* falls short. After years of groundless jealousy she felt, reading this, that real danger threatened her. And next day, he continued:

"She loves the Duke more nobly than he loves her, and in that mirror I have beheld myself, and seen that you too love me more nobly than most of us can love at all. But I don't give up, I feel I am challenged to the combat, and I beg the Graces to show every possible favour to my passion, and go on showing it. . . ."

But then, the next instant, he is all self-surrender; he flings his prudence to the winds in one comprehensive gesture, and falls at her feet with this supreme appeal: "My soul has grown into yours; I may say what I will—you *know* that I am inseparable from you, and that neither heights nor depths can part us . . . and my novitiate has surely been long enough for me to know what I am talking about. Adieu. I can't write *Sie* any more, just as I could not say *Du* for such ages." After his return he sent her a few more tender little notes, which by their use of *Sie* betray the tension of these early days at home.

Suddenly, with the last weeks of March, a new note is struck—that of one who has conquered after long wooing, almost the note of youth:

"Your love is as the morning and evening star to me. . . . I cannot tell you, and scarcely dare comprehend myself, the overwhelming effect of your love in my inmost being. It is a state which, old as I am, I have never known before. . . . Adieu, my New One! . . . I kissed your

soul in little Fritz. . . . My five years' love passes before my vision in all its beautiful pageant of ennobling emotions. Oh, if I could only tell you all I owe you! . . . Farewell, and be sure that you make me very happy. . . ." And so on and so on for ten days, full of such phrases and images as he had not known for five years.

" My last throw." So the mature woman, scenting the crisis as she surveyed her friend's most recent letters, may have said to herself. The crowning proof of her art would be to keep him now, and keep him for evermore. She did not dare venture on a separation and a marriage in Weimar; besides, it would make difficulties for him, in his position, if he were involved. The value of the gift she had so long refused had been, she judged, enhanced by the refusal. Moreover, she was in her thirty-ninth year; and Goethe was thirty-one. It was the end of her youth—though she was looking younger, as a medallion of her testifies: fuller cheeks, a rounder chin, even the ascetic lips more sensuously curved.

And yet Charlotte von Stein lost her friend, just when she believed she had won him wholly. A justice deeper-lying than she knew, a justice immanent in the decrees of Eros, bade her atone in the end for the too long-drawn-out refusal. Now she could make him happy but for a little while, and could never intoxicate him; and she, who had woven so strange a spell by her remoteness, must now as time went on lose all by her surrender.

It was too late, after so many fruitless appeals, to establish the illusion of perfect communion with the most clear-sighted of men; and yet it was too soon to have solved an enigma of the heart which might have continued to enthral him by its ambiguity.

Thus the period of passionate love-letters was a brief one—it lasted barely five weeks. He was once more haunted by the superstition of throwing a ring into the sea, for he " added up his happiness to an incalculable amount." By May the tone was quieter. " If you will permit me to tell you, at sunset, that I love and revere you

as much as ever." Then he went this length: "The Werther lady wrote me a most charming little note in returning *Wilhelm Meister*. The Schröter comes at noon. I am and remain the favourite of women, and as such too you must love me."

Never before had Goethe so described himself—nor was it at all often true of him, in that sense.

The playful tone of the possessor sounds in a postscript: "'You know who is my little love,' as the old song has it." There is something painful about these ostensibly light words, as used in a letter to a saddened older woman by a man whose soul was struggling towards a difficult development. The phrase is the *cliché* of boy-and-girl lovers; and behind it one seems to catch a glimpse of some profound renunciation.

For Renunciation was the first word Goethe had to inscribe on the portal of the new epoch; and though it was to be written again, and very strangely, in his declining years, it was now—between his thirty-first and thirty-seventh—no sad tenebrous giving-up, as in the *Werther* period, but a manly, steadfast, yet not uncheerful relinquishment of freedom to work and write. In a grand crescendo we read of overwork and disappointments, till those inhibiting forces slowly awakened the impulse towards escape. This spectacle too proceeds with all the deliberation peculiar to his leisurely mode of development, especially as, when it begins, he had just undertaken new burdens. Not till he had fought a six-yeared combat was Goethe to break away.

The exterior difficulties were the limitations of official life, which he had to regulate; and the recusancy of the Duke, whom he had to guide; together with the opposition of the stupid world around him to a genius who, after all, had invaded their sphere by a side-door—and was not born to rule therein.

At the end of his thirty-first year he revealed to his

mother, in a long retrospective letter, the resignation which underlay all other moods. He gave her a Pisgah-sight of the broad realm he governed, yet even in that gesture there was the first hint of a farewell to it:

"And yet now, could I possibly wish for a position more fortunate in every respect for the sort of person I am than one which has something of the illimitable about it? . . . so that nothing but the weightiest considerations . . . could induce me to forsake my post; and it would show little sense of responsibility even towards myself if I . . . were to leave it for reasons of personal inconvenience, and destroy the fruit of my labours. Nevertheless, believe me when I say that a great part of the good-humour with which I can carry my load and toil from day to day, flows from the thought that all these sacrifices are free-will offerings, and that I have only to order my post-horses to retrieve with you the necessary and pleasant things of life, and absolute peace and quietness. For without that prospect, when I have to attend to the demands of others in hours of depression as though I were a serf and a day-labourer, I should feel a much greater bitterness."

Yet at this very time, when routine had sunk from the tranquil glow of a symbol into the smoulder of dull obligation, he concentrated all his capacities for action, and undertook a double burden by becoming President of the Ducal Chamber and "buckling on my armour in real earnest."

It was not exultantly, however, that the envied poet took possession of a relegated courtier's desk. Goethe, as even his opponents testify, had got up no intrigue against the President. What attraction could there have been for him in becoming Administrator of the Ducal Estates and the finances of the realm—or, as we should say, Chancellor of the Exchequer at Weimar?

Again he relied on his knowledge of the country and the people, whom he had thoroughly studied; again he underestimated the unwieldiness and complexity of the antique feudal machinery which was the motive-power for

the whole. The President was confronted by four Governments, besides three provinces with three or four estates of the realm, all of which were at variance about laws, conventions, class-distinctions—and, being accustomed to an unequal division of burdens, were determined to stick to it. Goethe now designed to challenge his colleagues in the administration, together with the assessors who stood between them and the people; he cherished far-reaching schemes for the relief of agriculture, for in his years of official travelling he had thoroughly investigated the inadequate system which prevailed.

But very soon his hand was stayed. After two short years of it, he gave up the attempt to fight single-handed (and moreover not as head of the State) against the obstinate coalition of the Tories. A victor in the grand manner he saw that he could never be. At thirty, Goethe had known why the peasant was impoverished; at thirty-two he had perceived that to partition the great estates and increase the number of lease-holders would be one way towards amelioration of conditions; at thirty-four, he wrote from the Landtag saying he was resigned, no longer involved in a foolish hopeless struggle—"although I miss many agreeable sensations associated with earlier days. . . . But alas! out of nothing can come nothing. I know very well what ought to be done, in place of all the endless shilly-shallying and all the propositions and resolutions! Meanwhile, one waters one's garden, since one can procure no rain for the country at large."

This is the period of his social embitterment; these are the experiences which were later, with their consequences of misanthropy and resignation, to make him a reactionary. "Our damnable system of consuming the very marrow of the country destroys any prospect of a green and pleasant land. . . . I go on patching up the beggar's cloak which is gradually slipping from my shoulders. . . . Our moral and political world is undermined by subterranean passages, cellars, and cess-pools . . . to whose intercommunications and those of the

creatures who inhabit them not a soul gives a thought. But to one who has some personal acquaintance with these things, it will be a good deal more comprehensible when the earthquake does arrive . . . and strange voices become audible in these clefts of the earth." Written by Goethe in Thuringia, eight years before the great Revolution broke out in Paris.

How Goethe watered his garden, how he managed the "Household," is shown in his reports. Take three letters to the Duke, for instance. He was superintending the reconstructed mines at Ilmenau, he was establishing manufactories, visiting wool-factories, carting about samples and catalogues, trying a new method of selling timber, ordering well-water to be analysed for minerals, buying a laboratory, having a castle renovated, an old hospital demolished, the arch of a bridge widened, demanding twenty *louis-d'or* from a Prince for mining-shares unpaid for, getting money out of the Jesuits for a courtier, establishing a marble-mill in a brick-factory, reckoning the profit, in a favourable season, of the Ducal corn after deducting all the demands of the Court, the servants, and the military.

He hastened to Jena, which was overwhelmed by avalanche and flood; and—as before in the Apolda fire—immersed himself in ice and water, grasping and controlling the situation. His most edifying hours were those in which he rode round his district with Batty, his farmer-friend; for Batty had no theories, but his practical common-sense exactly chimed in with those which Goethe held by. "In the smallest village, or on a desert island, I could not exist unless I were just as busy as I am here."

Thus manifold were the claims and representations which, amid his exertions, Goethe did manage to bring forward despite the age, the environment, and the fatiguing work of documentation. But though he exacted the utmost from himself and nothing from the world around him, there was one factor whose energy and good conduct were indispensable, yet whom he could not bend

to his will. Because he could not, Goethe's own energy and zest diminished. That factor was the Duke.

When five years earlier they had gone hand-in-hand, a Prince and a Prince's friend and mentor, everything had depended on their sympathy with one another. But the first lustrum had scarcely come to an end before Goethe had had to ask himself, "Have I been able to influence the Prince's mind in any way?"

Carl August would stand for Goethe's one complete failure, if he had not been a half-finished product before the latter undertook him, hoping to finish him in his own way. The rare prospect of being able to do this in the grand manner, and yet as a thoroughly humane achievement, had tempted him to touch material from which his shaping hand could at any moment be removed. Now, after these five years, he had the proof that affinity of temperament is no sure foundation for friendship or enduring influence.

For while Goethe went more deeply, and ever more earnestly, into matters human and divine, investigating society and solitude, Nature and her sources, to say nothing of Art—the Duke evaded friend and duty, family-life, every educative influence, and kept up an establishment of eighty persons in the snow-clad hills for the sake of boar-hunting, thus maintaining a few impoverished aristocrats who gave him no thanks for it, and irritating the farmers whose land was trampled down. "And all this with the best intentions, to give pleasure to himself and others. God knows if he will ever learn that fireworks at noon have no effect at all." The shoots and driving-parties, the breakneck exploits and love affairs of the Duke, oppressed the little realm with ever-growing expenditure.

Goethe wrote of these shoots: "If at the end of it all we were the richer by a single province, I should commend it; but as it only amounts to a few broken ribs, slaughtered horses, and an empty purse, I will have nothing to say to it."

With good abilities and worthy intentions, Carl August, despite faithful servants and costly tutors, wasted his time from sheer boredom, merely wearing himself out; and though he saw the right, desired the good and even insisted on it, he could never stick to anything, was for ever craving new sensations, sick of his own puerility, and with all his fine ambitions was at bottom stubborn and intractable.

The poet had taken until now to see all this; for it was only now, when he was stricter than ever with himself, that he kept a sharper eye on the Duke and began to acknowledge that he was disappointed in him.

Never had the intimacy between Prince and Poet, which had been so oddly, so idealistically, conceived, stood in greater danger, never had Goethe's standing with Carl August been more precarious than in these four or five years when he undertook the Ministry of Finance—which, in the system of State prevailing at Weimar, included that of steward to his reckless and extravagant ruler and friend. True, the Duke was obliged to promise his friend some retrenchment at Court and in his private life, before Goethe would accept such a responsibility. For already he had felt a good deal of anxiety, not to say anger, in connection with the Duke; there had been many heart-to-heart talks about economy—all fruitless. " The Duke has an essentially narrow outlook, and when he takes a bold step it is usually the result of momentary excitement; he is not logical enough to carry out a far-reaching scheme which as a whole would be an equally daring experiment. He is not really a statesman."

The " daring experiment " alluded to, and propounded in long reports by Goethe, was for a reformation in the financial system. The Duke would have none of it; and it is almost as though he hoped to atone to his friend by official compliments for what he was too weak to grant his Minister. On Goethe's thirty-second birthday the Duke ordered a pageant in his honour; and arranged for the Emperor Joseph to ennoble him.

These things left Goethe cold. When, as Privy Councillor, he had reached the highest rung in the German citizen's ladder, the middle-class man in him had known a momentary tremor, and he had confided to his diary that he would rather not say exactly how he felt. Now, when at thirty-two he was raised to that social altitude which had so often proved a source of disillusion to him, he declared himself to be "so strangely constituted" that he felt nothing whatever when he looked at his patent of nobility; and for years afterwards he signed even official letters and reports as he had always done. But in his coat of arms the worldling did set that morning-star which the poet had long ago fancied.

His letters to the Duke now became colder and colder. When Carl August broke his promise and demanded fresh expenditure, Goethe wrote laconically to the Treasurer: "By this arrangement, you will have nothing more in hand this quarter. At the beginning of April you may include all that month's revenues. But afterwards, in May, I wish them to be held over until the end of the month. Have the goodness, dear Sir, to make your arrangements in this sense; for I must either get things straight by Midsummer, or resign."

That these lines would be submitted to his master by the frightened Treasurer Goethe well knew, and it was what he desired. The indulgent mentor had turned, in the course of seven years, into a stern trustee who seemed resolute to keep at any rate the Duke's money affairs in order—if the young man was bent on squandering his energies.

Only once in these years did his hopes for his friend revive. That once, Goethe really believed the Duke to be on the right path, and confided to his intimates that he foresaw better days both for his friend and his friend's family.

In this mood of renewed confidence he summed up the history and outcome of their companionship in a great Ode; and while affecting merely to look back upon

the time when both of them were younger and wilder, he ruthlessly held up the mirror to the Duke as he now was.

Ilmenau, composed in the Thuringian forest for the Duke's birthday, is anything but the amused retrospect of a poet conjuring up youthful follies from the harbour safely gained by him and his friend. The writer imagines himself stealing in a dream past the hut of the sleeping Duke; and when he interrogates his own phantom form, the embittered Minister is answered by the Goethe of twenty-six in these foreboding words:

Ich brachte reines Feuer vom Altar—
Was ich entzündet, ist nicht reine Flamme. . . .
Nun sitz' ich hier, zugleich erhoben und gedrückt,
Unschuldig und gestraft, und schuldig und beglückt.
Doch rede sacht! Denn unter diesem Dach
Ruht all mein Wohl und all mein Ungemach:
Ein edles Herz, vom Wege der Natur
Durch enges Schicksal abgeleitet,
Das ahnungsvoll nun auf der rechten Spur
Bald mit sich selbst und bald mit Zauberschatten streitet. . . .
Kein liebevolles Wort kann seinen Geist enthüllen,
Und kein Gesang die hohen Wogen stillen. . . .[1]

No word of gratitude for many gifts—for Goethe in this retrospect regards himself solely as the benefactor of his immature and dissipated friend.

And at the end, where there should have come a ceremonial tribute to the royal personage, he confines

[1] . . . I brought pure fire from off the altar high—
What I have kindled is no flame from heaven. . . .
Now I sit here, at once exalted and depressed,
Am guiltless yet chastised, am guilty yet am blessed.
But softly said! For under this roof-tree
Lies all my weal, and all that troubles me—
A noble heart, from paths that Nature chose
By narrow Fate diverted wholly,
That now, more prescient, grasps the good it knows,
Assailed by its own self and wizard-forms unholy. . . .
That spirit still is deaf to loving exhortation,
No siren-song can calm the billows' wild elation.

himself to a grave wish for tardy improvement, a paternal word of admonition:

> So mög', o Fürst, der Winkel deines Landes
> Ein Vorbild deiner Tage sein!
> Du kennest lang die Pflichten deines Standes,
> Und schränkest nach und nach die freie Seele ein.
> Der kann sich manchen Wunsch gewähren,
> Der kalt sich selbst und seinem Willen lebt;
> Allein wer Andre wohl zu leiten strebt,
> Muss fähig sein, viel zu entbehren.[1]

Had poet ever before handed his Prince so stern a festal ode? Must not Carl August—himself at the end of his twenties, surrounded by many secret enemies of Goethe, and now deserted by his boon-companion in sports and other follies—have inwardly regretted that he had ever made so much of him, that he had given this poet control of his cash-box? What had become of the complaisant literary personage who had been eager to surpass all others in proficiency and inventiveness? Was it not tacitly understood that his being here was a whim? And besides, he was even losing his looks. Those eyes that used to be so brilliant were now sunken, those lips of yore so rich in song were now as close as wax! An eccentric, almost a hermit, seeking the society of no woman but that of the elderly "Mistress of the Horse," self-shackled by his official duties—and if ever he did relax a little, doing nothing but study stones or plants or engravings!

And moreover, Goethe was not even his Prime Minister. They had duties in common, but their pleasures and foibles were poles apart. The Duke was but scantly interested

[1] The angle of thy realm, O Prince, discloses
The pattern set thy every day!
Thou long hast known the duties rule imposes,
And slowly trained thy wilful soul its debt to pay.
He who lives self-absorbed, unheeding,
May at his pleasure wreak his callous will;
But he who takes command is subject still—
He must renounce who aims at leading.

in Goethe's writings; Goethe hated the Duke's wild-boars. He had given up talking about the injury to the farmers; now he spoke only of the effect upon the public, who could not be expected to understand this passion of their monarch's.

Towards the end of this period they came into open conflict. Other Princes were urgent that Weimar should join the Princes' Alliance, under Prussia, against Austria; and the Duke, burning for warlike exploits, at last saw a chance of achieving them. He rushed into the Alliance, disregarded its clauses, acquiesced in the military demands of the Allies, and by his incautious behaviour awakened suspicion at Vienna—all this against the advice of Goethe, who was trying to gain their point by subtler tactics, and believed he could obtain his end from the old King Frederick.

But the Duke was dreaming of battle. Jingoism became fashionable at Weimar, and " is like a subcutaneous itch in our Duke, while it wears me out as a bad dream might. . . . Well, we must leave them in their fools' paradise, and hope that the prudent measures of the greater powers will keep the lesser ones quiet, and prevent them from acting at the expense of others, which is what they would like. On this article I have no pity, no sympathy, nor any hope or patience either."

Goethe as a statesman—in this instance to be judged by history—saw right, and the Duke wrong. During these negotiations Carl August was again sternly lectured by his friend: " However your affair turns out, behave with moderation and—if there's no help for it—extricate yourself without quarrelling with those whom you have involved and compromised." This is not even fraternal in tone. It is much more like a gruff father.

Goethe fled to Jena, where his friend Knebel was, took refuge in Nature-study, tried to get rid of some of his Council-work, even considered resigning it. How entirely in his secret heart he had given up the fight, we can guess from these cynical words: " The Duke is happy with his

(new) pack. I don't grudge it him. He is getting rid of his courtiers and getting keen on his dogs—it's always the same, no end of racket just to kill a hare. And I have to make nearly as much fuss to keep one alive." As money was scarce, the Court-dinners were given up, people dined in the ordinary rooms, and Goethe complained of the close quarters; but said there would be worse to bear than that.

Three lyric dramas and a few masques were the semi-official productions of the Court-poet; and when after reading these things one suddenly catches a glimpse of Goethe's bust, one is inclined to admire the self-abnegating person who could condescend to such trifling almost as much as, in the scenes of *Tasso* (written at the same time), one admires the authentic poet!

> So zwingt das Leben uns zu scheinen, ja
> Zu sein wie jene, die wir kühn und stolz
> Verachten könnten. Deutlich seh' ich nun
> Die ganze Kunst des höfischen Gewebes![1]

It was thus that Goethe, in the very years when he suffered his greatest disappointment in the world of action, learnt his lesson to the end, and became the complete man of the world—at Court, with his fellow-men, and in affairs.

Before his first big contract with a publisher, which he signed at the end of this period, he let it be known through a third person that he would not accept any lower price than his—for that time—very high demand of £300; and he asked the same price for unprinted and printed works, since these latter would be re-written and be "as good as new." He ordered a thousand copies of the announcement of his edition to be sent to him at Carlsbad, that he might distribute them himself. He accepted money

[1] Thus life constrains us to appear—nay, more—
To be like those whom yet our haughty hearts
Could scorn how coldly! Plain I see it now,
The great machine that turns us into courtiers!

from Merck to redeem some capital that was not paying enough interest.

He now made a system of saving time. He rarely read a book through. When the visits of passing strangers disturbed him, he would bring out some bones after a quarter of an hour, " which bores them so that they take their leave."

The stage on which his life was set now altered—and this too was symbolic. When the poet had been made a Privy Councillor, he had stayed in his garden; as " von Goethe," President of the Chamber, he took a large house in the town. Again it was not pride, but humility, but sorrow, that he felt at this change of residence. He knew quite well that he was giving up something irretrievable; and though it seemed like advancement, it was abnegation once more. This was no mere removal, but a final step.

The suburban abode had always had something of the romantic, the accidental about it, from which it would be easy to break away; the Minister possessed in it a refuge, close by the river, under the trees and stars. When he moved to the mansion in the *Frauenplan*, he was really casting anchor for the first time in his eight years' sojourn, never again to set sail. He lived exactly half a century in that house. In that house he died.

But when the time came for his quasi-farewell, he felt it as deeply as he had those of his younger days. His emotion overswept all the systematic self-restraint and common-sense. " Every rose said to me, ' And you are going to give *us* up? ' At that moment I felt that I could not do without that abode of peace. . . . I wandered round my deserted house as Melusina did round hers, to which she was never to return, and thought of the past that I did not understand, and the future that I did not know. How much I have lost. . . ."

In a long life Goethe found few partings from his

fellow creatures so hard to bear as that from the trees which he had planted himself.

To him, at thirty-three, his big house was not merely "the proper thing," but an instrument of culture as well. Had not the boy collected knowledge and proficiencies, ideas and objects? Now a man was collecting. Slowly, in the various rooms of his house, he accumulated engravings and drawings, pictures and books, silhouettes and busts, and above all stones, bones, and plants.

As the self-taught inquirer, Goethe still (as in the strenuous days of yore) directed all his mental energies towards scientific knowledge. When he was studying the situation of one of the great estates which were to be partitioned, the economic purpose would at once suggest the geological conditions; and wonderfully dramatic he found it to have a visible presentment of the origin and formation of the earth, and at the same time that of the sustenance which it could afford to humanity.

Never in Goethe's varied life and activity did he lose sight of the great concatenation of past and present which links every action and achievement as in willing obedience to some master-mechanism. His apparently strange destiny seemed the most inevitable of sequences to a nature which believed in fate's decrees.

The practical outdoor life at Ilmenau led him spontaneously to the study of geology. "The mountains and ravines promise me much entertainment. It is true they don't now strike me as so picturesque and poetic—but it is merely a different sort of painting and poetry that they suggest to me, when I go climbing among them." This is a turning-point; and, as it might seem, an alteration in him. But behold! on an official mission, when he was clambering up a dangerous slope, he stood on the shoulders of the young man who was with him so as to break off an interesting fragment compounded of primeval rock and red granite with a blue-black tone on the surface. When the other spoke of risks in their upward climb, Goethe cried: "No matter—

let's get on! We both have great things to do before we break our necks!"

He was President of an aristocratic Chamber, a poet of European reputation, a cold and misanthropic official—and from those lips broke those words, as he craned from the shoulders of a guide to touch the primeval rock! We might be still in Strasburg.

Mountaineer and mineralogist, rhapsodist and epic poet were combined, when with the fragment in his hand he examined the granite and began with this confession: "I do not fear the reproach of capriciousness because I turn from the contemplation and description of the human heart, of the most mobile and unaccountable portion of creation, to the observation of . . . the most steadfast, the most infrangible, product of Nature. To me, who have suffered and still suffer from the alternations of my fellow creatures' opinions, it may surely be granted to enjoy the sublime repose afforded by proximity, in solitude and silence, to the great heart of Nature, which speaks to our hearts so gently."

Visual conception was everything to him. Raphael without his arms would have been more productive than Goethe without his eyes. "As I never can learn anything from books, and had got through the miles and miles of pages represented by our neighbourhood, I now began to study and utilize the experiences of other men."

At this time Goethe turned from plastic art to science. True, he studied bronze-casting with Klauer, and had an occasional "attack of sketching-fever"; but during these middle thirties he quite abandoned serious work, for he saw that he could not "take pot-shots" in that sphere. In plastic art this man who could construct so patiently, who was content so slowly to investigate, and learn, and live, felt conscious that his genius stood aloof, and would impede his progress as a painter all too effectively.

But he retraced his steps as of old—and from scientific research looked back to art, both as teacher and pupil. The rapidly acquired knowledge of anatomy which

marked the Jena sojourn he immediately imparted to the Weimar School of Art, in the form of lectures for masters and students, treating osteology as a commentary on human biology. In lecturing he learnt the art of public speaking, and found in his demonstrations "that the logical processes of Nature are a solace for the illogical actions of humanity."

Rarely and briefly—never for more than a week—was Goethe able to steal away to Jena, there to study osteology.

All of a sudden, like a bolt from the blue, Herder received this note: "Jena. March 27. At night. I have found—neither gold nor silver, but something that unspeakably delights me—the human *Os intermaxillare*! I was comparing human and animal skulls with Loder, hit upon the right track, and behold—Eureka! Only, I beg of you, not a word—for this must be a great secret for the present. You ought to be very much delighted too, for it is like the keystone of anthropology—and it's there, no mistake! But *how*?"

In his thirty-fifth year, then, Goethe discovered the intermaxillary bone in the human upper cheek-bone, hitherto known only in animals, but which some were hopeful, some sceptical, about finding—the characteristic which distinguished the ape from the human being.

How did Goethe come to discover what had escaped the adepts? Because, as a dilettante, he examined the skull with an open mind, because his eye was unprejudiced—he was not looking only for what system and instructor had pointed him to. That eye was thinking while it gazed; and during its years of a roving apprenticeship to natural phenomena, it had perceived relations, transitions, gradations. And how, once more? Because there was a soul behind that eye which divined, from the gradual development of its own powers, from the slow difficult unwinding, coil on coil, of the mighty cable, that Nature obeyed a kindred law. Self-conscious yet humble-minded (as he had shown himself since his youth), his genius felt the cosmic laws to be immanent in itself. The same psychic emotion

which could bend that head, so haughtily confronting men, in reverence before the gods—the same sense of a sure and certain brotherhood to all plants or animals of the primeval mother-soil . . . that emotion and that sense alone could enable Goethe so to scrutinize a human skull as to cast new light upon the problem in so spontaneous a fashion.

It is only when subject to such a spirit—a spirit which in the moment of apprehension can crystallize its passion into abstract observation—that the eye discovers hitherto unknown correspondencies. When he discovered that bone, Goethe gave us no less precious a document for his inmost self than was *Tasso* or *Faust.*

But in a then unprinted draft, of which he allowed only a few *savants* to see a copy—confident of their scepticism! —he carefully kept silence about his ultimate conclusion: " That we cannot discern the distinction between human beings and animals in any isolated detail. On the contrary, man " (so he wrote privately at this time) " is very closely akin to the brute-creation. It is the harmony of the whole which makes every individual creature what it is; and man is as much man by the form and nature of his cheekbone as by the form and nature of the smallest joint in his little toe. And thus we have the further proof that every creature is only a tone, a modification, in a mighty harmony which must be studied in all its length and breadth—else every individual part will be no more than a dead letter." All this, which he declared to be the quintessence of the little article, and which in truth was its source, he—man of the world and hierarch of the mysteries—withheld from those who, as he knew beforehand, would be incredulous.

The animosity of legitimate scientists against the intruder quickly justified his precautions. Goethe's first step in Nature-study aroused that opposition which not until a century had gone by was to be changed into admiration of his far-sighted conclusions.

He was to immerse himself still more profoundly in problems of this nature during the next decade, but was never to synthesize his vision as a whole. His reverence

was such that he feared to propound an all-embracing summary.

But he had given one to a young Swiss. In some expansive hour he must have said—less *to* him than *before* him—what he felt in the presence of Nature; and it may have been the higher meaning of that young life to have embodied Goethe's dithyrambs in a memorable achievement—that great ode to Nature, which begins:

Natur, wir sind von dir umgeben und umschlungen.[1]

Let the reader find that poem, and read it slowly aloud, more than once!

When this Hymn to Nature appeared in the privately printed journal of the Tiefurt Association, Knebel guessed Goethe to be the anonymous author. Goethe denied it, but would not reveal the secret—admitting, however, that he had often talked of these things with the author, and that he admired the grace and melodiousness of the composition, which he would have found it difficult to achieve in that form.

This hymn gives us an idea of Goethe's character which far surpasses its rendering of his feeling for Nature. He can only be understood in his entirety, as he understood Nature. We perceive how he manifested himself in his most trifling works, although it is only in the sum of his production that we apprehend him as a whole. It needs little skill, but a good deal of perception, to substitute Goethe's name for that of Nature in many of the rhythms of this hymn—and thus to gain some insight into a soul which was untiring in its quest for enlightenment, and which, amid all its contradictions, was subject to a coherent law. And indeed one might say that though Goethe conceived of himself in terms of the microcosm, he could transmute that conception—by some miracle of treatment—into the image of a man who should be a prototype of Nature.

The rhythms of this hymn, breaking upon the now

[1] Nature! we are by thee encircled and included.

impregnable coast, might be the ultimate billows of that tempestuous, impassioned adolescence. The lyric impulse was quiescent; in the wellnigh seven years of this period Goethe (if we exclude his two-lined aphorisms) wrote barely ninety poems; and the few which stand out are the appanages of lyric dramas and novels. The impetus of passion seldom stirred him.

A life which was in some sort epical, as his was in these years, is propitious to the epic form. But if Wilhelm Meister's countenance often gazes through the sedulously barred windows of Goethe's existence, his presence did not mean any liberation from immediate tension (the origin of all the earlier poetic works), nor even any critical remarks on the present age and environment; rather, the novel was a pretext for critical retrospection. It is true that the foundations had been laid in the earliest Weimar years; but only the beginning was written, and despite all the parallels which are so easily to be found for this period, the book remains more of a retrospect than a survey of surrounding conditions. In treatment it resembles the novel rather than the autobiography; and even in his old age Goethe spoke feelingly of the terrible loneliness in which the work originated.

Undoubtedly it would be easy to point out from what living models some of the characters were drawn. But the most vivid figures—the Harper, Mignon, Philina—were the work of insight, not of actual experience; and in general there are far fewer transcripts from life than in the earlier *Werther* or the contemporary *Tasso*. Wilhelm, above all in the original draft—it was entitled *Wilhelm Meisters Theatralische Sendung*—resembles the author more in his social dilemma than in the structure of his soul; and despite all his medley of projects and undertakings, seems gayer, happier-natured than Goethe was. Round Wilhelm, Goethe wove the web of any fancies which refreshed his own imagination in these years—the novel is a gleam of romance in the restricted, joyless life of that period. It lies like a little convent garden, crowded

with bright pagan blossoms, between the stony strenuous paths of concentration, experiment, and toil.

This duality of artist and worldling, alternating with each other, characterizes the first shape of the book; and we should find it hard to say on which side the author took his stand, for he himself was uncertain of Wilhelm's predilection.

There is some bitterness in the words which the overburdened man assigns to his hero: "How the man of the world longs, in his distracted life, to preserve the sensibility which the artist must never let go if he designs to produce a consummate work of art. . . . Believe me, my friend, it is with talents as with virtue—if we do not practise them for their own sake, it is better to have nothing to do with them."

Egmont, too, which Goethe then provisionally finished, is biographically ambiguous, if only because of his long hesitation over it. Drafted at twenty-six, the play was at thirty-three temporarily, and at thirty-eight finally, laid aside—and besides, the plan of an historic drama precludes such reflections on a long course of authorship as were later to enliven the more imaginative *Faust*.

Precisely because in Egmont he was delineating a different type which he sometimes longed to resemble, the imagined figure was more objectively perceived than his own could ever have been. The daemonic youth beheld in Egmont the happy-natured and gifted creature that he must often have wished to be. Egmont's lighter-hearted, more transparent nature seemed enviable to him at a time when Lili's cynical innocence, her featherweight character, dancing as it were on small buoyant feet, her skilful manipulation of the problems which distracted *him*, had transported Goethe with delight. From Lili's fluttering youth he borrowed a few of the elements for Egmont's suppleness; and if now and then some of the poet's perplexities were discernible in his hero, they were, so to speak, smuggled in.

That is another reason why *Egmont* is less of a help than

a hindrance towards a knowledge of Goethe's soul—indeed, it may even be said to show a distorted image of it, for it is easier to understand Egmont than Goethe.

Elpenor, likewise a product of these years, is more intimately conceived; but here the external rather than the internal conflicts are illustrated. This piece, too, was interrupted by documents and duties. So was a *Roman über das Weltall* (*A Cosmic Story*), which remained a mere sketch. In this, certain pathological-ethical phases were to have been symbolized by planets and earth-tremors. And fortunately *Die Geheimnisse* too was cut short—an epic poem in stanzas, with a distant affinity to the cosmic novel.

Of these *Geheimnisse* a stanza was to be written every day, and the author resolved to give himself a double dose until he had made up his "arrears." "I dragged a stanza out of myself yesterday, somehow or other." Nowhere is our sense of the busy President so overpowering as when we traverse the desert of this poem, where there are but few oases to remind us of the author.

Welcher Unsterblichen
Soll der höchste Preis sein?
Mit niemand streit' ich,
Aber ich geb' ihn
Der ewig beweglichen . . .
Der Phantasie.[1]

The dark eye which once, either flashing or penetrating, had sought to wrest from fleeting life its utmost secrets and imprison them in anarchic rhythms or steadier rhyming-measures, now gazed with saddened yearning towards a country more congenial to genius, freedom—in a word, to a happier man. The poet's attitude to the world was undergoing a significant change.

[1] Say, which Immortal one
Merits highest praises?
With none I quarrel,
But I would give them
To her, the capricious . . .
Protean Fancy!

Now, when he had traversed one of that world's paths from end to end, when his monarch had disappointed his hopes, when he was conscious that without supreme authority he could not alone achieve the right—*now* the old sense of a vocation possessed his mind. At thirty-two, when a chapter in a novel satisfied him, he told himself quite naively, as though it were a new discovery: " In reality, I am a born writer! "

In bitter-sweet words he at this time imparted to his friend Knebel the essential reasons for, and results of, his dual mode of life. " The Duke lives only for hunting and shooting. . . . The Duchess has settled down, she leads her Court-life—I seldom see either of them. And so I have begun to live for myself again, and know what I am made of. The illusion that those germs of nobility possessed by both my friends could be ripened in this soil, and that celestial gems could be included in this Prince's earthly crown, has quite abandoned me; and I feel happier than I have felt since I was a young man. When I lived at home I never allowed myself to confuse intellectual vision with juristic routine, and I now make a similar distinction between the Councillor and my other self, who is by no means essential to a Councillor's success. Only I do secretly keep faith with myself in the inmost conception of all my plans and intuitions and undertakings, and in this way establish a hidden relation between my social, political, moral, and poetical existences —fasten them together with a knot that no one perceives."

The secret conflict between daemon and genius took this form in the years we are now considering; and the masterpiece of this period inevitably touched upon that conflict. So long ago as his thirty-first year—when he was constraining himself to a life of action remote from all poetry—he had, a year after *Iphigenie*, conceived the idea for *Tasso*; but in obedience to his chosen attitude, had never put a finger to the work. At the beginning of this new period he returned to it, wrote an act in the autumn, began the second at the time of his friend's final

surrender, and finished it shortly before his thirty-second birthday. Then he broke off, and not for six years was the work resumed, remodelled, and finished.

When in later years a Frenchman remarked that *Tasso* was an elevated *Werther*, the comment pleased Goethe; and indeed this work is a document for the Goethe of thirty-two who conceived and began it, rather than for the older man who concluded it.

The play is wholly concerned with the Goethe of that phase—who was then erecting his image of Terminus, who now, in his Antonio's cautious moderation, ironizes the enthusiastically toiling poet, and who all through is subject to his Prince's caprice. And if he did exaggerate his susceptibility in *Tasso*, it was not its intensity, but its duration, which he exaggerated.

Five years before he broke through its meshes, Goethe had recognized the net of entangling self-deceptions—noble though they were—in *Tasso*; and so once more in his character of poet, Goethe saw his life before he enacted it.

But we must not extend the analogy too far. The play contains no compliments to Weimar or the Duke; and all his intimate confessions of that period would lead us to expect this. It was not the Court of Weimar to which the poet gratefully referred in his picture of Ferrara—but the Court of Weimar as the poet would have had it. The Duke of Ferrara displays no single trait of kinship with Carl August, for Alfonso is zealous and moderate-minded, mature and good-humoured.

The two women are more certainly drawn from life; and as in the Sanvitale we can recognize the Countess Werther, though the slight sketch of her in Goethe's letters is all we have, so in the Princess he undoubtedly gives us an idealized portrait of his mistress. Charlotte's mature melancholy speaks here:

> Es gibt ein Glück, allein wir kennen's nicht:
> Wir kennen's wohl, und wissen's nicht zu schätzen.[1]

[1] There is a joy, but we may know it not:
Or else we know, and know not how to prize it.

And here is her soulful yearning for her friend:

> Wie mehrte sich im Umgang das Verlangen
> Sich mehr zu kennen, mehr sich zu versteh'n!
> Und täglich stimmte das Gemüt sich schöner
> Zu immer reinern Harmonien auf. . . .
> Ihn musst' ich lieben, weil mit ihm mein Leben
> Zum Leben ward, wie ich es nie gekannt.[1]

But here, too, is Charlotte's determination to be alone in the possession of him; and when Eleonore says of Tasso "*Was ich besitze, mag ich gern bewahren*," [2] they are almost literally the words of the one little note of hers which has come down to us. And here, again, is her poignant uncertainty, the tearful complaint of the woman who is growing old:

> Wir sind vor keinem Männerherzen sicher,
> Das noch so warm sich einmal uns ergab.
> Die Schönheit ist vergänglich . . .
> Wenn's Männer gäbe, die ein weiblich Herz
> Zu schätzen wüssten, die erkennen möchten,
> Welch einen holden Schatz von Treu und Liebe
> Der Busen einer Frau bewahren kann. . . .[3]

And finally, in the second act of *Tasso*, Frau von Stein's elusive treatment of Goethe brings on the crisis—he reproduces the dangerous way in which his transcendental

[1] With intercourse the yearning still grew stronger,
Better to know, yet more to understand!
And daily was the spirit stirred to fairer
And ever purer harmonies of thought. . . .
Him I must love, for life with him beside me
Became such life as I had never known.

[2] What I possess, I fain would keep for ever.

[3] Of no man's heart can we be ever certain,
Though warmly once it beat upon our own.
All loveliness is fleeting. . . .
If men there were, by whom a woman's heart
Were truly prized, who could in some sort measure
The wondrous wealth of constant fond devotion
A woman's breast can hold for him she loves. . . .

friend had allured him spiritually, only to repulse him physically. When Tasso ventures on a vehemently passionate declaration, the Princess does not interrupt him, considerately repressing his outburst, but encourages and incites him all the more.

Yet at the height of these allurements (which are clearly to be divined from Goethe's letters to his friend), she is dexterous enough to make use of her position as the cool-headed woman of the world, doubly protected by her rank; and the man whom she has been leading on so subtly is shown his place in these insufferably priggish words:

> Nicht weiter, Tasso! Viele Dinge sind's,
> Die wir mit Heftigkeit ergreifen sollen:
> Doch andre können nur mit Mässigung
> Und durch Entbehren, unser eigen werden.
> So sagt man, sei die Tugend, sei die Liebe,
> Die ihr verwandt ist. Das bedenke wohl![1]

So speaking, she turns her back on him, and with a final half-promise that he may possibly win her by long devotion, leaves him alone with the flaming passion she has excited in him! Can we wonder that Tasso, in his wounded pride and his distraction, falls in with Antonio? Or wonder that Goethe should have written those clamorous, despairing letters?

Encouraged by allurements of this kind, the poet very guilelessly pursues the Princess with his love. The visible catastrophe with which the play concludes is the natural consequence of this early scene of spiritual temptation.

When Goethe wrote this last scene, he had long escaped from the experience which inspired it. Before the first was written, she had yielded to him; and a poet appeased turned the previous unrest into song.

[1] No farther, Tasso! Many things there are
That we may seize with avid, hasty fingers;
But others we may only make our own
By gentle steadfastness and resignation.
Such, we are told, is virtue, such affection
Sister to virtue. So bethink thee well!

For a blissful tranquillity was the fruit of his friend's surrender, so that the succeeding two years—from thirty-three to thirty-five—were the quiet zenith of their affection. These were the real love-years; and though tempestuous adoration seemed quickly to abate after the crisis, Goethe never ceased to woo and serve her, even after he had possessed her.

Exactly a year after they had once for all established their relation, he wrote: " All my life I have had an ideal of how I should like to be loved, and have sought it vainly in illusive dreams. And now that the world grows brighter for me every day, I find it at last in you, and so that I can never lose it."

For some two years this spiritual surrender was continually interwoven with erotic suggestions. Here are some verses which he wrote his mistress at that time:

Einen wohlgeschnitzten vollen Becher
Hielt ich drückend in den beiden Händen.[1]

But Amor appears to the drinker, and promises a more beautiful cup with different nectar, and:

O wie freundlich hat er Wort gehalten,
Da er, Lida, dich mit sanfter Neigung
Mir, dem lange Sehnenden, geeignet!
Wenn ich deinen lieben Leib umfasse,
Und von deinen einzig treuen Lippen
Langbewahrter Liebe Balsam koste,
Selig sprech' ich dann zu meinem Geiste:
Nein, ein solch Gefäss hat ausser Amor
Nie ein Gott gebildet noch besessen. . . .[2]

[1] Finely wrought and brimming was the chalice
Held between my hands with clasping fingers.

[2] Oh, he kept his promise, and how richly,
Lida, when he moved thy heart to love me—
Giving thee to one who long had languished!
When I clasp thy dear, thy worshipped body
And from thy fond lips, the dedicated,
Drink the love for mine devoutly treasured,
Rapturous, I commune with my spirit,
Saying: Of the Gods none else but Amor
Ever shaped or owned so rare a chalice!

Between these verses (which Goethe conveyed to Frau von Stein in the graceful anonymity of a manuscript Court-journal, but had told her of beforehand) and the great ode about their union in a former existence, lie five years of an unhealthily indefinite relation, scarcely balanced by a tardy union. Towards the prototype of Iphigenia and Eleonore the playful flatteries of a youthful husband were out of tune. This can hardly have escaped the delicate susceptibilities of both lovers, and may serve to explain much of the ensuing friction.

The more intimate their relation, the more heedfully did Frau von Stein preserve decorum—at that time for her children's sake, but possibly with an eye to posterity also.

But though she so sedulously covered her tracks in an intercourse which, natural as it was, her soul persistently regarded as derogatory, she did not shrink from sending her friend suggestive keepsakes—for what other interpretation can we put upon the gift which, when Goethe opened it, so amazed him that he begged her " not to make him love her more every day by the delicious things she did, for since the time of Deianira no more inflammatory garment had been given to a lover "? He had shut it away in his despatch-case, otherwise it " would have burnt me up." And this was not sent or acknowledged from a distance—they were both in Weimar.

Whatever appearances may have been, theirs was nothing less than a marriage—except that she remained the wife of von Stein, Master of the Horse. Everything that Goethe was interested in, he shared with her; there were long evenings when the other members of her household were at the theatre, and the pair would go on imaginary journeys with the aid of books and atlases—though occasionally they would play whist with her friends.

Frau von Stein gave a luncheon party for the Duchess in Goethe's summer villa; she received his guests at the town house, as if to emphasize their purely fraternal relations by such public displays. But when she did not wish to give her name on her visits to him, she would

come in by the back door of the garden, or stop her carriage near the bridge. When he was away from home, he would send her the key of his writing-table. He lent her money for her mother; he ordered boots for herself and sent her a chemise. His letters grew more and more frequent.

He looked after her children as if he were their father, fetched doctor and nurse for her ailing son; but the youngest, Fritz, he took to live with him altogether when the boy grew older, so as to relieve his friend's frequently overburdened household of one anxiety. The clever little boy was like a keepsake from her when she was away. Goethe would show him English engravings, teach him the new Latin script, instil his own ideas about the progress of culture; and once he sent him to Frau Goethe at Frankfurt, where he saw the first air-balloon. How "thoroughly parental" Goethe's feeling was for him is evidenced by his proposal to his friend Jacobi that the latter should bring up his daughter to be the wife of this adopted son.

These strongly developed domestic instincts had been perceptible in Goethe, even as the student who liked to have everything in order, and so often included the entire household in his love for a girl. His first impulse was always towards marriage; it was only on second thoughts that he fought shy of it.

With their intimacy Charlotte's jealousy increased. If hitherto it had been no more than the wayward determination to keep him to herself, not unnatural in one whose intimates were so few and whose temperament was so melancholy, it now, with the ultimate surrender, became a point of honour that no other woman should be suffered to dispute him. Corona, whom he invited to Weimar when he was versifying *Iphigenie*, was obliged to leave at once; whenever he went to visit her he had to apologize to Charlotte, and assure her it meant nothing.

Her jealousy even included his men-friends, his acquaintances. "Knebel," writes Goethe, "has been such

a kind good fellow that, if you will allow me, I will paint him one of those flower-pots." And after a festival performance on his birthday: "If possible, let me thoroughly enjoy the pleasure of all these people's goodwill."

From the fourth year onward—the ninth of their love—Goethe's declarations diminish; not in number, it is true, but in variety, in convincingness. Sometimes he seems to get tired of his favourite turns of phrase, and this is nowhere more evident than in the letters written in French, which he sent her when in France on a political mission.

It was then that he found the just word for the whole situation; and vainly did he seek to soften down its penetrating insight by a tender corollary: "*Non, mon amour pour toi n'est plus une passion ; c'est une maladie qui m'est plus chère que la santé la plus parfaite et dont je ne veux pas guérir.*"

Very gradually had this sense of "a malady" grown upon Goethe, and it was to take him two further years before he could cut loose from this and all other distempers —and then, free at last, could frankly exclaim that he had shaken off a mortal disease. In these concluding years of their relation his desire for solitude grew stronger and stronger; and in the New Year of the last he puts it all into this strangely ambiguous phrase: "Be still my own, even though we are less together than of old, which is frequently almost more than I can stand." About this time Frau von Stein was entering on her forty-fifth year.

From the early Weimar period there were now, in reality, only two friends left—Knebel and Herder.

At this time, when Knebel left the Court and went to Jena, there to do research-work and immerse himself in Hellenism—in short, to become something of an oddity—Goethe's heart went out to him still more, and he wrote him his most intimate imaginings.

Herder was a stiffer proposition, but with him too this period of research drew the bond closer. Herder was

conscious that his mind rather than his heart attracted him anew towards Goethe. This great researcher and thinker was encouraged in his cosmic interests by seeing Goethe—the greatest man in his circle—investigating and thinking more enthusiastically even than of yore. Goethe (so Herder said at that time) was on the right track in physics; fortune favoured his efforts, head and heart always guided him aright, and at every step he took he proved himself a man. In the most insignificant matters, and even those he most abhorred, he steadily worked on as though it were the only thing that mattered, and the one he thought most special to himself. This is a very unexpected tribute,—something new from Herder.

How distant seem the perils of his youth! "Do write to me again about yourself," he begs of that Countess Stolberg to whom he had once opened his heart, "and—if you will—let us knit up the old threads."

From Lavater Goethe had resolutely withdrawn. Even his friend's self-knowledge had lost its suggestive power; he could see nothing but the advocate, in and out of season, of Christ, and was "so sick of the subject of the worthy Jesus that anyhow I would rather hear about it from someone else. . . . I am losing sight of the Lavater . . . whom I know well and love; I can see only the sharp outlines of his flaming sword of speech, and for the moment I feel that I can't stand it." But he was ready to acknowledge himself in the wrong to his quondam friend: "Breathe into me the balm of kindliness, and banish my sense of estrangement. Estrangement blows from the four corners of the world, and the spirit of love and friendship from only one." But it was too late.

In financial and private matters, but also in those of geology and osteology, Goethe turned more and more frequently to Merck, and got from him what he needed. But when the Duke thought of asking him to Weimar, Goethe advised him against it, giving as his reason that it was better not to transplant old trees.

His mother was more than ever a mere idea to Goethe.

After the death of his father, who became weak-minded before the end, her spirits revived; but the son's letters grew rarer and less affectionate. "Take good care of yourself and love me." Cold, haughty, distant.

And in this narrow circle was there anyone really to sympathize with and understand Goethe's works, his apparently halting literary development? He who was always the giver was given but little when he longed for encouragement and sympathy. Charlotte and Knebel were in these years as before his best audience. Wieland's critical ear was attentive, but his sage lips rarely gave judgment. The Duke could but seldom be induced to listen. Lavater, to whom nearly everything was sent in manuscript, would (amid the maze of his letters—between corrections, Christ, visits, and freemasonry) devote perhaps three lines to *Iphigenie*. About *Tasso* he wrote, two years after receiving it, exactly two lines.

As he had published hardly anything in these seven years, Goethe's fame was decreasing; he wore it, on occasions, as he might have worn an Order.

And so loneliness, still more pronounced than of old, was Goethe's fate in this period of apparently excessive worldly ambition. He did not always seek it. On his official missions he had begun to study the cosmos from a fresh angle, and systematically sought society, trying to get from everyone what at some time he might come to need. He was never in quest of gaiety or relaxation. To observe and record was his dual mission as author and man of the world; he deduced the larger sphere from the smaller.

And indeed the small portion of the world accessible to him was narrowing still more. It was now limited to a couple of Thuringian Duchies; even the Court of Brunswick seemed like a foreign country, while Berlin and Leipzig were so rarely visited as to represent distant centres of civilization. Out of such limitations the mind makes its own universe.

He was not moved by international events. Even Voltaire's Reminiscences of Frederick the Great, which

he read in manuscript, at the most amused him; Frederick himself he regarded as a mere historical personage. Goethe's friends considered that he ought to reply to Frederick's attacks on him; he did think of doing so, and a fragment has been lost. But he was too broad-minded to have persevered in the task.

Goethe stood yet more aloof from the lower classes than from such illustrious persons as these; though his rare contacts with them, now and in the early years at Weimar, left a profound impression. But those who look to find contemptuous allusions (such as he heaped upon Court and nobility) to the people in Goethe's writings of this decade will be disappointed. Of all that he did to help needy young men who, socially or intellectually speaking, came from the underworld, we have only an incomplete record.

That Goethe should take the Conservative side in German politics was a natural consequence of his general sense of order and civilization; and he who as a youth, in the period of his heaven-defying Prometheus, wrote in favour of upholding the Constitution and against any change in it, was as a Minister constrained to do the same for public and still more for private reasons. For it was his very official activities themselves which led him to make a complete severance between a narrowly bounded Duchy and the unbounded realm of intellect.

On the other hand, Goethe's social work was extremely democratic in tendency, much more so than that of any other German of his time. His treatment of the land-question preserved to the farmer what it wrested from the feudal nobleman—his general trend towards limitation urged him to that course. It was Goethe who led the way in partitioning the Crown Lands, so as to provide sustenance for the poor and the half-poor. The age, which was one of parliamentary and feudal transition, was propitious to his aims.

In that century an official rarely came into direct contact with the people; but on his journeys Goethe sought them out. "How greatly again . . . my liking goes out

to the so-called lower classes, who are perhaps the highest in God's sight! In them all the virtues are combined—austerity, contentment, straight-thinking, loyalty, pleasure in the least good fortune, guilelessness, endurance—endurance unto the end. . . ."

When, in his last year of office, he sent for a book-binder to bind part of a novel, and the man, while working, told him about his life and its conditions, the poet listened as he watched *Wilhelm Meister* being put together by those toilworn hands. "Every word he said was worth its weight in gold, and nothing but a dozen or so of Lavater's pleonasms could give you any idea of the reverence I felt for the man."

When writing orders to his servant-man, he would use no form of address. But once the villa was cleared of the Princes, master and man would collogue over the kitchen fire. In the early days they sometimes had to share a room when travelling, and then Goethe would have long arguments with him as to whether a nation were happier in subjection or in liberty.

Goethe did not, as of yore, turn to Nature that he might find himself. He was less interested in himself, indeed, than in Nature as Nature, and that not as landscape but as record. Nothing was more irksome to him in the years of his abnormal self-discipline than the indoor life he would impose on himself for weeks at a time. There is barely a mention of swimming, riding, or skating; his giving up his house and garden was in that sense symbolic. And when in his *Ilmenau* he gazes at the hills, it is as though his lips, long spellbound, had at last been opened:

> O lass mich heut an deinen sachten Höhn
> Ein jugendlich, ein neues Eden sehn!
> Ich hab' es wohl auch mit um euch verdienet:
> Ich sorge still, indes ihr ruhig grünet.[1]

[1] To-day, O let me on thy gentle heights,
New-born, behold an Eden of delights!
I too have earned it, patient care bestowing,
While green thy branches tranquilly were growing.

A victim of duty, he had forgotten how to roam. What a transformation—the vagrant turned into a man of action!

Sociabilities dwindled to nothing. Every week he gave a general invitation to tea at his new house, and even of that he would say, "My tea-party gives me the shivers." Otherwise he saw hardly anyone at home. Even music was rarely heard within his doors, though in the early years he had been a patient auditor of the Duchess's compositions, and would play on Wieland's spinet himself. And he had given up acting altogether.

By this time he had quite abandoned the idea of making Weimar a centre of German culture—in any respect, one might say. He was not in the right frame of mind, the Duke did not understand, the Court was too poor. He often fled to Jena, there to work in peace; and while at Weimar there were thirty rooms in his house, he had to arrange these visits to Jena so that he arrived on a Sunday, for his room was close to a concert-hall, and he could only stay a week before the Sunday music drove him away.

For his genius always urged him, when tempted into the larger world, back into the cell of contemplation—which alone is the *cella dei*, even though it be next door to a concert-hall.

And it was now too that he invoked the spirit of Truth:

> Ach, da ich irrte, hatt' ich viel Gespielen,
> Da ich dich kenne, bin ich fast allein:
> Ich muss mein Glück nur mit mir selbst geniessen,
> Dein holdes Licht verdecken und verschliessen.[1]

In such isolation he had sudden flashes of insight, revealing all the antagonism between the world and any earnest effort—the discord which precluded the harmony he sought. Then bitterness and dissatisfaction would

[1] Ah, while I strayed, how many were my playmates!
Now I possess thee, solitude I seek:
Joy such as mine is not for others' knowing,
Shielded thy light, too fair for outward showing.

overflood his spirit; and at the very moment when he undertook the Presidency of the Chamber, he was driven to confess to Charlotte: " I was intended to be a private person, and I cannot understand what made Destiny want to involve me with a Constitution and a Princely house."

Socially he became more and more of an eccentric in these years. When he was thirty-five, he arrived at a party in the Steins' house when dinner was nearly over, and was silent and terribly forbidding in manner. At Court, sitting beside a lady, he once began to talk audibly to himself, till she turned a freezing countenance upon him and asked, " What are you counting? "

As Goethe grew more dissatisfied, he grew more haggard too. Klauer's busts, as well as the letters of friends, testify to the profoundly introspective expression of his face, the furrowed brow which a visitor said denoted subtlety and guile rather than suavity. Knebel records that on a walk Goethe, who had appeared quite happy, suddenly begged him not to smoke because it made him feel so feverish. His friend was surprised at this nervous irritation; but Goethe's discomfort increased every moment, he had an attack of shivering and became so ill that he had to take to his bed. Knebel, however, observed " how Goethe's nature enables him to hold out to the last moment without any sign of a change; and then in the twinkling of an eye he will utterly collapse for a mere nothing. This in all sorts of ways."

This remark, appended by Knebel to his general observation of Goethe, is valuable as a clue to the way Goethe's psychic cataclysms would assert themselves and come to a head.

At last, in his thirty-seventh year, one of these cataclysms arrived, brought on by the seven years of self-discipline and the feelings which had oppressed him for a decade. In this, too, he held on to the last moment, apparently unchanged, only to break out with a suddenness which was not really suddenness at all. An eruption like this would seem to signify complete annihilation of that

spiritual tranquillity for which he had striven through so long a period. What was left of it? When at this point we seek to obtain an insight into Goethe's soul, does not our analysis of him at twenty-five seem to be scattered to the winds? What had he been striving for, through those twelve years of ceaseless effort?

For purity and harmony. Trusting, seeking, working, he had sought for these; and trusting, seeking, working, he had gained some steps. The confident faith which was in him could not be shattered in the decade of his probation; and if its growth was not upward, it took but the deeper root for that.

For a while Goethe tried to believe in an abstract good, without forms or ceremonies. From thirty to about thirty-three—and at no other time in his life—he taught himself an ideal of abstract morality; and though the rarefied atmosphere of *Iphigenie* is sufficiently disturbed by the tempest in the soul of Orestes, Goethe afterwards said that the work was "diabolically humanistic." How much more so were the few poems of that period, which are wholly intellectual! Cold and unreal, something like the fragmentary *Geheimnisse*, *Das Göttliche* raises its head among Goethe's verses; and because it is easier to understand than a thousand characteristic poems by which he contradicted these frigid lines, it has done more than any other lyric to obscure the general view of the poet.

Edel sei der Mensch,
Hilfreich und gut!
Denn das allein
Unterscheidet ihn
Von allen Wesen
Die wir kennen.[1]

[1] Noble man should be,
Helpful and kind!
For this alone
Doth distinguish him
From every creature
Known to science.

No—that is merely the creed born of Frau von Stein's experience; and because it is not his own conviction, the form is hopelessly inelastic. The man who at the same period declared that he was "good and bad—like Nature," could not be reduced to that magniloquent formula.

He eagerly defended the cause of his beloved Nature against philosophy. He himself sought the divine in plants and stones; for though Jacobi had been cursed by God with a love for metaphysics, God had "on the contrary blessed me with a love for physics, so that the contemplation of his works always does me good. . . . If you say that we can do no more than believe in God, I say that we can see Him."

But in conjunction with this radiant vision of externals, of terrestrial things, there persisted now as twelve years earlier that internal brooding gaze, which like the moon drew every cosmic image of eye and mind back to the vastness of the soul.

Thus his mysticism tended at first to increase rather than to diminish as a result of his scientific work. He perpetually invokes the name of Swedenborg, and the sense of another world became in this anti-Christian and anti-philosopher something amounting to a certainty, when he would grant it free scope. Goethe derided a new book on spiritism, calling it charlatanry; but: "No one is more inclined than I am to believe in another world besides the visible one; and I have imagination and vitality enough to feel that even my own limited ego can embrace a Swedenborgian conception of the spirit-sphere."

The man who pored upon infusoria and fragments of bone under his microscope was averse from any rationalist explanation of the macrocosm, and even shunned astronomy, of whose tremendous clockwork he had only the dimmest sort of an inkling.

At this time he was constructing, from his belief in a Beyond, a corresponding belief in a metempsychosis; but this was very vague, and belonged to the poetic side

of him. Henceforth he more frequently speaks of death as a friend, and there are casual sentences in his letters pointing to that which he was later to embody in mystic song. " What a good thing it is that mortals die, if only to shake off the stamp of mortality and come back refreshed as by a bath! "

More than ever did he feel himself the creature of destiny. When he was sorting his papers, he stood in amazement before his past existence, and " less than ever understood " what he was and what he was meant to be. And writing to Knebel, he suddenly wound up with: " Farewell, and pray for me! "

For the clash of the internal discords was more alarming than he had ever before felt it, in this period of inward striving towards harmony. What he attained was no spontaneous coalescence of his powers—it was only a way out from his chosen renunciation! He said at this time that he permitted himself no longings for any good that Destiny denied or had bereaved him of. He shut himself away from his fellows, refused to leave home because he wanted to avoid new ideas—and at the end of it all, this was the best thing Truth had to say to him:

> Wieviel bist du von Andern unterschieden?
> Erkenne dich, leb mit der Welt in Frieden![1]

Does that represent the catchword of a premature harmony, the fruit of those many years of sacrifice and effort? No—the elemental battle was still raging unappeased in that turbulent spirit.

In addition to *Egmont*, where in the scene with the Prince of Orange the balance sways between worldly wisdom and freedom, *Tasso* gives us a vivid exposition of his dual personality. The work belongs to this decade, and has its analogue in the original draft of *Faust*. Amid the many

[1] Whereby art thou distinguished from thy brothers?
Know thyself, then, and live at peace with others!

speeches which betray the essential difference between Tasso and Antonio, there is one which summarizes them all, and gives a clear idea of the superhuman drama which was still going on in Goethe's soul. All our sympathy goes to the poet who makes one half of himself say of the other: "He possesses, I might say, everything that I lack."

And is either of them proved right in the end? Exactly as in the first *Faust*, the poet's soul is so artfully divided between the two scales that the balance never swings true until the propitious moment arrives—the moment which Goethe himself so rarely seized.

It was not only the worldling and the poet who contended in Goethe's soul, but the old daemons also—now exorcised by courtly ritual, though ten years before they had gnashed their teeth at one another in the curt cynical rhymes of the first *Faust*. Neither obtained the smallest advantage; and the insoluble psychic problem would have been no less insoluble in actual life if the antagonists had not realized that they were obliged to live together. It is the authentic Goethe who at the conclusion of the first draft of *Tasso* draws his dagger upon the other Goethe, and cries to his inseparable antagonist:

> Zieh oder folge, wenn ich nicht auf ewig,
> Wie ich dich hasse, dich verachten soll![1]

Throughout all these years Knebel was the one who understood him best, as these words are enough to show:

"I am well aware that he is not always agreeable company; there are traits to dislike in him. . . . But taken as a whole the man is as good as can be. . . . I insist that he sees aright, that his outlook is clear and fine. He is bound to be misunderstood, and he seems to find that state his native atmosphere. He is most attracted by the beauty which shows as from under a mask. He himself is

[1] Draw or obey, if I am not for ever
Even as I hate thee, to despise thee too!

an extraordinary mixture—or a being compounded of hero and histrion, but the former prevails. . . . He sees that things which one had imagined to be settled now will not be so for years, and other things he as it were wrests from the distant future. . . . His wings are at present pinioned by inexorable fate."

The mighty eagle, self-condemned to captivity, seemed now all suddenly to spread, to lift, those broad fate-pinioned wings—suddenly, that is, for those around him, even those who knew him best; but not suddenly for posterity, envisaging the documents of this last year.

For now, in his thirty-seventh year, his pace—on every one of the various instruments he was playing—gained in velocity. The things that oppressed him oppressed him more, piled up as it were into a tower; and the things he enjoyed seemed more greatly to excite him. Aloofness, taciturnity, melancholy themselves reached such a height that he wished he could either rend his bonds or go under once for all. Here are Goethe's enterprises in the last summer of his Ministerial life:

An energetic campaign against a revolt of students in Jena. Spasmodic study of algebra. Observation of the passage of Mercury through the sun. Draft of six new parts of *Wilhelm Meister*. All his love-poems classed under general headings—for purposes of mystification—in a collected edition of his works. Re-modelling of *Werther*, in the course of which he came to the conclusion that the author would have done better to blow out his brains after he had finished writing it. Microscopic study of infusoria.

"The botanical kingdom has got possession of my brain once more—I can't lose sight of it for a moment. It forces itself on my attention, the whole thing—I don't have to *think* about it any more, it all comes to me naturally, and the tremendous business seems to be simplifying itself in my soul. . . . If I had time in this short life of ours, I should venture on a general investigation of Nature—of her entire kingdom."

Meanwhile, for months he had been planning out every detail of his flight.

Flight was the only resource by which Goethe's temperament, after it had held out to the last moment, could break free from all the cunningly contrived encampments and entrenchments. Five years earlier he had once despairingly confessed to Charlotte that his evil genius depraved him when he was away; "it points out the most troublesome aspects of my present situation, and advises me to save myself by flight."

True, Goethe was not desirous only of leisure and quiet —he wanted a warm climate and some social life as well. In the summer before this, when he was thirty-five, he had for the first time spent a few weeks in a gay, animated, ever-changing society, and that as part of it—not as a celebrity passing through; and he said afterwards that he "owed a perfectly new existence" to Carlsbad. Now Italy was the one magnet for the wearied man. Twice he had gazed southward from the Gothard Pass, and twice turned away. It was the lode-star of his intellectual life; but to consummate that life he must see, must tread, that soil.

Yet he was still more irresistibly attracted by the freedom which—he felt beforehand—would be in the very air of the South. Greece would have done as well, perhaps, for other reasons—he could have pursued his science there. But in his scheme of life, drawn up in the past year, he had written: "Trip to Italy decided on"; and now he was all regret that he did not speak and understand Italian as he did "that unhappy German." To visitors he said that it was a pity the Germans were not more temperamental. Take it for all in all, it was for the clearer southern atmosphere that Goethe inevitably yearned at the end of his thirties.

He intended to take the plunge from Carlsbad. No one was in the secret. His master and friend, his mistress and lover, the companions of this eventful decade, were only told that he would follow them to Carlsbad, and thence go on elsewhere.

So aloof was Goethe.

For in truth he was consciously putting an end to an epoch of his life, was fleeing from that mistress, from the office and duties of that Duchy, because he felt that he was at the breaking-point—only it was a more terrible, a more irreparable collapse than that of the afternoon when he had begged Knebel to stop smoking. In very truth he was determined to have liberty, poetry, warmth—rejuvenescence.

All was ready.

The President of the Chamber, Herr von Goethe, had applied to the Duke for leave of absence. When at the end of August he remained in Carlsbad after Carl August and Frau von Stein had left it, he put on speed and worked eagerly at getting the first volumes of his collected edition ready for the press. He read a good deal to his friends, and got very uneasy when his thirty-seventh birthday came and went, for it was to have been the day of days—the day of departure, the beginning of the new era. His last letters from Carlsbad grow more and more feverish and overcharged, like the chapters in a novel which lead to a new development of the story.

His mistress had of late been captious again, but they seem to have reconciled their differences. Nevertheless, when she left he can have given her only a hint of his plans: "Then I shall live at large with you (which means, without you); and in blissful solitude, incognito, a nobody, shall draw near to the bosom of earth.... Hitherto I have endured many things in silence, and have had no dearer wish than that our relation might so re-establish itself that nothing on earth could endanger it. Otherwise I prefer not to live near you, and would rather remain in the solitude to which I am now departing."

That is the tone of a man who intends to retrieve his liberty at last. It is more resolute than ever before—this is an ultimatum. Where he is going and for how long he does not tell his mistress; at the end of September he will let her have his address.

His friends at Carlsbad were not to know that he was off next day. He grew more and more secretive, his excitement waxed daily, the last postscripts are exactly like those in *Werther*: "Eleven at night. At last, at last I am ready, and yet not ready, for really I had a week's more work here; but I intend to go, and even to you this is adieu once more. Farewell, sweetheart! I am thine. G." Once more all the tenderness in his soul is brought into play, so as to console her for the days that are to come.

But he was imperturbable and resolute. He passed in review the past and the future of his actual position, as if to justify himself to himself. Then, the day before he was to depart under a name that none of them was to know, he could composedly write these arresting words to his master:

"Forgive me for having spoken so vaguely of my plans and probable stay abroad, when we said good-bye. . . . You are happy; you are about to gratify your dearest ambition. Your domestic affairs are in order, and promise well; and I know you will now permit me to consider myself." Generally speaking (he went on) he could now be dispensed with; he had arranged his private affairs so that even if he were to die there would be no trouble. He begged for an indefinite leave of absence, so that he might live at large for a while, restore the tone of his mind, and have leisure for the publication of his works. "All this and many attendant circumstances urge and compel me to lose myself in quarters of the world where I am entirely unknown. . . . Fare-you-well, it is my heartfelt desire; remember me kindly. . . . May you be fortunate in all your undertakings, and rejoice in their happy issue."

After this cold formula comes a postscript:—

His deputy on the War Commission had hitherto dealt only with pressing matters; but now he was to look after everything. "Seeger has precise knowledge of all these matters, and Schmidt likes the work." This was his last word—conscientious in the most trifling details.

Then for the fifth time Goethe fled from a woman—but this time from a burdensome form of existence as well. Only his servant Philipp had his pseudonymous address. It was:

" A. M. Jean Philippe Möller, Rome."

PART II

THE EARTH-SPIRIT

First my errors made me objectionable to others, then my serious aims. So do what I would, I was alone.



AGED 38

CHAPTER VII

LIBERTY

When you think of me, let it be as of a happy man.

IN the window of a large cool room stands a half-dressed young man, with slippers on his feet, for the floor is tiled and the Northerner in the South feels it rather chilly. True, it is spring-like out of doors, and girls look laughingly up to the window, whose one shutter he has only half opened. Is he a foreigner? His eyes are large and dark enough for him to have opened them first here—here in Rome; but his nose. . . . Most likely he is only a poor German painter. One would think so from the way he stares—as if he would like one to sit for him. And while the girls speculate about the foreigner at the window, instead of flirting with him, he only stares the harder and seems to be taking stock of everything—their complexions and profiles, the way they walk and carry their arms, the colours of their aprons and the shapes of their caps; but is simultaneously observing a rearing horse in a wine-cart, together with the shape of the wine-barrels and the appearance of the driver. Nor does he fail to notice that the wind is blowing from the Porta del Popolo to-day, as it has not on the last few days, and he asks himself why.

As he thoughtfully turns back into the room, he casts a fondly scrutinizing glance on the little pots in which he has planted seeds and kernels, and on the tiny date-palm that he hopes to rear. For the hundredth time he deeply studies the position, length, and arrangement of the leaves—they puzzle him. Then he goes over to the opposite wall to see how yesterday's sketch on the Via Appia looks this morning—is there any sense in going on with it? It is all right, but there's no stamp on the work. How is it that all Tischbein's sketches, across the room, have a stamp of their own? . . . To work!

And he sighs a little, and thinks he had better go back into his own small apartment, where *Egmont* awaits him. An hour every morning is devoted to *Egmont*, for it is better to get to work before his friends are up—otherwise they'll start an endless argument. The things Moritz says against Michael Angelo! Certainly, these fellows. . . .

He halts on the threshold. So high that her conventionally treated hair touches the dimly painted ceiling, there stands on a pedestal a plaster-mask of that Juno who is as inscrutable "as a song of Homer's." He gazes long and silently into her watchful eyes. Then he turns to her sleeping neighbour, Medusa, who seems to hover between death and voluptuous ecstasy. But oh, where is the colour of the marble?

When finally he sits down to the sallow pages of *Egmont* (covered ten years ago by his swift clear youthful handwriting), when he takes up the latest of them, written in the first Weimar years . . . all of a sudden he is in his attic-room at home, and then in the green little study of his summer villa in the Park at Weimar . . . and his whole existence, unguided, somnambulistic, and yet advancing with so sure a step, comes over him like a thing imagined, a passage from *Wilhelm Meister*. And he takes a firmer grip of these old pages which he is now to remodel and furnish with a new ending—the faithful mute companions of his path, the only things which prove that all he has been recalling is no dream.

Is this room really on the Corso at Rome? Is it the Roman sunlight which illumines the page before him? And when he goes out, will he only have to turn to the right and in a quarter of an hour be gazing from the Capitol? Yet here he sits as of old, nailed to his chair, inventing, writing—because Göschen in Leipzig wants to set up his fourth volume, and Herder in Weimar will soon be wanting the copy for correction.

Weimar! How far away it seems, it and his mistress and his friend! After all, doesn't everyone think first of himself? Is not Charlotte more deeply possessed by pride

and jealousy than by love and friendship? Is not the Duke much fonder of his war-game than of his friend's aesthetics? " I am cured of a mortal disease. . . . If I had not made up my mind to do what I am doing now, I should simply have gone to the dogs and become incapable of anything whatever." Liberty! Is it only liberty that he is enjoying in Rome? And is it really enjoyment—this feeling which possesses him?

Since his flight from Carlsbad on that September morning, Goethe had rushed to Rome, rather than merely travelled thither. Fifty-six days ago, and the mere getting there took sixteen. Still, half of Northern, and a good deal of Central, Italy had been seen. Some prescience had urged him irresistibly, some compulsion had driven him onward—as though the long dreamed-of goal might yet elude him. Here is Goethe on his first Transalpine day:

" I believe in God again! " he exclaimed in the Trentino. " I feel as though I had been born and brought up here, and had come back from a trip to Greenland, from whale-fishing. Everything smiles on me. . . . If this were read by someone who lives in the South, belongs to the South, he would think me very childish. Ah, what I am writing now, I have long known; all the time . . . I was pining under a gloomy sky, and now I like to feel that this delight is one of those rare occasions for which one should be eternally grateful to beneficent Nature."

So does a long-banished exile feel, returning to his home. These are Goethe's first words in Italy—he seems to be returning to the land he has never seen before. He stands incredulous as a prisoner released—and yet he had been twice in Switzerland—before the blue and white peaks of the Brenner Pass. Everything sad was disappearing in the North—the clouds and mists, which happened that day to be drifting northward, were in his view carrying, as they had always carried, darkness and cold to his native land.

Travelling incognito was like being a boy again—it was delightful to eat pears and apples in the street, to talk to the people he met, to ask his way of every beggar. A carpet-bag and knapsack were all his luggage; he had a sleeved waistcoat and an overcoat against wind and weather. In Verona he adopted the dress of the middle-classes, acquired their ways of walking and behaving, and ended by wearing cotton stockings so as to climb a rung lower down the society-ladder. In the market at Vicenza he played with some children. And he enjoyed being without a servant and running about the town, after his years of a " sedentary, slinking " existence. In a week he found his spirits rising, " for being waited upon makes people old and incapable before their time "; and now he had to " keep an eye on the exchange, see about my drafts, pay bills, keep accounts, write to you, instead of only thinking, planning, brooding, giving orders, and dictating."

In the two years of his Italian sojourn, Goethe was never again so light-hearted as in these first two months. He was like a Prince who has evaded his Master of the Ceremonies, and is on the way to embrace a long dreamed-of foreign mistress instead of the royal cousin who has been assigned him as a bride. It was only the beginning of the tour which smacked of adventure; Goethe was late in enjoying the rôle of wandering scholar, with its feasts of grapes and figs under the blue of an Italian autumn, and the language and the common people.

But though he was roving, he was learning too. Why, he asked himself, were the dwellers near Lago di Garda less attractive to look at than those north of the Brenner Pass—and he came to the conclusion that it was their different way of eating polenta. " What does it cost to rent an archway in the arena? " he asked in Verona of the craftsmen who had their workshops there; and from Venice he wrote, quite in his old manner, that he wasn't wasting a single hour and would stay away no longer than was necessary. Here—only a month after his flight—

he was very glad to provide himself again with a servant, and rejoiced in the assistance that a native of the country can render to a tourist. Now he could always go the shortest and cheapest way anywhere; and this, he said, was a great relief. Perhaps he was no longer young enough for the manner of life that a month ago he had so thoroughly enjoyed.

Very soon again he began, instead of calculating and paying (and the more gladly for the change) to think, plan, brood, and give orders. Even Venice got on his nerves, and after a fortnight he was glad to get away. With every degree of latitude the attraction of the great magnet increased. He scoured through Ferrara, from Bologna onwards he preferred merely to pass through the towns: he literally tore through Florence, stopping only three hours, the last two nights he slept in his clothes, left his inn before dawn, and: " To-morrow evening in Rome. After that I have nothing more to wish for, except to see you and my few belongings again, and find you in good health." But not until he reached the Porta del Popolo was " Rome a certainty. The law and the prophets are fulfilled, and I shall be quit of my Roman hauntings for the rest of my days. . . . Only now am I beginning to live. . . . Now I *am* here I am tranquil and, it would seem, tranquillized for the remainder of my life."

This rapid travelling is like the impatience of a young man approaching the fulfilment of his heart's desire, sure of his conquest, and yet at the last moment—because doubt assails him—exaggerating his joyful expectancy. As if stunned, unable to enjoy or look at anything, Goethe at the end of this journey sank upon his bed, rid of the " Roman hauntings." Rome was a certainty now, and no one could ever take it from him. And exactly like one whose nerves were aching for the first step on Roman soil to be over, he said on his first day there, quite tamely and coolly, that he had seen St. Peter's and " the most important " ruins.

For here and now as everywhere and always Goethe

knew the thing before he reached it. The image in his heart could only be confirmed by the actual scene or the literary presentment, but even in the deeper emotional life that soul could experience nothing which had not long been inwardly foreknown. Goethe could have dispensed with actions, landscapes, journeys, if he had trusted to his genius alone; but his daemon perpetually impelled him to submerge himself in complications, actualities, the atmospheres of foreign lands—to prove on his own body the prescient powers of his mind. He whose internal vision could surpass the earthly actuality required the external vision also to content his insatiable, probing eye, and thus nourish his ideas by constant observation. He was unchangingly the supersensual yet sensual lover, even when Italy was the mistress he wooed.

In Italy he was to learn nothing that he had not known already, to enjoy little that he had not anticipated. One charm of travel (as indeed one charm of life), and to many the greatest, Goethe was deprived of—the element of surprise. What other tourists found exciting he found soothing, for what he was seeing only confirmed his prevision. But to be soothed was precisely what his restless nature wanted when it drove him to the land of art, of liberty, of Southern warmth—repose of spirit, the assurance of an intellectual gain. It was not because he had read a great deal about Italy that he felt at home there; he had read about her simply because he *was* at home there. And now the chain of causation was linked up.

Even in Venice he felt less inspired than relieved "that Venice is no longer a name to me, a name which had so often tormented me—*me*, who was ever the deadly foe of mere combinations of syllables!" . . . "For I never get any nearer through historical facts; the things I see were never at any time more than a hand's-breadth away from me, yet I was divided from them by an impenetrable wall. For really even now it is not as if I were merely seeing them, but as if I were seeing them again." And it was just the same with the first days in Rome: "It is

all as I thought it would be, and all new." His old ideas had, as he said, come alive; and in Naples he added: " On the whole, man is a creature who knows very early and acts very late! "

There was only one thing he did not know beforehand, and that was the issue. He had a suspicion of it, but even some months afterwards he was agitated by the daemonic thought of all he had risked: " I have only one existence, and I have staked it all this time, and continue so to stake it."

To his nature, his intellect, and happy chance he looked for guidance. Chance did little for Goethe in Italy. His nature was not so much fruitful as tamed so far as to do him no harm; intellect alone bestowed on him inestimable treasures. But he owed more to the liberty which for two years he enjoyed there, after having been shackled for fifteen years first by his family and profession, then by friendship and society, finally by State and Court duties, often by women, and always by literary production. As a *savant* without rank or reputation, a German amateur of the fine arts, free from obligations and women, from social life and to some extent from production—free, above all, from the past . . . Goethe lived long in the great foreign city, intent on self-development before he should be forty.

For this was the purpose of his tour. Goethe lived in Italy to learn, not to enjoy, and so in the gay land his spirit took the same earnest fold as of yore. The painter Tischbein admirably rendered this frame of mind in a large painting where he depicted a wanderer meditating on the past among the ruins of a dead civilization. The only trait which does not fit Goethe is the romantic feeling in the composition—for that mind, at the end of its thirties, was for clear-sightedness at any price, for truth in art and Nature. Never was Goethe's eye keener, his vision shrewder, than in Italy; never was he less lyrically inclined than in the decade now beginning. Artistically speaking, he kept a tight hand on himself, living by rule and tranquilly, so that realities should not meet exaltation,

but should of themselves exalt the soul, for only in this way might errors be avoided.

"My practice of seeing and studying all things as they are, my loyalty to the light of the eye, my complete shedding of all pretensions, make me happy here in a very quiet sort of way. . . . I was pretty sure I should learn something at Rome, but that I should have to go to school to such an extent, that there was all there is for me to learn, I had not imagined. . . . Already I have gained much, spiritually speaking . . . and feel ever so much freer. Daily I cast another skin, and hope to return as a normal person."

These confessions in his first months at Rome show the frame of mind which ruled his whole stay in Italy—for ever learning something, seldom shaping it into form, still more seldom amusing himself. For even in Naples, a metropolis of the rococo whose charms have tempted many a sober German to a gayer life, he remained unalterable: "Quite calm, as I usually do remain, and when things are beyond the beyonds I merely goggle at them. . . . Everyone (here) lives in a sort of intoxicated state of self-oblivion. And so do I; I scarcely recognize myself, I seem to myself an entirely different person. I am certainly learning to be a tourist on this tour; whether I am learning to live I can't say. The people who seem to understand that art are too different from me in every respect for me to lay any claim to possessing their talent."

So it was no sacrifice to his genius, but only to his temperament, when Goethe made use of this freedom to learn what he could. There could not at that time have been a more fruitful field for this than Rome afforded. Here he saw what he had known erroneously or only in part, realized what connections could be made, and only now did his co-ordinating sense succeed in constructing a scheme for the tour which had begun as an adventurous escapade. Now he declared that he should need a year and more before he could fully grasp the things which, though they did not take him by surprise, he felt that he

must deeply study. Into the loose framework of the improvised route he now built columns and arches to make the tour a work of art—for himself, not for others. And at Rome he drew up a sort of educative programme so as gradually to master its marvels, and regarded his trip to Sicily as a means whereby to shape his experience into a whole, for to have ended the tour at Naples would have been to leave it an unfinished monument.

If in the methodical home-life Goethe's eye was his chief source of intellectual sustenance, how entirely it must have been master of the situation when he was travelling—an occasion when everyone tries to practise the art of seeing. " Here and now "—that was his motto in these years; sensuous impressions were what he was after, those which books and pictures could not afford him. He was testing his powers of observation, his clear-sightedness, his swiftness of apprehension, " and I want to see if my temper can get rid of its inveterate frowns and furrows. . . . I've been communing with *things* all day long. . . . I want to open my eyes, gaze humbly, and await the image which my soul will make for me. . . . All roads are open to me, because I walk in a spirit of humility."

Nevertheless, he could not but see according to the law of his vision—and Goethe always saw the object in its evolutionary aspect. Even here in Italy, where everything appealed to him to enjoy the " Here and Now," he sought instead to see how it came to be so. Rome, he said, he was considering as formerly he had considered Nature; and though, so doing, his delight in the object at rest, fully evolved, might be impaired or destroyed, he made for himself a profounder, more temperate delight in the thought of its struggle and development. Hills and pasture-land, arrangements of columns and shapes of vehicles—of all things that he saw he traced the genealogy.

If on entering the temple at Paestum he was disappointed by the cumbrousness of the squat pillars, it only took him an hour to feel at home with them, once he recalled the age to which such architecture was germane.

Instead of rhapsodizing romantically in Venice, he saw that the city was as it was because of its inception and situation. The costume of the Northern Italians did not strike him as an eccentricity of fashion, but as a necessity for people who were not very clean, but were very fond of appearing in public. At Verona he could see the arena gradually growing, in the master-builder's conception and under his hands, into a place of which the aim was to contain a vast crowd of spectators; and from a mysterious never-opened gate on the Corso he deduced the frustrated purpose of an architect, planning new pleasure-grounds. Everywhere his travels were productive for Goethe, for he seemed to create anew whatever he saw. Even on the Apennines he conferred a new aspect, when he said that if they had not been so high they would have been more exposed to the action of the sea, and thus would have been more beautiful features of the landscape!

What Goethe's eye beheld in Italy was, above all, things rather than people—he had recently had to suffer so much more from people than from things!—and that was why, in his capacity of author, he brought home numerous images and still more numerous forms, but scarcely any material, and even fewer models for new characters. In these last years at Weimar he had been more of an author than a statesman, more of a scientist than an author, and the proportions did not alter on the Italian tour. His inner aversion from the affairs which had weighed so heavily upon him is plainly proved by his lack of interest in the government and politics of Italy. It was like the wilful blindness of a homesick artist.

Freedom of movement and anonymity strengthened his democratic tendencies. He admired the Republic of Venice as a fitting monument, not to a ruling caste but to a people. Seeing the freer intercourse of the classes, here in the South, he realized more acutely the social mummeries of the little German sovereigns.

But in Rome he was not interested in the Papal State, either for its abnormality or its corruption; indeed, he

only once or twice had anything even derisive to say about it.

He was sometimes inclined to study the details of government, because in those the "Here and Now" suggested possible improvements to his practised eye. He devised a scheme for the sanitation of Venice, thought the painting of churches a mistake, praised a custom-house regulation for its stringency, however inconvenient travellers might find it, took note, for imitation at Weimar, of a method of paving the streets in Ferrara (this was the one point of comparison he made between Tasso's and Goethe's town!); and six lines of writing about Florence were followed by pages on agricultural methods, rotation of crops, the intervals between rows of wheat, and manuring in the Florentine region. Nevertheless, the paucity of these memoranda after a decade of practical routine is a striking testimony to the fact that he regarded all this in the light of a mere duty.

As a scientist, on the contrary, he worked with spontaneous enthusiasm at every stage of his tour. His love for truth prevailed over his love for beauty. Nature was to rescue him from his daemon's complexities. Goethe's nature-study in Italy proves the growing power of the organic principle in his evolution. Here, where such art as he could find nowhere else awaited his attention, he spent half his time and energies on the study of Nature, which after all he could have done at home; and as if to clinch his attachment to the laws of evolution, he now turned more and more decidedly from stones to plants. It was as though the North must always signify the petrified for him, while the South stood for germination and budding vitality.

On the third day of his tour he was still desirous to take a bit of quartz shot through with jasper along with him to Rome, for transport to Weimar later on; and up to the Brenner Pass he studied mineralogy. Then, crossing it, he was fascinated by the shapes of wind-blown clouds; and an entirely original theory of weather-conditions,

which was later verified in principle, was suggested to him by the vague feeling that everything dark and oppressive was bound to drift northward. When later on he indulged in sporadic geological studies, it was merely because there was an opportunity of seeing, in activity on Vesuvius, the volcanic lava of his Thuringian observations.

But as soon as he reached the Lido he became absorbed in the sappy toughness of the shore-vegetation; he enjoyed seeing all this kind of thing become part of the world around him, instead of mere cabinet specimens. Goethe never went forth to discover; he saw, and so discovered. But here, too, he was guided by his insight into the laws of things. Everything he found outside he knew to be already in himself. Really (as he said in the beginning of his study of lava) he might have devoted the rest of his life to observation, there would have been so much for him to discern. From South Italy, where new plants and fishes made their appearance, he felt tempted to go to India, " not to discover anything new, but to see what *has* been discovered in my own way. As I so often prophesied, I have found that everything here is more expanded, more evolved. Many things that I guessed at and looked for with the microscope at home, I can see here with the naked eye, an indubitable certainty." Those words are symbolic of the whole tour.

" The botanical kingdom has got hold of me "; so he had written shortly before his flight. The law which he had unremittingly pursued he now found outside himself, without having actually looked for it. At Padua and Palermo, looking at the palm-trees, he was struck by the idea of a primitive plant. He felt that he was " quite close to the mystery of procreation in plants; and that it is the simplest thing that could possibly be imagined. . . . This primitive plant of mine is going to be the most marvellous organism in the world, one that Nature herself might envy me. With this pattern and this clue to it, one will henceforth be able to invent new plants to all eternity, which cannot but be in the

order of succession. . . . The same law will be applicable to all other living organisms."

Ten years afterwards he spoke of this discovery as the most glorious moment of his life; and again, twenty years later, at the conclusion of his *Morphology*, he gave utterance to these glowing words: "To conceive, to sustain such an idea, to discern it in Nature, is a task which transports one into a region of tormented bliss." Then the study of Rome prevented him from working out his ideas; and so—entirely self-taught—he would gather plants from the gardens and fields, from wherever he went for a walk and wherever he came across them, "happy in that which is my Father's."

In Sicily he even gave up going to Syracuse, because he preferred to travel through the country-regions and see the corn which has given the island its nickname. He called Raphael's skull—very drolly, with a touch of scientific cynicism—a splendid structure of bones in which a beautiful soul could promenade at ease. When his friends in Naples tried to prevent his drinking a glass of water because there were insects floating in it, he quietly swallowed the liquid, saying that we ate crabs and eels, and that these little animals would do him no harm and might possibly nourish him.

This unromantic clear-sighted attitude is nowhere more evident than in his treatment of scenery. There are scarcely any long descriptions of Italian landscape in his letters and diaries. Here, where the German is wont to rhapsodize, Goethe kept his head. To the gardens and skies which in Thuringia had moved him to lyric yearning, he now—shaded by their trees and basking under their blue—devoted no long poem, and only a few descriptive verses in the dramas which were remodelled in Italy. But he was never tired of praising the climate—indeed, it was the climate alone that he wanted to transplant, to "cut a piece out of, big enough for a strip round my house."

The scenery itself was coolly, not to say tamely, described; even the flame-belching Vesuvius was examined

with a view to its inward rather than its outward aspect. Moonlight, which casts a veil over objects, is rarely mentioned. Even the sea did not surprise him, as a spectacle! From the tower of St. Mark's he saw it for the first time in his life, but described only the ships, hills, and lagoons. And standing on the Lido, he merely recorded: "So now I have seen this too with my own eyes, and followed its traces on the beautiful floor it leaves behind as it ebbs. I wished the children were with me, because of the shells!" He examined the seaweeds and sea-snails, and in this first contact with the sea he uttered, on seeing the crabs, these impressive words: "What an ineffably glorious thing is a live organism! How adapted to its environment—how real—how concrete!"

Here we have Goethe at thirty-eight—revering the Infinite in the little, but inclined to be suspicious of the vaster manifestation. This particular vastness of the ocean took some time to impress him, and in Naples he said that it was only when people had lived a long time by the sea that they could understand its being impossible to live without it. But when the sea revealed itself in storm, he studied the formations of the waves! Is it not as though, in his desire for proportion, he avoided all seductions even in Nature? Twenty years earlier Goethe would have seen in the ocean a symbol of his soul.

How useful his knowledge of the organic could be to him in art, he realized in Rome. On his arrival—so he recorded at the end of his tour—he had understood nothing about plastic art, had merely admired its reflection of Nature. Nevertheless, here he found art confirming his ideas, only in a higher state of development. He warned himself that he must always look at sculptures over and over again; in the first impression, "a mixture of truth and fallacy," he put no faith. He had delayed for a lifetime to acquire the technique of any craft; now, he said, he intended to do that, so that he might go on to something else.

"The great point is to get all these things, which

have worked on my imagination for thirty years—and have thus taken too supreme a place in it—so arranged in the lower rooms of my house of life that they and I can breathe the same regular domestic atmosphere."

He used these words when standing before Palladio's buildings. He had tracked that classic spirit all over Northern Italy; his desire for purity of line, serenity, could be satisfied only by the Greeks. He studied very cursorily the Renaissance buildings of Florence and Perugia—the baroque remained wholly alien; its distorted pinnacles were no less irritating to him than the eccentricities of a Sicilian Prince, which nevertheless he took the trouble to catalogue rather pedantically. His derision of everything that he thought at all Gothic was utterly indiscriminating—so set was Goethe's mind at this time on the linear, the serene, as opposed to the individual treatment. But in the multitude of buildings he did not ignore even those which were alien and disagreeable to him. Only once did he turn tail. In the Catacombs he experienced such discomfort that he instantly regained the light of day. He had often penetrated far into the bowels of the earth at the mines of Ilmenau, tapping with his hammer; in these Christian mortuaries his breath failed him, and Goethe escaped into the light.

Statues he at first found more impressive and striking than antique buildings. He could not help reconstructing the latter from their ruins, which only depressed him, since no romantic emotion moved him to gloat upon things that have been demolished. The statues, when they were intact, revealed to him the secrets of their raw material. In Germany he had seen only plaster-casts, not any originals. Now, in Rome, he quickly learnt to distinguish the various Grecian epochs in statuary and gems, and would have gone so far as to buy a genuine piece. At first these works of art struck him chiefly as witnesses of the age they derived from—in a literary sense as it were; and in them he revered humanity in its pristine purity of vision. It was not until the final half-year, the

most fruitful period of the tour, that they really came to life in his productive faculties. Aided by his anatomical knowledge, he learnt to draw the human head and body, began to model enthusiastically, and once again quoted those words of Jacob's: " I will not let thee go except thou bless me—though I should be crippled in the struggle! "

At twenty, on that cry, he had wrestled with Herder and his doctrine of the people as the source of poetry; at thirty, with the same prayer, he had sought to regulate and simplify the Weimar finances; now, at thirty-eight, he was struggling with his own shaping hands. For yet again Goethe was experimenting in drawing; and as it was in Rome this time, surrounded by art and artists, he put all his enthusiasm into the effort—and never tried again. For the first time he became so conscious of the affinity between plastic and literary art that he used the word artist in a dual sense, tried to attain realism in his modelling, divided his second Roman winter into five or six periods of plastic study, wished that, like a musician, he could set the harmonies he felt on the paper, believed he had discovered a principle, and finally did succeed in modelling a fairly good head of Hercules.

This study of modelling was useful to him as a writer. Impersonal though his drawings always were, the effort to attain line and colour showed him a new aspect of things, taught him to divine their essential features; and this entered into the manipulation of his sentences, verses, and images. One advantage of his tour, as he emphatically said when it was over, was that he had done with modelling henceforth, for he was " really born to be a writer."

In an amusing letter he said that he was fated always to forecast his own destiny in his writings, and this year they were telling him that he would fall in love with a Princess so as to write *Tasso*, and then sell himself to the devil so as to finish *Faust*. While he was revising *Egmont* in Rome, he read in the latest newspaper of just such disturbances at Brussels as he had described a decade ago;

and if he transferred a few scenes of *Tasso* to the Florentine gardens, and gave the new *Iphigenie* a touch of the Southern atmosphere he was then breathing, these incidental moods in no way transgress against the deeper law of his prescient imagination. Goethe was like other poets in that he did not need to see the landscapes and costumes he wanted to present. In the Borghese Gardens he wrote the scene in the witches' kitchen, than which nothing could be more German in feeling; and under the orange-trees of Naples he merely remarked: " Mignon was quite right to long for them."

On one blue morning in spring, Goethe went to the public gardens of Palermo, " with the settled quiet resolution of going on with my poetic dream " (*Nausicaa*). " But before I knew, I was in the grip of another phantom which had been slinking about my path for some days." This meant that among the sub-tropical plants he again began to search for the primitive plant of his faith. There *must* be a specimen! He compared, examined, got excited, but found nothing; and " my good poetical intentions were done for, the Garden of Alcinoë vanished into thin air, a cosmic garden had opened its gates. Why are we moderns so easily distracted, why are we fascinated by enterprises that are entirely beyond our grasp? "

Though the scientist was heaping up treasure in Italy, and the connoisseur was mastering form, the writer was gaining but little; for even in the Elegies which he was to write on his return, Rome was rather the background than the theme. He brought home neither any considerable poems nor any important new conceptions. But for the completion of his fragments, which was his one literary work in those two years, he needed that intellectual liberty which he could find only in absence from Weimar. In that sense, Goethe needed liberty more than he needed Italy.

When he had decided to print his fragments, he had regarded himself—or so a confession from Rome would seem to say—as extinct. But now he went vigorously to

work at finishing them; and, conscious that he had gained a new sense of style, he could compare himself with himself, and see his lights and shadows. It was with a peculiar sensation that one day he opened the parcel wherein the first four volumes of his collected edition " came to Rome with the results of half a life-time."

He took great pains with *Iphigenie*, seeking to lay the yoke of verse upon the delicate conception without straining it. Sometimes, in his solitary journey home, he clung to it as if to a firm bond connecting him, among these foreign people, with the past.

With a strange mixture of distaste and affection Goethe now re-read this work; and if we compare his earnest absorption in *Iphigenie*, his years of devotion to her presentment, with the indifference he felt for the play within a year of his finishing it, we have yet another symbol of his love for the original model, and the destined issue of that love. Goethe could forget Lotte Buff in the end, could parody *Werther*; but from Frau von Stein and *Iphigenie*, less passionately experienced, he merely felt remote when his fervour had died out. A year after he had finished it, that work of Goethe's left him cold.

Even *Tasso* (to which he added more in the last six months at Rome than he did in the first twelve to *Iphigenie*) grew *in* Italy, not because of Italy. At Naples he was tempted to throw it into the fire, but felt himself pleasingly intimidated by the distant printer; and though he said he was amused and surprised by this sense of compulsion, it nevertheless throws a light on the completion of many of his works—for if he had obeyed the deeper law of his conceptions, the majority of Goethe's works might have remained unfinished, because in fact they were experiments. Indeed, it was only a certain number of his poems that he felt an inward compulsion to finish, and this was because they fell from his pen in the utmost perfection—something like Leonardo, who of his countless ideas and schemes completed only one, and that as it were by accident.

Again and again he was on the point of abandoning the troublesome *Tasso*, but the poet had put too much of himself into that other poet to be able to leave him in the lurch. He was now recasting the nebulous first act of the Weimar manuscript, seven years afterwards, and giving it rhythmic form. Crossing the sea, far from the world of men, he used the leisure and physical relaxation in the service of mental exertion; and when later on he took the manuscript with him on the homeward journey, it was probably because he felt a melancholy pleasure in its close connection with the land to which he was saying farewell.

His genius would not suffer him to continue *Faust* in Rome. Wistfully recalling his youth, he deluded himself into the idea that all he need do was to go on writing at it, and have the paper smoked—then nobody would know it had been composed at widely separated intervals. But two scenes were enough for him. One of these, the Wood and Cavern scene where Faust invokes the Sublime Spirit, reveals a mood which later was to be constant with Goethe. How masterfully his strange genius could resist the attempt to subject it to classical forms is shown in the baroque scene of the Witches' Kitchen, which might have been written anywhere but under the tall spreading pine-trees of the Borghese Gardens. There is no trace of their umbrage, and still less of their form.

The later *Italienische Reise* remained a fragment, but has not the charm of the diary-form. The letters, on the other hand, are racy and spontaneous, though they too were designed for semi-publicity and somewhat written-up. For the first few weeks, up to his arrival in Rome, they were supplemented by a diary for Frau von Stein, of which Goethe then thought very highly indeed. All that was pedantic in him came out when, writing from an address she did not know, he adjured her (from whom he had concealed his plans, his destination, and was still concealing them when he wrote) to copy out the diary which would shortly reach her, on separate quarto sheets

and read none of it aloud, so that he might have something to tell when he came back. In this way, he said, there would be a copy waiting for him on his return, which he would be able to " correct "!

He abandoned this diary in Rome, and confined himself to notes which he did not send home and which were not preserved. None the less, to write and to depict was a necessity for him in travel as in life. It was only when he called himself to account that Goethe could comprehend himself at all; and to this highly personal impulse we owe the grand total of his work, which he called a prolonged self-revelation. When thirty years afterwards he collected his Italian notes, letters, and diaries for his volume, the material before him contrasted with his new outlook at every point; and yet he could not bring himself to re-write what had been written in the style he had now shed. " These documents, dear things, are altogether too naïve; they would have had to be done all over again."

Since in the South Goethe was first of all the student, his manner of life was necessarily quiet, secluded, Southern only in the sense of environment. His incognito shows the degree of his reclusiveness. He was nearly forty, of European reputation, ennobled and a Minister, and he had —except for a few weeks at Carlsbad—never mixed with the great world, never set foot in Paris, London, or Vienna. He had disliked Berlin on a brief visit, had merely passed through Dresden, in Strasburg and Leipzig had known nothing of the higher social spheres; Frankfurt was a provincial town, Weimar a stupid little Residency. A free man for the first time in fifteen years, he could now, with the renown which was spreading wider every day, on his tardy overstepping of the German-speaking frontier have easily entered the most dazzling circles in the " Capital of the World." He could have travelled like Voltaire—have breathed the atmosphere of a great nation by exchanging ideas with the best minds it possessed, have intimately felt its history, and compared himself with its illustrious men.

Instead of this, even on the way there he was upset when a bookseller recognized him, and he denied that he was Goethe. His incognito was soon, of course, an open secret in Rome, and every German there wrote home the news. But as he chose to be known as the painter Möller, the fiction saved him from visits and publicity; and the one Prince whom he did go to see, for the sake of useful introductions, he met first in a picture-gallery.

In Sicily he was forced to submit to some visiting. At the Palace in Palermo, a Knight of Malta asked about Central Germany (which he had visited ten years before) and finally about Weimar and a young man who there "*faisait la pluie et le beau temps*"—the author of *Werther*.

When he was told who his interlocutor was, the effect upon the Knight was to make him exclaim, with every manifestation of surprise: "There must have been a good many changes there." Goethe smiled, and reticent as ever about facts which concerned himself, merely said: "Oh yes. I've undergone a good deal of change between Weimar and Palermo." Soon after this, he happened on a market-place in the interior of the island where the citizens were sitting about in the antique fashion, and they asked this German stranger and his companion to tell them about "the great King." Goethe sat down and recounted the exploits of Frederick the Great, saying nothing about his death lest the audience should be mortified. These anecdotes give us a flash-light on Goethe in Italy—he startled the Knight of Malta at the Palace by his alteration from a youth to a man; the nameless foreigner told the old Sicilian peasants about the deeds of the only German who, besides himself, is epoch-making for that period.

Between the two extremes lies nothing but a quiet life. Goethe was in good health throughout these two years and longer, and that really for the first time since Strasburg. He attributed it to the Southern climate and had reason to fear, from various indications, that he might relapse on his return to the North.

"What I particularly like about him" (Tischbein wrote home) "is his simple manner of life. He asked me for a quite small room where he could sleep and work unhindered, and very simple food. There he sits now, and in the mornings works at his *Iphigenie* till nine o'clock; then he goes out and looks at the great works of art. . . . He doesn't let any of the big-wigs worry him, and will see no one but artists."

Economy was not the reason, was merely the mark, of this simplicity. In the first eighteen months he spent his official salary and the thousand thalers paid for the first four volumes of his works, apart from what his mere living cost him—that makes between six and seven thousand marks for a year in Italy, including all the expenses of travel, and the purchase of casts, pictures, and marbles. He was precise about details, told Frau von Stein that he was sending her seven pounds of the best coffee in Venice, which had cost one ducat, but that to this must be added the expense of transport; and he bought a marble replica on the Duchess's behalf, representing himself as the purchaser, which reduced the price by twenty ducats. He persuaded the Duke that certain volumes of the Vatican Museum Catalogue must be procured for Weimar. With the drawings which the painters Tischbein and Kniep did for him in South Italy he covered their expenses as his guests on the tour. For his return he intended to save the Easter quarter of his salary, and the advance payment for his fifth volume. Thus, though he lived comfortably, it was from hand to mouth.

Goethe—and it should never be forgotten when considering his most weighty decisions—had no capital of any kind until he was in his sixtieth year. He lived well, but always on his salary and his at first somewhat scanty remuneration from writing, which never brought him in any sums worth talking about until he was forty. That was why he was grasping with his publisher, Göschen—so much so that his Weimar friends actually called him petty, because on a slight difference of opinion arising he

firmly stuck to his bond. He ordered his servant in Weimar not to let the manuscript of a new volume leave his hands for anything but cash down from the publisher—" the contract says so, and there must be no paltering with it." When the subscription for his works fell below what author and publisher had hoped, Goethe wrote in serious earnest that " people may think they are paying me a prodigious sum for a piece of work, when in reality all they are doing is to recoup me for the money I had to spend on collecting the material for it."

His studious temper often deprived him of opportunities for closer study of the Italian people. In Venice he would be coming home when the Venetian is going out; and when at last he thought of buying a mask, the waste of money repelled him and he preferred to purchase himself some lasting enjoyment in the shape of a volume of Vitruvius. That is Goethe at thirty-seven, in Venice—studying a Latin writer on the architecture of the Augustan age in the evenings at an inn, while outside Canaletto's pupils at the tables on the Piazza of St. Mark's, and Casanova's mistress in her box at the Commedia, were savouring the autumn glories of the rococo.

The Roman Carnival, of which he gives us a graphic but unenthusiastic picture, pleased him better after the event than it did at the time, when he said it "'robbed him of a precious week," and thought it so dull that, once seen, no one could wish to see it again. And when he did look in at a masked ball, he fled in half an hour. The idleness and ostentation of Neapolitan life drove him away from the city—he liked it fairly well, but felt it was not for him; and when he met some men of the world he realized more clearly than before why he could never be one of them. When the Viceroy at Palermo invited him to the Court, he barely mentioned it in his letters. He avoided going into society at Rome because he knew he would be drawn into cliques, and obliged to praise certain artists and dilettanti. Why should he do in Rome what he tried to avoid at Weimar?

But in his small elected circle he was sociable, and in fact was much less alone than in the recent years at home. His society consisted exclusively—and only in those two years of his life!—of artists and connoisseurs. And they were all Germans. His chosen position of complete personal independence, and his intercourse with none but total strangers, permitted him to do just as he pleased. He dreaded being drawn into society by the Italians in Rome, and wasting his time and energies on fashionable people; and as his scientific studies were a thing apart from the place, no one in Rome could have been of much use to him in that sense. Thus it came about that in Italy Goethe seldom spoke anything but German. Just then he would have found it dull to live alone. He was learning, and for that he needed the sort of assistance which could be dispensed with when it had done its work for him. Here, among more unconventional people and surroundings, he appreciated the value of mutual endeavour more deeply than ever before.

The travelling Goethe, then, needed companions both as master and pupil, but these could only be adepts, a select few. Tischbein, with whom he made his longest stay, would by reason of his unconventionality and genuine knowledge have been the best possible company for him; and so he was for months. In his house, with his cheerful companionship, Goethe—the fugitive from his own stately abode in the sombre North—had his first rejuvenating draught of artistic domesticity, and was entirely contented until his host's unpunctuality began to irritate him. Finally he declared that Tischbein was a typical Bohemian —and Bohemians, for fifteen years, has ceased to suit Goethe's taste in friends. Ever since Weimar he had found them unendurable. In the end, too, he thought Tischbein less open-hearted and unselfish than he had at first.

At times he would say that the best company he had in Rome was a melancholic, neurotic, gifted writer—the German, Moritz; and declare that Moritz had taught

him anything he might have learnt there. Kaiser of Zurich, whom he persuaded to come to Rome, was his guide in musical matters. The German painters, Bury and Lips, completed this circle of artists, " who are all kindly disposed, all on the right path, and the proof of it is that they can put up with me. . . . For I am ruthless and impatient with everyone who dawdles and divagates, and yet wants to pass as a pioneer and an explorer. So I laugh and mock at them until they either alter their ways or give me the go-by. . . . Two of them—nay, three —already have to thank me for a new outlook and a new manner of life, and will be grateful to me as long as they live. On that count—my effect on others—I do feel that I have a healthy and inspiring nature. Only I can't walk in tight shoes, nor could I ever see through a stone wall." Here he appears as a comrade with comrades, influencing them, living with them, a German artist in Rome as they were, working hard like them, like them unpretentious, their superior in only one thing—the power of a tremendous personality.

In one social quality he did surpass them—and that was a kindliness greater than we have hitherto had occasion to record. He wrote a long letter to Wieland—otherwise honoured with no correspondence—about a young art-expert whose acquaintance he had lately made, suggesting that he should do some work on Wieland's journal, for the young man was in need of money. When the neurotic Moritz met with an accident, Goethe tended and cheered him, visited him daily for a considerable time, sat up at night with him, brought other fellow-countrymen to see him, arranging visits and vigils so that for six weeks the invalid was never without nursing and companionship.

But despite all this, he was as a rule so absent-minded and reticent, even in their company, that after a year he wrote home confessing that he could open his heart to no one in the place. It was not till later on that he met the only Roman acquaintance who was to influence him for his whole life—the Swiss Heinrich Meyer, a mediocre

painter but a first-rate connoisseur, reserved, loyal-hearted, a typical Swiss. This man did more for Goethe's aesthetic enlightenment than anyone since Herder, but he taught him less in the way of ideas than of technique. His pupil took earnest note of every word he said, for what Goethe had learned in Germany was as the rind to the kernel, compared with Meyer's teaching. At only one house was Goethe a frequent visitor—Angelica Kauffmann's, a kind woman, a skilful painter, very much the fashion in Rome and very highly paid. She was married to an old, miserly Italian. But even on his intercourse with her he laid such restrictions that she had to root him out on Sundays to go to an exhibition, and dine with her afterwards.

This second Roman sojourn, which was to have lasted one month and lasted eleven—because Goethe had by that time made up his mind to study and thoroughly master the artistic treasures of Rome—followed a strenuous course, as methodical as his life in Weimar.

In that summer he copied the heads in the lower part of the Day of Judgment in the Sistine Chapel. He and his friends would work there because it was the coolest place during the August heat, and they tipped one of the custodians to let them encamp in the Chapel, bringing their food and drink. Once indeed the great pagan dozed in the midday heat upon the Papal Throne. Here, and later in the country, Goethe led a light-hearted youthful sort of existence, for they spent a few summer weeks on the Campagna in the house and garden of an English art-dealer. It was exactly like life at a watering-place, and there Goethe fell in love.

Not like a boy. For a year and more he had abjured women in Italy. To the Duke, who was fond of recounting his *bonnes fortunes* in his letters, Goethe explained his abstention by a dread of " French influences " among the models, of social encroachments among the middle-class ladies—in a word, of interference with his studies. Even Lady Hamilton's dancing, which at that time was

regarded as the last word in erotic aestheticism, he curtly described as being very pretty and well arranged, "and an original sort of lark."

But now, in this *villeggiatura* at Castel Gandolfo, he made the acquaintance of a beautiful Milanese who in appearance, character, and destiny was in many respects a specimen of the type which ruled the Goethean love-affair. Once more she was of the middle-class, and he met her unconventionally. Once more she was of clear brunette colouring, with a delicate skin, and "frank, engaging, not to say appealing, manners." She had blue eyes; and he met her in the company of a darker, more statuesque Roman lady, but in this instance too was more attracted by the suppler, gentler, airier type. Like an elderly man, almost paternally, he yielded to her wish that he should teach her English. His courtship began on the first day with the substantive in a sentence from the *Times*, and was soon extended to the relevant adjective—it was all in fun, but all in earnest too; and before long she appeared in his company at meal-times, when she was rather coldly received.

Then he heard she was engaged, and he was "terrified ... I was old and experienced enough to pull up instantly, with whatever regret. 'It would be a little too much,' I exclaimed to myself, 'if a Wertherish story were to crop up in Rome, and spoil the unforgettably delightful conditions you've been so successful in preserving.'" Later, in Rome, she was deserted by her betrothed and fell desperately ill. Goethe often inquired for her; and finally he saw the convalescent in her carriage at the carnival, talked to her for a moment, receiving her thanks for his attentions—and went his way, feeling "tranquil and very happy."

This incident, as described in his old age, bears no resemblance to the mood of ever-increasing gaiety which characterized the concluding months in Rome—and particularly quarrels with a letter to the Duke in which, though rather pedantically, he recounts some love-affairs;

as also with some verses to Cupid which are evidently the outcome of a prolonged intrigue, and in which the poet actually bemoans his wasted time. In these we have the studious Goethe, modelling, revising his literary work, who has somehow or other slipped into a flirtation and cries to the God of Love:

> Du hast mir mein Gerät verstellt und verschoben,
> Ich such' und bin wie blind und irre geworden.
> Du lärmst so ungeschickt; ich fürchte, das Seelchen
> Entflieht, um dir zu entfliehn, und räumet die Hütte.[1]

This is another astonishing instance of the way Goethe's writings persistently foretold his experiences—for in the spring of that year he had, in his *Nausicaa*, imagined such an attachment of a passing stranger for a woman of the region. Now he was enacting it, and again it is symbolic, too, of his prescient nature, that he had portrayed this love fifteen years earlier in the dialogue of the Wanderer with the Woman of the Temple.

If his flirtation with the Milanese girl was really the platonic relation he represented it to be, there must have been another love-affair. This is indicated not only in the verses referred to above, but far more explicitly in the Elegies which were soon to follow. "Faustina," whoever she may have been—and her name, rank, and place of abode are supposed to be known—was no phantasm, but Goethe's great adventure in Italy.

He had one of a different kind before he met her, in which the tourist-Goethe was called upon to prove his pluck and presence of mind. On his return from Messina he was in danger of being stranded on the rocks of Capri one summer-night. It was a sailing-boat; and when all was confusion on board, Goethe rose to the occasion and authoritatively bade them keep their heads, soothed the

[1] Disabling, idling, thus to me thou comest—
Vainly I work, blind-eyed, distracted ever . . .
Thou foolish, restless lad! My startled spirit
Takes flight from thee, but leaves thee in possession.

terrified passengers, and persuaded them to pray (which was one means of keeping them quiet), and reminded them of Christ walking on the waters.

Such was the force of his personality, which in a long life had few opportunities of impressing itself upon the crowd. Sea-sick himself, speaking a foreign tongue, and in mortal danger, the poet yet contrived to act as priest, teacher, and practical man. Then, half stunned, he sank upon his mattress, "yet with a certain sense of pleasure which seemed to derive from the Lake of Tiberias, for I could quite plainly see the picture from Merian's illustrated Bible hovering before my eyes." He fell asleep, and was wakened by the rope dragging along the deck. They were taking in sail, and a favouring wind lifted the vessel from the rocks.

Goethe's sensations in face of death are remarkable, even if he did touch them up a little in describing the scene later on. The fact remains that he seems to have based his action on the Bible. His earliest memories revived in that moment—he found himself seeing the picture with which he had just calmed down the terrified devout; and even if he did not himself pray as he bade others do, the thought of prayer was with him, recalling childish emotions, in that grave crisis; just as ten years later he was to make the equally sceptical Doctor Faust recall them on the night of Easter-Eve.

For Goethe's anti-Christian heart felt a still keener revulsion from the old teaching, when in the Italian churches he saw that the works of the great painters were injured by their fidelity to the legend. He could bear Titian's Assumption of the Virgin only because her earthward gaze was so tenderly compassionate of humanity; Raphael's Madonna della Sedia he called "our beautiful Goddess-Mother." Later, in Bologna, his tone was that of contemptuous dislike when he spoke of the stupid detestable religious pictures that people went crazy about. "It is as though when the sons of God engendered with the daughters of men, monsters were born. . . . These people

are always concerned with the anatomy, or the execution, or the flaying—at any rate, with the sufferings of the principal figure, never with the artistic treatment. . . . Either miscreants or epileptics, criminals or fools."

The trend of Goethe's mind, intent on the true, the actual, which is to say on the classic, made him more clear-sighted than ever in this Catholic country. He said it was a mercy that the horses of St. Mark's had not been melted down into candelabra or crucifixes, that on the Greek tombs there was no man in armour waiting, in the attitude of prayer, for a joyful resurrection.

As a power and an organism he could admire the Roman Church. Before he left South Germany he had gladly looked forward to steeping himself in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Jesuit circles; but Venice was to teach him that one had to become a Catholic, like Winckelmann, if one wished to be admitted to any intimacy with that world. The irrational, when so sensuously portrayed, seemed to him an advantage of the Roman Church: "What a beautiful invention is that of the Mother of God. . . . A thing which subdues the sense to its beauty, which has a certain intimacy of poetic charm that so delights one as to annihilate one's powers of reflection—it is the very pattern of a religious object."

So it was really with a prejudice in favour of the Faith that he went to St. Peter's and saw the Pope celebrate the Mass on Christmas and Corpus Christi—but inveterately he obeyed his nature and broke loose from these seductions. He could not do otherwise. "It is a spectacle unique in its way, but I have grown too old a Diogenes to be impressed by it in any sense whatever. . . . All that fuss to bolster up a delusion seems to me simply silly, and the mummeries which impress children and sensuous-minded people are to me, when I regard the business as an artist and a poet, tedious and pettifogging."

Thus, with no intimate feeling for the country, the people, or the creed, friendless among comrades, unworldly in the capital of the world, methodical despite his liberty,

Goethe during those two years never quite looked away from his native land. As long as his sojourn lasted, he kept up an affectionate correspondence with the friends from whom it had been his first delight to escape. His second was to be the reunion. Not for an hour did he seriously think of settling down in Italy; and his very first message to Herder, who got his most confidential letters throughout the two years, was to ask him to reconcile the Duke and Frau von Stein to his flight—he had not meant to hurt anyone by going.

But his mistress was irreconcilable. For two months, on his way to Rome, he had kept a diary for her—though she did not know where he was, and could make him no sign. His attitude was like a friend's, not a lover's. He wished Fritz was with him, but did not say the same about her. Their future was uncertain; and from Venice he wrote her these extraordinary words of half-reluctant appeal: "If when I come back you are good to me, you shall know all my secrets." But when he got nearer to Rome he did feel that he wanted her, had presentiments of disaster, and suddenly broke into a remorseful strain, like a lover in a novel: "To have lived for ten years in your society, to be loved by you, and now to be here, in an alien world! I knew how it would be with me, and nothing but the utmost necessity could have made me resolve on this step. Let us have no other thought than to live our lives together to the end."

His presentiment was justified, and largely because Charlotte had none whatever, because even those ten years had left her unable to divine what he would feel when he was far away from her. Or *had* she any prescience of the great disintegration which her lover had not yet confessed either to her or himself? If she had written despairingly, Goethe would have been moved; but she assumed the attitude of a fine lady—and her first thought was that since he could so "insult" her, she must take care that her love-letters did not endanger her reputation!

What her first letter to Rome must have been like we can see from Goethe's answer: "So this is all you have to say to a friend, a lover, who had been so long looking forward to a sweet letter from you. . . . I won't tell you how your little note has rent my heart." And then he implores her not to open the box containing her returned letters until she has news of his death. Next he accuses himself; and once more we have the ardent, lonely, pleading Goethe: "You intend to keep silence? To take back the proofs of your love? You could not do this without great pain to yourself, and I am to blame for it. But perhaps a letter from you is on the way, a letter which will uplift and console me—perhaps my diary has reached you. . . . I can only beg you most submissively, most imploringly, to make it easier for me when I return—not to banish me utterly. Be generous, forgive me my misdemeanours, and let me lift my head again. . . . Don't regard me as a separate person—nothing on earth could requite me for what I should lose in you, in what life at Weimar means to me. . . . I was engaged in mortal combat there, and no tongue could say what I had to suffer. This blow has brought me to myself."

But thenceforth her image gradually faded from his heart. It was not without reason that Goethe had always told Charlotte that he needed her presence. Quickly now did he pull himself together; his other letters show how thoroughly he had recovered the healthier mood of determination to make use of his liberty, press on, be no longer the victim of her caprices. Even to Charlotte herself he was soon writing more composedly, telling her that at Kochberg (her country-house) she must not finish any of her sketches, for he was coming back with a new technique, and in a year they would celebrate her birthday in better spirits—the tone of consolation, of one who would fain be helpful out of kindness, but would not retain the attitude of a lover. She, however, removed her son from his house! That grieved him, for he loved the boy—and he thought he had "arranged it all so very

well," having installed Fritz in his own room and told the servant-man to sleep there too.

Gradually her letters grew more cordial, but now, in her anxiety, she made him promise to burn her answers at once. Goethe's letters were unchangingly kind, but grew rarer, and told her nothing of his arrangements. In the third half-year he wrote to her nine times; in the last (which was the period of his Roman love affair) not once.

His relations with the Duke were simpler; there were no critical moments. Carl August had gone forth to battle, happy to be rid of Goethe's admonitions; and now, with him confronting the cannons and Goethe the Roman statues, their different paths were so thoroughly established that they could salute one another cordially from their distance. Goethe made a joke out of their "antipodean existences," and never failed to give amusing details of social events; he entertained the Duke with remarks about the Roman battle-fields, and sent him a fragment of a water-trough which the German troops had once used in the Alban Hills. Only once did he warn him against certain follies, for he had heard, with anxiety and vexation, of a fresh accident to the Duke.

For the rest, he kept carefully to the stipulation that his leave of absence should be renewed from month to month—saying he would return at a moment's notice, but otherwise would like a few months more to complete his education. He got his friends to send him private information of the general position of affairs at Weimar.

The Duke was only too glad to agree to every demand for fresh leave of absence. The longer the poet would stay away, the better it pleased the Duke, and the heartier were the poet's acknowledgments. The more they were apart, the more their friendship revived. A relation which recently had been muddled was cleared up, and seemed quite natural again—they were once more the artist and his Maecenas.

All along Carl August wanted Goethe to do what was most useful and agreeable to himself, and Goethe put a

new colour on this return to their original cordiality when he said that the crown of all his endeavour now would be to " embellish " the Prince's existence. But when the Dowager-Duchess wanted to come to Italy and have Goethe for her cicerone, the startled poet (in one of the longest letters he wrote to the Duke) pointed out how difficult it all would be . . . but of course he was quite ready—and the recipient must have smiled and said to himself that he would spoil all his friend's enjoyment if he laid this duty upon him.

In the delicate question—never really decided—of whether and how far Goethe should be relieved of his official position, both men displayed the tact of skilled diplomatists. Goethe held himself in readiness to return after his first spring-season in Italy, so as not to have been more than a year away. The Duke then cautiously proposed to appoint someone else Vice-President, and make Goethe " Director " of a sort of Committee of Cabinet-Control. Goethe was no less circumspect in following up the suggestion. On some formal pretext he put forward a request that the colleague in question should at once be appointed President, and he himself be simultaneously relieved of office in the usual way, with a cordial word or two added to the official formula: " As a matter of fact, I shall be of more service to you than I have often been of late, if you will only permit me to do what no one but myself *can* do, and entrust the rest to others. My position in public affairs has been the result of my personal position with you—now let a different one with you result, after all these years, from the public one I have hitherto held. . . . Give me back to myself and my country; give me *yourself* again, so that I may begin a new life with you!

" I lay my entire destiny in your hands with perfect confidence. I have seen such a great, such a beautiful, part of the world, and the net result has been to show me that I can live only with you, and in your life. If I can do this, less burdened by details which are not in my line, I shall be able to give you and others pleasure by so living.

. . . Farewell, and be sure that few men alive can feel more loyally towards you than I do, and that the best thing which can happen to me is to be always devoted to your service. Keep me in your heart! Goethe." And in a postscript: " Do give the Steins and Herder a confidential hint, so that they may not be anxious and imagine all sorts of extraordinary things."

One of the cleverest letters that Goethe ever wrote! Certainly from no other can we make a clearer analysis of the combination of practical worldly wisdom and genuine gratitude, of loyalty and calculation, of freedom and sense of obligation, which marked his relation with the Duke. Tasso is in it, and Antonio too—Mephisto joins hands with Faust.

When he left Rome a year afterwards, he felt that the course of his development permitted him to speak more frankly. The colleague had in the meantime been appointed his successor; he himself was to hold an advisory position in the Cabinet. And now, homeward bound, he wrote to the Duke, saying that in his prolonged retirement he had found himself again—" but as what? As an artist! What else I may be good for, *you* shall decide, and shall use me to that end. . . . I shall willingly submit to your judgment. Accept me, then, as your guest; let me work out my destiny to the full, and savour the cup of existence, at your side—so shall my powers, like a mountain-source discovered, concentrated, purified, be your to direct as you will."

Meanwhile, for Carl August it had been no easy task to uphold his friend's cause. Court-gossip and town-talk had been swelling high; there was a jealous grudge against the absent minister; and Schiller, who then visited Weimar, had this to report of Goethe, almost as soon as he got there: " While he is painting in Italy, the Toms, Dicks, and Harrys are sweating for him like beasts of burden. For doing nothing, he is squandering a salary of 1,800 thalers in Italy, and they have to work double-tides for half the money."

Goethe never knew anything about this private letter; but when he was told that at Weimar they said he must be off his head, he resolved to answer this "good opinion" as Sophocles had done in writing Oedipus upon Colonos.

The opinion and the retort were reported and received by Philipp Seidel, who was now ceasing to be a mere servant and becoming a confidential right-hand man. He looked after money-matters, superintended the household, delivered messages, forwarded letters; but at the same time Goethe permitted him the frankest comments on the gossip of the servants, the town, and the general public, and wrote him confidential replies.

Meanwhile, however, the servant himself had ventured on authorship, and that on the subjects of the female sex and finance. Goethe advised him to go slowly with the latter and have his opinions on the former anonymously published, for in a moral question like that, anonymity left the writer in a better position to learn the truth by his effect upon public opinion. When Seidel, like a dutiful servant, went in for nature-study too, Goethe praised his efforts, warned him against hasty conclusions, and so as to gain his full confidence, assumed the position of a colleague. "So your observations are very useful to me, if I am a little beyond you in deductions and combinations."

Though he had fled from home, he was always haunted by its spirit, and always welcomed the haunting. Not, indeed, that of the wholly forgotten Court (to whose ladies he sent the curtest kind of greetings) nor that of affairs either. It is a fresh proof, and an astonishing one, of Goethe's increasing alienation from his political activity, that he should so entirely have consigned it to oblivion. Very seldom did he answer, and that with mere complimentary phrases, his colleague's various inquiries; from the Duke he never requested any details; the progress of Ilmenau alone seemed occasionally to appeal to his imagination.

On the other hand, he wrote precise instructions

from afar about the seeds and cuttings he sent home. Once, in Rome, Goethe had a dream about official affairs, and it is sure to have been a bad dream—for as long as he was uncertain of the Duke and his future liberty, he dreaded the moment when he should " have to resume the position of a Caryatid."

Yet his house, the little city, his friends above all, were missed during his travels; he knew well that he was too deeply attached to them for any thought of permanent absence. But it was only Weimar which so possessed his remembrance. In those two years he wrote his mother in all seven letters (of which she lost six), and one each to Merck, Schlosser, Jacobi, and Kestner—curt and cool in every instance.

To the Herders' and Frau von Stein's children, though, he sent many a lively epistle, telling on the same page of the pomegranates on the trees and the electric fish, or of the Holy Father on his throne and a thousand dead pigs at the butcher's—all adapted to their age and outlook.

Herder got the most intimate letters of these years. His penetration, his unflinching vision, just suited Goethe now—he hailed a friend in the man whose intellectual curiosity was so comprehensive. His verdict was impatiently awaited by Goethe in Rome—he frequently asked for Herder's impression of the completed *Egmont*. He had had a curious experience with *Iphigenie*. He had read it aloud three times in the early months at Rome, but it had always left the audience cold. They had expected something more like *Götz*, and were disconcerted by this classic piece, of whose like they had so many examples. Now from Weimar too came scarcely veiled expressions of disappointment; the earlier draft was preferred. That version, composed ten years before on an official tour, seemed to his friends more remarkable than the piece which had flowered under two blue skies.

And again Goethe felt himself alone. Slowly the premonition of his future as a poet dawned upon his consciousness—he would write no more for the nation,

for his own period of time. Moreover, the disappointing subscription for his collected edition hit him hard both in the practical and the ideal sense. Had it been otherwise, he said, he could easily have put forth ten or twelve volumes instead of eight. This German poet, whom his fellow-countrymen have since been fain to crown upon the Capitol at Rome, caught so faint an echo of his fame when he published this first edition of his works that he had to importune his nearest and dearest for their opinions. "Do say something about my writings; it greatly encourages me to hear a reverberation from afar." It was all very well for the misanthropic traveller to say that henceforth he would write only such things as even people whose lives were full, and concerned with great matters, would really enjoy reading. He was over-emphatic in asserting his indifference to the general public, and declaring that he only wanted to please his friends. Judicious criticism was, as ever, what influenced him most, and in Herder he honoured the one man who could—and was permitted to—make comparisons. To him Goethe sent the finished *Iphigenie*, and actually gave him *carte blanche* about corrections!

He had scarcely reached Rome before he declared that all his ideas about shutting himself away from his friends were a fantastic delusion, which had vanished with his feverish symptoms. They were to send him a round-robin, and everyone whose name appeared in it should have a sketch in acknowledgment. In this there was perhaps a sense that after all he was the cynosure of their circle: "Just wait till I'm back!" Under the orange-trees of Italy this German pictured himself sitting by the winter-hearth among the beech-woods of Thuringia, telling his travel-tales; and when the miners sent him a poem for his birthday and hung up a wreath on the *Gartenhaus*, Goethe in Rome felt a sentimental longing for Ilmenau.

These moods became, in the second year of the sojourn, more the outcome of an idea than of an actual emotion,

and recurred at longer intervals; while none the less he never dreamed of making his liberty a permanent possession or even of prolonging it for five years or so, instead of letting the question of his absence crop up every three months to worry himself and others. Observing all this, we cannot but feel dubious about the alteration in his character, and ask ourselves whether it was not a delusion when Goethe said that after three months he felt different to the very marrow of his bones. What was he like, in reality, when turning round in the coach, he for the last time beheld the dome of St. Peter's vanish behind the Alban trees? Was he really a different man from the one who had stolen out of Carlsbad on that September morning?

He was a rejuvenated, a more freely developed—above all, a happier—man; but in himself he was of the stuff which could be altered neither by travel nor women, by activity nor knowledge. If we explore the soul of this man of thirty-nine, we find the old duality in a new shape—we might, indeed, anticipate himself, and describe him as his own Faust, his own Helen. He had sought repose from his ceaseless struggle in the classics, in the ever-elusive Ideal Now of the South, and was going home—not re-shaped, only with new ideals for the shaping. It is as though his genius had strayed into a by-path of style, only to leap once more upon his daemon from that ambush.

For Goethe remained daemonic, even in the sunny Southern atmosphere. When he fled with the boast that he was resolved to "stake his whole existence"; when he spoke of the mortal combat and the deadly disease; when he arrived in Rome, and it was for the non-classic masters that he instinctively contended—for Michael-Angelo and against Raphael (whom he but coolly estimated)—still he was the daemonic Goethe. When he came out of the Sistine chapel, he could not give any attention to Raphael's Loggie, for "one's eye had been so expanded by those mighty forms that the brilliant trivialities of the arabesques gave it no pleasure."

Vesuvius allured him thrice, not only in the character of geologist. All his descriptions of Naples are coloured by the thought of that diabolic peak uplifted in the heart of a Paradise, by the incomprehensible paradox of that horror confronting that beauty. Men were as they were in Naples because they felt as though hemmed in between God and Satan! At this time he commented on Herder's *Ideen* (of which the second part reached him in Rome) that assuredly humanity would be victorious in the end; "only I fear that simultaneously the world will turn into a vast hospital in which everyone will be the devoted nurse of everyone else." In this cynically conceived phrase we have another proof of how the combat was always Goethe's interest—never the moral issue.

The most striking revelation of his dual nature occurs in that monologue in *Faust* (in the Wood and Cavern scene) which may be read as a separate lyric poem:

> Erhabner Geist, du gabst mir, gabst mir alles,
> Warum ich bat. Du hast mir nicht umsonst
> Dein Angesicht in Feuer zugewendet.
> Gabst mir die herrliche Natur zum Königreich,
> Kraft, sie zu fühlen, zu geniessen. Nicht
> Kaltstaunenden Besuch erlaubst du nur,
> Vergönnest mir, in ihre tiefe Brust
> Wie in den Busen eines Freunds zu schauen . . .
> Geheime tiefe Wunder öffnen sich,
> Und steigt vor meinem Blick der reine Mond
> Besänftigend herüber, schweben mir
> Von Felsenwänden, aus dem feuchten Busch
> Der Vorwelt silberne Gestalten auf
> Und lindern der Betrachtung strenge Lust.[1]

[1] Spirit supreme, who gav'st me, freely gav'st
All that I begged for! Not in vain didst thou
Turn from the flame thy countenance on me,
Giving for kingdom glorious Nature's realm,
With power to feel, to enjoy her. Not
One transient, shivering vision didst thou grant,
But sufferedst me to gaze in her deep heart
As in the bosom of a friend most dear . . .
Mysterious hidden marvels open there,

But then, at the very height of this flawless tranquillity of spirit—without transition Goethe continues the dialogue with himself:

> O dass dem Menschen nichts Vollkommnes wird,
> Empfind' ich nun. Du gabst zu dieser Wonne,
> Die mich den Göttern nah und näher bringt,
> Mir den Gefährten, den ich schon nicht mehr
> Entbehren kann. . . .
> Er facht in meiner Brust ein wildes Feuer
> Nach jenem schönen Bild geschäftig an.
> So tauml' ich von Begierde zu Genuss,
> Und im Genuss verschmacht' ich nach Begierde.[1]

In this avowal, the last two lines of which are the profoundest formulation of Faust's problem, we get the first hint of Goethe's relinquishment of the hope for complete harmony. He had realized that the path taken under his mistress's guidance was the wrong one for him—otherwise he would not have fled her. It had been self-deception—all the sacrificial soulful chastity, the extirpation of fervency and complexity of emotion. But even while he was giving free play to his sensuous temperament, Goethe was oppressed in spirit, unchangingly resentful—grateful to his genius, but implacable to his daemon. Never was the immutability of his enigmatic nature more evident than when, in presence of the classic and the

> And rises, as I look, the virgin moon
> In gentle pure refulgence ; from the rocks
> There float, and from the bushes wet with dew,
> The primal world's celestial silver forms
> To breathe soft balms on stern reflection's joys.

[1] Oh, that for man perfection may not be,
I feel this hour. Thou gavest this delight
That near and nearer draws me to the gods,
And with it him whom henceforth I no more
Can do without. . . .
He fans within my breast a fierce wild flame
For that sweet form, nor ever lets it die;
So am I tossed between desire and bliss,
And, having bliss, am with desire consumed.

South—those two great examples of serenity and symmetry—he thus summed up their healing influence: "My being has now found the counterpoise which gives it the desirable inertia; I no longer fear the spectres which have so often had their way with me."

It was in this sense only, to this degree only, that Rome had a tranquillizing effect on Goethe's nature. And in this sense we are to interpret his declaration, shortly before his return, that in Rome he had first found himself, been a happy and a reasonable being, made peace with himself. This was the halting-place he had reached, striving to moderate his heart's impulses, in the middle of his life. From classic serenity, Renaissance actuality, he was still excluded; nowhere is there an image, or even an *aperçu*, which points that way. *Tasso*, which alone hails from that sphere, has nothing of these attributes; to the house where Raphael lived Goethe paid the conventional compliment: "It is a sacred monument"; and everything unconventional and airy which charmed him in the Southerner, everything he thought enviable in the Italian's adaptability and contentedness, he declared to be utterly foreign to his own nature.

One spasmodic outburst is peculiarly expressive of Goethe's eternally unsatisfied desire to grasp the passing moment's happiness in all its actuality, to achieve a natural, spontaneous balance: "At all events I have been in contact with happy people, who are happy simply because they are all of a piece. Even the most insignificant of mortals, if he is *that*, can be happy and in his way complete. And that I will and must attain to also. I can do it—or at any rate I now know wherein it consists, and why it endures. I have gained a knowledge of myself, during this sojourn, which it is beyond me to define with any adequacy."

"I *can*!" he exclaims—but instantly abandons the resolve for the perception. If it had been true that he "could," he would not have gone home—or if he had, it would not have been Goethe, but another man, who returned.

As we watch him abroad, extending and fortifying his boundaries, then to return to the centre of his dominion, we speculate again on where that centre precisely was. The Italian sojourn gives but a negative answer—that it was not in activity as such, nor in excitement for excitement's sake. State-craft and government as duties were finally relegated—not again would Goethe's centre be the world of affairs. But whether that centre lay in art or in scientific research seemed long uncertain. Though he always insisted that in Rome he had found himself again as an artist, what he meant by that was a social, not a scientific, withdrawal. In Rome (he once wrote) his purpose was to gladden himself with the fine arts, to stamp their sacred forms on his spirit, but then, on his return, take up the study of chemistry and mechanics; "for the age of the beautiful is over; ours is one of emergency and implacable demands." Here is international prescience of coming evolutions.

True, during his second stay in Rome he was more the artist than the scientist; but even as an artist he seems more the scientist than the enthusiast of form. His love for truth was a stronger characteristic than his love for beauty; continually he spoke of classic art as true. "I have grown too old for everything, except the Truth. . . . There is nothing great but the True, and the least of that has greatness. . . . How glad I am that I have consecrated my life to the Truth."

Towards the end of the sojourn he gave utterance to this unromantic remark, which at one time would have been thought unpoetic as well: "Lately I see only the object—not, as before, the accessories which do not really exist." Was the stress laid upon unvarnished truth a sign of departing youth? In Italy there are continual references to his being "too old" for this or that, to his earlier poetry being good because it was written with youthful ardour, to our taking far too much trouble merely to live, to his having at the most ten more working years before him, to his long life of toil demanding some

relaxation now that it was nearing the end. On one sad evening shortly before he left Rome, he sat drawing a design for his tomb near the Pyramid of Cestius: "I will finish it when I can, in Indian ink, and then you are to have it." Nor could he have divined that the son of a woman whose acquaintance he was soon to make, would be buried under that Pyramid, forty years from that time, and that he would survive the death of that only son.

But for all the underlying seriousness of his mood, he *was* rejuvenated. A man (he wrote from Rome) must accept the good that comes to him as a beautiful accident, instead of worrying about good and evil in general. And in a happy hour he summed it all up for his friends in the words: "When you think of me, let it be as of a happy man."

Then, facing northward, daemonic melancholy fell upon his spirit. "In every great sorrow there is the seed of madness—we must be careful not to brood on it and foster it." In Angelica Kauffmann's garden he planted a little pine-tree "as a memento," and afterwards he confessed that on his last days in Rome he had wept like a child.

But his farewell to the South did not weigh on him so heavily as his prescient dread of the reunions in the North, which nevertheless he longed for. A year before he went home he had written to his mistress, saying diffidently that he would like to mean something to those whom he should see when he came back. Later there are many faint hints and questions as to what he was to expect at home, and from Rome sounded brief, appealing adjurations: "Love me, want me, so that I may come back joyfully!"

Now in Milan the north wind blew upon his cheek; and as he, leaving statues and blue skies, once more approached the gloomier northern peaks, he once more took it as a symbol—and there is a note of gentle melancholy in the words he wrote to his friend Knebel on the way home, saying that crystals "seemed interesting again" and a stone an object to be reckoned with. "Thus

does human nature help itself out, when there is no help for things." And, possessed by foreboding, Goethe—who yesterday had written a gay letter—added this poignant sentence: " I am bringing back so much—if there is any chance of your caring about it."

Then he was told that the man he had been most confidently reckoning on had passed him on the way—Herder, bound for Rome. Goethe was startled as by an omen, spoke of the bitter pain the news had caused him, but from the German frontier looked back once more to the gayest weeks he had spent in the South. " If you go to Castel Gandolfo," he wrote from Lake Constance to Herder, " ask to be shown a certain pine-tree. . . . I used to look out upon it, at the time when I wanted you most. . . . *Bon voyage*, and be well when you open this letter in the land where I was absolutely happy for the first time in my life."

CHAPTER VIII

Loneliness

I am not always in tune for great emotions, and without them I am negligible.

THE Belvedere. Tea with the Duchess in the little drawing-room. It is an evening at the beginning of August; all the windows are open.

Goethe stands at the table. On its inlaid surface he has spread out some Roman sketches, carefully mounted, many of them lightly framed, and now he unrolls a map of Rome and shows the Duchess, over whose chair he is bending, where he had lived. She finds the big map very puzzling.

Carl August, who has hurt his foot, sits in his invalid-chair; he looks ill. Another fall from his horse, when he had insisted on spurring the exhausted animal to camp after a whole day in the saddle. Only thirty-two, is he? When his well-drilled military figure is not in evidence, his head makes him look older than that. A Prince begins life early, especially when he comes to the throne at eighteen. He is smoking and gazing into vacancy. His mother yonder, on the contrary, looks younger than her age; she sits straight as a lath upon the sofa. She is just fifty, but her bearing and her fine figure make her still attractive. Just now she has a little sketch before her and is showing it to Wieland, who bends over her from behind, his sharp nose nearly touching her *décolletage*. With his long artistic hand he is pointing to a Watteauesque group which is prominent among the pine-trees of the picture.

On the left, with her back to the table, sits Caroline Herder. She does not seem to notice the prolonged silence of her neighbour, Knebel; her alert gaze is alert for her husband alone, and when it discovers him yonder

in the window, absorbed in a volume of the Vatican statuary, she wonders whether it would annoy him if she went and joined him.

Opposite, with her beautiful but no longer youthful head supported on her slender left hand, Charlotte von Stein leans well back in her chair, very silent, replying but coldly and absently to the Duke's occasional remarks. By the open door to the terrace a Chamberlain is telling a Privy-Councillor a piquant story of Carl August's youth, but the other seldom smiles. He is only half-attending—like all these people, who are always absent-minded, though they may seem to be talking or listening. . . . " Would it really be worth while for a month or two? " thinks Herder—who has not yet started for Rome, after all. He turns over the pages of the Vatican Catalogue. " We can't all stay abroad for two years; only this upstart can do things of that sort. What wonderful things he has seen, and how wonderfully he has seen them! But who was his guide? My *Ideen* showed him how to see Rome—from my distance it was *I* who taught him the essential. People like us, with the centuries in our hearts, don't really need to travel. It takes one out of one's groove, though. . . . General-Superintendent, am I? But it's not good enough, not nearly good enough! Where are your youthful dreams, Johann Gottfried Herder? King of the realm of intellect, absolute monarch? And all you are is a Duke! This Goethe—well yes, he's the one man I could have borne to take my place, for one has hopes that he won't get a swelled head—and that's something, at any rate. . . ."

" How long the Duchess is listening to him! " thinks Caroline Herder. " It's time that Herder went to Rome—that trip of Goethe's has given him too great an advantage. If one could only be sure that Dalberg will cover the expenses! We ought to be ' raised ' at last, Goethe will have to arrange it—it was he who brought us here, after all! Out of affection? I cannot get rid of the feeling that he never really does anything that isn't going to be useful

to him. Perhaps he *is* the more gifted—but certainly not the more profound; and as to fame—our *Ideen* are talked of all over Germany, and who has a word to say about *Egmont*!"

"He doesn't care a button about all these things he's showing!" thinks Knebel. "How different it was on that Sunday evening, when we were coming down the road at Tiefurt, and he stopped and plucked a bit of myosotis and began to pull it to pieces, observing it and never saying a word. And he was so communicative about our stones, but now he won't say anything about his plants. O solitary spirit! You flee from me because you think I might understand you!"

"We might as well not exist!" thinks Anna Amalia, the Dowager-Duchess, remembering Goethe's enchantment with the Borghese Gardens, a picture of which she now has in her hand. "Certainly I should like to go South, too—but I shouldn't forget my own country so completely when I was there! Yesterday he was complaining about the rain and the cold, now that it's turned cool at last. Good heavens, one would have thought we were at the North Pole! What did he come back for, then? But all these middle-class people are the same. . . ."

"*Fine mouche!*" thinks Wieland, who is looking at the sketch without seeing it. "He knows how to look after himself. No sooner is he back, and sees that we have managed to survive his absence remarkably well, than he looks round for something to keep up the Italian mood—and takes a girl! She had to be Junoesque, of course, but *plus gentille*—we don't get used to Roman sumptuousness and write poems to Cupid for nothing. Young too, with brown curly hair; they even say she's a virgin—what does he want more? There will be a charming scene if the Mistress of the Horse catches him at it. . . ."

"He might be surrounded by glass walls!" thinks the Duchess, while she painfully follows Goethe's finger on the map of Rome. "One would have expected him to seem younger, when he looks so sunburnt and animated.

But it's as if he wore a mask. I understand—yes, yes! He is not happy."

" The fellow's got a fresh lease of youth! " thinks Carl August, who has been talking to him this morning. " He understands at last that one isn't an old man at thirty or so, but must have some fun when one has to go through such a grind. This confounded foot of mine! My little girl will be unfaithful to me if I can't get about again before long. And there's the Review coming on. I'll give it till Sunday—then I'll be off, and devil take my foot! Goethe must come with me, as he used to. He can't put up an official excuse now, and I bet he's taken a liking to going about and will be glad to do it for nothing. *Parbleu*, I wish this tea-party was over. . . ."

". . . Never any more! " thinks Frau von Stein, and looks mournfully across at him out of her Italian eyes. " There he stands, prosing like Loder or some other wiseacre from Jena. He's getting stouter, more easy-going. How slender he once was! And his chin used to be so firm and clear-cut! Now it's almost a double-chin, and his lips are thicker—they say he's got fond of eating. That look about the mouth—it suggests kisses of a certain kind. . . . O Charlotte, why didn't you keep a firmer hand on yourself? Why—instead of making him unhappy all the time? He has tasted youth in the South—from creatures who could only fasten on his lips! No one will ever take hold of his soul as I did from the first day he saw me—no one will ever take hold of mine again. And now, in his desolation, he wants pleasure—and it's always to be found so easily. We're happier with lower ideals. Never any more—O genius that you are; and all that I gave you—done with! How is it I do not hate you. . . ."

" . . . Where am I? " thinks Goethe, showing his pictures and talking. " Are these the friends I was so glad to be coming back to? With whom I meant to share it all, in the long evenings? My public, my disciples, my teachers, my lord and lady? I feel their searching eyes upon me, and it's as uncomfortable as though my belt or

my stockings were hanging down (I wonder if they are). And when I came back and felt their hands in mine—was it just an accident?—how cold they seemed! Only now do I realize what I have given up for them, and when I wonder why I gave it up, I have to keep a tight hand on myself or I should fly at them all this minute. Or perhaps it's really only the climate of this place? No, it can't be only the climate. That brown-haired child was born here too—and she's as alluring as any Roman girl!"

When Goethe re-entered the Weimar in which he had wasted more than ten years of his life, he felt, after a few days, that all his painful forebodings were confirmed. "Why have you come back?" asked the eyes of his friends. "Why have I come back?" his own heart retorted.

Two years ago, departing from the place, the chariot of his life had been drawn by those two rival steeds—his genius and his daemon. They had borne him swiftly across the Alps, as though to retrieve the youthfulness which here was perishing, and only in the South could bloom again. But it was a mere remnant of it that he had retrieved. His days in Italy had been methodical and laborious; he had been overshadowed by the now wonted mood of deep seriousness, and any ripple of the gay Southern life which had reached him had been as it were a dance of wavelets on the shore beneath his watch-tower, which he was not yet too old to observe with indulgent amusement.

Nothing and no one urged him homeward—there was hardly a creature who called to him or needed him. The Duke had had enough of him, in a way; Goethe's place had been filled with his own consent; his mistress was, even at the time of his flight, little more than an idea for him, and during the years of absence her image had completely faded from his heart. The two Duchesses and Wieland had long been no more than friendly lookers-on at his struggle; Knebel, and even Herder, were still dear

to him but were not irreplaceable, and their attraction was far from being powerful enough to allure him from the animated sphere of mutual endeavour and daily renewed stimulations. Weimar, its town, its Government-offices, its politics, its Court, were like vague mist on the horizon of a little State of which he had hardly known the name twelve years before, and to which nothing now attached him but reminiscences of what he had learnt and achieved there. As poet, as scientist, he was tied to no country; at thirty-eight, Goethe was free to remain in a land, and a condition of life, which he enjoyed. Why *had* he come back?

The answer might be—because in Weimar he had a certain standing, a house and possessions. On the surface it would be true. He had to make some money; his inheritance from his father was in the remote future; he could not have afforded the expensive Italian sojourn without his ministerial salary and the advance-payment for his collected edition. Whether he would earn much more by writing seemed doubtful. No longer young, not adventurous enough to risk all, though he had no one to keep but himself, he had been spoilt by his position and manner of life; and though in Rome he could live in one room and used only two small ones at Weimar, he was not prepared to do without the large handsome house in which he could collect his treasures and entertain his friends. Travelling incognito was all very well, but he had no intention of dropping his famous name altogether. This Weimar post was as a needful prop, enabling him to stand with a dignity akin to that which his gait had now assumed. Prudence, convenience, a touch of provincialism —these entirely Philistine motives might well have been the reasons impelling him to return to the place whither his genius had originally borne him.

And yet, in view of the second half of his life, we cannot be content with such an explanation. The impulses of genius may appear to be rational, but they will always prove in the end to have been the reverse. Goethe might have his reasons, but his destiny had not—it drove him

on unconsciously. It was too late to settle down or even make a long stay in the clime and among the occupations and interests which he had so long desired. He came home because his spirit was not attuned to the dreamy measure of the southern days, to the infinite suggestiveness of Rome, to the pleasant unconventionality of foreign life—but needed a narrow circle, fixed duties, and that northern sky from which, to the end, he was to wish he could get away. Goethe left Italy of his own free will, of his own accord, because his antithetical nature needed the alternation of wish and fulfilment, because neither Faust nor Mephisto could long endure the "Here and Now." That alternation ruler his whole career.

He was hardly back before it began to take effect again. He had returned to the North, longing for the friendly use and wont of house and friends, and saying emphatically that the southern people and their manner of life were to him as a beautiful exotic picture. No sooner did he reach Weimar than the wish for what he had left behind deepened into a craving; and the more unlikely it seemed, after he had voluntarily made his choice, that he should ever see Rome again, the more he set his heart upon it. "Indifference to everything, since the loss of my Roman bliss"—so runs a note written some time afterwards.

If he had left that bliss with wet eyes, it was with eyes which dwelt too fondly on the past that he now gazed across the Alps. Now, as was his way, he celebrated the beloved place in verse; and while he sighed over the low barometer and the want of colour, and accused the murky heavens of depressing him beyond belief, he sought escape by fancying himself in the South—exactly as he had lost all sense of the Roman pine-trees in the vapours of the Witches' Kitchen. Now, under the grey skies, he wrote thus:

. . . Gedenk' ich der Zeiten,
Da mich ein graulicher Tag hinten im Norden umfing,
Trübe der Himmel und schwer auf meine Scheitel sich senkte,
Farb-und gestaltlos die Welt um den Ermatteten lag,

Und ich über mein Ich, des unbefriedigten Geistes
Düstre Wege zu spähn, still in Betrachtung versank.
Nun umleuchtet der Glanz des helleren Äthers die Stirne ![1]

Can we wonder that the restless fluctuating temper which, though at home, seemed miles away from them, should have caused some estrangement in his friends? Much had happened to them while he had been in Italy, but Goethe could find no interest for it; their whole sphere seemed even narrower to him, coming back from the world outside, than it had while he was absent. Herder and the Dowager-Duchess were on the point of starting for the Rome whence he had come; the Duke was absorbed not only in military projects but in a new love affair, and was for weeks confined to his sofa, restless on more than one count. Goethe had had a presentiment of how it would be; and had written to his friends a year ago, apparently for no reason whatever, that it was extraordinary how " there was a sort of eternal veil between even the best and most intelligent people."

Charlotte, whom disappointment, illness, and loneliness had aged—and the more because Goethe seemed to grow younger every day—was now in her forty-seventh year, and for more than six months had had no Italian letters from him. Whether the parting in Carlsbad had been an unconfessed eternal farewell, and the forgiveness in her letters to Rome but a half-forgiveness—certain it is that directly he came back, sunburnt and restless, both saw how far they had drifted apart. She might still send him little dainties, Fritz might return to his house as of old—these were mere gestures, concealing the emotions that neither wished to express. True, it was she alone who,

[1] . . . Those moments recalling,
Pent under skies of the North, there in the murk of the days,
Leaden, the lowering heaven pressed on my brain like a burden,
Colourless, formless, the world, wearily on it I looked.
And myself and my Ego, never satisfied spirits,
Sought us, how vainly, a path—silently fell into thought.
Now, in these crystalline skies, the glittering stars are as jewels !

privileged by the unlimited intimacy of the many years that had gone, spoke frankly to Goethe in the very first days of his return. And he, from old habit, resumed some of their old themes, sent her the manuscript of his poems before they were printed—but said to Herder's wife:

" Ah, with *Her* I can't do anything. She is out of spirits, and nothing seems to go right."

Herself he approached—not indeed as a lover, but with something of appeal as of a fellow-creature in distress. " I will gladly hear anything you have to say to me; I would only beg that you won't be too hard on me, so distracted—I won't say, so torn in pieces—as I am. To you I may surely confess that I don't feel exactly as I appear. . . ."

He was franker with Herder's wife, whom he often visited after Herder had gone, interesting himself in her allowances and the children; and her view of him—subtle and kind as she was, but always unequal to understanding him—was given in her letters to her husband, so that through Goethe's mask we can guess at the state of his soul.

" Goethe has been saying some comical, I might even say bewildering, things about his domestic and general situation. . . . He has now reduced all happiness and well-being to a sense of proportion, and all unhappiness to that of disproportion. He says he is now perfectly satisfied with having a house, enough to eat and drink, and so on. Everything . . . depends upon a person's having a domestic nature. . . . On the whole I don't altogether approve of him. He is living now in a way that starves his heart. Charlotte Stein thinks he has become sensual, and she is not far wrong."

Once he paid Frau Herder a surprise visit, and said: " I was well on the way to my garden, but I felt I must turn back—something drove me here, not love, but perhaps despair. I had just left the Duke." Equally laconic and obscure, gloomy and apprehensive, are the few words that surged from out the carefully guarded depths of his soul into his letters: " I am living very strangely,

very self-controlled, waiting on time and the hour. . . . Everyone finds it convenient to keep away, and I feel very much like Epimenides when he woke up. . . . How utterly useless I am, on the whole." On his birthday he danced till midnight—Goethe had to be thirty-nine before he could dance his birthday out in a mood of restless, bewildered apathy. And he was to be thirty years older before he could repeat the performance.

He remained in this " self-controlled " condition till the autumn, considering the possibilities presented by life. What he needed was a place for his collections, an income independent of his literary earnings, the proximity of a university, a circle which would be useful to him both as audience and disciples; and so he decided to stick it out to the end at Weimar, despite his retirement from office, despite estrangements—despite, perhaps because of, his isolation. Yes, to the end; since for a short span of time a man of his kind does not take such immense precautions as Goethe now took.

The first was clearing up the situation about his official posts. True, he was still a member of the Cabinet; but as his chair had always been empty for two years before he left for Italy, it was now removed, and Goethe was privileged, when he did wish to put in an appearance, to sit in the Duke's.

He was relieved of all responsibility; there were no more admonitions to the Duke, the Court, or the Government. Only rarely did the economically inclined Treasury-Minister flame forth, as for instance when he wrote to the Dowager-Duchess in Naples that her tour might involve her in many expenses: " Your Highness will pardon this expression of opinion, which though well meant may seem to smack a little of an Ex-President of the Cabinet." In this spirit of self-mockery he played the part of an old intimate, and barely concealed behind his courtly blandishments the annoyance he felt at extravagant diversions. But in the same letter he begged the Dowager to patronize his friends, the German painters, in Rome!

He was gentler with the Duchess Luise, whose resigned melancholy struck an answering chord. A certain strain of love-making, now and then tinging their expressions of platonic sympathy, can hardly be said to obtrude itself, but does occasionally strike one as one reads the documents. At this time he often read aloud to her, was very helpful to her after a miscarriage—and she gave him her husband's letters to read.

He continued to do some practical work for the Court, superintended the structural alterations in an old castle, tried to induce a foreign Minister, whose acquaintance he had made on his tour, to come to Weimar, interested himself for some old friends at Court, procured credit for a Chamberlain who was in debt, got a paid post for an old servant. Officially speaking, he was still Minister of Mines, but not for three months after his return did he inspect Ilmenau.

For the rest, he became Minister of Education in the little realm, which means that he undertook the direction and supervision of the University, the Institute, the Academy of Art, and the Theatre. And this was more than an office. In this, and this alone, what executive authority he had became an effective instrument of his plastic spirit. He clutched at the post because just then he felt some menace in the air—he would be the officially recognized intellectual leader in this Duchy at any rate, if he was no longer to be so for Germany.

For when Goethe returned, he found the literary atmosphere altered. If in the overburdened years before his departure for Italy he had scarcely noticed this, or perhaps refused to let himself notice it—now it asserted itself, he could not doubt that other gods were on the throne. While Goethe was in Rome, Schiller had come to Weimar. His plays were being acted over half Germany. When Goethe came back, nobody was talking or writing about his *Iphigenie*, which had just appeared, and even when *Tasso* followed hard upon, the same silence reigned. Twenty years were to go by before the German stage saw

his plays. All the world was raving about Don Carlos—even the Duke, whose cousin of Meiningen gave Schiller a title of honour.

But to Goethe—so he later described his feelings—Schiller's *Die Räuber* was " detestable, because a powerful but immature talent has . . . abounded in the very ethical and theatrical paradoxes from which I have sought to get clear . . . pouring them out in a turgid, irresistible torrent. The applause which was lavished on that remarkable production was to me alarming. . . . I should have been quite glad to abandon the practice of authorship, had that been possible—for what chance was there of outbidding those works with their genuine talent and their outrageous form? You can imagine my state of mind! "

At first he held his peace; and while he built himself a stronghold where he might write and analyse undisturbed, he took care to make it impregnable, a refuge and a *locus standi*, not easily to be invaded by anyone whatever. His position as Minister of Education—originally jumped-at so as to give some return for his salary—he now used as the corner-stone of that stronghold.

Resolute to abdicate the position of intellectual leader in this region neither for Schiller nor another, he lost no time. A criticism of *Egmont* had appeared, full of reverential fault-finding. Its author was Schiller, with whom for years Goethe refused to treat as an equal power; and its appearance coincided with his return from Italy, as if to welcome him home. Goethe spoke of it to the Duke with regal indifference, scarcely deigning to do more than make an all too prophetic allusion to Carl August as Schiller's new Maecenas. Then he recommended the inconvenient poet, who was living in or near Weimar, as Professor of History—that is to say, he packed him off to Jena. Moreover, he removed the new elements from the Academy of Art, and introduced methods and teachers who would carry out his own severely classic ideas.

For the stronghold had now turned into an academy. Feeling himself less of the author, more and more of the

scientist and aesthete, Goethe needed co-operation. He procured pass-men from the colleges who, for the sake of a living and a certain position, would give him the indispensable assistance. This intangible Goethe-Academy, which had its quarters in Goethe's house, was the grand annexe, so to speak, of his collective Roman studies, the ripe fruit of his dilettante adolescence, and was quickly supplied with professors. From Rome came Moritz, and stayed several weeks with Goethe. Then he was politely dismissed, handed over to his bewildered destiny—having unloaded all the aesthetics that his friend required. They were contained in a manifesto which was transferred to Goethe's Works, like that of an assistant-student to the archives of an Institute.

For Meyer, the art-historian and painter, Goethe contrived to procure two years' financial support in Rome for the completion of his studies, upon his promise that he would then come to Weimar.

The Duke was induced to grant these gratuities, salaries, and commissions by the slogan that a modern Florence was to spring up in his capital. In reality it was simply to give Goethe facilities for the work that was useful to him. For now, when he could see his way before him, with fewer calls upon his time, and farther-reaching purposes, he found himself unable to push forward on that level path unless certain material was prepared for his attention, as it is for a Minister's. His increasing absorption in scientific research henceforth made him dispose of his fellow-creatures' destinies, claim certain people's brains as his exclusive property, and be highly indignant if any one he wanted was unable to come to him, or refused, or, once come, proposed to leave. Meyer's knowledge of art was as indispensable to him as a lexicon, and when his friend fell ill, Goethe wrote: " If he dies, I shall lose a treasure that I despair of finding again in a lifetime." But Meyer got well, and was for ten years his housemate, for forty his friend.

In Rome one final, systematic effort had proved to him

that he was no painter. Thenceforth—and we can guess with what a heavy heart!—he gave up painting once for all, and persuaded his Roman friends to come North. He sent Meyer to Dresden to copy Titian; he lured Lips to Weimar by promises of commissions and journalism, and gave him money enough to travel in comfort; Bury too came later on. As Goethe was no longer responsible for the finances, he was ready to turn the Duke into a Maecenas. In his passion for plastic art, indulged to the hilt at Rome, he tried to replace Rome at Weimar by pictures and statues; and as Goethe never in his life cared for possessions merely as such, and would certainly not have been a collector if there had been collections at Weimar, he satisfied his own ambition by enriching the Court, the town, and the Academy.

When he could not get at the Duke, he would approach the two Duchesses for appointments and pensions for struggling artists. Or he would send a musical servant to the Berlin orchestra, or give an engraver lessons in lithography at Dresden. His house and his letters, which formerly were full of society-people, became, after the tour, alive with artistic figures; and when, at the end of the *Kunstlers Apotheose*, he causes his artist to implore the Muses to keep the needy student, it was really Goethe, pointing the Duke to Lips or Facius, and saying sternly:

> Und willst du diesen jungen Mann,
> Wie er's verdient, dereinst erheben,
> So bitt' ich, ihm bei seinem Leben,
> Solang' er selbst noch kaun und küssen kann,
> Das Nötige zur rechten Zeit zu geben![1]

One and a half millions—so, forty years later, he could reckon up—were given for great purposes, at his instigation, in that small sphere!

> [1] Wouldst thou, as merits this young man,
> Ensure him future acclamations,
> I pray thee, spare him all privations;
> While yet he lives and comfortably can
> Digest and kiss, fail not in thy donations!

Goethe, who for the last few years had been almost invisible, now again went into society. "Forgive me; I am distraught to-day, and my head is spinning with the Carnival gaieties"—so he could now write to Friend Meyer in Rome. A year before, in Rome itself, he had fled after half an hour of the ridotto, and hoped never to see another! If nowadays he gave a big tea-party in his garden, he enjoyed it—it did not "give him the shivers" as before the tour. At Belvedere he served tea and sour milk, "so as to win the ladies' hearts, while the menkind are chained by the powerful Parcae to the card-tables."

Nevertheless he worked at full pressure. He invited a colleague for a discussion either in the evening at eleven, or next morning at six. He read aloud a great deal—the fragment of *Faust* three times running. In between he would make frequent visits to Jena; and there, though it is true that early in the mornings he would tramp through the snow with Fichte, Humboldt, and Meyer to the anatomy-lectures, the afternoons would be spent at tea-parties, the evenings at balls and concerts, and he was never tired of talking about Italy, for people best enjoyed hearing about that. "People" in general got more of his conversation than of old, and possibly more than his friends did. Knebel fell rather into the background. Goethe now found him too enigmatic; what he was looking for was simplicity, animation—youth, in a word. He hesitated to ask Knebel to accompany him on a trip, and remarked afterwards: "He is so kind that it is bad for one to be long with him—and I am so set in my own ways, by which I must live or be utterly wretched."

How kind he was to Caroline Herder, when her absent husband was offered a post at Göttingen, and she was full of hope and anxiety! He wrote again and again to his friend in Rome, and advised the wife to think well over all the pros and cons. He procured gratuities for father and children, and higher rank and greater liberty for Herder, so as to keep him at Weimar; was for ever praising his new work to his wife—and yet, though nothing



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could have been more devoted than his counsel and his actions, though even Caroline perpetually assured her husband that he was their only friend . . . this was not Goethe's old unmeasured devotion, either with Herder or any other friend.

A heartier tone, so to speak, was infused into his letters to everyone; they seem more friendly than before, and more superficial. Commonplace turns of phrase, a quantity of postscripts, testify to a carelessness which had not hitherto been his. They are more communications than letters; at any rate, they seldom have any literary charm. To his very good friends there is a frequent condescending "My dear fellow" or "Write to me now and then"; there are many requests to excuse his illegible writing, and if one compares one letter with another, one finds things twice recounted, or even metaphors and images used twice over on the same or the following day.

Were all these indications of a more pliable, sociable life the symptoms of a nature more at ease? If so, we should expect to discover traces of a more genuine happy-heartedness. Or did they mean a flight from self-knowledge—the flight of an unhappy man who is trying to stupefy himself? Were that so, we should look for signs of a collapse, for reasons or at any rate causes at this particular time. No; rather this is a man whose conflict with the world has gradually so isolated him, whose inward life has finally become so withdrawn into itself, that there is no further danger for him in mixing with society; a man who after mighty efforts to attune his nature to the world at large has—not now defiantly, but astutely—abandoned all idea of that attunement. This is a man with a mask—and here is Goethe at forty-one, as Lips depicted him.

Middle-aged, but only in years; no longer young, but only if we go by dates. The features, that but four years ago were lean and nervous, are now becoming broad and massive; the nose, whose irregular lines spoke of a man at odds with himself, is now strikingly majestic—the lips beneath are folded tranquilly, making one think of

noble treasure-laden ships at anchor. The chin is beginning to acquire a massy fullness; it can hardly be true that the brow has widened, but certainly the head is more set, is heavier and squarer—that head which not long ago had seemed to touch the clouds. But the eye, once inquiring, then impassioned, then fiery, then searching, now seems spellbound in impenetrable aloofness—from no other portrait does it gaze thus uncompromisingly, staring straight into your own and yet not seeing you. No mouth was ever more resolutely wordless, no eyes ever looked more inexpressively into vacancy, or—so looking—more profoundly into the man's own soul, than do Goethe's in this portrait. Yes—it is gone; that ardent youth, that inquiring, craving, dreaming, appealing youth. This is the first, the pathetically premature, attestation that Goethe is growing old.

Can we wonder that at last he, even he, resolved to possess, enjoy, retain what others had been granted sooner and in richer measure? He took a wife, he founded a family, he became the father of a son.

Here too his prophetic look had long been conscious of a new turn of fate. It seemed no more than the light touch of Tyche's flying wing, to his first apprehension. In a few months he knew it for fulfilment—in a few years, for destiny.

Ja, wir bekennen euch gern, es bleiben unser Gebete,
Unser täglicher Dienst Einer besonders geweiht . . .
Diese Göttin, sie heisst Gelegenheit; lernet sie kennen! . . .
Gern ergibt sie sich nur dem raschen, tätigen Manne,
Dieser findet sie zahm, spielend und zärtlich und hold.
Einst erschien sie auch mir, ein bräunliches Mädchen, die Haare
Fielen ihr dunkel und reich über die Stirne herab,
Kurze Locken ringelten sich ums zierliche Hälschen,
Ungeflochtenes Haar krauste vom Scheitel sich auf.
Und ich verkannte sie nicht, ergriff die Eilende, lieblich
Gab sie Umarmung und Kuss bald mir gelehrig zurück.
O wie war ich beglückt![1]

[1] Aye, we acknowledge ye gladly, yet are our prayers and our service
Daily offered to One—she is the chosen of all . . .

Four weeks after his return, in July, Goethe one morning went for a walk in the Park. A girl, such as the above lines depict, approached him with a request that he would let her brother call on him—he was a writer, she said, penniless and unemployed. Christiane Vulpius was twenty-three, Goethe nearly thirty-nine. Frau von Stein forty-six. Youthful and fresh, the girl might have been Charlotte's daughter, though they were utterly unlike in character, temperament, and class. Or she may have resembled the Roman damsel whom Goethe had left a few months ago. The impression she made upon him that morning he recorded twice to Johanna Schopenhauer in the beautiful phrase that " she was then like a young Dionysos."

Everything that was southern in Charlotte—the melancholy night of her black eyes, the ivory pallor of her skin, the symmetry of her noble features—in this young creature was diametrically different. She was fresh as the dawn, impulsive, virginal yet budding into ardent womanhood, while in Charlotte a woman's instincts had been inhibited by her prolonged withdrawal from sexual life.

Goethe, who might almost have been her father, snatched at her as at a goblet filled with wine that would dispel his troubled restlessness, and did not too closely inquire into the provenance or vintage of the draught. It was a young, fervent, simple nature that he snatched at, rather than the actual Christiane Vulpius; it is as though her looks were at first more important to him than her personality, for he took possession of her more rapidly

Goddess this of our hearts—Opportunity: learn ye to know her!
Him, the swiftly-deciding, swiftly-acting, she smiles on,
Him she meekly obeys, sportive and tender and kind.
Once to me she appeared, an olive-brown girl, and her tresses,
Dusky and rich, like a cloud covered her forehead and fell;
Tiny ringlets curled round her neck in delicate beauty,
Loose, unwoven, the hair sprang in thick waves from her head;
And I mistook her not then, I caught at her passing, and sweetly
Docile she clasped me and kissed, swift her response as my call—
O the joy that was mine! . . .

and more decisively than of any of the women in his earlier love-affairs.

For from the first moment it was his heart that ruled his desire. No one was ever less of a believer in the primitive dualism of the soul and the senses than was Goethe, whose " hygiene of the spirit " could never have misled him into giving only a part of himself to a woman. He, who in Venice had not been able to resist expounding Palladio to his servant-man, simply because they happened to be standing together before the masterpiece—he, who had tried to teach the boy at his side to observe the phenomena of Nature, because they so stirred himself—this man, so unreserved and self-surrendering with his intimates, who had never had a woman under his roof till now—was *he* the man to shut this first feminine housemate out of his heart, and like any vulgarian take his pleasure when he listed, consigning her at other times to the kitchen and the housework, and leading a separate existence with other men and women? That day would never come.

For the present he did not even exclude her from his work. True, she did not possess the freedom and breadth of Charlotte's culture, nor could she grasp the idea of plastic form. If Frau von Stein had never stimulated Goethe's brain, she knew very well how he had stimulated hers. Christiane's appreciation was more naïve, but when her friend explained optical experiments or botanical studies, she had mother-wit enough to get some idea of the things that Charlotte's intellect had fully grasped. Of the sciences to which Goethe was now entirely devoting himself, both women were quite ignorant; but it was in a very tender tone that he lyrically answered Christiane's questions about the *Metamorphosis of Plants*. That didactic poem, whose opening lines are enough to make it a love-poem, is like a rainbow spanning the distant horizons of the two lovers.

Between his seventeenth and twenty-fourth years Goethe had been thrice engaged, each time with a wish for

children; and now again at forty he was thinking, if not of immediate marriage, at any rate of paternity. For the first time a second person was to be a permanent inmate of his house.

In Weimar, throughout the past ten years, he had taken no woman entirely to himself. With the Court-lady, as with the loveliest artist in the town, he had had intimate relations, but had never lived with either. Now, immediately after his second arrival, he identified himself with this girl, who was the penniless daughter of a deceased archivist, and had been obliged to work in an artificial flower factory. She was cheerful, simple, and domesticated, and though she was fond of dancing, there had never been a word of scandal about her. At first their meetings were only in his little *Gartenhaus*; when after scarce two years he established her and her mother in his town-house, he did not propose to marry her—what he wanted was a woman, a home, an abiding-place for his son. " I am married, except for the ceremony," he said, and referred to the anniversary as the date of his marriage.

Her bright exhilarating nature always reminded him of his native home. For fifty years this man vainly strove to love the Thuringian landscape, and longed not only for the Tiber but for the Main and the Rhine, when the absence of brooks and broad sheets of water weighed on his spirits. " Only love me " (so Goethe now read on his travels); " I think of you every minute of the day, and am planning to have the house looking ever so nice, so as to give you pleasure because you give me so much."

When had he ever before read such tenderly imagined, timidly solicitous words? And soon he was to read that a little person had asked: " Did Father send me a kiss? "

His swift snatch at Christiane, the defiant attitude he took up, give us the impression of a man who, like him of fifteen years before, was fighting down his former prepossessions—and fighting too against the rank that now was his. Though this had first begun in Rome, it was not until now that it became apparent.

One day Goethe found his newly written love-poems in a cupboard under the cast of Raphael's skull, where someone had put them away. He smiled, and took this too as a symbol—and indeed these poems are themselves the most definite symbol of the alteration he had undergone. Through the very first that he wrote for Christiane —*Der Besuch* (*The Visit*) and *Morgenklagen* (*Morning-Complaint*)—rings the cheerfully assured tone of a man whose happiness lies more in being loved than in loving. Here is a lyric in which gossamer lightness is linked to passion, here is the playfulness of love at ease—it is not even rhymed, is just a whispered caress:

> O du loses leidigliebes Mädchen,
> Sag mir an ; womit hab' ich's verschuldet—
> Dass du mich auf diese Folter spannest,
> Dass du dein gegeben Wort gebrochen ? . . .[1]

Very likely he found her asleep, and sang that song to her; and when he sketched her, as he sang, in that position Goethe was for the first time, and unconsciously, illustrating one of his own poems.

A month or two—and even from that exhilarating contact he removed himself (as was his wont) to a little distance, there to take it in as a whole and at the same time see it in detail. When, with his devotion to the classic ideals, he found his beloved so easy-going, unexacting, and cheerfully selfless, he was reminded of the Roman girl who might have walked out of the pages of Horace; and soon that image became so fused with the more immediate relation that Rome, Faustina, and Christiane seemed one and the same thing.

He quite understood the process, and explained it to her by his classical predilections; and when in the third Elegy he distinguished between two kinds of love, one

[1] O you lazy love, you little rascal,
Tell me in what way I have defaulted,
Tell me why you rack me, tantalize me—
What are given words when they are broken ?

seems to detect some resentful reminiscence of Charlotte's feeling for him:

> Vielfach wirken die Pfeile des Amor : einige ritzen,
> Und vom schleichenden Gift kranket auf Jahre das Herz.
> Aber mächtig befiedert, mit frisch geschliffener Schärfe
> Dringen die andern ins Mark, zünden behende das Blut.
> In der heroischen Zeit, da Götter und Göttinnen liebten,
> Folgte Begierde dem Blick, folgte Genuss der Begier. . . .[1]

Goethe, in the first four years with Frau von Stein, wrote her nearly four hundred notes, all of which we possess. There is not one page to Christiane, in a similar space of time. There was no sense in writing when they were both under the same roof, and his communications in the early years of travel are lost. Thus there are few direct testimonies to the strength of an attachment which no one who reads his verses could possibly dispute.

In the course of eighteen months Christiane became the mother of Goethe's first son. During the early weeks the least thing was enough to alarm the father. He was in Venice when something occurred to make him anxious, and he wrote to Herder about the woman who had now made him happy for two years: " Those whom I have left behind are very dear to me, and I freely confess that I passionately love the girl. How deep my attachment is I have only realized since I came away." So profound was the strength of his feeling, so entirely did he now feel her to be his destined mate, so heavily did loneliness weigh upon his spirits, that he was soon obsessed by the pessimistic fear of love's instability which filled that soul, so rarely happy as it was, with humble apprehension at the touch of good fortune's flying wings. He was awaiting

[1] Amor's arrows are many and various—some of them rend us,
And their poisons are slow, long will the heart be in pain ;
Ah, but fleetly are feathered, skilfully pointed, some others,
These will go deep, and inflame the quick blood at a touch.
In the heroic old times, when the gods and the goddesses coupled,
A glance would engender desire—joys on desire followed hard.

the Dowager-Duchess, whom he had come to Venice to bring home, and the days were slipping by: he was nervous, longing for the wife and child in the North. . . . He broke out into a cry which Hamlet might have uttered, quivering with a sense of former evil tricks of fate, though to the world all might well have seemed glad fulfilment:

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

The full significance of these words (which we must accept in default of any other written confession) can be estimated only by those who have realized the passion for unvarnished truth to which, at this period, Goethe was resolute to sacrifice even his imagination. How little of love, of trust, had his forty years' quest instilled into the man who, nevertheless, would choose the sweet delusion rather than a rough awakening!

However, he was to be granted many years of happy domesticity. Eros soon made himself at home in the house; comfort and good order, entrusted to kind, capable hands, were at last to surround and soothe the restless spirit which had longed for them through twenty years. He was a man at ease, tranquil, self-assured, and cheerfully resigned to the limitations that genius must ultimately accept in this world of ours.

The solitary found his happiness in the narrow home-circle. Now he was intent on founding his family, on increasing it—but in the succeeding years four children died almost as soon as born, exactly as it had been with his parents. Those were the first shadows to fall, as shadows had fallen in the past, on the well-being that Goethe had now begun to enjoy.

[1] Oftentimes I mistook, and often came to my senses,
Happier never I was. Happiness now is this girl.
Oh, if this too be mistake, spare me, ye gods that mistake not,
Suffer the dream to go on, till I wake on the lonely shore.

At last, four years after their union, we have an example of Goethe's letters to Christiane herself:

"There is no sense at all in going away from those one loves. . . . Dear angel, I am all your own. . . . Kiss the little man, of whom I often think. And of everything about you, down to the coal-rapes we planted. . . . If only you were with me! There are big broad beds everywhere, so you'd have nothing to complain of, as you often have at home. Ah, my darling! There is nothing better than being together. We'll say that very often, when we have one another again. . . . For I'm frequently jealous in fancy, and imagine that someone else might please you better, because so many men seem to me to be handsomer and more agreeable than myself. But *you* mustn't see that; you must think me the best of all, because I love you quite terribly, and no one pleases me but you. . . . While your heart wasn't mine, what good was anyone else to me? And now that it *is* mine, I want to keep it. And so I'm yours, you see. . . . We'll always stick together, for we'll never find anything better, after all. . . . If I ever write you anything you don't like, you must forgive me. Your love is so precious to me that I should be wretched if I lost it—so you must forgive me a little jealousy and anxiety. . . . Weren't the shawl and the frock pretty? I wish you lovely weather, so that you can often wear the frock."

That was how Goethe could write to this woman, in the fifth year of his attachment to her, and in the midst of the embarrassments and anxieties which are part of every adventure. In the whole series of his letters we find nothing like this simplicity, this utter surrender to the normal relations between a man and a woman. It is his nearest approach to the typical lover.

And in fact it was a quiet, simple existence that Goethe led in the early years of this marriage which was not a sanctioned marriage. It was the form taken by a daemonic personality for its tranquillization, that genius might be set free to create.

His neglect of the marriage ceremony was the result of his choice. The domestic, not the social, aspect of marriage was what he wanted; neither the aristocratic nor the gifted woman would have been of any use in his house —each would have imposed those duties which for a decade he had avoided. It was no source of distress to Goethe that his young mistress was lacking in the education and social training suitable for his wife—indeed he needed her simply because of those lacks, and for a long time his view was justified. The large house, which he had inhabited since the years immediately before the Italian tour, was now superintended by a sedulous housewife; when he went away for a time he had it re-decorated, and constantly impressed on her that she must have everything looking its best when he came back.

Money, far in excess of his salary, was now needed and earned. Directly he returned, he offered Wieland part of his Italian writings for the *Merkur*, and these grew into a long series, running through fifteen monthly numbers. The form taken by Goethe's offer, which was almost exclusively concerned with the question of payment, shows that he made the proposal to that end alone. When Göschen, later, declined to publish the *Metamorphosis of Plants*, Goethe despondently made him a list of all the works he had ready, waiting for the propitious moment, and added this outspoken comment: " Since, as you say yourself, my things are not so popular as other people's, which better please the public taste, I can only yield to circumstances; and I am sorry to say I foresee that I shall have to make a complete change in my arrangements for future works."

Dwelling in so limited a sphere, he continued to stand aloof from the dim figures of the past—from some, indeed, his estrangement grew more marked.

His mother, whom he had last seen when he was thirty, and who in the meantime had lost her husband and his

father, he did not see again till he was forty-three—yet in the interval he had travelled as far as Sicily and Galicia. On his way to the Rhine, when he simply could not avoid it, he made up his mind to visit her at last.

When, shortly afterwards, Frankfurt was in danger of invasion, he offered his mother—whom for twenty years he had never invited, and whose suggested move to Weimar he had definitely prevented—shelter in his house; but she stayed where she was, for she was fearless. Then he urgently advised her to sell his father's house. She consented, and went to live in lodgings. All the furniture, so associated with the old man's life and work, was auctioned off—Goethe did not even add the good library, which had helped to educate him, to his own. So little family-feeling for the past did he show—and for the future it was scarcely stronger. With no relative, old friend, or companion did Goethe, who now stopped at Frankfurt three times running on his way elsewhere, keep up any intercourse; he even refused to visit his dying niece (whose letters grieved him), saying he did not wish to see his sister die " for the second time "—she whom in trouble, illness, and death he had for years neglected.

Could a man have shown more aversion from his own youth?

Nevertheless, his name inspired such confidence in his former home that very many people, during the French invasion, sent him their jewels, savings, and other treasures for safe-keeping at Weimar.

The only man to whom after years of very intermittent correspondence he did make a definite approach, was Fritz Jacobi, in whose house on the Rhine he spent several weeks; and this was not mere accident, for that friend lived in a luxurious country-mansion, where Goethe was glad to be a guest after the deprivations of camp-life. In this " most hospitable of all houses " the old scenes of friendship and confidence were now renewed, less buoyantly than twenty years ago, but more sagely, more

humorously—for only in a spirit of high tolerance could Jacobi, now shedding his early enthusiasms in favour of theosophy, accommodate himself to the rational, bleak outlook of his guest. However, the personal beauty, the nobility, and the knowledge of the world possessed by his friend were enough to make up to Goethe for many other things.

Towards Lavater his aversion now developed into hatred. He did not answer his letters; in Mainz he was "not at home" to him; in Zurich, some years later, he avoided him by turning down an alley. In his *Gross-Cophta* he derided him along with Cagliostro, in whom Lavater believed; and this seems to be meant for Lavater; "What a knave! To interweave the Holy of Holies with his lies!"

Herder, on his return, remained intimate with Goethe. There was much to share with each other, and Herder even gave such vent to his affection as the jealousy and antagonism in his soul permitted. But can it be called friendship, when Goethe had to suppress nearly all of his deepest, most intimate emotions, those connected with his child and its mother? Before he left for Venice, he told Christiane that Herder was the person to whom she was to turn in any sudden emergency. But to Herder he did not dare to say this outright; it was not until the first stage of his journey, from Jena, that he wrote to his friend: "I told her in any such extremity to turn to you. Forgive me!" The clergyman, to show his freedom from prejudice, had to his wife defended Goethe's unsanctified union; but how entirely his partisanship was from the lips outward we can plainly see by comparing the active interest Goethe took in Herder's children and his attachment to his eldest boy, with that touchingly timid, almost shamefaced word on his departure: "Forgive me!" And yet a frank wholehearted identification of himself with Goethe's private affairs would then have gained Herder an eternal, wholehearted friendship. Knebel seems to have shown just this kind of chivalrous affection, and Goethe and he remained attached to the end.

Weimar, which winked at any *bonne fortune* of the Duke and his courtiers, turned against the eccentric favourite in whom for ten years it had vainly sought material for some scandal. He had been forgiven the "Mistress of the Horse," but the girl from the flower-factory was disgraceful. It is true that among his many enemies there was no one who could cast suspicion on her past life—but it was none the less an affront to society that so renowned a member of it should pick up a person of her class to establish in his stately abode. Herder advised him not to publish the Roman Elegies; Wieland called Goethe's son "the servant's brat"; more frequently than before Goethe was driven by the tattle of the town to Jena, whence he gave vent to ironies about Weimar: "My purgatory over there gets worse and worse. . . . *Crescono le mie virtù, ma la mia virtù cala.*"

How deeply he felt certain slights in Weimar is to be read in the sixth Elegy:

Also sprach die Geliebte, und nahm den Kleinen vom Stuhle,
Drückt 'ihm küssend ans Herz, Tränen entquollen dem Blick.
Und wie sass ich beschämt, dass Reden feindlicher Menschen
Dieses liebliches Bild mir zu beflecken vermöcht![1]

Along with all this went increasing jealousy and hostility, now that he no longer requited salary and house by the colossal toil of the Presidential office. "Goethe is a private person nowadays," said Weimar; and gossip about the big house was incessant.

The Duke alone held out. He defended Goethe's love, and stood godfather to his son August. He (whose Chamberlain's name was Venus) felt that Goethe's erotic rejuvenation cast its aegis backward over the years when Goethe had sought to bring him back to the Duchess. He felt that they were friends as of old, rejoiced in the tone

[1] Thus my loved one replied—from his chair she lifted the baby,
Pressed him close to her heart, kissed him with tears in her eyes.
Oh, but shamefaced I sat, to think that malignant gossip
Could have sullied for me a picture so dear and so sweet!

of the new poems, saw much more of Goethe than of late, would ask him to come away with him. And again he took interest in Goethe's work, offering frank criticisms which were often just.

Goethe made wise use of his patron's mood, contrived to become indispensable once more, followed him to camp, and even, for the first time in eight years, adulated him in verse:

Denn mir hat er gegeben, was Grosse selten gewähren:
Neigung, Musse, Vertraun, Felder und Garten und Haus.
Niemand braucht' ich zu danken als ihm, und manches bedurft' ich
Der ich mich auf den Erwerb schlecht, als ein Dichter, verstand.
Hat mich Europa gelobt, was hat mir Europa gegeben?
Nichts! Ich habe, wie schwer! meine Gedichte bezahlt. . . .
Niemals frug ein Kaiser nach mir, es hat sich kein König
Um mich bekümmert, und Er war mir August und Mäcen.[1]

And just as formerly he had told him salutary truths in *Ilmenau*, so now he made no bones about letting the Duke see why still, when he had given up all hope of influencing him intellectually, he remained at his side.

In confidential letters he gave Carl August many intimate details—even telling him when his mistress was restored to normal life after the birth of a child. The tone is that of equality regained. When the Duke sent him to meet the Dowager-Duchess in Venice, Goethe wrote: "This free trip is great fun." He now ended his letters even to the Duke with that haughtily humble request of his: "Go on loving me." But he was sage enough to abjure entirely the mentor's rôle which had been such a

[1] For to me has he given what great ones but rarely have granted;
Affection, leisure, and trust; acres and garden and house.
No one but him must I thank, and great the beneficence needed,
Since, as a poet, but scant the reward I received for my work.
Europe—has Europe acclaimed me? Given me aught has this Europe?
Nothing! But heavy indeed the cost of my poems to me . . .
Never an Emperor summoned me, never a monarch
Thought of me—this my Augustus, Maecenas, this man!

failure; there is not one written word of even political advice, though he was constantly asked for it by word of mouth. With finance he never interfered; and only once in several years did he use the tone of an *emeritus* Court-tutor: "Keep a particularly bright smile for the days when you are doing what of yore you were so keen on!"

On this basis of mutual tolerance he constructed, after his return, a new relation to his patron, which if not very productive had its own vitality, and bridged the former quasi-estrangement.

Not even the shadow of friendship was accorded him by his former mistress.

Charlotte's attitude towards Goethe's love-affair was that of a Court-lady. For quite a long time she knew nothing of what half Weimar knew. Goethe made Christiane's acquaintance in July; the first Charlotte heard of it was in February, and as he was no longer her property in any sense of the word, she tried at first to avoid a breach. "But," wrote Caroline Herder, "she takes it very much amiss in him." She concealed her knowledge from Goethe; her first breakdown was like that of Hamlet's mother—the play was the thing. From a drama which portrayed a similar estrangement she came home in a state of collapse. "It has grieved me very much," wrote Goethe, "to hear that that insipid, wretched play gave you such pain by reminding you of a sad reality. I shall expect you this evening. Let pain and joy be our bond of friendship, so that we may get some good out of the few years we have left."

But, for all that, both held back. Soon afterwards he wrote more resolutely, absolving her of all blame, though her reproaches hit him hard; "and if you are to suffer a great deal through me, it is only fair that I . . . should, through you"—exactly like the verses in *Tasso*. Better to close the account and keep out of one another's way than to dispute the items, since he could never be anything but in her debt. Strenuously did they try to save what might yet be saved. He told her about his optical secrets;

in his letters he did seem urgent to bring matters to a head, but was unchangingly chivalrous and grateful. How uncertain his feeling about her was is evident from a letter which begins in this contrite but cautious strain: "Forgive me, my dear, if my last letter was a little confused. Everything will settle down and clear up—we must give ourselves and circumstances time. I am so nervous all round that I can hardly make up my mind to come to you."

Can Goethe have hoped for her return, in a situation so ambiguous? Certainly she hoped for his. There is no stronger proof of how whole-heartedly she was convinced of his love for her, in the recent years at Weimar, than the fact that she now resolved to give him his choice. Charlotte, in her transcendental phase, would not only have had to forgive her forty-yeared lover a mistress, but could scarcely have helped wishing that he would take one; but Charlotte as a woman scorned, blind to her forty-seven years, with a rival just half her age, felt that she had been betrayed; and, completely misapprehending Goethe's character, presented him with an alternative which was no alternative at all.

She did not do this until the beginning of May, and amazingly selected the moment in which she was about to visit Goethe's mother for the first time. It is as though the woman of the world, after the collapse of all her mystic dreams of elective affinities, was anxious to parade a more normal relationship so as to protect her fair fame. Goethe did not answer till July:

"How very much I love you, how completely I recognize my duty to you and Fritz, I proved by my return from Italy. . . . Unfortunately, when I arrived, you were in a peculiar frame of mind. . . . I saw the Herders and the Duchess leave for Italy, and the place in the carriage which had been pressingly offered to me, remained empty. I stayed behind for my friend's sake, just as I had returned for her sake—and all I had to listen to was the obstinate reiteration that I might as well have stayed in Italy. . . . And all this before there was any idea of the relation which

seems so greatly to offend you! And what sort of a relation is it? Who is deprived of anything because it exists? Who makes any claim to the feelings which are mine for that poor little thing? Who, to the time I spend with her? Ask Fritz, ask the Herders, ask anyone who is dear to me if I am less interested in their affairs . . . than before? Strange, indeed, if it is with *you* that I am to lose touch—you, the best and dearest of all my friends! How strongly I have felt that everything is as it has been between us, when you have been disposed to talk with me about the things that interest us!

"But I will freely confess that I can no longer endure the way you have treated me of late. When I was most inclined to talk, you would silence me; when I was most sympathetic, you would accuse me of indifference. You wanted to regulate my behaviour to everyone; you found fault with everything I did and was. . . . What chance was there for confidence and frankness, when you had made up your mind to repulse me at every turn! . . . Unfortunately you have long scorned my advice about coffee, and have taken to a dietary which is most injurious to your health. . . . I won't give up the hope that you may again do me some justice. Farewell. Fritz is in fine fettle and often comes to see me."

A week later: "I have known no greater happiness than my confidence towards you, which once knew no bounds; now that I may no longer practise it, I am a different man, and must become more and more so. . . . What with this cold wet summer and the hard winter that is at hand, what with the Duke's frequent absences" [as a Prussian General] "and all the other circumstances which make things here so unsettled and confused that one scarcely knows a single person who is content with life, it takes some doing to . . . keep a good heart and not make plans for gradually getting clear of it all; and when, in addition to these things, one finds one's dearest friend quite estranged, one simply doesn't know where one is. I mean this as much for you as for myself. . . . Only I should like to implore of

you—help me even in this matter, so that the relation which offends you may not degenerate, but remain as it is. Let me confide in you again—let me say one quiet, heartfelt word to you about it, and then I shall hope that all that was between us will be completely and happily restored."

What makes these letters unique in Goethe's life is the fact that they were inspired as much by worldly wisdom as by kindness, as much by gratitude as by diplomacy. They were written by a man who only in them—and even in them but intermittently—laid aside the mask he habitually wore, because he was remembering the time when no one saw his face as this woman had seen it, she whom he now sought to retain more for her sake than his own. Therefore he adopted a tone of gentle friendship to soften the effect of the defensive passages, and took no notice of the harshness which her letter must have contained.

Their love had died; but he as it were covered its grave with green grass, when in this letter he wrote only of duty and Fritz, of things that interested them both, but never referred to their past, nor directly to his own love for her. For an abandoned mistress there is nothing more painful than the consciousness that no one makes a claim to those hours which her lover now spends with a younger woman. But, being a diplomat, Goethe did not shrink from almost depreciating Christiane to her rival; and while he often reassured Christiane with the same words he had once written to Charlotte, he was at the same time writing of her to Charlotte as a "poor little thing." In the second letter, which he need not have written at all, there is an unmistakable return to the one-sided devotion which had been the mark of their friendship in its first great days. To confide in her had, he said, become a necessity to him; he does not ask her to requite his confidence with hers, and he gives her a final proof of how entirely he does "confide" in her, when he implores her help in this new passion, and longs to talk it over with her like a brother. How little he understood her pride, still

less her jealousy! Whether she answered or not, we do not know. Seven years go by without a written word.

But after the short space of two years, she seems to have felt more kindly disposed towards him. She confessed to a woman-friend that she was sorry for Goethe and could have wept about it all. About this time her husband died. But five years after the rupture, she took her revenge when she wrote the drama of *Dido*.

Goethe, on his side, closed the record of his longest love-affair with the sadly apathetic, purposely unimpassioned epigram:

Eine Liebe hatt 'ich, sie war mir lieber als alles!
Aber ich hab' sie nicht mehr! Schweig und ertrag den Verlust![1]

It is like the clang of a heavy hall-door. The man who is leaving that house has no intention of wandering drearily through the streets—he is on his way to another, newly constructed abode. Those two lines were his farewell; they were followed by no song or elegy, no haunted hours of reverie. From the epigrammatist two lines were wrung. The poet had nothing to say.

The poet, indeed, had nothing to say throughout all this period. It was a strain rather than a delight to complete his collected edition on his return. His mind, more intent on truths than on imaginative creation, more scientifically than artistically inclined, turned from "consecutive compositions; the fragmentary style of erotic trifles better suits my present state." *Tasso* gave him most to work on. But in that instance too it was more a personal impulse that impelled him to the task than a desire to finish and reshape the piece. According to a later confession, he wanted to shake off some impressions and memories of Weimar which still clung oppressively to his mind.

[1] Once a lover was mine, she was of all the most cherished!
But I have lost her for aye! Bear thou in silence thy loss!

Faust, which was to have been finished in Rome, appeared as a fragment—that is to say, scarcely differentiated from the original draft.

In the volume containing the lyrics, which he said was the *summa summarum* of a whole life, we see the earliest signs of the attempt, which afterwards became so marked, to cover up his tracks. He omits, softens down, and (on aesthetic principles) so fuses one experience with another that it is impossible to assign date and incident to any poem. This effort to objectify his work after the event is a very extraordinary contrast to his itch for self-confession; and when we see the man who called his life-work a prolonged autobiography carefully obscuring the details of that disclosure when they were concerned with others—which is to say, with women—we cannot refuse this further proof that Goethe's confessions were regardless of his own person, but full of consideration for others.

What he wrote at this time was influenced by the events of that agitated period—sometimes directly, sometimes symbolically. *Reineke Fuchs*, that profane Bible, he found it a relief to remodel after the shocks of the Revolution; and at the same time it was good practice with its several thousand hexameters, which he challenged Herder, Wieland, and Knebel to improve upon. The two comedies on the Revolution—*Gross-Cophta* and *Bürgergeneral*—are *pièces de circonstance* and nothing more. They are of no importance in the canon—they are of the stage pure and simple, the latter being boiled down from an opera. The third and most important play—the very modern-mannered *Aufgeregten*—is no more than a fragment.

To persevere with the drama in the grand style, after *Tasso*, he needed—and lacked—both actors and repose of mind. He knew that well, and shut his conceptions away like jewels, unsuitable to such dangerous times.

Thus throughout this whole period there was no great work, nor any new development in style except the twenty-four Elegies. In those he retrieved the fresh note of his youthful lyrics, though the form was entirely different,

both psychologically and artistically speaking. And even they remained long in his desk.

For then, and through decades to come, Goethe was discouraged from attempting the grand style by the crying lack of an appreciative public. If he seemed petrified throughout these years, if he fled from the turmoils of the time to the Fortunate Isles of domesticity and scientific research, it was due to the change of taste in a public which he had consistently despised while he possessed its suffrages. Now that change struck home—not to his heart, but to his theory. Or was there not indeed something tragic in the fact that just when what he had learnt in Rome had caused him to deduce the value of the classic from the interest taken in art by an entire nation, his own nation should be beginning to turn from him to newer writers?

It was only for a brief while in his youth that he had felt it a happiness to be in touch with the best men of his time. Ever since Weimar he had abjured the national appeal, had written a few things for the few, so that the first edition of his collected works could scarcely have spelt success. Now, when he definitely came forward as a national poet, even the stirring *Egmont* was little talked of or acted, while *Iphigenie* and *Tasso*, then first published, left everyone cold. There was no attempt to stage them; all Germany was agog for the dramas of Schiller, who had publicly and adversely criticized *Egmont*. The revolutionary spirit of the age was averse from abstract beauty—subjective treatment, the intrusion of the dramatist's personality, was demanded, and was found in other poets. While Heinse's *Ardinghello* was the theme of universal praise, three of Goethe's works—the *Faust* fragment, *Tasso*, and the volume of lyrics—were on their first appearance discussed almost exclusively in the letters of his literary contemporaries.

On the whole, he felt that the scepticism about German culture which had grown on him in Italy was confirmed in his own person. While his German publisher was dis-

mayed, *Iphigenie* was at once translated into verse in England. "The average German is an honest, decent fellow, but of the originality . . . of a work of art he has not the smallest conception—which is to say, in a word, that he has no taste. Roughly speaking, it is comprehensible enough. Variety of scene and exaggerated treatment tickle the coarser minds in the audience, while the more cultivated are attracted by a certain vulgar sincerity. . . . A well-sustained middle course, departure from which is attended by the risk of either sinking into the platitudinous, or soaring into the realm of absurdity." Impossible to overlook the note of personal pique in that passage from a private letter of Goethe's.

Is it astonishing that his mind, which was already turning away from art, should have found in the incomprehension of his age another pretext for abandoning the Muses? The temper of his soul and the temper of the time, his isolation and his trend towards scientific truth—both private and public circumstances pointed him to research, to natural science. "I feel pretty sure that, as things are, I shall devote myself exclusively to it." Between forty and forty-five Goethe completed the two most important of his observations in this sort, and laid the foundations for the third.

In every particular instance, Goethe's research-work followed the same mystical course as did his poetry and his experience. His eye saw the object, his genius envisaged the universal, his individual self made the connection. This path from perception by way of vision to the law was that which the lyric poet, the Minister, the scientist, consistently pursued; and whether it would take him minutes or years depended solely on the scope and intricacy of the matter in hand. As with Leonardo and Kepler, so with Goethe—casual experience was raised to vision, and vision widened to embrace the form; "for it is with these phenomena as with poems—I did not make them; they made me." Even the modes of endeavour which his manifold gifts called forth in Goethe were undifferentiated;

it was the same spirit which, in its own highly individual way, projected itself on events no less than on phenomena. As arrogantly as Faust did Goethe turn to the symbol of the macrocosm, that he might feel himself to be God; as humbly as St. Francis did he submerge himself in his microcosm, that he might feel God in him.

That was why as artist and statesman no less than as scientist he never began by seeking the law—he merely felt that there was one. As a poet and man he gave examples, as an investigator he found prophetic outlooks. Goethe's achievements in physics, born of perception, fostered by intuitive generalization, are no more than rough drafts for laws which he was prevented from elaborating either by want of time, or the resistance of his anti-philosophical sensuousness. But, as the draughtsman, he was always free to make use of his intuition for later investigation of the given problem. Here as elsewhere all his knowledge was derived from his personal apprehension of things, and even his logical fallacies could prove fruitful, because they were psychological verities.

" A perception of this kind," he now said of his vertebral theory of anatomy, " always has . . . one quality of the esoteric—that as a whole it can be expressed but not demonstrated. In detail it *is* demonstrable, but one can't completely round it off." And so he insisted, quoting an old saw, that we should never seek to take Nature by violence. " No—I pursued her cautiously by observation and experiment, and was content when she was so good as now and again to confirm my view. When she declined to do that, she did not fail to show me some other way of perception. To inquire about the purpose—to ask ' Why? ' —is wholly unscientific; one gets a little further with ' How? ' For if I ask, ' How does the ox come to have horns? ' I am led to consider his organization, and so to see at once why the lion has none, nor can have them."

Thus all his discoveries were, in this higher sense, empirical. He could not make minute investigations, nor could he specialize; and though distrust of a scientist-

poet's exactitude may be excusable, he was found to be more careful than many a pure scientist, and was never accused of inaccuracy by any of his opponents. Rather it was he who uttered a warning against hasty conclusions. "Genius," he said, in one of the earliest of the papers against Newton, "... is by its nature inclined to lay down the law to phenomena, to take them by storm. . . . Far more difficult for genius is the determination—often, alas, deferred too long—to give credit to phenomena for all they imply; and though it may succeed, by its productive energy, in creating its own microcosm, it usually does violence to the macrocosm by preferring to make a coherent whole of a few experiences which are easily to be apprehended, rather than to combine several experiences in a spirit of humility, with the hope of discovering, at long last, the natural connection between them."

It was to this fresh, simple, unsystematic procedure—natural to a self-taught student—that he owed the perfect candour of his eye. He did not make his discoveries by sedulous exploration like Vasco da Gama, nor even indirectly like Columbus; Goethe was like Red Eric, a buccaneer on the high seas—and yet not wholly so, for Goethe's intuition said to him: "Here is a new continent." Indeed, it seems as though this explorer-by-intuition was not intended to find the thing he definitely sought, for when he sought the primitive plant, for example, it was not to be found.

His was the eye which, on the promenade at Padua, observed the fan-shaped palms as it might have observed the human heart—as lovingly, as thoughtfully. It was the same eye which eighteen years before had seen anew the tower of Strasburg Cathedral and discovered the plan in the torso. When, so observing, he detected the modification between the leaves of the stem and those of the blossoms, and between these and the stamens, the secret of the leaf's anatomy was revealed to him—that which enables it constantly to take another essential form. And hence he called the leaf the fundamental type of

plant-organism, and based a system on this law of metamorphosis.

And as a side-issue he followed up such experiments to their logical consequence: "At the heart of this law lies the restriction to which every creature is subject—that it may not exceed its measure. Thus one part cannot encroach without causing another to deteriorate; nor one part wholly prevail without causing another wholly to perish." These are first principles which were later to issue in his theory of dynamics.

His mind had long conceived the idea of a similar abstract type in the animal-kingdom—ever since he had discovered the intermaxillary bone in man. Fusion or reconstruction (he had then said to himself) causes increase or decrease in size, or else the atrophy of certain parts must have obliterated an original type, if we find that there remain even the rudiments of organs, no matter how unnecessary these may have become. The construction of the botanical kingdom from the metamorphosis of plants was to him in no way different from the transformation of the larva into the butterfly; there, too, a homogeneous origin resulted in differentiated forms—only in the plant the organism was the same, and in the butterfly it was different. Even in the higher animals this eurhythmic identity was evidenced by the vertebral column, though there the continuity seemed to elude the eye.

Thus far his meditations had led him years before—and now, on a visit to Venice, his servant one day picked up a skull in the Jewish cemetery on the Lido, and laughingly presented it to his master as the skull of a Jew. Goethe saw at once that it was a portion of a ram's skull; and then, remembering the thrilling discovery, ten years ago, of the intermaxillary bone, his eye discerned what no one before him had discerned—that the skull too consists of vertebrae. And instantly he felt that "he had taken a great step towards comprehension of the structure of animals."

Every bone, he now told himself, is in itself a part or fragment of a vertebral nucleus—and thus he was the first to grasp a guiding principle of comparative anatomy. But this did not content him; he soon went further and concluded that "a universal type, progressing by metamorphosis, is characteristic of the whole organic creation, is observable in all its divisions at certain intermediate stages, and must therefore be at least postulated in man, who is the most highly developed organism, even though it takes so modest a place as to be actually imperceptible" —the Darwinian postulate, discerned seventy years before the younger Darwin.

So fruitful was Goethe's work, when its basis could be confined to the sense-perceptions. But just as he scorned all "invented" writing, and wrote poetry only when it came to him—just as he held no theories of government which did not naturally ensue from his own experience —so his genius warned the scientist off the ground of speculative science. Only once, misled by the object, did he transgress against this law of his being. Unconsciously he then overstepped the frontiers of his own nature; and no sooner had he entered that alien realm in which the sense-perception can deceive, instead of guiding the observer clear-eyed to the goal, than he became involved in a confusion of thought from which he was unable to escape throughout the forty years which followed.

Goethe's theory of colour, his campaign against Newton, is one of the strongest proofs of his daemonic nature. That enigmatic force which impelled him—in love, from desire to its satisfaction; in endeavour, from adoration to contempt of the active life; in poetry, from pure beauty to the cosmic orchestra—that force which through all his life conducted him from devotion to scepticism and back again to devotion, was now to invade the most untroubled sphere he knew, that of the light itself, his phenomenon of phenomena; and he was to wrestle, daemonically misled, for an erroneous conception! While defending it against

the analysis of the profane, he himself turned analyst; and it is as though the indignant god of light had retaliated on the devotee who presumed to think that his divinity could be dissected.

Newton taught that light was of varied kinds, differentiated by the colour-sense of the eye. This heterogeneous light yielded combinations of colours. White was the fusion of all the colours. Every colour was affected by an altered combination of the light, hence it must derive from the light; bodies merely caused it to be perceived. The prism caused the light to diverge at a certain angle.

This doctrine, which he had half forgotten when he first began his investigations, Goethe repeatedly made physicists expound to him. He apprehended it rightly, but stuck to his point—which was that white light could never be a product of coloured light; and though all his experiments yielded the same results as Newton's did, his theory is impossible of acceptance, because all Goethe ever did was to insist on Newton's fallaciousness, without demonstrating exactly in what it consisted. Physicists of every school united in upholding Newton; Goethe stood derisively alone in the opposite camp.

He taught that all the colours were denser than white—had an element of shadow in them. But as the mere combination of light and darkness yielded grey, colours must be the product of some other alliance of light and shadow, and were perceived in the faintly nebulous atmosphere of blue and yellow—the sky and the sun. This nebulous medium gave the light that element of the opaque, of the material, which was necessary to the production of colour. Colour was more than light; a combination of light and shadow could alone elicit colour—or, as in his old age he once expressed it in verse:

Einheit ewigen Lichts zu spalten,
Müssen wir für Torheit halten,
Wenn euch Irrtum schon genügt.

Hell und Dunkel, Licht und Schatten,
Weiss man klüglich sie zu gatten,
Ist das Farbenreich gesiegt.[1]

Goethe was defending his worshipped phenomenon against the professors of physics—not only that light which they were intent on dissecting for him, but even the eye through which he had learned to worship that light! He was defending his God. Hence his long-lived error, hence the persistence of his passionate campaign.

Disappointment with Germany, avoidance of cold weather, opportunity, and above all the pulsing of an expectant, lonely heart caused him to absent himself four times in the course of four years; but, driven by unrest as he was, unrest perpetually drove him home again. The Dowager-Duchess's presence in Venice was only a pretext for departure; he had no sooner reached Nürnberg than he was conscious that he felt no desire to go on, and once again his heart had foreseen what was to be. If in the earlier sojourn Venice had struck him as too lyrical, what he now complained of was the cold April, the hoggishness of the national life, the imposture and filth which prevailed in that wilderness of stone and water. He invoked boredom as the Mother of the Muses; the Italian tongue alone retained its former magic, and he complained of being master of only one language:

Deutsch zu schreiben. Und so verderb'ich unglücklicher Dichter
In dem schlechtesten Stoff leider nun Leben und Kunst.[2]

[1] Light, a deathless Whole, to sever
We must hold unwisdom ever,
Fallacy too mild a word.
Radiance, dimness, wisely wed them,
Light and shade, adroitly shed them—
Of the colour-world you're lord.

[2] German author—and so, ill-fated, as poet I squander
Life and art in the worst medium that language has known.

So completely can a master underrate his medium, when he happens to incline to another! And it was the same captiousness which now made him declare, with the exaggeration of overwrought nerves, that his love for Italy had received its death-blow.

The real cause of his disappointment was home-sickness for Christiane. His first trip to Italy had been a flight from an ageing mistress who seemed the symbol of a period in which *he* was ageing—had been the hope of regaining tone and youthfulness in the South. His second was pervaded with longing for a young mistress at home, and he could only cast about for some transient compensation. On each occasion his mood created the land after its own image; and so now the two classic types of women, one in the South, the other in the North, disputed the ground:

Schön ist das Land! doch ach, Faustinen find'ich nicht wieder,
Das ist Italien nicht mehr, das ich mit Schmerzen verliess . . .
Südwärts liegen der Schätze wie viel! Doch einer im Norden
Zieht, ein grosser Magnet, unwiderstehlich zurück.[1]

And looking at the waves of colour in the sea at sunset, flaming and tossing round the ship, he thought of Aphrodite, from whose flames a son had issued for him and his beloved.

And yet, even now, his longing was shot through with resignation! His view of the Italians was arrogant and acrid; he maintained that they cared for nothing but eating, procreating, and nourishing their children; and cynically, sadly, he admonished himself:

Merke dir, Reisender, das und tue zu Hause desgleichen!
Weiter bringt es kein Mensch, stell' er sich, wie er auch will.[2]

[1] Fair is the land! but ah, Faustinas here I retrieve not,
This is no more the Italia, left with an ache in my heart . . .
Beauties many there are in the South! But one in the Northland
Draws me, a magnet how strong, how irresistible, home!

[2] Voyager, mark it, and see that thou doest likewise, returning!
More shall no man achieve, think of himself as he may.

In such moods, now bored, now erotically languishing, he withdrew still more decisively than of yore from social life, frequented taverns and booths more constantly than at any other time, observing and portraying—in the suppressed *Epigrams*—prostitutes and hucksters. He had love-passages with little girl-acrobats and dancers, spoke of the poet as a conqueror of women, and in a public-house the tone was something new in him when he shouted, as if to purchase oblivion:

Aber auch mir—mir sinket das Haupt von Sorgen und Mühe . . .
Liebes Mädchen! ein Glas schäumenden Weines herbei.[1]

Suddenly the expected Princess made her appearance in Venice, and Goethe resumed the courtier's mask. Of the sojourn nothing survived for him—and us—but a sheaf of epigrams, the portrait of a rope-dancer, and the revelation from the ram's skull.

He ended his forty-third year in the French field, and even there he was at bottom half-hearted from first to last. "It's outrageous that I've never yet seen a review," he had written the year before to the Duke, in the character of pure observer; this time he said he wanted to find the fields sown with soldiers instead of plants and stones. Unenthusiastically, scarcely out of curiosity, more with a desire to play up to the Duke—in short, once again because he wanted to escape from the unrest of his lonely heart, did Goethe turn soldier.

"We lead a restless sort of existence here, and yet it's thoroughly boring for the most part. . . . My life is very simple. I scarcely ever leave my tent of late; I revise *Reineke* and write down optical observations. . . . I see many people, with most of whom I have little in common. . . . I shall not rush into danger—one gets no thanks for it, and has nothing to show but the damage."

[1] And for myself—myself, heavy-headed, weary, and anxious . . .
Bring to me, pretty maiden, a glass foaming over with wine!

When the camp was in bad humour, he would recount the adventures of St. Louis, which were much more disagreeable, to the circle in the evenings; at night would read French improprieties to the Duke, or else write, like any adjutant, to his colleague at home: "Our dear Prince, who is well, cheerful, and active . . . sends you his kindest regards. . . . There is no doubt that he values you as you deserve that he should." One seems to read between the lines that the Duke, sitting by, had been given a friendly hint: "Wouldn't it be well to send a gracious message to old Schnauss?" He spent half a night walking with a Prince behind the vineyards, and explaining his theory of colour till the peep of dawn.

He played the part of intelligent amateur, and took his baptism of fire. The effect was only to be conveyed by an image; he said it was like being in some torrid region, and so permeated by the heat that one felt as if fused in the element—as if one's blood was ignited. Goethe, as on the sailing-ship at Capri, looked death in the face with the composure of a man who does not regard it as final, since he believes in metempsychosis.

At the end of the eighteenth century, war was a problem in which Goethe could take but scant interest. "There lay the poor dead and wounded, and the sun was setting gorgeously behind Mainz." That is all. Even when they had to make a difficult retreat, he merely alluded to the anxiety, privations, and hardships which "we" had to bear. In such moments he came very near exchanging speculation for a definite creed; and in a somewhat ironical spirit promised himself that he would never again complain of boredom in the theatre at Weimar, where at any rate one was under a safe roof. Amid the confusion of the flight he, in the kitchen-cart, sat conning a Dictionary of Physics, because "he should not much mind being interrupted in that sort of reading"; but he was glad, for all his coolness, to get on horseback again. Once restored to home-comforts, he sang the most cheerful of the Psalms of David to the Lord who had redeemed him from the mire, and

hoped to awake from his bad dream in the company of his mother and his friend.

There was one personality of the campaign, one individual fate, which remotely moved him, and that was not because of the man's reckless daring. His feeling for Prince Louis Ferdinand was inspired not nearly so much by the Prince's romanticism as by his own urgent efforts to keep him out of the firing-line. But on the other hand, he was profoundly affected by the thought of the shepherds who had been robbed of their herds, and into whose horny hands were pressed, in compensation, worthless banknotes dating from the days of the King deposed. The mettlesome hero, intent on risking his life, seemed to him even in practice merely foolhardy, and therefore to be restrained; but Goethe felt an affinity with the suffering shepherds, and compared their destinies with those in classical tragedy.

Restricted to headquarters as he was, his general view of war was necessarily so superficial that he could not but despise it. " First they are the fearless destroyers, then the compassionate healers; they have a collection of set phrases for inspiring hope in the most desperate situations. Hence a sort of hypocrisy, quite unique, and totally different from the parsonical and the courtly varieties. . . . This, in fact, is a regular puppet-play, wherein I act the (melancholy) Jaques in my own peculiar fashion."

How alien to his spirit was the war-machine, how reluctantly he obeyed the Duke's summons to follow him a second time into the field, is evident from the verses which he wrote, before he had even set out, to celebrate his return:

> Und wie wir auch durch ferne Lande ziehn,
> Da kommt es her, da kehrt es wieder hin—
> Wir wenden uns, wie auch die Welt entzücke,
> Der Enge zu, die uns allein beglücke.[1]

[1] And as through distant lands we wend our way,
One thought alone sustains us through the day—
However fair the world, our fancy turning
To that small sphere which holds our bliss, our yearning.

But only in the sense of wanting to extricate his person and his work from the turmoil of the time did Goethe desire " that small sphere." His mind was gripped, was even fascinated, by the age—it tested his universality to the utmost that history could.

Here, too, it was not the day but the century which stirred his imagination; and this is merely confirmed by his withdrawing, in the first agitated years, from any contact with the general political situation, and seeking oblivion in the " small sphere " of affection, scientific research, and study in general. The campaign in which he had taken part had inclined him towards the Monarchists who wished to restore the legitimate rulers, and against the Revolution. Since, instead of reaching Paris (maps of which he had had bound into his field-books), he was involved in the rout of the Royalist army behind Valmy, it must be conceded that Goethe's practical experience of the Revolution was almost entirely that of defeat.

The daemonic element in him could not but sympathize with the Revolution, while his genius, at this time intent on repose and somewhat rigorously conservative, could not but be against it—so that his instinctive abstract sympathy suggested a negative judgment, and ultimately led him to impartial contemplation.

He had two moments of insight into the ensanguined future. When, four years before the fall of the Bastille, the Necklace-Affair became known, he shuddered " as at the Gorgon's head." The prestige of the throne seemed to him to be undermined, he foresaw its annihilation, and the future rose before him like a spectre. So instantaneous, so overwhelming, was the impression made upon him that his friends afterwards told him they had thought him off his head that day. Everything that in his letters and works he had complained of during his ten years as Minister—the frivolity of princes, the arrogance of the nobility, the oppression of the poor—points to a democratic scepticism,

and now his view was confirmed by international politics. The same Cagliostro whose crime he now saw as a horrifying symptom, he had suspected three years before; and writing to say so to Lavater, he had added to his doubts the very significant admission: "I have indications, not to say information, of a vast fraud, hovering obscurely. . . . Believe me, our moral and political world is undermined by secret passages, cellars, and cess-pools."

Are not these words, which ostensibly express no more than fear of upheavals eight years before the Revolution, pregnant with unspoken condemnation of that society whose recklessness he had often enough tried to restrain, within the narrow compass of the little State in which he was Minister of Finance? Only the physician who has seen how frail is the organism will be quick to recognize the threatening symptom.

In the fourth year of the Revolution Goethe was a witness to the first defeat of a paid army by a voluntary national force. Stunned by an event which had seemed beyond the bounds of possibility, the Generals and officers were sitting round the camp-fires on the evening of the lost Day of Valmy, and apprehensively discussing the situation. Finally they turned to the civilian—after all, he was an author, a thinker; perhaps he would be able to say something encouraging. Then, among the uniforms, Goethe spoke out; and he said: "Here and now begins a new historical era, and you can all say you have been in it!"

Goethe's answer was equivalent to a deed; and as in a long life he was but seldom called upon for immediate action, that answer, thus and then enunciated, is unique in his career. A defeated man (or at any rate a man on the defeated side), the friend and Minister of a defeated ruler, by position, education, and prejudices a Royalist—and instead of an imprecation or some facile prophecy, an electric intuition! This was no cannonade, yet the irresistible flash of the idea had something in it of the cannonade. And it did flash upon the conquered men as might the



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crucifix appearing among clouds of smoke in place of a tattered standard; so that while he destroyed their self-confidence, he instilled into them the deeper trustfulness of those who are the instruments of destiny. And all in a few words, struck out at a moment's notice on the night of defeat!

Those are the two visions of the seer.

The observer, too, stood awed and penetrated—for Goethe did once actually *see* the Revolution. A year after Valmy his position was reversed; he was on the winning side. Mainz, in which the Jacobins had let themselves be invested, had fallen; and from a window of the re-conquered town Goethe watched the tragic exit of the defeated French, who were permitted to march out to the strains of the Marseillaise. He felt it as a poet would: "That Revolutionary Te Deum always has something mournful and foreboding about it, no matter how arrogantly it is played; but this time they took it very slowly indeed, to suit the funereal pace of their horses. It was moving and terrible—a most poignant sight, as the horsemen, tall haggard men of a certain age, with faces that matched the music, rode past. Individually one might have compared each of them to Don Quixote—taken together, they were highly impressive."

And when, right before the Duke's tent, some infuriated citizens were preparing to lynch a departing Jacobin, Goethe stepped forward imperiously, saying they had no right to visit their sufferings on individuals. The Republicans had free egress; God and the authorities would judge them. And he pacified the mob.

But though in presence of the conquered he thus boldly took their side, because the question was one of sheer humanity, it was not so easy to see clear when hampered by his official position. When in Jena at this time there was a rising of students, because troops to the number of fifty had been drafted into the town to keep order, Goethe, in his capacity of Minister of Education, showed a very unusual violence of feeling. But furious though he was

with each individual rebel, it was to him that everyone looked for the most conciliatory measures. He undertook to negotiate between the troops and the students; finally the troops were withdrawn. And he was so enthralled by the many " interesting scenes " that at moments he regretted being obliged to carry out his plans for a proposed journey.

So powerfully did the measureless, the lawless, fascinate the daemon in Goethe, once he was obliged to look it in the face. But his imagination, too, was gripped by the vastness of this vast movement. In his *Aufgeregten* he makes the Magistrate envy a Countess, who has returned from Paris, her good fortune in having been a spectator of the mightiest performance that the world had ever beheld. " A witness of the blissful intoxication which fell upon a great nation in the moment of first feeling itself free and unshackled." To the Countess's sceptical rejoinder the Magistrate replies: " To blunder in a great cause is always more praiseworthy than to be right in a small one." It is as though we heard a distant echo of the Shakespeare speech at Strasburg, twenty years ago.

Ere long political instinct warned him that the ferments abroad were spreading to Germany. It vexed him to see, in his friends' houses on the Rhine, the busts of Mirabeau and Lafayette among the Lares and Penates. These friends had been in Paris, had seen the two great men act and heard them speak; and they had been, " as Germans are unfortunately apt to be, stirred to imitation, and that at a time when anxiety about the left bank of the Rhine has been transformed into a genuine peril." He was angry to find his compatriots playing with ideas which would prepare a similar fate for Germany, to hear high-minded men propounding fantastic hopes, without any real knowledge of themselves or the situation. Many of his friends were for the Revolution—Herder, Knebel, Wieland, and others such as Kant and Fichte, Klopstock, Bürger, Stolberg; " all running about with bellows in their hands—when, as it seems to me, they had better be

looking for cold-water jugs." When Fritz von Stein praised a Hamburg merchant-prince who had joined the Reds, Goethe said angrily that the Marseillaise would not sound well at the groaning dinner-table of a rich man!

As soon as he began to reflect like a prudent man, the trend of his judgment was all in favour of order, and against the upheaval. He had from of old believed in the genius, not in the mob; in the star, not in the supers—yet had striven to subordinate himself, when sharing in the government of the country. And now, in a mood of ironic reminiscence, he demanded the same from others:

> Alle Freiheitsapostel, sie waren mir immer zuwider:
> Willkür suchte doch nur jeder am Ende für sich.
> Willst du viele befrein, so wag es, vielen zu dienen,
> Wie gefährlich das sei, willst du es wissen? Versuch's![1]

Goethe knew that, as regarded his own monarch, he was a Monarchist. This second motive for his aloofness from the Revolution derived from a fundamental trait in him—that gratitude which was the simplest expression of his devotion. Because the man upon whom (for all his critical independence of feeling) he must always look as his benefactor was a Royalty, Goethe could support no anti-Royalist movement; and that was why he hoped the Revolution would be confined to France, where he could contemplate it coolly.

His heart had been always, and his plans had been at first, in favour of the lower classes; in critical moments he had never taken his stand with the rulers, with whom he was the sought rather than the seeker. But Goethe was always for evolution, and now he had to suffer the reaction against his democratic influence—to see the freedom of the Press, of thought, endangered; to see Fichte's and

[1] Always obnoxious to me was every apostle of freedom:
Each was solely intent on doing himself as he willed.
Wouldst thou emancipate peoples, begin by attempting to serve them.
Wouldst thou learn what the risks, waiting that servitor? Try!

Hufeland's lectures in Jena frowned on by the neighbouring States, the Jena literary journal prohibited in Prussia. Force, it seemed to him, would never be efficacious towards the order which he desired.

For love of order—a third principle of his being—made him shrink from chaos and anarchy. " It is part of my nature, once for all. I had rather commit an injustice than suffer disorder." That this was no mere pedantry, resembling that of his father, the whole structure of his character goes to prove—indeed, the twenty-five years since in Leipzig he had seemed to be possessed with the idea of destroying himself and his genius, knew no more ardent purpose than that of combating the daemon which urged him to irresponsible violence, clouding his judgment and betraying his highest aims. Only a man who felt that himself and his work were no less powerfully menaced by the perils of spiritual anarchy, could at times have displayed such vehement antagonism towards an international movement whose vastness could in other moments overwhelm his imagination.

Just then Goethe was making an effort to master the events as a dramatist. In the two short plays already alluded to, as well as in the *Erzählungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* (*Tales of German Emigrants*), he attempted the satiric vein; in his *Märchen*, the symbolic; and later in the pastoral of *Hermann und Dorothea*, and the classic *Natürliche Tochter*, the idyllic and tragic. Now he was writing *Die Aufgeregten* (*The Terrorists*); and in that, by his own admission, he set forth his political confession of faith for the men of his time.

In this comedy, so deft as to be among the most valuable of Goethe's fragments, a doctor, a magistrate, and a bailiff instigate the peasants to end a lawsuit by violence. This lawsuit has been dragging on, between the lord of the manor and the Imperial Chamber, for years; and, inspired by Parisian models, these lesser revolutionaries defend

their rights with bullets. Types of the aristocrat, the bourgeois, and the peasant are presented with the utmost impartiality; and there is delightful art in the way they are made to understand one another when brought into contact, and yet are never allowed to pass the bounds of pure comedy.

At the very end of his life, Goethe said he could still sign the Countess's views—they had been his own at the time. " I was rewarded with all sorts of charming epithets which I had better not recapitulate. . . . Moreover, I was profoundly convinced that no great revolution has ever been the fault of the people, but of the Government. Revolutions are quite impossible while the Government is steadily just and steadily vigilant, so that it meets the people's desire for timely ameliorations, and does not oppose them until it is obliged to yield to pressure from below."

This practical realism is a summary of Goethe's political attitude during the Revolutionary epoch.

For realism was now his guiding principle, and never more markedly than in these years. " Generally speaking," says Carl, one of the German Emigrants, " it seems to me that every phenomenon as well as every fact is interesting only for its own sake. To explain it, or relate it to other events, is usually no more than an amusement of the mind, and we are taken in by it—as, for example, by scientists and historians. But an isolated action or event is interesting not because it is explicable or probable, but because it is true." This paradoxical gibe, which so transparently masks the author of the speech, does indicate what was at the bottom of Goethe's mind. To his old friend Stolberg he declared, in resolute opposition to the other's fanatical propaganda, that he clung to the teaching of Lucretius and believed that life could suffice for all our pretensions. The yearnings which in his youth he had perhaps too fondly cherished, he now did his utmost to combat; yearning " was not fit for man, could not suffice him; and so his quest was for complete temporal satisfaction."

But just because the ebullient Faustean mood was rare with him, now that he sought a stoical composure, he seems to take his stand with Mephisto when, in one of the two new dialogues between them, he makes the latter reason cynically with Faust:

MEPHISTO.

Das will Euch nicht behagen.
Ihr habt das Recht, gesittet Pfui zu sagen.
Man darf das nicht vor keuschen Ohren nennen,
Was keusche Herzen nicht entbehren können.[1]

In the practical sphere, too, the middle-aged Goethe began to oppose the mysticism which had tinged his youth, and was to tinge his old age. He prevented the establishment of a Masonic lodge in Jena—indeed, he induced a colleague there to lecture on the chaotic state of the secret sciences, and make a simultaneous attack in print, so as to proclaim open hostility " between ourselves and the fools and knaves."

And following the law of Goethe's development, which always curved upwards in a spiral, the scepticism of the Leipzig student was now, after twenty-five years, resuscitated—only with loftier motives and on a higher plane. " The rest will be, and is welcome to be," (so he wrote from camp) " as it is written or not written in the stars." But he did not fail to see that he was in danger of becoming a fatalist, and it was thus that he summarized his destiny:

Götter, wie soll ich euch danken ! Ihr habt mir alles gegeben,
Was der Mensch sich erfleht ; nur in der Regel fast nichts.[2]

[1] MEPHISTO.

You'll not permit such jesting ?
Your right to cry me shame is past contesting.
We should not name to ears of chaster brothers
What their chaste hearts insist on, like the others.

[2] Gods, of my thanks am I debtor ? Yea, ye have given me all things
Asked of men at your hands. Yet is it naught, of a truth.

With this strange two-edged thanksgiving he turned to his gods in the bitter-sweet weeks at Venice; and how unmystical his feeling then was he once indicated. It appeared, he said, that he was thought to take the most transcendental things in too earthly a sense; yet the gods of the Greeks were not enthroned in the seventh or tenth heaven, but on Olympus, and it was not from sun to sun, but more probably from mountain to mountain, that they took their one gigantic stride!

This very earthly faith, which was a quasi-scepticism, is nowhere more cynically set forth than in Mephisto's words, when Goethe—at the conclusion of the second new dialogue—seems to close the case for himself in these lines:

> Und hätt' er sich auch nicht dem Teufel übergeben,
> Er müsste doch zu Grunde gehn![1]

This glacial frame of mind leads to observation, compromise, sociability; but being entirely egotistic, is apt to make intercourse with others only a deeper loneliness. In this way Goethe's attitude towards sociability and seclusion took a new aspect. In the preceding decade he had more and more resolutely withdrawn from social life, that he might find himself; now he resorted to it again, that he might lose himself. The sense of being oppressed by numbers who were harmful to his productive energies or his moments of insight, had driven him to isolate himself; now he was driven back into society by a sense of sterile loneliness.

Disillusioned with the austere schooling to which, under Charlotte's goads, he had submitted at thirty—in the belief that it would lead to an harmonious organization of his nature, and for that hope renouncing social life—he was now, at forty, taking a wider range. In Charlotte's day his thin pale face, his absent look, together

[1] And even though he ne er had bargained with the Devil,
He must at last have come to grief!

with what was mirrored in his poetry, had betrayed so much to the world that he was driven to seclude himself; but now he had found a mask, a bearing, a manner which enabled him to move as it were incognito in society. He who for so long had stimulated those around him by the mysterious element which glowed within his breast, now constrained himself to frozen contemplation, unapproachable even by the critical sense. The " Here and Now " of the classic form of life became his ideal: " I was leading a rather unconscious sort of life, from day to day as it were. . . . I developed an idiosyncrasy, which was that I never speculated about anyone who happened to be expected or anywhere I happened to be going, but let things make their own unanticipated impression upon me. . . . In much the same way I never cared what personal effect my presence or way of thinking might have upon other people, for I often found that I aroused quite unexpected liking or disliking, and sometimes both at once."

It was inevitable, then, that Goethe should begin to strike other people as a prig, an oddity. In the field, with his stiff bearing, serious expression, long hair, " streaming like the wool on a distaff," his effect was provincial, disconcerting, haughty. Strangers who brought letters of introduction to him at Weimar were dismayed by the absent-mindedness that would suddenly overtake their host, and astonished at the way he would unexpectedly leave the rooms of other people. Keen observers testify that he often made faces; and nobody could understand how it was that this master of language, so accustomed to society, often seemed at a loss for a word, and had to be helped out.

But an intelligent official, who made friends with him on a journey, perceived why it was that Goethe was never animated unless he was in a genuinely friendly atmosphere. He saw that Goethe was incapable of small-talk, and yet could not very well avoid it with strangers; while, once he was on intimate terms, his ideas came thronging to his

lips. Like an algebraist, he reckoned in quantities, not numbers. At Münster, where the tone of society was devout, he felt a personal sympathy which made him give and enjoy the tolerance that best befits human intercourse; and to a Bishop, who was also a man of the world, he seemed at once friendly and aloof: "He is a very unhappy man, and must be perpetually dissatisfied with himself."

Of these very years, when he travelled so much and saw so many more people, Goethe himself said afterwards that his need for human intercourse had diminished, his decisive trend towards natural philosophy having made him more self-centred than ever. "I could find no master, and no fellow-students, and had to depend on myself for everything. I should have spent my time all alone in the solitude of the woods and gardens, in the obscurity of darkened rooms, if a happy domestic relation had not had its soothing and refreshing effect upon me during that strange period of my life." His life, he said, was a mystery even to his closest friends; they could not imagine how any man could be so aloof as he was then, and had been for a long time.

For in these years his duality again became strongly apparent. It was now—in the *Emigrants*—that he first launched the idea of the two souls, which not until later, in the mouth of Faust, was to become the watchword for antithetical natures. Not until now had he found the philosophical authority for his first principle—from Kant's physics it leaped at him that attraction and repulsion were inseparable from the nature of matter, and from this he deduced "the essential duality of all substance."

This characteristic of his own nature he now stated afresh. Since the presentation of Tasso and Antonio, ten years earlier—since that attempt to take the measure of, and express, himself—he had shaped no other dialogue of self-communion. Now the old voices, which fifteen years ago had died away, broke out afresh in the antiphonies of

Faust and Mephisto—nay, their two new dialogues were the first real expression of the two conflicting forces, for in the original *Faust* they spoke (except in two brief passages) only of the immediate predicament, that of Gretchen.

But the new scenes, written at forty, and irrelevant to the drama, display more arrestingly than any others the mighty to-and-fro of the pendulum which swung within the soul of Goethe. So subjective are these scenes, so entirely is any dramatic disguise stripped from them, that Faust—in the fragment—begins in the middle of a sentence, and Mephisto suddenly appears for no reason at all! These passages must be read as the hieroglyphic of his soul, and nothing more. The following instance will suffice:

FAUST.

Ich fühl's, vergebens hab' ich alle Schätze
Des Menschengeists auf mich herbeigerafft.
Und wenn ich mich am Ende niedersetze,
Quillt innerlich doch keine neue Kraft.
Ich bin nicht um ein Haarbreit höher,
Bin dem Unendlichen nicht näher.

MEPHISTO.

Mein guter Herr, Ihr seht die Sachen,
Wie man die Sachen eben sieht;
Wir müssen das gescheiter machen,
Eh' uns des Lebens Freude flieht.
Was Henker! Freilich Händ' und Füsse
Und Kopf und Hintrer, die sind dein—
Doch alles, was ich frisch geniesse,
Ist das drum weniger mein?[1]

FAUST.

The treasures of the mind that I have hoarded,
Now I possess them, seem an idle show;
I count them up at last, yet am accorded
Nothing of soul-revivifying glow.
Not by a hair's-breadth have I risen higher,
No nearer to the Infinite Desire.

Here we are listening to the quintessential dialogue that persisted in Goethe's breast; between forty and forty-five it was incessantly renewed. It explains all the vertiginous images which made the man a puzzle to his contemporaries, and to posterity.

This is the nadir of his battle for harmony. It is the climax of his self-analysis. And, beyond yea or nay, it is the deadlock.

It is as though the solitary were aching for a human voice.

MEPHISTO.

My dear good sir, the view you mention
Answers to that which all men hold.
Life needs more delicate attention,
Joys must be caught ere yet we're old.
Why, you have hands and feet, deuce take it!
And head and hind-parts, as I see—
Use them; your sport will never make it
Less of a sportive world for me.

END OF VOLUME I



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