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GOETHE

THE HISTORY OF A MAN



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GOETHE

The History of a Man

by

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GOETHE

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CHAPTER IX

PROTEUS

. . . Because my existence seems to be infinitely subdivided.

IN a large bleak well-lit room some hundred young men are standing in a row, heels together, heads and bodies very upright, for before them looms the stern and fateful figure of their aged ruler, the Duke of Wurtemberg. He is about to present the prizes to the students of his Military College. Behind and beside him hovers a semicircle of Court-officials, exchanging whispered remarks, and there are some guests as well—the Duke's young cousin of Weimar, with his friend the author and Minister. The Duke has been praising the zeal and ability displayed by some of the candidates, and has just received a list from the Instructor. He reads out the names of the most distinguished students, who approach him in turn; and then, with a look which has more of admonition than approval about it, he presses a prize into the right hand of each. The recipients thank him mutely with the prescribed gesture, anxiously observant of his face, for he inspires them with awe.

There is one, and only one, who does not gaze into the master's face, who hears nothing, does not even see the winners of that reward which he would so much like to win himself. His eyes are riveted on the form of the visitor who stands a little in the background, sombrely attired. That silent man—as silently this other seeks to fathom

him. So that's what a poet looks like, when he's famous and full of honours! No more dazzling, no grander, than that? He is pale and thin, something like his Werther.... Now he has turned his wide, penetrating gaze on me, and now—if I could only hold it with my own, if I could only rush into his arms, and cry "*Et in Arcadia ego!*" But arrogant you are; you do not look into my soul as should a poet, you do not dream of what is pulsing through my veins.... Now you are bowing before the Duke, who has expressed a desire to speak with you; you're smiling and nodding; you are the servant of Princes, a mere courtier, after all. How I hate them all! And you too—you who have been false to your genius! Your pallor is that of ennui, your thinness that of dissipation. No, you are not a poet, any more....

"Friedrich Schiller!" the Duke calls from his list. The youth awakes from his dream, steps forward, much embarrassed, plants the prescribed kiss on the hem of the master's coat, and returns to the ranks. He might be walking in his sleep.

"A book!" he is thinking now. "You press a book into my right hand? O Duke, some day I mean to press a book upon your heart that will turn it to stone! So this is your prize? And I am twenty years old. When I'm thirty, like that man there, I intend that a prize made of evergreen leaves shall be pressed upon my brow, and *he* shall see the nation give it me!"

Eight years later, on a tranquil evening in August, Schiller is sitting with a glass of Rhine-wine before him in Goethe's *Gartenhaus*. He has left the military college behind him, he has travelled and wandered, known poverty, known glory, but the vision of Goethe has persisted through it all—of Goethe standing there, so taciturn, and never for a moment dreaming that genius was being awarded a prize under his very eyes. Then he had come to Weimar, and the intellectuals had received him with open arms; but where was the man whom the visitor, with his admiration and his envy, his grudge and his reverence,

his curiosity and his scepticism, at last might have put to the proof? Goethe was then domiciled at Rome, and only his house was to be seen, and only his *Gartenhaus* at that, for it was there that Goethe's friends had assembled on his birthday, inviting the new poet to be present. . . . So Schiller clinks glasses with Knebel to the proprietor's health, in the little house where Goethe had lived for six years; Schiller drinks Goethe's health, the absent Goethe's —and it is mid-summer.

A queer mixture—what he hears about the eccentric at Weimar. Some are hostile and speak ill of him; a few are enthusiastic and speak well; and these few are undoubtedly the best people there. The Mistress of the Horse at the Court of Rudolstadt, her daughters, the Lengefelds (Schiller's most distinguished acquaintances)—don't they all speak admiringly of Goethe's genius? But their friend, that Frau von Stein . . . his reputation has already suffered from her acerbities. Many an official in Weimar purses up his lips when the visitor asks about Goethe. How long does he mean to stop away, what can he be doing? Anyhow, he gets his quarter's salary regularly from the Treasury. And once more Schiller feels the old resentment. " What luck the fellow has, what an easy time of it, while the rest of us have such a struggle! Is he a bigger man? No; but he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, and so he was better educated; he's lucky, that's all, and ten years older too! " And with tongue and pen he joins in the aspersions that he hears everywhere on Goethe.

When Goethe later returns, in the following June, Schiller's curiosity reaches its climax. " I am impatient to see him; few mortals have interested me so strongly "; and he bids his friends " say as many flattering things as possible." Soon Frau von Stein comes to visit the Lengefelds in the country; and from the lips of this lady, who must know, Schiller hears nothing but cold depreciatory remarks about the home-comer. " O my prophetic soul! " he thinks—but then he comes across a copy of *Iphigenie*,

reads it again, and "it gave me a very delightful day, though I had to pay for my pleasure by the overwhelming conviction that I could never produce anything in the least like it."

But anyhow—won't he come to call upon me? And (how completely mistaken!) Schiller writes to his friend: "Goethe would have visited me if he had known how near I was to him, when he was passing through to Weimar. We were within an hour of each other." You will be within a few minutes of each other, Friedrich Schiller—and yet he will not look at you!

For only a few weeks later, on a brilliant Sunday in September, when people could still spend the day in the open air, they meet at a nobleman's country-house. The Herders are there, so is Frau von Stein.

"At last I can tell you something about Goethe," writes Schiller to his friend Körner. "My first look at him was rather destructive of all I had heard about his charm and personal beauty. He is of middle height, holds himself stiffly, and walks stiffly too. He looks reserved, but his eye is very expressive and animated, and one watches eagerly for its kindling glances. Though he looks stern enough, there is something very kind and sweet about his expression. . . . We were soon introduced, and he was very easy to get on with. Of course it was a big party, and everyone wanted to speak to him, so I couldn't be much alone with him or talk about anything but commonplaces. . . . I doubt that we shall ever become very intimate. Many of the things which still interest me, many of my hopes and wishes, are to him past experiences; he is . . . too far in front; we can never meet as fellow-travellers, so to speak. . . . His world is not my world; our outlooks seem to be essentially different. . . . Time will tell, however."

And that is all? A chat with Goethe about the Neapolitans and other Italian matters? A gay Sunday-party, in the company of ladies who are his friends or his enemies—and yet the stranger had proudly supposed that this was to be the historic day when Schiller and Goethe had looked

one another in the face for the first time! How little has he seen through Goethe's mask—scarce more than that he wears one. He is mortified because Goethe did not draw him apart, or say one word about the link between them. But his self-confidence comes to the rescue, telling him not to be distressed, and he measures himself with the other, informs his friend, "We are too different ever to come together"—but hastens to add that "time will tell."

Time went on, and Schiller was still waiting. . . . When on that Sunday he had vainly hoped for a personal word from Goethe, his review of *Egmont* was in print—one might say, his attack on *Egmont*. Well that it was written but not yet published—so that the two men could exchange their first handshake without nervousness on one side and wounded vanity on the other. Soon enough Goethe was to read into that review the general atmosphere which surrounded his return. Schiller grudgingly saw in Goethe the darling of the gods, who conquered the world without fighting it; Goethe grudgingly saw in Schiller the usurper of the Muses' realm, who thought that he could conquer *them* without a struggle. His own twenty years of wrestling with the chaotic in the service of form, his desperate search for the gold that lay in the daemonic depths of him—that was what Goethe had to see arraigned, not only abroad but at home; for this young man was beginning to re-inspire the Germans with the chaotic ideal. And he was to make friends with him? Even if he could manage not to hate him, his ideals would still be obnoxious.

But Schiller, for whom Goethe's ideals had always been inspiring, if uncongenial, *was* beginning to hate him personally. From October onwards he spent the whole winter in the same little town with him, living round the corner, so to speak, consorting with his friends, frequently seeing Knebel and Moritz—but never a sign from Goethe, nothing but a polite deadlock, on the one or two occasions that they did meet. And Schiller was getting desperate.

He had to listen by the hour to Moritz, reading eulogies on Goethe; and the more he pumped out about Goethe from this colleague of his enemy's, the more Schiller writhed. When Moritz returned to the stately abode where *he* was at home and where Schiller might not even set foot, and thence came back to Schiller, the latter was always hoping to hear that Goethe had "said something, the other day, about *Don Carlos*." Through all his antipathy pierced the desire to be judged as a poet by that poet —though it were to be condemned.

Goethe would neither give judgment nor even speak. All he wanted was to get Schiller out of the place. Already he seemed to see people cautiously pointing him to the new dramatist, and it dismayed him. On his return, he had found his friends changed; they were listless, evasive, and he did not intend to have a rival forced on him in that way. For Goethe, in whose work and projects Schiller felt an ardent if reluctant interest, took not the faintest interest in Schiller's art. To get him out of the town, he set up a new professorship in Jena for the poet. And he was in so frantic a hurry with this subtle scheme that he caused Schiller to be approached in December; and when Schiller agreed, Goethe obtained the Duke of Gotha's consent the very next day! Together with the official offer, Schiller was informed by letter that he might make all his arrangements—it was as good as settled. Schiller was now obliged to go and thank him. "Meanwhile I paid a call on Goethe. He has taken any amount of trouble about this business, and seems to be very much interested in what he believes to be to my advantage."

A man of the world, with some knowledge of human nature—can Schiller have failed to perceive his rival's motive? Did he not see that it was with the Weimar Minister that he held converse, and that that Minister was careful not to set foot in the illimitable region which was for both their spiritual home? So fervent was his desire to win over the One and Only that in those days his penetrating insight was obscured.

And there was something else to obscure it, upon which Goethe had likewise reckoned, basing his attitude to Schiller on that very circumstance. After ten years of a distressful, uncertain, nomadic existence, Schiller now, at thirty, was anxious for official recognition—wanted a position, settled means, a house; wanted, in short, that repose from external anxieties which would further his intellectual aims. It is true that with the Lengefeld sisters, who were simultaneously the recipients of his confidences, he assumed a pathetic attitude of "heroic resignation," saying that the appointment had been "forced down his throat," that he would like to draw back, and praising "golden freedom." As a matter of fact, since he was not yet officially appointed, he could at any moment have drawn back—but he simply did not want to, for to his friend Körner he confessed that he was very glad indeed of the post. He wanted to cast anchor; and while trying to get out of his love-affair with the brilliant Frau von Kalb, he was looking out for a rich and well-born wife, for his heart was set on having money and standing at long last.

"That fellow, that Goethe is always in my way," he now cried frankly to his friend, and made no concealment of his grudging envy for a destiny which had made it so easy for "that fellow" to obtain such incomparable advantages. Indeed, before ever he went to Jena he poured forth all the passionate mixture of love and hatred with which Goethe had filled him: "The idolization of Goethe which Moritz keeps up—and which goes so far that his most mediocre productions are regarded as canonical, and every other kind of literary work is consigned to outer darkness—has somewhat restricted my intercourse with him.... To be often in Goethe's company would make me miserable. Even with his nearest friends he is never for a moment really spontaneous, he won't expand on any subject whatever; in fact, I believe him to be extraordinarily egotistical. He has the knack of fascinating people, and gaining their hearts by small as well as great

attentions, but he always manages to keep apart from them. His kindness is well known, but he must always be as a god, he never gives *himself*—and that seems to me a consequential... sort of attitude, designed in reality for the satisfaction of his self-love. People ought not to let a man of that kind domineer over them. It makes him quite detestable to me, though I love his intellect with all my heart and think highly of him. I look upon him as one might upon a pretentious prude, whom one must get with child so as to humiliate her socially. It is a most peculiar mixture of love and hatred that he has inspired in me—a feeling unlike any other, something like what Brutus and Cassius must have felt for Caesar. I could destroy his intellect, and yet go on loving him.... His brain is now at its best, and his opinion of my work is, so far as I know, more hostile than favourable. And as I care most, at bottom, to hear the truth about myself, he of all men whom I know is the one who could best do me that service. So I intend to surround him with my spies, for I myself will never ask him a single question on the subject."

Never did Schiller so define his feeling towards Goethe as in this tempestuous letter, which indeed reveals little about Goethe, but much about Schiller—with his literary integrity, his artistic incorruptibility, his reverence for the great and the beautiful, and at the same time his ambition, his jealousy; and in the image of the pretentious prude, his passionate and virile craving to conquer the thing he loved. He never afterwards wrote for Goethe in so fiery a strain as here he writes against him; and this hostile temper obscured his perception of character. True, Schiller never at any time entirely revised this most mistaken view of what Goethe really was, but there are cordial words of tardy recognition for the unselfishness he did come to appreciate, despite Goethe's coldness of manner. At this particular moment Schiller saw no deeper into Goethe's soul than all the world did—and for a century afterwards, even most Germans.

In a year and a half Schiller was sitting—a married man and a professor, son-in-law of a Thuringian nobleman, honoured by students, *savants*, and writers—in his tasteful house at Jena. His wife had been known to Goethe from her childhood, Schiller himself frequently met him at the houses of common friends, so there is nothing to surprise us in Goethe's having gone (it is uncertain whether only once or on several occasions) to Schiller's house. The conversation, reports Schiller, soon turned on Kant. "Goethe is quite incapable of taking a firm stand about anything. His view of philosophy is entirely subjective. . . . Generally speaking, his methods are too sensuous for me—too tactile. But his intellect is on the alert in every direction, striving to construct a synthesis for itself—and so I consider him a great man. In other respects he can be silly enough. He is growing old; and woman's love, against which he has so often blasphemed, seems to be getting its own back. I fear he is about to make a fool of himself, and suffer the usual fate of an elderly bachelor. His girl is a Mamsell Vulpius—she has a child by him. . . ."

Schiller's position was steadily improving. Two years later—it was no longer to be avoided—Goethe produced *Don Carlos* at his Court-theatre, but the coolness between them persisted. For six long years Goethe never said or wrote one recorded word about Schiller! He afterwards declared: "I refused every overture from persons who were intimate with us both. . . . His essay on *Anmuth und Würde* (*Charm and Dignity*) was equally little calculated to ingratiate him with me. . . . There were certain acrimonious passages which I could see were intended for me—they displayed my creed in a false light."

Schiller's position went on improving. He was full to the brim with promising schemes. Cotta had perceived a great political journalist, as well as a poet, in him; and now, under his editorship, he founded a monthly literary journal to which Schiller's name, together with generous payment, attracted authors. The two brothers Humboldt, working at Jena in the flush of their youth,

Fichte, and many others, were already at Schiller's disposal when he bestirred himself to net the three big fish—Herder, Kant, and Goethe—in the name of "a group which sets unlimited value on your work."

When Goethe opened Schiller's letter, he knew that to hold back now would do him more harm than it would the new magazine. Prudence counselled him to mount this rostrum; in his reply he congratulated himself on his collaboration "with such fine fellows," and in the rough draft of his answer we see him gradually revising his expressions until they become really cordial.

A month after this letter the two poets met at the Society of Natural Science in Jena—real neutral ground. By chance (as we are pleased to call Providence) they left the hall together. Schiller deplored the mere dabbling in natural science to which a layman felt himself condemned.

Meanwhile they had reached Schiller's house. "Our conversation," reported Goethe afterwards, "tempted me in; I eagerly introduced the subject of the metamorphosis of plants, and showed him what a primitive plant was like. He listened to, and looked at, everything with great interest and remarkable quickness of apprehension, but when I had finished, he shook his head and remarked, 'That is not an experience; it is an idea.' I was taken aback and somewhat annoyed, for our breaking-point could not have been more sharply defined. My ancient grudge raised its head, but I controlled myself and replied: 'I rather like the notion of having ideas without knowing it—and actually seeing them under my eyes!'

"Schiller, who was much shrewder and more tactful than I was, and moreover was more desirous of pleasing than of vexing me, on account of the magazine, retorted in the best Kantian manner; and as my stubbornly materialistic outlook gave occasion for lively argument, we had a pitched battle which ended in a deadlock—neither of us could say he had won. We both considered ourselves invincible. Remarks like the following made me

quite unhappy: 'How can we ever postulate an experience which shall be adequate to an idea? For the essential peculiarity of the latter is that no experience can be congruous with it.'"

When Goethe left the house and walked to his own quarters through the July evening, he said to himself: "Though Schiller regards as an idea what I describe as an experience, the two conceptions must have some quality in common." And went back to Weimar next morning.

One day, soon after their talk, he availed himself of the opportunity of sending back a proof for the magazine to write thus: "Remember me kindly, and be assured that I shall very greatly enjoy a frequent interchange of ideas with you."

Goethe was well aware of the value and significance which the recipient would just then attach to every one of those words—and it was in statesmanlike fashion that Schiller treated the inestimable utterance. As Goethe was away from home, he let four weeks elapse; then he wrote to him—and can we call it a letter? It was a philosophical treatise on the mind of Goethe, of the kind which is publicly promulgated on the death, or possibly on the birthday, of an aged celebrity, but had never before been privately presented to a man in the prime of life—and Schiller's only pretext for offering this unexpected monograph was a preliminary passage in which he said that Goethe's conversation had stimulated what he called the whole mass of his ideas. Schiller wrote thus:

". . . Your unerring intuition possesses, and possesses in much greater abundance, everything for which analysis laboriously searches, and it is only because you possess it as a whole that your own abundance is hidden from you. . . . Minds like yours, for this reason, seldom know how far they have penetrated, and how scant is their need to borrow from philosophy, which can but learn from them. . . . Long since, though from afar, I began to follow the operations of your intellect, and to observe with ever-

renewed admiration the path you had marked out for yourself. You are searching for a first principle in Nature, but you are doing this in the most arduous of all ways. . . . From the simple organism you have climbed, step by step, to the more highly evolved, and now your effort is to construct genetically the most complex of all—the human being—from the materials implicit in all Nature. And by using Nature's methods to reconstruct him, you seek to penetrate the mystery of his technique. A great and truly heroic conception. . . . You can never have hoped that your life would suffice for the attainment of such an aim, but merely to set foot on such a path is grander than to reach the end of any other—and your choice is like that of Achilles in the Iliad between Phthia and immortality. . . .

" This is how I see the course taken by your intellect, and whether I am right or wrong, yourself best knows. But what you can scarcely know (because genius is always the greatest of mysteries to itself) is the beautiful accordance of your philosophical instinct with the clearest deductions of speculative reason. . . . It is true that the intuitive intellect is solely concerned with the individual form, and the speculative as exclusively with the species. But if the intuitive intellect is that of a genius intent on discerning the law of necessity in the empirical world, its creations will always be individuals, but will display the characteristics of species; while if the speculative intellect is that of a genius and does not lose sight of the experience which it seeks to transcend, its creations will be of the nature of species, but will possess the element of personality and relate themselves to material substance.

" But I perceive that I am in the act of writing a treatise instead of a letter . . . and should you fail to recognize your own aspect in this mirror, I beg you earnestly not therefore to reject it." Follows an enquiry whether *Wilhelm Meister* may appear in the magazine. " My wife, together with my friends, send kind remembrances, and I remain most respectfully, Your obedient servant,

" F. SCHILLER."

A philosopher wrote this letter—and a man of the world. The literary man is out of sight, and so a purely literary recognition of the recipient was irrelevant. Assuredly this was the first adequate summary of Goethe's development; never before had he had, and very seldom was he to have, the opportunity of reading such deep things about himself. But it was the path of the intellect, not the pilgrimage of the human being, that Schiller had there delineated; and for the space of eleven years, to the end of his life, he was never, despite closer contact, to attempt even a sketch of Goethe's character—astonishing in such a psychologist, and only to be explained by the purely intellectual attitude of Schiller towards this relation. (Neither poet ever attempted to portray the other in his literary work.)

But the diplomatic art with which, in this letter, Schiller disguised his real purpose was supremely effective. With what subtlety he treats Goethe as the purely instinctive genius who knows nothing about himself—and yet he was perfectly aware that Goethe knew everything about himself! How haughtily, at the same time, he excludes him from his own realm, that of philosophy! How boldly, and yet with what high reverence, he shows him that his stupendous aim is impossible of attainment! How gently he proffers himself, even though his mirror should present the image of what was not! For this letter was a big bid—with its reverence for the greater man, chivalrously acknowledged as such, but always with the far-reaching corollary that Schiller's reason is in sweet accord with Goethe's intuition, that Goethe is in fact an intuitive, and Schiller a speculative, genius—and that therefore none but Schiller is born to comprehend Goethe.

Goethe had once or twice written this type of letter to his Duke; and just as those epistles had ever, after all the wishes and rebukes, been voluntarily concluded with the formula of obedience, so now Schiller, on closing the door of the Holy of Holies, suddenly and frigidly remained most respectfully his obedient servant.

But in the same moment Goethe re-opened the door. For it was twenty years since . . . nay, never before had he had such a letter! He felt the grandiosity in Schiller's view of him—in what an historic, what an heroic light was he regarded! And in his gratitude he did what he hardly ever (and in these particular years never) undertook to do; for it was he, the ten years older man, who first used the word Friendship. He accepted this courtship as may a beautiful woman, who is aware of the distinction she confers, and refrains from too precipitate and whole-hearted a response to the ardour of a suitor. It is the strangest of betrothal-letters:

" On my birthday—it is my forty-fifth—I could have had no more welcome present than your letter, in which with a friendly hand you recapitulate my existence, and by your sympathy stimulate me to more assiduous and enthusiastic application of my energies." From that conversation he too dated an epoch; it seemed " as if, after such an unexpected encounter, we were bound to go on in each other's company. I have always known how to value the genuine, and very rare, sincerity which is apparent in everything that you have written and done; and by this time I can claim to know something of you through your intellectual production, especially in recent years. . . . All that is of me and in me I shall gladly share with you. For as I have a very lively consciousness that my aim . . . far transcends the measure of our human capacities, I should like to lay it fully before you, and in this way not only be indebted to you, but also perhaps interest you. How great the privilege of your sympathy will be for me, you will not fail to see if, on nearer acquaintanceship, you perceive in me a certain perplexity and vacillation which, though I am very well aware of it, I cannot get over. . . . I hope soon to see a great deal of you, and then we shall talk over many things." The novel, he said, had been delivered to a publisher. " Fare you well, most cordially, and remember me to your circle. Goethe."

He makes it quite clear that his partner in the proposed

marriage of minds will be welcomed as a coadjutor in his realm, and need contribute no more than the said "genuine sincerity," which will be sufficiently valued. But of what Schiller himself actually is, Goethe seems to have no idea at all; for although Schiller's productions are before him and have become very famous, he is here cordially invited to unveil himself to his new friend. There is never a hint at equality.

Nevertheless, Schiller was conscious of victory; and he was right in so far as he had taken Goethe's confidence by storm. His interest (Schiller reflected) would be aroused by deeds. He got rid of his susceptibility, concentrated on the phrase about their going on in each other's company, and extended its application by saying that "we shall keep together for whatever may remain of the journey, and with the advantage that those who travel the latter part of a long road in one another's company always have most to say." In this way he established not only a lifelong friendship, but one by which Goethe was to profit to the end of his career.

Schiller now wrote ardently—much less philosophically than in the first letter of carefully restrained enthusiasm. He alluded to himself in a strain resembling that of a Posa, and while chivalrously affecting to take a back seat, stepped with dignity into his proper place:

"To make much of little is what I need and desire; and when you know something more of my poverty in what is called acquired knowledge, you will perhaps find that in some respects I have not failed to do so.... *You* have a kingdom at your disposal—*I*, only a numerous progeny of concepts.... My mind really works best in the realm of symbols, and so I hover, like a sort of hybrid, between ideas and perceptions.... Commonly the poet in me takes the reins when I mean to philosophize, and the philosopher when I sit down to creative work.... But unfortunately, now that I am beginning to have some idea of my mental powers, and some knowledge of how to use them, my physical energies are threatened by disease....

But I shall do what I can, and when the building finally collapses, I shall at least have saved something from the flames—some right to survive. . . . I confidently lay these confessions before you, and I venture to hope that you will receive them in a spirit of affection."

A fine phrase—that of the poet taking the reins when he means to philosophize! Into what pulsating rhythms he fashions his confession—in this letter one seems to see the pen flying over the paper, while the first had been carefully composed and revised.

It was in a spirit of affection—as the younger man had requested—that Goethe answered these lines, at the same time inviting him to Weimar. Schiller, accepting the invitation, asked only for indulgence towards his delicate health. But as if re-assuming the old mask of pride, he made a point of telling Körner that " he could not well refuse " Goethe's persuasive invitation to stay with him, and that their intercourse would have far-reaching consequences for both; while to his wife he wrote that he heard on all sides " how very much Goethe looks forward to knowing me better." Much more coolly did Goethe inform his friend Meyer that Schiller had a very refreshing effect on his stagnant ideas; and even at the end of three months he was saying dispassionately: " For the present I am a good deal mixed up with Schiller and the Humboldts, and it seems as though we might keep company for quite a while."

This fortnight's stay in Goethe's house took the aspect of an inventory of all the goods which each partner in the marriage of souls could contribute. A programme was drawn up—they were to correspond aesthetically, with a view to further revelations. " We know now, my dearest fellow," wrote Goethe to Schiller on his departure, " from our fortnight's conference, that in principle we are agreed, and that the range of our perceptions, thoughts, and activities sometimes coincides and sometimes approximates, which will be in many ways advantageous for us both." And with this begins their correspondence,

their collaboration in the magazine, and a new grouping of German writers.

When they contracted this alliance—which was to endure, with occasional slight vicissitudes, for nearly eleven years—the allies were aged respectively forty-five and thirty-five. But it was the younger man whom suffering had made pale and fragile; the elder collaborator was sunburnt and vigorous. Schiller was taller, with a spare, lanky figure; Goethe was broad of beam, and now looked more thickset than of yore—he was already beginning to grow stout. Schiller's liquid deep-set eyes looked out from an oval-shaped face; his pale brow was more remarkable for breadth than height, but there was something splendid in its rugged outlines; the colourless but sensuous lips might have belonged to a priest; the straight, short, prominent, hawk-like nose jutted out boldly, imperiously, from the face, and in its curves seemed concentrated all the sensibility of the head. Goethe's head was now tending to squareness; the arch of the brow, above the eye-sockets, was high rather than broad; the long nose, despite its slight obliquity, was almost classical in effect compared with Schiller's; the thin close lips were folded resolutely, but the eye seemed to irradiate the universe with its sombre brilliancy, and make the visible its own. Schiller's handwriting was like a large swift-rushing wave, streaming in creative urgency over the paper; Goethe would form some letters with such care as to make them a work of art in their own convention.

Schiller, the youthful Councillor and courtier, paid great attention to dress. He would order the most expensive materials for his evening clothes, kept open house, had at thirty-eight set up his own carriage and horses (which Goethe had never done till the end of his forties), and in the first year of his marriage he and his wife had never gone so far as Leipzig without valet and maid. He shone in society, and in his Court uniform with epaulettes had actually, in the ante-room, been taken by Mme. de Staël for an officer of high rank. Goethe dressed very

simply, had already given up the peruke and side-curls, scarcely ever went to Court and seldom into society, lived, though a Minister, like a private gentleman, wanted to seem forbidding, said very little indeed. Schiller, accustomed to learn from books rather than from people, a stranger to outdoor life, consumptive and always in dread of haemorrhage, spent much of his time indoors, was in no way athletic, and would sit through the long summer-evenings in a stuffy room, smoking and taking snuff.

Sleepless on most nights, he could never be sure of his mornings; sometimes he did not eat anything before eight o'clock dinner, on his bad days had to stimulate his energies by alcohol, and did his best work when the barometer was low. Goethe depended on its being high, went early to bed and got up betimes, never wrote except in the mornings, would spend whole weeks in his little summer cottage, had resumed his rides and his skating, and between forty and fifty enjoyed his best health. The atmosphere which suited Schiller Goethe declared to be poisonous for *him*, and one day, when the smell of rotten apples rose to his nostrils from his friend's desk, he had to fling the window open lest he should faint.

Schiller, often distracted by his numerous undertakings, was for a time entirely debarred from literary work by his disease. Goethe disposed of his duties and business-affairs as fast as he could, so as to devote himself to study and creative composition. Want of method in the one made public life a burden to him; the other found routine a help. And yet Schiller needed to separate the dream and the business far more than Goethe did, because he made many more worldly plans, and then had carefully to divorce his art from them.

Schiller, at the moment of his collaboration with Goethe —and it is to this moment that our antithesis refers— was in danger of becoming a journalist. He was, in Goethe's words, shaping well as an editor. For his gifted, refined, politically atheistical intellect many proprietors were contending; and Schiller, who wanted power and money,

might possibly, but for his disease and but for Goethe, have entered on that career. Friends of his youth had early seen in him a born diplomatist; Goethe said that he was as great at the tea-table as he would have been in the Council of State. He was good at negotiations, subterfuges, intrigues; and everything of that kind in his dramas is better, and moreover much more relevant and more frequent, than in Goethe's. He was supremely clever at getting hold of the best brains for his magazine, as well as at advertisement; and he enjoyed both activities.

Goethe's gifts were the direct contraries of these. "As a contemplative being, I am a stubborn materialist, so that I am incapable of desiderating anything whatever from the objects I perceive, and the only distinction I can make between them is whether they interest me or not. On the other hand, when it comes to any kind of action, I may say that I am a rabid idealist—I do not enquire into circumstances, but insist that they shall conform to my ideas."

Schiller's spirit of enterprise was not wholly the outcome of his money-making ambitions. The inward will-to-power was also responsible. Goethe, in his old age, seems to point to this. "Schiller," he said to Eckermann, "was much more the aristocrat of our group than I was, and much more cautious about what he said. Yet he had the remarkable good fortune to be accounted a special friend of the people."

Schiller was haunted by the idea of contemporary and posthumous fame, when he sat down to write. What with critiques, attacks, competition, gossip, and party-feeling, his correspondence was immense; and although his only successes were as a dramatist, he was vexed by any journalistic failure—would talk of his blood boiling, and was very deeply wounded when his *Muses' Almanack* was torn to pieces between eulogy and censure. Goethe, who for twenty years had given up trying to please the Germans, answered amusedly in these sage words: "Unless we can be like the heedless sower in the Gospel, who casts

his seed without caring what becomes of it, we ought to have nothing to do with the public."

In the sphere of passion, likewise, Schiller's masterfulness is the antithesis of Goethe's more feminine self-surrender. Schiller had scarcely broken with his mistress before he warned his new love against her, and when the latter became his bride, he sought to make her his obedient pupil. His relations with Frau von Kalb, with the separated wife, Caroline, and her sister Charlotte—respectively his sister-in-law and his wife—were all going on at the same time. As soon as he was married he invited Caroline to live with them; and when she married again he obtained a house and an official position in Weimar for the pair, because he himself lived there. But for all that his relations with his wife were happy—at any rate he called her " dear Mousie " in his letters. Schiller was sensual and domineering in love, Goethe gave himself up, heart and soul—therefore he loved only one woman in all his life, and in the more literal sense he never had two mistresses at a time. To this one woman, it is true, his words were such that when Schiller's widow read Goethe's letters to Frau von Stein, she was startled by their passion, and confessed that Schiller could never have loved like that—" he was really incapable of sheer passion."

The contrast between the literary work of Goethe and Schiller follows naturally from these antitheses. Schiller very cleverly defined it in his allusion to his own self-consciousness and Goethe's spontaneity, but that is only the first element in the problem. Goethe himself, in his old age, traced a connection between Schiller's talent and his arrogant bearing, but melting eyes. He said that Schiller attacked a big subject boldly, but was prone to fluctuate in his treatment as time went on. " He saw the thing from the outside, as it were, and only so. A tranquil inward evolution was not for him."

In those words Schiller's greatness, his limitations, and the difference of his method from Goethe's, are precisely defined. Schiller looked about for his material;

Goethe came across his. Schiller selected; Goethe experienced. If the one was content with allegory, the other expanded everything into a symbol.

The more profoundly Goethe felt this to be his own method, the better could he fathom the contrary one of his friend, who always interested him in the way that a natural phenomenon might have done. "You are really, while you are actually at work, in darkness, and the light can scarcely be said to be in you; but when you begin to reflect, the inward light shines out and irradiates your environment, yourself, and others. With me both processes are fused, and not wholly to the advantage of my work."

The necessary consequence of this was that Schiller was attracted, by temperament and gifts, to the theatre, while Goethe was repelled by it. Schiller genuinely enriched the German stage with eight or nine pieces; Goethe, with his most important dramas, merely irritated his audiences; and while Goethe's plays are only now beginning slowly to be appreciated for their profoundly dramatic qualities, Schiller's, after the space of a century, have not yet lost any of their effectiveness. Tragedy follows tragedy, for humour scarcely finds a place. Schiller makes the very most of his dispassionately selected subject; he gives his *dramatis personae* the highest possible expressiveness—indeed, he even tried to instil his frenzy of passion into Goethe's plays.

Both men, as creative artists fashioning types of humanity, treated parentage and nationality as secondary factors. How Goethe could forget father and mother in the service of his vocation has already been shown. Schiller was very fond of his mother, but lived always at a distance from his parents. We know what Goethe thought of nationalism, and to Schiller he wrote: "Patriotism, as well as personal heroism, has had its day, like clericalism and aristocracy." Schiller, whose material was nearly always of foreign origin, said—in almost identical words—in this thirtieth year of his life: "Patriotic enthusiasm is,

generally speaking, important only for the nations which have had their day; it belongs to the morning of the world. . . . It is a poor, paltry ideal to write only for one nation." Or take this about his public, whom he could not complain of so far as outward enthusiasm went: "The Germans want sensations, and the more commonplace these are, the better they are liked."

Even from their most removed standpoints—those of thinker and observer—they sometimes beckoned to one another. Schiller was carried away by *Wilhelm Meister* (a work so entirely unlike him) because it contrasted so vividly with his own cold philosophy; "for all Nature is pure synthesis, and all philosophy antithesis. The poet is the only authentic human being, and the best philosopher a mere caricature compared with him." So he wrote—and it was precisely then that he again began to turn away from philosophy.

In his philosophical friend Goethe entirely failed to see a purely speculative nature. Indeed, he expressly attributed to him a peculiar mixture of observation and abstract thought; and Schiller himself, speaking of his method of work, once made the strange confession that a musical kind of mood would come upon him, for no particular reason, before he began to write.

But before all and above all, the two minds resembled each other in the purity of their earnest endeavour—nay, with extraordinary unanimity they both, independently of each other, hit upon the same metaphor for that endeavour. For Goethe—as he wrote at thirty in his diary—designed to build up his life like a pyramid; if that should prove to be beyond him, the mere attempt would answer for his earnestness. And, "Every one builds his own pyramid," wrote Schiller in almost identical words at the same age; "even if he cannot achieve the spire, he could assuredly have found nothing better to do."

At these points the curves of their natures approximate. But normally and in general they were poles apart; and to the end of their association Goethe's phrase, after their

first talk, held good—neither was victor, neither felt himself to be defeated. For directly we cease to talk of the degree of genius possessed by each—directly we are concerned with their characters and how these are shown forth in the life and work of both, they must be ranked side by side as equally matched rivals and essentially different men.

Thus—Schiller's desire was to dominate, Goethe's to influence. Schiller never gave himself entirely to any human being, but always entirely to his work; Goethe always gave himself to those who loved him, and only sometimes entirely to his work. Schiller hammered at his composition with cold intensity; Goethe modelled it with a loving hand. For Schiller life came second to work —that was why he went about his enjoyment in so awkward a manner; for Goethe life was the radical element in work—that was why his existence flowered with such seeming spontaneity. Schiller always reflected when he felt; Goethe was always observant, even while reflecting. Schiller planted one tree after another; Goethe sowed his seed.

For Schiller could hate as deeply as he could love, and he is the rival of his own heroes, as Goethe is—with the difference that the heroes of Schiller are condemned as evil-principled by their creator, while Goethe's are complex human beings (just as the so-called hero is), "good and bad, like Nature." Only once did Schiller comprehensively delineate himself—as Wallenstein. He believed in the existence of evil, and so it was only the good in himself that he dramatized; Goethe, by harmonizing the equally matched contending energies, sought to elucidate the mystery of his own soul. Schiller wrestled clamorously with the world; Goethe silently with his daemon. Schiller struggled; Goethe grew.

But there is one thing which can cause the figure of Schiller suddenly to take on the softly glimmering patina of a noble bronze, while Goethe's always seems panting to extricate itself from the white marble block. This is,

that Schiller was perpetually conscious of death; and if we did not already know it, we could divine from the sequence of his works that it would terminate in a premature and fiercely resisted death. When Goethe's friend Meyer once met Schiller on the promenade, he wrote that his face was like that of the crucified Christ in a picture—and this was many years before the end. An internal fever drove him onward at an ever more frenzied gallop; it is as though he were crouched, breathless, on a fiery steed, pursued by the black horseman, and glancing behind him every morning to see if his adversary had gained on him once more last night—and so it went on for years. Hence it was that in the last and most fruitful decade of his life, when all his circumstances were propitious, he was irresistibly and perpetually impelled to heap tragedy upon tragedy.

Gravely and helpfully, with sympathetic understanding, Goethe watched that spectacle. *He* was to see his eighth decade; illnesses with him were short, sharp, critical. He believed in life, he shunned tragedy, for death was not his foe—he had lived from the beginning in fond communion with death. For Goethe believed in metempsychosis.

It is thus that the silhouettes of Goethe and Schiller define themselves against the evening horizon of the eighteenth century, at the time when they concluded the pact which, from Goethe's forty-sixth to his fifty-seventh year, was to enrich his life with intellectual companionship. The natures and experiences of both men urged them, though from widely differing impulses, to this association. Schiller had every motive, human and divine, to persuade him; while Goethe, after ten years of intellectual isolation, eagerly caught at a mind which could comprehend his own.

What did Schiller, what did Goethe, gain from that alliance?

Schiller gained a friend.

Failing energies and super-sensitive nerves, lack of

experience in ordinary ways of living, and an unpractical wife, caused him, with his exacting claims upon existence, to look round for help—and what better could he have found than in Goethe's kindness and knowledge of the world! Goethe rented a house in Weimar for him and furnished it, sold him his summer-cottage in Jena, chose carpets for him, asked in August how much wood he should order for the winter; he let Schiller live for several weeks in his *Gartenhaus*, procured quarters in the Palace for him and his wife, offered him money, got a position at the Court of Weimar for his brother-in-law.

Goethe's practical kindliness was inspired by a wholly unselfish heart—as usual, he fondly devoted himself to Schiller, once he had made his choice. "Our lives are so closely intertwined that whatever happens to you, I feel in my own person." When Schiller's father died, at a time when one of his children was seriously ill, Goethe "had not the heart to forsake him in his present state"; for as Schiller seldom went into society, he had few visitors.

And, giving his heart, he enfranchised Schiller's mind. Now, upon eight years empty of poetic work, followed nine in which Schiller wrote six great plays, all his ballads, and a quantity of lyrics—that is to say, his life-work. At first Goethe's productions were more fruitful for Schiller—even when, or even because, they were so foreign to his own method—than any that he wrote himself. *Wilhelm Meister* especially led him (as he confided to Körner) most blessedly away from speculation and towards the concrete. But eventually his conversations with Goethe, pursued through hours and weeks, together with their correspondence, re-awakened his productive energies, and his hope was to distil their quintessence into his succeeding works. None but this intercourse, he confessed, could have so extended his boundaries. If Goethe paid him too short a visit, Schiller would complain that he had not been able to outpour his heart. "I never leave you without having something implanted in me"; and to a woman-friend he

spoke of the most inestimable of all men he had ever met, and the most blessed event of his life.

Above all, Goethe relieved him of any anxiety about the performance of his plays, and not only opened to him a rich stage on which he could see both his old and his new pieces, but also became Schiller's stage-manager and producer. And so the dramatist's most valuable means of instruction was unconditionally at Schiller's disposal for ten years—a stroke of good luck which had scarcely ever fallen to a German author. At the new theatre every fifth night was, at first, a Schiller-night—later, it was every third. *Wallenstein*, *Carlos*, *Maria Stuart* were there, and there alone, more frequently performed than even Kotzebue's popular plays.

The new house was to be opened with *Wallensteins Lager* (*Wallenstein's Camp*). For a year and more Goethe had been discussing the trilogy, scene by scene, with its author; now, as Schiller had written no prologue, Goethe wrote one for him, and other passages were introduced, altered, or rejected. Goethe, alone in Weimar, was solely responsible for the scripts, the music, and the costly dresses. Then Schiller arrived, and the rehearsals proceeded.

In this and subsequent dramas the great antithesis between the two men had a favourable influence (despite several stormy encounters) on dramatic art—for it led to productions in which Schiller's part was, as colleagues testify, to inspire the actors with a sympathetic comprehension of their rôles, and Goethe's to see that everything looked as it should.

Even on the first night of *Wallenstein*, Goethe was writing to the author about a cuirass, a cap, a scarlet cloak. At the same time, after long revision, he wrote an article in a leading journal to tell the Germans what they were to think of the drama. He also, in Schiller's name, offered the trilogy, before it was finished, to the Frankfurt theatre for sixty ducats. All this Goethe did for the author who was definitely putting him in the shade—for the leader of that younger generation which was upsetting all that

he had taught Germany—for Friedrich Schiller, who had attacked him both privately and publicly.

And this period of happiness—as husband, official, author, and dramatist—brought about by Goethe's advice and assistance . . . what was its upshot? So far as the alliance was concerned, a "No" for Schiller. In his moments of insight he felt that he was the second, and always would be; and after reading *Wilhelm Meister* he expressed that feeling in exaggerated terms by saying that after such an aesthetic treat, he could not possibly go on with his own botching.

What did Goethe gain from Schiller?

Firstly, a more secure position, if likewise a contested one. The pages of *Die Horen*, Schiller's magazine, were for him, who had long lacked such an organ, a welcome outlet, an opportunity for bringing much to light which had hitherto been mouldering in his desk; and though he "knew the farce of German authorship inside out," he was seized with the desire to edit a magazine once more. "How long is it," he may have reflected, "since one read manuscripts, wrote reviews, made up numbers? Twenty years? Where are the companions of those days? Merck is dead, Schlosser a recluse, Lavater a monomaniac; only Herder is still near me, but rancour and discontent are making him old before his time."

New names appeared in these pages—Fichte, the Humboldts, the Schlegels; but Schiller surpassed them all in *élan* and initiative. But he seemed over-anxious for publicity, while Goethe demanded complete anonymity for his contributions, if in his position he were to collaborate "freely and gladly."

The *Horen*, one might say, used Goethe as a rallying-point. This made him feel younger, "and moreover it is to be remembered that we get a fine scope when we weld with one hand, and with the other take as full a stretch as Nature permits us."

The great thing that Goethe gained in Schiller was an intelligent listener. Such an one he had always wanted and seldom found; and when found, the other had never been creatively productive, and so had not been able to inspire *him* to productiveness. Frau von Stein was, in that sense, no use to Goethe as an audience—she was merely a receptive vessel, not a light-reflecting mirror. Herder, born to be Goethe's as no other was, had even when teaching him to a great extent destroyed his own great influence—and utterly destroyed it when he was called upon to listen. It was not until the years just before the Italian sojourn that his intellectual friendship with Goethe was an untroubled, tranquil relation.

Now Goethe was finding two more besides Schiller. W. von Humboldt and Meyer were in these years assured by him of his deepest gratitude for their comprehension, just as Schiller was. Moritz he even overestimated, until Meyer came upon the scene. And yet Schiller remains the only man whom Goethe then acknowledged—with Homer and Shakespeare—as the typical artist. Who else, in long private letters, paid such homage to the whole body of a work and showed such understanding of its details, as Schiller did with *Wilhelm Meister*? Even Jacobi had the impertinence, in a captious letter about the book, to refer to certain passages " which at the moment he had not time to look up"!

Schiller was ready to devote months to studying it, " and so, in a loftier sense of the word, deserve the name of your friend. . . . Farewell now, my dear, my honoured friend "—so the finest and longest of Schiller's letters concludes. Only after so much of jealousy had been atoned for was it possible for one writer thus to surrender himself to another. Alien as Goethe's dramas inevitably remained to Schiller—since to accept them would have been to condemn his own—he was stirred by the novels and elegies, where art-forms hitherto unfamiliar to him were provccative of eager aesthetic discussions.

For it was this which made Goethe loud in his praise of

intercourse with Schiller—that no one was so good at solving aesthetic problems; and if, after three years, he thanked Schiller demonstratively for having rejuvenated him and made him a poet again, he said the same thing in quieter, more measured words to their friend Meyer: "My intercourse and correspondence with Schiller, now that I look back upon it, still seems to me of inestimable value."

Goethe's longing for really intelligent criticism was almost entirely satisfied by Schiller. He incessantly demanded a frank and decisive opinion about the various parts of the novel, for even in aesthetic friendships (he said) it was affection alone which saw all the excellence; and it took an incorruptible affection to see, nevertheless, what lapses there were; "and no words I could add would better express the unique position I am in with you, and you alone."

But, despite all this, Goethe had to do without any proof of true friendship. Wholly though *he* gave himself, Schiller was able to separate his heart—which was inherently less capable of personal affection—from his intellect. Never could Goethe have addressed such words to Schiller as, for instance, these to his devoted Swiss friend, Meyer, to whom he confessed (in the third year of his alliance with Schiller): "That we should have found one another is one of the happiest events in my life." Because Schiller's wife—beautiful and amiable in her way, but neither distinguished nor capable—shared, for love of Frau von Stein, in the latter's hatred of Christiane, Schiller was able to spend the happiest decade of Goethe's life in close proximity to him, without having a word to say about Goethe's wife! Resolute to make a social position for himself, this pagan poet of freedom adopted a disapproving attitude, like any Court-parasite, towards their "connection." Else how can we account for the fact that Christiane, whom he knew to be married to Goethe, is scarcely mentioned in the two volumes of Schiller's letters?

When Goethe sent him *Der Neue Pausias und Sein Blumenmädchen* (*The New Pausias and His Flower-Girl*), which was an allegory of Christiane, Schiller did make one allusion to her—but in what words? " I wish you a right good night after a pleasant evening, and may the lovely Muse who watches over you so vigilantly by day be pleased to consort with you in the same, though more material, beauty by night." So coarsely did Schiller touch upon Goethe's love. When Christiane gave birth to a child of Goethe's, Schiller congratulated him in three words without so much as mentioning the mother, and he was equally reserved when the child died immediately afterwards. Again, when in the eighth year of Goethe's friendship with Schiller Christiane once more gave birth to a child: " I have just heard by chance that I have to congratulate you on a happy event in your household. I want to hear this confirmed by yourself.... Remember me very kindly to the little girl, and be assured of my warmest interest."

For weeks Schiller had stayed with Goethe, under Christiane's hospitable care, and after many years she had even been once in his house with Goethe and her boy. Goethe had, in Schiller's company, markedly alluded to his " married state "—but Schiller's coldness went so far that even during their daily intercourse in the small town of Weimar, Goethe did not venture to tell him of the expected or the accomplished event. Finally Schiller wrote that he " had " to congratulate, and mentioned the " little girl." Goethe accepted the designation quite gratefully, though from Schiller it sounded derogatory enough, and answered that the little girl would be very much pleased with his message.

Once more the child slipped out of life, and once more Goethe, who for the first time in six years had again been made a father and had instantly lost his child, was obliged to keep silence with Schiller about an event which most profoundly grieved him.

" Things are not well with us, as you may perhaps have

noticed in me at the opera yesterday;" and when Schiller at last made enquiries, Goethe thanked him: "The mother . . . sends her kindest regards and values your sympathy."

So little did Goethe receive in return for so much done by him for Schiller's wife and children! What worlds of feeling are held in check by the formal phrases—what strange thoughts must have passed through Goethe's mind, amid his domestic joys and sorrows, at the sight of his friend! How entirely Schiller misjudged Goethe's marriage is shown by his expressed regret that Goethe should have been led, by false conceptions of domestic happiness and dread of marriage, into this unfortunate connection, which "he was now too weak and soft-hearted to break off—but, after all, these failings were the defects of his noble qualities." And Schiller was, at this time, finding *his* bliss in domesticity with two sisters! Even aesthetically he would have none of Christiane, for to the fine character of Therese in *Wilhelm Meister*, for whom Goethe's wife was the model, his critical friend could promise but few admirers.

From everything which intimately concerned Goethe in this decade, not only from Christiane, Schiller held aloof. And it is typical that he, who signed himself "Yours ever" to a dozen people, at the best addressed Goethe as his "dear," and on a single occasion as his "loved," friend; while Goethe, infected by this coolness, never got farther than "most valued" friend. Schiller publicly broke with the Schlegels, who at this time were Goethe's admirers and often at his house. With Frau von Stein, despite her rupture with Goethe, he remained intimate. Even after her reconciliation with Goethe, she could actually entrust the manuscript of her pamphlet drama, *Dido*, in which Goethe was caricatured, to this friend for his criticism.

We are in the third year of the poets' alliance. It was at its zenith, letters were flying, visit succeeded visit—at such a time, one would think, Schiller would have felt obliged politely to decline reading this attack of his

woman-friend upon his man-friend, so that he might not seem to take sides in the unmistakably set battle. At any rate, he might have handled it in ruthlessly aesthetic fashion, or at the very least have delicately hinted that the figure of her hero reminded one a little too much of the original in some respects.

Schiller wrote a rhapsody upon it! In a long ecstatic letter he declared that the piece had "interested him inexpressibly, in every respect. Besides the general sense it gives one of a fine, tranquil, mellow, intellectual atmosphere . . . it recommends itself to me, I might say especially recommends itself, by the faithfulness with which a tender, nobly feminine nature—with which indeed our friend's whole soul—is therein depicted. I have read few things, indeed I might almost say I have never read anything, which so clearly and simply, so truthfully and unaffectedly, revealed to me the spirit from which it flowed, and so it has moved me more than I can say. But besides it is so individual and authentic that one might reckon it among the confessions of a noble nature to itself and of itself, and then it is so poetic"—whereupon follows laudation of the style as such. He has heard from his wife, he continues, that the authoress is willing that her work should be copied. Should Goethe too receive a copy, "give me a handsome proof of your friendship, and you shall never regret having presented me personally with this charming poem."

Could an enemy of Goethe's have taken sides more unmistakably? Not only does this great critic declare himself to be in raptures with the style (which happens to be execrable), but he is even more so with the confession, with the threnody so mournfully chanted by "their friend's" soul over its own sorrows, and has never been so moved as by its tones! And in this drama Schiller had just read these words of Ogon, who was Goethe: "Exalted sensibilities are the outcome of a disordered digestion; nothing I have been saying to you [about ideals] applies to me." And his mistress answers him, in the play:

"Once I was deceived in you; but now I see only too plainly, in spite of your beautifully dressed hair and well-made shoes, the little horns and hoofs and other attributes of the Forest-Dweller, and to him no vow is sacred." By this sort of writing Schiller declared he was moved; a few days afterwards he wrote to the original of Ogon: "This absence of yours from Jena seems to me longer than I can say.... And I have missed the most indispensable of all encouragements in my work. Do come as soon as you can.... I shall but the more greedily and thirstily devour every word you say to me.... Kindest regards from us all to you." We read, and silently marvel, asking ourselves: *Was* Schiller Goethe's friend?

What Goethe's heart was deprived of in this intercourse had its origin in Schiller's self-centred nature. What Goethe's intellect had to dispense with belongs rather to his own appointed lot of isolation. Neither Schiller's industry nor his personal inadequacy was the reason for his failing Goethe in the thing that mattered most—Goethe's own nature must bear the blame. Hence it was not the fault of Schiller, but of Goethe's uncharacteristic attempt at an intellectual alliance, if Goethe had unchangeably to stand alone in all the critical moments not only of his daily, but likewise of his intellectual, life. Goethe nowhere attributes any stimulating influence upon any of his works to Schiller, nor did he follow his advice on any essential point.

Their longest and most interesting interchange is concerned with *Wilhelm Meister*. This work, when the alliance began, was about half finished. Other parts were sketched in, and as a whole it was already arranged for, when Schiller's first letter asked for it for the *Horen*. But it was not concluded, and but for Schiller would perhaps have remained a splendid torso. Instead of that, Goethe was constrained to finish it; and Schiller's influence seems to have destroyed the vivacity and colour of these final portions. While they were ostensibly discussing epic composition (as Goethe afterwards confessed to his

interlocutor), he was always thinking of the situations in his novel. The signs of this are only too apparent. With the fifth book began those debates between the two authors —and with the fifth book begin the debates in the novel, too! To give an instance: For the first time a chapter of Goethe's opens with such very unconvincing words as: "One evening the company were arguing as to whether the novel or the drama deserved the preference," whereupon follows a dialectical extract from the correspondence with Schiller.

Two works only seem to owe much to Schiller's influence—the stage version of *Götz*, in which the poetry is a good deal sacrificed to theatrical effectiveness; and that sterile fragmentary *Achilleïs* which was the outcome of theories on material and form. For Goethe was then wandering in a thicket of theories, and he found in Schiller the impassioned aesthete whom he sometimes sought and sometimes merely suffered. It reached such a pitch that Goethe, whose entire work was a mirror for his personality, took pleasure in a mutual adoption of each other's manner for anonymous articles in the magazine; and accounted for this by the egregious argument that "they would both gradually shed their mannerisms, and improve their general style." But when, after five years, his patience gave out and he suddenly resolved to abjure all theories in favour of real work, Schiller stuck to his philosophical outlook, and more insistently than ever proclaimed theory to be the pre-eminent link in the chain.

Nowhere can we more plainly perceive the boundaries of Schiller's sympathy than in the illuminating dialogues of Goethe's old age, where he tries to extend those boundaries as far as possible. "What would have become of me without Schiller's promptings?" asks Goethe; and after such an exclamation one at least expects to hear the watchwords for the great works that followed. But Goethe answers himself thus: "If the *Horen* had not fallen short of contributions, I should never have written the conversations of the German Emigrants, nor translated

Cellini; I should not have composed any of the ballads and lyrics, as they stand in the *Muses' Almanack*, the Elegies would not—then, at least—have been published, nor would the *Xenien* [*Epigrams*] have gone buzzing about." Yet (since as regards the Elegies it was only a question of publishing a finished work) all these, with the exception of three or four ballads, might never have been written, and the value of Goethe's achievement would be in no wise diminished. He himself, at other times, acknowledged the meagreness of a harvest which was the result of so much labour, and when he was old cried angrily: "The time I wasted with Schiller over the *Horen* and the *Muses' Almanacks*! . . . I can't recall those enterprises without feeling annoyed—they were utterly fruitless for us both!"

Sooner than this, he regretted the most notorious work of that decade, the only one in which Schiller collaborated —the *Xenien* (*Epigrams*).

Isolated, attacked, partly dethroned, Goethe was at that time in the very mood for parody; but even his enmity usually soars above personalities into the sphere of the universal, and he can slaughter half a dozen undesignated literati in a single quatrain:

So will der Spitz aus unserm Stall
Uns immerfort begleiten,
Und seines Bellens lauter Schall
Beweist nur, dass wir reiten.[1]

Personal polemics he had abjured for twenty years; in these days his daemon was alive only in the depths of his being, and was to make itself heard in the new *Faust* dialogues. About this time he counselled Schelling, Hufeland, and the Schlegels to make up a literary quarrel,

[1] The Pomeranian dog we feed
Follows us, ever present;
No one would know we ride, indeed,
But for his bark incessant.

and rebuked Schelling for the polemical conclusion of an article.

So it was only as a "brain-wave" that he one day suggested to Schiller the insertion of critical letters to the editors of the magazine. But Schiller's canniness thought to perceive that Goethe wanted a "field of battle," and he did not follow up the idea of confronting authors with their public. Instead, he arranged for something like a voluntary attack of the editors on their own means of subsistence; anyone who then wanted to defend himself would have to accept "our" conditions; they must act first and make their suggestion afterwards; "it will do us no harm to be considered 'wild men.'" Goethe gradually gave in. First of all, he found in Martial's Epigrams a model for the attack desired by Schiller, and threw off a dozen distichs. Again Schiller was electrified, arranged for their continuation, and published sixty-six distichs of his own.

Goethe wanted to attack cliques, schools, views; Schiller's contentious spirit drove him to annihilate individuals either under their own names or the most transparent of disguises—he talked of a declaration of war. He spurred on the daemon in Goethe; and although it suited neither his temper nor his years, Goethe once more did what was required of him, and on his side now pleaded for a pedantic "continuity"—so that between them they composed about a thousand distichs, sometimes in collaboration, but finally published no more than five hundred or so in the Almanack, thus giving cause for offence to some eighty literary men.

Schiller's epigrams are keener, wittier, more venomous—they are the better ones, as his *Tierkreis* (*Zodiac*) alone would prove. He took public, critics, rivals more seriously, because he wanted to dominate. He let fly at the friend of Goethe's youth, Count Stolberg, and forced Goethe to acquiesce.

The sensation was immense and universal. Goethe was thought to have suborned Schiller, though Goethe's

dearest foes could not understand how "that slinking malingerer had ever allowed himself to be persuaded into such a schoolboy prank." And when the victims retorted in more distichs, witty and malignant, it was Schiller's turn to foam at the mouth over such treatment of honoured names, and declare that they must be passionately refuted. Goethe, on the contrary, had gleefully looked forward to the answers; and now, when Schiller lost his head, was ready to be more careful, rejected Schiller's retort as taking things too seriously, and planned a jesting answer, saying: "The fat's in the fire, and time is on our side."

Suddenly, when Goethe was preparing a satirical refutation of the attacks for the new number of the Almanack, Schiller called a halt. Worldly wisdom ruled again; his fury was overpast.

Schiller's negative influence on Goethe ends with this episode. How little he personally understood him, despite his profound appreciation of single works, is nowhere more clearly to be seen than in a letter to Meyer, where he tries to get the latter to persuade Goethe (who was then in Switzerland) not to revisit Italy, and thus waste time and energy that should be devoted to work. "When one man out of a thousand *does* succeed in making a beautiful, satisfying synthesis of himself, it is my opinion that he can do nothing better than express himself in every conceivable way; for no matter how far he may get, he will never improve upon that offering." Schiller considered Goethe, at forty-seven, to be a finished product. There would be no further evolution, and to express his completeness in ever-new forms was the only task left to him.

If such a psychologist as Schiller was blind to the lifelong conflict in his friend, how profound must have been Goethe's loneliness! If the most powerful contemporary intellect could so misapprehend him—who helped him, by sheer affection, to bear that utter isolation? His beloved helpmeet.

In this period, while Goethe's mind was enlivened by Schiller's interest, his heart was nourished by Christiane's devotion, her fresh youth, her cheerfulness and unassumingness, while at the same time her capable hands and vigilant care kept perfect order among his possessions and personal comforts. This decade, when he saw so much of Schiller, was also Christiane's prime; it was the meridian of their marriage, clouded only by the death of their children. For now she was flowering into what only the poet in Goethe could have foreseen when he found her —the self-reliant, active, happy-natured being, creating such an atmosphere as, long ago, his mother had created for the boy.

There was much in common between these two women, and on a visit of Christiane's to Frankfurt, they took the most cordial liking to one another. This points clearly to the hereditary element in Goethe's love for Christiane. Both women had sunny natures, warm hearts, and active bodies, with native intelligence and little education; they were courageous, devout, and virtuous—the Councillor's widow a little the vainer of the two, Christiane a little the simpler. But such natures do better as mistresses and wives than as mothers, when the mother has to feel her way between father and son in a saddened married life; and on the whole it was a more grateful task to be Goethe's wife and the mother of his son than to be Councillor Goethe's wife and Goethe's mother. Both were uncritical, and at bottom uncomprehending, of the human phenomenon so closely connected with them; but when the mother bestirred herself for the son, her work was usually undone by her dual and difficult position, while the wife was not called upon to strive for the husband's advancement, nor to prepare a career for him. On the one occasion that she did intervene, her fearlessness pulled the wires successfully.

Nor were their destinies very different. From a narrow sphere of intercourse and thought, genius dragged both into the light; and in the long run neither proved wholly

adequate. The elder woman's spontaneity lost much of its charm in the course of these ten years; a great deal that in her old age, posing as Goethe's mother, she said and wrote was more pretentious than dignified—only a son could have let it pass in silence. But when Christiane at last fell between the two stools of spontaneity and "behaviour," it must sometimes have been distressing for a husband. Frau Goethe out of six, and Christiane out of five, children had lost all but one at a tender age; and however different a value we may set on the two survivors, the sorrows and joys of two much-bereaved mothers are no different in quality. For Goethe's development his mother was negligible, since his education came from his father; his progress from sixteen onwards was entirely uninfluenced by her. But Christiane was the wife with whom Goethe, by his free choice, spent the three middle decades of his life. Late in that life he wrote this, in memory of her:

Ich wünsche mir eine hübsche Frau,
Die nicht alles nähme gar zu genau,
Doch aber zugleich am besten verstände
Wie ich mich selbst am besten befände.[1]

When Goethe entered the room, in Christiane's time, he was welcomed by a frank look from a young cheerful healthy face, which expressed contentment and intelligence, and there was only one question in the eyes: "What would you like—can I fetch you anything or do anything for you? Nothing in the world can interest me unless your brow is clear!"

Christiane was sweetly grateful. "I pray God," she wrote to him after fifteen years together, "that in return for your kindness He may be kind to you in every way . . . but you shall find me just as grateful through all

[1] I only ask for a pretty wife,
Without too strict a view of life,
But some things she by heart must get—
The things whereon my heart is set.

eternity." When she consulted an old doctor about an ailment, she impressed upon him not to send his answer direct to her, because Goethe might open it and be uneasy. The children of Schiller's wife, who would not associate with her, Christiane willingly had in her house for weeks at a time. If an employé at the theatre was to be replaced, she would manage to get the position for a deserving person who really needed it; for an official in distress, with whom she had only the most remote acquaintance, she begged an advance from Goethe, saying " You won't turn a deaf ear to your rabbit." Throughout her life, she provided for her brother and sister.

Never did Christiane try to conceal her origin—she was never anything but the girl of the people, whose face had been her fortune. When in later years she went over what Goethe's mother had left on her death with the niece " who had never seen her before," the latter declared in astonishment that " people were very unfair to her; she had been so generous and sweet about the division of goods, when if there had been anything mean about her, she would certainly have betrayed it."

She always pined for her lover when he was away; and when he was working in Jena it must sometimes have been with a mixture of amusement and annoyance that he read her touching attempts to lure him home again: " Your room, and the whole house, are in good order, and await their master with the utmost impatience. Perhaps your work would go better here than it used to lately. You can dictate in bed here, just as you can at Jena, and I won't come to you in the mornings until you want me. . . . I can't be happy at home without my love. . . . To-morrow I'm going to kill time at my ironing." If she had no word from the absent one, she could not eat all day, and then everyone in the house complained of her tempers; even after thirteen years she counted the days and nights till he came back, and congratulated herself on its being " one less to-day." And when she was allowed to visit him at Jena, or go to fetch him home, she timidly asked

beforehand whether she should alight at the Palace or the hotel. When he delayed altogether too long, she pretended that the child was pining for him, but he was not to let himself be put out by that, "for it was our fault, after all, that the poem wasn't finished." And Goethe would put down the appealing letter, to write:

Das ist die wahre Liebe, die immer und immer sich selbst bleibt,
Wenn man ihr alles gewährt, wenn man ihr alles versagt.[1]

But when it came to the point, she had the right sense of her position. Coming home from Frankfurt, she bought new clothes for her return, "so as to be a little smart," because people would know she had been at Frankfurt. And she always said *Sie* to him before other people. Goethe, on his side, knew how to silence any gossip that happened to come to his ears.

To the Leipzig Fair, whither he had preceded her, he told her to come in a good carriage, because all the world would be driving about in their best; and Schiller and others testify that Goethe would never suffer a word to be said against Christiane. But it was not until he was fifty that he began to appear in society with her, and then it was away from home. At Lauchstädt the students in the theatre applauded them both equally, but she said very little about it; and any compliments that were paid her she attributed to her charming frocks.

But Goethe's friends and foes in Weimar were unchangingly malicious. The two Humboldts, like Schiller, repeated all the latest tales about "little Christiane"; and when a tactless official asked her in the theatre if it was true that the Privy Councillor was desirous to marry, she had a sudden attack of bad spirits, complained that they were envious of her having the best box, and that she did not want to see anybody, "for I hate people more and more every day." But at her side there was a comforter who had gone far along the road towards misanthropy.

[1] That is the true devotion, which knows not a shadow of turning,
Whether one grants or denies every fond wish of its heart.

"*As regards people in general,*" *answered Goethe,* "*show* them every politeness in your power, without looking for thanks. That causes one many vexations in individual cases, but on the whole it makes for pleasant relations."

"Then I will go my own way," we seem to hear her clear sweet voice reply. "I'll be a good housekeeper, love my love, and make our boy the light of my eyes, and later on pay stiff visits to any extent."

How well they understood one another—the grey-haired man of the world with his genius and the middle-class woman in her prime with her native intelligence! What simplicity there is in this written dialogue, so harmonious, so unpretentious! And at once her spirits revived; he could again call her his little child of nature, his angel in the house, and fondly smile when she spelt a word as it was pronounced in Thuringia—"*Einsegelibter*" instead of "*Einziggeliebter*"—or scraped out a blot on the paper, or invented comic euphemisms for the state of pregnancy, or came to grief with her grammar—as did Frau Goethe and Lotte Schiller and the Duchess Amalia. He could smile, for he had never sought or wanted a cultured wife, and all his life he was the same—he who re-created the German language, and never quite mastered the art of punctuation.

> Welche Schrift ich zwei, ja drei Mal hintereinander,
> Lese? Das herzliche Blatt, das die Geliebte mir schreibt.[1]

Yes—what was she writing to-day, what had she thought of to amuse him? "It's very queer that the novel won't go; but perhaps it's going now—you mustn't lose heart too soon. With us there's been great spinning." How whimsical, how amusing, to contrast his work with her own! Was it unconsciously done?

Perhaps. But how well she understood the management of her difficult husband, Knebel's wife has told us.

[1] Which the letter I twice, nay, oftener, three times running,
Read? The affectionate words written to me by my love.

She, like Christiane, had long been the mistress and then the wife of an equally enigmatic being, and had known the Goethes well for twenty years. "Christiane," she wrote after Christiane's death, "had a great deal of native, clear intelligence, and a sunny temper. She knew how to encourage him, and exactly what tone would be good for him. Goethe could not have found a wife better suited to his temperament.... He often told us that when he was absorbed in some idea, and thoughts thronged into his mind so tumultuously that he really could not find his way among them all—he would go and explain the case quite simply to her, and would be astonished at the way in which with her quiet, native shrewdness, she would always find the right way out. He said he owed her a great deal in that respect."

He talked to Christiane about *Hermann und Dorothea*, before he began it, and afterwards wrote about its progress. She did not fail to pray that it should go well, but when he asked for a carriage-rug to be sent to Jena, she took it into her head that the work was going all wrong, and "so my prayer has been no use this time." She could give a vivid description of an unruly student who had made a noise in the theatre, and when some official dogged her steps with pretended deference and vowed that she must order her garden-manure from him, since if she asked for his life he would give it her, she added the quaint comment: "But that makes me all the more afraid of him." At a visit to a palace she picked out Cranach's pictures as the best, and for half a night she could not tear herself away from reading Tieck's *Genoveva*.

True, it was only by renouncing any attempts at education that Goethe could have kept such simplicity unspoilt. At some naïve question put by her after twenty years of life together, Goethe at the dinner-table turned to a friend and said: "That is what delights me about her. She is always so utterly herself."

Had Christiane any passions?

She liked wine, as Goethe did. At first she drank less

than he, then quite as much; but in her life of fifty years there is no credible witness to her ever having been more than merry. Once she regretted there being no Malaga in the house; on another occasion that she hadn't drunk a whole bottle the other day; and she had a white frock made " so that when you come back, we can have some nice little champagne-suppers." Frowned on by society, she made friends with actors and was to be seen at masked balls with young men, or laughing and singing in the mornings, dressed for riding. On these pretexts, contemporaries founded the legend that she drank to excess; and posterity has eagerly embroidered it.

But it was the theatre which attracted her most, as food for her feminine curiosity, and at the same time as neutral ground where nothing could happen to vex her. From her visits she would send reports to Director Goethe on the cast and the audience; but when she found fault with a new Ophelia, she added honestly that it was only because she was like a girl of whom Goethe had a high opinion. Sitting in her box, she liked to look pretty; and the better she succeeded in this, the more indulgent was her lover—he was indefatigable in contributing materials, shawls, and hats, and consulted his expert in art-needlework about the design for an embroidered gown.

A practised and daring horsewoman, she was very fond of riding, and at the end of her thirties learnt driving too; but above all she loved dancing—indeed, it was her only real passion. Her flirtations were always innocent, and what could better prove her innate sense of fitness than the well-attested sincerity of these words: " I could have lots of little affairs here, but I don't care to. When you are with me, I make eyes at lots of people, but when you aren't, it's no fun." But if it was a question of dancing, her partner could not be sufficiently handsome or graceful. Nothing elated her more than being engaged for all the dances straight off, and having worn out a pair of new shoes in one night with a fine dancer. In his early youth Goethe

had sometimes done much the same, and when he was forty had danced with her fairly often; but now he was sedate and lazier, and even held a theory that every kind of dance bordered by its very nature on affectation. Strange irony of fate—that genius should invest itself with these dullnesses at the very time when his most unaffected of companions was reducing them to absurdity by her flying skirts and laughing eyes! Did he not laugh himself, perceiving it?

Raum und Zeit, ich empfind' es, sind blosse Formen des Anschauns,
Da das Eckchen mit dir, Liebchen, unendlich mir scheint.[1]

Nothing made their long companionship dearer to Goethe, or more effectually contradicts all the legends about her, than her constant activity; and if he always sought light-hearted and simple-natured women as a counterpoise to his own difficult and complex nature, it was because he was active himself that he also needed an active woman as companion. They both filled their days to the brim; and though the one ruled, as it were, a household of masterpieces, and the other made a masterpiece of house-keeping, that only helped to turn the harmony of their daily life into a perfect unison. So she could sum it up without *arrière-pensée*: "*Your* work is splendid, for what you have once done will last for ever, but with us poor drudges it's quite different. I had the kitchen-garden in such good order, all planted and everything. In one night the snails had eaten nearly everything I had put down, and I shall have to do it all over again.... We can't have anything for nothing, and I won't allow it to vex me."

In that house there was neither self-indulgence nor sloth. They went to bed betimes, and by six o'clock in the morning he was sitting at his desk, while she was

[1] Space and Time, I am learning, are merely modes of appearance,
Since a corner with thee, darling, seems infinite now.

usually to be found at the potato-bed. Christiane could buy and sell horses, and knew that they must be in good condition before they were auctioned; she advised him in the purchase of more land for a vegetable-garden; and the things she sent her husband at Jena in the way of beer, wine, or meat, and the fruit he sent to Weimar, took up no less, but likewise no more, space in their letters than in his to Charlotte, long ago.

Christiane had to keep accounts, control their expenditure, answer enquiries; and if no one came to their Friday at-home, she would lament the beautiful wasted wood-fire. She sold home-grown asparagus too, and her own discarded clothes, made new skirts out of old materials, and when Goethe wrote to say that Cotta (the publisher) had sent some lovely brand-new *louis-d'or*, "which I shan't enjoy in the least until I count them into your hand. . . . Which would you rather have—a gold-piece for yourself to spend as you like, or something for the house?"—he must have smiled when he read her answer. It was a long story of two second-hand gauze frocks, one of which was to be had for two and a half thalers, but she intended to buy one that cost two *louis-d'or*; "and if you don't like it, I can always sell it again with a lace edge and make money on it. But if *you* had been here, you would certainly have bought me a new one!"

That is Christiane—very economical and rather vain, capable and utterly devoted, with something of Therese in *Wilhelm Meister*; but able at a pinch to become Clärchen too, as she was one day to prove.

Viele der Veilchen zusammengeknüpft, das Sträusschen erscheinet
Erst als Blume; du bist, häusliches Mädchen, gemeint.[1]

The brilliant Therese, it is true, had sadly to confess "that undoubtedly intellectual men look out for good

[1] Violets fastened in clusters together, then and then only
Look like flowers—of thee, housewifely damsel, I think.

housekeepers, though their hearts and their imaginations may crave for other qualities." Christiane had better fortune, for the qualities by which she had charmed the lonely man—her youthful heart and her capacity for love—remained the firm basis of their union throughout thirty years.

And so, though daily life might be prosaic, he was unchangingly her lover, and never wearied, through decades, of showing her tender little attentions. Goethe was not now the obedient servant he had been to Lili and Charlotte, but still less did he want, like Schiller, to domineer. He gave public expression to his estimate of his wife when in his will he made the son his heir, but gave her a life-interest in the property.

After nine years, this: "I love you very dearly, and you only; you wouldn't believe how I miss you. Only now do I wish I was a richer man, so that I could always take you and the boy with me on my travels." Again, after thirteen: "Joyfully shall I . . . press you to my heart and tell you that every day I love you more and more." And after fifteen: "On the very next opportunity send me your last new danced-out pair of shoes that you write to me about, so that I may once more have something of yours to press against my heart." Written by Goethe at fifty-four, when he was the father of a boy of fourteen.

And yet, in that hard-fought existence, not even this gift from Tyche could be free—for this, too, he had to pay.

Four or five years after the beginning of their union, Christiane's sister and aunt moved into Goethe's house and stayed there to the end—her brother, too, lived there for a long time. Quiet people, the Vulpius family; but for all that a family, entailing obligations, with their own claims, their own friends, very unsuited to Goethe—strangers, who though they did not sponge upon him made all the more fuss about finding something to do. Here were three uninteresting middle-class down-and-outs, undesirable denizens of the stately mansion, belonging neither to Goethe's social nor his family life. True, it never came

to quarrels or scenes; but still there was the unemployed brother to help, and in his interest Goethe wrote quantities of letters. And there was a lover of Christiane's sister, a runaway young nobleman, for whose return the clergyman on the parental estate appealed to Goethe, and Goethe had to answer him, arrange, and provide for it. Yet his native kindliness forbade him to drive out his mistress's family.

What was the result? Without knowing it or at all desiring it, they drove *him* out; and while he left the handsomest house in Weimar to a trio of lower-class bourgeois, with whom he was not really even connected, he set up a bachelor-establishment in Jena which consisted of two apartments in the Palace, scarcely capable of being warmed, and an occasional room in a lodging-house. So that Goethe, without being married, had to bear all the burdens of married life. Once he spent four, once nearly six, months out of the year at Jena.

It is true that at Weimar there was also the everlasting racket to which as Minister, Manager of the Theatre, and social personality he was subjected, and this too played its part in driving him away; even Schiller, when afterwards he lived in Weimar, had sometimes to take refuge in Jena for his literary work. There they could both be poets again, the one eager for success, the other for flights into the empyrean of the mind; and Goethe, sitting in Knebel's old study (long since deserted by the latter), said fondly that in no other place had he known so many productive hours. Soon he sent for a dozen of the choicest engravings from his collection: "So that I may have something to delight my eyes." In the evenings he would argue with Schiller, or in the circle of scientists and friends of which he once said that it was "like a fairy-tale."

Not that Christiane was forbidden an occasional visit, with or without the boy; and once or twice he went *sub rosâ* to Weimar, late in the evening, when he would have the back-door into the garden left open for him.

Early next morning he would be off again to Jena—a three hours' journey each way. Does it not sound like the prank of a Crown Prince, stealing at night to his vigilantly guarded mistress? And it is an author of fifty, free to choose his place of abode, to arrange his affairs as he pleased, who slinks secretly in the dark through the backdoor of his own big house to see the wife who had lived with him twelve years, for the space of a few hours.

And yet it was on this loved woman's account that his absences became more frequent and more prolonged! "You know that at home I can't concentrate sufficiently to get through my arduous work. . . . There is a lot to do still, and I must be quite alone for it. . . . I beg you not to come here unexpectedly; I must stick to my usual routine and stay here till I've finished this one piece; then we shall be happy together again." With such fatherly gentleness did he excuse himself to her.

He expressed himself more forcibly to Schiller: "As I couldn't get away to Jena, my household has had to give way to *me*, for there's one thing certain—that without absolute quietude I can't produce anything whatever . . . and that not merely the voices, but the very presence in the house of people I love and value, entirely dries up my fount of poesy."

As the inmates of his house grew older and their claims more diversified, he sometimes had occasion to shake his head very gravely over the situation. He had lived irreproachably in the little State for twenty years, and now it was his to kowtow to subordinate officials for a passport for "Frau Vulpius and son." Once, when he had brought his family over to his mother in Frankfurt for three days, he found it more advisable to pack them back home at once.

On the whole, when his wife and son had paid him a visit in Jena, and he was left sitting quietly over his papers, at work again, Goethe must sometimes have asked himself: "Is it not strange that that brief beautiful encounter

should have expanded into a destiny of which I had not then the remotest conception? Are we never permitted a lovely fleeting instinctive fancy, inconsequent as its origin in a summer morning? Primitive, classic as it was, is this relation now becoming ponderous? Ought we not to part friends and each resume the liberty that was voluntarily sacrificed?"

The boy's education, too, suffered from the divided claims of society and authorship, for this was the critical period between six and eighteen. Goethe, who understood and loved children, who had been almost entirely responsible for Fritz von Stein's upbringing, who had done so much for Lotte Buff's brothers and sisters, and for Carl August's, Herder's, and Jacobi's children, was far from neglecting his own son, especially in his childhood; and the boy loved him in the early days, and delighted in being with him. He was allowed to take part in the Festival Procession at Ilmenau, dressed as a little miner, and was put to bed by his father in the evening. If he happened to be playing with a little girl in the Palace-yard at Jena, and Goethe, leaving his desk, caught sight of them from his window, he would let down little tit-bits at the end of a string for the children to catch, a game which greatly delighted them. Or he would make a pumpkin-head for the boy, like a devil with eyes of flame, or paint him a scene for his toy-theatre—and little August would sit, like his father before him, gazing at the shadow-play, and Doctor Faust would come on the scene, and the devil too—but the best fun, according to the boy, was when the cat suddenly upset the candle.

But it may have been that Goethe, at fifty, was too old, or too absorbed in his manifold activities. At any rate, the father and son were destined never to know that intimate and lasting affection which is the outcome of real mental contact in early years. For Goethe delayed too long his instruction of the boy.

The little we really know of August's childish years—for his letters were dictated by his teacher in imitation

of Goethe's style, and that the father should have permitted this was a mistake, to begin with . . . that little gives the impression of a lively, plucky, practical-minded, rather rough sort of boy, who jeered at his mother when her cucumbers did not do so well as his, who teased his playfellow, Schiller's son, because he was "afraid of everything," who bought himself "a great lot of siskins," but gave away a rare little bird because he did not want to be bothered finding food for it, who cruelly killed a mole, and liked to hear the pigs scream when they were being slaughtered. When one day he found a little silver trinket in the garden, he sold it for a penny. But he was quick at languages, had a good memory, and when his father read him Schiller's latest Turandot-riddle, he guessed it before Goethe did.

When he was growing up, Goethe would take him away with him in the summer; but the result was more to enliven the father than to educate the son, for the boy seems to have been incapable of really getting anything from Goethe. He preferred his mother's company, and of all the gossip one bit is undoubtedly true—that she always took him with her to the theatre, that Goethe never prevented it, and that so he grew up to be fonder of amusement than of any serious study.

"Paternal feeling developed every civic virtue in him. He was conscious of this, and nothing could exceed the joy it gave him. . . . Oh, the strange exactions of society, which begins by perplexing and misleading us, and ends by demanding more of us than Nature herself. . . . Man is born for a limited sphere. He can comprehend its simple, immediate, unchanging aims. . . . Directly he sets foot in the great world, he knows not either what he desires or what he ought to do, and it matters little whether it is the mere pressure of events or their greatness and splendour which dismays him. 'In America,' said Lothario, 'I thought I should be able to get something done. . . .

How differently I see things now, and how dear, how precious, to me is the place I know best!' "

"'I remember the letter,' replied Jarno, 'which even then I received from over the sea. You wrote: 'I shall come home; and in my own house, under the trees of my own garden, among my own people, I shall say: *Here or nowhere is America!*' "

Here or nowhere, at the end of his *Lehrjahre*, Goethe hints at the reasons for his becoming a provincial at fifty. But besides—and we must lay stress on this—there is something of a desire to generalize an extremely individual case, as if to convince himself that he could not have done otherwise, that this was his appointed lot. "The aim of life is life itself," he wrote at this time to Meyer; and taken together with all that Goethe sought, attempted, began, abandoned, avoided, lauded, and disapproved, the aphorism denotes nothing more far-reaching than a sense of reality which, from a fiercely bubbling spring, had broadened into a river serenely submissive to its burdens of ships and barges, and flowing tranquilly onward through the spacious plain. In the powerful well-controlled stream of Goethe's middle-age the cities of men were mirrored, with their towering spires and modest houses, and he conveyed their argosies from place to place. It was so that Goethe became a bourgeois.

As a youth, his burgher-blood had enjoined self-control in his most ecstatic moments. In his middle thirties it had kept him a thrall, between fits of despair, to state-obligations; about forty, it turned him into a resolutely sober-minded tourist. Now, in the fifties, we get the citizen, with wife and child, with a legion of accepted and self-imposed duties, definitely "settled down," remote from the great world and its events, but likewise from the intellectual centre of his country, and maliciously entitled by his enemies "the most cultivated man of the century." We get, in short, a power-house of intellect, which was capable of infinite extension.

And how different he was to look at! Eight years after

Lips had delineated him, he refused to send that likeness to an admirer, for now (he said) it no longer really resembled him. Besides Bury (whose portrait is here reproduced), Jagemann, Meyer, Tieck, and the woman-artist Bardua painted him in these years—the man who now declared that dreamless slumber was the most refreshing, who never bared his throat; the portly thick-set Goethe, with fat-fingered hands, with fleshy cheeks and a double chin (which he was fond of pulling at) and bags under his eyes, with their look of weary penetration behind the glasses he had now more frequently to wear. Such he was at this time, living and working from within outwards along a line more marked by breadth than depth; everything that stamps the bourgeois now stamped him, and so for ten years from this period.

He was the bourgeois who is happiest at home—though (as he said in verse) the nations might be raging in far-away Turkey; for almost in the words of his Leipzig citizen he remarked, when reading a travel-book about Morocco, that he thanked God he was in Lauchstädt. Humboldt's invitations to Paris could not tempt him away from quiet Weimar, where a visit from Mme. de Staël was epoch-making; he might sentimentalize about the cradle of the new epoch, envy Humboldt and Cotta for all they saw and enjoyed there—but the farthest he would go was over to Leipzig for the Fair, and there he gaped at London in the panorama! For the first time in his life he appreciated Frankfurt, and there is a touch of pursiness in the remark "that the Frankfurt bankers, merchants, stock-brokers, shop-keepers, Jews, players, and managers were a thousand times more interesting to him, because at any rate they had some end in view, even though they might put a spoke in other people's wheels." In his letters and diaries there is scarce an allusion to the European upheavals; and when the Rhine Confederation was established, he could actually note in his diary: "Quarrel between servants and cab-drivers on the bridge, which excited us more than the partition of the Holy Roman Empire."

He was the bourgeois, still more intent than of yore on the preservation of order. When Fichte protested against his rule in the name of liberty, he was infuriated —so much so that, though he thought most highly of his ideas, he acquiesced in the Professor's resignation for official rather than personal reasons.

At this time he was strongly addicted to note-books in which, when travelling, he collected the sort of information that to-day we find in Baedeker—regulations, price-lists, ceremonies, placards and proclamations, census-returns and statistics; and this practice he began in his native town, of all places, methodically documenting what his eyes and his intelligence had been familiar with for decades! At home, likewise, the catalogue-habit became more and more pronounced. If he wrote a new Elegy, he instantly began to "plan a new series of Elegies," and drew up this grotesque literary programme: "The second will probably deal with the craving to cross the Alps for the third time, and in that spirit I shall . . . continue."

He was the provincial good trencherman: the time had come for enjoying one's food in quiet! Since his early forties he had begun to drink a good deal—gradually arriving at one or two bottles of wine a day, and to that measure he mostly kept until the end of his life. In his fiftieth year he said that there was hardly anything he now enjoyed except meat and wine. Sometimes he would have as many as fifty bottles sent to Jena, besides dessert-wine. To a publisher from Bremen, who sent a case of fine wine as an inducement, Goethe delivered the second part of his *Zauberflöte* and left the price to him. The publisher sent another consignment of wine. In the diary, between entries about literary work and business, appears one about the first asparagus of the season, and in the second Epistle Goethe actually arrived at singing the praise of pickled cucumbers.

He was the well-paid prosperous bourgeois, more

deeply concerned with figures than when he had been President of the Council. Even now, at fifty, though his house had been presented to him, he possessed no other property, no certain income but his salary, which from thirty-six to sixty-six brought in sixteen hundred thalers a year. But now he had made up his mind to live at his ease; he refused himself no engraving, gem, apparatus, or book which he needed for his collections or studies, and he kept open house (though he cared little himself for anyone in particular), had friends to stay, and gave generous presents.

From this time forward Goethe stuck to Cotta, who was becoming very powerful (and from whom in four decades or thereabouts he obtained a hundred and fifty thousand thalers and nine thousand florins); but he did not refuse himself to other publishers. When Unger asked for material for a new volume of Goethe's writings, which was appearing with him, Goethe (who meanwhile had promised his next work to Cotta) said neither Yes nor No. For their contributions to the *Horen*, and later to the *Propyläen*, Schiller and Goethe received such payment as had hitherto been unheard-of in Germany—which is the only possible explanation of Goethe's having translated Cellini, or extracts from Mme. de Staël's books. For the four annual numbers of the *Propyläen*, of which he was only part-author, he stipulated for terms which exceeded his yearly salary as Minister; and when the enterprise failed, as it soon did, he at once advised the publisher to try again! It was only the great success of the *Zauberflöte* which induced him to write a second part, though Mozart was by that time dead; but the characters, dresses, and decorations could be made use of again in all the theatres of Germany, and Goethe demanded a hundred ducats from a Viennese composer for the text.

He intended *Hermann und Dorothea* for Vieweg's *Almanack*, and though two-thirds of the work were written, the publisher was not allowed to see it—he had to make a blind offer for "an epic poem in two thousand hexameters."

Finally, at the end of this decade, Goethe re-sold his works for the first Cotta edition. There was very little new material—beyond a few lyrics, *Achillëis*, and *Elpenor*, nothing except a third of *Faust*. Nevertheless, he asked and received, for the five-year rights of this edition, ten thousand thalers—a sum which only Voltaire had ever before attained to. There was some excuse for Schiller's writing, rather bitterly and tactlessly, to Cotta that Goethe set too high a price upon himself, and no publisher ever stuck to him. But Goethe wrote in high spirits: "It would seem that, since we literary men came short in the cosmic division of goods, we are accorded one important privilege—that of being paid for our follies."

Yet before he received this large sum, he had again been obliged to borrow—this time from his whilom servant, Philipp Seidel. He did not allow this circumstance to lead to any familiarity. When he repaid a portion of the twelve-hundred thaler loan, which had been advanced from savings made for the most part in Goethe's service, his tone was very definitely that of a master to whom the creditor had every reason to be grateful: "Herewith a jolly lot of double *louis-d'or*." This was the same Seidel to whom in former days he had, out of the riches of his intellect, made a present of a prose version of his *Iphigenie*, and to whose criticism he had gratefully lent an ear. Now, when Seidel handed out his contribution from the modest affluence which in Goethe's eyes was so contemptible, it was repaid with a gesture of cool indifference, as a mere nothing.

On selling the epic, Goethe had made his one mistake in household economy—he had bought (under Christiane's persuasion, it is true) a little property near Weimar, which he had not inspected before purchase. Now he occasionally spent a few summer-weeks there, laid out some winding walks in the park, and on one occasion Herr von Goethe—Minister, *savant*, eccentric, and literary man—was to be seen buying horses at the horse-fair. Then he quarrelled with the tenantry, and evicted one dishonest farmer only

to find another who had peculiar ideas about arboriculture. Village-festivals, visits, a distillery, finally finished the work of creating a deficit for this great economist, who had once reformed the finances of two Duchies. And the good bourgeois was more upset by the mismanagement than by the monetary loss.

Yet it cannot have greatly surprised him, for from the first he had talked of this possession in a tone of somewhat shamefaced irony; and as if to symbolize his remoteness from that one aspect of his life, he had usually stopped with his neighbour, the Vicar, instead of in his own country-cottage.

In former years, whenever a land-owning friend had sought to initiate him into the secrets of preparing the ground for crops, he had said that dilettantism in such serious matters was not for him, and now he at once farmed out his land. But he could not resist giving an occasional hint to the experts. Moreover, he liked his country-sojourns, " because I hand over the daily grind to someone else, and thus enjoy a sort of comfort and easy-going indifference to which I have long been a stranger."

This shows us plainly why Goethe was bound to come to grief in that little enterprise. Not that he lived romantically like a poet, in the country, nor experimentally like a scientist, nor counting the cost like a President of the Council—he lived like a townsman on holiday. But to do that was to contradict his whole attitude towards life. However, this very fact may give us a clue to his motive, for Goethe in his maturity never took any step out of heedlessness or weakness. It would seem, then, that as he had long contemplated regular marriage, he wished to give Christiane a house of her own, as a way out from the difficult position created for them both by his residence in Weimar.

In the end she, with her practical good sense, was glad to get rid of the property at no great sacrifice, after five years of doubtful enjoyment of it; and in his old age Goethe smilingly summed-up the episode in the words:

" It was everything—except any use to us." When he sold it, he characteristically made a synthesis of his feelings. It was of no service to him, " for I have renounced the earth in both the economic and aesthetic senses of the word."

A more than doubtful, or at any rate by no means typical, pronouncement, quite contradicted by this particular epoch in his life.

For Goethe in his fifties was no longer the thinker, candidly intent on the truth of things, and striving ever and only upward—and was not yet the poet, clear-eyed, winged for realms of freedom hitherto unknown, which he was soon to become. At this time he was more than ever in the toils of actualities and persons; and the wish which had ruled the immediately preceding years (and which was then a symptom of recovery in a heart benumbed by solitude)—that wish to be companioned at any price had now subdued itself to the claims of daily life, had lost its intensity and vehemence, was more normal, more commonplace, more accommodating. But even now he had his days of misanthropy, and after a tiresome visit would consider the building of a higher hedge around his life, and keeping his writings sacred from the eyes of men. " So I shall always travel incognito, prefer quiet clothes to fine ones, and in conversation with strangers or slight acquaintances choose trivial subjects or at any rate a trivial treatment of the subject, appear more frivolous than I really am, and thus, as one might say, stand between myself and my presentment of myself."

Here Goethe for once confesses to the reserves which his self-sacrificing but disillusioned spirit had been driven to practise, and which later degenerated into a formality of manner that gave an intentionally false impression to his contemporaries and posterity. And at the same time he shows how a reluctantly adopted misanthropy works out in actual human intercourse. It was only by the aid of such unnatural reticence that Goethe, in his fifties and afterwards, was able to dispense with the iron mask worn

in his forties—that so much slighter a disguise could now permit him to be more approachable, more agreeable, yet not less secretive. " In this life, which we can get through the better the more indifferent we are, our chief aim should be to divert people's curiosity from ourselves and others, to keep our passions in check, and find our pleasure in things which do not depend on them."

It was on this unadventurous basis that Goethe resumed social intercourse as an author and *savant*, with more animation than when, as a statesman, he had fled his fellow-creatures. In Jena there were Professors who honoured and feared him; and to judge by the accounts that young men who were recommended to him gave of their first impressions, it would seem that every one of them stood in awe. At intellectual tea-parties he was to be seen standing stiffly under the chandeliers in a flood of light, surrounded by a semicircle of the erudite, who listened to him with open-mouthed attention.

The youthful Jean Paul, who told him some home-truths, nevertheless prevailed so far that Goethe warned Schiller against either over-praising or decrying him. To the young man himself, however, who was only too anxious to draw out Goethe on the subject of his works, he stood on the defensive; for one whole evening he, as it were, held him in check, and finally the boyish, inspired sceptic could find no point of attack, and was reduced to concluding his account with: " Also, he eats a great deal."

Mme. de Staël, who was then touring Germany, complete with note-book and interviews, Goethe at first tried to elude; but later, respecting her intellect and disliking her loquacity, he laid many a good-humoured trap for her, from which the clever lady always escaped. But when she informed him that she intended to print every word he said in France, he became more reticent and more cautious.

When, some time afterwards, Goethe was reading aloud some Scottish ballads at a tea-party in the house of the brilliant and wealthy Johanna Schopenhauer, and asked the ladies to repeat the refrain in chorus after him, a

Professor's wife burst out laughing. Then she knew the lightning of his eye, the thunder of his voice: "Very well —I shan't read!" The horrified hostess intervened; universal obedience was guaranteed, and the ladies, keeping time with their chins, all recited the refrain in chorus—a scene so comic that only Goethe's authority could prevent them from giggling. Such was the end of one sociable endeavour when, a man of fifty, embarrassing and embarrassed, he sought friendly intercourse after an all too prolonged seclusion. Is it astonishing, then, that he preferred to sit down to his wine with the cheerful Christiane in her best frock, sure of warm-hearted affection?

For friends to whom his heart could really speak were almost wholly lacking. Schiller and Meyer, whom as kindred thinkers he usually brackets together, were not really, in that sense, a refreshment. Schiller was in bad health, and preferred to work in the evening, which was Goethe's favourite time for talk—moreover, his head was as full as ever of business-projects. But it was he who in these years could best give Goethe companionship. Meyer, who was a sort of permanent boarder in Goethe's house, was more a combination of teacher and graduate than a talker on equal terms. For him of all men Goethe felt the strongest affection; for among them all Meyer was the only one who had no designs on his intellect and influence, who was always receptive and always responsive, so that it was a true marriage of intellects, and endured to the end. When Meyer came back after a second visit to Italy, Goethe congratulated himself on their reunion, which would make up to them both for the separation, as if he were talking to a woman; and when his friend fell ill, he spoke of their love and their unique relation to one another.

And who else was there to devote himself? Was not everyone, at bottom, intent on getting something out of intercourse with Goethe? Was anyone ready to sacrifice his time, his heart, his energies? There was Knebel, but he must have felt that, as Goethe's audience, he was

supplemented and surpassed by Schiller. Besides, he was now doing some original work, whereas hitherto he had been at most a translator, and by his productiveness he was putting some strain on his friend's sincerity.

More straightforward was the now increasingly intimate relation with Voigt, whom Goethe had at once distinguished from other young legal officials, and had gradually promoted to the title of Excellency and one of the principal Ministries in the Duchy. High-minded and energetic, shrewd and disinterested, here at last was the nature which believed in Goethe's heart and was unalterably grateful. Now indeed, after ten years of testing, he could feel that his highest hopes were gratified when he read: "I wish . . . I could have you always at my side. May I be able, one day, to requite you in some way. . . . For I cannot imagine what my existence would be like without you."

But those others, who had seen Goethe through his first decade in Weimar, sometimes affectionately, sometimes disapprovingly—what had become of *their* attachment? The destiny of genius—to disappoint its friends, because their love would have it keep to the one path marked out by them! The destiny of friends—to abandon the daemonic being, instead of learning and unlearning from him! Almost all the friendships of his life were outlived by Goethe, but not more than one or two by reason of his longer span of years. Guiltless and guilty, as with women, his daemon wrenched him from nearly all to whom he once had clung.

Charlotte's hatred had evaporated. She was approaching sixty, her hair was turning white; her son was soon to marry and make her a grandmother—so that the formal recognition which had been exchanged in a drawing-room not more than a year after their rupture, was with Schiller's help worked up into a reconciliation; and as in former years she had sent her boy to Goethe that he might be shaped on that pattern, so now Goethe, to the same end, sent little August to the ageing woman. For never had

Goethe depreciated her powers, and he now desired that his son should inhale the rarefied atmosphere which was hers—little, indeed, though the boy could breathe in it at all. However, little August served to bridge the abyss; the adjacent households were brought into some sort of contact—and although Charlotte did not associate with Christiane, she put in a plea for the first asparagus, which the good-humoured Christiane, " as you weren't there, sent over by the chickabiddy." Christiane herself raved about Fritz von Stein as the finest dancer she had ever admired from the gallery at the Court-ball; and August told his father in a letter about a little picture that Frau von Stein had given him after dinner, " and she gave me eight pennies too."

" . . . She gave me eight pennies too." Goethe read, smiled, and thought of many things. Soon the moment arrived when he could again do his hostile mistress a service—he intervened with the Duke for Fritz's transfer to the Prussian Army, and so the first note from Goethe's hand that she had unfolded for seven years began with counsel and help. But how did it end? " And suffer my poor boy to rejoice in your presence, and mould himself after your image. I cannot think without emotion of your wishing him so well."

" . . . My poor boy." Charlotte reads, and remembers how in that last letter, seven years ago, he had alluded to Christiane as " the poor girl." May she not feel rehabilitated, in the purest intellectual sense of the word, by Goethe's choice of such expressions? Only two years back, she had distilled her venom into the Dido-drama. But now. . . . One grows milder as one grows older; she, who knows every accent of Goethe's voice, consoles her wounded pride with the humility of his tone in mentioning his housekeeper's child to her—and Charlotte sits down to the writing-table which Goethe had designed for her those twenty years ago, and seizes her pen, and sets upon her answering sheet of paper (after all the malignity in verse and prose) one human word, a word from the depths:

" Surely you must feel it very natural that my heart should be irresistibly drawn to your child."

Now it is Goethe's turn to read—and smile; for only a few weeks earlier he had made a forsaken mistress say, at the end of his *Lehrjahre*: " We women have this peculiarity—that we can care very deeply for our lover's children, provided we do not know the mother, or else heartily detest her." And when shortly afterwards he passes her house with his seven-yeared son, and sees her sitting in the orangery, he turns in—and Goethe and Christiane's boy, one after the other, kiss Charlotte von Stein's delicate fingers.... Goethe keeps silence about this incident, but Charlotte writes to a woman-friend, and is surprised and ashamed that she could so long have misjudged him....

Yet for all that—a year later she entrusted Schiller with her pamphlet upon Goethe!

He, however, invited her again to his house, usually with her niece or other ladies, sent fruit as of old, showed her his collection of coins, and occasionally even took something like the old tone with her: " May I beg of you to brighten this gloomy morning with your presence?"

Soon after the unsuccessful campaign against the Revolution, the Duke had come back as a Prussian General; and as he could not now do any strenuous military service he began to assert himself somewhat more as the sovereign, and there were a few slight collisions between him and his Minister of Education and Theatre-Director.

Goethe, who had left the Duke behind twenty years ago, now needed only the faintest indication of royal caprice to make him keep his distance; and so this second half of their respective careers, though closely connected by propinquity and public activities, was in no sense a really intimate relation. When we consider the ever-widening divergence between their characters and ways of life, we

are at first inclined to wonder why, in spite of all, Goethe stayed in this sphere of intellectual authority and security, and why the Duke repudiated every attempt of Goethe's enemies to separate the pair.

But Goethe understood the Duke, and if the Duke had ceased to understand Goethe at all, he did hit upon a most pregnant phrase to describe the pedantic travel-letters: "It's amazing what a pompous chap he has become!" He seems to have lost all interest in Goethe's work, and approached him as a Court-poet pure and simple when he wanted Voltaire's *Mahomet* translated for the Court theatre.

Carl August showed no such interest in any of Goethe's later writings as he bestowed on this forced labour, which was entirely alien to the translator; he suggested some slight modifications, and dated a new epoch in the history of the German stage from the production!

But Carl August's growing interest in nature-study sometimes brought him and Goethe nearer to one another; they prepared papers, procured specimens, together, and we cannot but admire the Duke's modesty in decking all his questions and proposals of visits with such phrases as: "With your permission I shall call upon you this evening in Jena—I am bringing something to drink. . . . I shall be immensely obliged by your kind acceptance." But only very seldom do we find "Dear old man," and only once "Keep me in your heart."

But never again was Goethe to be lured out of the citadel of formalities.

In connection with the building of a new palace, of which Goethe was in official charge, the Duke's interference sometimes drove him to despair which, though clinging to the last remnants of courtly behaviour, could not resist a phrase or two of blighting irony: "Our monarch has an excellent eye for the suitable and the convenient . . . only he is rather apt to sacrifice beauty of form to those ends. . . . Your Serene Highness believes that my presence at the works may be useful, and, little though I am myself

convinced of it, I can only respect that belief." The days were long gone by when the two men had fraternally confided in each other about their pranks and projects, their ideals and follies!

Sometimes there was a renewal, but the old days seemed to hover timidly, like ghosts which were forbidden to revisit the glimpses of the moon. In one such instance Goethe, for a second as it were, cast off his reserve. When the Duke sent him, under a transparent pseudonym, a few of his own verses, Goethe's answer took this malicious turn: "The impenetrably disguised poet . . . is really to be congratulated upon the very peaceful—one might almost say empty—moments of inspiration granted him by the Muses, which indeed are a prime necessity for productions of this kind."

And then—once more it was Eros who really brought them together; that is, the Eros of men over forty. A few years after Goethe's union with Christiane, the Duke, weary of passing fancies, set up a dual establishment, and he too chose a Weimar archivist's daughter. Before long Goethe stood godfather to Caroline Jagemann's son, just as that son's father had stood godfather to Christiane's. Caroline was as well an actress at the Court theatre, which was financed by the Duke and managed by Goethe—and thus three people found themselves in a position which might afford material for a dozen comedies. But life's developments were to turn it into a semi-tragedy. There was friction even now. Goethe begged to be relieved of the Court-theatre managership, having had enough of it four years ago, but the Duke, though neither warmly nor urgently, held him to his post. So that Goethe had to look after this Jagemann girl, who continually tried to injure him with their common friend; and the concatenation is sufficiently amazing when we find the ruler of the Duchy contending for his concubine's prestige—for Schiller would not receive her in his house, and so Carl August begged Goethe to persuade him, as it would improve her social position. His letter concludes

thus: "I leave all this to your wise management. Farewell."

The third and most remarkable of the friends of Goethe's youth was also lost to him before he died. In reality, Goethe had lost Herder as soon as he had gained him—for the ardent devotion of the youthful poet had felt itself repulsed by the bigoted criticism which nevertheless he always wanted to hear. No other man was so sedulously and so sincerely courted by Goethe, but their relation was like an interestingly unhappy marriage—in the first ten years at Weimar it had its good moments, followed by coolness, and then again by good moments; for some time then the barometer stood at temperate; and finally they declared open enmity.

The "split" which occurred between them at the beginning of our present period—when the Herders, with threatening words, demanded of Goethe that he should obtain a wholly inequitable grant for their sons' education from the Duke—shows Goethe in a hitherto unprecedented position, and an entirely fresh light. This is his tone towards a woman-friend whom he is obliged to rebuke, though he does not intend to abandon her cause: "To speak with you," he writes to Caroline Herder, who was the one to approach him, "would hardly be advisable at this heated moment. . . . You have written what I ought never to have had to read—I could not but expect to hear what I prefer not to listen to." This monumental reproof is followed by thirteen practical points which are designed to make the situation clear to all concerned, and in which he dismisses both her appeal to the Court and her attack upon himself. "I give you free permission," he concludes, "to hate me as you might hate any other stage-villain, but I beg you thoroughly to understand me, and not expect that I shall reform in the fifth act. . . . I pity you for having to seek the support of people whom you do not like and think so slightly of, whose existence

can give you no pleasure, and to whose satisfaction you feel in no way bound to contribute. . . . Nevertheless, be sure that behind all the arguments you put forth in favour of your claims, I do not really mistake you. . . . I shall not read any reply you may make to this letter, and shall never again allude to what has taken place. . . . I know very well that no one is thanked for his utmost, when once the impossible has been demanded of him, but that shall not prevent me from doing what I can for you and yours."

After this dazzling sword-play, he obtained from the highly incensed Duke the grant so unjustifiably demanded by the Herders. But Herder resented the episode for years; and when he published a two-volume work on German literature, he vented all his jealousy, all his venomous depreciation, in the five words with which he abolished Goethe's art: " Unsympathetic, precise description of the visible." Those were Herder's last public words on Goethe.

But they could not let one another alone—this Herder and this Goethe. The spell was mutually magnetic, because they were such poles apart. Scarce three years after their rupture—and Goethe was again induced by friends to support another and still more questionable appeal for money for Herder's children. Again, after prolonged persuasion, he obtained the desired grant—basing his appeal upon Herder's intellectual eminence.

Now there was a possibility of reconciliation; the Herders occasionally came to Goethe's house, and once when his friend was dining with him Goethe put him at his right hand, though Schiller and Jean Paul were fellow-guests. At this very time Herder started a periodical in opposition to Goethe's *Propyläen*.

Immediately afterwards a fresh quarrel blazed up. Goethe wanted the chorus at the theatre to be reinforced at need by schoolboys; Herder protested against a theatrical manager having his finger in the educational pie. Herder and Goethe, once purely intellectual antagonists, spurred only by their respective daemons, ended by opposing one another as stage-manager and superin-

tendent of schools, the helpless victims of their extraordinary destinies.

But once more Goethe bestirred himself in Herder's interest. The latter had, after getting the Duke of Weimar to provide for his son's education, got the King of Bavaria to ennoble himself, so as to ensure that son's future by making him heir to landed property; and Goethe persuaded the Duke to accord, without a patent of nobility, some gradual official recognition of Herder's title. " More when we meet " (so Goethe ended his last letter, that about the title)—" when I come to drink your health. Thine, Goethe."

It was the end of September, and Herder was ill, but no one dreamed that he had barely three months to live. Had *he* perhaps some prescience of it, and did he want to be intellectually reconciled with the greatest personality in his life, before that life came to an end?

It would seem so.

In November they were both stopping for a while in the Palace at Jena. They visited one another, and one evening Herder began—after six years of silence on matters of the mind!—for the first time to praise Goethe's work.

Quietly and sincerely he opened the subject by giving the highest commendations to the new version of the *Natürliche Tochter* (*The Natural Daughter*), and Goethe felt " the most intense and exquisite pleasure." Something of the old concord, something like his youthful sense of friendship, came over him—and more untroubled than it had ever been before. But his friend had never been master of his own daemon; and precisely as he finished his song of praise with its critical ground-bass—he suddenly, as by some irresistible compulsion, flashed his other aspect upon Goethe, and remarked: " For the rest, I prefer your *Natural Daughter* to your natural son! "

Goethe was struck to stone. He was fifty-four at this time, Herder was sixty; for thirty years and more this man had picked him to pieces, had bantered and derided

him—and now, in that hour of renewed confidence, he epitomized their lifelong battle in a gibe. By Goethe's own account, "this horrible false card had a really terrific effect upon me. I looked him in the face and said no word, and our many years of intercourse, thus as it were symbolized, seemed to me hideous in the extreme. On this we parted, and I never saw him again."

Here or nowhere we plainly perceive how deep was the affinity between the figure of Mephisto and the character of Herder. But we also perceive once more that Goethe too had some instinctive sympathy with Mephisto, for only one who was conscious of a modicum of such endowment could have been perpetually, as by a wizard spell, attracted to its possessor. Nowhere in all Goethe's symbolic career is the Mephisto-strain in Faust, the Faustean in Mephisto, more apparent than in the story of this dearest enmity and its conclusion.

When some weeks later Herder died in Weimar, Goethe did not come back from Jena, nor did he mention the event in his diary or his year-books. But when Mme. de Staël simultaneously arrived, and he wrote in a letter that he was glad of her visit, because a richly intellectual nature could make him forget the spectral visions of these winter-nights, it is evident that despite his silence he had been stricken to the heart—and Mephisto's tragically cynical spirit informs his bitter allusion to the depressing time of year, "when I can very well understand how Henri III had the Duc de Guise assassinated, simply because it was miserable weather; and when I envy Herder for lying in his grave." That evening Goethe had spent with friends, where a beautiful girl had been surrounded by young men.

And yet once more—when twelve years had gone by, Goethe wrote for the only man to whom he owed anything that wonderful epilogue to *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, wherein the mighty intellect of that enigmatic being is shown forth in a portrait which to this day the Germans revere.

Shortly before, he had heard unmoved of Lavater's death, and by Corona Schröter's end he seems to have been equally unaffected. Perhaps she had been present, a few months before her death, one evening when under Schiller's management some young actors were giving the first public performance of *Iphigenie*. Must they not both have recalled that other day when they themselves had played Orestes and Iphigenia, before a youthful, animated Court? Twenty-three years ago. . . . It was a spring-day then as now, but then it had all been pastime, a flash of genius—set down on paper only a few weeks back, and acted a few days after the last lines were written. And to-day they both sit stiffly in their boxes, and glance occasionally round the house. Old Knebel there with his young wife—do you remember? He was Pylades, alert and gay. And there, bull-necked, somewhat vacant, somewhat gloomy, sits the Duke in his Royal box—the Duke who had insisted on being Pylades next time, so that even in play he might do whatever his friend was doing. . . . Sometimes still older memories would hover about him, like players who have played their parts. Lili had asked him to interest himself for a friend, and her wish had been coldly obeyed. Lotte Kestner had wanted him to recommend her son as a doctor; from Wetzlar, where she was paying a sad visit, she had written—dwelling, woman-like, upon old times. "My best regards," Goethe had answered, "and think of me in those places where we have spent so many a pleasant hour." Commonplace enough, surely? But even that had then seemed to him too sentimental—and he had crossed the sentence out of his rough copy! However, when a month later he had had to write again to Wetzlar, he had permitted himself a warmer tone: "How I should like to be once more beside you, on the lovely Lahn," and then had brought the correspondence to an end.

His letters to his old mother had become balder and balder; and it was not until she had had his August to stay with her, and the fifteen-year-old boy was always

talking about his granny, that Goethe, who had had to swallow so many an insult to wife and son in Weimar, became more affectionate and wrote: "We all send our fondest, best, and most grateful love." When for the last time he stopped with her in her new lodgings, he tried in vain "to do some work in that house"; and when he was departing—never again to see his mother—he said good-bye presagefully, "and not without emotion, for it was the first time, after so long, that we had got a little used to each other again." So aloof was the expression, even when Goethe wanted most kindly to remember his mother.

It was only under the light shed by poetry that his youth could move the elderly man to any deep emotion. What an impressive retrospect is that dedication to *Faust*, so regarded—how haunting, how pregnant, do the stanzas sound, when we read them as the epitome of fifty years! There he sits, before the sallow dog's-eared sheets of the old Fragment, turning them over and wondering, while:

Gleich einer alten, halb verklungnen Sage,
Kommt erste Lieb' und Freundschaft mit herauf.
Der Schmerz wird neu, es wiederholt die Klage
Des Lebens labyrinthisch irren Lauf,
Und nennt die Guten, die, um schöne Stunden
Vom Glück getäuscht, vor mir hinweg verschwunden.

Sie hören nicht die folgenden Gesänge,
Die Seelen, denen ich die ersten sang.
Zerstoben ist das freundliche Gedränge,
Verklungen ach! der erste Widerklang.[1]

[1] Like some old saga half-forgot they hover,
First-love and friendship, mine in other days.
Grief is new-born—its echoes I recover,
Filling Life's labyrinthine, broken ways:
By names of dear ones, torn from hours enchanted
Long, long ago, remembrance now is haunted.

They do not hear the song that I am singing,
They, to whose hearts I sang the first of all;
Scattered the kindly troop, no plaudits ringing
Now will, alas! that earliest praise recall.

Is it surprising that the first verses with which, after decades, he resumed the work of his youth should be as an elegy on that youth, which till now he had been desirous only to discard, to forget? Moments wherein the realist gives up the game—seconds wherein he yields to the flowing tide of emotion.

For now he was entrenching himself more deeply than ever behind a tenfold palisade of activities, wintering as it were until the spring should come again in glory. And life and work went placidly on in the well-defended Castle Goethe, where everything had a certain amplitude —Platonic friendship and a bourgeois Eros, household and position, time and space. And similarly in this man, between the middle forties and fifties, the practical intelligence seems to have been in its most diversified phase —in every direction warmth and energy streamed from the great power-house, but only a few beams reached the sphere of infinity. It is Proteus who moves in ever-changing forms before our eyes, and it was now that he used the word Protean to define that amazing power of presentment which he demanded from himself in literary work. But even literature was then but one mode of presentment.

The tree of duties—that smaller, that indigenous tree which Goethe on his return from Italy had chosen to plant in the soil of his life's garden—will quickly take root in familiar ground, will spread in all directions, and is not always easily cut down. The Privy Council, which at twenty-six he had entered as the least of its members, now—twenty-five years afterwards—submitted to his Presidency as the senior in rank. But he was concentrating at one point only; he left most of the work and responsibility to Voigt, and in fact was Minister of Education sole and simple.

Nevertheless, though his days of unbounded energy were over, he kept such a firm hand on his office and conceived his duty in such a sense that not only the documents he signed, but correspondence begun and

carried on by him alone, deal with such subjects as these among many others:—

A gardener applies for exemption from military service; an innkeeper is desirous to set up a billiard-room; someone neglects to have saucers put under the flower-pots in the Botanic Garden; there is strife about the rating of master-builders, journeymen, and masons in the palace-works, or trouble about the menu for the luncheon to be given a foreign architect from the Court-kitchens, and the estimates for beer, bread, and table-linen; or again about the shape and varnish for the shelves in a provisional arrangement of a library, or the cheapest mode of conveyance from the mason's of the stone to be used in a memorial. Besides all this, there are private instructions to the police on the conditions under which an excellent cook, dismissed for outbreaks of temper, is to be reinstated; or on the arrest of a servant who had gone off his head when in foreign parts.

And all of a sudden he perceives the extent and the excess of all these activities. "Symbolic!" he thinks, and echoes Schiller's groan: "As a matter of fact, we poets ought to be treated as Luther was by the Dukes of Saxony—forbidden the streets and shut up in a mountain fortress. I wish someone would do it to me, and then my *Tell* would be finished by Michaelmas."

A few years after his return, Goethe's duties had been augmented by the management of the theatre, but in the early days he felt no real interest in it, nor it in him. It was not until Schiller took a hand that the work became a vital question.

Did this task suit Goethe?

Many of his characteristics, much of his training, were of the right sort for that sphere. His thoroughness protected him, and protected the theatre, from the dangers of a visionary director; he reformed the finances, appointed box-office keepers and limelight-men for tours in the provinces, set up a regular system of free passes, and was always courteous when personally importuned for stalls.

His philosophical outlook on the world saved the theatre from "tendenciousness"; he struck out every personal allusion in the pieces presented and refused those which were based upon anything of the sort. His universality would suffer no "one-part" performers, and he challenged the prevailing fashion by training all-round actors. If a performer were naturally impassioned, he would soon be cast for a phlegmatic character: "So that he may learn not to 'act himself,' and be able to assume a personality which is alien to him." He turned his knowledge of the world to good account in selecting his company by manner and appearance, and his connoisseurship inclined him to historical productions.

He commanded such respect that at rehearsals his word was law, and when an actor grumbled at having to take a small part as a gamekeeper, Goethe disarmed him by threatening to act the character himself. When at a performance of *Die Räuber* there was some disturbance among the audience, he quelled the tumult with a few stern words from his box.

Other characteristics were not so propitious. Goethe's systematic method of work was here confronted by the business which of all businesses is least amenable to system; and he was ever and always at the mercy of his period and his public. His unerring taste clashed with the Duke's desire to make the theatre pay, or at any rate not to lose by it, and so Goethe often had to produce bad plays which were considered likely to draw.

On the whole, he was unimaginative in his management, and that as it were of set purpose. He was a poet who had never been stage-struck, even in his youth, and as an amateur actor his appearances had been more in the nature of social events than anything else. Now even the slight fancy for the footlights which had coloured the original version of *Wilhelm Meister* had been left far behind.

The one thing which might have been expected to attract him—the staging of his own dramatic works—he had long abjured. "I have written in opposition to the

stage," he said of his plays. No wonder, then, that this essentially untheatrical human being and artist should have been, both before and behind the curtain, more of a level-headed mentor than an inspiring influence. And the most striking manifestation he could have given of what this activity meant to him was that Goethe the Dramatist, whose plays were so purely classic in form, so unadapted to the age, so "unactable" or at any rate so unacted, should have stood haughtily aloof from Goethe the Manager. In short, during twenty-six years of managership, the dramatist may be said to have proudly withdrawn his own best works from the manager's eye, rather than that the manager was prudent enough to decline them. Only thus is it explicable that so great a master of dialogue should, in his theatrical capacity, have learnt so little in the way of dramatic effect that at the zenith of his technical stage-career he wrote the most unactable of all his plays—*Die Natürliche Tochter*.

His duties were endless. Goethe himself engaged every actor, chose every play, rehearsed the whole repertory, wrote prologues, supplied translations, made alterations, controlled the box-office and the policing, personally produced many pieces, built a summer-theatre in Lauchstädt. In twenty-six years he arranged the programmes for more than four thousand performances. Two-thirds were of the spoken drama, one-third being devoted to opera, operetta, and a miscellaneous bill of fare. Four hundred and fifty plays, of which four hundred were novelties—fifteen in a year—each with an average of eight performances, were produced under his management; and these figures alone testify to a standard of organization which was very remarkable for the period.

In his character of impresario he had the plays read in his own house, where he would sit at the head of a long green table, tapping with a key when he wanted silence—and with his strong feeling for musical rhythm, he would often wave the conductor's wand. To a mind so swayed by the sense of universality, so intent on subduing the

part to the whole, *ensemble* was inevitably the ideal—his aim was to construct a sort of aristocratic republic in the theatrical realm.

For his insight into the psychology of the actor was profound; and on those lines he dealt with his players, thus winning more of respect or affection than he ever had in his governmental work, where the reserve and precision which characterized him had had a chilling influence. He founded a school of dramatic art and drew up a code of first principles for its teaching—always, however, keeping a musical ideal before him; and so he conducted rehearsals as though they were operas, directing the pace, the crescendos, the *forte* passages. Every step, every gesture, no matter how trivial, was sedulously rehearsed.

Moreover it was his aim, at a time when the actor was still looked upon as more or less of a vagabond, to improve the social position of the stage. He invited the best performers to his house, and both in and out of Weimar his example obliged many persons of rank to do the same. Christiane was his best aide-de-camp there. It was proposed to assign professionals a small box for their visits to the theatre, but he rejected it as an unworthy little pigeon-hole. When his colleague wanted to dismiss an actress because she had love-affairs with officers, he intervened, saying that her private life was not the management's business; but he himself kept free of all entanglements, and never had an intrigue with any of his company. He was the fairest of disciplinarians; when one member of the company boxed the ears of another, he devoted days to hearing the case before he punished the offender, and wrote seven letters about it. The question of whether another member had merely abused or actually struck a fellow-actress he thought worth five weeks of investigation, in which he himself took down most of the evidence!

Such respect for the actor was in strong contrast to the thorough-going contempt of the public for the profession. It was certainly Goethe's intention to teach the people a

better way, but he did not propose to use persuasion—his idea was to show, not how much, but how little he cared for their opinion. He made use of armed force to this end of creating public respect for the stage. Hussars were stationed in the house to see that everyone kept off his hat before and after the performance, and they were equally energetic in restraining any hostile demonstrations, for he had nothing to learn about the public's incapacity for true criticism. "Once for all, the public needs to be bullied; and no matter how it kicks, it will submit in the long run." Thus he resolutely ignored both puffs and abuse of his players, for he knew only too well how capricious and ignorant is the judgment of the masses.

Thinking so slightly as he did of the public taste, is it surprising that Goethe suppressed his own plays, instead of bringing them forward? Even *Götz*, in its new stage-version, was only very rarely staged under his management; and likewise with *Stella*, which in Weimar was thought improper. For *Iphigenie*, *Tasso*, and *Faust* he had neither public nor players. The two last were never performed under Goethe's management; *Iphigenie* and *Egmont* were done a few times when Schiller took the reins. Only the slighter pieces, *Clavigo*, *Die Geschwister*, *Die Mitschuldigen*, *Der Bürgergeneral*, remained in the repertory. During the first few years Goethe staged none of his own plays; after some considerable time he did put on a few. At this time the other German theatres, too, fought shy of him; even the most popular of his pieces, *Götz*, was —despite the remodelling—acted only seven times in all during the last thirty years of Goethe's life!

Director of the Court theatre, and Minister of Education for the Duchies—and yet these also are but two aspects of this Protean being.

In that period Goethe's universality was at its perilous zenith.

"As a stone falls faster the longer it takes to fall, so

it would seem to be with life. Mine, for all its outward tranquillity, is swept along more violently every day. The many scraps of scientific, artistic, and practical knowledge which in my younger days I got together, now intermingle, obstruct one another, throng upon me to such an extent that I need all the sense of order I possess to keep my head at all. . . . And thus a futile, laborious existence interminably goes on, like the Arabian Nights—each fable growing out of that which has gone before."

It would be easy to give some idea of the fantastic yet impressive power of emission in his flashing intellect by pointing to his work on diseased ivory and his plan for the biography of a frozen tiger. But entries in his diaries will by their variety afford us a more interesting standpoint, since we may regard them as legends under the dissolving views of Goethe's life at the zenith of his worldly career.

" In the morning got the fourth canto " [of *Hermann und Dorothea*] " right, and sent it to be copied. Read Froschmäusler on the various species of insects. In the afternoon with G., chemical experiments on insects. Continued galvanic experiments. The Duke in Jena all day. In the evening to Schiller. Influence of Reason and Nature on the actions of human beings. . . . In the early morning corrected my poem; then to the anatomy of frogs. Rest of the morning in Schiller's new garden, talking over its laying-out; went through the First and Second cantos again before this. . . . In the morning tabulated colours. Oyster-supper in the evening. Afterwards ' Oberon's Golden Wedding.' Ramadan and the Bayaderes. Letters to Humboldt and Vieweg. Ideas for an itinerary. In the evening at Schiller's—consulted him about it. Expedition to Weimar (see Letter-book). Indian Romances, conclusion. Looked through the Schlegel essay. Thibaut [master-builder]. In the evening, Lord Bristol. Morning, Character of Lord Bristol. V. and St. came; talked over the proposed contract with the latter, and with the former, about an advisable place for the ice-grate. At Schiller's—various observations about char-

acters. His *Diver* Romance. Talked about comedy. . . . In the evening at Loder's. A billiard-ball in a dog's stomach, one-third digested in twenty-four hours. . . . In the morning corrected final portion of Cellini. Letter to the Duke. Drafted a letter about new ice-grate. Theatre-business settled in afternoon. Various epochs of architecture in St. Peter's. In the evening at Schiller's—talked about naïve and sentimental writing, with reference to our own individualities."

He was fifty years old, and here is the account of how he spent a stay of six summer-weeks in his former garden-house:

"(1) Collected my short poems; (2) Took this opportunity of studying rhythm; (3) Winckelmann's Letters reviewed; (4) Took this opportunity of studying his already published letters as well as his early writings; (5) Read Herder's *Fragments*, as bearing upon the literature of that period; (6) Made the acquaintance of the moon, with the aid of the telescope and selenotopography; (7) Began to read the *Athenäus*; (8) Hurried up the building at the Palace; (9) Judged the Prize-drawings; (10) A long letter arrived from Humboldt, and was revised for use in the *Propyläen*; (11) Was of some use at a few rehearsals of the Amateur Dramatic Society; (12) Paid a few visits to the Exhibition at the School of Art."

Goethe could only have made himself master of so many provinces of the mind by doing a little at a time of a great many things. In his youth, the only works he can really be said to have written at a sitting had been *Werther* and *Clavigo*; but now he definitely taught himself to exchange the *tempo furioso* of his method for the balanced pace of the mediaeval artists. He now scarcely ever put all himself into one impassioned production; but would have in hand a quantity of different things in early stages, at which on one day or another he worked hard, and it was as though the alternation refreshed instead of confusing him. Goethe's day, throughout all this second half of his life,

was more like a great organizer's than a researcher's, a Minister's, or a poet's.

His letters play a considerable part in these labours; they fill a thick volume yearly. The business-like temper of this decade is reflected in his cool matter-of-fact epistles to all and sundry; they were more polite than of yore, and all the more formal for that. Even to strangers he would frequently write an essay or short statement—the latter merely informative, the former for publication later on.

Everything was catalogued; he was determined to have chapter and verse for everything. Goethe had the creative kind of memory which from the remotest regions of thought and experience can call forth the right analogue at the critical moment; his was not of the reproductive type to which everything is immediately present. Satirical engravings from Paris were catalogued for the magazine, ideas and sequence of scenes for *Faust*, price-lists for the travel-diaries; for so " I can synthesize a great mass of material.... I have filled a few useful note-books already," he wrote from Switzerland, " in all of which my information is . . . written down or pasted in. Up to this the most kaleidoscopic stuff imaginable.... It will help me to be circumstantial about ever so many things."

But not only about this extremely tedious guide-book stuff—about all Goethe's literary work in this decade it may be said that to be " circumstantial about ever so many things " he simply wrote about them; hence his manipulation is often, nowadays, less interesting than the fact that he undertook to manipulate such material at all. Magazines—that is to say Goethe's desire to extend himself and to make money—led him, under Schiller's misguidance and guidance, straight into multifarious realms of scribbling. " It will make a useful paper for the *Propyläen* " —on such grounds he would seek to justify an article which was entirely out of his line. Every journalistic detail, moreover, was earnestly discussed, usually by his own desire—such as the different colours of the magazine-

covers, the cleansing of the copper-plates with turpentine, the setting-up and printing, done in Weimar, so that they might always be "thoroughly up-to-date."

The magazines bring us naturally to the prize-competitions for German painters, which were held year after year; but were so entirely literary in conception that they have left nothing of any value behind them. *Pictura ancilla Poetarum.* If a passage from a classic writer was set for illustration, the details of the environment were so precisely prescribed by Goethe (as President of the Committee) that no self-respecting landscape-painter cared to compete. The pictures would then be exhibited. It is still more grotesque to find the two great dramatic poets of Germany offering a prize for the best comedy of intrigue!

At this time, too, Goethe was reviewing for several papers.

Amidst all this task-work some masterpieces suddenly raise their heads. The review of Winckelmann is one of these; and in this Goethe, faced for the first time with the task of presenting a life in pure narrative form, selected his method with so sure an instinct that the little piece must be regarded as the pioneer of psychological biography, for never before had the chapter-headings of a Life stood thus: "Paganism. Friendship. Beauty. Strokes of Luck. Character. Society. Strangers. The World. Christ. Passing Over."

And just as his literary activities were less inventive than accumulative, so as a scientist he was less of a discoverer than an encyclopaedist. "Optics are progressing, though just now I approach them more from the practical point of view."

So he was back at his cataloguing, his classifying, had paper-bags made for him, and did in fact finish the didactic and half the historical and polemical portions of his Theory of Colour. And again, all this re-modelling of material about which he had long since formed his own ideas, was more for the sake of "being circumstantial"

to his own satisfaction in genetic matters than of contributing to that satisfaction in others.

Proteus could change into a poet in the twinkling of an eye—there was no pause in the shadow-play. And here we get an arresting light upon the baroque style of his mental architecture at this time: "The output of time and energy I have expended on these studies I can put to no better use than by turning them to account for a poem" —and so he proposes to make magnetic attraction "the theme of a poem; one must try one's hand at a part, when the whole might prove to be beyond one." If for "poem" we substitute "dépôt" or "branch," we might be considering a prudent business-man who, if he has failed at one point, at any rate proposes not to come entirely to grief. Of his more important projects he spoke in a like matter-of-fact way; of the most subtle things he would say that he was "working hard at them," and even of poems he would talk, before they were finished, in terms of the number of pages or hexameters. The success and selling-powers of works of art were more frequently alluded to than of old.

This provincial common-sensical state of mind inevitably kept him to epic poetry; and, writing almost nothing in dramatic form (and that little by no means actable), he maintained that epic poetry was ruled by reason, while in the drama blind Destiny held the reins! He became increasingly and perilously submissive to his material during this prosaic period.

Though in conception *Wilhelm Meister* belongs wholly to earlier years, some of the second part—the *Lehrjahre*—was not written at all until the beginning of the present phase. The work had dragged on too long, and finally it came to weigh on Goethe's mind; hence the latter half has lost something in ease and animation. He had come, tired out, to the end of a long road; yet—very uncharacteristically—he declared that the completed book was his great work.

One thing is certain—that throughout this second half there is an undertone of weariness. The characters are

inanimate, and still more so is the manner—sometimes it is prolix, sometimes cut and dried, sometimes grandiloquent. And everywhere the author, grown respectable and growing old, seems trying to account or apologize for the verve of his youthful beginning.

Hermann und Dorothea is—with the exception of *Die Natürliche Tochter*—the only one of Goethe's more important works which belongs to the Schiller decade; for *Wilhelm Meister* and *Faust* were but awaiting completion. This idyll, suggested by accounts of an incident in the Salzburg region, was conceived and written more rapidly than anything had been since *Werther*, and resembles it in brevity and finish. Two-thirds were written in nine days, and the conclusion, after a pause, took him no longer. Another point in common with *Werther* was its success—not, it is true, quite so sensational; and (as with *Götz*) that success was the outcome of a misunderstanding.

For Germany believed that it had been presented with the pattern German epic, and certainly the provincial homeliness which was an element of Goethe's mood at this time, the miniature-painter's touch, as it were—in short, everything that was Dutch in him came out in the eclogue. The names are tinged with this spirit, like the scenery and the domesticities, the social standing and the interests of the personages; in no other of his works is there such intimate and tender observation of simple, kindly, narrow lives. The German middle-class read the poem in this sense, and gratefully accepted it from the first moment of its publication.

It was well that the nation had no idea of what Goethe himself thought of the Germanness of his work. "In Hermann I have for once, so far as the material goes, given the Germans exactly what they want, and so they are overjoyed. I am wondering now if one could not write a drama on the same lines, which every theatre in the land would be obliged to produce, and which everyone would pronounce to be superlatively excellent, the author not necessarily being of the same opinion." Is there not a note

of disdain, of aloofness, of bitterness in that, as coming from the long unrecognized poet in the moment of a national triumph? Shall we give a yet plainer indication? "If I were younger," he subsequently wrote to the translator of his work in Paris, "I should arrange to pay you a visit, and learn something of French customs and localities. Perhaps I should then succeed in writing a poem which, translated by your hand, might not be ineffective as a companion-piece to *Hermann und Dorothea*."

Goethe regarded *Hermann* as an experiment in form. The piece was the outcome of a desire to reproduce, in a purely classical dress, what Voss had done before him—but with a modern theme. Germans, however, can truly apprehend the vivid sensuous beauty of the figures in the story only through their counterfeits on canvas or in stone; for the rhythms of this poem could never come home to German hearts. Even Goethe's diction could not conjure with the German hexameter; and so his most popular poem, next to *Faust*, is unquotable, unrecitable, to this day.

Similarly, does anyone ever quote the Epigrams in Germany? But all the world knows the brief quatrains from Oberon's Wedding, which continue the satiric themes of the Epigrams; and if we would realize to the full the intractability of the hexameter, we should listen, immediately afterwards, to the miraculously gossamer verse in which, at the very same time, Goethe derided the "German Parnassus." Only the happy accident that the original draft of *Faust* had been composed in the short measures characteristic of German folk-rhyme has endowed the nation with a poem round which it can comfortably get its tongue.

Towards the end of this period, however, there are moments of a lighter, brighter manner, which remind us of Schiller's having called *Wilhelm Meister* "a magic-lantern."

Sind es Kämpfe, die ich sehe?
Sind es Spiele? Sind es Wunder?

Fünf der allerliebsten Knaben
Gegen fünf Geschwister streitend,
Regelmässig, taktbeständig,
Einer Zaubrin zu Gebote . . .[1]

Did ever any of Goethe's poems begin with such sparkling gaiety, such fleet-footed grace, as does this *Magische Netz*? And some free translations (such as *O gib vom weichen Pfühle*) or those brief stanzas beginning "*Die Sterne, die begehrt man nicht,*" or the slightly ironic sentiment of a lyric like *Schäfers Klagelied*, or, again, the charming conceit at the end of the Cuckoo-song, "*mit Grazie in infinitum*"—these all herald a new note as of light-heartedness acquainted with grief, which makes itself felt towards the end of this period.

Even in his ballads Goethe abjured the tragic, at a time when Schiller, next door, was inspired by none but themes of that calibre. Hence the action of *Die Natürliche Tochter*, too, is interrupted before it reaches tragic heights. Vainly did Goethe strive to do what Schiller, at the same period, was doing so easily—to simplify his *dramatis personae* as in the classic dramas of fatality. Whenever he lacked the detail which his powers of intuition could transfigure into the typical, whenever Goethe had to deal from the start with the type pure and simple—he fell short both as poet and researcher. His work would then be frigid, would lack atmosphere—would be "a noble ennui," as Mme. de Stael said; and we feel cheated, so to speak, when Eugenie and even the Duke make their effect by a few magnificent but fortuitous exhibitions of character—thus proving themselves to be invented for the occasion—rather than as personages dedicated to the priesthood of ideas.

[1] Are they battles, there before me?
Are they revels? Mystic dances?
Five the youths of peerless beauty,
With a kindred five competing,
Time they keep, as if to music
Some enchantress bids them follow

Faust and his Theory of Colours he described as importunate spectres, which must be dealt with and laid at long last; and indeed it was only by the sweat of his brow and the pressure of circumstance that the poet, as recalcitrant as ever he had been, succeeded in finishing the first part of *Faust*. He was now fifty, and he added about eight hundred lines to what had been written between twenty-two and twenty-five, and augmented but slightly towards the end of his thirties. The new material increased by a third the Fragment then published, and perhaps we can nowhere more plainly perceive the different attitudes of the youthful and the elderly Goethe than in the following words: " The old (and though serviceable, absolutely chaotic) manuscript has been copied, and I have arranged the parts separately, in sequence, numbered on a systematic scheme."

It was after a fashion so entirely undaemonic, so ample and so sanguine, that Goethe seems to have addressed himself to re-kindling and polishing-off the once pulsating fragment.

And yet in solitary hours he would confront it with a kind of silent anguish, as though his youth, his whole life, were there mysteriously conjured up before his eyes.

Suddenly, without transition, as he turned some classic page, Goethe encountered Helen. And unhesitatingly—since she had her place in the old puppet-play of *Doctor Faust*—he brought her on the scene, writing three hundred lines for Helen, the Chorus, and Phorkyas, which are purely classic in form and sentiment. Begun thus arbitrarily, the fragment does not, for all its irrelevancy, interrupt the action of the drama; and Goethe wrote that " the beauty of my heroine's situation so enchants me that I shall be wretched if I find I have to burlesque it later on. Indeed, I feel no slight inclination to base a serious attempt at a tragedy on this beginning."

Goethe's conviction that the world of southern classic art was a higher, more sublimated region of the spirit was so profound that when he reconsidered his scheme, and

saw that he had arranged to include Helen in the original Faustean universe, he found the word "burlesque" upon his lips! He had not yet bridged the gap between the old and the new versions.

Immediately after he had sketched the Helen episode, he fell seriously ill; and no sooner had he recovered than he resumed the work of his youth at the critical point, and (in two months, at fifty-two) completed the First Part of *Faust*—that is to say, the conclusion of the first monologue and Easter-day, the walk taken by Faust and Wagner, the second monologue, and the wager with Mephisto. Four years then elapsed, before he thought of publishing this First Part as it stands to-day—and then it was to be as a Fragment. The war prevented publication for three years more—it is as though some fatality pursued the work which Goethe had begun so long ago.

But then *Faust* stood still for twenty-four long years—from fifty-two to seventy-six—before he began to write the Second Part.

The works of this period would have done little to revive public interest in the half-forgotten poet, had not *Hermann und Dorothea*, figuring as a German epic, added fresh lustre to his name. When Goethe stepped out of his immediate narrow circle, he was confounded by the national incomprehension of him. At fifty, he was classed as thirteenth in the ranks of German lyric poets!

More depressing was the want of appreciation among his friends. Nearly all of them condemned *Wilhelm Meister* and the Elegies; he ought not, they said, to have introduced the *Schöne Seele* (Beautiful Soul) into the brothel that *Meister* was, nor whores into the pages of the *Horen*. Stolberg actually made a solemn holocaust of the book, and had the confessions of the Beautiful Soul separately bound for him. Two women, who had known him twenty years and ought to have understood him, had these things to say of *Meister*: "When he deals with lofty emotions,"

wrote Frau von Stein, " he always flings some dirt at them, as if to deprive human nature of any pretensions to the divine." " One never knows," wrote Caroline Herder, " whether he is in earnest or not. . . . His manner is quite too invidious." So seldom did he hear any discriminating praise that Schiller's searching criticisms or Humboldt's expositions of *Hermann* and *Alexis* were sufficient to encourage him.

The phalanx of new-made enemies also acted as a kind of incentive. With his Epigrams he had made the mistake of setting up a clique when he was growing old, and exposing himself to public attacks in a way which for him was imprudent. In their retorts the victims designated him as a ram, as Aries, as a wether of the flock, and jeered at his natural son.

Finally Kotzebue, smarting under some social rebuffs, set up a clique in Weimar against Goethe. A proposal for an ostentatious tribute to Schiller, at Goethe's expense, in the theatre there, was officially turned down by Goethe in his capacity of Minister—unwisely enough, for it enabled his opponents to accuse him of jealousy, though the whole intercourse of the two poets proved the contrary. A group of young writers who hailed *Wilhelm Meister* and Goethe as their ideals, were sure to be attacked by Goethe's enemies whenever he showed them any favour or produced their works.

This caused him, for the first time, to lay an autocratic hand upon the freedom of the Press: he simply would not suffer a word to be said against his management in Weimar. On the first night of a play of Schlegel's there were outbursts of derision. Goethe rose, came forward, and standing sternly at the front of his box, called out to the pit: " No laughter, if you please! " When, next day, an editor withheld half the criticism of the play from his inspection, Goethe took the extreme step of threatening him with the Duke's intervention—" for I will either be relieved of this task altogether, or protected against such infamies for the future. . . . I will suffer no more of this

kind of thing in Weimar, while I hold my official position. I beg you to let me have your decision before four o'clock, for as soon as that hour strikes, my report shall be made to His Royal Highness." The attacks were discontinued, but Goethe took a further step—he requested Wieland to close his magazine thenceforth to that antagonist!

Soon afterwards a marked demonstration in favour of Schiller was made in the theatre by some students, and had the most unpleasant consequences. The Faculty in Jena was written to, the Professors were rebuked for the behaviour of their sons, there was a general explosion of feeling against Goethe's autocracy, several Professors left for other colleges, the famous literary journal was stopped, Kotzebue openly exulted, and the whole University of Jena was in danger of being boycotted!

Goethe's reaction to this uproar was a frantic effort to fill the vacant places and set things on their feet again, for he enjoyed most of the work he did at the Jena Academy. He devoted four months almost entirely to this business, personally inviting every possible specialist to contribute to the new literary journal which at great pains he established in Jena to replace the other, now edited at Halle.

All this is important to our knowledge of Goethe only because the incident awakened one of his lesser passions, love of power—which, no matter how great the provocation, would never have been thus conspicuously displayed except in his provincial phase. Goethe, who never really desired either to dominate or to possess, was at this middle period of his life repeatedly a prey to selfishly autocratic impulses.

On the whole, during this decade, he took his official position more seriously than when it had made much greater demands on his time. Now, when he had long ceased to idealize public life in any respect, he seemed determined to play up to his little world's view of him both as Saxon Minister and German author. Goethe's

attitude was quite as much the outcome of provincial self-consciousness as of genuine contempt. At this time he deliberately chose to give other artists a wrong idea of himself.

Jean Paul was awe-struck when he entered Goethe's house. Even the pictures and statues were enough to unnerve him, as he waited with Knebel. " At last the god made his appearance—cold, monosyllabic, uninterested. For instance, Knebel remarked that the French were entering Rome. ' Hm! ' was all the divinity said. He looks vigorous and full of fire; his eye is an abode of light. . . . But at last he woke up; it was not only the champagne but the conversation about art, the public, and so forth that did it—and behold! One was in the company of Goethe. He does not blossom out and pour forth as Herder does; his talk goes deep and is very quiet. His reading is like nothing so much as the roll of thunder, interspersed with the softest possible rustlings of rain—it is absolutely unique. At the end he read us, or rather acted us, a splendid unpublished poem where you could feel his heart flaming under the icy surface, so much so that he ended by pressing the hand of the enthusiastic Jean Paul. . . . By heaven, we are going to like each other, after all."

Schopenhauer's mother gives a similar account of how Goethe was always rather taciturn and as it were embarrassed, when he first came in—until he knew who was there. He would be carefully dressed in black or dark blue, his hair curled and powdered. But when he thawed and began to tell a story, he acted every character who spoke in it. That is why there are so many different descriptions of Goethe; and when disparagement appears in them, we may safely attribute it to the incapacity of the person concerned to capture his interest. A daughter of Frau Brentano's says that he was cold and priggish and looked like a Frankfurt wine-merchant; but Mendelssohn's daughter, at the same period, raves about him in a high-flown tiresome fashion.

A young engraver on wood failed to obtain access to Goethe in Weimar and was taken to the rehearsal of a masque, disguised in a domino. They pointed out the poet, excitedly conversing with his colleague in the auditorium, and continually jerking at his golden silk domino. And standing close to Goethe, who was finding great fault with the affected posturing of one of the actors, the stranger—nervous but adventurous—joined in and upheld the excited manager, who eagerly poured his grievance into this sympathetic ear. He was right, said the artist, and did well to be angry; and at last Goethe broke into a laugh—" but all of a sudden, as if recalled to his dignity, asked me with a positively terrifying austerity: ' But with whom am I speaking? Who are you? ' " Tremblingly the young man produced his letter of introduction from under the folds of his domino. Goethe recognized the name of an artist he admired, arranged to meet him again under a certain pillar, and when he came back, invited him very cordially to his house.

With youths of impressionable and ardent natures he was always at his ease, and was quite like a father to them, though he treated them on terms of perfect equality, calling them his friends. It was as though he wished to be rejuvenated by mixing with young people. He would scarcely let Fritz von Stein out of his sight, saying he missed him too much, " for in bygone days I understood you so thoroughly and was of so much use to you, and I need you even more now that you are so advanced and experienced, while I am growing older and a little one-sided." Young Voss was allowed to visit him at any hour of the day; Goethe would read Sophocles with him in his dressing-gown, and gave a dinner-party for him when he took his doctor's degree. They would take long walks together, discussing philosophical questions.

But none the less, Goethe's self-esteem was such that he regarded his theatrical management as an historical event, and some of the correspondence about it as matter for publication. Sometimes his attitude was positively

regal. When some gossiping critical indiscretions about the Weimar theatre appeared in Cotta's *Allgemeine Zeitung*, Goethe (though it was barely a year since his big contract with the publisher) gave him a slap in the face: "If you set any value on our pleasant relations in the past, if you have any sense of the charm of our intercourse, put an end to this unworthy chattering, which cannot fail to destroy our mutual confidence in a very short space of time. No more! Goethe."

This self-esteem, increasingly conspicuous in his public demeanour and actions, was much reinforced by a stronger sense of intellectual certainty and philosophical grasp. At this period he discovered in Schelling—for the first and only time in his life—a thinker whose system included his own visionary, poetic range of thought. The amateur physicist and research-worker felt himself vindicated by this young student of natural philosophy.

In Schelling's system Goethe's contemplative intellect found none of the repellent atmosphere, suggestive of a Polar landscape in its arid desolation, of the Kantean scheme with its uncouth categories, its hailstone-shower of *à priori* conceptions. The new thinker's organ-point was the World-Soul—a spiritual conception of the universe; nor did he contemn imagination. Symbolism was at the heart of his aesthetic, and Goethe was a true Schellingite when he stated his formula thus: "What is the Universal? The individual case. What is the Particular? Millions of cases."

Goethe, whom Schiller's speculations had always intimidated, driving him back with a confused sense of antagonism into his own domain, now for the first time ventured to give some of his verses a title of purely philosophical import, and to promulgate his ideal of that blend of poetry, thought, and observation which had been good enough for Plato and his followers, but not for Goethe's contemporaries. "The World-Soul"—so he now entitled a lyric which was ostensibly one of good fellowship, but embraced a complete outlook on the uni-

verse as seen by a man of fifty. In this poem Goethe's "God-Nature" was for the first time hymned in joyous alternation, as by a festive company at table. It is the mystical counterpart to the Pan-inspired *Ganymede* of the boy; and all that had surged within him through those thirty years of spiritual stress lies hidden here beneath the superficial aspect of a whimsical profession of faith. The light that never was on sea or land had dawned in Goethe's firmament.

A blend of materialism and magic—such was the form taken by religious faith in this man of fifty. When Schiller, steel-clad in cold philosophy, was discussing Wallenstein's belief in the influence of the stars, Goethe remarked that astrology was based "on an obscure sense of a vast cosmic whole. Experience tells us that the nearest planets have a decisive influence upon weather-conditions, vegetation, and so forth; and since man's upward evolution can only be gradual, it is impossible to say at what point that influence ceases to prevail. Thus man's prescience of his destiny inclines to take the further step of supposing that influence to embrace social conditions, such as fortune and ill-fortune. I should not even call it superstition—it lies so close to our nature, and is as acceptable and workable as any other belief."

The recusant, we perceive, is carefully feeling his way back to the native region of his soul. How apologetic is the materialist, how hard put to it the scientist, how reverential the biologist, when confronted by this image of the Divine, and feigning oblivion of the mystery which envelops it! And yet Goethe, when he uttered those intensely characteristic words—"man's prescience of his destiny"—set the whole question in the sphere of mystic thought. And now, too, his dream was of the "Lord of the earth, coming for the sixth time as one of like nature with ourselves, at one with us in joy and pain." This God, and this Bayadere, indeed might seem to dawn upon us from some intermediate world of faëry—approaching one another from their polar distances to find, to lose again,

and amid the flame at last to know each other in a marriage of true souls!

Towards the end of this period there was a tendency no less marked to superstitious beliefs, much more so than in the past of some decades ago. Goethe would dream a number and take a lottery-ticket, would be secretive and deceptive about his plans. He who in bygone days had made fun of Caroline Herder's forebodings and dreams was now dismayed when, sending good wishes to Schiller, he wrote "*last* New Year's Day" instead of "this year's." He tore up the sheet, but on the fresh one had the greatest difficulty in avoiding the ominous word, and on that very day he told Frau von Stein of his premonition that either he or Schiller would go that year. Four months later, Schiller was dead.

The old wonder, the old worship, filled his soul as of yore—that underlying sense of the superhuman. Young Voss heard him, at fifty-five, speak ardently, with flashing eyes, of susceptibility to emotion, and rage against the *nil admirari* attitude—"as if any living soul could believe anything in the whole of God's world to be less than a marvel and a sacred revelation of the Divine." In this vein he talked for an hour; then took his candle and went off without a Good-night.

It was the revival of his faith at the end of this period which tuned his mind to so confident a mood; and he needed it, for he was beginning to feel old.

At forty-seven he spoke of the end of his career, and soon afterwards of the disappointments belonging to the second half of life. "The new," he wrote at another time, "is, in our maturity, no longer a new thing, and the strange special case is of rare occurrence; one seems to be going downhill faster all the time." He commended Tieck's delight in youthful talent as an insurance for the future, which showed comprehension of the art of life; and when at the Court of Gotha they got up a surprise-party for his birthday, with a ceremonial cake on which the fifty-two candles threatened to set fire to one another, it was

in a mood of elderly sadness that he recalled the birthdays of his childhood when, instead of these crowded symbols of the years, the candles all had plenty of room.

Work was the only refuge from such merciless reminders. Once, in mystical mood, he expressed it thus: "Well, however it be, I am forcibly swept round my zodiac, and every sign in it gives me something different to do." He was less exalted when, proudly confident, he said to Schiller: "We will await the favours genius may grant us in the autumn of life." It was his time for seeking rejuvenation and solace from the Muse whom he so touchingly invokes in the apologetic Prologue to *Hermann und Dorothea*:

> Denn du bist es allein, die noch mir die innere Jugend
> Frisch erneuest und sie mir bis zum Ende versprichst.
> Aber, verdopple nunmehr, o Göttin, die heilige Sorgfalt!
> Ach, die Scheitel umwallt reichlich die Locke nicht mehr:
> Da bedarf man der Kränze, sich selbst und Andre zu täuschen.[1]

This is Goethe's first explicit acknowledgment of a sense of growing old—this mood in which he promises himself a phase of unresting endeavour.

He sought other means, however, of solving the dilemma of grey hairs and a young heart:

> Das Leben ist des Lebens Pfand, es ruht
> Nur auf sich selbst und muss sich selbst verbürgen.[2]

In that passage from *Die Natürliche Tochter* sounds the old fearless materialism. He tackled the problem differently in his programme for *Faust*, as now sketched; and the first and second portions of that work might very

[1] For it is thou, thou alone, who freshly dost ever restore me
Youthful feeling, and say: "So shall it be to the last."
Ah, but redoubled must fall, O goddess, thy heavenly bounties!
See, no more do the locks richly encircle my brow:
Hence the laurels are needed, to cheat myself and the others.

[2] Our life is pawned to Life, its only pledge
Is of itself, itself the sole redemption.

well be taken as the programme for the first and second portions of Goethe's life. Looked at in juxtaposition, they are highly significant: "Personal enjoyment of life as seen from without, in the backwater of passion: First Part. Enjoyment of action, directed outwards, and conscious enjoyment, beauty: Second Part." Finally, the problem of growing old became one with the old problem of the dual nature, which in the lines spoken by Faust about the two souls is more conspicuously in his mind than ever, though even there in only one of its manifestations.

On the whole, Goethe's polarity seems in this homely phase to have been more manageable, more normal—more legitimate, so to speak. He now boldly extended the law of polarity to embrace magnetic, electric, and similar influences in Nature; and now, too, in his new manner, he drew up a "scheme" for the various forms of sensation which brooded and thrilled within his being—centripetal and centrifugal, the former passive and conceivably vacuous, the latter active and frequently called forth by immediate objects. Thus on one side of the scale he set reclusiveness, apathy, languor as vacuous sensations, a blend of physical requirements, timidity, lost innocence, vague symbolism, regret for or expectation of an unspecified beloved, a weakness peculiar to dreamy natures—and on the other, the centrifugal side, he classed aspiration, ambition, conscience, love of travelling, planting for posterity, premonitions, appraisement of existence, shooting, fishing, building, road-making, representation.

Goethe's dual nature was the supreme inspiration for the new *Faust*-scenes, and Schiller went so far as to declare that the duplexity of human nature was the essential idea of the work—the unsuccessful effort to unify the divine and the physical elements in man; and with great perspicacity he continued: "The devil, because of his materialism, gains the verdict from the intellect; Faust, from the heart. But sometimes the parts seem to get mixed, and the devil turns into an advocate for divine reason as

against Faust." Again, Goethe himself said in the afterwards rejected Envoi to *Faust*:

> Und hinterwärts mit allen guten Schatten
> Sei auch hinfort der böse Geist gebannt,
> Mit dem so gern sich Jugendträume gatten,
> Den ich so früh als Freund und Feind gekannt.[1]

Broadly speaking, in this period he was so absorbed in Mephisto (who, in reality, was never at all a disturbing influence in the original conception of *Faust*, but merely Faust's evenly matched opponent) that in a conversation about the work with a young Professor of History—the longest conversation we have of Goethe's—he always took Mephisto's part against Faust.

But it was the inevitable logical result of all the defensive measures taken in this Protean decade that the daemonic element in his nature should be somewhat obscured. We seldom read of any outbursts of wrath; nor do we often hear (with the exception of Faust's great curse) in verses, prose, or letters that clamouring of his soul, enamoured of the universal as it was, for air, for felicity. If he was attacked by fits of impatient revolt at futile labour, we see him somehow managing to get rid of them, for—in his own remarkable words to a friend—" It is better to relinquish once for all than to be for ever in a rage about yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow."

Slowly, and with cautious tread, he was at the end of this period climbing the green hill of serenity.

Since the outbursts of his youth with their savagely satirical tendency, Goethe's humorous writings had constantly revealed a stern, frowning habit of mind. Something of Northern heaviness which even the South could not conjure away, had pressed ever more weightily upon the spirit which, between his middle twenties and forties,

[1] With every kindly spirit relegated,
That Evil One shall vanish from my sight,
With whom the dreams of youth too fondly mated,
Whom, friend and foe, I early read aright.

had striven so earnestly to find repose in the common activities of humanity. The earlier manifestations of the new temper had a strain of crude jocosity which was somewhat provincial and old-fashioned; but probably this note was, after the tension of the last decade, the same sort of relief to Goethe that it is to posterity. For instance, he gave Schiller a comic description of all the gifts which his friends in Jena had made him in a recent week, ranging from an amputated foot to a crab-supper. Or he sent a messenger to wrest *Wallenstein* from the still hesitant author, saying that "he represented a detachment of Hussars, with instructions to take possession of the Piccolomini, father and son, at any cost. . . . By order of the Melpomene Commission of Investigation into the Wallenstein Disturbances, graciously appointed by Messrs. Goethe and Kirms." Such moods inspired poems like his *Séance*, with its forced march of capital letters, or *Musen und Grazien in der Mark* (*The Muses and Graces in Prussia*), or *Der Neue Alkinous* (*The New Alcinous*) where the Jena School is parodied.

But it was only at first that Goethe's newly revived humour was so cumbrous; it soon became fleeter-footed—in the end it grew wings. Eros dwelt on the way to Serenity.

Even Eros, though, makes rather a rough clownish entrance at the beginning of this period. The uncouth stanzas of Mephisto and the Chorus were evidently introduced at this time into the Paralipomena to *Faust*, and it is likewise with the interlineations in the Walpurgisnacht.

In the third version of *Götz* some burning scenes with Adelheid, which belonged to the original conception, were restored; the *Neue Pausias*, and above all *Alexis und Dora*, are aflame with sensual exultation; and the two great ballads end in a blaze of erotic triumph.

Moreover, there are many more of those charming, felicitous, gracious social remarks which were almost unheard during the twenty years we have been considering. At a ball in Jena a young writer, at the height of the

dancing, asked him if he was going to stay much longer. "Longer than I had thought I should—as long as it is so delightful. I have so many friends here, and one makes so many pleasant acquaintances, that I don't know when I shall depart; but I shall soon be returning to Jena for work." And when the young man applauded him for his interest in youth, Goethe answered: "When I see around me all this growing, all this budding, in other people's children and my own, as here to-night—that is life, is it not, life in its essence? What else could remind me that I am, and am what I am?"

We cannot fail to catch in such remarks those minor tones which some of us who come after him find more ravishing than many a famous passage in his works—and in phrases like these, casually uttered between two dances, we are listening to the first notes of the overture to a new Goethean manner.

Soon his song soared into the blue, and an April blitheness now informs a succession of brief lyrics—of a kind that he had not attempted for thirty years, but in his youth could never have fashioned with such skilful, tender hands:

Tage der Wonne,
Kommt ihr so bald?
Schenkt mir die Sonne,
Hügel und Wald? [1]

Or that glorious one, also written at fifty:

Was zieht mir das Herz so?
Was zieht mich hinaus?
Und windet und schraubt mich
Aus Zimmer und Haus? [2]

[1] Early, O smiling
Day, art thou come,
Sunlit, beguiling
Hill, forest, to roam?

[2] What tugs at my heart so?
What tugs me, and fast
Entwining me, drags me
From indoors at last?

Or perhaps those graceful, airy *Weissagungen des Bakis* (*Prophecies of Bakis*), where a heavy-laden soul begins to make friends with the universe, in stanzas full of a radiant serenity. The "magic-lantern" effect which Schiller's penetrating eye had discerned in *Meister*, is here in full force.

And though these few unfamiliar poems, for all their beauty, are more like milestones on the path of this pilgrim-spirit than monuments of his genius, their music does lead us straight back to Goethe's spiritual home. For only of kindliness is serenity born; both are gifts of maturity, and flower late and warily in natures driven by mysterious urgencies.

When Humboldt lost one of his children, Goethe wondered whether to send him *Die Natürliche Tochter* would console him or open the wound afresh. To an actress, who sent her adolescent son to the Weimar theatre with some misgivings, Goethe wrote: "You will have patience with your bantling, if you should hear too often of some trifling imprudence. I always think of these babes, cast upon a world of strangers, as of birds allowed to fly about in a room."

For the building operations at the Palace he engaged the workmen without the intervention of the master-builders, for these latter always took a commission on the wages. He wrote to consult his colleagues on the Council as to whether the library-attendant might be permitted to ask for a Christmas-box from those who used the library, "for this might easily lead to a general system of importunity."

A letter about a servant's tip—is not this typical of the odd things we come upon in characterizing these twelve years, which lie like a vast lake, circumscribed yet often apparently shoreless, along the frontiers of Goethe's old age?

But while all this Protean endeavour sought to elude the well-marked enclosure, Tyche, who had rather neglected Goethe during these ten years, made up for it to

posterity by preserving a single page—more valuable for the history of that soul than a thousand others. It is a fragment from the beginning of this period, but was not discovered among his unpublished papers till a hundred years later—a note without preamble or superscription, written in the third person, probably so that the secretary to whom he dictated it might not know it related to himself, for Goethe gives us here a summary, one might almost say of his whole endeavour up to nearly fifty.

"A tireless energy, a poetically conceived passion for self-development both spiritual and material form the focus and the groundwork of his existence; once that fact is grasped, all else that may seem contradictory is explained. Since this passion knows no rest, he is forced, if he would not feed upon empty air, to turn his attention outward, and being not contemplative but merely practical, meet externalities on their own terms. Hence the many false shots at plastic art, for which talent—at active life, for which adaptability—at science, for which perseverance—are equally lacking; but since his attitude to all three is consistently inquiring, and he is himself irresistibly impelled to demand actuality in materials and contents, and unity and suitability in form, even these misdirected endeavours are not without fruit both spiritual and material. . . . In practical affairs he can be useful, when these are directed by a definite purpose; and finally, in one way or another, a permanent achievement is the reward, or at worst he finds he has done something worth doing as a side-issue. When hindered, he is not at all pliable; but he gives in or opposes with all his might, holding out or dismissing the subject, according as his conviction or his mood get the upper hand at a given moment.

"He can bow to circumstance, to emergency, and the demands of necessity, art, and craftsmanship; but he cannot bring himself to look calmly on at work done by rule of thumb, yet pretending to proficiency. Ever since he grasped the fact that in science the measure of culture attained by the inquiring mind matters more than the actual

phenomena with which we deal—ever since then he has but the more regularly pursued and delighted in what had formerly been an occasional uninspired endeavour; nor has he . . . entirely lost interest in the other two activities, but practises them now and then, only with more of perception and acceptance of the limitations which he knows to be his. And the more because the cultivation of any one mental faculty to the best of our ability will prove beneficial to every other.

" The special character of his poetic efforts is for others to define. Unfortunately his temperament has created many hindrances and difficulties for him in the handling of his material no less than of his form, and he has attained to some degree of perception only when the period of unabated energies has gone by. An idiosyncrasy which both as artist and man has always swayed him is a certain susceptibility and mobility which is at the mercy of direct impressions, and must either ignore immediate objects or make them a part of itself."

If this self-portrait confirms our delineation in all its particulars, it no less thrusts upon us, in its staggering dispassionateness, Goethe's perception that all perception comes too late.

But even so, these twelve years might seem to have been almost empty of developments, had they not been salutarily and profoundly disturbed by four great crises.

Only the first of these was voluntary—the plan of another trip to Italy. Yet can we call that obscure and potent urgency by the name of will, of purpose? Was it not rather a propulsion ever freshly renewed in Goethe's being since his return from the South? He thought of collaborating with Meyer in a great book about Italy. But in truth, though he was scarcely conscious of it, something far stronger impelled him. For the second time he was craving escape from the all too mundane, too importunate environment of his life; and again it was escape, too,

from the woman—like Charlotte of yore, a symbol of his state. For the second time he was planning a kind of flight from Weimar. He had sent Meyer on before him. Years and days, military campaigns, were to intervene between the two; and it is typical of Goethe's then remoteness from mundane events that the name of a young General meant no more to him, when he first heard it, than a portent which might prove dangerous to a single work of art—he hoped that a picture despatched to him by Meyer "would escape the omnipresent and omnipotent Bonaparte's clutches."

Not yet did he dream of the heights to which that name was to lead his imagination. Still, as of yore, he regarded contemporary history from the mere standpoint of whether the war would keep him out of Rome or suffer him to get there. But though he consulted Meyer, who was ill and returning to his native Switzerland, on the best route they could take for Rome, he talked (now as then!) to the Duke and Christiane of a short visit to the Lake of Zurich.

The uncertainty got on his nerves. When the prospects seemed favourable, he was sociably inclined; when they were not, he resorted to working on *Faust*, so as to have "a path of retreat into the cloudland of symbolism and ideas." This labour was the best anodyne for his restlessness, during the one quiet month it lasted—he said that "the work promised to spread like a vast outgrowth of fungus, to the general astonishment and consternation. If my trip falls through, my only hope is in this piece of skylarking." So monstrously did Goethe exaggerate his craving for the sunny South that he could thus monstrously depreciate the most northern in atmosphere of all his works! In this state of vacillation, which in his maturity never arose from anything but a sense of loss of external liberty (and was therefore of very rare occurrence) he spent a whole summer, leaving *Faust* to its fate before long and getting through the days as best he could; "and I am vain enough to compare myself to Orpheus' lyre, which

sounds but accidentally as it is borne upon the billows to the open sea."

At last there seemed to be nothing to prevent his starting. He engaged his lodging before he set out, made his son his heir, insisting upon even his old mother's renunciation of all her claims upon the property, burnt countless records of his life and loves, and then was sorry he had done it. Such, before he left his home—perhaps for ever—and stood contemplating the orderly volumes of his letters, was Goethe's hesitation between discretion and biography.

Now he settled down for weeks beside the Lake of Zurich, and ransacked the region with Meyer. A queer pair they must have seemed to many a God-forsaken Swiss hamlet, as they wandered about, poking their noses into everything, wool-gathering, botanizing all over the place.

And then, for the last time in his life, he stood upon the Gothardt Pass, and again he was stirred by the symbolism of this boundary between two countries, tongues, climates —two worlds, to both of which he belonged, and wished he could belong more whole-heartedly. And once more, for the third time, he turned his back upon the Pass. Here, twenty-two years ago, he had stood and looked back longingly to Lili. Here, eighteen years ago, he had stood and looked back longingly to that Duchy where he had hoped, with all the force of his being, to build himself a sure abiding-place. And eleven years ago he had hurried over another Pass, eastward, with the same South for goal—driven onward by the disillusionment and perplexity in which that Duchy, and the inextricable spell of one woman in it, seemed to have entangled him inextricably for evermore.

Now he was nearly fifty, more easy-going, inured to moderation in every pleasure of the senses. The war was not much of a nuisance, people could travel, others were not deterred—the war was no real reason for changing his mind. Why then did Goethe for the third time turn tail at the threshold of Italy?

He was a husband and father—and that called him back. He had fled of yore from Charlotte; now he hurried back to Christiane, not because his love for her was a deeper, but because it was a happier, thing. Woman-like, her instinct had warned her that she might lose him; yet assuredly it was not the mere dread of danger for him, but the healthy impulse to preserve the happiness she knew which made Christiane plead with such unwonted urgency: "I implore you by everything there is in the world, not to go on to Italy just now! You love me so well that you will never let me lose my prayers!" And she made the boy, too, appeal to his heart, and tried another method herself: "If you do go on to Italy or take any long journey, and won't let me come with you, Gustl and I will start off to follow in your tracks, for I would rather go through any sort of tribulations than be without you so long again!"

Such cries as these plucked at the greying Goethe's heart; and he answered: "So far as the danger is concerned, there was nothing to prevent my going on to Italy . . . but I could not bear to be so far away from you. If it proves impossible to take you, I will give up the idea of seeing Italy again. . . . I can . . . say that it is only for your sake and the boy's that I am returning. . . . Already I could wish to be at home with you, to bid you good-night and good-morning in the green alcove, and have you bring me my breakfast. . . . It's a bad business, this going away—something like being dead." He knew what he was giving up, and yet he had to give it up. Of his vacillation between North and South the best witness is *Amyntas*, then and there composed.

No sooner back than his laments began again in full force! Profound were his sighs, as he looked through what Meyer had written. When he thought of the Niobe, he could have ordered his carriage for Florence; Humboldt in Rome was commissioned to kiss the Giustiniani Minerva's hands for him; and when Wolf, the Homeric expert, came so near as Halle, the place seemed to Goethe "a Southern country." He chose Greek plays of the

Romantic period in preference to any others for the theatre, so that he might see the classic scuplture come to life, and in an essay at this time it was all summed-up in: "The Southern race is the enkindled race."

The second crisis? In the middle of this period a severe illness brought him near to death for the first time since his twentieth year. Afterwards he called it "the great, ferocious illness." Like that earlier one, it too broke out alarmingly with scarcely any warning, was perilous in the extreme but short-lived, and left him ailing for years. And just as then our interest did not lie in the physiological causation of an ailment (which on both occasions pointed to some disorder of the blood, with fever, ague-fits, and heart-trouble) but in its psychical consequences—so now posterity seeks to discover the underlying moral cause of so acute, so abrupt a visitation. This time it was a stone in the kidneys, an affliction to which strong drinkers are frequently subject; and he wished he had the organs "of one of those healthy Russians who fell at Austerlitz." The preliminary symptoms were slight. He caught cold at the Palace, and collapsed in the ever-dreaded month of January; there were weeks of fever, a short period of horror in which his eyesight seemed to be going, the household was distraught, the Duke lent a helping hand—and in his delirium Christiane heard the sick poet quoting verses, probably from a *Höllenfahrt Christi* (*Christ's Descent into Hell*), which had been wrung from the boy of sixteen in the earlier ordeal.

Through it all his scientific impulse persisted. He daily dictated for his diary an account of his state on the day before. On that following the crisis which nearly cost him his life: "Last night, too, was very restless. High delirium. In the morning at eight o'clock there were three hours of sleep, the spasms decreased in frequency and the swelling in the eye diminished." Of

course the data were given him by his nurses; but that he should have asked for them and dictated them as as though he were doctor instead of patient, is a fresh proof of Goethe's ability and resolve to keep cool in the throes of fever—a symptom of the polarity of his nature.

The first thing the convalescent asked for was music; and the first letters he was able to write have music in them, as it were—a solemn Largo from him who could breathe and see once more. He fingered the texture of his life anew, and found that "none of the threads seem to have broken; the mixture goes on as of old, and even production seems to be peeping round the corner."

Soon—behold!—production came out of its corner. That time-honoured poem of his youth, that fragment, once rejected as a torso, lifted a haughty head and stepped forth as though determined to inhale the renewed vitality and offer it up in gratitude for Death's overthrow. There seems to be some mysterious connection between *Faust* and the two illnesses which endangered Goethe's life at nineteen and at fifty-one. The former led the sceptic to make his first acquaintance with the mystic writings which were condensed into the beliefs and superstitions of Faust, as originally conceived; the latter led the materialist back to a coherent continuation of Faust's first self-communings, which had formerly broken off upon a dissonance. But for these two momentous physical interruptions the fragmentary poem would scarce have been either begun or completed.

His body, with its fifty years upon it, took longer than before to revive. Five years of recovered activity could but slowly restore the shattered constitution; and so the two succeeding times of crisis found Goethe still in precarious health. He was still ailing, though it was four years since his illness, when Schiller's last year on earth began. By Christiane's account he was "scarcely ever really well, and many were the occasions when one could not but think him on the point of death.... The attacks were

usually of regular monthly occurrence, and attended with the severest pain, to which he was obliged each time to succumb." It was at this period that Schiller collapsed, never again to rise from his bed. Goethe had always hitherto been of the greatest help to him in these attacks, and his mere presence had seemed like a recall to life.

Now they were both sad, ailing, and grown older. Schiller declared he was completely undermined. There they both lay or sat in their well-heated houses, a few hundred yards between them, each accustomed to cheer the other in his hours of weakness—and all they could do was to exchange notes like prisoners. As time went on, Goethe got better, Schiller worse. Goethe did visit him, a week before the end. Schiller wanted to go to the play, but Goethe felt unwell, and said a last adieu to him at his hall-door. Soon afterwards he sent him some pages of his Theory of Colour: "And may you soon be quite yourself again!" Then both men had a relapse. Christiane was frightened about Goethe; Schiller, in the midst of a feverish renewed activity, fell seriously ill again.

It was the end. No one dared to tell the other invalid; Meyer could not bring himself to utter the words. "I see," said Goethe, "that Schiller must be very ill indeed." Christiane said he had been unconscious for some time; then she pretended to be asleep, so that Goethe might not work himself into a state of alarm. In the morning he asked: "Schiller was very ill yesterday, wasn't he?" His wife began to sob. "He is dead?" asked Goethe firmly. Then he wept. They did not tell the invalid a word about Schiller's inglorious funeral. "I felt as if I had lost myself, and I *have* lost a friend," he wrote soon afterwards, "whom to lose is the loss of half my being. I suppose I ought really to change my way of life altogether, but at my age that is out of the question. So I just live from day to day, and do the first thing that turns up."

Is there not a note in that of the sort of annoyance, of estrangement, with which a King might deplore the retirement of his most trusted Minister? In that very

same month Voss was obliged to leave Weimar; and Goethe exhausted himself in passionate complaints and reproaches to Voss's son, saying that he had had to submit to the loss of Schiller, but Voss's departure "was not the fault of destiny; men had brought *that* about." The fine flower of his friendship with Schiller had faded; but that his familiar intercourse with Schiller or Voss should be broken up by death or departure was more than Goethe could endure in these particular years. He took weeks to recover from such personal grievances, inflicted on him by destiny or the will of another.

When he did begin to consider how they could best honour the dead genius, he was quite himself again. For soon after the brief dejection caused by Schiller's death, Goethe began, for the first time in many years, to recover health and vitality. That this was no accident, but a law of his being which made him always feel spiritually regenerated when a crisis was over, a comparison with future losses will prove.

Not more than three weeks after Schiller's death Goethe had planned a great tribute to his friend in the shape of a choric threnody. But it came to nothing, as did his earlier plan of finishing *Demetrius*. The epilogue to the dramatic version of *Die Glocke* is the only epitaph to that wonderful alliance which we possess; and once more we feel, when reading those verses, that Schiller does not pervade Goethe's life as do Herder and Jacobi, but moves through its third act like some impressive but transient figure in an episode. It is an ideal image of Schiller which Goethe gives us in the lines:

> Nun glühte seine Wange rot und röter,
> Von jener Jugend, die uns nie entfliegt,
> Von jenem Mut, den früher oder später
> Den Widerstand der stumpfen Welt besiegt![1]

[1] Redder upon his cheek the rose shone glorious,
That rose of youth which poets keep for aye,
That courage, soon or late to be victorious,
Though the dull world withstand it many a day.

Just as after that brief subjective anger and real sorrow for Schiller a heightened vitality was apparent in Goethe, so in the fourth of these crises—the upheaval in public affairs which threatened to break him down—he seemed on the contrary to be filled with all the ardour of his youth; for now the threads of his public and private life were strangely intermingled, and this is the cardinal point in the chronicle of that Protean period's final years.

Christiane, hitherto mistress, mother, and housekeeper, had in these recent semi-invalided years become Goethe's nurse as well; and as he lost courage and health and felt the support of her strong capable hand, the relation between these two (soon to have been united for twenty years) began slowly to take a different form. An ageing, ailing, increasingly solitary man at the end of his fifties was conscious of being upheld and stimulated by a brave cheerful woman at the beginning of her forties; and if hitherto he had paternally guided her steps as though she were his child, he now clung to her ripe youthfulness as that father in his grey hairs might have done.

For now he owed her such gratitude as she had formerly owed to him, and in gratitude—the emotion to which he was most susceptible—Goethe was second to none. Ever since the first years of their union he had treated Christiane as his wife; and now he felt himself her debtor until the world, too, should treat her so. So that the intention of marrying her which he now cherished was dictated by his feeling for her, not by any suggestion from without, and still less by Christiane's influence. Not a single word in any of their letters, spontaneous as a rustic song, no hint from any of their numerous enemies, gives the least handle to the conjecture that she (as would have been comprehensible enough after all their years together) made any attempt to persuade him into marriage.

But though Goethe's gratitude made him anxious to regularize their union, the tragic irony of Fate decreed that their life together lost in intimacy when the outward

bond was more defined. Goethe married Christiane just when he was beginning to feel that he needed her presence less; and his inward dilemma had been earlier revealed, when he congratulated his friend Knebel on the regularization of a similar bond: "In such cases it always comes to this—one has to choose between two sacrifices." But even then he did not make that choice.

In the summer after Schiller's death Goethe, restored to health, wrote these earnest words to his mistress: "I thank you for all the love and devotion you have shown me recently; may you be rewarded for them in good measure, and I hope, while I live, to contribute to your happiness by every means in my power." It sounds frigid, but from Goethe it meant a promise; and on his birthday he had something warmer to say: "If it goes well with me I shall rejoice for your sake especially, since wherever I have known delight I have silently wished for you."

In the winter he was ill again for a while, and Christiane was in a state of utter despair, for her sister and aunt, then inmates, died in the house. Later, in the summer, she and Goethe quite regained their strength, but in different places and by different methods.

While Goethe in Carlsbad was re-entering social life and beginning to sketch and geologize, Christiane too had left home, but was alone for the first time in her life. Her kindred were dead; August, at seventeen, spent much of his time with his companions in the hill-country among the castles; Goethe was living in Bohemia—so Christiane betook herself to Lauchstädt, where she was received with open arms by the company at the theatre.

But there, remote from Weimar and on holiday, even aristocratic circles condescended to pay her some attention. She was now received in some sort as Goethe's wife; she rode and drove, was considered pretty and amusing, much might be conveyed through her to the powerful Minister, and therefore she was courted. It turned her head a little, to be invited to tea-parties and balls by the nobility. But now her accounts of it all left Goethe cold;

he merely wrote that she was to make hay while the sun shone. " I was pretty sure that you would be spending more money, anyhow. And now farewell to you, with your luncheon-parties, dinners, dances, and theatres."

In September both were back in the house at Weimar.

Suddenly consternation and terror filled the neighbourhood. Napoleon's victorious army was advancing on Central Germany. Many people fled. Goethe did not stir, did not even remove his papers; it was as though he thought, like Danton, in misanthropic pride: " They will never dare! " He quietly went on with his theatrical work, putting on a play to the resentment of the company, for the house was almost empty. Goethe entered his box and gave the signal to begin. The paltry operetta was sung by very nervous voices; when it was over, to-morrow's programme was announced.

To-morrow was the 14th of October 1806.

At Jena, on that day, a battle was fought which changed the course of history. Prussia was vanquished, and with Prussia the Duke of Weimar, who had again become a Prussian General. Sitting in his house, Goethe could hear the cannons. Fugitives came running into the town, the theatre was converted into a hospital; the French followed up their victory, and by that evening the entirely defenceless town of Weimar was in their hands. Nobody knew where the Duke had gone when the lost battle was over. The Dowager-Duchess, her Court, and many officials had fled before that day. Only the reigning Duchess Luise, and Goethe, the Minister-in-charge, remained at their posts. His whole existence was at stake—he must have known it, for Napoleon's aim was to annihilate the Duke, and he could easily have seized the Minister instead of the fugitive ruler.

Goethe did as the emergency demanded. His son and secretary were the first people he sent to meet the French Hussars (now riding in by the Frauentor near by) with wine and beer; he himself went over to the Palace—with a young Hussar-officer. It is uncertain whether the young

man then gave Goethe his name. He was Lili's son, now in the service of France.

Sixteen Alsatian troopers were quartered on Goethe—tired, good-humoured fellows, amenable to food and drink. At the same time some fugitives from the town collected in the back-premises, seeking refuge from the looting soldiery, as though their poet's and Minister's house were a place of sanctuary. Christiane was indefatigable in providing food, clothing, and shelter; forty beds were made up, and the table-linen was used as bed-linen.

Then in the dead of night was heard a violent hammering of butt-ends on the door, and two armed tirailleurs demanded entry. Those already installed refused it. The newcomers hammered still harder; Riemer, the secretary, at last opened the door, and gave them food and drink, They then asked for the master of the house. Goethe, who till now had kept out of sight in his own two rooms, appeared in his dressing-gown on the staircase, carrying a candle. He asked them if they had not had all that they could reasonably require. "His dignified imposing figure, and the intellect in his face, inspired them with respect," says Riemer. Then he withdrew.

But no sooner was he gone than the pair, intoxicated by fighting and drink, began to bluster more violently than ever, demanding beds; and finding there was none to be had, they rushed upstairs to Goethe's room and covered the defenceless man with their weapons. They might have wounded or killed Goethe—a couple of drunken tirailleurs on the night after the Battle of Jena.

But Christiane rushed up the back-staircase from the garden, bringing a man with her, and threw herself between them. With superhuman strength, born of the emergency, and aided by the man, she drove out the soldiers and bolted herself and Goethe into the room. The drunken men stumbled cursing down the broad Italian staircase of the silent house, flung themselves on the beds which stood in readiness for the Marshal and his staff, and

when the Adjutant at last arrived at break of day, he drove them out with the flat of his sword.

Goethe, unarmed and defenceless, had been saved by his mistress—that fact has never been disputed. To the brave, loving Christiane Vulpius the world probably owes the last twenty-five years of Goethe's life, in which the *Diwan* and *Wahlverwandschaften* (*Elective Affinities*), *Pandora*, *Wahrheit und Dichtung* (*Fact and Fiction*), the second parts of *Wilhelm Meister* and *Faust*, were written.

Again Goethe had stood immovable in a short-lived crisis, wholly the victim of circumstances. Scarcely was it over—on the very next morning—than his soul seemed filled with a rapture of grateful emotion. The danger was past; on that following day the Marshals of the French Revolutionary Army took measures to ensure Goethe's safety; their safe-conduct designated him as "*un homme reconsidérable dans toutes les acceptions du mot.*" Denon, Director-General of the Paris Galleries, who accompanied Napoleon and had known Goethe in Venice, was now his guest, and had portraits painted both of him and Wieland.

Meanwhile Goethe was unwearying in reassurance of his friends. All his notes are quiet, manly, even cheerful. He was at his very best—Paris had come to Goethe, the Empire was as it were installed in his house; he felt it all to be a stimulating event.

But the diary was kept as diligently as in the most halcyon periods; and nowhere is its pedantry, its wilful affectation of provincial detachment, more ludicrous in effect than in those days of the Battle of Jena. It is as though Goethe had held the white-hot hours in a great pair of pincers, and plunged them into a cold bath of biography so as to render them innocuous.

"*14th October.* Morning cannonade at Jena, followed by a battle near Kötschau. Rout of the Prussians. In the evening at 5 o'clock the cannon-balls smashed in the roofs. At half-past five the chasseurs entered the town. At 7 conflagration, looting, a fearful night. Our house saved by stability and good luck. *15th.* Marshal Lannes

in billets. 16*th*. Lannes gone. Immediately afterwards, Marshal Augereau. Extreme anxiety in the interval. . . . Dined with the Marshal. Several introductions. . . . 17*th*. Marshal Augereau left. 18*th*. Denon arrived. . . . With Denon to the Duchess. Received. Late in the evening, at Court. . . . 19*th*. Wedding-day."

For just as in the past Goethe had been haunted for a year and a half by the Werther-mood—his love for Lotte, the suicide of Jerusalem—then suddenly in a flash to feel the whole experience crystallize within him and write *Werther* in the course of a few weeks . . . so now, after that night of mortal peril and rescue, he gathered into one great impulse all the wishes, all the obligations, all the inhibitions and claims which for many a long year had revolved round the question of his mistress's position—and, four days later, was married to her.

He wrote to the Court-Chaplain of Weimar: " These recent days and nights have confirmed me in a long-considered purpose—I intend that my young friend, who has done so much for me and has gone through these hours of trial by my side, shall be fully and formally recognized as my wife. . . . Please give the messenger, if he finds you, an immediate answer, and oblige. Goethe."

Was Romeo more insistent with the Friar? We know that Goethe had engraved within the wedding-ring the date of the day which had been so near to seeing the end of him and his Prince.

On the Sunday after the Battle of Jena, Goethe was married to Christiane in the vestry of the Court-chapel, in the nineteenth year of their life together; and the witnesses were their son of seventeen and his private tutor.

In that moment all the elements of Goethe's strange career seem to be shuffled together like a pack of cards—complete freedom from prejudice, swift resolve after prolonged consideration, trust and gratitude, sense of duty and self-respect prevailing over appearances and worldly advantage, world-history regarded merely from an

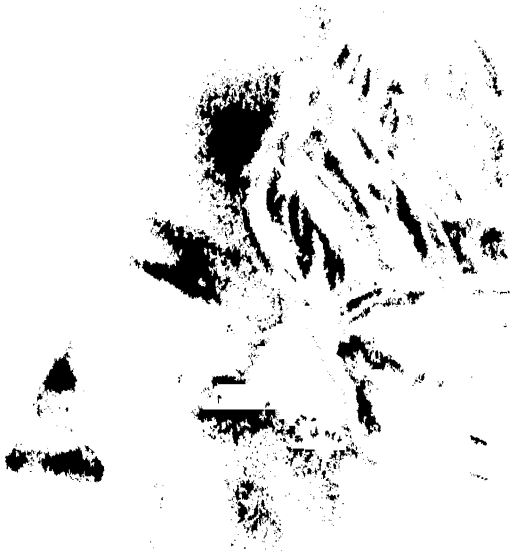
extremely subjective standpoint—and to crown all, a Court-chapel and a private tutor. But as though nothing had happened, the relentless diary goes on:

" 19*th*. Wedding-day. Denon came back from Erfurt. . . . 20*th*. Showed Denon the medals. . . . Spent the day at Court. . . . In the evening at Mme. Schopenhauer's. Letter to Herr Cotta. . . ."

His attitude about his wife was uncompromising. He presented her to his intimates and business-friends with the words: " I introduce my wife to you with this testimony—that ever since she first entered my house, I have known nothing but happiness with her." And when a newspaper wrote that amid the thundering of the cannon of Jena Goethe had seen fit to marry his housekeeper, he merely sent Cotta a stiff intimation that he considered it unseemly; but in his rough draft we find these proudly indignant words: " I am not of sufficient importance for my domestic affairs to be made the subject of a leading-article. But if there should be any suggestion of that kind, I am of opinion that my country owes it to me to take this step of mine in a serious spirit, for my life has been, and still is, lived in that spirit."

On that night of Jena, Goethe looked death in the face for the fifth time. In his youth he had felt that mystical methods had saved him; on the boat near Capri he had been the poet and the dreamer, submissive to destiny; under the hail of bullets he had felt his pulse like a scientist; on the day after the crisis of his illness he had noted " extreme danger " in his diary. On the night of Jena he had stood defenceless, as it were naked, before the drunken herald of victory, and let himself be rescued by a guardian angel of that sex which he served throughout a lifetime.

But ever and always to look death in the face—his own death or his friends'—was for him but to know renewed vitality. And now he made haste with his writings, sending enough belated manuscript for three volumes to Cotta; for " the dilatory days are over, the pleasant hours when



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hope tells a flattering tale of finishing one's attempts, and doing what one had only dreamed of doing."

A new tone, is it not? The malingerer, the bourgeois —over them both the ardent panting breath of hurrying life has swept; and it is as though Goethe were not referring only to his Fragments, but felt so powerful an impulse to new life and new endeavour that new masterpieces too must come of it.

The long ramble on the table-land was coming to an end. Goethe stood face to face with his grand climacteric.

PART III

TRAGIC VICTORY

Only he who has been the most sensitive can become the hardest and coldest of men, for he has to encase himself in triple steel . . . and often his coat of mail oppresses him.



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CHAPTER X

EMPYREAN

Ich weiss, dass mir nichts angehört
Als der Gedanke, der ungestört
Aus meiner Seele will fliessen,
Und jeder günstige Augenblick,
Den mich ein liebendes Geschick
Von Grund aus lässt geniessen.[1]

GREEN is the shade of the large hanging-lamp, and its light, falling on the table with its piles of books and drawings, leaves the talkers in semi-obscurity; but on the piano in the distance two wax candles sparkle, and cast a softly golden gleam upon a young girl. Who is it that she reminds one of to-day? Only of herself, of her childhood?

A delightful household, this of Frommann, the erudite publisher in Jena. Here they are not for ever talking of French spies and magazine-articles; here one can breathe a clearer loftier air. There is a volume of Petrarch on the table, though Frommann's great friend and adviser from Weimar is no lover of the sonnet. However, these have caught the sceptic's fancy; he examines the print, paper, and binding, turning over the leaves while his hostess pours out his tea.

Goethe, back in Jena a fortnight now, likes to spend his time here. The November evenings are getting longer

[1] I know that naught belongs to me
But thought, from out my spirit free
To take its flight unchidden,
And every moment sweet and fair
That fate shall fondly let me share,
To full enjoyment bidden.

and longer; the brief spell of daylight does not give him either light or air enough to make up for lost time—those few hours are too few, what with laboratory- and library-work and short walks with old Knebel in the morning and evening mists, for much pacing up-and-down of the little room in the Palace where he works and eats, and dictates articles, reports, letters. Comfortable eating and sleeping conditions, the charm of that affectionate spoiling to which he has been accustomed for twice ten years, the dignity of large reception-rooms, his many and various collections—all these are lacking in Jena, and yet . . . here alone is peace, is concentration; no theatre, no Court, above all, no family. If only the shortest day, that mortal enemy, were over—then one could breathe deep again and look forward to the distant spring. . . .

A soft prelude sounds from the piano. Instantly everyone stops talking, chairs are turned round—what is she going to sing? "*Der Erlkönig*," thinks Goethe, after the first few notes, and the waves of melody envelop him in a cloud of reminiscences. Is it really twenty-five years since we were acting that comedy in Tiefurt, and Corona sang the song? Only twenty-five years—is it possible? It seems more like centuries since I was Petrarch to that lovely Laura. . . . How beautiful this girl has grown, prettier every year; a maiden in her flower, and only three or four years ago she was a short-skirted child with lanky arms. Or did she not then look as like a little grown-up girl as she now looks like a child? So spiritual, in the white gowns she always wears; and how wistfully the large dark eyes look out from the delicate pale face, appealing, expressive as the sweet low voice—but the rich luxuriance of the plaits that encircle her little head has its own tale to tell. Such lustrous black hair answers for passions which at eighteen she can know nothing of, and perhaps the dainty nose will one day tilt more piquantly than now above the small faintly-tinted mouth which is opening to sing those old verses of mine? . . .

Her soul sheds no light as yet—it is like unburnished metal; but her beauty and youth suffice to stir the heart of Goethe, at fifty-nine, as it has not been stirred for twenty years. When Minna Herzlieb was only fifteen, her gentle charm had enthralled him; on her account he had spent many evenings in her foster-parents' house, a silent admirer of her childish grace.

To-night, seeing what Nature has done for her, seeing her flower as it were beneath his gaze, he knows her better; to-night, too, Christiane is farther from his heart—moreover, in the meantime a new, a vital urgency has taken hold of him. Since those days of peril—peril in the field and peril at home; since the Schiller-period of theorizing and argument, now little more than a wonderful memory, he has known physical regeneration. He has ceased to grow stout, his heart is pulsing for life, for poetry—and this girl, to-night, is as a symbol of new youth for Goethe's soul.

. . . Too late! A creature like this would look upon him as a father. Ah, why did he lead—and for so long—that empty life of theorizing and wool-gathering? Other men *do* something, other men are for ever on the go; it is only our sort that sits dreaming, shaping images of beauty long gone by, possessed for how brief a space! O Epimetheus! O ever-fleeing moment!

And, saying good-night to the girl, to his hosts, he makes up his mind to avoid this house with its perilous attractions—and does henceforth absent himself, to the surprise of his friends. But he, back in his little room, cannot sleep that night. What had he better do? he asks himself over and over again, and feels shut out and old, condemned to refuse himself what he fain would venture. But in the morning—for the first time in many years, involuntarily, almost unconsciously, submissive to the Muse who will not have her prompting disobeyed . . . at last, as of old, Goethe begins a poem, and these are the first lines he sets upon the paper:

Kindheit und Jugend, allzu glücklich preis' ich sie,
Dass nach durchstürmter, durchgenossner Tageslust
Behender Schlummer allgewaltig sie ergreift
Und, jede Spur vertilgend kräft'ger Gegenwart,
Vergangnes, Träume bildend, mischt Zukünftigem.[1]

And on the twelfth morning of his chosen remoteness from the beloved girl, he wrote nearly all we possess of *Pandora*, that most glorious of his fragments. The poet's dream of youth restored, beside the restrained and beautiful emotion of a man grown old; steadfast wisdom, hand-in-hand with passion; a smile at his own pain! With this work Goethe inaugurated ten years of pure music—it was the overture to a new mode of composition, a completely realized rendering of experience, after fifteen years of sterility. From the sublime background stand forth Prometheus and Epimetheus, the two brothers with their offspring; and, as ultimately in *Faust*—but more conspicuously, because the pair are so insistently contrasted—the poet here used his passions and his inhibitions, the essential traits of his character, to construct his living, breathing figures.

Slowly from the darkness emerge the antagonistic brothers who have their abode in Goethe's breast, and who rule the two halves of the scene as they rule the two halves of his soul: Prometheus, the infinite energy—but slumbering near, the infinite imagination, Epimetheus rapt in dreams.

It is his duality, sounded upon a deep low chord in unison, and that first closing phrase can thrill us with its grave calm passion. The Dream and the Business—and resignation alone can harmonize them.

And then the girl in her white dress, with her dark eyes and hair, springs to quick life when instead of Pandora, her daughter Elpore, a vision in the father's dream, breathes in his ear:

[1] Childhood and youth, for this I hold them blest indeed,
That after days of tumult, days of joy, outlived,
Swift slumber in its arms will take them, warm and close,
And, blotting out the present's all too potent spell,
In dreams will blend the past with days that are to come.

. . . Die du verkennst und kennst, die Tochter ist's.
Epimetheus. So komm in meinem Arm!
Elpore. Bin nicht zu fassen.
Epimetheus. So küsse mich!
Elpore. Ich küsse deine Stirn
Mit leichter Lippe—Fort schon bin ich, fort.[1]

With what hesitant tenderness, here and still more in Elpore's epilogue, the poet's imagination dwells on Minna's fragile, supple form!

And then, something that had never before happened to Goethe came to pass. In the midst of his imaginative renunciation, life knocked at the door; a Promethean virility of emotion awoke in the dreamer. It was on a morning in December that a man entered his room—a man with the face of a faun, frank and ambiguous, grotesque and romantic: the young Zacharias Werner, whose plays, now being acted all over Germany, were making more of a sensation than any of Goethe's ever had. A false prophet, a deceiver of souls, himself deceived; and as Goethe found him "interesting and even lovable" because of his contradictions, he went with him next evening to his friend's house.

Werner, all nerves and vagaries, began to read passages from his own plays and poems, sonnets among them. The guests caught fire; they poetized too, till the room became the arena of a little tournament of song, under the hanging-lamp. Of course there had to be a goddess, and of course she was Minna Herzlieb. Werner, in a charade, composed a sonnet on her name.

Then, in a flash, Goethe felt the contest between admiring versifiers to be really a contest between admirers who happened to be versifying. His jealousy was twofold —and as he soon began spending his evenings in the girl's

[1] . . . Thou knowst me not, and knowst—thy daughter I.
Epimetheus. Come then to my embrace!
Elpore. Thou couldst not grasp me.
Epimetheus. Then kiss me, child!
Elpore. A kiss upon thy brow,
So light, so fleeting—I am here no more.

society between poesy, music, and magic-lantern shows, *Pandora* had rather a long rest. Youth and art were about him, setting his spirit free—Goethe was in love, and he was writing sonnets. His diary gives us the literary data, and shows together with the sonnets the synopsis of a love-story which lasted barely a fortnight, but left deep marks both before and behind it.

"Sonnet-fever," Goethe called this mood. Petrarch was the model, but Goethe's beloved was drawn into much more possessive arms:

> Doch wandt' ich mich hinweg, und liess sie gehen
> Und wickelte mich enger in die Falten,
> Als wollt' ich trutzend in mir selbst erwarmen—
> Und folgt' ihr doch. Sie stand. Da war's geschehen!
> In meiner Hülle konnt' ich mich nicht halten,
> Die warf ich weg—sie lag in meinen Armen.[1]

Occasionally, in this garland of seventeen masterpieces (which to-day are scattered anyhow among the poems and called merely "Sonnets"), the paternal note is struck. She could have been his grandchild; that thought recurs amid all the passion.

But suddenly upon the elder Goethe fell the fatality to which the younger had succumbed. That daemon, the dreaded turmoil, upheaval, distraction of his Ego—*that* must be fled at any cost, whether it took the form of Mme. Branconi's beauty, or of a piece of work, or of a fragile girl who was half a child. On the seventeenth of December he was still with his friends, with his darling; Knebel alone knew that he would be gone on the morrow. It was a flight from Jena to-day, as thirty and forty years before it had been from Sesenheim and Leipzig, from Wetzlar and Frankfurt, and finally from Carlsbad, when

[1] But then I turned aside, and let her go,
And pulled my cloak of white more closely round,
As if to warm my heart some other way—
Yet followed. She stood still. And it was so
That hateful grew the mask; swift I unwound
And flung it from me—in my arms she lay.

he escaped to Italy. This man's life was built up on catastrophes brought about by Eros. The next day he packed his trunks and rushed away with no adieu. But now he knew better how to turn flight into victory. " Swift Parting " is the pencilled title on the manuscript of that poem, smouldering with hidden flame, which was later inserted among the collected lyrics under the colourless name of *Abschied.*

He went home, thinking, " Soon we shall be in Weimar, a Minister again, a husband and father again "—and in this mood he suddenly began to tell his travelling-companion, Riemer the secretary, all about his love for Lili! To Lili herself—so chillingly replied to a few years ago—he as suddenly, during those Jena love-days, wrote of his " infinite delight " at seeing " some lines from your dear hand, after all these years. I kiss them a thousand times in remembrance of the days which I count among the happiest of my life. Your affectionate Goethe." Lili's image always haunted him, whenever he felt youth pulsing in his veins.

But alas! *Pandora* became as remote from him as those early poems which had been snatched at rather than wooed. " Pandora is a darling (*herzliebes*) child," he wrote, gaily punning on Minna's name, to Knebel—who had been partly confided in, and had heard the sonnets read aloud in Jena.

But Eros had stirred in his sleep, and was not soon to be lulled to rest again. Whenever Goethe succeeded (the daemon exorcized) in linking Eros with his genius, that brighter companion of his path, everything in life and work seemed to take a happier turn. From that brief winter-love, which in true Goethean fashion was but the outbreak of an attraction felt for years, his genius evolved for him not only the drama and the sonnets, but a third work—a novel.

For in those productive December-days, which Goethe had been wont to call his hibernation, the electric experience suggested the idea of *Wahlverwandschaften* (*Elective Affinities*), first conceived as a short story. What

had soared to a heaven of music in the transcendentalism of *Pandora*, in the rhapsodical fervour of the sonnets, was in the novel devoted to an adoring portrait of Minna Herzlieb. True, no single episode in the book is faithful to the actual experience; but, as Goethe said, there is not one that *he* did not experience. When someone pestered him with questions about this story, he replied, in his character of stark materialist, that he always had written from experience, not out of the air—for " I have always held life to be more authentic than my invention "; and again in a later year-book we come upon a phrase which startles no less than it thrills us: " No one can fail to see in this novel the record of profoundly passionate suffering—a wound which winced from any healing touch, a heart for which its own recovery was something to be feared."

For Ottilie and Minna Herzlieb are one, as Werther's Lotte and Lotte Buff were one. The elusiveness, the maidenliness, the fleet sweet grace that fled yet glanced behind, the woman in the child, the child in the woman—the tremulous, instinctive warmth of Ottilie seems drawn from life, and all *was* drawn from Minna.

Charlotte too is in some respects modelled on that Charlotte whom Goethe wooed for ten long years, to possess yet unchangingly to serve, to be happy with at times and yet to suffer through. Both Charlottes are the formative influence in their circles—that wise, passionless influence of the older woman. The futile self-tormenting of this later Charlotte (and of the Princess in *Tasso* too) is wholly Charlotte von Stein's, when the woman in *Elective Affinities* says: " If we think of all the people we have seen and known, and own to ourselves how little they have been to us and we to them—we feel so sick at heart! " And the second Charlotte is again the first, when she finds the self-imposed rupture unendurable after all, and counsels Ottilie to distrust her own self-immolating heart, for " how swift, how sharp is our awakening, when we find that what we thought we could do without has never ceased

to be the thing for which we really lived!" So, in Goethe's conception of her and his reminiscent sense of what she must have suffered in the past, might Frau von Stein have spoken of his return and her later reconciliation with him. But there is not a trace of their actual circumstances, nor of any posthumous apology for his long-ago invasion of the Stein household. How should there have been, when their former relation was a thing so extinct that a perfectly new one had been able to spring up between them!

The author himself does not resemble his hero, either in character or temper, as he did his Werther; for while *Werther* was a monologue, in this novel of his declining years Goethe is again, as always except in *Werther*, both hero and rival. It is true that there is little of him in the Captain, and a great deal in Edward. But the Captain's laconic hand holds the pen throughout—not that "most lovely hand" which he praises in Edward; and it is the Goethean hand which makes the Captain sketch plans, design avenues, make estimates, organize court-ceremonies, draw up rubrics—as it is with that hand, too, that finally he restrains his all too wildly pulsing heart, when he resolves that the woman and her friends shall keep their peace of mind. The author could stand before his glass and see it all—a *profil perdu* of the white-haired Goethe, for the Captain is older than his years.

And Edward younger. Here we have the adolescent Goethe's impetuous temper: "If she loves me, as I think she does, as I know she does, why does she not make up her mind, why does she not dare all, escape and fling herself into my arms? She ought to, I often think—and she could!" With one dispassionate phrase, indeed, Goethe as it were cast a protecting arm round Edward. "Edward," he wrote soon afterwards to a friend, "—he at least seems to me inestimable, because he loves with all his heart!"

And this, and nothing else, is the theme of the book—one wild-fire passion. Goethe had written nothing like it for limpidity since *Werther*; and so *Werther* is its nearest affinity, despite the world of difference in style.

The first real signal from the Muse of Goethe's rejuvenation is this—that in his sixtieth year he began and finished a work of such passionate intensity as he had not even conceived since his twenty-fifth. His over-long preoccupation with scientific research and experiment was avenged by the belated blaze which scorched him in the last ten years of his life. "Great passions are mortal illnesses. What might cure them makes them but more dangerous than before. . . . Passions are merely the enhancement of defects or qualities." Such is his commentary on his theme; and to-day we can understand neither the opinion of contemporaries, which held the book to be improper, nor that of posterity, which has explained it as an ethical defence of marriage. There had just been a great many divorces in Goethe's circle; and when he was interrogated on the subject, he gave an evasive answer.

There is no question that these words were meant to be taken seriously: "Marriage is the beginning of civilization, and represents its highest development; it tames the wild beast in man"—but they are put into the mouth of a third party, the *raisonneur* of the book; he who utters them is neither hero nor rival. This Count, who comes butting into the quadrangle of the lonely castle from the great world without, is no lascivious stripling, no figure of caricature; he is a sage worldling, and his whole character, his whole past and present experience, go to prove that he is Goethe's mouthpiece, and not the mere *raisonneur*, when he suggests the idea of marriage on a five-yearly contract. Goethe explicitly says that Charlotte, reflecting on this pleasantry, feels it to have a profound moral significance, and merely regrets that Ottilie, in her extreme youth, should be present at such discussions.

The "election" born of the affinity and attraction between certain elements and certain human beings, is in neither instance a free election, even though it may at first appear to be so. When passion works so imperiously on the lovers that in the arms of the unloved a child with the beloved's features is generated; when this magic law

of attraction has its will with the younger pair; and when all this is prepared for by occult similarities in habits and names, dates and figures—we have the manifesto of Goethe the Materialist's revived credulity, the first signs of which were considered at the end of the preceding period.

"There are certain things which Fate resolutely takes charge of. In vain do reason and virtue, duty and all things we hold sacred, seek to obstruct her path; that which is right in her eyes, though not in ours, is bound to be, and so she has her way in the end, let us behave as we may!" That these are not Edward's words, but Charlotte's, the most dispassionate, the most clear-sighted of the four concerned, is a plain proof that it represents the outlook—nay, the teaching—of the whole book.

Was not this tragic sense of the inexorable utterly opposed to Goethe's distaste for tragic themes? Why shun tragedy for thirty long years if the issue was to be a tragic novel?

We might well ask—and the whole nature of the man as it was at sixty would seem to be entirely different from that which had so lately begun to unfold in him—were not this book the first to be illuminated by that wide serenity which the end of his fifties slowly inaugurated in Goethe. It is indeed a different lightness of heart from that which gave such animation to the first part of *Wilhelm Meister*. Now it is the acquired serenity which at sixty—and in general throughout the decade from fifty-seven to sixty-six, our present theme—filled Goethe to the full. In that clearer air he soared on surer wings to ever more exalted heights; Goethe was at his zenith. This period is as well (except the years of adolescence at Strasburg and Frankfurt) the most productive which, as a poet, he enjoyed.

Goethe wrote the tragic *Elective Affinities* in the brightest weeks of summer, amid the gaieties of Carlsbad, six months after he had conceived it amid the secret agitation of those

winter-evenings in Jena—finishing the first part almost as rapidly as *Werther*. And this was much more of a feat, for now he did not write in a locked room, but surrounded by women and royalties, in the whirl of adventures, driving-parties, conversations.

Here he soon found himself among women who were so happily scattered over different neighbouring spas that like a young man—though as a young man he had never done it—he could choose and alternate between them. Here, entering his sixtieth year, his mood for some months of summer was what it had never been before. For the only time in his life Goethe became the women's darling. They sent him roses, sent him their pictures, they adored and flirted with him, becoming a mistress or a tender dream.

With Minna Herzlieb, the briefly loved, the swiftly renounced, begins (for the first time in twenty years) a procession of beloved women, almost immediately after his marriage. It is as though Goethe's will-to-freedom permitted him to be constant only while he was not bound. For the space of eighteen years he had kept faith, by his own free will, with the mistress of his heart; in the first year of their regularized union he broke that faith.

Not with Bettina Brentano. This daughter of Maximiliane Laroche (with whom Goethe in his Werther-period had had a brief passionate affair, until her husband forbade him the house) came to Weimar at the time of his love for Minna Herzlieb. She was twenty-two years old; and though she chose to call herself a "child," the dates at any rate are somewhat against her. But she represents herself as being a child in appearance and feeling—and was in reality anything but naïve in every respect. With literary gifts, but not a writer; with an aesthetic cult for self-surrender, but never surrendering herself; artificial to the core, incapable of spontaneity, sensual without passion, pruriently lascivious, entirely self-centred, eternally acting up to her idea of herself, yet with nothing

of the player's candour—Bettina is the crowning bloom in the hot-house of pseudo-Romanticism, the pattern for those countless provincial stragglers who for a century strove to be " in the movement."

She would have as little place in a Life of Goethe as she actually had in his existence, were it not that by her *Correspondence of Goethe with a Child* she distorted his image in Germany as his bitterest enemies scarce succeeded in distorting it. For it was she who set up a Goethe for the market-place, by investing that unfathomable nature with the one attribute of all others which it never possessed—sentimentality, sugariness, " hot air." It was not for some time that research proved a number of her " Goethe-letters " to be fabrications, and this discredited her on the topic for which the German nation most had cherished her—those accounts which she represented Goethe's mother as having given her of his youth, and which Goethe himself, with some hesitation, excluded from his reminiscences.

At first he good-humouredly submitted to her bombardment of declarations, letters, presents—no doubt thinking of the mother whom he once had loved, of the grandmother to whom he was attached, for during this erotic period he was inclined to be weak wherever women were concerned. But to become Goethe's beloved was what the " child " could not by any means accomplish. Very likely he saw through her from the first of her hysterical letters, for he soon wrote to Christiane, who could not bear her: " These few lines have done her more harm with me than all your and Wieland's backbiting." He called her " thou," because she implored him to; and would sometimes write: " My pretty child. . . . My little friend. . . . Thy letters remind me of the days when I was perhaps as foolish as thou art. . . . In reality one can give thee nothing, because thou wilt always get it for thyself, one way or another." When she returned to Weimar after her marriage with Achim von Arnim, Riemer gives her away to us in his account of how Goethe

always changed the subject when she wanted to make love to him, pointing out the comet, for instance—" and she was baffled; the meteor with its long tail shooed off the persistent fly, the child who was a married woman (not so very young) and wanted to settle down on his knee."

At last Bettina insulted Goethe's wife in public, by the use of a coarse word. Goethe forbade her his house. But she, no longer permitted to write to him, busied herself with the sonnets to Minna (which had appeared in the interval), paraphrasing them in prose as Goethe-letters addressed to herself, so as to indicate that the Sonnets too were meant for her—even the charade upon Minna's surname. However, she was shrewd enough not to produce these documents till after Goethe's death. But he, in his very old age, when he was inclined to be indulgent to everyone, called Bettina " that troublesome gadfly."

Three or four other women occupied his thoughts during that amorous Carlsbad summer. Young and aristocratic, reserved and slender, naïve and fresh—Silvie von Ziegesar. Mature, dark and beautiful, impassioned, intellectual and experienced, the typical highly cultivated Jewess *pur sang*—Marianne von Eybenberg, born Meyer.

From this Marianne he shortly fled, leaving Carlsbad for the neighbouring Franzensbrunnen, there (as he wrote to his wife) to take the cure for gout. But with Silvie at his side he wrote to her rival, Marianne: " Why did you say, dear, that I ran away from you! In reality I was carried off and am now in custody. . . . Attraction and counter-attraction." He was quite well again, he said, and had discovered a volcanic peak which reminded him of Italy. Would she borrow some money from Riemer, " for I've run through my whole bundle of notes. And now a fond farewell for the present. . . . And write soon, dear—please, please! . . . Addio. Goethe."

Is this a white-haired, elderly man? Did his voice ever

ring out so gaily in the adolescent years of perplexity? Did that heavy-laden heart ever before breathe so freely, in an air so clear? Not even in Italy!

But a few weeks later (apparently he had been bantered about her), he took a firmer tone with Marianne, and advised her " to think of him in silence, for it has come to my ears that people don't quite approve of your too flattering references to myself. So long as we ourselves know what we have in one another, it is quite enough." That is the tone of a man who has made his conquest.

Meanwhile Silvie, at Franzensbrunnen, was his star. " Daughter, mistress, darling—white and slim ": so he addressed her in a long lyric written for her birthday. In the evenings he would go about alone with her, walking " in the bosket " or " behind the houses "; would read Tasso aloud to her, and when in a fortnight he departed, the diary notes: " With Silvie . . . for a walk. Bag packed. Beforehand! Leave-taking."

Marianne had scarcely left Carlsbad before he lost his heart to a Fräulein von Knabenau, lady-in-waiting to a Duchess who was fond of him, and beautiful like the rest. To her, as to the rest, he read aloud from his new stories and *Pandora*—and made these fair ones representatives of the parts written for the goddesses. On her departure the lady sent him a tender note in a rosy envelope. Had any women in the past done as much for the poet who did so much for women? " If you could know, dear lovely one, how delightful it is to be looked at by you (for your mirror can't tell you), you would be delighted yourself."

But one or two years later he cooled off. Marianne was too political for him; he ceased to visit the lady-in-waiting; Silvie alone, the youngest and freshest, still haunted his dreams.

Carlsbad offered him women and a great deal of gaiety. The three succeeding summer-holidays, each lasting for three or four months, saw Goethe, at sixty, for the first

time immersed in that brilliant society. In his Weimar days he had shunned such circles, had hated the visits to other German Courts; in Italy he had lived like any nobody, consorting exclusively with artists; in the field he had been a silent observer. Now he was more frivolous and more inclined for the company of frivolous, fast-living, much-travelled women and men of cultivated tastes. Far from his wife and his son, he lived like a fine gentleman who happened to be an author as well, with his secretary and valet; and as his work too went on wings, we can now for the first time say that—irradiated by his genius, untormented by his daemon, loved and loving—Goethe was enjoying life.

He was quick to establish himself in Carlsbad after his usual methodical fashion, talking of his little ménage and determined not to seem, either to himself or others, a mere bird of passage. Hence he was always among the earliest arrivals, got up at five o'clock so as to be the first at the Pump-room and (for reasons of hygiene) in the baths; breakfasted at eight, dictated, took a walk, and spent all the afternoon in society. Feeling so well as he usually did in these days, he soon completely regained his vigour, and the cure did the rest.

Here he was not so economical as at home, for the Austrian currency, depreciated by a third, covered half his expenses. To his wife and son, and to the Princesses in Weimar into the bargain, he sent the prettiest of little presents, reflected that in the long winter at home one would want something to amuse one, and so bought a tea-service, some porcelain, and some Bohemian glass. " My chief amusement is inventing everything I can think of to amuse *you*," he wrote to Christiane. " For I must tell you in strict confidence that I have ordered you another fillet in old paste."

But despite all these attentions towards wife and son—how pleasant it was to be away from them!

When Christiane, from Weimar, complained of cold-shouldering, he put himself on the same level and gave

tranquil advice: "Don't worry about it, and it will soon go out of your head. There are plenty of blackguards who make it their business to belittle my work, but I pay no attention, and just get on with it."

So she clung to him as her rock of refuge; and all the fun of their first years together was mingled with all the seriousness of the later developments when, between smiles and tears, she wrote him this touching appeal: "And have that Bettina and that Frau von Eybenberg arrived in Carlsbad yet? They say here that Silvie and the Gotters are to be there too. So what will you do, between all your flirtations? Rather *too* many! But you won't forget your oldest one, will you? Think of me a little, too, sometimes. I mean to trust you absolutely, whatever people may say. For you are the only person, you know, who thinks of me at all!" Even if he had been free, such words could not but have deterred him from entering into any serious relation with a young girl—just as his marriage would not have deterred him from a separation, unless he had still cared for Christiane.

Since in these spas he sought the society of cultivated, fashionable people, he naturally consorted most with the nobility, who at that time were almost the only representatives of such a world in those watering-places. It is in this light that we should regard Goethe's increasing intercourse with people of rank, at the same time bearing in mind the heresies which for decades had kept him aloof from Court-life! Moreover, those noblemen were nearly all men who have made German history or at any rate were behind the scenes; and when we see Goethe, in his summer-sojourns, conversing with Stein, Blücher, and Metternich, Lichnowsky, Liechtenstein, and Colleredo, living in constant intercourse with the ex-King of Holland, Napoleon's brother (who had the room next to his at the hotel), and enjoying the company of Prince-Bishops and Dukes, Silesian and Polish Counts, Prussian Generals, English Peers, and *émigrés*, we must recognize that this was the way he could best hold dialogues with himself

about contemporary history. For just as in Nature he could grasp none but the tangible fact, so in the " Here and Now " he had to use eyes and tongue before he could comprehend its leading figures.

There was for him a tenderer, deeper sense of this clearer air in the intercourse that for four weeks, at Teplitz, he enjoyed with the young, lovely, suffering Empress of Austria. Here he was face to face with the authentic queen, adorned with every charm that Nature and intellect could shed; and as her life, overshadowed as it was by sorrow, gained upon his imagination, his feeling for her became tinged with something of the Tasso-sentiment which years and experience had unlearned. And this would perhaps have broken into flame had he not been able to divert it to the beautiful and intelligent Lady O'Donnell, her lady-in-waiting, and let himself go in that direction so far as befitted a courtly existence.

For the Empress, unconventional and intuitive, felt at once that he was the One and Only. Every day she begged him to read to her, secretly trying to penetrate to the arcana of poetic art; and one day she set him, with all her gracious deference, the task of making a play out of a lovers' quarrel. Goethe, the very next day, hit upon the idea of *Die Wette* (*The Wager*); on the following one he dictated the little comedy, which is far more psychological than comical, and was evidently modulated with masterly skill for a Royal audience. Perhaps he remembered that, forty years ago now, another such task had been set him, and that he had written *Clavigo* in the same spirit. Then it had been a middle-class girl, now it was an Empress, whom he obeyed; Goethe was now, as always, the one to do service. When the Empress herself achieved a little play, he actually condescended to memorize the principal part, and only the premature departure of the Court saved him from having to act it.

Goethe, in these weeks, was as lively as a young man, getting up amusements and observing with ironic complacency how his own Duke, who was sometimes of the

company, looked on at his conquests. Several times he thought of going to Vienna, whither everyone was inviting him—indeed, he confided to Christiane that the consequences of the Imperial intimacy were "incalculable." But after all he was rather glad of the Royalties' hasty departure, for the Imperial comedy had in the end got upon the nerves of the provincial in him, and "now, as you may suppose, it is time to have done. But as she delights in that kind of thing beyond anything and is so incredibly kind, tactful, and sympathetic, everyone does his very utmost for her."

But every thought of social ambition, everything that in hours of fatigue had influenced him for or against the Empress, vanished into nothingness when in his narrow winter-quarters at home her vision haunted him afresh. Then he complained to the beautiful lady-in-waiting that he had had to teach himself "not to talk about our adored lady; for even the nicest people . . . don't fail to impress upon me that I am raving about her, when *I* think I am talking the plainest prose.... But if I am a man in a dream, I don't want to be awakened; and so I keep my distance from people who think they are looking at the truth when in reality they are only seeing the commonplace."

Even in these circles Goethe was not to be imposed upon by rank or titles. Of a certain Duke of Gotha he afterwards wrote, and wrote publicly, that "in a somewhat feeble fashion he had been good enough to be politely disagreeable."

But for all his sociability he stuck to his methodical ways, and withdrew from the erudite Wolf, in Carlsbad, only because the philologist was something of a busybody. He would spend half the day with an obscure economist from whom he could get information, and whom his diary, usually reticent about personal opinions, praises as an excellent fellow. He took six-hour walks with an old mineralogist; and had long talks, like those of thirty years ago, with Carlsbad specialists about buildings, schools, the murrain in Bohemia. He made researches into

the origin of the limestone so much used in the region, calculated how the Pump-room management could afford stoppers for their bottles, made a note of a meeting at Eger with an old waiter from Erfurt, and of his driver's racy expressions on seeing a procession pass—just as he had, when a student, taken down the words used by the peasant-woman who brought eggs to his mother.

It was a refreshment after the Weimar air, which would occasionally blow over even to Jena; he said he was glad to be months "without hearing a word about German literature, and especially erudition and science, for I haven't looked at a newspaper or gone to a single theatre. It makes me feel as though I were living in an age of gold, in a paradise of innocence."

All the works belonging to that period and place are redolent of this sociable light-hearted mood, for he had never written much in the winter, and the gayer summer-weeks had nevertheless been always his best time for work. Narrative pieces were of course what now attracted him; he enjoyed playing with his characters in the lively mood which at that time possessed him; and nowhere was that easier than in the fable-like short stories, and some tales which later found a place in his *Wanderjahre*, such as *Die Neue Melusine*, *Die Gefährliche Wette* (*The Dangerous Wager*), *Der Mann von 50 Jahren*, *Das Nussbraune Mädchen*. Hence, too, the change of tone, when he told his friends thus frivolously of the arduous *Wanderjahre*: "Probably Wilhelm will come across some fine children, whom I am bringing up here and there *sub rosâ*. I particularly recommend the Nut-brown Girl, who is my pet just now. If you meet Pandora, be kind to that beloved child!"

For in the spas of Bohemia Goethe found at last that sophisticated public for whom, twenty years ago in Rome, he had resolved exclusively to write. His *Elective Affinities* he sent "really as a circular letter to my friends, so that

they may give me a thought now and then in the various ends of the earth. If into the bargain the mob should read this little work, I shall not take it amiss."

Even his Theory of Colour, which on its publication at this time the specialists tried to annihilate by abuse or silence, became a craze in these circles; and Goethe, who had been adamantine in his defence of this work against the scientists, derived great amusement from the perplexity his two thick, erudite volumes caused his polite new friends.

How different is every utterance of Goethe's heart at this time—he who through decades had suffered from misanthropy and dejection, and only when certain he could not be heard, had dared to breathe one word from the depths of his being!

But the loveliest thing those days of liberty brought forth was the end of that *Pandora* which had been begun in so melancholy a November mood. Now, in the earliest weeks at Carlsbad, his miraculous phrasing drew the splendid forms out of the dark night of the spirit into the light which was their native sphere—and in the whole range of Goethe's works there is nothing of such radiant serenity as the final scenes of that fragment.

Now for the first time the Dionysian note rings out from Goethe's soul—not only in the personages, but in the rhythms and images as well. The gods, who in the *Prometheus* fragment written at twenty-five stood only for the enemies of man, here carry the whole action on their shoulders; and it is from their mouths—with all the daemonic influences potent in the old *Prometheus* exorcized—that Goethe's resonant harmonies peal forth with such triumphant mastery.

A new voice is heard—a voice which in the early work spoke only as the prisoner at the bar, and in the beginning of *Pandora* was not audible at all. Eos, irresistibly driven onward by Helios, departs because she must; but, departing, flings this counsel backward to the Inexorable:

Fahre wohl, du Menschenvater! Merke:
Was zu wünschen ist, ihr unten fühlt es;
Was zu geben sei, die wissen's droben.
Gross beginnet ihr Titanen; aber leiten
Zu dem ewig Guten, ewig Schönen
Ist der Götter Werk! Die lasst gewähren![1]

Goethe so profoundly felt these concluding words to be a summary of his faith that with his dying hand he set them as an epilogue to the last volume of his collected works. Is this in truth the utterance of a vanquished Titan? If we have understood the early Prometheus-fragment—if we have understood Goethe's whole youth—in the light of an inborn daemonic force held in check by creative genius, we shall read into these lines of his riper age no recantation, but the majestic heavenward gesture of a serene, strong-hearted man at the zenith of his career.

As one not conquered by the gods, yet sceptically clear-sighted for human values, the Goethe who could love speaks, as the old Prometheus, against his human personages, but only because in the youthful work he had trusted them too far; and he who there defiantly rejected Minerva's mediation does not bow his head to-day. But instead of Minerva's reasoned discourse—she who pleads for the gods as a mortal woman might—the voices of the gods themselves now ring in his ears, it is divine discourse to which he hearkens now, from them who are victorious without battle. Here or nowhere Goethe's poetry approaches the authentic Greek, the Mozartian, world of his adoration. Pandora herself was designed to be the fairest, purest, of incarnations. "Beauty, piety, tranquillity"—such she was to be in his synopsis for the continuation.

But then the poet laid the work aside, no doubt con-

[1] Go thy way, thou Procreator! Mark me:
All desires ye know, on earth abiding;
All that shall be given, know the heaven-born.
Great, O Titans, your beginnings; but for guidance
To the eternal good, the eternal beauty,
Only gods suffice. Them suffer gladly!

vinced that to pursue a work of art harmoniously for long was forbidden him, or at any rate too grudgingly conceded him, by his daemon—and so where Pandora's voice should have sounded, Helen's takes up the tale. Goethe never did presume to make the gods in whom he believed his mouthpieces. Reverence and incertitude were equally opposed to that; and the music which in the last year of his life he heard and rendered back to us, was sung by mystic, not celestial, choirs. Only in *Pandora* did his genius thrust its brow against the cloudless vault of sunlit heaven.

And so—he himself did not understand his poem! Only as a mystery, he wrote, could it affect the reader, inspiring him with sympathy or repelling him, without his being able to say why. Three years afterwards—no more—he stood amazed at his own creations. But when it was suggested that he should complete the work, his answer was this dark saying—that whenever he tried to lift his most precious things they always fell from his hands; so he soon ceased to look at those glowing embers, and then they went out.

Weimar and even Jena, whither he always had to return for the winter from these pleasant sojourns, would have depressed him even though the days had not been short and cold. He had taught himself, true master of the art of living, to keep the fires of his temperament alight through the long winter.

His first proof of that mastery was frequent separation, prolonged as far as might be, from his family—with whom he was on the best of terms, though he could not live for any length of time too close at hand. By now he had familiarized Christiane with Jena, where she made friends; and they played a regular game of exchanging quarters, for when he left Jena for home with his secretary, she generally had to decamp from the house in Weimar with the companion whom he had engaged for the sake of appearances, and that she might have someone to amuse

her. The end of it was that the companion and the secretary (Riemer) got married. This arrangement soon went on wheels; no one was injured, no one put out: " This makes it so that on Thursdays you will find the coast clear, have all your comforts, while we shall gain our few hours in Weimar—so everyone gets something out of it."

Certainly Christiane kept much of what he first had loved in her, even now at the end of her forties. A bust at Weimar shows her to have still been beautiful, something in the style of a Roman Empress; and a year after their tardy marriage, she and he still talked of " our bedroom " when at home. But she was growing fat; and as she was full-blooded and moreover danced too much and took a good deal of wine, she fell into bad health and had to take cures, in the very years when Goethe had grown slender again and felt so rejuvenated. It is a kind of symbol of their evolution—they were both young and slim when they first met, and then (in every sense of the word) expanded; but now their physical constitutions, temperaments, energies, habits, and desires led them on totally different paths. " I don't feel strong enough to stand joys and sorrows as I used to do "—so Christiane complained from time to time, while Goethe gained in vigour every day.

She remained as deferential, grateful, housewifely as ever; and as Privy Councillor's wife and Her Excellency she was indefatigable for humbler folk. She was glad that her visits to Court were so few and far between; indeed, it was Goethe who now insisted on her going into society—and in that he made a mistake. He bade her pay calls on the Weimar ladies "even if only for a quarter of an hour "; he had to insist on her looking up certain people when she was in Frankfurt, and this called forth the only command which we find in a correspondence of thirty years: " It is my wish. You know I never like to say ' my will.' "

For their circles differed more than they themselves did. If she did not care to associate with his friends, he was still less attracted by hers. And her craze for dancing, which he had looked upon indulgently when she was in her

thirties, now began to be a little ridiculous by reason of her corpulence. When at forty-three she was again having dancing-lessons, and would take the three hours' journey to Jena for the sake of a ball, always with students and officers, the town began to talk and say that the ladies of Goethe's household were like vultures haunting the Army. He gently warned her, but gave no commands. "Only don't let yourself be tempted by a ball which I am told they are going to have here on Thursday. I could not bear to encounter you in the Mühltal."

Though the increasing fastness and unhealthiness of Christiane's life made no difference in her affection and gratitude, there was less attention to his little fads—he had more frequently and more urgently to remind her of his carefully numbered commissions, "so that they mayn't all come pouring in at once and create confusion, as unfortunately has been the case before now"; he had to entreat her "most pressingly" to forward his standing-orders of joints and wines to Jena; and now it was he who kept her in mind of the garden and remembered about planting and watering, for she had ceased to do much with her own hands. If she neglected to write to him in his solitude at Jena—for Minna Herzlieb was away, perhaps by some secret arrangement—he warned her, half in fun: "You should remember that flirtations are hanging fire, but may have to be resorted to if you are quite so neglectful. With this threat I make my very fond farewell."

And so, with long intervals of separation, their happy relations continued undisturbed, though not seldom there were sharp encounters. Two years after their marriage the Duchess, at a masquerade, at last permitted Goethe's wife to be introduced to her. An hour later, Christiane was seen with her party "making a great noise in the supper-room, everyone half-seas over, champagne flowing, corks popping, ladies squeaking, and Goethe standing in a corner, silent and stern." Among a hundred malignant reports, so exaggerated as to be their own refutation, this

one seems to bear the stamp of truth, for it comes from a woman-friend—and it shows Goethe in a position which one knows not whether to call merely painful, or tragic. In such moments he needed all his kindness to forgive his wife for being what she was; for as he put it about this time, in *Elective Affinities*, " the most enlightened of men has no better opportunity of displaying his equanimity " than in marriage.

Goethe's sense of estrangement from his son kept pace with the boy's growth, and here there was no former depth of feeling to supply what the present lacked. Of the boy he had sometimes had hopes; in the student he could not but perceive that talent of any kind was completely absent; and the one thing he prized in his son was at best pedantry, showing itself to the third generation in tidiness about letters and pocket-books.

Otherwise the lad at seventeen was a conceited youth, alternating between apathy and unruliness, to whom his father, in his first term at college, had to shout " Don't go mooning about the place," and whom he held to be a sponge upon his mother. For the rest August could hunt, wear ever-new waistcoats, insist upon having silk stockings, solicit his father for new pistols and an expensive sword, though he was not at any time an officer.

Cool and friendly are the letters to this son, quite impersonal, often uninteresting. Goethe never used, either in the text or the signature, the word father. Any attempt at improving him was kindly made; he wasted his energy in explaining to August why he kept him on a small allowance, or would like him to devote a little more time to his letters, so that they might be legible.

Either the boy's pernicious tendencies were as yet undeveloped, or Goethe's paternal vigilance was insufficient to discern the dangers attendant on August's inadequacy. The one hope seemed to be—find him a safe position!

So Goethe wrote a begging-letter to the Duke, asking that his son should be officially appointed to an assessor-

ship, "for which both father and son herewith most humbly apply to Your Royal Highness. Neither will fail to testify, by assiduous attention to their duties, how deep is their sense of the inestimable value of Your Royal Highness's gracious interest and most flattering confidence." Never before had Goethe taken so obsequious a tone with any man alive. To Princes and Emperors he had used the ceremonial phrases of compliment, but had always treated the essential matter with manly self-respect. It is painful to think of his now having to adopt, in a son's interest, so servile a manner—he, the prince of German authors, friend of this Duke and of his House, whom he had served for more than thirty years as Minister!

It is as though he could not transgress against his own decree of personal aloofness without injury to his dignity. He had never had the sense of inherited family-obligations. From one decade to another he had left his mother unvisited; and when she now died, in Goethe's sixtieth year (he having seen her for the last time in his forty-eighth) the event is just mentioned in two of his letters, and in his year-book briefly alluded to.

And it was likewise with his own son. August, the sole survivor of five children, had only for a few years of his boyhood been near to his father's heart. Goethe's work and temperament had caused him to keep as aloof from his parents and from his child as if they had been strangers.

Nevertheless he looked carefully after their interests, whenever that was in his power. When Cotta—as his contract permitted—wanted to produce a new pocket-edition, Goethe protested in one of those letters, as friendly as they were business-like, which had been his resource in the old days of stress with the Duke. His household (he said) were horrified at the idea, which in case of his death would be injurious to their interests. "I feel very much of a stranger to myself, when I use the word 'advantage.' . . . And yet I must think of these things, unless, after a laborious and frugal existence, I want to be in debt when I leave the stage."

After this highly coloured picture, he threatened not to go on with his biography unless he was paid two thousand thalers for every volume, and concluded with "Yours, in esteem and confidence." When finally it came to a new contract for a second edition of the works in twenty volumes, for which he demanded sixteen thousand thalers, he pointed out the usefulness of the biography in drawing attention to the new edition.

He consented to let the Mannheim theatre produce the remodelled *Götz* only on condition that the receipts of every third performance should be guaranteed as a "benefit" for the author. He expected neither pleasure nor profit from the drama: "I much prefer novel-writing, for everything that in the theatre is against the author is to his advantage in the novel."

His inheritance on his mother's death—a half share of what his father had left, amassed entirely by his grandfather, the Goethe who had been a ladies' tailor—amounted nominally to about fifty thousand marks, but the war had greatly depreciated its value. This was all that, beyond his wide education, Goethe inherited from his forebears, and it came to him in the sixtieth year of his life, when he no longer needed it.

As Christiane's energy and interest diminished, Goethe, finding that in this period of literary activity he had more free time, and being in a good-humoured frame of mind, himself did a good deal more about the place. There are many letters about a juniper-tree which had been broken in a storm; he brought all sorts of things home from his travels, including even a chest which contained a thousand corks; and wrote the following international-provincial note: "The French Emperor has not yet got through.... Herewith I send a quantity of mignonette-seed, and a very little pansy-seed, because it is rare. So have the place under the stone . . . well weeded . . . and sow it at wide intervals with the pansies."

He twice lodged a semi-official representation about a skittle-ground in his neighbourhood; and the functionary

who received it may, if he was a reader of *Faust*, have smilingly remembered Wagner at the city-gate, when he read Goethe's ground of complaint: "It may seem to be no more than a slight concussion . . . but the noise is quite as tiresome as if it were louder."

Goethe stayed at home a good deal. He rarely went out to dinner, often to tea, but to the house that had of late been so frequently shut up, guests now came in throngs. At early noon and evening, during the winter, friends and new acquaintances would be received in Goethe's sitting-room, the most welcome being young Countesses or beautiful actresses; and so this most sociable period of his life resembled, in Goethe's old age, the youth of Wilhelm Meister—his intercourse was with the aristocracy and the stage. His old friends were dead, it is true, but it is also true that Goethe did not want old people about him—he wanted youth and pretty women. Knebel was the only survivor of the early days; Goethe and he had again drawn very near to one another after Schiller's death.

Charlotte von Stein, now approaching seventy, continued to receive frequent visits from Goethe, and letters which were full of significance for her, though almost impersonal and supposed to be read by the ladies of the Court as well. Charlotte declared that she disliked meeting Christiane; "but as he is very fond of the creature, I don't mind it now and again, if he likes." Twenty years after their rupture—her hatred was undying! But Goethe, on his side, confided to Christiane that he never could feel sure of Charlotte; and once, writing of a woman-friend that she was charming but that one always felt depressed after being with her, he added as if to make his meaning clear: "Just as it is at Ackerwand"—where Frau von Stein lived.

On the other hand, a new friend had during the last decade won Goethe's heart through their artistic sympathy. If Meyer, his practical expert on the plastic arts, had become his bosom-friend—taciturn, zealous, kindly—and was to remain so to the end, Zelter was from this time

forward his trusted adviser in musical matters, likewise taciturn, zealous, and practical, and, likewise, so to remain. These two specialists, whom Goethe discovered—one at forty, the other at fifty—and drew into his circle, became (quite apart from their artistic functions) the friends and brothers of his heart.

To Zelter, who surpassed Meyer in temperamental gifts, Goethe was personally attracted by his North German quickness and energy, his virile intelligence, independent career, and (as with Meyer) absolutely unselfish devotion to art. For in both men love of art was more marked than talent—Meyer being a great connoisseur and aesthete with little gift for painting, and Zelter an agreeable composer with remarkable musical insight and untiring energy in the performance of great works. Both men—like Schiller, about ten years younger than Goethe—were "thorough," genuine and unpretentious, practical and downright; they did not seek out Goethe, he discovered them. Their portraits speak for them. In Meyer's contemplative nature there was something of Goethe's Epimetheus; he compared the enterprising Zelter to his Prometheus. This pair, who came to him from the world without, but whom he resolutely drew into the closest intimacy, may be likened to the pair who dwelt in Goethe's inmost self, and so constantly appeared in his literary work. In that sense, these two last of his friends are, once more, symbols of his polarity.

From Zelter's first visit, he was Goethe's priest and devotee. "I thank God hourly with a humble heart that I have seen your face at last." And Goethe too instantly appreciated him: "There is something positively Promethean about the sort of man you are, something that I can only wonder at and revere. . . . All good to you, dear sun, and go on with your work of warming and enlightening us." When Zelter, later on, wrote to tell of his step-son's suicide, Goethe began his answer with a rush of spontaneous affection: "Thy letter, my beloved friend . . . has grieved me to the heart, nay, crushed me, for

it found me in a mood of very serious contemplation of existence. . . . Thou hast answered to Death's probing touch with a note of golden purity, refined in the crucible."

For forty years Goethe had never offered himself in brotherhood to any man. In this instance his heart cried out—the heart to which nothing in the world was so comprehensible as unsullied, steadfast character. This longest of Goethe's correspondences was at first of a purely practical nature; Zelter became as it were his ambassador in Berlin, and everything that in these years tended to promulgate the Goethean spirit there was the result of Zelter's propaganda.

Zelter showed Goethe the way in musical matters, but it was not he who first aroused his interest in them. Goethe had found and grappled to himself Herder, Charlotte, Schiller, Meyer, when they were necessary to him as exponents of the things he sought to make his own —and in the same way he now felt the need of musical knowledge, and grasped at Zelter's aid. For this is, in a dual sense, Goethe's musical decade. Like mysticism, music had never been absent from his life; but in his middle period both had been obscured, for in that phase of sententious materialism his impetus had been towards active work and scientific research rather than towards the things of art and literature.

Now he was constructing a world for himself in this region of the mind, and it was to be both school and social centre. Following Zelter's example, he got up a little Choral Society, which for several winters assembled every Thursday evening in his house for practice, and on Sunday forenoons would perform before an invited company.

Moreover, he wrote a quantity of convivial songs for music, which Zelter set for his Berlin choir, and which someone else would more or less improvise for the gatherings at Goethe's house. So through the rooms the *Ergo Bibamus* would peal, and the humanist took heart again—Goethe's resonant bass could even be heard among the singers.

At the same time he steeped himself in the study of

counterpoint, and was combative about the theory of the origin of minor modes or the exclusive right of the diatonic to be called the normal scale. He even thought of writing a book upon acoustics, and drew up a detailed synopsis for it. And one morning in Carlsbad, Goethe—sixty-four, all alone and palpitating—seized on a sheet of music-paper and there set down an arrangement for four voices of the *In te Domine speravi*, afterwards comparing it with one he had got Zelter to make, so as " to be once for all convinced of my own delusion."

Even if we knew nothing of Goethe's love for music, his attitude towards Mozart would suffice to show how sure was his taste. He had deeply studied Mozart at Weimar and constantly produced his operas; in his declining years he frequently ranked him with Raphael and Napoleon; and in two utterances of his middle period he put his finger on the point where Goethe and Mozart part company—*Faust* could only have been set to music in the manner of *Don Giovanni*, but *Don Giovanni* " stands by itself, and when Mozart died, all hope of anything resembling it was at an end."

It might have been supposed that Goethe had nothing to do but sample the talents of young composers, from the quantity of packets which at this and subsequent periods were sent him by unknown musicians, whose veneration had an eye upon the advantage of a word of praise from Goethe. When, among the many, Schubert's *Lieder* arrived, it was an evil fate which made even the appealing letter of the unknown composer powerless to induce Goethe to open the packet. Of other masters, all were either dead or unborn—except one, the sole contemporary who was of equal stature with the older Goethe. With him he did make acquaintance, and him he recognized for what he was.

Fatality—in that it was not the younger Goethe! For when in the whole history of the arts would two great

spirits have been more profoundly in sympathy than Goethe and Beethoven, had they but met in their tempestuous daemonic periods! When the older Goethe dreamed of *Faust* with accompanying music in the style of *Don Giovanni*, it was of Beethoven as the nearest approach to Mozart that he longingly thought for the composer. When the original draft of *Faust* was being written, the young poet would have wanted the most undiluted, the most un-Mozartian Beethoven for his rhythms and visions. Beethoven was closely akin to the Goethe of the most German, the most Herculean of the poet's phases; and indeed Beethoven *had* been deeply stirred by *Egmont*, the work which casts so clear a retrospective light upon that period. But as it was, Beethoven at forty, with the stormy splendour of his work and his untamed personality, encountered a Goethe of sixty-two, who after decades of struggle had risen to the heaven of his *Pandora*, and was just at the beginning of his loftiest and serenest epoch.

Everything that Goethe's genius had wrested from his daemon, after a lifetime of warfare, was arraigned when Beethoven's ravaged countenance, Beethoven's sombre accents, met his eyes and ears; and if that encounter had taken place in the heart of the vast labyrinth which was Goethe's middle-period, he would menacingly have bid the stranger: "Go—nor invade my magic circle!" The chaos from which he had so painfully emerged, the Promethean battle which he had left behind him, Goethe saw revived for his imagination in Beethoven; his own youth, so pitilessly and so long reviled, arose from its grave. And because it was only now, a conqueror at the zenith of his career, to light and to serenity at last attained, that he met the other great daemonic being, Goethe could comprehend him. Before this period, he would never have sat down beside Beethoven's piano; now he felt armed at all points against any and every tempter. During Goethe's most Mozartian phase he came in contact with Beethoven —hence his admiration, hence his imperfect sympathy.

It was at Teplitz, during his daily intercourse with the Empress, surrounded by potentates and pretty women, as excited as a boy, as a poet, could be, yet weighing and calculating possibilities like an old man, like a worldling —it was there and then that he encountered Beethoven, and spent three or four afternoons and evenings in his company, visiting him, driving out with him, hearing him play.

We seem to see the two. In a small ill-furnished lodging-house apartment, Goethe—just come from the Empress, looking young and handsome, serener and richer now, intrepid and emancipated, lord of life, master of his daemon—sits at a wretched piano alone with a man devastated, pallid, ill, and very hard of hearing; alone with Beethoven, whose fingers are rushing headlong over the keys. It is a summer-evening, and the candles are flickering. . . . When at last he goes, Goethe feels stirred to the depths: "He played magnificently. . . . I have never beheld so concentrated, so powerful, so intense an artist!" Never before or afterwards did Goethe use such words about a musician.

When, later, his own sphere was invaded by that strange elementary force, he was conscious of a certain aloofness. In Beethoven's settings of his lyrics he sometimes felt that he had been misrepresented, here by amplification, there by contraction, of his meaning; the rendering was seldom exactly true—but always he would declare: "Beethoven has done wonders with it."

Yet none the less Beethoven's temper and attitude were inevitably alien to Goethe. "His talent has utterly amazed me"—so he wrote to Zelter—"but unfortunately his is a most savage personality. Certainly he is not entirely to be blamed if he finds the world a detestable place, but the effect is none the less disadvantageous both for himself and others." Beethoven's deafness (he said) was as regrettable as it was injurious to himself, for he was laconic anyhow, and the deafness made him doubly so. Beethoven saw it in the same light. "What patience the great man

has had with me! What good he has done me!" But on the other hand, this: "The Court-atmosphere suits Goethe too well—better than it ought to suit such a poet." This accusation of worldliness, common to everyone about everyone else, may be regarded as merely symbolic of that difference in their spiritual evolution which could not but keep them apart.

Eleven years afterwards Beethoven sent a subscription-list to the Courts and the rich patrons of art in Germany, for the publication of his great Mass; and with this petition to Goethe wrote these words, so moving in their reticence: "I have written a great deal, it is true, but have gained almost nothing. But now I am no longer alone; for more than six years now I have been father to my late brother's son. . . . A few words from you would make me very happy."

When this letter from the ageing Beethoven reached Weimar, Goethe (who was then seventy-four) was so seriously ill that two doctors had given him up.

Fatality, this also—which to the deaf impoverished genius closed such a source of spiritual and temporal succour; for those were years in which Goethe's soul would assuredly have responded to him who so could render suffering and strife. A short time before, Beethoven, when someone suggested his writing music for *Faust*, had exclaimed, with arms raised to heaven: "That *would* be worth while—I could do something with that! But I have had three works in hand for some time now. . . . When they are done, I'll have a try at *Faust* at last!"

It was the same with Kleist. In a purely dynamic sense his period of *Sturm und Drang* had had an esoteric affinity with that of the young Goethe; but the strain of intense morbidity in Kleist was strongly opposed to the pantheistic outlook of Goethe's riper years. Goethe did not depreciate Kleist's talent; he merely disliked its tendency. His own endeavour was to render the antique in terms of

modernity: in *Amphitryon* it seemed to him that the two worlds were, artistically speaking, poles apart. In the *Zerbrochene Krug* (*The Broken Jug*) he saw extraordinary beauties; but when *Penthesilea* appeared, Goethe must have felt that the whole of his antique world was menaced by Romanticism! Long afterwards he said: "That poet aroused in me, for all my genuine desire to enter into his mind, a frequent sense of horror and repulsion, as might a body which Nature had intended to be beautiful, but which was in the grip of an incurable disease."

Previously, however, he had managed so to shake off this after-growth of repulsion that he could examine it dispassionately, for:

> Mit den edlen, lebendigen Neuen
> Mag ich wetteifernd mich erfreuen.[1]

Goethe's arduous endeavour to enter into the minds of those who were his very antipodes went on for years; and if he was first attracted and then repelled by the Romantic School, that fact has no bearing upon his own development. Goethe was the great Unromantic all his life long, yet in the previous period he had gone some way with the Schlegels, with Tieck, and even with Jean Paul—and in the same spirit he now went some way with Zacharias Werner.

That "remarkable man" had originally fascinated Goethe by the sparks he could strike from the Jena circle; perhaps he felt some secret gratitude to him for having made his affection for Minna Herzlieb break into flower from the bud so long unclosed. But the element in Werner which derived both from heaven and hell, the faith which illuminated that faun-like face of his, was his chief attraction for Goethe, recalling as it did, though at an infinite distance, Merck, the friend of his youth.

Goethe thought highly of Werner's gifts, and when he was taken to task for this, he wrote:

[1] With proud new life, in young hearts beating,
I love to feel myself competing.

Wie doch, betrügerischer Wicht,
Verträgst du dich mit Allen?—
Ich leugne die Talente nicht
Wenn sie mir auch missfallen.[1]

But if pure poetry was in question, he would stand no nonsense; and when Werner one evening at Goethe's produced a sonnet in which the moon was compared to the Host, all Goethe's suppressed hostility suddenly broke its bonds—he flamed forth, he lost his temper, declaring that he hated that kind of perverted religiosity and would never countenance it. "You have spoilt my dinner for me—you have made me forget myself before these ladies!" Werner turned pale and said not a word; and Goethe soon left the room, in search of composure. Later, Werner wrote from Rome to say that Ottilie's self-sacrifice (in *Elective Affinities*) had made him feel inclined to turn Catholic. This time Goethe answered with good-humoured amusement, but there was a touch of Götz's mailed fist when he added: "But don't, I beg of you, strew any allusions to the crown of thorns before my feet!"

In that scene at the dinner-table Goethe quite literally turned his back upon the Romantic School. For the thing of all others that he, so rigorous with himself as he was, must have detested in the young Romantics was their fatal facility, their pride in being chaotic, their affected serenity—so different from that of Mozart, who, just because he was unromantic, knew real serenity of soul. "There are plenty of people who know what they want to do, only they would like to stroll up to it, quite casually."

Those are not the words of a worshipper of strict form, from which indeed at that time Goethe tended to depart; they are an expression of the anger aroused by such self-conscious ranters in a strong spirit, whose aim it was to shape, though in obedience to them both, his life and art.

[1] But what a humbug you must be
To get on with so many!—
Because a talent mayn't please me,
I don't deny there's any!

It was the pretentiousness of the Romantics that, after such a fight for life as his had been, he could not away with—their arrogance, and their self-seeking too. And they, who had begun by adoring him, fell upon him tooth and nail when he would no longer be called their champion. "They admit that we have influence; to insight they lay sole claim; and to use the former to the latter's advantage is their hidden purpose. Real belief in us is no part of their programme. I do not blame them, but neither do I choose to live in a fool's paradise, or to support uncongenial views against my own conviction."

Even in Friedrich Schlegel, whose intellect he never ceased to admire, the apostolic attitude annoyed him. Goethe thought his conversion an instructive example of how the highest endowments of reason and talent, if their possessor persistently plays the Veiled Prophet, will end in the hocus-pocus of the magician's cave.

Their next move was towards Brahminism—a good advertisement; and what at the outset of the rococo-period had been a slender flame now smouldered as on altars of sacrifice. And Goethe sardonically looked on, and grew but the more trenchant in his repudiation of their mysticism as his own welled ever more crystalline from the depths of his being! The old man rejuvenated might well have felt himself a pagan in presence of these Christians; yet, none the less, from the altar of Goethe's life the great sacrificial flame rose in august solemnity, and with scarce-concealed arrogance he declared, heroically prophetic, that a century would elapse before their grandchildren and great-grandchildren would find pleasure or profit in his works.

In so exalted a frame of mind, the importunate daily round could be more easily endured than in the years when a gigantic resolve to learn and to achieve had often run its head against the limitations of a Saxon Duchy. By this time he had lived so long in the neighbourhood of a Court that his attitude was like that of an enlightened

scion of nobility, to whom that life is inevitable, in the nature of things—it can scarcely even be called resignation. In such a place he did not propose to do very much, but he had ceased to be resentful of it.

The Duke saw less and less of him. "It will be a great pleasure to me," wrote Goethe to the Duchess, "to pay my tribute in his Residency, though it be but for a few days, to that admirable ruler to whom, with equal confidence and affection, I have dedicated my existence." A singularly grandiloquent sort of compliment to the friend of his youth, now returning from the war! And much the same tone, though a trifle more cordial, marked Goethe's first use of the new title when at the Congress of Vienna he congratulated Carl August on having been promoted to the rank of Grand-Duke.

For the finishing-touch had been put to their estrangement by Carl August's supplementary spouse. She was that actress Jagemann whom we have glanced at; and with her increasing influence over the Duke, she was trying to undermine Goethe's already diminishing authority at the Theatre. She set herself to gain complete control over the repertory, the assignment of parts, the appointments to all offices.

Christiane's idea of separating the operatic and dramatic sides was adopted; and in one of the lengthy memorials which Goethe composed at this crisis, he embodied his views in this despotic formula: "Privy-Councillor von Goethe has sole and unlimited control over the artistic arrangements connected with dramatic performances"; and he made it very clear that "artistic arrangements" was to be construed in the widest possible sense. This he called his ultimatum, and would hear of no exceptions. The Duchess finally smoothed things over, and Goethe made the mistake of sticking to his managerial position.

Of yore the various threads, so flexible at first, had indeed grown refractory to the pattern, but would still obey the weaver's hand in some degree. Now they were hopelessly entangled—and it is tragi-comical to observe how

the straightforward, steadfast Carl August contended against Goethe, not about constitutional matters but those very theatrical affairs in which he had never aspired to any special knowledge; and how behind their broad backs two women, each an upstart mistress, skirmished with one another—till in the end a third, the dispassionate secluded Duchess, had to call a truce!

But Goethe, though vexed and wounded, managed not to lose sight of the ideal pursued throughout all the strange vicissitudes of his existence; and every one of his personal frustrations seems to have been dismissed from his mind when at this time he said in confidence to a friend: "The Duke is of that primal daemonic breed whose inflexible natures have something of the quality of granite—they can neither bend nor be destroyed. He will always come unscathed out of every peril." In those manful measured words he seems to epitomize his whole relation to the Duke, and if we are as conscious as he was of all the restrictions and contentions upon which they shed so illuminating a gleam—a gleam which twenty years of the unknown future were to see still flickering as from a smoky torch . . . we are also conscious that here for the first time, so far as that relation goes, we see Goethe as it were in equilibrium between his youth and his old age.

For now, at sixty, he was mature and serene enough to look indulgently upon his youth. With ironic detachment he contemplated, from his heights, those distracted aberrations; and reflecting, found the lines which best epitomize them:

> Du hast an schönen Tagen,
> Dich manchmal abgequält?—
> Ich habe mich nie verrechnet,
> Aber oft verzählt.[1]

[1] Wert many a day tormented,
Though heavenly blue the sky?—
I never summed up wrongly,
But often paid too high.

As before, the entrance upon a new decade was surrounded by symbolism. On the threshold of his thirties he "had been conscious of strange emotions"; and so it was now on his sixtieth birthday, with its challenge to a retrospective survey. Very likely he recalled, that day, the serious-minded thirtieth anniversary, when he and the Court had paid tribute to the pleasure-loving Duke in verses and festivities; or the fortieth, with no one to cheer his loneliness but the young pagan mistress, already carrying under her heart the first of his sons; or the fiftieth, when the old garden had seen Proteus follow with his telescope the moon as she went up the sky. And on that morning, surely, he must have passed in review the works of each decade, with last year's achievement bringing up the rear? First had come *Iphigenie*, then the Roman Elegies; next, from this aesthetic *quod-libet*, the Ballads rose to memory—and to-day *Elective Affinities* was nearly ready for the printers.

Surrounded by the things he loved, warmed by the affection of his friends, unperturbed by official duties, Court, and renown, he was sitting on that August morning in the garden at Jena between old Knebel and his pretty wife—when lo and behold! a carriage with Christiane inside, and Christiane had brought three young actresses along with her, thinking that, whatever else might be afoot, Goethe would be sure to enjoy feeling young on his sixtieth birthday.

Directly after this day, when the last touch had but just been put to the novel, Goethe—heretofore so chary of touching old documents, and never unless for an *auto-da-fé*—began to look up his old diaries and, as the cold weather began, to dig himself in like a hibernating animal among his Tales of a Grandfather. It was not long before the impulse to shape and form was stirred by the scope and novelty of this task; and in sweeping outlines—as when he had thought of writing the history of Duke Bernhard of Weimar—he now laid out the ground for his own biography.

But as he prepared himself to write the history of a human being, and contemplated the young man with whom he should have to begin, it came over him "how one may seem more worth while when one is shallow, crude, and undeveloped than when one encounters one's-self in one's abundance, elaboration, and accomplishment!" This is the first time that the older Goethe ever gave expression to any kind of envy for the daemonic genius of his early days, as he looked down upon him from the altitudes of his serenity.

The portraiture is so intimate, so penetrating, so entirely free from any tinge of complacency, that the later sub-title, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, is not to be construed as the mental reservation of an author paltering with the truth. By *Dichtung* he undoubtedly meant no more than the "re-modelling" indispensable to a survey of such distant years. The actual facts (not only about the period but about Goethe himself) are at first touched with a gingerly hand, but gradually they assume more prominence, so much so that the book must be regarded, in its most interesting chapters, as a source-work of the first importance.

Whenever he was hampered by regard for persons still surviving, Goethe preferred silence to tactful evasions. Though the world was agog for revelations about the *Werther* episode, he chose to ignore his Wetzlar novel rather than give pain to Lotte Kestner, now widowed and living in Hanover; and in his generalized portrait of her the one intimate allusion he permitted himself was this enchanting turn of phrase: "Lotte—for I think she would like me to call her so. . . ."

Friederike was able to read her story just before she died. But when Lili's moment came, he found that no consideration for her could persuade him either to ignore or to throw a veil over that most sovereign of his passions—and at this stage he suddenly interrupted the narrative, to resume it at a point after the death of Lili many years later. His mother, for whose delineation he had been

supplied with material by Bettina, he preferred (when it came to transcribing these notes) to leave unsentimentalized; hence we have only one or two allusions which would have been a great disappointment to her, had she ever read them.

He found it easier to deal with the friends of his youth. Most of them—Behrisch, Salzmann, Lenz, Merck, Lavater, Herder—were dead; Jacobi is most fondly portrayed; and Klinger at this time received a cordial letter from Goethe: "Life is just like the Sibylline Books—the nearer to its close, the more precious. Farewell; and remember me, as in the beginning and the middle, so to the end!"

What grateful tributes he could pay to his old friends, ignoring any estrangements there might have been, is shown by the votive-tablets to Lavater and Herder, here as it were propped against the mighty tree that was his life.

But what sort of picture does he draw of himself? His diary at the moment of beginning the book has these deep sayings, an open sesame for the student of that spirit:

"Ironical view of life in the higher sense, by means of which biography assumes a superiority over life. Superstitious outlook, whereby again one stands back from life. By the former method the intellect and the reason—by the latter the sensibilities and the imagination—are indulged.... Physiology lies at the heart of it all. Physiological, and pathological too, as for example in the passages relating to organic Nature.... This to be carefully distinguished from any definitely morbific state of mind. ... Anyone writing a self-confession runs great risk of falling into melancholy, for one is owning up to the morbific, the peccant, side of one's nature, and is never at liberty to confess to one's virtues."

That seems to be a revelation of something far transcending a biographical method. Was not the form taken by Goethe's whole life the outcome of an objective survey and a superstitiously conceived endeavour, and did not the

individual thereby sublimate his experience, yet find himself perpetually drawn back to it by imagination and sensibility? In this programme for the delineation of a life we have, besides, the programme for that life itself.

At the same time, it is all a well-considered manipulation. Such writings should not be too serious (so he admonished himself); one should give them a certain special kind of wings—for with this book Goethe desired, for the first time in his life, to gain popularity. While "all my earlier works were written for myself because I wanted to write them, so that in that way I could afford to wait a dozen years or more for many of them to gain acceptance . . . with this work I want . . . to please my fellow countrymen, but especially my friends." No work of Goethe's, with the exceptions of *Werther* and *Hermann*, won such instant popularity as *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. The book laid the foundation for the renown of his old age; and, as he had foreseen, aroused interest in many of his earlier achievements, which were regarded as fragmentary renderings of this whole. All the world was eagerly awaiting a continuation.

But if anyone is curious about what the author kept in the background of his ironic *décor*, let him turn to the sketches for this work; and there he will find himself staring at these tremendous words: "My life one long adventure. Not the adventure of striving to bring to perfection what Nature had implanted in me. Endeavour to acquire that which she had *not*. Tendencies as often right as wrong. Thence perpetual torment bereft of any genuine enjoyment." So did Goethe, even in his serenest phase, hold commune with himself, surveying that vast Titanic wayfaring of whose aberrations his biographical confession says in so many words that it does not represent more than "the thousandth part."

In like manner, the third masterpiece completed and published by Goethe in this epoch of four masterpieces—the *Theory of Colour*—is in its best portions an outcome of the same spiritual temper. What at forty he had begun in

a manner purposely dryasdust, he now at sixty actually thought of turning into a novel! And now, too, he took to satirizing his colour-antagonists in rhyme; and it was in this humorous vein that he first epitomized the affinity between himself and his Theory, the reason why he was so devoted to it. The polarity of light—that was it; and he found a far-reaching symbol to express it:

Armer Tobis, tappst am Stabe
Siebenfarbiger Dröseleien,
Kannst dich jener Himmelsgabe
Reinen Lichtes nicht erfreuen;
Nicht erlustigen dich im Schatten,
Wo mit urgebotner Liebe
Licht und Finsterniss sich gatten,
Zu verherrlichen die Trübe.[1]

Then the colours are marshalled as in a grand march-past, each with its own emblem; and it is then too that the exultant reverence he felt for Nature takes chiselled form in these splendid words: " The eye owes its very existence to light. From inert animal ancillary organs light evokes an organ which shall become light; and so the eye learns to give light for light, emitting an internal ray to encounter that from without."

And now, obedient to the scheme of his psychical evolution, Goethe the scientist turned from materialism to symbolism. It is marvellous—the synchronization, the ubiquitous unfolding, in that nature whose growth was so akin to Nature's own, of the blossom upon every branch in his old age. If it was one and the same Goethe who in his life and his work, in Nature-study and art-criticism, had moved by the light of reason throughout twenty years, so

[1] Still to fumble colours seven,
Hapless Tobit, art thou bidden,
Light, pure light, that gift of Heaven,
From thine eyes for ever hidden?
Shalt thou never bend, elated,
O'er the nuptial couch primeval,
Where the light and darkness, mated,
Glorify the gloom coeval?

now it was one and the same Goethe who, living and writing, criticizing and investigating, grappled the universe to himself, to contemplate it with trustful vision, irradiate it with symbolic truth, adore it with tender irony. Goethe's research had fused with Goethe's faith.

More and more symbolic grew his ideas about Nature—more and more do such passages in his letters and conversations recall Leonardo's day-books. His was the recondite suggestion that animals and plants, which in their ultimate phases would be scarce distinguishable from one another, might conceivably be evolved from the primal state—plants by concealment from light, animals by extreme exposure to it. He closed an argument with chemists with the observation that for the lower organisms a terminology typical of the higher would become the usage; and " it will go so far that for the more advanced intellects mechanical and atomic demonstrations will be entirely supplanted, all phenomena appearing as dynamic and chemical; and in this way the divine principle in Nature will become more and more clearly evidenced."

All this led to the most astonishing changes of front. He who had always looked askance at astronomy and mathematics as too abstract for him, holding aloof from stars and numbers in a heresy of superterrestrial conviction, now lauded astronomy as the one science which proceeded from accepted data to certain and illimitable conclusions. " Divided by continents and oceans, astronomers, most gregarious of recluses, have all the elements of their science in common, and so they can build as on the solid rock." His principal quarrel with Newton had been for the inconclusiveness of his experiments, as contrasted with the radiant clarity of Goethe's own Promethean vision. But now to Schopenhauer, Kant's young follower, with whom Goethe was arguing his colour-theory, he exclaimed in words of flame: " What? You affirm that light exists but by virtue of your perception? Never! You would not be there at all, if light did not perceive you! "

And now it was that such lines as these could say the last word for him:

> Was wär ein Gott, der nur von aussen stiesse,
> Im Kreis das All am Finger laufen liesse!
> Ihm ziemt's, die Welt im Innern zu bewegen,
> Natur in sich, sich in Natur zu hegen,
> So dass, was in ihm lebt und webt und ist,
> Nie seine Kraft, nie seinen Geist vermisst.[1]

Henceforth his intellect is as a mighty river in full spate. One almost shrinks from any detailed treatment of the features in a portrait of such majestic unity. Goethe's faith, as it was at sixty, had been foreshadowed in his scientific work, and was inevitably constructed out of identical elements.

"For an old pagan like me, it is a very strange experience to see the Cross erected upon my own territory" (the reference is to Werner) ". . . and yet it is not entirely repugnant to me. . . . It ought by this time to be just what I should like—to live and die the last of the pagans. . . . For myself, so variously constituted as I am, I can never be satisfied with only one way of thinking; as a writer and artist I am polytheistic, while as a scientist I am pantheistic, and both with equal conviction. If, as a moral being, I wanted a personal God, that God would assuredly be forthcoming." There we have the formula for the creed of Goethe's earlier old age, and for its evolution.

It was only in opposition to the pretensions of Christian belief that he professed so primitive a paganism. In his moments of deepest insight Goethe was now drawing near to the mystical temper of the antique faiths, in consonance with the more and more mystical bent of his scientific

[1] A God who in external force consisteth,
One who the All around his finger twisteth!
Nay—he is blent with every cosmic motion,
Nature and he so fused in deep devotion
That all which lives and moves and is in him,
His energy, his mind, fill to the brim.

research. The metamorphosis of plants and a belief in the Eternal Return are only two forms of the same spiritual perception; and one day, in a dialectical correspondence with an intimate, he wrote down this most amazing scheme, as his " general confession of faith ":

" (a) Nature contains all that the Ego contains.
(y) and something more.
(b) The ego contains all that there is in Nature.
(z) and something more.
b can perceive *a*; but *y* can only be surmised through *z*."

With such a sense of what Nature stands for, is it surprising that he now turned again to the study of the mystics and alchemists, the Kabbala, and Pico della Mirandola, re-established a Masonic Lodge which had been closed for twenty-five years, and even drew an occasional horoscope?

He said at this time that man was irresistibly impelled to take refuge in the unconscious, for in that he was rooted; at another time he called his own works " Vestiges from a former existence "; on a third occasion these ironic words fell from his lips: " I often seem to myself like a magic oyster, washed over by mysterious waves of ocean."

Emotions such as these proceeded from and contributed to a wonderful serenity of mind. The conflicting voices in his soul were better harmonized—but neither was yet silenced.

In these years he found endless new ways of expressing the polarity in the universe and in himself: " There are two worlds. When one of them is angry, the other does not ask why. . . . For a God and for a dumb animal dispassionateness is the supreme condition; hatred and love, victory or death, dominion or subjection—these are only for men. . . . As if overstrain, illness, were not likewise conditions of Nature! So-called health can only consist in an equilibrium of contending forces."

Goethe had now, after a lifetime of spiritual conflicts, attained to a kind of glad security. His daemon was

quiescent, in these years, as never before or afterwards it had been or was to be; and the love which he extended to the world and man was a universal, all-embracing love. It was the Eros of a Goethe grown old—and thus a manifestation different in kind from that of the earlier period. One mark was a patience with all and sundry, which had hitherto been foreign to him; and it was now that the philosopher could say: " All the world over there are plenty of poor devils, each more or less panic-stricken. Others, who have known what it is to be like them, look on at their antics in a spirit of forbearance." And again: " Hatred is like an illness—like the *Miserere*, turned the wrong way round."

This was an Eros which armed him with a steel so true that none could pierce his breast. The transition between his moods of grave serenity and sportive ease was as subtle as ever. One day he would declare that even joyous music could induce melancholy; the next he would enjoy hearing his acquaintances caricatured upon the piano. His heart held the balance true. " It is no effort to me to be indulgent, for my harshness and severity are only factitious—only bluff." One might quote as many as two dozen aphorisms which give expression to this temper:

> Lass nur die Sorge sein,
> Das gibt sich alles schon;
> Und fällt der Himmel ein,
> Kommt doch eine Lerche davon.[1]

All burdens weighed light upon him now. Problems were wrestling-bouts, contentions games of skill. Goethe's most strenuous hours were bright with a clear radiance hitherto unknown. And we listen, open-eyed, to utterances wherein he seems eager to shed a retrospective gleam of gaiety even upon the times gone by: " I want to get

[1] Abide the hour, for all
Is but a passing thing,
And should the heavens fall,
A lark will earthward wing.

as much fun as possible out of everything I do. . . . In my youth I did that, unconsciously; and now I propose to do it, consciously, for the rest of my life. Useful? I leave that to you! *You* can use me, if you like; but I can't consent to do anything 'on sale or return' . . . I don't hand myself over as a tool, and all professionalism means being a tool—or if you prefer a more flattering word, an organ." Had such insight as this taken less than a generation to visit him, how much he might have spared himself! And yet it was because nothing was spared him that such spiritual conquest could be his in his old age. For how organic, in its slow gestation, was the change in Goethe! Only in that light can we comprehend how the sombre misanthropic seeker after truth could now sing thus:

> Gibt's ein Gespräch, wenn wir uns nicht belügen,
> Mehr oder weniger versteckt?
> So ein Ragout von Wahrheit und von Lügen,
> Das ist die Köcherei, die mir am besten schmeckt.[1]

In truth, it was the Goethe of sixty and sixty-five—and that Goethe alone—who could get anywhere near such a degree of harmony, the utmost ever permitted to his antithetical nature. The daemon was at his feet for once, if only slumbering—that daemon which had always hitherto disturbed the joys of equilibrium.

All this is to be read in Goethe's face—so much younger looking, so much handsomer. On a spring day in his sixtieth year the poet, Count Baudissin, saw him for the first time, and says: "I swear that I have never seen a handsomer man of sixty. Brow, nose, and eyes are those of the Olympian Jupiter, and the eyes absolutely unpaintable and incomparable. At first I could do no more than feast my own upon the beautiful features and the magnificent olive complexion; but afterwards, when he began to tell

[1] Is there a language, sometimes apprehended,
A chiaroscuro—or is this but dream?
Such a ragout, of truth and untruth blended,
Were the concoction I should best esteem.

stories and gesticulate, those two black suns seemed to be twice the size, and they gleamed and sparkled so divinely that I can't imagine how anyone can face their lightning when he is angry. . . . He has got rid of his former corpulence, and his figure is now faultless in its symmetry. . . . In conversation his gestures are full of fire, and exquisitely graceful. . . . He speaks low, but with a voice of splendid quality, and neither too fast nor too slow. And the way he enters a room, the way he stands and walks! He is one of the born kings of the world."

From the mask at fifty-eight, the voice would come upon a darker key. Here the discords in the head, re-echoing those in the soul, are not refined away into beauty. The features are still immobile, as in a plaster cast; the asymmetry in the two sides of the face is conspicuous. But the lofty brow bears marks of anguish, graven by the tool of destiny; the great eyes have widened thus in their unresting watch for the true faith, the dignity in that strong virile nose is his own work. The lips droop at the corners; and though they can smile, the smile is no Olympian gift—it is the conquest of a mortal man.

Such had Goethe become, in body and soul—to such a degree of harmony had he pressed on, when two events befell him, which are the mountain-peaks in this second half of his life.

At this time he encountered Napoleon and Hafiz.

As powerful as the influence of sex upon kindred natures, mutually drawing them together in a relation which has something both of hate and love, is that of genius upon genius. The craving to behold himself as in a glass will ever urge the genius towards his compeer—only, like any other creature, eventually to find the way back to his native solitude; for self-love, vigilance, distrust keep him continually, warily, poised as it were on one foot for flight. To seek and fear his kind, then, is for the daemonic being, solitary as the genius is, a natural process. Goethe, in

whom both types were included, had spent more than forty years in a vain quest—and yet, with his venerative instinct, felt but the more intimately drawn towards his great contemporaries.

It was chiefly the work of destiny, but also the result of his chosen remoteness from artistic life, that the few by whom he could have measured himself had eluded him. He had missed meeting Lessing and Winckelmann in Leipzig; Voltaire had left Switzerland when Goethe visited it; Klopstock he remembered as a dignified man of the world with whom he had spent a few hours; Herder had always done everything he could to spoil his own effect; Goethe had seen through Wieland at a glance. With Schiller the case was so complicated that friendship had been difficult to bring to birth at all; and their gifts being as little akin as their natures, theirs was an artistic alliance rather than a mutual flame of genius. He never met the great German thinkers, for Kant never left his eastern town, to which Goethe was as little attracted as to Kant himself; Schelling and Hegel were, among other things, too young to set a standard for Goethe. And Mozart, whom as a boy he had listened to on the piano, came too soon for him, as Beethoven came too late.

Men of action would have made a deeper impression on this man of action; especially because, as a writer, he always longed to behold the kind of man whose prototype in history and legend he sought to portray. Frederick the Great was an old man when Goethe went to Potsdam. But even through the absurdities of his courtiers Goethe had been able to divine the spirit of "old Fritz," though by mysterious dispensation he was absent at the time of this visit. Romantic natures in men of action were always unattractive to the Goethe of the middle and later periods, and so Louis Ferdinand had left no lasting impression upon his observant eye. But there was one thing which might have challenged his attention, and possibly have taken him by storm—the atmosphere of Paris in those years of the 'nineties; and above all Mirabeau,

whose mind was adored by Goethe's friends—and his busts as well. But inner conflicts, such as we have indicated in an earlier chapter, had kept Goethe out of Paris; and even if he had visited the city, there would have been certain inhibitions to overcome—inhibitions of which he, as a Conservative and a teacher, was always conscious with an orator so alien in spirit from himself.

But when General Bonaparte came upon the scene Goethe was instantly captivated—though his temper forbade him any great admiration of warlike deeds, and even in Caesar and Frederick he esteemed the monarch rather than the General. But as the years revealed Bonaparte's enterprise in all its vastness—as a host of anecdotes, inspired both by love and hatred, showed forth the antique valour, the downright, forthright grip, the ineffable range and latitude—in short, the mighty daemon in the little man who at thirty-five, a lawyer's son and a lieutenant, stood in possession of the kingdoms of the earth . . . then Goethe forgot the anarchical beginnings of that towering flight, forgot as if they had never been the weeks of the campaign in which he had suffered with his countrymen for the restoration of the Bourbons; and could forgive this latter-day hero the Revolution, nay, could feel it to be retrospectively justified by genius such as this. From the day of Austerlitz he called him "my Emperor."

Goethe, who had never striven for authority, loved authority and hated anarchy. Nothing more clearly demonstrates how sublimely he conceived of the hero's part in history, how wholeheartedly he could relinquish the traditional order in favour of the heaven-sent genius, than this enthusiasm for the greatest "self-made man," besides himself, to whom the age had given birth. It was the impossible which came to pass when this Saxon Minister, this member of a vanquished nation, this poet, felt that in France, in the conqueror, in the great man of action, the electric spark in him had met its answering spark—that he had found, as in a brother, here at last the

elements which were his own twin elements, the Genius and the Daemon.

"We forswear the prodigious as long as we can, and maintain a wilful blindness to the elements of which it is composed. But when one listens to an unsophisticated description of this Emperor and his environment, one cannot but perceive that there never has been, and probably never will be, anything like it. . . . His legend reminds one of nothing so much as the Revelation of St. John. Everyone feels that there is a quality in it which he cannot define."

When on one occasion the talk turned upon genius and morality, Goethe declared that such figures transcended the moral law, and were like natural phenomena such as water and fire; for a God could be measured only by the stature of a God.

"Napoleon combines the most contradictory characteristics—his love of the miraculous really belongs to the poet; his delight in overcoming difficulties to the mathematician."

There we have Napoleon's character in outline, and from that outline Goethe's eye could logically deduce his downfall; for what could ever have overthrown him save the inordinate preponderance of his imaginative over his mathematical faculties, as typified in that Alexander-like Eastern campaign, the first to be based on erroneous calculations?

But this is yet another indication of their spiritual affinity—for what else could have so complicated, so destroyed the blissful harmony of Goethe's existence as did that very play of inborn energies, taking shape in ever-renewed attempts at the consummation of a life of action, forcibly discriminated from that of the imagination? Napoleon, pointed by destiny to the deed, was doomed to fall if ever he should trust his dream; Goethe, pointed by genius to the embodiment of his dreams, must wait for victory till he should sacrifice the deed to the poet's vision. Precisely at the dividing-line between these

two courses—Goethe at the zenith of his attainment, Napoleon immediately before his tragic error—the two men met for a brief hour, mutually to gaze in one another's starry countenance.

Goethe, when this hour came, was in his sixtieth, Napoleon in his fortieth, year. Five years earlier, Napoleon would have been disappointed to behold a fat Goethe—Goethe to behold a fat Napoleon. For both it was the propitious moment.

When, since Socrates had sat with Alcibiades at the Symposium, since Seneca had given counsel to his Emperor, had one speck of space, one little room, enclosed two human beings of such self-acquired authority? Was this really possible, so recently as in the days of our grandparents—that two men should, in the course of a few decades, have made themselves legendary figures, have shaped spiritual dynasties—that two sons of the bourgeoisie, born as it were invisibly among a thousand more in the street of a town like any other town, should in that space of time have raised their mothers to such rank that one reigned as Empress-Mother at the Tuileries, and the other could enter a drawing-room on the majestic words: "*Je suis la mère de Goethe*"!

When at the end of September, 1808, Napoleon came to Erfurt before the Spanish campaign, he was at the zenith of his fame. Four kings and thirty-four reigning princes were there assembled to do honour to the parvenu.

Those days found him inwardly in a state of extreme tension; he felt that he was at the apex of his powers, yet some daemonic presentiment seemed already to warn him of the end. How else can we explain the uneasiness which just then assailed him concerning the alliance with Russia? "If Alexander is as friendly to me as you suppose," he said to Talleyrand, who has recorded the interview in his Memoirs, "why is he taking so long to sign the Alliance?" He walked up and down the room excitedly:

"Do you know why nobody will join in with my luck, why everybody hesitates? Because I have no children, and they all think it will come to an end with me! It is unfortunate for the world—and we must alter it some day."

With the Tsar, who travelled by way of Weimar, Carl August too came to Erfurt, bringing an immense retinue. Goethe alone held aloof. Everything, it would seem, ought to have attracted him to Erfurt in the mundane phase through which he then was passing. Did he fear reality, with its grand disillusionment? Did he wish to be personally summoned? When after a few days he *was* summoned, but only by his own ruler, he hesitated long; and it was only Christiane's sure instinct which could persuade him to take the short journey.

He came into such a medley of diplomats, soldiers, and courtiers of every nation as he had never beheld till then. On his second evening he made the Minister Maret's acquaintance at a tea-party. Next day, Maret told the Emperor that Goethe was in the town. Instantly he was summoned to an audience.

"I am summoned to the Emperor's private room. At the same moment Daru is announced, and at once admitted. I hesitate on that account. But am again summoned. I enter. The Emperor is seated at breakfast before a large round table; at his right, somewhat removed from the table, stands Talleyrand, Daru a little nearer on his left.... The Emperor beckons me closer. I remain standing at a respectful distance. He looks at me attentively, and says: '*Vous êtes un homme!*'

"I bow profoundly.

"'How old are you?'

"'Sixty years old.'

"'You are well preserved. You are, I know, the chief dramatic poet of Germany.'"

Goethe demurs, and alludes to Schiller and Lessing. All Napoleon knows of Schiller is his *Thirty Years' War*, which is not to the Emperor's taste. Goethe defends Schiller. Napoleon changes the subject, and asks if

"the academicians" in Weimar get on well together. Goethe points to Wieland as the most renowned. Napoleon requests that he be asked to Erfurt.

Then Daru takes up the tale. He sings Goethe's praises, as he has heard them sung in Berlin, alludes to his translations from the French, particularly Voltaire's *Mahomet.*

"I will at once inquire," says the Emperor, "whether we can have the play acted here. You ought to hear it in the French, but it is not a good piece; and very convincingly shows how unfitting it is to make a world-conqueror reveal himself in so unfavourable a light."

Then he touches upon *Werther*, which he has read seven times and had even taken with him to Egypt. He makes various comments (which Goethe afterwards described as very just) and then His Imperial Majesty says:

"*Je n'aime pas la fin de votre roman.*"

"*Je ne croyais pas que Votre Majesté aimât que les romans aient une fin.*"

Upon this, the Emperor puts forward his objection to Werther's ambition having been used to bring about the *dénouement*: "That is not natural, and weakens the reader's impression of the overwhelming influence which love had had upon Werther. Why did you do it?"

Goethe laughs—as he affirmed in two of his letters (or as his more considered narrative, written much later, has it: "I smiled"); and answers that though certainly no one has ever before taxed him with that error, he thinks the Emperor perfectly right, and must confess that there *is* something not quite authentic about that passage. But is there not some excuse for the artist if he resorts to artifice for producing certain effects which could not be achieved by simple natural means?

"The Emperor seemed to take that for an answer; he recurred to the drama and made several very interesting remarks which showed that he scrutinizes the tragic stage much as a judge's keen eye does the evidence in a criminal case, and has been much exercised by the absence of

spontaneity and authenticity in the French theatre. In the same way, he disapproves of the drama of fatality, and said that it belongs to the dark ages:

"'What is fatality to us of to-day? Policy is Destiny for us.'"

Then he turned again to Daru, and continued their discussion of war-contributions. Goethe withdrew into an embrasure, and looking round the room, recognized Berthier and Savary. Soon big, long-haired Marshal Soult came in with a report upon Poland.

Then "the Emperor stood up, marched straight at me, and cut me off, by a sort of military manœuvre, from the rest of the row I was standing in. Turning his back on them all and addressing me in a low voice, he asked me if I was married, had any children," and so on. Then he inquired if Goethe was enjoying himself in Erfurt.

"Very much, and I hope these days are going to be of service to our little land."

"Are your people contented?"

"I hope and believe they are."

"Monsieur Göt, you ought to stay here the whole time, so as to describe the effect of this great spectacle upon your mind."

"I should need the pen of a classical author for that . . ."

"Your Duke has invited me to Weimar. He was rather badly behaved for a while, but he has got over that."

"If he was badly behaved, Sire, he was pretty well punished for it—but perhaps I ought not to offer an opinion upon these matters. At all events, none of us can refuse him our admiration."

Then for the third time the Emperor recurred to the tragic drama.

"It should be a school for kings and peoples. That is the highest service a dramatist can render. You ought to write a play on the death of Caesar, as it should be written—a finer thing than Voltaire's. *Ce travail pourrait devenir la principale tâche de votre vie. Dans cette tragédie il faudrait montrer au monde, comme César aurait pu faire*

le bonheur de l'humanité, si on lui avait laissé le temps d'exécuter ses vastes plans. Venez à Paris! Je l'exige de vous! " [1]

Then he invited Goethe to the theatre that evening, when he would find several ruling monarchs among the audience.

" Do you know the Prince-Primate? Well, you will see him to-night, slumbering on the King of Württemberg's shoulder. Have you met the Russian Emperor? You ought to dedicate something about Erfurt to him! "

" I have never done anything of that sort without regretting it."

" Our great writers thought differently, under Louis XIV."

" Doubtless, Sire; but we cannot be certain that they never regretted it."

Goethe always answered " quite naturally. The Emperor seemed to like it, and translated it into his own phraseology, but rather differently from what I could have permitted myself to say. . . . He seldom listens quite passively; either he nods thoughtfully or says ' *Oui* ' or ' *C'est bien* ' . . . and would usually add, ' *Qu'en dit Monsieur Göt?* '

" And then I seized an opportunity to ask the Chamberlain by a gesture if I might take leave, on which he nodded, and I immediately did so."

This audience, granted to one another by Goethe and Napoleon, lasted more than an hour.

In that hour the two minds recognized each other. Napoleon expressed this after his laconic fashion in the three words with which he received Goethe, and which probably were not " *Vous êtes un homme*," but (as Riemer reports them) " *Voilà un homme!* "; and in another way by silently accepting Goethe's championship of the Duke. But above all—how could he have paid a higher com-

[1] Such a work might become the principal task of your life. In that tragedy, you should show the world that Caesar might have made the happiness of humanity if he had been given time to carry out his vast plans. Come to Paris! I insist upon your coming!

pliment to a German dramatist than by requesting him to take a theme of Voltaire's and do better with it, instead of lauding the French school as something from which the vanquished *ignorami* might learn their business! Indeed he frankly decried the French theatre as false and artificial —and here we may remind ourselves that after all it was not a Frenchman who spoke, and that it was easier for Goethe to get on with this half-Italian. Finally the Emperor invited a German to Paris, there to write for his Imperial Theatre; and as Napoleon must have known what an insult this would have been to the poets of his nation, we cannot but ask ourselves: " What was at the bottom of it all? "

The theatrical programme for the Erfurt sojourn gives us our answer. When Napoleon insisted upon the significance of the tragic drama, he meant every word he said. He had made a thorough study of it; as a young man he had written for the stage. Amid all the business of State, he had carefully chosen the pieces to be acted during these few days, and they were designed to give food for reflection to his royal guests. For " policy is Destiny for us." When Talleyrand had contrived, with a great deal of trouble, to get Goethe a good seat—the whole of the front row being reserved for crowned heads, and the second for Crown-Princes—Goethe could listen to many a vicarious expression of His Imperial Majesty's mind. On the first evening, in *Mithridate*, Napoleon's hatred for England found voice " by command "; on the second, in Racine's *Iphigénie*, Talma, by the same Imperial behest, delivered the lines in which the self-made man is glorified. But when finally, in *Mahomet*, one of the prophet's devotees exclaimed:

Qui l'a fait roi? Qui l'a couronné? La victoire!

Goethe could see all eyes turn to the Imperial box, and when Omar went on to proclaim:

Au nom du conquérant et du triomphateur
Il veut joindre le nom du pacificateur

—Napoleon, from his place, indicated by a gesture that that was his intention also.

At such moments Goethe must have felt what a tribute had been paid him by the conqueror of the world when Napoleon asked *him* to proclaim the greatness of Caesar, and hence Napoleon's own. Never—since his youthful days—had Goethe, now sixty, been stirred by any definitely national enthusiasm; and now he was called upon to forget his nationality and give expression to an enthusiasm which had for years possessed him. The Roman note was struck in Goethe's soul—it was as though Caesar and the antique world had taken shape before his eyes.

And, thus ranked above Voltaire, must he not have seen himself as the avenger of the German school to which his youthful writings had belonged—the school which Frederick the Great had contemned, when he summoned Voltaire to Potsdam? Did it not appear as a grand belated vindication of the German *Sturm und Drang*, when the master of the world selected just this Goethe, out of all other poets, to summon to Versailles? Goethe might well have felt the laurels of the rhapsodists, of Homer, on his brow when Fortune chose this amplest, this serenest epoch of his life to favour him in such a sort. As the poet pure and simple—as what he had now at last perceived himself to be—he was challenged to stand forth by the Lord of Europe, to whom he had never paid tribute by so much as a single word.

Indeed, he had entered the Emperor's private room as one armed for defence; and though in all his movements—as he walked, stood, bowed—he had held himself as befitted a man of the world, his general tone towards the Emperor had been less complaisant than the Emperor's towards him.

For Goethe and for Weimar the after-effects of those days were far-reaching. "Napoleon is our patron saint," wrote Voigt, the Minister of State. Weimar was exempted

from active service, Jena was indemnified, Wieland excelled himself in courtly paradox, calling Napoleon the mildest, most unassuming man in the world. Goethe was enraptured with Talma; and the Imperial delegate, appointed to the surveillance of Prussian espionage in Weimar, translated *Faust* into French.

But why did not Goethe go to Paris?

The idea long occupied his mind; he made repeated inquiries about the expenses and necessary arrangements. Yet he never once went even to Vienna—he no longer felt any need to go there. To see Italy with his own eyes had been his heart's desire, because the Southern element in his soul demanded its long-delayed sustenance. But what did he want with Paris? At thirty-seven he had irresistibly fled "over the hills and far away"; but at sixty he smiled—and stayed at home.

What we might call Goethe's unhappy love for Germany was never put to a severer test than in the years when he saw his fellow countrymen—of whom he would fain have been prouder—thrall to the hero's hand, yet at the same time "bucked-up" as never before. Goethe's affectionate scepticism about the Germans is explicable when we consider his temperament and his experience. After a short-lived phase of fanaticism, fostered by youthful revolt against French domination in the frontier-provinces—after an infatuation, lasting for years, for German Gothic, German landscape, German chivalry, Goethe at twenty-five had found and encouraged in himself a somewhat crude and confused, but gradually more purposeful (and at thirty challengingly emphatic) dislike for the climate and scenery, the history, policy, and temper of his native land. This he developed into a reasoned and systematic antagonism, which every fibre of his being helped to intensify.

When, in his adolescence, he had ardently surveyed the boundless universe from behind the mask of Faust; when three times he had stood upon the Gothard Pass to look down longingly on Italy; when in the Trentino, just

below the Pass, he had felt as if new-born, or amid the world-convulsions had lamented that he was not a son of England, free from the first drawing of his breath; when, a South-German, he made lifelong moan over Thuringia's ruder winters; when he envied Voltaire and Rousseau, Tasso and Ariosto, because their voices were the voices of their land; when as his own Wilhelm Meister he took refuge with the strolling players from provincial heavy-handedness; when he immersed himself in classic art, to paint more radiant gods, more radiant men beneath a bluer sky; when Schiller, in that first letter, showed him what endless circumlocutions might have been spared him had he been of Italian birth . . . always it was the old, the Faustean cry, embodying itself in Goethe's craving for beauty and warmth, for air and liberty. It was the German, the Hohenstaufen, spirit, winging from Mainz to Palermo, the Isle of the Blest. It is—it ever is—the dark, the cloud-encompassed daemon of the North, glad thrall to him of the radiant South.

And yet, throughout his eighty years, he hardly ever left that German land, and came back sooner than he need have come from his one great Southern pilgrimage—just as the German Emperors were perpetually drawn from Palermo to the Rhine. And yet, again, his mind had from decade to decade steeped itself afresh in study of the magician-doctor whose shadow had loomed upon the pathway taken by his adolescent feet, and never left him till he stood before the Gate of Transformation. A Northern poet, whose delight was in Southern themes—and whose masterpiece could scarce have been more Northern in conception!

It was because he loved it and would fain have been afar from it, because he could cast his German skin and yet could never long be absent from his land, that Goethe rebuked Germany more severely and more affectionately than ever a German had done before him. But the marked neglect shown by his fellow countrymen, of which he could not but be conscious, necessarily embittered his

attitude. He was filled with an anger which, humanly speaking, was more than justified—if, in a metaphysical light, unreasonable—when he beheld the sudden right-about turn of his compatriots, who had for two brief moments sung the praises of two superficial adolescent works. How could he have divined, at that time, that the people had shown a sure instinct in abandoning the poet who was tentatively abandoning them? And how could they, in their turn, have then divined that he was the elect who should lift them, and the tongue in which he wrote, to loftier planes of life and art?

No one can say whether Germany was first to turn its back on Goethe, or he on it. For Goethe's growing resistance to the Northern side of himself inevitably tended to make Northern themes distasteful to him, and thus brought about the isolation and oblivion which could not fail to wound his spirit. One thing is certain—that Germany, simpler, cruder, more prosaic (as the great public must always be) loved its poet little from his thirtieth to his sixtieth year; while its poet, subtler, deeper, and kinder, none the less loved Germany throughout, though to his sovereign eye her soul lay bare.

Banal, at any time, to inquire of creed or patriotism—frivolous, and worse than frivolous, when concerned with a spirit so eminently German as to create a new language for his nation. Of this, in his last years, he would say with the greatest modesty that at best he might be said to have surpassed Luther in subtlety, now and then!

What, then, could the French mean to Goethe? Their Emperor (in whom, besides, he felt the Southern strain) was in his view a timeless, raceless portent—the object of a purely personal adoration as creative energy incarnate.

And when it came to the subjection of Germany, Goethe was not only possessed by a vague instinct that the issue would be salutary, but was intellectually convinced that Germany deserved her fate.

"At Jena German power went to the devil because the Germans had no initiative. . . . Germany is naught, but

the individual German is much—although they like to believe the opposite. The Germans will have to be, like the Jews, uprooted and dispersed the world over, before all the good which is in them and which would work towards the well-being of all nations, can be brought out. . . . 'Many men, many minds'—that may be called the motto of our nation. . . . They have a bad habit of undoing their best work by inordinate demands, although mediocrity is their native sphere. . . . I am so sick of the imbecility at present displayed in every department that even in their distress the Germans strike me as ludicrous, for their despair arises simply from the fact that an end has been put to their bungling methods. . . . These fools of Germans keep up an outcry against egotism—would to God that long ago there *had* been some frank solicitude for their own and their families' interests! Things would look very different if it had been so. . . . Though the Germans are not materialistic in tendency, it is none the less difficult to move them to an ideal end."

Countless similar judgments are to be found in Goethe's confidential letters and conversations during the most distressful years, and nothing could be less like the voice of a poet. Rather might we think to be listening to that of a relegated statesman. He who thus speaks is a statesman in voluntary retirement; and through the larger indignation we can catch the echoes of the vast disillusionment he had suffered, thirty years before, during his own endeavour in a small German enclave. But later, too, when the country had raised its head again, Goethe—untroubled by the apparent change of view—epitomized his fondly critical perception of the German people in one of his most penetrating deliverances, when he refused to be instrumental in founding a German Literary Association.

"I am afraid that now as of yore they will misjudge, undervalue, hinder, retard, persecute, and injure one another. . . . This habit is the less likely to be shed because it derives from a superiority . . . which is, that perhaps no other nation is wont to have so many eminent men

contemporaneously living within its borders. But now observe this. Each individual among these remarkable men finds it as much as he can do to develop himself to the full; hence it ensues that since the German takes nothing for granted and is given (though without at all resembling a butterfly) to perpetual transmutations, he goes through such a series of metamorphoses, not to say stages of evolution, as the most faithful of historians is unable to keep track of. . . . Everyone who is conscious of his own individuality begins from the very beginning, all over again—and who is without his right to such self-consciousness? . . . Well, then, as this heterogeneity must in the immediate future steadily increase, while . . . on the other hand the great mass of those whose soldierly activities effected the salutary change have an unquestionable right to *their* opinions, simply because they have got something done—the conflict cannot fail to grow fiercer and fiercer, and the Germans be more than ever split up into very small parties, if indeed they do not fall into complete anarchy."

The Jeremiads over "Germany destroyed" drove him to utter despair, for deeply though he sympathized with the private sorrows caused by the war, and anxious as he was to console the sufferers, it was irksome to be obliged to conceal his impatience, "when people whine about an entity which was doomed to destruction, whose birth no living man had seen, nor ever cared twopence about."

His vision grew more and more catholic. He was emphatic in repudiating the mass-sentiment of hatred for the enemy. The only vital question for him was Civilization or Barbarianism; and he owed much to French civilization.

In Goethe's words, war is a disease in which the forces useful for recovery and health are dissipated in the service of something alien and abnormal. He was soon to learn, too, from the narrative of a cavalry-officer, that the soldier "speaks more rationally and temperately of the whole thing than the entire pack of do-nothing Philistine on-

lookers "; and he exclaimed to those who stuck it out at home:

> Nicht grössern Vorteil wüsst' ich zu nennen,
> Als des Feindes Verdienst erkennen.[1]

For everything tended to make that spirit, strenuously seeking to outsoar the temporal and the national, the enemy of race-enmity; everything inevitably made him the friend of international friendships. "Our life," he said immediately after Jena, "does not point us to isolation and separation from other nations, but rather to the utmost possible degree of intercourse. Our civic existence is not like that of the ancient world. On the one hand, we are much more emancipated, more unconventionalized, and less one-sided in our views than they of antiquity; and on the other the State makes no such claims as would oblige us jealously to maintain, on its behalf and for its purposes, an exclusive patrician class. The whole trend of our civilization, the Christian religion itself, points us to inter-communication, the communal life, submission, and all the social virtues which make us yielding and complaisant, even at the sacrifice of all the emotions and susceptibilities—nay, the rights—which belong to a barbarian state of society."

It was now Goethe's steadfast purpose to give practical proof of this super-national outlook in a nationalist work of art. He was pressed to publish a kind of Golden Treasury of folk-songs, which should revive the German spirit. Much tempted by the idea, he wrote a long glowing preface of inestimable value, which to this day lies neglected; for as in that period of hallucination, so now—posterity has been incapable of comprehending how the first of German poets could have proposed, in a time of national distress, to introduce foreign strains into a German anthology, on the ground that "it was high time to draw attention, and children's attention especially, to the

[1] No greater gain for the human spirit
Than a sense of our foeman's merit.

merits of other nations." For the Germans (he continued) had little native inspiration; individuals had aimed high, "but what has been achieved is far less than we care to admit to ourselves or others." On the other hand, they had nearly always proved themselves to be good translators, and in this way all paths to civilization could be made to converge.

In advance of the age as it was, this work might have been Goethe's national achievement during the period of German subjection. It was too nobly conceived to be then carried out.

The year of German liberation dawned. Prussia revolted; Young Germany sang songs, and sabres were rattled.

Goethe, staying in Dresden, heard the voice of German aspiration, of national self-confidence. Theodor Körner, sword at his side, welcomed the poet with military swagger; his father stood near, and beside the two was Ernst Moritz Arndt. Goethe heard and saw these ardent spirits; cordially did he shake hands with the two poets of freedom, but he said: "Stop short at rattling your chains —the man is too big for you! You will not be able to break them!"

His compatriots stood gazing open-mouthed at one another when Goethe was gone—but the spell of his personality was so powerful that Arndt himself publicly applauded him, in that same year, for his quiet persistent endeavours.

During the three days of the battle of Leipzig, Goethe received the French Ambassador, examined excavated skulls, studied English history under Elizabeth, read *Gil Blas*, revised the proofs of his biography, wrote the epilogue to a foreign drama, in the hope of making a better ending for a mediocre play entitled *Graf Essex*. There is no doubt that this *Essex* really inspired Goethe to an epilogue on Napoleon's day of doom; for during the course

of those four October days in which Napoleon's destiny fulfilled itself almost under Goethe's eyes, he—Goethe, whose duty it was, as German poet and Minister, to rejoice in victory—assumed the mask of the Queen of England that he might cause these words to be spoken upon the boards of a Saxon theatre:

Wer Mut sich fühlt in königlicher Brust,
Er zaudert keineswegs, betritt mit Lust
Des Stufenthrones untergrabne Bahn,
Kennt die Gefahr und steigt getrost hinan.
Des goldnen Reifes ungeheure Last,
Er wägt sie nicht; entschlossen wie gefasst
Drückt er sie fröhlich auf das kühne Haupt
Und trägt sie leicht, als wie von Grün umlaubt.
So tatest du. Was noch so weit entfernt,
Hast du dir anzueignen still gelernt,
Und was auch Wildes dir den Weg verrannt,
Du hast's gesehn, betrachtet und erkannt . . .
Der Mensch erfahrt, er sei auch, wer er mag,
Ein letztes Glück, und einen letzten Tag.[1]

All the sympathies of the Genius were with the Emperor in flight. If hitherto Goethe had despaired of a German victory, now he was dubious of the victor's staying-power.

But August his son, unsoldierly as he was, had joined the colours merely because every other young man was

[1] The man with mettle in his kingly breast
Ne'er hesitates to tread with fearless zest
The perilous mined pathway to a throne,
Sees well the risk, but pushes coolly on.
The weight of that gold fruit, though vast it be,
He reckons not—calm, resolute is he,
And on his dauntless brow will press it down
To bear it lightly as a laurel-crown.
And thus you did. Howe'er remote the prize
You made it yours through silent, long surmise;
Though round your way wild beasts were gathered thick,
You saw them, tracked them, knew their every trick . . .
Man knows, let man be mighty as he may,
His last good-fortune, and his last great day.

doing so—to find that the Duke, as a Russian General, was about to lead a German corps across the Rhine; and Goethe did put forth all his authority to keep that son at home. He approached the Duke in a respectful document, with the request that his son might be exempted from military service, "in the interests of reconstruction"; and so exaggerated this pretext as to declare that he would be deprived of his son's "indispensable aid," adding: "It would make my position unendurable—indeed, I might even say it would put an end to my existence." Here Goethe appears as the aged father who is not prepared to sacrifice his only son, because no pulse in his heart beats to the ideal patriotic tune.

"The following passage in the *Literaturzeitung* I wish you to take to heart, and say nothing about it. Our men and women must on no account be led to imagine that Germanism is identified with Christianity and chivalry; for the former was extraneous to Germanism . . . and the latter, likewise a foreign product, is in many ways contradictory of the fundamental idea of German national freedom."

Such was Goethe's state of mind, as confided to his son, in the January which saw Blücher cross the Rhine. His public attitude he soon had the opportunity of setting forth in a ceremonial piece of writing; for when Paris had fallen and Napoleon had made his first abdication, there came to Goethe from the Berlin Court a request to write a pageant for the King's re-entry.

Des Epimenides Erwachen (*The Awakening of Epimenides*), written in a few hurried weeks, is far from being a Court-pageant—it is a real poem. In this piece, half-allegory, half-satire, Goethe in his most light-hearted period, and with great expenditure on music, scenery, and stage-devices, takes the most affectionate of rises out of him who commissioned it, His Majesty, and the German people.

The vanquished foe was the inspiration for every "passionate speech." One is reminded of lines from the

second *Faust* when the Daemon of War (Napoleon) exclaims:

> Kein Widerspruch! kein Widerstreben!
> Ich kenne keine Schwierigkeit,
> Und wenn umher die Länder beben,
> Dann ist erst meine Wonnezeit.
> Ein Reich mag nach dem andern stürzen,
> Ich steh' allein und wirke frei;
> Und will sich wo ein schneller Knoten schürzen,
> Um desto schneller hau' ich ihn entzwei. . . .
> Ein Schauder überlauft die Erde,
> Ich ruf' ihr zu ein neues Werde.[1]

At the end the poet makes a clean breast of his feelings about this war, this foe, this peace. As Epimenides, Goethe is shown in the Prologue as one under the guidance of his tutelary spirits, sleeping on a couch; as Epimenides, he awakes when the action is over. Was he not, in those seven years between Jena and Leipzig, dreaming and taking soundings, withdrawn, insistently aloof from the age in remote countries and centuries—had he not pilgrimaged even to the primitive rock of China?

> Doch während meines Schlafes hat ein Gott
> Die Erd' erschüttert, dass Ruinen hier
> Sich auf einander türmen . . .[2]

—and Epimenides-Goethe shrinks in terror, thinking he

[1] Oppose me not! No protestation!
What difficulty baffles me?
When round me trembles every nation,
I know the thrill of ecstasy.
Let crumbling realms on realms be scattered,
I stand alone, supreme in power;
Are bonds drawn closer, swift they're shattered,
I cut them loose in one short hour. . . .
The earth is all one shuddering fear,
I bid her rise, a new-born sphere!

[2] But while I slept, a god came down to earth
And shattered it, till ruin piled on ruin
Here I behold around me . . .

is lost in a world unknown. But soon he recovers, and is himself again; and now he proclaims himself the people's loyal priest. But then Goethe confesses with a smile, which we may be sure no actor could have smiled to his satisfaction:

> Wie selig Euer Freund gewesen,
> Der diese Nacht des Jammers überschlief,
> Ich konnt's an den Ruinen lesen,
> Ihr Götter, ich empfind' es tief!—
> Doch schäm' ich mich der Ruhestunden;
> Mit euch zu leiden, war Gewinn:
> Denn für den Schmerz, den ihr empfunden,
> Seid ihr auch grösser, als ich bin.[1]

With that smile he at last consigns the problem to the archives; nor does he find it hard to turn away, for his soul is already afar in time and place.

Long before he saw Italy, Goethe had begun to use Italian themes. When at last he did behold the country, it seemed no more than the continuation of a dream, and he felt no surprise at anything he saw with his waking eyes —landscape and vegetation, people, cities, and works of art all served but to confirm his prevision. Twenty-five years later, at sixty, Goethe had emotionally and intellectually—nay, even stylistically—pilgrimaged in spirit to the East; but not as a thirsting devotee, impregnated with its magic through books and pictures, as of yore with

[1] How blest your friend, who calmly slumbered
Throughout that night of woe and fate,
I read in ruins all unnumbered—
O gods! I know my happier state!
Yet restful hours must shame my spirit;
More had I gained, to bear with ye
That anguish—yours is higher merit,
Greater are ye than I can be.



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Italy. This time it was more like a sleep-walker, unwitting of his path. With such ease as could only, in a consciousness so highly cultivated, betoken a second youth, he displayed, quite without set purpose and with the utmost beauty, a perfect mastery of an eastern poet's methods—and this between his sixtieth and sixty-fifth years.

It was the serenity in his soul which would not be denied expression in song; and once again, it was only song which could enhance that serenity. In the East all this lay ready to his hand—in those regions of the East which, pregnant with the ancient wisdom yet not dulled to Brahmin quietism, know the fullness of life through the more positive and liberal creed of Mahomet. Proverbial wisdom has its native home there, for wisdom there is both old enough and young enough to express itself in aphorisms; and song too lives among a people, worn in battle, who rejoice in the firmly drawn boundaries of their existence. There the weapons hang above the silken rugs; and the Divan of the Chieftains and the Divan of the Viziers and the Divan of the Pundits assemble among their many-coloured yielding cushions, yet never lose the energy of body and of mind which acts as a centrifugal force. Ripeness—that is the mark of Arabia, after her centuries of battle and victory; and ripeness was the mark of Goethe at the zenith of a life of struggle. He must have felt the breath of those lands within him before ever he opened one of their books.

Wisdom and love, the Persian singer's themes, filled the rejuvenated poet's spirit, before he knew Persia. A swarm of aphorisms summarized, in these years, his fond yet critical conceptions of God, modality, the universe; and the little songs that here and there break forth again are akin to aphorisms. Far in the dim inane of an earlier period the hexameter panted laboriously to its predestined end.

Goethe's rhythms now soared on airier pinions. His humour goes hand-in-hand with his eroticism, stumbling

about the foot-hills, wandering through the valleys, clambering up the mountains, circling through space. The richest lyrical years that Goethe knew—far richer than those of his adolescence—dawned in music and rejuvenescence.

Zwischen Weizen und Korn,
Zwischen Hecken und Dorn,
Zwischen Bäumen und Gras,
Wo geht's Liebchen? Sag mir das. . . .[1]

And even more like a diffident young lover is the message sent with some flowers to a pretty girl:

Der Strauss, den ich gepflücket,
Grüsse dich vieltausendmal,
Ich hab' mich oft gebücket,
Ach wohl eintausendmal,
Und ihn ans Herz gedrücket
Wohl hunderttausendmal![2]

So closely was he drawn in spirit to the threshold of the East, yet knew it not.

Then there appeared in Vienna the first translation of Arabian poetry.

Goethe was not a stranger in this realm, either. As a youth he had planned a drama about Mahomet, had paraphrased the Song of Solomon, had studied the Old Testament thoroughly and repeatedly, had thought of versifying the Vedas. A few years before this he had studied the Thousand and One Nights; and yesterday,

[1] 'Twixt the rye and the corn,
'Twixt the hedge and the thorn,
'Twixt the trees and the grass,
Whither away, my dainty lass?

[2] A many times a thousand
These flowers for you I've blessed,
And stooped—say, times one thousand
To pluck the very best,
And times a hundred thousand
All to my heart I've pressed.

as it were, some Chinese poems. So he was well equipped for the Arabian adventure.

Yet what would all his knowledge have been to him if the foreign land had not despatched to his borders, as to a veritable Prince punctilious for etiquette, a tribute-bringing herald who bowed before Goethe as though seeing himself reincarnate! His name was Hafiz.

But throughout this eastward pilgrimage his eye was fixed upon the peak of Olympus, glittering afar; and as he turned to the Land of Morning he made sure that that height, once the cynosure of a lifetime, stood impregnable behind him, towering upon the borders of both kingdoms. Goethe never exchanged the Greek form for the Arabian; he merely absented himself, smilingly, like a blissful traveller sojourning for a space in some land of dream.

For at sixty-five, at this height of inspiration, not even the inveterate observer, not even Goethe, had any need to see with eyes what he already carried in his heart. That is why this journey, taken in no travelling-carriage, was the only one which brought him no sort of disappointment. He had spent two years in Italy, studious, strenuous, collecting and watching, laboriously shaping, writing not at all. Now, older by nearly a generation, he strayed for the space of two years over Persia, over Arabia, giving as much as he took, collecting as much as he bestowed—and singing, always singing, with such wayward ease, such fire, as never of yore in his ebullient youth, as never afterwards in his contemplative old age.

And wantonly, without title, without purpose, without a thought of any more to come (how differently from those recent years when a single idea for an Elegy had been the instant occasion for a plan embracing a new series of Elegies!) like a man intoxicate, like a boy, Goethe one day, after studying Hafiz and Firdusi for a few Thuringian summer-weeks, dashed down these lines on his paper, half in the old life, half in the new:

Auch in Locken hab' ich mich
Gar zu gern verfangen,
Und so, Hafis, wär's wie dir
Deinem Freund ergangen . . .
Wer sich aber wohl besann,
Lässt sich so nicht zwingen:
Schwere Ketten fürchtet man,
Rennt in leichte Schlingen.[1]

—and he called the whole *A Warning*, and laid it aside. But already *The Talismans* had submissively shed their Eastern form for a masterly Western rendering:

Lasst mich nur auf meinem Sattel gelten,
Bleibt in euren Hütten, euren Zelten!
Und ich reite froh in alle Ferne,
Über meiner Mütze nur die Sterne![2]

And next day, and for many another day, there came coveys of little aphorisms, of tender songs; and he wrote them down quite legibly, with scarce a correction—as he had been wont to do in his youth with the waking dreams of his white nights; only now it was always in the broad sunshine of summer-days that he recorded them.

This was a youth new-born, who now as forty years ago obeyed the esoteric law of his being in that he beheld his desire come gladly hastening towards him—and smilingly awaited its arrival, singing a leisurely sweet song the while to the fair Unknown.

. . . But it was full summer by this time, and people were talking about Wiesbaden. The Main, the Rhine—

[1] Curls about the heart that twine
I have not resisted,
So my fate like thine had been,
Hafiz, sadly twisted . . .
But we longer-headed ones
Prove in this thy betters—
He in silken reins who runs,
Shies at heavy fetters.

[2] Saddle me my horse, and learn my mettle!
Ye that will in huts and camps may settle;
I will ride away, exultant singing,
O'er my caftan stars of Heaven swinging!

for twenty years, almost, he had not seen them! Not long since, he had refused to revisit the altered places which were going to be part of his biography. Now he suffered himself to be persuaded—in the name of Hafiz, he would fain see the old made new:

Gutes zu empfangen, zu erweisen,
Alter, geh auf Reisen!
Meine Freunde . . .
Haben nicht an mir gelitten,
Ich hab' ihnen nichts abzubitten;
Als Person komm' ich neu.
Wir haben kein Konto miteinander,
Sind wie im Paradies selbander.[1]

Scarcely was Goethe seated in the carriage before the waking, lucid dream began. The country was gay with the hues of a Thuringian summer, yet this traveller was asking himself:

Sind es Zelte des Wesires,
Die er lieben Frauen baute?
Sind es Teppiche des Festes,
Weil er sich der Liebsten traute? . . .
Ja, es sind die bunten Mohne,
Die um Erfurt sich erstrecken
Und dem Kriegesgott zum Hohne
Felder streifweis freundlich decken.

[1] Give and take—old man, if that's your pleasure,
Travel yields full measure!
My companions . . .
Have not found my ways too trying,
No indulgence I've been buying;
Unknown am I to all.
We keep no reckonings with one another,
Each, as in Paradise, our brother.

[2] Are they tents the Vizier builded
For his women fairest, dearest?
Are they silken festal carpets,
And his best-beloved nearest? . . .
Nay—but scarlet poppies burning
Laugh the war-god to derision,
All the fields of Erfurt turning
To a fair forgetful vision. . . .

By the evening—behold seven poems, and to Hafiz he owed them all! "When did I experience these things?" thought the biographical side of him. And if we follow his pedantic mood and restrict ourselves to comparing the number of his lyrics, we find that those inspired by Strasburg fill only eight pages (though not many have been lost), that the four years of his deepest passionate experience fill sixty, and that then, throughout his entire middle period, counting every little aphorism, there are three hundred pages for thirty years. But now he writes half as much again in two years—and even if we must stop there, we have already, for twenty-five years of Goethe's old age, twice as many poems as for the twenty-five of his youth.

And he was the lover of humanity in these, and some little songs against hatred might almost be called love-songs. Someone happened to gaze wonderingly at Goethe in his carriage—a beggar ventured to approach his table at an inn . . . little sayings, light as the breath of a sleeping child, flowered from every encounter, and all are instinct with kindliness. Then—so soon!—he gathered them all together into a German Divan, and it was instantly given a name: *Ostlicher Diwan vom westlichen Verfasser* (*Eastern Divan by a Western Writer*).

Even the old diary strikes a younger note; and where of yore it hoarsely remarked: "Letter to the Chamber-Assessor von Goethe," or "His Excellency Voigt here," or "Colours of the fourteenth century classified," or "Forty-fourth bath"—it now sang very softly, and with only the slightest of stutters: "Magnificent day. . . . Another magnificent day. . . . First stork, first reaping. . . . Think of going to Rüdesheim. Glorious to be so near the Rhine. Clear sunrise. . . . Never tired of gazing."

The whole world of men, hitherto apt to avoid him as an unsociable or haughty being, now saw how brilliant and kind his eyes could be; and on the promenade at Wiesbaden the very school-girls ventured to request a complimentary message for their teacher, which he instantly wrote for them.

Never were Goethe and the world in such unison as during this summer—he wished the whole world well, as it wished him. Nay, the unprecedented came to pass—the Frankfurt General Post-Office Gazette took notice, for the first time in its existence, of its fellow-citizen's presence in their midst, and in the quaintest of phrases announced the arrival of Goethe, " the greatest and oldest surviving hero of our literature."

For most astonishing things were happening to Goethe's fame in these years, as if the fame too were sharing in the rejuvenescence. Of a truth, his name had never since the *Werther* days been so continually on people's lips as at this very period of political emancipation—of which Goethe took so extremely critical a view. It was as though the nation, in its renewed self-consciousness, felt the need of an intellectual leader, and could turn only to one of the old guard if it were to know real confidence. The word " hero " in that singular tribute was without precedent in Germany. *Werther* lay forty years behind him, and was out of fashion; no German could keep a line of *Hermann und Dorothea* in memory; *Götz* was forgotten, the poetic dramas incomprehensible; *Faust* was unactable and known only to the intellectuals; *Wilhelm Meister* was " very queer " and *Wahlverwandschaften* " immoral "—forbidden to young people.

But *Dichtung und Wahrheit* won all hearts. Reflective and idyllic, it struck the Germans as German to the core; and the nation—which had insisted on regarding the literary Minister at Weimar as an adventurer—now looked with amazement on one corner of the vast battle-field, one fragment of a life so deep, intensely felt, and full that it had kept the poet true to his high calling. And there was something to move the " great heart of the people " in the modesty with which he dwelt only on his errors. Besides all this, a series of lyrics in lighter mood had gradually made their way into popular favour. So, because they happened to need him just then, the people took Goethe back to their hearts at this precise moment of national

exaltation, when his own spirit was sojourning in Arabia—and there was some indwelling justification for what seemed a misconception. For whether it was the cause or the effect of this mood—this Rhine-and-Wine mood of the spirit—one thing is certain: Goethe now began to immerse himself afresh in German art.

A young man named Boisserée had taken the first bold step. Arriving at Weimar from Heidelberg the winter before, with good introductions, he had spread out drawings and plans of Cologne Minster upon Goethe's table, and shown him how German they were. Goethe had hummed and hawed, growled and grumbled "like a bear with a sore head," had had a week's battle with himself before he could confess to being convinced—but (as great natures are) was only the more attracted to the young man who had beheld him in his weakness. He had promised to go and see Boisserée.

Then the young collector (who has preserved the most invaluable conversations for us, and reported them with dispassionate and arresting convincingness) induced him to come from Wiesbaden to see his pictures; and so Goethe for the first time beheld a fine German collection—he who throughout sixty years had really studied nothing of the kind beyond a few Dürers and Cranachs. Now he was confronted by Roger van der Weyden's *Tod der Maria*. He gazed silently for some time; then he said, as though he were speaking of Bach: "The truthfulness in that smites one in the eye!" But when he had studied and admired them all, he drew this conclusion: "The finest things I have got out of it" (he was speaking of travel) "are some bas-reliefs from the Cella of the Parthenon (in plaster), the Pallas Velletri, the infinitely beautiful torso of a Venus, and perhaps the head of a Venetian horse"—and soon afterwards he wished he could sleep in a gallery of sculpture, so as daily to awake among the Greek gods.

One day there came to Wiesbaden an old Frankfurt friend. This was Councillor von Willemer, a tall, vigorous, graceful man in the middle fifties, clever, worldly, and

satirical—twice a widower before he was forty, and the father of several children. He had long retired from affairs.

This man had, many years before, discovered a girl who had originally come from Linz with her poverty-stricken mother in a company which was nothing more or less than a troop of gipsies; and was then as a soubrette-dancer, fifteen years old, displaying her gracile childish limbs to the ravished old bankers and young poets of Frankfurt. He was a connoisseur in women's charms, and he had made up his mind to take charge of this girl, buying her outright from her mother.

And when she grew into a great beauty, and her foster-sisters were married, and Willemer himself was getting older—what could be more natural than for her benefactor to court her, win her, and omit to marry her? Both were happy in their union; gradually he ceased to be regarded as her father; he took her with him on his travels, and in summer they lived outside the town in an old tree-girt country-house, as happy as the day was long.

Now Marianne, just thirty, at the zenith of her charms, graceful and sumptuous, thoughtful and sensuous, imaginative, brilliant, and provocative—like the most charming of Austrian women—stood at her lover's side and held out her hand to Goethe.

Eagerly did he accept Willemer's invitation to his "tannery" near Frankfurt; and at sixty-five Goethe found, for the first time in decades, a house in which he really enjoyed being a guest for a few weeks.

He was seldom to be seen in the mornings. He drank his wine, in the forenoons, out of his own silver goblet; he dressed for dinner, and would often drive into town; but later, in his white flannel coat, he would be in sociable mood. He would find some work to do among the flowers with a handsome pocket-knife, and in the September evenings would tell stories and recite, read and talk; they would play and sing Mozart's arias, would drink and laugh upon the terrace that looked out on the Main; and many of the early drinking-songs in the *Divan*,

written but yesterday, would be read aloud by the poet over his wine. Sometimes (Boisserée writes) tears would come into his eyes as he read.

But what were Marianne's feelings while she sang Goethe's songs to the piano, the windows standing open upon garden and river? Hafiz now added to the earlier love-songs, addressed to nobody in particular, one or two new ones in which there was already perceptible something transcending the long-ago witchery of Christiane:

Über meines Liebchens Äugeln
Stehn verwundert alle Leute;
Ich, der Wissende, dagegen
Weiss recht gut, was das bedeute. . .

Could Willemer have told them too? He knew women, and had early divined the danger threatening him from this grey-haired rival; for nine days after Goethe's appearance, Willemer had made Marianne, who had been his so many years, into his lawful spouse! The haste with which the master of the house made certain of his mistress is surely Goethe's swiftest and least welcome success with a woman!

Nothing was further from his thoughts than to disturb their bliss, for he really valued his friend, and in this mood of airy fantasy could still put up a good fight against falling in love with a real live woman. Was he not Hafiz of Shiraz? Was it necessary to possess Marianne before he could sing Zuleika? He easily steered clear, and after these vaguely sentimental weeks of dalliance went home with a heart at ease.

In Jena and Weimar Goethe contrived to get pleasantly through the winter, and for the first time in many years he saw the New Year in at a public ball. It was full of promise for him. He steeped himself in his Arabian dreams, forgetting temporalities. What on earth did they mean by

[1] When my darling glances sideways,
Whom she looks at no one guesses;
I, all-wise, alone can tell them
Who receives those mute caresses.

their Congress at Vienna? Was it the real world that they supposed themselves to be parcelling out? "I am ready to toil to my last breath, if only I don't have to attend any diplomatic dinners in Vienna, where everyone spends his time eructating over the latest piece of villainy. . . . One soon becomes unable to distinguish between dream and real life. That is, if the word of the enigma were not love and fidelity."

With Zuleika, however, he played hot and cold; and if there were some love-songs in this winter, they seem to have been uninvolved with glances of any kind, quite in the air, of Eastern inspiration wholly.

At last the sun came out again. True, the world was in an uproar; for from Elba a certain person had suddenly descended on Paris, and the gaieties of the Congress ended in confusion. Goethe smiled, for even the Old Guard could not close Persia to him. Frankfurt, indeed, was not far from the French frontier—for there can now be no doubt that he returned to the tannery that summer. But he seems to have entirely lost interest in the Emperor who had so long been his idol.

Goethe came into contact with Baron von Stein, and learnt to know and value him better, now that he had a more open mind upon German questions. By this time Waterloo had been fought—his hero was a prisoner, after all. Goethe praised Stein's confident faith, to which he owed a clearer sense of the next world; and when he drove alone to Cologne, there to study on the spot young Boisserée's plans for finishing the Minster, he turned and found that Stein, who had happened to come too, was standing behind him in the building. Arndt was with Stein, and he relates how they suddenly caught sight of Goethe under the striving pillars, gazing at one of the Cathedral pictures. Two years had gone by since Goethe's chilling words to the young soldier and poet; the present moment confirmed Arndt and refuted Goethe, yet the younger man stood silently apart. And when someone in Stein's party showed signs of wanting to say something

controversial, Stein laid a finger on his own lips and said: "Hush, boys—no politics, please! He would not like it. It is true that we can't be enthusiastic about him in that respect, but after all—he is too great. . . ."

It was a pure amazement for Goethe to find himself at this time greeted with "fanatical enthusiasm" wherever he went on the Rhine. He had not been accustomed to it in any corner of the world—in Weimar he was too well known, in Prussia too little, to have experienced personal tributes.

Undoubtedly his complete openness of heart was the key to all other hearts. Never had his charity been so warm, so wide. Only a couple of years ago he had grumbled when his amanuensis fell ill in Carlsbad; now he nursed his sick valet, pitied him more than himself, and smiled to think that with such a figure and at such an age he could still pull on his own stockings. He invited antediluvian friends of his youth to wine-parties—among them that Riese to whom he had written such extraordinary letters from Leipzig.

He grew restless as the summer-heat increased—and about the middle of August he unexpectedly drove up to the door of the tannery. He stayed six weeks. Again the country-house life went on to the blithest of tunes—harmony seemed to reign supreme. But Hafiz and Zuleika were drawn towards one another by invisible forces, daily growing more and more irresistible. Goethe's songs became very much more highly coloured, and right into Marianne's eyes he looked while singing like a latter-day Romeo:

Deinem Blick mich zu bequemen,
Deinem Munde, deiner Brust,
Deine Stimme zu vernehmen,
War die letzt' und erste Lust. . . .
Eh' es Allah nicht gefällt,
Uns auf Neue zu vereinen

Gibt mir Sonne, Mond, und Welt
Nur Gelegenheit zum Weinen. . .

He still tried, however, to elude the spell; in the beginning of September he went to Frankfurt town for a week. Now they were parted, now they could be more explicit than when in the same house, now to write and send verses was in the natural order of things. And there, at the inn, he took a half-sheet of green paper, and wrote upon it, in characters that seem to gallop across the sheet:

Nicht Gelegenheit macht Diebe,
Sie ist selbst der grösste Dieb;
Denn sie stahl den Rest der Liebe
Die mir noch im Herzen blieb. . .

Would she answer? Had she not made some pretty little verses before now?

Next day arrived a small envelope—and Goethe, who had laid a thousand verses at ladies' feet, was now for the first time answered in verse by a beloved woman. But what had come to her? It could not take the master's keen eye two minutes to perceive that love, in a single night, had turned a graceful poetaster into a true poetess, for her answer was this:

Hochbeglückt in deiner Liebe,
Schelt' ich nicht Gelegenheit;
Ward sie auch an dir zum Diebe,
Wie mich solch ein Raub erfreut!
Und wozu denn auch berauben?

[1] In your eyes to gaze adoring,
Watch your lips, your bosom, move,
Hear your voice in music soaring,
Once was all I asked of love. . . .
Now, while Allah still delays
Our rebirth to fairer morrow,
Sun, moon, world, are all my days
Seen through tears of yearning sorrow.

Thieves made by Occasion—never!
She's herself the thief, I say:
Stole from this poor heart for ever
What was left of love away.

Gib dich mir aus freier Wahl!
Gar zu gerne möcht' ich glauben—
Ja, ich bin's, die dich bestahl. . . .[1]

When they met again, both were on fire. In the house of the Frankfurt patrician, surrounded by the provincial proprieties of the nineteenth century, the Eastern play-acting blazed into passion; and under the social forms he could conceal his emotions from the husband and her environment when in the evenings, singing their songs in the garden-room, he decked her out with a turban of white muslin, secretly crowning Zuleika.

Then he resolved to break away. Was Wetzlar to repeat itself once more? Again he felt himself, the guilty guiltless, to have invaded an untroubled relationship between two people whom he loved. He saw the Goethe-Fate stand threateningly before him. Already it was time—still it was time—to go. The month was September, the moon was at the full. The last evening is described by Boisserée (who in the character of his disciple spent a few days in the country with him) as cheerful and rich in amusing incidents. But when Marianne sang *Gott und die Bayadere*, Goethe was nervous, fearing it might be too much for her—it was almost her own story. Next she sang some of Mozart's arias, and finally a song from *Don Giovanni*. Goethe applauded and even declared she was his little Don Juan. Then he decked her with shawl and turban, and read aloud his new songs to Zuleika.

But for this same last day Goethe's diary contains, among social records, these revealing, unmistakable words: "Discovery. . . . Ostensible departure." In this twilight mood, between anxiety and gaiety, listening with

[1] With your love a raptured being,
I will ne'er Occasion chide;
Shameful thief for you, but seeing
All she gives me, my fond pride!
Nay—why talk of theft so sadly?
Give yourself, nor think of grief!
I could fancy, all too gladly—
Yes, I was myself the thief!

panting hearts, usually dragged back to the social scene, but always tranced in their Orient dream . . . in this mood they parted, for Goethe went with his young disciple to Heidelberg—but the others promised to visit him there in a week's time. Was it a sudden thought of the lovers, who had respected their friend's roof, to meet in another place under cover of a journey? Did she perhaps make it a condition, before she would let him go? Only one thing is certain—that in these days of their parting such passion broke out in both of them as Goethe had not known since Lili's time.

Marianne's impatience took wings; she persuaded her husband to hasten their departure for Heidelberg; and when Willemer appeared, at an astonishingly early hour, at Boisserée's table, Goethe leaped up, rushed into his room, and all he could say in his confusion was: "We can't go on eating while the ladies are waiting in the hotel!" So Marianne and Willemer's daughter were fetched in all haste, and then Goethe came back.

They had three days to themselves in that Heidelberg autumn weather. She timidly slipped a sheet of paper into his hand—something she had written on the journey; and Goethe read:

Was bedeutet die Bewegung?
Bringt der Ost mir frohe Kunde?
Seiner Schwingen frische Regung
Kühlt des Herzens tiefe Wunde . . .
Und mich soll sein leises Flüstern
Von dem Freunde lieblich grüssen,
Eh' noch diese Hügel düstern,
Sitz' ich still zu seinen Füssen. . . .[1]

What shall be the consummation?
Frolic Eastern wind, art bearing
Happy hours? Thy fresh elation
Cools the heart that knows despairing
Whisper softly, whisper gladly,
Saying: "So shalt thou be greeted;
Ere those hills have darkened sadly,
Silent at his feet be seated."

The poet gazed in wonder at the sheet of paper; and when later on he incorporated this (and four other lyrics of Marianne's) in his *Divan*, he altered it for the worse in three places, and for the better in only one. He stood amazed at her reckless abandonment to a love which had grown so silently, now to break out with ardour such as this. All things seemed possible, all things desirable, in these three days to the old man grown young; and when he drew her name in Arabic characters on the sand, when he wrote some verses comparing the ripe chestnuts on the Palace-terrace to his love, when he made the twin-leaves of the gingko-tree symbolize the mystic Two-in-One of lovers' dalliance . . . all suddenly his passion broke through the eastern Web of Maya, and he sobbed out these lines:

Ist es möglich? Stern der Sterne,
Drück' ich wieder dich ans Herz!
Ach, was ist die Nacht der Ferne
Für ein Abgrund, für ein Schmerz![1]

But then the fire sank a little. From the red-gold blaze of a first embrace there sprang, opalescent, fables about the origin of the Cosmos—born of Goethe's innate loneliness and the tragic, insoluble enigma of man's existence. And yet again, unexpectedly, the song flared up to full intensity:

So, mit morgenroten Flügeln,
Riss es mich an deinen Mund,
Und die Nacht mit tausend Siegeln
Kräftigt sternenhell den Bund. . . .[2]

Fifty years ago, wellnigh—and he had sung:

[1] Can it be? Thou star supernal,
Once again upon my heart!
O abyss of night eternal,
O the pain when lovers part!

[2] So the rose-red wings of morning
Swept me on to lips of thine,
And, her myriad stars suborning,
Night the bond shall seal and sign.

Die Nacht schuf tausend Ungeheuer,
Doch frisch und fröhlich war mein Mut:
In meinen Adern welches Feuer,
In meinen Herzen welche Glut![1]

The aubade of the Strasburg student, as he mounted his horse after the love-battle won in Friederike's arms! Never since that day had Goethe thus depicted passion in its blaze of triumph. So, since his genius was ever his loyal companion, we must conclude that throughout the decades even that vital spark had scarce shot to such heights as in the Sesenheim days and these. It is as though, after Titanic wanderings of the spirit, he had returned to the zones where youth leaps exultant in the heart—zones in which of late he had begun again to dally.

The Daemon had burst his bonds once more. The set game, the circumspect conquest of his spirit, of his years, seemed likely to be lost; Hafiz with his enfranchisement and Zuleika with her radiant smiling were sternly arraigned—and then, as of old, the dispassionate decree of reason sounded in Goethe's pulsing heart. He must flee.

Forty years ago—and he had stood at a selfsame parting of the ways, when he left Lotte and Kestner alone together. But to-day the struggle was fiercer. Then Lotte's No had defined the situation for him; now it seems incredible that Marianne, with her theatre-blood, a bourgeoise only by an extraordinary turn of fortune, dazzled by his glory, stirred by his devotion, should have refused to follow him whither he would. But he did not feel young enough for the folly of carrying her off; and besides, now to forsake Christiane seemed to him, eighteen years after *Amyntas*, utterly unthinkable. Tree and ivy—that was how he thought of it. Everything seems to say that it was Goethe who once more resolved on relinquishment, and as an old man accepted the destiny which had four times convulsed his youth, and made him into a poet.

[1] Weird monstrous forms were born of night,
But I could play the hero's part:
What fire within my veins alight!
What pulsing passion in my heart!

He tore himself away after three days, letting her return with her husband to their beautiful home, whither he promised to come for a while on his return. Marianne wrote, on the day they parted, her other little masterpiece to the West Wind: "*Ach, um deine feuchten Schwingen, West, wie sehr ich dich beneide. . . .*"[1] But Goethe, during those days, wrote these lines on a stray sheet of paper:

Locken, haltet mich gefangen
In dem Kreise des Gesichts!
Euch geliebten, braunen Schlangen
Zu erwidern hab' ich nichts.
Nur dies Herz, es ist von Dauer,
Schwillt in jugendlichstem Flor;
Unter Schnee und Nebelschauer
Rast ein Ätna dir hervor.
Du beschämst wie Morgenröte
Jener Gipfel ernste Wand,
Und noch einmal fühlet Hatem
Frühlingshauch und Sommerbrand.
Schenke her! Noch eine Flasche!
Diesen Becher bring' ich ihr!
Findet sie ein Häufchen Asche,
Sagt sie: Der verbrannte mir![2]

[1] Ah, of thy rain-burdened pinions, West Wind, is my spirit envious.

[2] Love-locks, keep me prisoned ever,
Captive of the face ye frame!
Dear brown snakes, from me shall never
Sound a word of grief or blame.
April to this heart is bidden,
Green the meadow, green the lea;
Under snow and fog-drift hidden,
Blazes Etna, all for thee.
Like the rosy morning, certes,
Thou dost shame the gloomy hill;
May and June—they both are Hatem's
Once again at thy sweet will.
Fill the glass with diamond-flashes,
For this goblet goes to thee!
If she finds a heap of ashes,
She will say: "He burnt for me!"

Godlike was the gesture with which he crushed down the leaping flame within. His daemon had grown strangely compliant—a thrall, not a master. How he had stormed, of yore, in innumerable pages to Käthchen, Lotte, Lili! It had taken Goethe a lifetime to find this Archimedean lever.

The carriage bore his beloved away—he felt: " It is for ever "; and he must have believed that she would be the last woman in his life. There he stood in Heidelberg where his genius had led him; and only by a word did he show that once more the hard-fought combat had been won, only by dropping just a single rhyme in the above-quoted verses, thus mutely bidding his reader substitute for " Hatem's " name the name of Goethe—called for by the rhyme, and suffusing the Eastern original as by international anticipation of history.

The collapse came very suddenly. In a few days Goethe resolved to leave Heidelberg; he said, " I am making my will! " His young companions tried to persuade him to stay—but he was afraid he might fall ill, he could not sleep, and finally he gave Boisserée some of his poems to read, saying, " I must get out of this place." In the diary: " Sad, troublous farewell."

He had held out for ten days after the parting, seeming to live in a state of inward ardour, haunted by a strange medley of past and present memories, some long gone by, some recent—Lili, Carl August, Minna Herzlieb. But on the day of that sudden impulse to make his will, when he rushed away from Heidelberg, and—for the sixth time in his life—fled from a woman beloved, he wrote two letters which make it clear that on that day he resolved to conquer himself and lose not a moment before relinquishing, once and for all, the whole relation. To the woman herself he dared not announce his resolution to avoid the tannery; but to Willemer's daughter he wrote: " Only think—up to yesterday I had hopes of seeing you any day, and now I'm hauled by the hair through Würzburg home. . . . Forgive these splutters and blots—they represent my state

of mind. Adieu to the other two. May they always be united as they are now! And I too. G."

Almost literally, what he had written at twenty-three to Kestner and Lotte. To-day he was sixty-six.

But with a wonderful manly restraint he wrote at the same time to Willemer: " I've had a hundred imaginings of when, how, and where I should see you again for the first time. . . . But now it's all up! And I'm hurrying through Würzburg homewards, consoled only by the thought that, submissively and quietly, I am taking the appointed path, and so may think with unremorseful yearning of those whom I leave behind. But even that is more than befits my state, for there is a rift which cannot be ignored, which I would be loth to widen, but would fain put an end to. Cordial thanks for all your kindness and affection. But these thanks, to be fitting, must bring some sadness with them. You, who understand the heart, will know how to convey all I mean. So these words will serve for you both—who are so enviably happy in your union."

On the day he returned to Weimar he sent Marianne, as agreed between them, a letter in Arabic cipher; and, turning to the same ciphers and numbers in her own copy of the Arabian poems, she read the rune:

Die Einsamkeit ist schön,
Sobald die Freundin meine Freundin ist.
Aus meinem Kopfe geht
Die Sehnsucht deines Aufenthaltes nicht,
Weil dort das irre Herz
Des armen Fremdlings wie zu Hause ist.[1]

To Willemer he dedicated an Arabic work as from " his grateful guest, Hatem." His native town and the

[1] To be alone is well,
So long as my belovéd still is mine.
For ever in my head
The yearning to be with thee doth abide,
For there my heart can rest,
Poor alien heart, at home a little while.

tannery, his friend and Marianne, Goethe never saw again.

It was the middle of October when Christiane fondly welcomed him back to the big house. The cold weather had set in already; the large stove had to represent the sun. He slowly settled down into the accustomed life of active contemplation.

Tranquilly he collected his new poems. . . . Where did that happen, now? On the Neckar? On the Euphrates? Uncommonly pretty pieces there were among them, especially those about her. . . . He must have a talk with Riemer about the arrangement.

CHAPTER XI

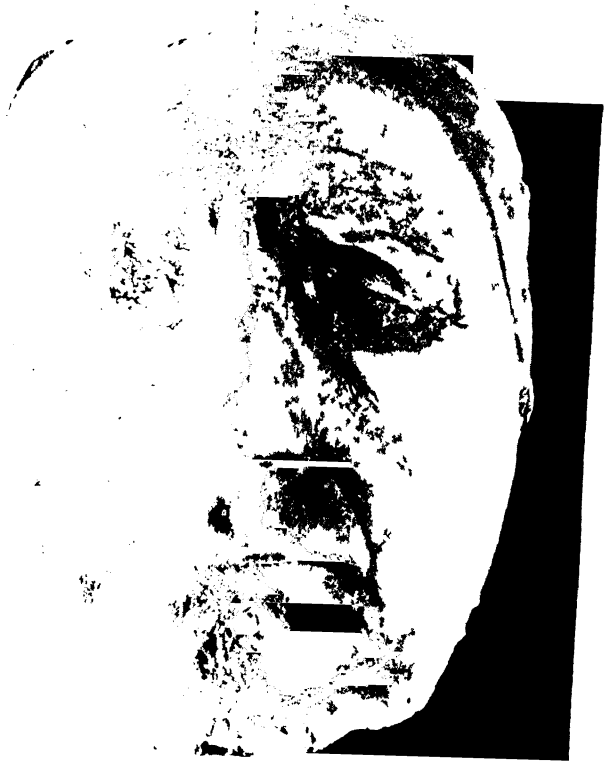
Resignation

Give a thought to the hermit who, cloistered in his cell,
yet hears the ceaseless roaring of the sea.

AMONG the tops of the olden pine-trees a bay-window glitters from the highest storey of the inn overlooking the river, outside the town of Jena. It is the beginning of February, but the season is mild; and here, on the south side, an old man (who even in his youth had needed more warmth than do his fellow-countrymen) can scent the spring as he suns himself in the feeble radiance. What is he doing up here in the snug little room at which he had often looked enviously as he passed, then had engaged by the day, and finally had come to sleep in? Is he dreaming, writing poetry?

He is working. But every now and then he lets his eyes rove to the hills and the surrounding country, and drinks in the lesser beauty that symbolizes the greater. "Among these pine-tops I live as in the Land of Goshen, cheerful and serene, while over Nineveh-Jena broods the black cloud of politics." Through the arches of the bridge at his feet he can see the raftsmen skilfully making their way down the river. "One man is enough to do the work. . . . The logs go lolloping along behind; some are stranded, God knows where, others whirled round in the current. . . . To-morrow the water may rise high, float them all, and bear them many miles to their destination, the hearth-place. You see that there is no necessity for me to waste my time on the daily papers, when the most perfect of symbols are spread before me for the looking at. . . . The old man amid the pine-tops, rocked like a raven in his eyrie."

There he defines the essential temper of his spirit for the next few years—serene relinquishment, ironic con-



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templation, cosmic wisdom within a narrow circle; and that temper of the spirit is the sole explanation of his curious fancy for this remote abiding-place.

And now, when he does take to verse at all, it is more in the way of arranging than of composing. The Muses have once more deserted him, and during this period—from his sixty-seventh to his seventy-fifth year—will but rarely and remotely attend upon his utterances. Seldom do we catch an echo of that richest of all his phases, so recently passed away.

How far it seems! Is it really only two years and a winter since in Heidelberg, convulsed by desire and passion, warned by experience, he had for the first time wrested of his own accord—entirely of his own accord—a tragic victory over his daemon?

Since then he had carefully collected the gifts of his genius, arranging them in sections, adding scholarly notes—for Goethe was in truth not merely Hafiz the Singer, but Hafiz the Scribe as well. True, he had not acquired the difficult tongue of Arabia, but its beautiful script was his; for hours he would copy those mysterious arabesques, once he even began a letter to the reigning Duchess with an oriental invocation, and his *Notes to the Divan* are not mere explanations, but the crowning proofs that, if rather by irruption than a formal siege, he had made himself master of a civilization.

And now the veteran Goethe could, like the experienced statesman he was, heedfully partition the provinces of his wellnigh boundless realm among contending powers, and keep them united by no other bond than his own sense of synthesis. This was his only means of guarding himself against the imperious assaults of public upon private life. The system he imposed upon his spirit is perhaps nowhere more evident than in this decade, so scantly poetic and yet for that very reason the more laborious—and ended at last by the daemon's once more upsetting the entire Art of Life.

Christiane is dead. He who in his pine-top eyrie thinks and dictates, arranges and classifies, is alone and a widower. Though during the decade just gone by he had been more and more frequently driven away from his well-ordered household, because it had always been full of strangers, he now—when it was resounding to new voices, new movements—missed the only being who had always drawn him back to home. Christiane's last year of life had been, despite many brave rallies, a period of suffering; and since that year was for Goethe one of his richest and brightest and most expansive, the spiritual gulf between them had inevitably widened in the long run. That it never, even then, became estrangement—that Goethe never felt any secret resentment against his wife for having had to part from Marianne—is yet another proof of the fineness in both their characters, and of a concord which neither rank nor social conditions, gossip nor jealousy, free-love nor marriage, fame nor intellect . . . in short, which only death could rend asunder.

On the day she died he had looked from the window of his room, and seen the June sunlight contending with the cloud-rack. He had found a sheet of paper and written:

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

And on another day—we know not when—he put into his dear woman's mouth this touchingly modest epilogue, in which everything that had sometimes been a source of uneasiness to him is transmuted by grateful recognition:

Ein rascher Sinn, der keinen Zweifel hegt,
Stets denkt und tut und niemals überlegt;
Ein treues Herz, das, wie empfängt, so gibt,
Geniesst und mitteilt, lebt, indem es liebt;

[1] O thou sun, how vainly art striving
To illumine cloud-rack of sorrows!
And mine the sole gain of surviving—
Her loss to lament through the morrows.

Froh glänzend Auge, Wange frisch und rot,
Nie schön gepriesen, hübsch bis in den Tod.
Da blickt ich ihn noch manchmal freundlich an
Und habe leidend viel für ihn getan.
Indes mein armes Herz im Stillen brach,
Da sagt' ich mir: Bald folgst du ihnen nach!
Ich trug des Hauses nun zu schwere Last,
Um seinetwillen nur ein Erdengast.[1]

That House had long been deprived of the solicitude lavished upon it by Christiane in her youthful days. What had kept the pair united—and fruitfully so—through all the conflicts of their life was her skill in smoothing things down at the theatre. But with failing health she lost interest in this as in other things; and when shortly before her death Goethe's favourite pupil let himself be enticed away to Berlin by a new director, the Goethe-party was crippled. Goethe had repeatedly declared that Christiane was his one remaining link with the stage-world; and so, on her death, he would have done well to abandon all connection with the Weimar house, which he had long ceased to love, while its master had long ceased to love his presence there. But instead of resigning, Goethe made a fresh start, resumed entire control of the dramatic side, and proposed to arrest the gradual dry-rot and regenerate the Weimar stage. His principal aim, no doubt, was to prepare a field of action for his idle son, from childhood all too familiar with that sphere. Six months after Chris-

[1] A reckless disposition, foe to doubts,
That acts on impulse, and reflection scouts;
A loyal heart that, as it takes, will give,
Enjoy and share, and best in loving live.
Bright-glancing eyes, a cheek whose roses blend,
No beauty, yet attractive to the end. . . .
How fondly would my gaze upon him rest!
I suffered much for him, and did my best.
When this poor heart seemed like to break for pain
I said: "Thou soon shalt see thy dead again";
The burden of the House,* too vast, I bore,
And willed to live for him a few years more.

* "The House" refers to the Weimar Court Theatre.
Translator's Note.

tiane's death—at the New Year—he appointed August to the Board of Directors, and both by words and deeds made it plain that he intended to inaugurate a new era for the Theatre. The earliest weeks were rife with instructions, reports, and innovations; for more than ten years Goethe had not been so often in the House, nor held so many committees of inspection, nor taken a hand in so many productions.

Did he fail to perceive how this zeal incensed his opponents? Had he forgotten that that Jagemann who now controlled the operatic side was his Duke's supplementary wife into the bargain? It is as though some external force were driving him, as though he were (as in his youth) to be bludgeoned by Destiny into fuller knowledge of himself and the world!

So it went on for ten long weeks—went on till March.

Then there came into Goethe's life, which so many human beings had helped to shape, the first dumb animal that was to affect it. A strolling-player inquired if he might not exhibit his famous trained poodle in Weimar too. Goethe refused—not on the dog's, but on the theatre's, account.

He had, indeed, repeatedly inveighed in print about the barking of dogs, and had never had any of his own since his student days; but he disliked them as little as he did any other product of Nature. Cats he even liked to have about the house, and he once compared them to fallen princesses of the leonine race. With a tame adder displayed to him by a clergyman he had tried to make friends. The Duke was always surrounded by dogs, and when August brought home a huge English mastiff, Goethe willingly suffered it to remain. The older he grew, the more kindly disposed he was to animals; he never, it is true, was much interested in their souls; it was more compassion that he felt for them.

But on his stage he would not suffer animals to appear—and that is no matter for surprise. However, this actor found his way to the Duke. Carl August wanted to see the dog, and bade the manager ask Goethe to reconsider

his decision. Goethe refused for the second time—now on the disingenuous pretext that animals were not even allowed in the auditorium. The Duke read Goethe's minute.

For forty years he had never allowed Goethe to tyrannize over him—because Goethe had been shrewd enough never to take the law into his own hands. After that one grand effort of the first decade he had given up the contest once for all; and throughout thirty years had devoted himself solely to the cause of education, in which he had to some extent a free hand.

But the Theatre had been from the very first a bone of contention about which friction, more or less unpleasant, had periodically recurred. When Goethe lost interest in it after Schiller's death, the favourites of the Favourite had seen to it that hers became all the more engrossing. This affair of the poodle brought matters to a head. Goethe had just reasserted himself—to give in now would have been to let his opponents triumph over him. But that was precisely what the Duke too was feeling. The deep grudge which these two men, despite their friendship, had in reality cherished for a generation, now for the first time—but also for the last—stepped into the light of publicity from out the little circle of their intimates. Attracted by a sympathy which had been naïve in its precipitate expression, each had in a few years recognized how different he was from the other; and when they awoke to this glaring discrepancy and considered men and things in general by its light, each realized with a mixture of fascination and horror how inextricable were the bonds that held them together. For Goethe and Carl August lived side by side for fifty years as in a marriage begun in love, continued in good-will, to culminate at last in estrangement. Throughout whole decades each went his own way, entirely regardless of the other, to be happily reconciled in their old age through habit and environment, activities and friends. The Duke had never seriously considered the final dismissal of Goethe, and every motive, both practical and ideal, urged Goethe to remain.

But that after forty years of friendship this which now came to pass should have been possible, is a fresh proof of the irreconcilability of their natures. The one was formative and practical, the other wanton and destructive.

Child's play for the Duke to ring the curtain up upon the dog, despite Goethe's double veto! But this was not merely an instance of the commonplace autocrat, who ordains in his wrath what he could not accomplish by fair means. It was much more. It was a grand advertisement of his authority over his friend, the consciousness of which had often made him unpleasantly overbearing. The inferior daemonic being defying the superior one—in that light Goethe's refusal must have struck the Duke; and he thought to have defeated Goethe when he ordered the dog to take the stage. We see that no poodle, but an eidolon, was in question. The Duke commanded the performance.

On the evening he heard this, Goethe's daemon leaped to life once more. Should he make the Duke a scene, tell him home-truths kept back for forty years—and then leave Weimar? Should he silently acquiesce and allow the performance? How often had Goethe stood confronted by such pros and cons before a woman, on the critical day when he had either to link her fate with his or leave her altogether! Overcome by the possibilities of either decision, he had always solved the problem in one way—flight. To-day, too, this seemed to him the only course; and despite the precision with which in his old age he was wont to make his arrangements, he now took only a few hours to resolve on flight to Jena—packing, though, more extensively than ever before, and taking sufficient manuscripts, drawings, and apparatus for an uninterrupted stay from March to August!

When next day the stage-manager made his appearance, Goethe was gone. Simultaneously the Duke received a message from him—he begged to be allowed to absent himself from the dog's performance. The sensational news was soon all over the little capital. Frau von Stein and Frau von Schiller were anxious to mediate through Knebel

—Goethe returned an evasive reply. At Jena he remained, by no means in seclusion, writing tranquilly—indeed, by visits and committees, he there emphasized his position as Minister of Education.

The Duke, however, incensed by the exit of his distinguished friend and antagonist, was not content with regaling the town and the nobility by the sight of the dog on the Court stage—a poodle who, like that other poodle, seemed to have a devil in him. The Duke would have felt himself to be a beaten man if he had calmly acquiesced in Goethe's flight. So he took the extreme course; on the day after the dog's appearance he decreed Goethe's dismissal from the directorship, saying that some recent expressions of opinion had convinced him that Goethe would wish his services to be dispensed with. As he simultaneously notified the Board of Directors of his decision, it was irrevocable.

But Goethe, in one of his cleverest letters—which feigned devotion, but was really full of oblique malice—proclaimed the Duke's defeat before the Areopagus of the intellect.

" Your Royal Highness, as has so often before now been your gracious pleasure, meets—indeed anticipates—my wishes. I had been hoping I might now be permitted to entertain them. . . . Will you, then, accept my respectful gratitude for all the favours I have enjoyed in the course of business; and I trust I may be graciously allowed, in the future, to exercise some influence upon that department in which I may lay claim to a certain amount of knowledge and practical experience." His son (he went on) also wished to retire, since " in my present position I can be concerned only with affairs which require ripeness of judgment and calm deliberation." His presence in Jena was useful; " and therefore I venture to ask for an extension of leave. . . . Your Royal Highness's most obedient servant, W. von Goethe."

The Duke got no pleasure out of his victory—for after all, he loved his mighty antagonist! Two weeks later he betook himself to Jena. It seems that he paid Goethe a

surprise visit at Knebel's family dinner-table—he is even said to have embraced him. That he took any steps to reinstate him in the position from which he had just kicked him out is very far from being proved, and moreover would have been quite out of character. Goethe resigned, and held his peace. Why—once more the question assails us—why did he remain in the town, and in office? Practical considerations can have had no more to do with it now than they had had thirty years before, when he returned from the South to find himself superseded in affairs and cold-shouldered by his circle. Renowned, highly salaried, and as an author still more highly paid—a widower, and the father of but one son, he was now in every sense free to turn his steps homeward, or anywhere else he pleased on the inhabited globe. And he must, besides, have guessed what indignation all Germany would feel when it became known that Goethe had been dismissed from office on account of a poodle. Germany would have taken his part, if he had left Weimar. Why did he stay?

Because he saw that in this sphere he could find scope for his energy; because in this uninspired phase some impetus to practical work was vital for him, at the age of sixty-eight; because, in spite of all, he could be sure of the Duke's real amity; because he could perceive every single one of the articulations in this stupid senile quarrel as clearly as those in a skeleton—because he had learnt wisdom, and because, by remaining, he conquered. Goethe was not at all like the Persian poet whose story he was now telling in the *Notes to the Divan*—that Firdusi who, after toiling thirty years, received too scanty a reward from his sovereign, and left the Court to die a man embittered.

By remaining and holding his peace, Goethe greatly increased his silent influence. Several actors left the Court stage as a protest, came to see him in Weimar, and confidentially imparted to him what admiration was felt for his " gigantic display of energy and his Brahminical power of patient endurance—indispensable, throughout wellnigh thirty years, for making something out of nothing. And

that something was—however it might recently have dwindled—so fair a thing that I felt great reluctance to abandon it, and was sick at heart to cry: '*Rentre dans le néant dont je t'ai fait sortir!*' Haide's statement of particulars, though prudent and sensible enough, gave me a glimpse of the slough of despond into which before long they would all be plunged. We had at least kept the wine in the stage of fermentation, but now it was turning sour with a vengeance, and everyone knows the pace that goes at."

What a mixture of derision and pride, of grief, soreness, and malicious satisfaction! The wounded heart could torment itself like a boy's—the mature spirit could resign itself like an old man's.

Could resign itself, in every sphere. That voluntary relinquishment by which he put an end to rejuvenescence, poetry, and love, was now followed by the two relinquishments imposed on him by Destiny. The fond brown eyes of his dear companion were shut—the eyes which had never looked anything but fondness to the end; and the manly loyalty in those of his master and friend had in the end been clouded over. The hand which had a thousand times been given with the fraternal *Du* (so long now unresponded to) in assurance of his old-time faith, could now without a qualm sign the rescript which banished the same friend—an old man—from the House of his creation.

A year and a half—no more—since the farewell evening with Marianne, followed by the June day of Christiane's death, when Goethe himself lay ill in bed. Schadow, at this time, took a mask of the face. And indeed, to play with words, the mask was finally torn from the face of this man of sorrows by one individual's utterance: "*Voilà un homme qui a eu de grands chagrins.*" A diplomat had said this of Goethe, and Goethe translated it: "Which means, a man who has made no easy job of life."

The look of resignation was never absent from Goethe's face, though it was susceptible of much variety—now exorcized by contemplation, now kept under by activity. But since the time, nearly fifty years ago, when that look had been the mark of the Wertherish Goethe, it had never

(not even in the loneliness of his fortieth year) been the distinguishing trait of his countenance. Now it pervades the relentless fidelity of the mask in Schadow's bust, and the profile portrait by Jagemann.

Stoicism, compounded of manifold spiritual elements, rules the different phases of Goethe's seventies. When something caused him to re-read *Werther*, he said he could not understand "how a man to whom the world had appeared so absurd in his youth could possibly have contrived to stick it out forty years longer. The enigma is partly explained by the fact that everyone has something of his very own in him, which he thinks to make good with by letting it have its way. This queer notion makes fools of us, day after day, and so we grow old without knowing how or why. If I look at the thing closely, I can see that nothing but the talent I happen to possess has sustained me through circumstances which did not suit me, and in which I became involved through miscalculation, accident, and entangling affections."

Such revealing soliloquies, which scarcely anyone but Zelter was allowed to overhear, and which posterity almost blushes to assist at, lose nothing but rather gain in sadness by the irony which makes the old man's mode of expression so different from the bitternesses of his youth. In his youth it was hopeful despair; in his age it was despairing mockery. And that is the undertone in the later-born songs of the *Divan*, sonorous as the ground-swell of some imperishable Largo:

> Lasst mich weinen! umschränkt von Nacht
> In unendlicher Wüste.
> Kamele ruhn, die Treiber desgleichen,
> Rechnend still wacht der Armenier;
> Ich aber, neben ihm, berechne die Meilen,
> Die mich von Zuleika trennen, wiederhole
> Die wegeverlangenden, ärgerlichen Krümmungen.
> Lasst mich weinen. . . .[1]

[1] Let me weep, by the night engulfed,
In the infinite desert!



HAND IN OLD AGE

But what kept the balance of his resignation true was the manful confidence in the other scale—the confidence that waited upon the veteran's melancholy, the same feeling that had made him, as a youth, suddenly fling aside every thought of death, "and I made up my mind to live." This is the way he speaks of the talent entrusted to him by God:

> Ich brauch' es zur Rechten und Linken,
> Weiss nicht, was daraus kommt.
> Wenn's nicht mehr frommt,
> Wird er schon winken.[1]

And it was then, too, that in a dialogue before the gates of Paradise, he looked the reluctantly inquisitorial houri in the face and cried, a poet unafraid:

> Nicht so vieles Federlesen!
> Lass mich immer nur herein:
> Denn ich bin ein Mensch gewesen,
> Und das heisst ein Kämpfer sein.
> Schärfe deine kräft'gen Blicke!
> Hier durchschaue diese Brust,
> Sieh der Lebenswunden Tücke,
> Sieh der Liebeswunden Lust! . . .[2]

The camels rest, their drivers beside them,
Counting, mute, stands the Armenian;
While I, not far away, am reckoning the distance
That parts me from thee, Zuleika—reckoning, counting
The endlessly lengthening, harassing labyrinths.
Let me weep, then. . . .

[1] To right and to left I bestow it,
What comes of it, can't say.
When past our day,
He'll let us know it.

[2] Not so ceremonious, pray you!
Let me pass the gate at last:
I have been a man—what say you?
Does not that mean battles past?
Yours are eyes of piercing vision;
Look into this breast and see!
Life-wounds—those were spite, derision;
Love-wounds—those were ecstasy.

German as is the splendid sonority of these lines, worthy to adorn the scutcheon of the Muses, it is nevertheless something more than the form which makes this Western, this Protestant, confession of faith an Oriental poem. Whenever he could, during these years, Goethe held fast to the spirit of the East. In it he perceived all the elements befitting the poetry of an old man: "Unquestioning acquiescence in the unfathomable will of God; a serene vision of the pulsating flux, the incessant convolutions and involutions, circle-wise, spiral-wise, of the terrestrial rhythm; love, affections, hovering between two worlds; all matter purged of its dross, symbolically evaporating. What more can Grand-Daddy want?"

With the last five words he at one stroke sets this confession of faith (addressed to Zelter only) in the light of another relinquishment—putting a comprehensive minus-sign before all forms of dogma.

During this period Goethe's nervous susceptibility became more and more marked—for while the strong-hearted cheerfulness of the immediately preceding years had faded away from him, the most sensitive part of his nature was exposed to the batterings of the world and Destiny. The subtlest of his observers had to describe as "unusual" an evening on which Goethe was "cheerful, reasonable, sympathetic, instructive—no pique, no irony; nothing violent or repellent."

Very far removed from the harmony which it had taken him sixty years to acquire at all, in this retrograde phase Goethe had to redouble those hygienic methods which even as a youth he had practised. Zelter was on his way to visit him, when his daughter died; Goethe was asked to break the news to his friend. He, who regarded all unprofitable agitations as superfluous, because to him the inexorable was the only school for the spirit, said nothing to Zelter and sent the letter containing the news to his room on their first evening, adding some lines from himself

of heartfelt sympathy and consolation. Afterwards, to a third person, he described the whole incident as "vexatious."

His trustiest weapon against Destiny was now as forty years ago—occupation. In occupation the veteran took refuge, as had the man bidding farewell to youth—yet not as he! When we consider from without the ceaseless activity of the life which this man of seventy pursued year in, year out, we are reminded of the strenuous period of practical work to which he had condemned himself at twenty-seven.

But spiritually considered, the two phases are radically different. During the most fruitful portion of a man's existence Goethe had of his own choice wellnigh completely abstained from production, that he might gain practical experience; now he filled one of the most unfruitful with occupations, merely that he might survive.

Again, as ever until that brief halcyon-time of serenity, we find him inventing countless emblems, phrases, and metaphors for his dual nature. The sage among the pine-tops was only one of the shapes it now assumed; in other moods the familiar daemon would burst the bonds of resignation, as never before but in his youthful days. Once more he was plunged into the strife of warring impulses, once more victory seemed out of the question. On the day that the mortal combat of his soul should be decided once for all—on that day Goethe would die!

Of such a savage Goethe is the tale of a summer-night which he spent with the contentious philologist Wolf, and Meyer. The ever-argumentative Wolf he then "brutally" sat upon. "Fortunately or unfortunately I had drunk so many more glasses of Burgundy than was good for me that I could not control myself. Meyer sat by, composed as usual, and I don't think he liked it." But such violence, he adds (and it is more like self-reproach than censure), will come home to Wolf, as it did to Herder. "Examine yourself, then, to see if you are made of similar stuff—*I* do, every day."

If there was any noise in the house, such as a quarrel or a mishap, Goethe used immediately to call out: "Quiet! Quiet, for Heaven's sake!" But the fact that he sometimes called out like this when the noise was over shows that he had to bid himself be quiet; and it was a man of seventy who dashed off these electric lines:

> Was hast du denn? Unruhig bist du nicht,
> Und auch nicht ruhig, machst mir ein Gesicht,
> Als schwanktest du, magnetischen Schlaf zu ahnen.—
> Der Alte schlummert wie das Kind,
> Und wie wir eben Menschen sind,
> Wir schlafen sämtlich auf Vulkanen.[1]

Now, as in the past, Goethe perpetually speaks of the systole and diastole which formed part of his dual nature; and in one of the little biographical sketches—splendid *torsi*, so long left to moulder neglected in one dust-covered volume of the series of sixty—he finds the happiest of expressions for the old problem: "The reason within us would be a great power if it only knew with what it had to contend. Our nature is always taking fresh forms, and every one of them is an unexpected enemy for that good-humoured equable reason of ours."

Two external events tended to encourage Goethe's renewed zeal for work. Weimar, at the Congress of Vienna, was raised to the rank of a Grand Duchy, and almost doubled in extent; then Voigt, who was Goethe's nearest colleague in the administration, died; and Goethe's duties were vastly increased. As from this time forward the improved revenue at last enabled him to work out former schemes, his energy could indeed spread its wings.

[1] What ails thee then? Thou art not restless now,
Yet canst not rest. I see around thy brow
For sleep magnetic timid craving flutter.—
The old man sleeps as children sleep,
And mortals all, our couch we heap
Where far below volcanoes mutter.

The Public Library, collections of coins, drawings, antiquities, the School of Art in Weimar—and in Jena seven scientific laboratories and the Botanical Gardens, the School of Medicine, the Observatory, the Chemical Institute and Library, were henceforth controlled by him alone. As soon as he took the helm the Observatory was renovated, a veterinary college was established, all institutes were enlarged, archaeological work was set going again, the Botanic Museum was founded, the Library reorientated, under the greatest architectural difficulties. As the taking over of the old revenues by the new State necessitated the removal of the most important Treasury officials, Goethe had himself to wind up all the old accounts and open new ones; and indeed he could have found, as matters stood, no better expert, for had he not been Finance Minister in the past?

He had shed every illusion; and, never having been dazzled by personal power, could look with perfect indifference upon the much-aggrandized Duchy. When the new States first assembled to do homage in the great hall of the new palace, which he himself had helped to build, Goethe stood beside the throne of his monarch, now promoted to be His Royal Highness. Goethe was nearest to the Duke's right hand, his ageing back constrained to the courtier's erectness, the orders bestowed by Napoleon and the Tsar glittering upon his gold-laced Court uniform. He looked into the circle of nobles and citizens, now for the first time representing their country; and in all that Palace-Chamber there was no one so unmoved as he.

He gave his friends an unemotional account of the ceremony—indeed, when there was talk of an intellectual association, such as Wilhelm Grimm suggested to him, he confessed that he had " from of old wandered about these indigenous regions without ever feeling them to be his abiding-place." How literally, in the intellectual sense, he used the phrase, could not be more clearly demonstrated than by his having omitted these drafted words from the letter, fearing that they might reveal too much to the outer world!

It is true that there were practical reasons for this sense of complete aloofness. Goethe disapproved of the new Constitution given to the land, in accordance with promises made at the Vienna Congress, by Carl August—and by him almost alone among German rulers. He transformed the old Privy Council into a Ministry of State; in the diets he gave citizens and peasants such a share in the government as corresponded with modern ideas.

Goethe was opposed to any kind of majority-voting. With real humility he had, especially in his middle period, appealed to his friends to follow him into the arcana of his art; from Herder, Schiller, Knebel, Wieland he had taken advice on the form of a stanza; even now he would ask the most intimate of his pupils for their verdict, which he sometimes made use of; and he never ceased, in his grey hairs, to feel himself a beginner in the sphere where he had been from the first a master. But when practical questions on which he had thoroughly reflected were fumbled with and interminably discussed by a dozen different colleagues, it was only by great self-control that he could bear it at all, and many a groan or curse was confided to private documents.

And now was he, for whom politics had always represented an art, to shake in his shoes before a shopkeeper from Apolda or a cabbage-grower from Kochberg, lest such an one might refuse to vote him the desired amount for Greek casts on the Education Estimates! "The mass of men has from all time been united only by prejudices and stirred only by passions; even the loftiest aims are in this way perpetually obstructed or indefinitely postponed; but" (he was careful to add) "no matter for that—the best will get done, if not at once, in the long run; if not by direct means, as an ultimate consequence."

Here Goethe is revealed as looking both ways, exactly as he had done twenty-five years ago during the Revolution. As a practical statesman, as an expert and adept, he desired oligarchic rule; indeed, had Goethe been born to a crown he would never have yielded a tittle of his authority, but

would have reigned precisely as Frederick did, perhaps as Joseph did—serving of his own free will where he could have commanded. That had been his method at the Theatre, where alone he was supreme. But as a thinker and a seer, he saw on the horizon the " cloud no bigger than a man's hand "—the cloud that meant Democracy. In his own life he had contrived to strike the balance between liberty and subjection. This was now his aim in the public sphere; and anything in the pages to come which may seem contradictory or illogical is—once more—nothing but the outcome of his dual nature, which inevitably alternated between cleaving and leaving, prizing and despising, creating and contemplating. So that the veteran's frame of mind is, again, only to be explained by the essential elements in his nature, which held fast to the established fact in the belief that the ideal would emerge from it.

In his public life this looking-both-ways is strongly evidenced by two instances which affected his own realm of letters. Together with the new Constitution, Carl August had given his land the freedom of the Press, while everywhere else in Saxony autocracy and the censorship prevailed. So of course the little land of liberty attracted critical brains, to augment the many others which already made the poet's City, and the University, richer in them than in poets and specialists. Five new journals, springing up in the small city of Jena, attacked the new Constitution as being regarded by foreign lands in the light of a dangerous experiment, and by their own as a caricature of liberty. The Duke foamed at the mouth—he had meant so well! He proposed to dismiss the professor who edited the most acrimonious of these sheets—for a few months after the accorded privilege he could not, without stultifying himself, suppress the newspaper.

Goethe advised the exact reverse—to suppress the paper and leave the editor alone. After all that he had suffered, throughout forty years, from the stupidity and tactlessness of the Press, he could not but despise it—while the

scientist, in his view, was sacrosanct, was not even to suffer rebuke! "It is pluckier," he said, "to let one's leg be cut off than to die of frost-bite." And he scribbled these lines:

O Freiheit süss der Presse!
Nun sind wir endlich froh:
Sie pocht von Messe zu Messe
In dulci jubilo.
Kommt, lasst uns alles drucken
Und walten für und für;
Nur sollte keiner mucken,
Der nicht so denkt wie wir.[1]

Such was the angry derision with which he greeted the freedom of the Press.

Youth at the universities, disappointed by what, instead of the promised emancipation, had ensued from affiliation with Germany after the fight for freedom, had now conceived a positive hatred for Austrian and Russian hegemony —and this was precisely what Goethe had foreseen, and what had prevented him from joining in the jubilations over the new era. When all the world was singing:

Gott Dank, dass uns so wohl geschah:
Der Tyrann sitzt auf St. Helena![2]

Goethe's rejoinder was:

Doch liess sich nur der Eine bannen—
Wir haben jetzo hundert Tyrannen.[3]

[1] O land that now rejoices,
In Freedom of the Press!
Hark to the thousand voices
That chant our happiness!
Come on—we'll all be printed,
And rule the roost, you'll see;
No word be ever hinted
By him who won't agree.

Thanks to be God—we sing Hurrah!
The tyrant's dumped on St. Helena.

Yet only One is gone to his place—
A hundred tyrants now we face.

When the Jena students invited their brethren from all Germany for the 31st October 1817 to celebrate Luther's tercentenary at Luther's Wartburg, Goethe uttered a word of warning—and was of course accused of upholding the party of reaction. But the Duke sanctioned the arrangement whereby his Professors led five hundred German students from Jena to Luther's stronghold, there to celebrate emancipation. Some of these young men, at the end of the day, combined to build a bonfire and burn, amid inflammatory speeches, the most embittered writings of the reaction. Rumour fanned the flame—the little *auto-da-fé* became a vast conflagration, Weimar and its administration fell under suspicion as a centre of revolutionary thought; Hardenberg arrived with the Austrian Ambassador on a special mission; the rulers of France and Russia were shaking their fists in the background, terrified for their thrones if German intellect should revolt. The affair, in short, was magnified into a crisis of State.

And Goethe upheld the youngsters! The bonfire at the Wartburg kindled his old heart; and as his enemy Kotzebue's political writings had at last met their fitting fate among the rest, he had a double draught of satisfaction. Fearing the consequences, he had advised against the ceremony; now, when youth was arraigned, he took part with their idealism. "They're so attractive, these young people—with all their faults, which will be got the better of quite soon enough. If only the seniors weren't so asinine! For it's they who really spoil the fun." So he wrote confidentially to his son. In his public capacity he played the responsible minister, and was sternly silent when one of the ringleaders in the Wartburg incident ventured to approach him. But the student was no sooner gone than Goethe declared that he had had the greatest difficulty in preventing himself from taking the culprit in his arms and saying: "Dear boy—don't be so silly!" Then he went on to imagine fondly how the young eyes would have flashed at him; but instead he had had to administer a sedative to "the dear hotheads for their own good."

Does it not read like a scene from one of Schiller's plays —the philosopher, the fond father, and forced to act the cold worldling's part in the service of reason! " On the principle of upholding the established order, and preventing revolution, I am in entire agreement " (with the Monarchists); " but not as to the means to that end—by which I mean that they put their trust in stupidity and obscurantism; I, in reason and enlightenment."

In this cleft stick between natural and political prejudices, owning allegiance to neither party and looked askance at by both, he sought solace—resigned in that as in all else—in a comparative study of the spirit of the age.

While his mere routine-work, in this period, waxed daily, he allowed the Court likewise to take up a good deal of his time. It was easier than before to get on with the circle there represented—friends and enemies were dead or grown old; memory, embellishing the past, spread a gracious patina over the relations of those concerned in it. The third generation was growing up, and Goethe's intercourse with Carl August's grandchildren was so patriarchal that he good-humouredly declared that they regarded him as one of the ancient fixtures of the house.

He was always inventing graceful little attentions with which to cheer the Duchess's embittered old age. All through the winter the Duke and she came once a week to his house, there to view interesting novelties or antiquities. Goethe became like a museum to be frequented in the days of growing old, when people want to replace, to forget, so much.

In public his courtly attitude grew more and more punctilious; it was as though he revenged himself by senile stiffness for a servility which no one demanded of him. " Upon this occasion I had the unexpected pleasure of having my house and garden . . . honoured by the presence of Their Imperial Highnesses the Archduke Nicolaus and the Archduchess Alexandra, accompanied by our own most gracious Royal Highnesses. Her Imperial Highness the Archduchess was so gracious as to allow me to inscribe

some lines of poetry in her tastefully and splendidly bound album."

Indeed, he even played the Court poet again; and anything he accomplished in this, his seventieth year, was superior—in the opinion of his friends and of posterity—to what he had formerly done in the Court masques. The Empress-Mother of Russia, as the guest of her relatives, was given an exhibition of what Weimar could do in the way of poetry; and to this end the old gentleman led a retired life for quite a long while that winter. And when Goethe slaved for six weeks and said " Bravo! " to himself at the end of them, something brilliant was to be looked for. This festival-piece was nothing less than an epilogue upon Weimar's Golden Age, at the conclusion of which Goethe himself wore the cothurnus as Phorcias, commenting on his own lines.

Weimar's river, the Ilm, was the supposed narrator of all that it had seen in those decades. Allegorical figures entered, singing the praises of Herder; Wieland's characters advanced to the rhythm of Wieland's measures; from Schiller's plays the dramatis personae, familiar to all present, appeared in turn; and when the Ilm, gladdened by the general applause, should have proceeded to the laudation of the only one among the Weimar poets who still survived to write these verses, the doubly involved author extricated himself from his dilemma with the utmost tact. Then came the turn of Mahomet and Götz, Adelheid and Iphigenie—nay, of Mephisto and Faust themselves, who had never yet trod the stage in actuality; and with what a courtly bearing did Mephisto, before this little Court, propound the devastating veracities with which in later years he was to regale a great Imperial one!

And when on that festal evening those figures passed before their poet's eyes—his own and those of his departed friends—and he, sitting between his sovereigns, looked down upon the crowded house and saw the son of Schiller in Götz's mask, and his own son, August, in that of Mephisto . . . how like his own ghost he must have fatal

That was his adieu to the Court which it had certainly not been given him to turn into a Court of Ferrara; but "we have preserved the antique honour of Weimar; though I, God willing, have bid an eternal farewell to all such vanities."

Even in his own home Goethe had to practise resignation. Christiane's death had robbed him of his companion without delivering him from the racket which had so often driven him away from her; and now that in his age he needed even more care, and would have liked a still stricter routine in his household, he had again to face his old lot—always to give, seldom to receive.

A year after Christiane's death he had got his son married; and if it was his father who induced August to settle down and found a bride for him, the bride, too, was thinking more of the father than of the son she took for husband. August was now at the end of his twenties, promoted to be *Kammerrat* and, under the new dispensation, associated with his father's official duties. He had grown handsome—there was even a look of Goethe about his eyes. The weak, round chin and cheeks derived from his mother; but in height he outstripped both parents, and through the exercises taught him by his father had acquired the true Greek symmetry. But there was a fierce unruly element in his composition which neither work nor affection availed to mitigate—and in fact he was given little of either. But he still seemed susceptible of improvement; and it was to remove him from a way of life which was always erratic, sometimes coarsely dissipated, and often intensely miserable, that Goethe found a wife for him, and began—so we are told—by making the mistake of separating him from a mistress, instead of waiting till his own volatility should do the work.

Ottilie von Pogwisch, of the North-German, impoverished nobility, was slender and pale, delicate, intelligent, and gifted, tormented by an unquenchable thirst for love

and romance—which, however, she was not so reckless as to seek outside the shelter of a Court. When she became a member of Goethe's inner circle and comfortably shared his spacious house with him, she was not so much in quest of the young man's love or the old man's intellect, as of the great house and the great renown, which would give her desirous soul an outlet and confer upon her prosperity and a name. Though at first she was but partly conscious of this, a few years proved that it was her real purpose. To Goethe, whose last fifteen years she tended, the occasionally charming but often ailing and moody young lady meant little more in the beginning than a "daughterling," such as of yore he had been wont to choose for himself in a more normal and less egotistic fashion.

Discipleship—which was what he now chiefly desired in young people—he did not find in August and Ottilie; they were scarcely even listeners. Ottilie preferred to collect first editions of Goethe's works, to receive the Court in his house, and to represent the Goethe-dynasty at Berlin before the Hohenzollerns.

But even these things pleased her only when she happened to be in the humour for them. She was given to crazy infatuations which made her utterly scorn the social joys which yet she could not do without, and neglect household, father, husband, and children in favour of some handsome exquisite of the Court, especially if he happened to be an Englishman. Everything with which Weimar had reproached the defenceless Christiane, Ottilie revelled in for years under the shelter of the law.

Yet how little she did for her father, of those things which Christiane had so long done for her husband!

It was a semi-resignation here too, for Goethe. August's married life soon became a source of anxiety, and was often punctuated by quarrels. In a few years it showed as definitely unhappy; and as all this went on in Goethe's house, and only too often in his presence, the young pair did little to cheer him, and he was soon feeling lonelier than before. And as the young wife filled the house with her

relatives, had her sister to stay for months at a time and her mother too on frequent visits, as Court interests, love-affairs, and dress (with a literary atmosphere superimposed) took precedence of all other topics, Goethe now did as he had done twenty years ago when Christiane introduced *her* relatives—scarcely more alien to him—into the stately mansion. He betook himself to Jena, there to dwell for months, on two occasions for as much as half a year. As of yore, his abode there consisted of two exiguous rooms (for the pine-top eyrie had been only one spring's refuge); and this, because the house where he could collect his mind and his treasures happened to be just what the young people wanted as a focus for their own activities.

But Goethe made no claims. The closer his association with the life of a fellow-creature, the more impossible it was for him to make it serve his own interests. In his old age he expected absolutely nothing from his fellow-men; and the completeness of his disillusion made him but the more serene. To his powerful vision their antic figures were transparent, and it was with the scientist's absorption that he observed an interior mechanism which was all too human in its functioning.

On several occasions he was unable to show hospitality to foreign notabilities because supplies had failed to come from Weimar; and his only reproach was a casual remark in a letter that his servant "had to make out as best he could, and send the hat round perpetually." Even when he was the giver, the thankless young pair would take no trouble for him. Sending Ottilie a melon from Jena, he requested her "*urgently* to send back the seeds and if possible those of the former one too—for gardeners set an excessively high value on the good sorts. So as to impress upon you the desirability of taking this small amount of trouble, which, moreover, may be of advantage to yourself next year, I beg to announce that a quarter of a hundredweight of manuscript music has arrived, which will be dispatched on receipt of the desired seeds." So that all he had to thank Ottilie for was a couple of grandsons.

These years had made Goethe a nominal grandfather several times over, for from all Germany came requests that he would be godfather to children whose parents had once had some slight connection with him; and whenever he was asked if a boy might be christened Wolfgang he would beg that his name might be William—for that was Shakespeare's name. It was now his turn to become a real grandfather.

"Meanwhile I am occupied with the education of my grandson, which I deliberately conduct on the principle of giving him his own way in everything—hoping by this means to have him on his pins before his parents return.... With true grandfatherly infatuation ... I regard him as the most charming little creature in the world, and in sober fact I do feel that this great empty house and grounds are full, now he is here."

And when, as the boys grew older, they would rush all over the house with their little girl-friends, he would send them down sugar-plums (which with inextinguishable faith in his childhood's memories he always procured from Frankfurt) to play lotto with, and perhaps keep quiet for a while.

Since his children spent the money he earned as though it were water, he had to worry over expenses as in the old days; and Goethe, who had scarcely saved a penny, was obliged at seventy to calculate that he had better stay in Jena for the moment, for August was on court-duty, and Ottilie "dined out so often that there were fewer household expenses at Weimar."

True, in his old age he was more finical than ever about most things. With his grey hairs he grew more and more like his father in that way.

> Das mach' ich mir denn zum reichen Gewinn,
> Dass ich getrost ein Pedante bin.[1]

The perpetual re-arrangement of his papers became a

[1] I haven't a doubt but it's better for me
A pedant unabashed to be.

passion with him. He appointed sums to his various assistants for the publication of his posthumous works; and once when he returned from his summer holiday at a watering-place he was much gratified to find that they had prepared a portfolio for him, in which everything that came from his hand was carefully arranged in good order.

On a return visit to Carlsbad, walking along the principal streets, he was delighted to discover that he knew all the street-signs by heart. When someone, driving with him, warned him that the carriage might upset on the bad road, Goethe said laughing that Napoleon could have had no better coachman than his; but when he happened to have with him a piece of black spar with which an admirer had presented him, he was worried all the time lest this should get any harm by the jolting.

In money matters Goethe had grown so discreet that he, who dictated every single thing he wrote, often settled his accounts with his publisher with his own hand. From Frankfurt, for which he had no sort of sentimental feeling, he removed his inherited capital on the ground that he did not wish to contribute towards the rates, and for the same reason renounced his citizenship!

When the Duchy was reorganized he had no scruple in urging his claim to an increased salary, and this frankly on the score of his renown. The Duke granted him three thousand thalers a year—at that time an unusually high salary.

Goethe needed the money for his collections, his comforts, above all for his children—but also for the open house it pleased him to keep with them. During one winter there were guests in that house nearly every evening, while on Thursdays there was a large party; and he seems to have partly depicted his social ideal in the life of that uncle who, in the *Wanderjahre*, likes to be hospitable and inhospitable as the fancy takes him, dines from a travelling-kitchen which follows him everywhere, and waxes eloquent about the new arrangement in hotels of dining at separate little tables.

For Goethe liked society best when he was certain of being able to get away as soon as he wanted to. At their formal parties he now made a practice of appearing only when all the guests had assembled and been received by his son and daughter. On such occasions he was inclined to be stiffly ceremonious, wore all his orders and stars, was very much His Excellency—this to protect himself from being buttonholed by the sort of guest he did not care about. He usually stood with his hands behind his back, and himself described this attitude as one which betokened certainty of one's rank, did not preclude a nearer approach, and properly belonged only to princes. When he received friends in the middle of the day he did not at once shake hands with them—and, even when they were leaving, only if he had enjoyed the visit.

But any man whose work and achievements he admired, Goethe would astonish by the warmth of his reception. If a young physicist, with whom he had exchanged letters on their special subject, came to the house in Weimar, he would take him into his own room on the first visit; and, while they stood sketching and measuring, would break the loaf brought him by his servant in two pieces, so that he and his visitor might share it without ceremony.

To judge by many accounts, it was with an embarrassing mixture of fear and veneration that everyone for the first time ascended the broad staircase; and as Helen's beauty is best conveyed to us by Homer's description of its effect upon the Trojan veterans, so we can get our best idea of Goethe's personality from the impression it made upon visitors. Either they were afraid of him beforehand and became natural and confidential under his gaze, or else they had promised themselves to tell him home-truths and fell silent before those great eyes. In either event, fear played its part with everyone.

Even the uncertainty of how he would behave, which had to be reckoned with, derived from the very roots of his being. "I have an idiosyncrasy," he wrote at seventy, "which has been both fortunate and unfortunate for me,

in that it has led me to give more or less than was desired, but very seldom just *what* was desired. For my old friends it has been a source of mingled pain and pleasure."

The death of his former colleague in office, Voigt—one of his few surviving old friends—was a great loss for him. In a feverish, almost illegible hand Voigt wrote, on the day before he died, these words to his old friend: " . . . wanted to write you this last word while I could. Harrowing thought—the last word to Goethe! Ah, dear Goethe, but we shall live together in spirit . . . till I see that word written high above the stars. Perhaps to-morrow in the script of Heaven! Your Voigt."

It did not occur to Goethe that he might go to see his friend, who lived only two streets away from him. He answered on paper:

" Forgive me, most revered of my friends, for having left your treasured lines unanswered for twenty-four hours. Noble, to remember your old friend and bid him farewell in such a sacred moment—inestimably precious for him. But I cannot let you go! When our nearest and dearest prepare for a journey, which sooner or later will bring them back to us somehow, we try to dissuade them; and surely when it is the most solemn of all departures, we are called upon to be recalcitrant. So allow me to hope for the best. . . . Now and ever your most faithfully attached . . . J. W. Goethe."

Ghastly—this cold, stilted tone towards the dying man who had breathed such a tender yearning farewell to his friend! Goethe, who had never seen a fellow-creature die, and had scarcely ever visited a graveyard, now as before avoided the spectacle—and, as though he had never reflected upon that mystery and that change, addressed his friend on his dying-day (and probably too late) with a semblance of cheer and affection. His letter has all the metallic hardness in which that tenderest of hearts was driven to disguise itself. Every word in this letter is

studied; not one adjective could be changed for the better, and even the signature is unique in its mingling of formality with intimacy—for usually he signed his surname alone, unless ceremony demanded the particle of nobility.

Truly, at such moments, it seems to be made of glass—the heart of Goethe, crystalline, transparent, hard; and yet at other moments, even in his most advanced years, to be a heart pulsing with warm humanity. " It is certain " (he had said when he was no more than sixty) " that only he who has been the most sensitive can become the hardest and coldest of men, for he has to encase himself in triple steel . . . and often his coat-of-mail oppresses him."

His relation with Frau von Stein was strangely sublimated now. Her son, whom he addressed as " My dear friend and son "—and Herder's son too—were now " fine young men," as Goethe said; though neither in them nor in Schiller's and Wieland's posterity was there any sign of remarkable talent. Charlotte had once more proved how different her nature was from Goethe's when she wrote to her son about *Dichtung und Wahrheit*: " I could not let the public into my secrets as he does." But she, who after Christiane's death was admitted to something like her old intimacy with Goethe (as though Charlotte, who was about twenty years older, had ultimately got the better of Christiane by surviving), did at last find the right phrase to characterize him: " I might call you the One who Gives."

Yet what Goethe now felt for her transcended by far their mutual memories. The woman whom he had loved at thirty and fled from at fifty he now—at seventy—ranked with his idol Shakespeare, and expressed it in these words:

Einer Einzigen angehören
Einen Einzigen verehren,
Wie vereint es Herz und Sinn!
Lida! Glück der nächsten Nähe,
William! Stern der höchsten Höhe,
Euch verdank' ich, was ich bin.
Tag' und Jahre sind verschwunden,

Und doch ruht auf jenen Stunden
Meines Wertes Vollgewinn.[1]

His fidelity to Knebel, Meyer, Zelter, was inviolable; his anxiety intense, whenever any of them happened to be ill. For some time his circle had been enlarged by a musician and a philosopher—the former a boy to be delighted in, the latter a youth to be argued with and admired. When Goethe was sad and lonely, sitting in the wintry gloom among his many disillusions, the twelve-year-old Felix Mendelssohn, whom Zelter had discovered, would come rushing up the broad staircase of the Weimar house; and he was never tired of listening to the handsome boy's improvisations on the piano—he would caress and spoil him, calling him his David who could exorcize his bad dreams when he was feeling ill.

Schopenhauer was instantly appreciated by Goethe, although his misanthropically self-conscious nature irritated the older man. Long before Schopenhauer produced his principal work—when he was little more than a boy—Goethe declared that he had a remarkable brain. Later he called him a man misunderstood by most people, but undoubtedly very difficult to know, and he initiated him into chromatics. But when Schopenhauer went farther than he did in his fine *Versuch über das Sehen und die Farben* (*Essay on the Perception of Colour*) Goethe wrote these testy lines:

Trüge gern noch länger des Lebens Bürden,
Wenn Schüler nur nicht gleich Lehrer würden.[2]

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[1] Only one for heart's emotion,
Only one for mind's devotion—
Heart and mind communing so!
Lida! thou the bliss beside me,
William! thou the star to guide me,
All I am to ye I owe.
Days and years must fly, must perish,
Yet those deathless hours I cherish,
Best and rarest life shall know.

[2] This life and its load I could gladlier shoulder,
If pupils would wait to teach till they're older.

From a single sheet of paper we get a wonderful indication of the mutual comprehension between those two minds, for Schopenhauer's whole personality, the dangers threatening him both as a man and a philosopher, are hinted at in the lines written by Goethe in his album:

Willst du dich deines Wertes freuen,
So musst der Welt du Wert verleihen.[1]

And Schopenhauer recognized the truth there was in this, and—despite all his misanthropy—so passionately revered the personality of Goethe that he tore out every other page in his album, but kept that one till he died.

Zuleika's image gleamed afar. Of no other woman did Goethe keep so long such tender, thrilling memories. It was no more than he deserved—for had he not relinquished her that he might not spoil the happiness of his two friends? Now he could write to both; and gifts and remembrances came and went, in pleasant, untroubled, often whimsical fashion.

Marianne and Goethe never saw one another again, and so they could love to the end. As a youth he had always, when he lost his sweetheart, lost her whole household with her, having loved them as one—but now he could keep both with a clear conscience. A box in which she had sent him fruit from her garden was returned with a medallion of his head and these touching verses:

Eine Schachtel Mirabellen
Kam von Süden, zog nach Norden.
Als die Frucht gespeist geworden,
Eilt sich wieder einzustellen
Das Gehäus, woher es kommen.
Bringet keine süssen Früchte,
Bringt vielmehr ein ernst Gesichte,
Das im Weiten und im Fernen
Nimmer will Entbehrung lernen.[2]

[1] To get from your gifts the sum of pleasure,
You must judge the world by a kindlier measure.

[2] Mirabelles, a box of beauties
From the South came northward fleeting.

Do we not feel through the graceful, tender melody a renewal of sadness—a smiling-down of the heavy-laden heart, as in the days of his *Divan*?

Fifty years ago he had sent his picture to Lotte Buff with these lines:

's ist ungefähr das garst'ge Gesicht,
Aber meine Liebe siehst du nicht.[1]

A poet's life had drawn a great sweeping line between these two inscriptions; yet the morose adolescent of Goethe's Werther-days, with his many meretricious flourishes and the sophisticated sprightliness of his rococo-rhymes, seems an older man than the writer of that midget masterpiece, with its German touch of real earnest.

About this time Goethe made a private note: "When a man, as is the way with lovers, has opened his heart and kept nothing to himself, he has given a present which he cannot take back; and it would be impossible to injure or leave defenceless a once-loved being." Here he gives us an outline-sketch of the Goethean Eros—first, wholly feminine in surrender and bestowal; then, wholly masculine in protection and helpfulness. And it was so that Goethe loved throughout his life, wooing and serving, honouring and protecting—never claiming, never contending, never the master.

The literary work of this period was all uninspired—continued, left unfinished, or concluded as it were by chance. He wrote a great deal, but—if we disregard

When we all had finished eating,
Said the box: "And now your duties
Are to pack and send me homeward."
No sweet fruits it now will bring you,
But a grim old face will sing you:
"Far, though far away for ever—
I can do without you never."

[1] A fairly good likeness of ugly me—
Ah, but my love you cannot see.



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isolated lyrics—nothing which can compare with any one of the four principal works in the preceding phase.

Didacticism was the note of all his verse at this time—the rhymed proverb flowered high in these anomalous years, and the epigrammatic form made it easy for him to take up a critical attitude towards the world and the age, their men, and the works to which they gave birth.

One evening he was sitting alone with Ottilie, and telling her "a little tale of the sort I often invent. She wanted to read it, and I had to confess that it existed only in my imagination." But as he dictated it to her, it grew into a short story; and when he put it together with those so rapidly composed twelve years ago in the happy weeks at Carlsbad, lo and behold! there resulted, in the most natural way in the world, the scheme for the first *Wanderjahre*—published by the author of seventy-two after he had brought Wilhelm Meister's *Lehrjahre* to a conclusion. He might have given those *Lehrjahre* the sub-title of "The Years of Desire"; and he now did give these *Wanderjahre* the profoundly expressive description of "Years of Resignation."

There is no comparison between the depth of wisdom in this volume and that of the *Lehrjahre*; but the way the episodes were strung together was too casual for it to equal the former work in construction. Besides, the idiosyncrasies of his older years enter even into the merest technicalities of this work—the circumstantial way in which letters and manuscripts are produced and exchanged by the characters corresponds to the pedantic tabulations, the cut-and-dried diaries, of the ageing Goethe.

Even the pieces which he frankly described as episodes "from my life"—the first half of the *Italienische Reise* and the *Campagne in Frankreich*—often lack the ease, and always the breadth, which had made the earlier portion of his biography so brilliant. This does not result from the period therein depicted, but from the period at which the work was done. The rejuvenated man of sixty had not lost his power of describing his youth; the stoical septua-

genarian had to fasten on the Italian and Field-service documents if he was to recover anything at all of the earlier effect.

The impression we derive from the "Day- and Year-Books," in which he annotates the records of the last thirty years, is that of a positively frost-bound senility. Precious self-revealings and maxims are obscured by masses of nebulous tediousness, almost all his spiritual experiences are ignored, his works are barely alluded to; while on the other hand every prince and duke who happened to cross Goethe's path in this year or that is scrupulously mentioned. Of Christiane's death, or Herder's, or of the time when the Duke dismissed him from the Theatre, there is not a word to be found. But the Duchess's broken arm is bewailed.

Nowhere is the "polar landscape," which to many Germans even then stood for an image of the veteran Goethe's inmost self, more manifest than in these official annals, which yet have almost nothing to say about the soul of the old man. While his mental realm was extending beyond all compass (though the spiritual powers were inadequate to supply centrifugal energy) Goethe despatched to his outermost frontiers mail-clad legions who—dumb, marble-cold—should watch lest any unauthorized foot profane the sacred soil.

And yet, all unafraid, self-confident, he could sum up his youth and his old age—sum up the whole mysterious problem of his being—in these light-hearted lines:

Wüsste kaum genau zu sagen,
Ob ich es noch selber bin.
Will man mich im Ganzen fragen,
Sag' ich: Ja, so ist mein Sinn.
Ist ein Sinn, der uns zuweilen
Bald geängstet, bald ergetzt,
Und in so viel tausend Zeilen
Wieder sich ins Gleiche setzt.[1]

[1] Never did I know distinctly
What "myself" might mean for me.

At this time Goethe made the oddest attempts at sentimentalizing his youth for his private eye, though he was giving such a frigid account of it to the public. For a philologist he wrote a bowdlerized commentary on the "abstruse" poem *Harzreise im Winter*. Yet at the same time he was recalling those so-called "mad days" with great pleasure, at his dinner-table.

But every illusion was pricked like a bubble when one thing happened—when any of these sublimated figures of his youth ventured to appear as its own ghost in Weimar. More than forty years after the final adieu in Wetzlar, the widowed *Hofrätin* Kestner, with a tall daughter from Hanover, arrived at Weimar—*una poenitentium*, once known as Lotte. Goethe set up an attack of gout, excused himself, sent them tickets for his box, put off this (to him) extremely unwelcome meeting as long as he could. Ultimately Lotte made "the acquaintance of a stranger—an old man whom I should never have known to be Goethe; and even so, he made anything but an agreeable impression on me." And yet, at bottom, there was nothing worse between these two old people than a book which had carried her name round the civilized globe.

When the creative impulse slumbered in Goethe, the critical always awoke. At this time he established, in the journal *Kunst und Alterthum*, a sort of veterans' home for aesthetic opinions; for the six volumes published by him in the last sixteen years of his life are for the most part of his own authorship. Upon contemporary literature in almost every European country, upon plastic art in almost every age, upon coins and gems, upon songs, speeches, biographies, upon natural rights and policies, he there

> On the whole? I say succinctly:
> "This is what my mind must be"—
> For there is a mind that thinking
> Tortures now, and now delights;
> This, a thousand verses linking,
> Somehow sets itself to rights.

pontificated—ostensibly, as a rule, reviewing new works of art, but always so prone to take a general view that in the event these volumes comprise the veteran Goethe's complete aesthetic.

With renewed enthusiasm and longing the old man's saddened contemplation fastened on antiquity; and nothing in this decade excited him to such a pitch as the rumours of the Parthenon Frieze—the suspense, and then the pictures of it, as brought to London by Lord Elgin.

And when the sketches of the recently discovered frieze of Phigaleia reached him in his pine-top eyrie, Goethe wrote: " It is abysmal in its profundity and power—one feels two thousand years younger and better the moment one looks at it."

Ease and blitheness in art—these alone he desired, exacted. During this difficult self-sacrificing era of the spirit it was by these that he judged all achievement; and Mozart's and Raphael's names fell constantly from the old man's lips.

It is not until now that his letters and conversations can be reckoned among his important works—from their number and interest, but chiefly as the ground-plan for a critical judgment which (in most instances with a view to later publication) was now used to elaborate his maxims and essays. Goethe, in his old age, dictated something like three hundred letters every year, of which more than a quarter treat of outstanding events, persons, or tendencies. Many he would read to his friends before despatching them. In his business-letters, especially those to the Duke, he used a system of continuously numbered sections; but as private matters frequently broke in, there would crop up, say in No. 1, an opinion on a new book of memoirs; and then: " *No.* 2. A passion-flower stands on my desk. . . . I take great delight in it, though it distracts my thoughts. *No.* 3. And I take the liberty of enclosing a message from Frege " (the banking-house).

For the signature to his intimate letters the septuagenarian adopted a couple of formulas which are all the

more touching when they are irrelevant to the actual contents. "And so ever and for ever yours"—that was his chosen conclusion to his friends, and it always has the effect of a lifelong farewell. But the other phrase, with which in his youth he had always, and even in his middle age sometimes, conjured his friends, was scarcely ever used—it does occur to Knebel, but even to him only once or twice: "Love me." The stoic said that no more to anyone. Now that he could love more universally, he did not need to beg for any individual's love.

The veteran Goethe expanded most in conversation. As everyone hears what he carries in his heart, any isolated account may easily distort the image of Goethe; and what friends profess to have heard him say must be reckoned by psychological weights and measures. It is only the sum of all his conversations which can give us the image of him—especially that which the six most renowned interlocutors have drawn for us.

Of these the Councillor of Legation, Falk, seems the most suspect because of his remarkable intelligence, which is prone to mingle Goethe's ideas with his own. Boisserée and the Swiss Soret are faithful and perceptive, but their opportunities were few. Eckermann is usually true to fact because so unimaginative, but his long-winded answers are tiresome. His renown really derives from the steadiness of their intercourse, and the confirmation afterwards given by Goethe to a part—not all!—of his accounts. But nearly all his narratives depart from the living word, and are couched in a pseudo-classic style which spoils the effect; while the third section, published by Eckermann sixteen years after Goethe's death, and really taken over from Soret's French notes, is stylized beyond recognition, and not seldom demonstrably erroneous.

Of his occasional visitors the only ones who have given really illuminating accounts of conversations with Goethe are Riemer, a highly cultivated psychologist, and Müller, an equally cultivated man of the world. They alone, in their Memoirs, give us a comprehensive portrait of the old

Goethe. Doubtless Meyer and Zelter were the friends who got the most personal confidences by word of mouth, because Goethe knew that they would for ever hold their peace.

At this period Goethe was *Praeceptor Germaniae*. He had lived to be an historical figure; and having seen his whole experience in an historical sense, he was not too modest to make arrangements for posterity. "Take your time over the study of my posthumous works," he wrote to Schubarth, his commentator. "This I advise, not because the works are by me, but because in them you have a complex of emotions, thoughts, experiences, and results which all bear upon one another."

A young poet could often charm the veteran by an expression—a stanza—a look—a gesture. He sometimes commended the verses of modest, well-bred young people whose efforts have passed into complete oblivion; but when Heinrich Heine, in his student-days, came and confided to Goethe that he was writing a *Faust*, it must be confessed that Goethe dismissed him with the remark: "Have you no other business in Weimar?" He detested writing to programme, in every sense.

Generally speaking, he shunned more carefully even than before the vast, chaotic type of talent, preferring graceful Goethe-Epigoni—not because they imitated him, but because they were more unlike himself in his youth than the chaotic were. And yet, all of a sudden, he would say something of this sort: "Higher aspirations are by their very nature more admirable, even when unfulfilled, than lower ones perfectly carried out."

To foreign poets Goethe was much more indulgent—he would even permit them to be Romantics. But in Germany at that time the Romantic school was becoming more and more dangerously allied with Catholicism and the Reaction, while abroad it was otherwise, and so did not trouble him. He called attention in several articles to Serbian songs and Russian poems; he praised and translated Manzoni; Greek students sent him their

modern heroic ballads, and while he was advertising these for them, they were translating his *Iphigenie* into Neo-Greek.

Foreign renown, which was only now really beginning, was the weapon he most coveted against his adversaries. From essays upon his work, from translations and books about him, appearing in Paris and London, he would make extracts with his own hand, "to show my friends that it is not (as some would fain persuade the nation) the indiscriminating applause of the mere mob." And indeed this foreign fame did seem to make his position stronger in Germany. True, certain of his works still failed to make their effect. The *Divan* was held to be untimely and obscure; and Goethe was continually, as of old, annoyed by the appreciation of early works at the expense of new ones. And if anything of his did happen to be acted, it was usually by amateurs. When Prince Radziwill, in the little Monbijou Palace at Berlin, experimented with some scenes from Goethe's *Faust*, the Earth-Spirit wore a mask representing—Goethe!

Nevertheless Goethe, whose fame had revived of recent years, was gradually becoming the National Sage. "Strange, but quite natural, that human beings should ponder on our last days as if they were Sibylline books, though they looked with such insulting composure on the fireworks of the earlier volumes." It was not until now that Goethe's personality captured the imagination of his fellow-countrymen. The queerest questions came to him from afar; strangers would consult him about their marriages, their business-affairs, so that he could smilingly call himself a father-confessor. Princes and pundits, travellers and dilettanti, sent him stones and coins; there came amethysts from Kamstchatka (and it was like being transplanted again to the regions of the *Divan*); while some antique church-plate was actually presented to the pagan by a collector.

In Frankfurt they took heart of grace, and (after Goethe had been suffered to renounce his rights as a citizen, instead of being presented with the freedom of the city) made up their minds to erect a memorial to the septuagenarian. He was personally consulted by the committee; but it was not until an artist so renowned as Rauch came to model him for a statue that he changed his attitude, declaring that he had done with false modesty, and was ready to co-operate as if someone else were concerned. He began by remarking that the site chosen for the memorial was too remote and too damp, and suggested instead the vestibule of the library, where other men might be placed beside him. Finally he even wrote an article: "Considerations on a memorial to be erected to the Poet Goethe in his native town"; and this article is yet another symbol —the strangest alloy of pedantry and naïveté.

More the Sage than the Poet, more the busy man than the creative artist—so Goethe appeared at the beginning of his seventies; and he was again devoting the best part of his energies to natural science, from which the poetic phase of the preceding period had caused him almost entirely to abstain. Nowhere does the old man's eager elasticity take so splendid and so youthful a stride as in this era; for now begins the last of his metamorphoses, the gradual rending of the veil behind which he had lived his inward life and accumulated all his creative forces. Individuality was now merged in the Universal.

The grand pitched battle between poet and thinker which had convulsed his writings, his thought, his existence, for decades—that symbol, as it were, of his dual nature—was now at last to be fought to a finish, and Goethe was conscious that the decisive moment was approaching. "My whole attention," he wrote at seventy-three, "is now fixed upon the question of how far special and individual tendencies divorce the perceptions of the observer from the logical processes of the thinker—and especially those which operate in the same sphere, and attract and repel one another as living beings do." Once

more he was projecting that inner conflict from out his breast into the universe, that so he might more clearly apprehend it.

Like Leonardo, Goethe in his old age never abandoned his reverent investigation of the particular for contemplation of the universal. Like Leonardo, he plodded on patiently at the details, faithful to the lowly endeavour of an entire lifetime, for whether it was a stone or a colour, a plant or a cloud:

Und es ist das Ewig Eine,
Das sich vielfach offenbart:
Klein das Grosse, gross das Kleine,
Alles nach der eignen Art;
Immer wechselnd, fest sich haltend,
Nah und fern, und fern und nah,
So gestaltend, umgestaltend—
Zum Erstaunen bin ich da.[1]

This was a sage who never wearied of testing his underlying pantheistic emotion by ever-renewed observation; but now he was not urged by materialistic scepticism—rather by a sort of confident curiosity, very much as a lover, without doubting her, will test his beloved that he may be the more fondly convinced of his mastery. Nurtured by his father on world-history, challenged by talent and energy to a life-time of many-sidedness, Goethe was now beginning—he whose influence as veteran, teacher, educationist, was so far-flung—to preach one-sidedness.

" Many-sidedness really does no more than prepare the element in which one-sidedness, having sufficient margin, can effectually operate. . . . To confine one's-self to one

[1] One, the deathless, manifested
In the Many—this I see;
Small is great, great small, attested
Each by its own entity.
Ever-changing, never ranging,
Near and far, and far and near,
Forming now, and now transforming—
I to gaze in awe am here.

craft—that is the best way. For a limited brain, a craft is at worst a craft; for a better one, it is an art; and the best of all, in doing one thing, does everything—or, to be less paradoxical, in the one thing done well it sees a symbol of everything that is well done."

He himself, who was renouncing so much both in life and poetry, entered on new realms of thought with fearless confidence, and did not abate his investigations into the old ones. A journal of his own, " in the service of science as a whole, especially morphology," which he ran alongside *Kunst und Alterthum*, was henceforth the channel for Goethe's scientific writings on physics, botany, zoology, geology, mineralogy, meteorology.

A new discovery in chromatics, which led to definite results, he first announced to his son in words recalling those wherewith he had flung the new-found intermaxillary bone in Herder's face. Thirty years lay between, but from the tone one would not imagine them to be more than ten at most: " . . . that the moral dispensation of the universe . . . has graciously suffered me, as I once hoped but scarcely expected, to solve the enigma of entoptic colours which has so long occupied me, and for the last ten weeks has utterly distraught and befooled me, but has at last been got the better of. . . . It was not like holding an eel by the tail, but a dragon by the throat—and I throttled him so unrelentingly that he had to give in."

When a disciple of Hegel's founded a special chair for Goethe's Theory of Colour in his Berlin Academy, he told several friends of it—much uplifted, and hoping " after thirty years of non-recognition, to win a decisive and dangerous game at last, supported by young eager intelligences."

New geological studies confirmed or refuted the old. He had once thought of bringing chromatics into a novel; and now, in his *Wanderjahre*, he created a geologist-hero. Montan's emotions are those of Goethe—and so much so that to-day it is not Goethe himself but Montan whom we think to see, when Goethe suddenly made his carriage

stop, bent over an ordinary stone in the road, and (by his companion's account) stood gazing and tapping, and saying softly to himself: " Well, and how do *you* come here?"

Following the example of an Englishman, he now took up the new science of meteorology; and was not deterred by the prospect of beginning in a small way what could prove fruitful only in a large one. From one day to another he made himself a " Cloud-Calendar," classified cloud-forms, arranged that the warders of towers all over the country should keep a look-out for meteors, published tabular forms for officials and amateurs, and was incessant both in private and public appeals for observation of the skies.

With Goethe's symbolic apprehension of the visible world, it is not surprising that now, towards the end, scientific research, poetry, and faith should have imperceptibly merged in one another; and that—even by posterity, considering him—they are to be divided only by the most heedful of hands. How true it is that poetry is the connecting-link between science and faith, Goethe showed unmistakably when, from this time forward, he took to publishing his profoundest poems in the morphological magazine—so that the maturest productions of the septuagenarian had to be sought for between the covers of his scientific journal.

Im Namen dessen, der sich selbst erschuf,
Von Ewigkeit in schaffenden Beruf. . . .
So weit das Ohr, so weit das Auge reicht,
Du findest nur Bekanntes, der ihn gleicht,
Und deines Geistes höchster Feuerflug
Hat schon am Gleichniss, hat am Bild genug.[1]

[1] Now in his Name, who did himself create,
And evermore doth form, doth generate. . . .

Side by side with the manful composure of such a mood existed all the more feminine instincts. Imagination and faith survived to fight the old battle with the scientist's tenacity; and though Goethe fulminated against the telescopes that bring us too close to the arcana of Nature, he could laugh to scorn those who parroted Haller.

"Ins Innre der Natur"
—O, du Philister!—
"Dringt kein erschaffner Geist!"—
Mich und Geschwister
Mögt ihr an solches Wort
Nur nicht erinnern!
Wir denken: Ort für Ort
Sind wir im Innern. . . .
Natur hat weder Kern noch Schale,
Alles ist sie mit einem Male.[1]

And under the stern superscription—"Ultimatum"—he soon afterwards reiterated almost word for word the last two lines.

When we touch upon the conflict between sensuous perception and dream, we have penetrated to the core of Goethe's religion. Never is it more difficult of apprehension than in this penultimate period, wherein a complex of spiritual tendencies, impulses, and counter-impulses threatened to make even his political attitude uncertain.

Far as the ear, the eye, can hear or see,
Only the Known will make him known to thee;
Thine ardent spirit, though it scale the sky,
Symbol and image still must satisfy.

[1] "To Nature's inmost core"
—O Philistine!—
"No mortal mind may pierce"—
For me and mine
That phrase you fondly air
Is not so telling!
We hold: Or here or there
In her we're dwelling. . . .
Not husk is Nature, no! nor kernel;
She is the All-in-One Eternal.

Here as there we shall find our way only by an undeviating gaze into the heart of his being.

Kindliness is not religion—it is a trait of character; and indeed Goethe at his kindliest is Goethe at his most controversial, in the doctrinal sense. If gratitude and worship, sisters to kindliness, always filled Goethe's heart in an unbroken continuity, it is equally true that he was much more actively benevolent at some periods than he was at others. Work had never made him hard, if misanthropy had made him cautious; and now stoicism, unsullied by any hatreds, removed all inhibitions of that kind. No one knows how much Goethe, for all his pedantry and aloofness, did for others. Vehemently opposed though he was to the larger issue of universal suffrage, his servants and subordinates were personally devoted to him; and if as an official he figured as an enemy of the people, in private life he was a spiritual healer and counsellor, the advocate and helper of the oppressed and of his friends. A hundred letters now supply a connected narrative of what then was known only to individual persons.

In that sense the veteran Goethe was a Christian; but in that sense, so was the young Goethe. And yet he was a Pagan, and remained one to the end. For everything which might be adduced as a symptom of change of heart in his advanced age, turns out to be no more than a social or aesthetic, an historical or academic, recognition.

Both Churches now made tentative approaches to the old heretic, for it was felt that such a soul was worth saving. Goethe first learnt to appreciate Catholic teaching at the age of seventy. Closer intercourse with Austrian aristocrats, issuing from the hands of the Jesuits as accomplished men of the world, and with Bohemian prelates, the head-masters of admirable schools, gave Goethe—who had seen little of Catholicism in Germany, and in Italy only its decadence—a clearer idea and a more logical comprehension of that mighty influence; and when in Carlsbad he was induced to hear some missionary

sermons, he confessed that he could find " not a trace of monkishness or sacerdotalism."

Yet even when looking at the pictures of Martin Schön, whom he loved, he exclaimed regretfully: " If only the r··cal had stuck to the Magi instead of going in for that detestable Passion! . . . Eleven hundred virgins—at any rate that's an element in which an artist can let himself go, and be as happy in the odour of sanctity as any gay dog of them all!" When he recommended, as a subject for painting, the Lord walking on the sea with Peter sinking beside Him, he in the same breath suggested Thisbe, eavesdropping at the hole in the wall!

" No doubt," he wrote in ecstasy about a Danaë by a contemporary of Veronese, " a thing like that seems foolishness to our experts, who so revel in Holy Families." He was against the idea of summoning Schelling to Jena (though he always spoke admiringly of his teaching and character) simply because Schelling had embraced the Catholic faith, and Goethe did not desire " to see that old obsolete stuff re-introduced in a new mystical-pantheistic, abstrusely philosophical, though (tell it not in Gath!) by no means despicable form."

A single incident, contradicted by a hundred others, seems at this time to indicate a more amicable attitude. When Chancellor von Müller was reading aloud to Goethe, then seventy-two, a passage upon the contrast between revealed and natural religion, Goethe vehemently exclaimed: " Damned rhetorical flourishes, that's what they are—putting a false gloss on everything. What has made the Christian religion prevail over all others, how has it become mistress of the Universe—and deservedly so—if not because it has incorporated the truths of natural religion in its teaching? And then what becomes of your ' contrast '? The frontiers are conterminous, I tell you!"

He found that certain secular tenets of the Protestants were congenial, and his praise of the Reformation as a liberating force is a plain proof that he was very far from

conversion in any form—for as a born Protestant, and an artist and mystic into the bargain, he could scarcely, after fifty years of paganism, have chosen any other faith than Catholicism. When the tercentenary of the Wittenberg Thesis was approaching, Goethe spoke up for Luther, and said that the two Testaments stood respectively for Law and Gospel—for Necessity and Freedom. This he thought of making the theme of an oratorio—and no one can read his synopsis without a fervent regret that it never came to the birth. He intended to begin with the thunder of Sinai, with "Thou shalt!"—and end with the Resurrection of Christ, with "Thou wilt!"

Nothing came of it; "for, between ourselves, the only interesting thing in the whole business is the character of Luther, and it is also the only thing that really impresses the big public. All the rest is the same sort of wish-wash that descends upon us every day of the year. . . . And so you will come to see that the greatness and glory of our forefathers is to be found, in all its pristine beauty, when they speak for themselves; for what God says in the Koran is true: 'We have sent no nation a prophet who does not speak directly to the people!' Thus, the Germans were no nation until the coming of Luther."

Among the voices which whispered to Goethe, thinking to save that soul while yet there was time, one spoke in accents which he had not heard for nearly fifty years. Augusta Countess Stolberg had certainly—though she had never seen him—not forgotten Goethe. She was an earnest member of the Moravian Brotherhood; and she devoted nine days to the composition of the beautiful letter she wrote him.

He seems to have answered immediately; and nowhere in the whole range of his confessions (and scarcely from any other human spirit) shall we find such noble acquiescence as in this letter from Goethe at seventy-three, to a woman once worshipped from afar, a saintly nature,

elected to uplift him. Dignity and humility, complete spiritual immunity, lent him these gentle chastened accents of assent and dissent, with their silver music:

" . . . All my life long I have been sincere with myself and others, and through all my striving here below have ever looked above—as you and yours have looked. Let us then work together while yet it is day. . . . And so we need take no thought for the morrow! In our Father's House are many mansions, and he who has given us so fair an abiding-place here will assuredly care for us in the Beyond. It may be that what we failed in here we shall accomplish there—to know one another face-to-face and love one another still more truly. Remember me in tranquil trust and faith."

With these exquisite words Goethe closed the door and withdrew into his own kingdom; and the sexagenarian poet who had said he was a polytheistic artist and a pantheistic scientist, shows at seventy as a scientist oblivious of his Muse, a Pantheist through and through —as those didactic poems, heralding his Nature-studies, testify.

Yet Goethe now drew the line more stringently than he had done of late; and, no doubt fully conscious of the supremacy to which the best German minds were beginning to look up, he refused to be identified with any sect or secret society. " When my eyes shut and my brain loses control, it is extremely refreshing to fall into natural slumber. When I reflect that I was a friend of Lavater's, who attached religious value to this miracle of Nature, it often seems to me very strange that I was not led away, but behaved exactly like a man walking beside a river without the least desire to bathe in it. This shows that it must have been natural to me, else it would not have lasted into my old age. . . . [But if] the inexpressible ever did contrive to get expressed, we should not take it so literally as all that. And so the poet, if he wants to be modest, must recognize that his state is neither more nor less than a waking sleep; and indeed I do not deny that a very great

many things have come to my knowledge when I was in a dream-like condition."

Is not the boundary-line perceptible—so fine, yet so decisive? This believer shrinks from all dogma; this scientist, whose mysticism embraces the All because its source is the All, will be seduced by none into betraying his nature by acceptance of the formulas of transcendentalism. At no price will Goethe, in his old age, surrender his eye and his reason, which have revealed to him the universe. Goethe gave his fellow-creatures all that his vision gave him—but they were not suffered to urge upon him as a principle what he possessed as a divination.

True, he could still be superstitious—as in the preceding decade, when he traced a decided connection between the news of Napoleon's escape from Elba and a Napoleon-ring which on that very day, after a prolonged search, was restored to him. Nevertheless, the words spoken in trance by an Indian conjurer (whose tricks had delighted him) he tested afterwards with an Orientalist, sceptical as a criminal judge. For it was to himself as well as others that he uttered the pregnant warning:

> Suche nicht verborgne Weihe!
> Unterm Schleier lass das Starre!
> Willst du leben, guter Narre,
> Sieh nur hinter dich ins Freie![1]

No mistaking there the line he means to draw against the " fools that rush in "—for what had been revealed to him, Goethe the Poet revealed to none but them who had wisdom.

As poet, indeed, he did now create the most mystic of all his characters; and suffered her, in her supremacy, to meet his wandering Wilhelm—for Makarie is an

[1] Break not into holy places!
Shroud the corpse, and leave it lying!
Worthy fool, wouldst live? No prying—
Vast enough the rearward spaces.

astrologer; and "it would seem that to Makarie the correspondencies of our solar system were from the beginning so clear as really to seem part of her being—first in repose, then gradually evolving, and finally revealed with such vividity as she could not mistake. At first these visions were a source of distress to her, then she began to take pleasure in them, and the fascination grew with every year."

When the "magic manuscript of a family of alchemists" had to be sold to relieve their poverty, Goethe procured it at a high price for the Library, and wrote under the report for his colleagues—who might have derided or blamed him—the singular words: "Consideration! And sympathy!" Of Giordano Bruno, the Orphic Mystics and their commentaries, he made a prolonged study at this time.

And so on a day in October, all the elements—scientific research and prescient perception, emotional and intellectual adventures—joined forces for a poem. In its strophes genius is ever present, together with all the aspirations, experiences, misgivings, engendered in the twilight of a mystical yet discerning and vigilant faith. They were written in a cold glow of spiritual exaltation; and (as Goethe afterwards acknowledged) embody "perhaps the most abstruse conceptions of modern philosophy. I am inclined to believe that poetic art is possibly the only instrument which can at all suffice to express such mysteries; they would have an absurd effect in prose, because they can only be conveyed by contradictions which the reason is not prepared to accept. Unfortunately, with things of this kind, the will avails little for consummation—they are gifts and graces of the moment, which come unbidden, casually as it were, after long gestation."

Aboriginal incantations, spoken over the destinies of mortals: so he called these runes, which were collectively entitled *Orphic Mysteries*, and calmly printed as introit to a new morphological essay—strophes which are at once a profounder and a clearer paraphrase of the veteran

Goethe's faith than any other confession, as that rhapsody on Nature had been for his middle period.

When Goethe wrote them down he can scarce, for all his prescience, have been conscious that a few years were to bring him yet another gift and yet another ordeal, which should once more embroil the five primeval forces of his Orphic poem. In his seventy-fourth year Goethe was brought into contact with a young man, and a girl, who perplexed him, attracted him, and were swiftly swept away from him.

While the man of seventy, busy and uncomplaining, was working, experimenting, writing in his restricted sphere of Weimar and Jena, the thirty-yeared Lord Byron was pursuing his headlong career. For the first time in many years, old Europe was regaled by the spectacle of an artist who made his life more famous than his work, although the work was no less a product of genius than the life was. That wild-fire existence consumed itself in one quick flare of daemonic energy, sensuality, and melancholy; and was a literal, if grossly exaggerated, embodiment of the lines in which Goethe—at the very time of Byron's birth—had unbosomed himself during the Roman dream, through the lips of Faust:

> So tauml' ich von Begierde zu Genuss,
> Und im Genuss verschmacht' ich nach Begierde.[1]

Surpassing genius destroyed itself in Byron, because it sought adequate material in vain—for even his poetry was no more than a cry. "Napoleon robbed me of the first place." So Byron, whose star rose with Napoleon's, complained; and arrogant as it may seem, there is a profound truth in the saying. A Peer of England, beautiful, gallant, highly cultivated; but, as the result of an unhappy mar-

[1] So am I tossed between desire and bliss,
And, having bliss, am with desire consumed.

riage, ostracized, driven from his native land, an outlaw from the society to which he belonged by right of birth, which he regarded as the best in the world, which devoured his verse and held him up to contumely—such was the Byron who for wellnigh a decade racketed about Southern Europe, the lover of one of the loveliest and proudest of Italian women, the friend of the most distinguished intellects, the first artists, of his time; world-renowned for the passion and gloom of the poems which were always so much the same; for ever craving the fiery deed, the gallant action, all energy and all indolence—the perfect type of the uncontrolled daemonic being, who puts no rein upon himself, and least of all the rein of his genius. In sober truth, this is the formula for Byron's life—the daemon, destroying genius.

At every point the life of Goethe was the antithesis of this. His daemon overcome by genius, his whole existence a battle with himself; the world shut out by walls of such artful construction; a clutch at every form of activity for the saving of his soul; deliberate concentration on a narrow sphere; the inward self the focus of all endeavour —and thus, the soaring sweeping flight of eighty years of life slowly bearing him, in his supreme fortitude, to the peak which seems to touch the stars. No competitor had been able to disconcert Goethe; for they who took a different line from his were less than he, or else came quickly to the ground.

Not until he was nearly seventy, then, did Goethe meet his match in a poet. How his heart must have burnt within him as he saw Byron rush uncontrollably on to spheres in which he himself had never been at home, to phases which he had always shunned—and yet saw, too, a poet's life enact itself in the grand style which, whatever Goethe might tell himself, had its own way of defeating the world. It is the ebb-tide gaze of the old man in his resignation at the young man in his wilfulness; it is some abysmal resentment, never even to himself confessed; it is the reflective envy of a tragic victor for the more

dazzling Defeated—this it is which explains Goethe's enthusiasm for Byron.

From the first the personality fascinated him more than the poetry. It was only gradually that he got used to Byron's poetry, "which at first repelled me by its hypochondriacal passion and violent self-hatred; and, though I wished for closer contact with his great personality, threatened to make his Muse entirely alien to me." What was it that made this impression on Goethe, who was very chary of attributing "a great personality" to his contemporaries, and—take it for all in all—really confessed it in none but Napoleon? He never saw or spoke to Byron, so that the supreme fascination passed him by; Byron had never *done* anything to speak of, and his writing began by irritating rather than convincing Goethe.

It was nothing but the unmistakable genius speaking from Byron which attracted him; the apocalyptic frenzy of the man, depicted in a hundred anecdotes, the pace, the furore, the passion, the *Weltschmerz*—of yore, in the young Goethe, no less fierce, no less convulsive. The dimensions of this career, the journeyings, the love-affairs, everything by which the English poet, with neither army nor throne, had worn himself out—these were the influences; for if he contrasted their youthful periods, Goethe fell short of Byron only in the limitations of his home-life, in the dullness of his career as a Frankfurt advocate, in the mereness of society as represented by a banker's house at Offenbach, in the lesser proportions of the Parliament House at Weimar, and of the marriage he made there, and of the local paper he conducted there.

In cosmic emotion (as the retrospective Goethe was well aware) this young foreign poet was by no means superior to himself in his youth; but with his title, his means, his women, horses, travels—with the whole anarchic glamour of his poetic career, he cast a spell over Goethe. For the career, with its non-moral, its challenging note, was Napoleonic; and Napoleon's tyrannous course, like Byron's, overwhelmed all Goethe's fundamental principles of law

and order. Here as there it was—over and above the success—the mighty personality, of which Goethe throughout a lifetime had felt the absence in his contemporaries, and which he knew to be chiefly of inward growth in himself. A like poetic genius, born as a German bourgeois, would have left the veteran Goethe cold. But the complete, undeniable unity of Byron's life and poetry made him able to admire both Byronic manifestations, because his own endeavour had been to see life and poetry as mutually stimulating forces.

Yet at the same time Goethe's vision could discern, in the heart of Byron, all the blindnesses, the exaggerations and untruths, the self-conscious sentimentality. He called his a talent born to torment itself, saying that his "mannerisms," both in life and poetry, made it well-nigh impossible to judge him aright. "He has often enough confessed what it is that torments him . . . and scarcely one human being has any sympathy with the unbearable pain over which he broods so incessantly, and which he is for ever flinging in the face of the world." Even about Byron's *Manfred*, which was a deliberate variation on *Faust*, Goethe (amid the general admiration) went so far as to say in his review, "that the lurid glow of an infinite, grandiose despair becomes fatiguing at long last." Indeed he even said, so late as this, that in six months he would perhaps declare against Byron!

Instead, his expert critical judgment suddenly veered round to passionate enthusiasm; and as Byron's later works can scarcely be considered notably superior to his earlier ones, it must have been his conduct which brought this about. As his fantastic manner of life became more and more talked of, Goethe found it easier to understand and admire the poems it inspired—particularly as Byron now approached him with a dedication. Never had such a step affected Goethe's judgment—and scarcely even the manner of his acknowledgment. But now he was most marvellously uplifted by the young Lord's veneration. In a published essay he had already told the romantic anec-

dote about the murder of a Turkish mistress of Byron's, and attributed his persecution-mania to that incident; and generally speaking he had adopted—in defiance of his wonted scepticism—the tone of the legend woven through all Europe round that frenzied career. "What a wounded heart must be that of the poet," exclaimed Goethe, referring in this essay to the history of a Spartan king, "who chooses this story out of all antiquity, to identify himself with so tragic a fate!" Then he spoke of "that singular career, that singular poetry, in all their eccentricity, and made the more arresting because their parallel will not be found in any bygone century, so that we have no material of any kind by which to measure them." Finally he makes use of such superlatives as had never before appeared in any criticism from Goethe's hand; and in reviewing *Cain* and *Don Juan* writes of a "work of boundless genius," of "a revelation not before communicated to man," of "a poet without his equal"; and declares that he "would not have Byron other than he is."

In private he spoke more robustly, saying that *Don Juan* was wilder and more grandiose than any of the former works, but wearisome by reason of the perpetual repetitions. If Byron had been a painter, he added—and we perceive that he appreciated this poet's knowledge of society—his pictures would have fetched their weight in gold.

So that when Byron wanted to dedicate his *Sardanapalus* to Goethe, and caused this to be conveyed to him, and when the dedication somehow failed to come off—Goethe, to whom Byron's written words had by some curious chance been lent, had them lithographed, and sent copies to his friends. When the succeeding work (*Werner*) really was dedicated to him, he declared that he felt it almost beyond his power to acknowledge it adequately!

Then Byron himself afforded a better reason than heretofore for admiration of his personal life. He sailed for Greece, equipped with insufficient funds and few followers, but with any amount of romantic feeling and

craving for action, there to support the Greeks in their revolt against the Turks. Byron was nearly thirty-six; Goethe was twice that age. He beheld a young chivalrous nobleman, who loved to trace descent from Thor, the god of thunder, preparing himself to fight for Hellenic freedom—beheld a poet endangering his life out of passion for an ideal; he felt that the action was in the grand style, and that his own life had never known such a moment. And from that day Goethe, who had lately heard of his Emperor's death, was in possession of a new hero. Did he not know that it was more out of fatigue and satiety, out of a craving for the sensational, out of a premonition that the Fifth Act of his life lay here—in a word, that it was wholly as an adventurer that the poet decided on this plan, with the idea of which he had toyed two years before, suggesting it to a friend as an excuse for an interesting journey? Even if Goethe could have divined all this, he would not have let himself divine it.

Then there came from Genoa, where Byron was waiting to embark, a charming note in which he introduced the bearer, who was a friend of his, to Goethe. And the old poet's every pulse thrilled for the young hero; he hastened to send him a message before he sailed, and (while ostensibly wishing him God-speed) tenderly summed up his whole fate, his whole nature, and all his genius and folly, in a few lines—closing with this profoundest of a poet's well-learnt lessons, directed straight at Byron's quivering heart:

> Wohl sei ihm doch, wenn er sich selbst empfindet!
> Er wage selbst sich hochbeglückt zu nennen,
> Wenn Musenkraft die Schmerzen überwindet,
> Und wie ich ihn erkannt, mög' er sich kennen![1]

At the last moment Goethe's lines reached Byron. Would he answer in verse, or in more precious prose?

[1] Though of himself be all his contemplation,
Blessings attend him! He whose Muse can quell
His earthly pain has godlike compensation—
I know him; be it his to know as well!

A formal note, hastily scribbled, speaking only of himself and his setting-out, thanked Goethe for " your verses sent me by my friend "; and there was only one sentence which gave a glimpse of his perplexed, excited state. Goethe's words (he said) he would take for a good omen, and hoped on his return to visit him.

But Goethe, stirred by the thought that a poet had no time for writing because he was on the eve of sailing for Hellas, was moved by the letter, declared himself to be vastly honoured by Byron's having found time " to answer with a whole page of writing, which the recipient has preserved among his most precious papers, as the proudest testimony to the connection existing between us." Byron sailed; and for something like a year very little was heard of him.

In a letter referring to Byron Goethe spoke of old age—saying that it asked for documentary evidence, which for younger people was too much of a tax. This partly explains the puzzle. It was not his years alone which made Goethe's attitude what it was, but they had something to do with it. But above all, it may have been a premonition that this figure of Byron might turn out to be material for poetry. How could the equanimity of old age have been subject to such overmastering excitement, unless it were engendered by some creative purpose? We shall soon see.

That agitated letter of Byron's which Goethe, as though presciently, treasured as a *Moriturus*, reached him on a summer-day in Marienbad, when he himself was stirred to the depths. He had fallen in love, and she whom he loved was nineteen years old. Goethe was seventy-four.

This was the third year that he had stayed, as a paying guest, with the family of a Frau von Levetzow to whom he had made love in Carlsbad fifteen years before, and whom he had compared to Pandora. Her daughters were now grown up; in his first summer with them Ulrike, the eldest, had been seventeen; and he had played

and laughed with her, and given her a few lessons. When he had presented her with the new volume of *Wilhelm Meister*, and she had asked him about the earlier ones, he had sat himself down beside her in the garden and told her the story of Wilhelm's *Lehrjahre*, for she was not then permitted to read that book.

It was in the second summer that he fell in love with her. " I am in a bad way," he had exclaimed a few weeks before in Weimar, " for I am not in love, and no one is in love with me, either." This was the first word of the kind that had fallen from Goethe's lips since his parting with Zuleika some years ago; and it speaks more of vague yearning than of a definite access of impassioned sensation. So it would seem that Ulrike caught his eye more because she happened to come at the psychological moment, than because his vision of her induced that moment. For of all the women whom Goethe admired, Ulrike seems to have had the smallest degree of personality—she seems to have signified no more than the general atmosphere of youth, its dancing, laughing charm, as it were in a type, an allegory; and as she was the last to make that old heart blossom like the rose, she might almost stand for a symbol of sublimation, generalization, in Goethe—the old man desires a maiden; and the maiden happened to be this girl, for Goethe.

Not that she was not charming, with her brown curls (in which she resembled Marianne and Christiane) and her deep blue eyes; but to herself she was merely his " daughterling," a title she was proud of because a kind father had conferred it on her—and moreover a very famous man, whose works indeed one was not allowed to read, but which would seem all the more splendid when one could. But there is no sign that by the magic spell of love Ulrike, who was half a child, succeeded in getting a glimpse of this old man's Olympus, as some young men had before now not failed to do.

Goethe saw it all. Poetically, he never sought to present her as a creature of flesh and blood—she was no more than

the melody running through his verses. In the *Äolsharfen* (*Aeolian Harps*) he said his farewell, the phrases rippling softly over the ache in his heart; and when in this ethereal dialogue his voice takes up the tune, it is to Goethe's sense of the pain love means for all of us that we are listening:

Er:
Ich dacht', ich habe keinen Schmerz;
Und doch war mir so bang ums Herz,
Mir war's gebunden vor der Stirn
Und hohl im innersten Gehirn—
Bis endlich Trän' auf Träne fliesst,
Verhaltnes Lebewohl ergiesst.
Ihr Lebewohl war heitre Ruh—
Sie weint wohl jetzund auch wie du. . . .[1]

But he was careful not to send her such verses, after having given her only a few laconic aphorisms; and when he wrote to her six months afterwards from Weimar, it was in this decorous style: "Your sweet letter, my dear, has given me the greatest pleasure.... Though her fond papa is always thinking of his loyal, lovely daughter, your welcome image has never been so vividly present to him as of late. And now I know why! Those were the very days and hours in which you were thinking of me in a dearer sense than usual, and feeling that you wanted to say so from far away...." Then he sends messages to her kind mother, whom he had been given to thinking of as a star in days gone by; "and so, my dearest, I claim your daughterly remembrance again, and very soon. Your truly attached, J. W. von Goethe."

Can we not divine the trouble in the heart of this

[1] He:
I thought that I had done with pain;
And yet my heart knew fear again,
My brow was as with iron bound,
No thought within my brain I found—
And then the tears flowed free and fast,
And I could say Farewell at last.
And her Farewell was calm, was gay—
Perchance she weeps like thee to-day.

paternal lover? That phrase, which of yore had always been his in a thrilled moment: "That's it—*now I know why.*" And the subtle compliment to her youth, her "kind mother" so definitely relegated to the blind-alley of the past—yet always, and so insistently, the dear old Dad and his daughterling!

When he was writing such lines, with their delicate harmonics, he did not know that Death was standing at his shoulder—soon to step forth into the light.

For suddenly, in February, Goethe was attacked by severe illness, with rising temperature and eye-trouble. He was delirious, had to spend eight days and nights in his armchair; two doctors gave him up for lost, though he fought bravely. "Practise your arts by all means, but you won't succeed in saving me! . . . Death is all round me, in every corner of the room. . . . I am lost."

On the tenth day he flew into a rage, because the doctors forbade him the Kreuzbrunnen water in which he put his faith. Angrily he cried: "If I am to die, let me die in my own way!" He insisted on having the Kreuzbrunnen; next day he was better—was soon complaining because someone had not kept his diary going for him, and after a a few days talked of his illness as a thing of the past. None of the accounts says a word about wisdom and resignation, readiness to go and weariness of life; every one of them tells of the will-to-live, of vigour, crossness—this side of things.

For it was simply because Goethe willed to live, not because he drank the Kreuzbrunnen, that he got over this mortal attack. He was determined to have a second rejuvenescence. .

And so in June he for the third time visited his Marienbad friends, declaring that new blood was running in his veins and that he had not felt so well for years. But his nerves were on edge; for in these summer-weeks he was tormented by his infatuation—and by this time the girl's eyes must have been opened. They were seldom alone together. Her sisters were usually on the scene; the

group was supposed to be studying crystals, and he would bring them chocolates, look on at their dancing, and often be with them till midnight. And when in August there was a temporary separation—for the family were going to Carlsbad, whither Goethe was shortly to follow them—he so far forgot caution in his cautious diary as to illuminate the situation with these laconic words: "Met the sisters. Great fun, escorting the carriage. . . . A moment on the terrace, and in the room. Ante-room lit up. . . . Thoughts of the past. Considered my next step. . . . Quiet night. Refreshing dreams."

That "next step" which he was considering was—marriage.

And once more the Goethe-Destiny fulfilled itself. Two generations between him and Ulrike! But the atmosphere in which he was just then living was erotic. Carl August (who was also of the party), the Duke of Leuchtenberg, and some Viennese nobles, had more or less appropriated various lovely women; and society and beauty, all around him, were turning Goethe's head. He consulted his doctor on the question of marriage; and as the doctor did not advise against it, Goethe got more and more restless.

Fantastic dreams of eleventh-hour happiness fevered his brain; but at the same time he had to consider his son and daughter-in-law, his repute and his dignity. At the close of a long life of inward growth, with few sensational incidents, how could he venture on anything so paradoxical, so abnormal? Now, as *Praeceptor Germaniae*, now in his grey hairs bring home a bride of nineteen for the Weimar scoffers, the youth of Germany, to gape at—he, Goethe, cynosure of the world!

But what was the good of this fame, of that strenuous life of endeavour, if a soul which had for sixty years withstood the world might not now, at last, step forth in all its freedom and defiance with a public challenge to the world? Had not the Peer-Poet arrogated such liberty to himself, and by his tameless appetites that knew no bounds

captivated Europe but the more surely? Yes: Byron, to whom Goethe that very spring had paid tribute for his inexhaustible self-expression, and who was now, as the finishing-stroke, on the eve of that high-flown expedition to Hellas, under the critical or fervid gaze of foes or friends—a glance at that contrast must in those impassioned days have lent irresistible impetus to Goethe's decision.

For it was precisely then that, enclosed in a letter from Ottilie, he received that hurried note from Byron, just sailing from Leghorn; and Goethe, who happened to be writing to his daughter-in-law and making a quasi-confession of his dalliance in phrases of ambiguous mock-earnest, went on to say:

"At this moment comes . . . Byron's letter. What different strings I shall have to touch, in my answer to it! The fairy-tale I am in the middle of here will be finished in a few days. . . . Enough, for the present. Anything else I may have to say shall be kept till we can talk, perhaps for one of our midnight sittings. . . . But read between the lines a great deal that will only be seen in its true light when this is over—and you will understand the bitter-sweetness of the cup which I am now draining to the dregs. How solemnly impressive Lord Byron's farewell words must have seemed to me in moments such as these, you will readily guess: it was like being told the most vital news at a masquerade. . . . Such a consummation could be the outcome only of a daemonic youth intent on enjoyment and the common human aims; and now, to its own amazement, called upon to attempt more than it can ever have willed or dreamed. . . . Forgive me! But the constant mutual companionship of such excellent, reasonable, intellectual people as we are has at times (to my despair) somewhat tended to stagnation—we have felt the need of a third or fourth person to complete the circle. . . . May all come to pass as I think and hope it will. . . . In the fondest sense, Your loving father, G."

A letter that might have come out of *Elective Affinities*—

all background as it were, full of appeal and persuasion, caution and coaxing, with its exaggerated adoration of youth, its recognition of the "years that bring the philosophic mind"—and yet! Here is the boy again; the boy who will not be denied his love, the lonely, longing boy . . . in this letter to Ottilie, signed for the first time with the name of father!

And yet again—as he saw everybody's gowns and hats disappearing into everybody's trunks, and in anticipation felt the loneliness of the deserted Terrace, behold another woman comes upon the scene, and on the instant he loses his heart to her! This was one in her early thirties, like Marianne before her; an artist like Marianne, but very much more beautiful—indeed, with Lili and Corona, who belonged to nearly half a century ago, the most beautiful woman whom Goethe ever loved. Slender, mobile, profoundly imaginative and yet absolutely spontaneous—so she was afterwards described by a connoisseur, and he adds that the upward look of her eyes had something about it both of witchery and childishness.

She was a Polish woman, Maria Szymanowska, and Goethe soon found himself taking a walk with her in the rain. But she was married, and the mother of children, besides having brothers and sisters to provide for; her only mode of self-expression appears to have been music of exquisite quality and romantic interpretation; and so she represented—what with her art, her nature, and her lot in life—the sort of divinity whom a man does not actively desire, not even Goethe in his amorous state. His Byronic mood grew upon him as he yielded to the swelling tide of erotic emotion; for besides the Polish pianist there were her charming sister and a German diva, so that Goethe, with Ulrike far away and only her glove to console him (like Faust with Gretchen's scarf), flung himself, a Werther redivivus, into a sea of music and tears.

The impression he gives at this time is of gentle low-pitched sentimentality, easily stirred to lachrymose emotion, and somewhat uncertain of its direction. He could

never have enough of the lovely Pole's piano. "If music be the food of love, play on!" And when after a few days she departed, the immediate effect was an impetuous cataract of verses, beginning:

> Die Leidenschaft bringt Leiden! Wer beschwichtigt,
> Beklommnes Herz, dich, das soviel verloren?
> Wo sind die Stunden, überschnell verflüchtigt?
> Vergebens war das Schönste dir erkoren!
> Trüb ist der Geist, verworren das Beginnen;
> Die hehre Welt, wie schwindet sie den Sinnen![1]

A new note runs through the poet's lyricism now—the Byron note; for here, and soon again, all these overwhelming encounters mix and are as one in the soul of Goethe, grown so old. It was because he was ready for such a mood that Byron was dear to him; and it was because Byron was dear to him that the mood took possession of him so strongly.

On the evening before his birthday, in Carlsbad (where he soon joined the Levetzows) he saw the girls at a ball; and looked on until "a Polish lady asked me to dance the final polonaise with her. So I went round with her, and in the changing of partners most of the pretty young things came into my hands." So Goethe danced, the chosen girl clasped to his breast, in the seventy-fourth year of his life. September and separation were coming nearer—he would soon have to make up his mind.

And Goethe confided in the Duke, who had so often in the past called upon *him* to be father-confessor, and go-between too. It may have been with satisfaction and a little malicious pleasure that Carl August, whose amorous youth had brought upon him many a mute reproof from Goethe, undertook the commission now entrusted to him,

[1] With passion cometh pain. Who shall appease thee,
Care-burdened heart, such loss upon thee falling?
Where are the hours, too swift, that once could ease thee?
Vain to know beauty, past beyond recalling!
Sad is my soul, perplexed the short sweet story;
Scarce can my sense retrieve that world of glory.

and gave his opinion on it. With all ceremony the Grand Duke of Saxe Weimar and Eisenach approached Frau von Levetzow with a request for her eldest daughter's hand on behalf of his chief Minister of State, Privy-Councillor von Goethe; and as the proposal was not at first accepted, we ask ourselves whether it was mother or daughter who was against it.

If her mother had consented—so Ulrike maintained in her old age—*she* would have agreed. This seems the more probable because—as Goethe's verses and Zelter's notes testify—she had received, by this time, not the senile advances of an old man out of an *opéra bouffe*, but the impassioned kisses of a youthful lover!

At any rate, there is no doubt that her mother begged for time to decide. On this uncertain footing Goethe had to take leave of them. And then, as soon as he had left the girl behind, his passion broke all bounds; and one day driving homewards, he wrote the most powerful of all the poems of his old age—that *Marienbad Elegy* which he always loved as a parent loves a late-come child, and which was, like other of these poems, written under the spell of Byron. He felt like Tasso now, and chose some lines from his own *Tasso* as the motto for these twenty-three strophes.

When for half a century—when since *Werther*—had Goethe suffered such accents to break from his soul? Where else does the battling, insatiable daemon give such vent to his frustrated wrath? Ineffable—the tempest in that heart, for ever aching to snatch the moment, for ever robbed of its " Here and Now," of its bliss. It ebbs and flows here like the sea, yet never finds the shallows where the ninth wave may lull itself to acquiescent peace. The day of travel which created this poem may be regarded as exceptional, as the crisis of a mood almost unique with Goethe, and its issue contrasted with the myriad utterances of ripe balanced wisdom which stand in opposition to it. Yet, even so, it was on such a day that the floodgates were opened, and his spirit could soar into the light, the air, soothing itself with the plangent, reiterated lament—for

when all is said it was always Eros who laid bare the essential Goethe. But that it was a man of seventy-four who now as in the Lili-days sobbed out—if in a more exacting form—the unslaked thirst for happiness, for youth, for the woman possessed, for that equilibrium of the spirit which Hafiz had, like him, known instantly when with Zuleika all his being seemed to drain itself away . . . this does drive on us the lesson that even superhuman self-control, in the last issue, is but self-control—a flimsy rope that will break in the critical moment. After wayfarings such as no human being but he could well have permitted himself, he seems to have returned to his source, to have forgotten all the harmonies of Arabia, all the symmetries of Greece—he seems, as a psychical entity, never to have changed from adolescence to old age.

The last thing he wanted was to write a letter to the girl that day, and so he forced himself to compose a rhymed note:

> Am heissen Quell verbringst du deine Tage,
> Das regt mich auf zu innerm Zwist:
> Denn wie ich dich so ganz im Herzen trage,
> Begreif' ich nicht, wie du wo anders bist.[1]

In that graceful form he allowed his passion to take shape on paper—a rococo-trifle, with the great elegy pouring from his soul like a long-reverberating echo, but kept hidden away in his portfolio.

Meanwhile, from the two spas rumour had penetrated to Weimar—" Goethe is going to get married." On his return to the Weimar house, a scene ensued; the bitterest ordeal Goethe had to endure from his fellow-creatures in eighty years of life.

When in his youth three girls had thrown him over, there had been certain ties, certain circumstances, to

[1] You dwell where springs gush hot; and I to find you
Must rend myself in twain, for since I bear
A heart within, and in that heart enwind you,
How can I think that you are otherwhere?

account for it and make it comprehensible, if not consoling, to Goethe. When on his return from Italy, with a heart full of love, he found friends and mistress estranged and worshipping new gods who were his enemies, he could reflect that the change in him was as much to blame as they were. When his fatherland forgot him and youth sought to depreciate him, he felt the transiency of such literary fashions, and salted the bitter bread with mockery. When the Duke, after fifty years, dismissed him from the theatre which he had made into the leading German house, after all it was only inherited authority resuming its ancient privilege.

But now his only son, who owed him everything—existence, rank, repute—set his face against the father of seventy-four, furious at his daring to assert himself in his own house, and (we may safely conjecture) suspecting him of intent to divide that son's inheritance with a stranger. "The brutal, heartless disposition of his son" (so the Chancellor, who is our best witness, writes of this period) "and Ulrike's" (this was Ottilie's sister) "harsh one-sidedness and shallow naïveté were certainly not conducive to smoothing over such a crisis." And Charlotte Schiller's testimony is much the same—she says that it is true that Ottilie was ill and took no part in the discussions; but that her sister, who was quite at home in Goethe's house, egged on the son, who moreover was drinking hard and threatened his father with removing to Berlin.

And among these people stood—for a while almost beside himself—the aged Goethe, pleading, persuading; a man not born for domination and by no means desirous of it; solicitous only to divert the gossip by clear pronouncements against rash marriage-projects. But none the less he procured from a dealer some of the sort of medals that are supposed to be mascots, together with a larger one which prognosticated marriage-ties! We may be sure that no one knew this but the man who ordered them. To the Chancellor Goethe told only half the truth: "The de Staël once said a very true word to me: '*Il vous faut de la*

séduction!' Yes, I came home in good spirits, having been happy for three months.... Now I must dig myself in for the winter and carry on as best I can.... It's preposterous that Julie" (von Egloffstein) "isn't here this winter. Not that she has any idea how she attracts me, as little as she has of how I love her! To you I may say this, though on that point we are rivals.... But believe me, the old Merlin in his badger's-holt fills many a quiet hour with absent ones like these!"

Then he praised a country-life where one can do as one likes, saying he was the sort of gardener who never realizes how lovely his flowers are until someone asks him for a bunch. And all of a sudden, he began to rave about the beautiful Pole—evanescent as a zephyr, ethereal, immaterial, her voice so troubling to the nerves that one always wanted her to go back to the piano; and he fetched a specimen of her handwriting to show her character. Then, in his most moving tones, he read the Chancellor some of his verses to her.

Soon afterwards he took a fancy to be "at home" every day. The house was to be prepared for guests every evening—they would read and talk or make music, just as they felt inclined; and he himself would come and go at pleasure. "A sort of everlasting tea-party, like the lamps that everlastingly burn in certain chapels." Then suddenly he told the Chancellor something of the strain in the household, blamed Ottilie too, and doled out morsels of his love-story.

"There's a little affair going on which will give me a good deal of trouble yet, but I shall come out of it all right. Iffland could make a pretty thing of it—an old uncle, head-over-ears in love with his youthful niece."

He would show his guests the landscapes he had painted only ten years ago, regret that he had quite lost his hand at the art, laugh at the dangling bonnet-ribbons worn by girls at that time, rave about the nobleman-poet: "No one but Byron will I hear of as my equal!" He commended the Persians, who had only seven renowned poets, and yet

"among the rejected there were some small fry who were better than he was." If anyone got sleepy, he would fume at having wasted his literary history of Persia on young people, and storm out of the room "with mock violence."

But after three days the Chancellor, arriving for the "everlasting tea-party," found that Goethe had forgotten all about the plan; and a week later he came upon him in a dejected mood: "of immense, unsatisfied striving, a certain inward desperation."

Into these heart-sick quivering days, Goethe always the one to give in, always trying to find something he might console himself with—gentle affection, friendly faces, kindness, indulgence . . . into this vast solitude of soul there shone, that autumn, the mild radiance of the Szymanowska. All of a sudden she arrived with her sister —dressed in brown with white lace, and roses in her bonnet. For some days she visited Goethe regularly, playing to him in the afternoons and evening; he invited people to hear her and moved about excitedly, claiming applause; then he arranged a concert, and when someone asked him if she played as well as Hummel, he answered: "You must remember she is a lovely woman into the bargain!"

At dinner in Goethe's house, after the concert, someone proposed a toast in remembrance of her. "I won't have any 'remembrance' of that sort!" cried Goethe passionately. "Anything great and beautiful and impressive that comes our way, can't be *re*-remembered from outside in; it must become part of our being from the instant we experience it.... There is no past that we need look back upon regretfully.... Real regret can never be anything but productive, making a new and better thing out of the old. Haven't we all known that, in these few days? That sweet, noble creature . . . lives in us, with us, henceforth; and though she should try her very best to get away from me, I have her for evermore."

The next day, when she had arranged to leave Weimar, Goethe tried to be quite cheerful about it; but the Chancellor saw that the parting was causing him the profoundest

sorrow—he wandered restlessly to and fro, and back again incessantly. It utterly upset him to see the lovely Pole in black. When she had left the house, he vehemently implored the Chancellor to bring her back—then, with tears in his eyes, he silently embraced her and her sister, and followed them with his gaze through the open door of the room. "I have much for which to thank that charming woman," he said afterwards. "Her friendship and her talent were the first things that gave me back to myself." So deeply was he conscious of the interplay of attractions, the universal element in his craving for love; and one doubts whether Ulrike herself, if she had come instead of the Polish pianist in those autumn days, could have made him any happier.

Scarcely were the visitors gone than Goethe fell ill again, almost as seriously at the end of this year as at the beginning. There was no one to nurse him; Ottilie was away, his son ill-tempered and sullen, and the secondary Ulrike never to be seen—until Zelter paid a surprise-visit, and was horrified to find his friend so neglected. Though he felt that Goethe needed a more intimate companion, he swore to remain until his friend was better, and so he did. "What did I find? A man who looked as if love, love with all the torment of young passion, were seething in his veins!"

Goethe told him the history of his heart in long talks together, and loved to hear Zelter's sonorous voice reading his great Elegy over and over again—the Elegy that he had copied in his best hand, and kept in the Carlsbad drinking-cup. He had it always beside him, like a bottle of medicine! And so the two old men sat alone together in the sick-room, and read the love-poem to one another.

But when the year drew to its close, and Goethe was ready with his new wall-calendar, all the protagonists could not keep the girl's image from once more becoming so vivid to him that he wrote to her mother these arresting, sensuously inspired words:

"... If a slender, darling child bends down and picks

up a little stone in memory of me, it will be a new treasure to add to the hundred attitudes in which she is present to my eyes."

Then he made several allusions to the happy second marriage of an old Court Councillor with many children, which had caused a brief sensation—and was careful to add that the young wife got on remarkably well with her step-children. "As I write, I am looking at the new wall-calendar for 1824, where the twelve months look as good as gold, no doubt, but also absolutely uninteresting. Vainly do I try to guess which days will be rosy for me and which dismal; the whole table is a blank, with wishes and hopes fluttering about it. May mine and yours encounter! May nothing—*nothing* prevent their fulfilment and their happy issue! In hopeful, expectant longing. . . ."

But though he hoped and expected, he had already begun to relinquish. There were the pressure from his family, the threatening tones of his furious son, the vacillation of the girl and her mother—for we have no proof whatever that this New-Year letter was answered by a final refusal. But above all, there was the ebbing of that last great spring-tide in his heart—for Goethe, wooing Ulrike, had been wooing womanhood, youth, vitality. The twilight in his soul, the soul that still hoped on while it relinquished, darkens the poem which, in the following March (for the Jubilee edition of the novel published fifty years ago) he addressed to Werther:

. . . Zum Bleiben ich, zum Scheiden du erkoren,
Gingst du voran—und hast nicht viel verloren. . . .
Da kämpft sogleich verworrene Bestrebung
Bald mit uns selbst und bald mit der Umgebung. . . .
Ein glänzend Äussres deckt ein trüber Blick,
Da steht es nah—und man verkennt das Glück.
Nun glauben wir's zu kennen! Mit Gewalt
Ergreift uns Liebreiz weiblicher Gestalt. . . .
Doch erst zu früh und dann zu spät gewarnt,
Fühlt er den Flug gehemmt, fühlt sich umgarnt.
Das Wiedersehn ist froh, das Scheiden schwer,
Das Wieder-Wiedersehn beglückt noch mehr,

Und Jahre sind im Augenblick ersetzt;
Doch tückisch harrt das Lebewohl zuletzt.

Du lächelst, Freund gefühlvoll, wie sich ziemt:
Ein grässlich Scheiden machte dich berühmt;
Wir feierten dein kläglich Missgeschick,
Du liessest uns zu Wohl und Weh zurück.
Dann zog uns wieder ungewisse Bahn
Der Leidenschaften labyrinthisch an. . . .

Verstrickt in solche Qualen, halb verschuldet,
Geb' ihm ein Gott, zu sagen, was er duldet.[1]

So profoundly had Goethe relapsed into pessimism—resigned indeed as at the beginning of this period, but with a heart no longer thrilling to the chords of truth and faith, stirred now by gusts of melancholy only. And as though Destiny were resolute to set her seal upon this mood, so that even the last lingering gaze at youth should henceforth be obscured—at the very time when those lines

[1] Elected, I for staying, you for going,
You went before—and little lost, so doing. . . .
Here in the clash of battle we, confounded,
Turn on ourselves, who are by foes surrounded. . . .
Of shining aspect, masking looks of woe,
A form draws near—and joy we think to know.
Oh, surely now we know it! Such the power
Of love, of woman's charm, in love's great hour. . . .
Yet warned too soon, too late, howe'er it hap,
He feels his wings are caught, he feels the trap.
To meet again is bliss, to part is pain,
Yet best of all, once more to meet again,
And years are turned to moments, such the spell;
Nay, at the last we know the thing "Farewell."

You smile, my friend—the sad, sweet smile well-known!
Cruel your death, but mighty your renown;
We followed, weeping, in your funeral-train,
Then left you—free for life, for joy, for pain.
Our wandering feet once more too surely set
On labyrinthine paths to wild regret! . . .

Snared by such torments, half his own creation,
Give him a God, to teach him acceptation.

to Werther were written, Byron died in Greece; and by that death became, once for all, the legendary figure which the old man had loved to think him while he was alive. Every omen seemed to say that the course of Goethe's life had taken its final downward trend.

If then, after those half-envying lines to Werther, Goethe had died in the seventy-fourth year of his age, he would have lost the great battle. It could not be—there had to come the ultimate ascension, when his soul should walk in light. But the man who wrote those lines was called upon to renounce the last faint possibility of simple happiness. When shortly afterwards the Levetzows wrote, asking if he would not be with them in the summer, he refused; and never saw them again.

CHAPTER XII

PHOENIX

Immer höher muss ich steigen,
Immer weiter muss ich schaun![1]

THROUGH the green shutters of the little window the earliest ray of light peers into a narrow room, to touch the old man's eyes to life. He wakes from a brief dreamless doze, and no sooner has he collected himself than he considers what is to be done to-day. Then he gets out of bed, puts on his white flannel dressing-gown, opens window and shutters. It is chilly, though the month is June, for it is only just four o'clock. As he draws back his head, his eye catches the reflection of his face in the pane. That face is his life-work.

The mouth is an old man's mouth—framed by two deep lines that speak of suffering and patience, and run from the bony chin to the powerful nose. It is sunken, for behind the thin close lips some teeth are missing; and as the skin of the cheeks and throat is furrowed all over with a network of wrinkles, under which the cheek-bones stand out arrestingly, there seems all the more splendour in the dark lustre of the sovereign eyes, and again in the brow whose lofty arch so majestically meets the halo of short silvery hair. For eighty long years those eyes have been the intermediaries between that brain and the world. In the shapes of moving clouds and the positions of passive stones, in the veinings of leaves and the jaws of prehistoric beasts, in the refraction of light and the glance of an enamoured maiden, they have sought untiringly to descry the image of God. They have sent forth messengers from the interior of that royally vaulted forehead to classify the visible, and re-establish the form first taken by it. For a

[1] Ever mounting higher, higher,
Ever farther must I gaze!

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mysterious affinity, perceptible from the first, has endowed the inmost soul of this man with some prescience, some clairvoyance; and it is simply because everything he has seen and learnt was a confirmation of pre-consciousness that so swift, so complete a synthesis has been possible to him.

Now he shivers slightly, and goes into the adjoining room, straight to the large stove—out of habit, as if it were still heated. With short shuffling steps he gets along. As bare of ornament as the bedroom (in which, besides the bed and washstand, there is nothing but a big, seldom-used armchair) is this work-room, lit by two windows. The table in the centre is cleared of everything but an inkpot and some pens—his trusty lifelong servitors, patiently awaiting him; the wooden chairs around it look uncompromisingly stiff and hard. Yonder on the desk is a row of plainly bound books; from the door a diagram of acoustics issues a challenge to arithmetical ignorance; a few scientific appliances stand against the wall; no picture breaks the space, no easy-chair or sofa invites to repose—everything speaks of work and concentration.

Near the big stove a plain standing-desk holds some sheets of white paper in a parchment folder. Goethe goes to this desk, opens the folder, reads yesterday's work, writes on. He is now at the " Klassische Walpurgisnacht "; he makes several notes, to be expanded later, and then adds something to the poem in his clear script. Two hours go by in this dialogue between the solitary old man and his creations. Sometimes he walks up and down, looks out into the dewy garden—the earliest sounds from without rise to his ears, a bird-note, the beat of hoofs; and when he closes the folder again, he has written not more than a single page.

Now the household begins to stir. Friedrich the servant comes in, wishes His Excellency good-morning, and brings him a tempting breakfast. Newspapers have arrived from Berlin, Paris, Milan; the old man lays them aside unopened, for it is the letters that interest him. What is

there? Another young man asking for an opinion on his poems; a request from a newspaper for a contribution, at his own price; a woman-painter, wanting to do his portrait; a letter of thanks for the *Neue Melusine* out of the *Wanderjahre*. Ah, but here is Zelter's vigorous handwriting — what news has *he* got, fond indefatigable fellow?

And while Goethe is reading, and smiling over art and Court-gossip from Berlin, and how the Professors have been arguing about the latest number of *Kunst und Alterthum*, a boy bursts into the room. This is little Wolfgang; and he gives his grandfather a brief bear's-hug, then pulls out the writing-table drawer which he has appropriated, so as to be sure of having a few toys upstairs when he wants them; and as he arranges his dominoes the old man looks on with secret satisfaction to see the fourth generation as tidy, as careful of its possessions, as his own father used to be in Frankfurt. Then the boy coaxes a handful of cherries out of his grandfather, who keeps a hoard for such occasions—and off with him again, and soon he is heard merrily laughing with the secretary, Herr John, who enters unannounced.

Meanwhile the old gentleman has been dressing with Friedrich's help; and when he comes in and says good-morning to his secretary, he is wrapped in a long brown coat, under which high boots are visible.

While Friedrich is clearing away, John has taken one of the stiff chairs at the table and spread out his writing-paper. Goethe sits opposite, resting his arms on a cushion; and in his still sonorous bass, which he can modulate to the most delicate intonations, begins to dictate in verse what he has just drafted. Soon he stands up and strides to and fro in the little room, his hands behind his back; and without a pause he first dictates yesterday's diary, then an order for *foie gras*, then an article about the French translation of Goethe's Works, with quotations from the Parisian reviews, and then a few words about Neo-Greek heroic ballads.

In the middle of all this a stranger's name is brought to Goethe. He is introduced in no wise, save by the far-away address on his card. Goethe thinks it over while the servant waits, twists the card in his hands, reflecting on the certain waste of time, the possible gain of information . . . then he says, "Show him up," goes down a few stairs to the front part of the house, and enters a large, bright, rather too low-ceilinged room, while through the communicating doors of two others a young man comes timidly towards him.

The veteran, now bolt upright for the first time to-day, stands (his hands immovably behind his back) in the middle of the room, letting the stranger come all the way to him. While the young man stammers out a few embarrassed phrases, the old man gives him no help; but makes use of the moment to wrest the visitor's secrets, or as many of them as he can, out of his features, glances, figure, bearing, apparel, and choice of words, with concentration on which might hang the fate of a poem. Seconds like these are highly productive for Goethe.

Then with a stiff bow he indicates a chair, and takes one himself; and when the guest, terrified by his host's speechlessness and the steely arrows from his eyes, ventures on a compliment, there issues from that hitherto inarticulate throat a deep-toned "Hm!"—but it sounds so formidable that the guest is struck dumb. And now Goethe, without transition, begins a catechism upon conditions in the distant city, the foreign land; and as the other, warming to his task, brings up all sorts of interesting topics, the old gentleman hitches his chair nearer and questions pour from his lips—till the visitor, feeling more at ease, begins to plume himself on being able to give Goethe information. He is agreeably surprised when his host, getting up, lays a hand on his shoulder and invites him to luncheon at two o'clock, "for there are several other things he wants to hear from him."

Two minutes later Goethe is back in his work-room, and when he has walked up and down once or twice he goes on

dictating his article, without having read over what had gone before.

When, in the course of two hours, he appears at the luncheon table, Ottilie comes up to him. He kisses her on the forehead, does not forget to ask after her headache, pulls his grandson's curls, shakes hands with his son. This last begins to tell the latest gossip of the town in a loud blustering voice—the old man silently endures it, Ottilie tries to stop it, whereupon August scowls at her. Goethe sees it all and holds his tongue. "How is your sister Ulrike?" She shrugs her shoulders. The foreigner arrives, is introduced; Goethe continues their talk from the point where they had broken off in the morning. Fortunately the youth has a smattering of geology, and has provided himself with a few stones for the great man. When he brings them out, and Goethe sees that they are rare specimens, the stranger has completed his conquest; lo and behold! his host is pouring out his wine for him—but when he breaks off to answer August's irrelevant questions, he is gently called to order by the old man.

All this time Goethe is eating very largely of an abundant, savoury menu. He carves a substantial fowl with his own hand, and empties a bottle of red wine which stands at his place (as at everybody's), but does not except by example urge anyone to drink. Then he confides to Ottilie that some artichokes have arrived, and everybody who behaves nicely shall have one. The basket is brought in. It came from Marianne in Frankfurt this morning—and as Goethe begins to separate the leaves of the prickly fruit, he falls silent for a while, absorbed in the construction of the plant. "Now he'll say something about his *Metamorphosis*," thinks the stranger; but Goethe lays the artichoke aside without a word.

When luncheon is over he asks for a certain portfolio, and on Humboldt's geological maps he shows the guest where and how the stones that he has brought from home are distributed. Meanwhile Dr. Eckermann has arrived, and the family has disappeared. About four o'clock the

guest is given the friendliest of farewells; and as he has previously persuaded Ottilie to make the usual request for him, he is handed, on leaving, a small sheet of paper on which a couple of lines in Goethe's handwriting are lithographed—in this instance, as in many others, made still more precious by his signature.

The carriage is now ready; and since none of the household seems desirous of accompanying the old man, Eckermann is requisitioned to-day, as on many another day. He sits on Goethe's left, heart and ears entirely at disposal; and as they drive along to the Belvedere (the old man wearing a blue cloth cap, and spreading a pale grey cloak over his knees) Goethe begins to talk about old times, about the Duke and Herder—idealizing everything a little, for the June sunshine cheers one up, and besides one knows that this very evening every word one says will be written down by this faithful disciple—so it's better to mind one's p's and q's and say nothing so profound that Eckermann won't be able to grasp it, and nothing, either, that one does not wish posterity to know.

When they come home, Goethe goes through the house to the back-garden, putting on a little shade to protect his sensitive eyes (that are often ailing) from the light. That archery that Eckermann was talking about? And he sends for the tall Bashkiri-bow—a present that has hitherto been rather a white elephant. The young disciple and writer draws it skilfully, and shows the old man how to do the trick—and then the octogenarian, for the first time in his life, takes a bow in his hand. He stands there, facing the setting sun—he draws, and shoots into the air, but the old arm can only propel the arrow a few feet towards the sky. Does the veteran envy the young archer's muscles? He turns to his border of mallows, and consoles himself with their colours.

Meyer—the laconic Meyer—now appears in the garden, and Goethe sits down with him in the mellow sunlight, and asks about the entries for the new painting-competition. Then they sit silently side by side—two old

men who do not need to keep up conversation with each other.

At six o'clock Goethe resumes dictation in his study—a long letter about meteorology, full of new ideas, masterly in construction. Then arrives Riemer, now a Court-Councillor. How time does fly—can it really be Wednesday? He has brought back a volume of correspondence with Zelter, revised by him with infinite pains; and they go on to talk about deletions, modifications. Suddenly Goethe has an idea concerning a point at issue with Cotta, and makes notes for a letter to Boisserée, his agent in South Germany, who has the matter in his hands. Then similar notes for a letter to Zelter, his Berlin intermediary, who is negotiating with Rauch about a medal.

Sudden uproar in the corridor, boys' voices clamouring, and the grandsons rush in to say good-night, chaffing, begging for little favours. Immediately afterwards the Chancellor is announced. He brings in a breath of the world of affairs—they scoff and praise and disparage, and soon find themselves involved in an argument. Riemer, less sophisticated, less loquacious, but no less misanthropic and nearly as shrewd as the Chancellor, often upholds him against Goethe. So the three work one another up, and grow combative. Goethe speaks his mind—at first about the past, its personages, affairs, and actions, and the things he says are mordant, acrid; then he goes on to talk at large about his youth, his errors, waxing warm against his adversaries, against the thing called Fame.

When Müller has gone, Goethe (now in his dressing-gown again) begs Riemer to see about carrying out his suggestions; and as the sitting has now lasted a long time and the servant has brought lights, he orders supper to be laid for his guest on the study-table. He himself seldom eats so late, but will drink a couple of glasses with him. Every ten minutes he uses the snuffers, for he allows no one else to tend the candles.

Then, left alone, Goethe begins to read, late though it is, some of Niebuhr's lately published *History of Rome*.

Suddenly he starts—what noise is that? He listens a moment. Upstairs in August's quarters the son, come home intoxicated, is making Ottilie a scene. Goethe stands up, throws open the window, looks for Orion, calculates when Mars and Venus will be in propinquity again—then rings the bell. Friedrich helps him to undress. But he is very far from being tired yet. He takes a sheet of paper and writes:

Nachts, wann gute Geister schweifen,
Schlaf dir von der Stirne streifen,
Mondenlicht und Sternenflimmern
Dich mit ewigen All umschimmern,
Scheinst du dir entkörpert schon,
Wagest dich vor Gottesthron.[1]

It is night. He goes into his room, lies down in bed, puts out the light and thinks of the lines with which, at the first ray of dawn, Thales shall continue the Walpurgisnacht.

Something like this was the routine of Goethe's day in the last eight years of his life. The old man worked in the two little rooms, received his visitors and talked in the handsome front rooms, went neither to Court nor parties nor the theatre, scarcely ever (and then for brief stays) left Weimar, and left Thuringia not at all. Sometimes he ventured on a little driving-excursion, in the course of which he would sit on a heap of stones by the high road, carefully extract from its leather-case a little gold folding-cup, and filling it with wine, lift it still more carefully to his lips.

And this narrowest of spheres, in which Goethe was to

[1] When, of nights, good spirits creeping
Slumber from thy brow are sweeping,
When the moon and stars resplendent
Tell thee of the All transcendent,
Thou, in flesh immured no more,
To the throne of God dost soar.

terminate his course—was it irradiated by tender affections? Did he achieve at last what he had striven for from the first, and for a while in middle-life had known in some degree?

The household which then he had got into such perfect order was now a melancholy failure. In broken health and spirits, idle, unoccupied, his only son inhabited the upper storey with a wife who was alien and hostile to him, who sought to forget her discontents in love-affairs and social excitements, wasting her talents, drifting, aimless, incapable of ordering or managing her house and servants—and between this pair two boys (and later on a girl) were growing up, almost entirely without education, example, or purpose. The daily life of Goethe at seventy-five was as cheerless as his life at twenty, in his parents' house, had been; but he, who once had so longed for marriage and children, normal happiness and tranquillity, now voluntarily (when he could) kept his family at a distance, ironically stoical; and when the children—usually unescorted—left home, the grandfather secretly congratulated himself.

Though Ottilie's extravagance made her precise old father-in-law extremely uneasy, she was so utterly incapable of managing a household that Goethe himself had to look after the smallest details, and in the end was obliged to install a young nephew of Christiane's as a sort of steward, so as to get some relief from such cares!

If little cheerful Christiane had housed her relatives in the back-rooms, Ottilie, for hers, took such complete possession of the whole house that for Goethe's most intimate friend, for Zelter himself, no room could be found in a mansion which contained thirty—and he had to put up at the neighbouring hotel.

Sometimes the old man complained bitterly to the Chancellor of the disorder in the household, and confided such matters as Müller was careful to keep out of even his diaries. Frequently the master of the house had to do what he had often done before when his family was too much for

him—take flight, though it should be no farther than to the summer-villa near by.

Though he still envied Byron his wide wild life—a life which Goethe could never at any time have led—Carlyle's, on the other hand, struck him as ideal. To study and write in the remote Scottish Highlands—he declared that such a married life, such a rustic existence, represented something " sincerer, more concentrated," than his own.

But how far he really was in spirit from these two, though in reminiscent mood the comparison could sometimes fret him! He now seemed resolute to cope no more with his environment, conscious that he needed all his remaining vigour for creative purposes. It is as though Destiny made amends to him at the last moment by teaching him to throw off the bonds of natural affection; for if the children gave him little, he did not give them much more.

Two boys, the only grandsons of this man who believed in heredity and had engendered five children—surely they must have had something of Goethe in them? No one disciplined them, and he was merely indulgent. The little belated daughter, on whom was to fall the Goethean doom of early death, he admired for her beauty; and over her doubtful paternity (to be read between the lines in Ottilie's letters) the old man smiled, remarking with subtle irony to his intimates that the child reminded one of " foreign friends as well as of home-ones."

Walter played the piano, paid visits, was idle and frivolous; in little Wolfgang's eyes the grandfather did think to see a poet, and *he* was orderly enough, but " it would never have done for him to be born a peer of England—he would have behaved very badly indeed; however, I think a middle-class upbringing will suit him well enough.... I admit he has a very pretty way of forcing me to play some game or other with him before he goes to bed." And of climbing on his knee too, and if reprimanded by a guest, of exclaiming that he was doing no harm—when he was asleep, Grandpapa could rest. Grandpapa

would smile and let himself be pulled about, summing up his attitude for the guest in the sublimely ironic remark: "You see, love is always inclined to be a little disrespectful." When the house-tutor complained that he could not get the boys out of bed in the morning, the old man contented himself with saying: "Tell them their grandfather wishes it." The tutor comes to him again in a day or two. "Did you tell them?" "Yes, but it was no good, Your Excellency." "Hm," says Goethe—and there an end.

This dialogue took place during the last years of his life. Before then he had had the severest of blows to face —the complete demoralization of his only son.

For Goethe was really to blame for August's ruin. May he not sometimes have thought (as in Faust's exclamation over the sleeping shepherd-boy, Paris, kissed by Helen): "*Furchtbare Gunst dem Knaben!*"[1] But all he said in confidence was: "It is my son's misfortune that he has never recognized the Categorical Imperative." He might have said: "That his father never held that Imperative up to him." For though he had ordered August to be brought up with the utmost simplicity, very circumspectly and by Goethe's most carefully selected subordinate, remote from the luminary whose blaze might have scorched him, the boy had in fact spent his childhood between women, the Court, and the theatre; then had made a loveless marriage, been prevented from developing himself by travel, been kept at his father's side as a sort of adjutant to serve and work for him. Such a life as this was the sure destruction of just those elements in August which were most akin to Goethe; and if he was now—in his thirties—an utter wreck, it was the almost inevitable result of his parentage, tendencies, and training.

"I had rather they said, 'Goethe's son is a dolt,' than be able to say of me, 'He wants to play Goethe junior!'" This and other confessions, made by August in his last

[1] Dire for the boy—that favour!

years to his friend Holtei, go far to explain his fate. It was not because his mother and father were hard drinkers—though no one ever saw either of them drunk—but because the son sought oblivion of himself in wine that he gave rein to an inherited tendency, and became a drunkard.

Take him for all in all, Goethe's son stands revealed as a thoroughly daemonic being; and psychologically considered, he is what Goethe might have been if that gigantic force of will had not acted as a powerful corrective throughout eight decades. For Goethe's genius was only one of the means—not the sole means—of salvation from the perils of being born with a devil in him.

If August was dissolute, if in his cups he was violent and blasphemous, none the less his room was full of papers, pictures, coins, geological specimens—all interesting to him and arranged with true Goethean pedantry. In society he was polished, courtly, elegant; and even in his rages there was often something heroic about him. At times, indeed, he reminded people (entirely against his will) of his father's ceremonious stiffness—Goethe's fetch, as it were.

When strangers spoke to him of his father he would abruptly change the subject, would tell indecent Berlin stories, play the barbarian. He never spoke of Goethe's poetry—indeed he seemed to prefer Schiller's. His favourite mode of escape from his heart-sickness was the telling of ribald anecdotes; but in the maddest of his letters or in convivial conversations, there would suddenly break out a desperate cry that revealed the *taedium vitae* beneath.

He could not but hate his father. Why did Goethe prevent him from seeing the world?

Goethe, who had let his wishes be brought to naught by his son, held August as in a vice, daemonically resolute, when the son wanted to go his own way—so disastrous was the mingled hatred and love between them. Goethe flinched before his furious offspring, when the happiness of his old age was at stake; the son wilted under the father's piercing eye, instead of indignantly asserting himself.

"Not one of you knows anything about me! You all

take me for a good-for-nothing brainless fellow—but inside me here . . . the abysses! If you were to throw a stone into me, you'd have to listen a long time before you heard it fall! "

One of the younger Goethe's sayings—that savage cry with its fine metaphor, so poignantly expressive. Goethe only once or twice complained to others of August's selfishness—otherwise his heart was a closed book. But there was nothing he did not know; and when (himself eighty-one) he at last suffered August to go to Italy, he gave him up for lost.

So there he sat in his narrow room—an old, old man; and though he could give others beaker after beaker of living water, sparkling to the light, not one of them could do the same for him. Riemer and Eckermann, the clever Doctor Vogel, the subtle Genevese Soret, laconic old Meyer, best of all, the Chancellor—these were the most interesting of his friends; and almost daily they received inestimable treasures—later, it is true, to some extent shared by posterity, but at the time by no one living. " Cribbed, cabined, and confined " the veteran must indeed have felt, when he thought of the animated circles in which the old Voltaire, the Titian of remoter ages, had been privileged to renew their youth! On one Whit-Sunday he was sitting in his shirtsleeves, drinking with Riemer and Müller, when the Countess Egloffstein was announced. He sent a message, begging her to come in the evening instead; " not when I am with friends in whose company I am either pensive or above myself! "

He wasted hundreds of irretrievable hours on Eckermann, who with all his good-will could never be anything but the Wagner of *Faust*, and once absented himself for months because he had been offended. And when he did come back, he was at best little more than tactful and discreet, which made him to the end a useful intercessor in family affairs. Moreover, his official work of registration

and correction was arduous, and in addition to all this it was he who held the Chair for Englishmen who wished to study German Literature. Goethe certainly had Eckermann completely under his thumb. His had been the Mephistophelian rôle of persuading him to settle down in Weimar immediately after his first visit; for Goethe had seen at once what a valuable official Eckermann would prove, and so had held out inducements, though without offering any security of tenure.

Of Riemer, whom Goethe had made an official and teacher, their thirty years of intercourse made it natural for him to see a great deal; but the Chancellor was not so easy to get hold of. Goethe and he consulted together over any State-business that still remained in the former's hands—for after forty years of service the Duke had in effect pensioned off his old friend, without formally depriving him of position and authority.

Yet Goethe's heart was never really given to these men who so incessantly battened on his intellect. Knebel, Meyer, Zelter—they alone were and remained his last real friends.

In his seventy-ninth year Goethe sat for the last time at Knebel's familiar table in Jena. Knebel, then eighty-three, had silently tottered across the room to meet and embrace him; but now they did not enter eagerly upon some intellectual argument—they merely sat rejoicing in one another's company. Perhaps they thought of that twilight-hour in which, fifty years ago, the literary-minded officer from Weimar had first appeared in the poet's attic-room at Frankfurt.

Or was Knebel's head full of very different memories? He had wanted to be a poet; but Goethe had prized him only as a translator, and had let this be generally known. For years they had tacitly kept apart, without any sort of breach; during the middle-period Knebel had sometimes stood by Herder, who had been Goethe's opponent. It was as though in the temple of their mutual attachment there lay one stone against which each must be careful not

to stumble—on Knebel's side one might define it as sublimated jealousy; and Goethe occasionally resented the fact that Knebel had never been his devotee.

For the last ten years they had very seldom met, though they were only a couple of hours' drive from one another. Goethe wrote to Knebel sometimes—now and then with a sudden access of startling ceremoniousness: "Dearest Sir and Friend," signing himself with his full name and title! Upon which would follow a little poem, headed with a phrase unique in Goethe's correspondence: "To the dear companion of my life, von Knebel." It was some indefinable attraction, suffused with memories, which in his best hours Goethe felt for Knebel; and when at the banquet held to celebrate his Jubilee year of office, Goethe (himself absent) entrusted the giving of thanks to August, and everyone was hanging on the words to which the son, in the father's name, would empty his glass, there was a stir of surprise and emotion when the toast was drunk to "my oldest surviving friend" Knebel—and while the two old men sat in their warm rooms at Weimar and Jena, the formal banqueting-hall was applauding to the echo that sensational coda to a friendship which had demanded some self-abnegation from both concerned.

And it is true that, on a general survey, Knebel was perhaps the one who for the longest time looked deepest into Goethe's soul.

When Meyer (who after his wife's death lived alone) fell ill, Goethe sent his secretary, whom usually he could not do without for a day, to help in looking after him. "The two old men," writes this secretary, "had by now grown as it were into one.... Often they would sit together for hours without speaking a word, content to be in one another's company"; and Goethe declared emphatically: "I don't want to survive that man's death!" or else he would say sadly: "Am I to be condemned to see him go?"

The most fruitful relation, however, was certainly that with Zelter; his letters were always a refreshment to Goethe. To Zelter went Goethe's most intimate confes-

sions—and perpetually; to him alone he spoke so openly that sometimes he half-repented it, "for when one doesn't even like to say what one's thinking, how on earth can one bring one's-self to write it?"—and off the letter would go at once, lest he should be tempted to keep it back! Zelter's serene temperament, his inexhaustible interest and energy for the things of art, made precisely the atmosphere that Goethe needed.

Even the Duke and Duchess were over seventy now. Carl August, who after a long, dull middle-age had regained all his youthful eagerness of mind, stood to Goethe in the same sort of relation as one of a married pair estranged for many years, and now happily reconciled in a mutual self-surrender. They had long ceased to quarrel about military matters, about policy and administration; for Goethe was in effect out of office, and Carl August was inclined to let things slide. The chief bond between them was natural science, in which the Duke grew more interested as he grew older; and the Goethe who had sought, in their young days, to amuse him with letters about flirtations and starry nights, later about recruits and high-roads, and later still about Professors and Theatre-directors—now wrote to him about the temperature of the earth, steamships, or the origin of the wood-louse.

But about his literary work he said as little now as he had in the past, for it was a regret to him "that as concerns poetry this high-minded Prince has never thrown off the influence of French materialism." Such was—a year before the Duke's death—the German Poet's epilogue upon the intellectual equipment of his Prince and Pupil.

Nevertheless, they had renewed their mutual attachment. On the day of Carl August's Jubilee Goethe—then seventy-six—hid himself behind the Duke's bed-hangings at six o'clock in the morning, so as to be the first to congratulate him; and when the occasion was celebrated in the evening at Goethe's house, and the Duke shook hands with him on coming in, Goethe was heard to say very softly, with deep emotion: "—Together to our last

breath. . . ." But the Duke, quicker to recover himself, looked laughingly into his eyes and said like any poet: " Ah, eighteen—and Ilmenau—! "

The more little attentions the constantly rejuvenated Court showed to Goethe, the more stiffly punctilious he became. Even there his duties were all at an end. At the very most the Master of the Horse might ask the old Court-poet to name a new-born foal—or the Master of the Household very politely inquire if His Excellency could remember whether, fifty-four years ago, certain robes had or had not been provided for a Councillor of Legation? Whenever a handsome carpet was spread out upon the threshold of Goethe's house, Weimar knew that the Princesses were paying him a visit. If one of these ladies congratulated the old man on his birthday, he would answer in the language peculiar to courtiers: " The most gracious handwriting . . . so as it were dazzled me, that till now I have been able to find no adequate expression for the gratitude I owe "; and when there was an addition to the princely family Goethe declared that the news had " transported him to the highest pinnacle of earthly happiness! "

Can Goethe, who had never truckled to any royalty, have ended by becoming a time-server?

No—it was because all the elements of his personality were in solution that these forms and ceremonies grew upon him, as many another trait in this last portrait of his soul will demonstrate. Royalty: in the last analysis it meant for him legitimacy, meant law and order, and hence was to be swallowed whole—as for instance when he once said to Schiller, vexed by some desire of Carl August's: " I am bound to respect it." The more unflinchingly, as the long years went on, he worked his way upward from the unit to the type and from the type to the symbol, the more he was inclined to accept legalized authority as a law of Nature. But as Goethe's style, like every other old man's, tended to become a tissue of formalities, it would now and then break out into such grotesque servilities as those

cited above; yet in truth they signified no more than his symbolic sense of kingship, his punctiliousness, and the fixed determination of a master-spirit—living, under the pressure of genius, an inward life of the utmost intensity—to come to a dispassionate understanding with the powers of this world, rather than hotly to contend with them as in his earlier years.

In the same way, those so-called " dumb audiences " in the course of which Goethe scarcely spoke at all, were really no more than the outcome of tediousness or tactlessness on the part of his visitors, whom he saw to be attracted merely by curiosity, with its inevitable result of futile conversation-making. On these occasions he would deal out such platitudes as: " How do you like Weimar? There's a good deal of intellectual life in the place, don't you think? We've done our best in that line, at any rate."

But anyone who had something to contribute would be surprised by the epic hospitality of his reception. With both hands extended Goethe would welcome young men who had written a good book or painted a fine picture. Scholars and artists, when they pleased him, were invited to luncheon every day of their stay in Weimar. On the second occasion, he would beg these birds of passage to go on from the precise point they had reached the day before. Young men had to submit to sitting down while he, standing, handed them sketch after sketch to look at.

For such guests there were all sorts of amenities—he would call upon the whole table to admire a good remark; but if the guest told an anecdote for the general ear, everyone waited to see whether Goethe testified his approval. If he toasted the painter Cornelius, everyone followed his example; even old Meyer, for whom no good thing came out of that Nazareth, had to toe the line—for this was a question of art-politics.

Moreover, Goethe would send his own tame portrait-painter to the hotel that he might sketch these interesting guests for his collection. Finally the " Goethe-Order " would be conferred. There were three classes of this:

a Goethe-medal in copper—by Bovy or Rauch—which in the last ten years he lavished so generously that he would send his various agents several copies for free distribution to the deserving. The same head in silver was given only to a few intimates; three, at the most, received the gold medal. When Goethe felt disinclined to hear Tieck read *Clavigo* aloud, Ottilie handed to Tieck's daughter some scarf-pins with Goethe's likeness on them, by way of compensation. On the evening of Carl August's Jubilee Goethe threw his house open in true regal fashion—everyone who liked could come in for wine and cake.

Sometimes he gave a formal evening tea-party. When all the guests had assembled and been welcomed by Ottilie and August, Goethe would appear in evening-dress, wearing his Star, with his hair beautifully done (he still had it singed every second day), holding himself bolt upright by sheer will-power, and would speak to each individual guest as a king does. Then the various groups would converse in low voices, intimates looking forward to the moment when the strain should be relaxed by his departure.

This extraordinary stiffness of demeanour in the old man who only yesterday would have been chatting over his wine or in the garden—this apparent affectation, the legend of which could for a century distort our conception of Goethe in his old age, was in truth no more than the outcome of embarrassment. The man who had most insight into Goethe's nature—that is, the Chancellor—told interesting visitors, whom he saw to be disappointed, of this psychological trait in the veteran; and everything else we know of Goethe's demeanour points to the same conclusion. Had it not been for this, he could have done himself justice as the brilliant, humorous man of the world that he was; yet it was men of that calibre who most noticed how frequently, on ceremonious occasions, he would be difficult and out of humour. The stiffness for which the Leipzig student—nay, even the schoolboy—had been derided, was now a mannerism to conceal the infirmities of old age. Scepticism had developed into

misanthropy—and this, together with everlasting preoccupation of mind (for he was as chary of his time as of his highest favours) united to bewilder visitors, and posterity into the bargain.

Yet when a young painter, on taking leave, kissed Goethe's hand, the old man laid both hands upon his head as if to bless him for his journey.

Grillparzer had three days to judge by. Disappointed, on the first, to find his ideal as straitlaced as a Spanish king, he would have preferred not to go near him on the next. But to his utter amazement, on the second occasion the old gentleman led him to the table with his own hand. Grillparzer was moved to tears, which Goethe was tactful enough to prevent anyone else from noticing. At table the guest kept crumbling his bread, and for a long time never noticed that Goethe, beside him, was gathering every crumb into a little heap with one finger. On the third day the garden was the place of audience; Goethe was walking up and down in his dressing-gown and the little peaked cap. " Infinitely touching," said the young poet. " He looked something between a king and one's father."

One day two Russian noblemen, brothers, arrived at Goethe's house—men of the world, a rare type of guest in that circle; and in the description given by one of them (who was an accomplished horseman, a traveller, a libertine, a patron of art, and there an end of him), we see this singular community under a fresh light. To him the intellectual arrogance of that narrow self-centred society seemed absurdly pretentious; and when at a large reception these aristocratic Russians found themselves looked upon as a species of queer foreign birds, and rather tactlessly interrogated about serfdom, while Goethe sat by in silence and seemed to revel in their embarrassment—this gentleman suddenly turned the tables and very loudly launched at him some far-reaching questions about his writings, their origin and intention, while the company sat round in silent consternation. Instead of Goethe, a

professor undertook to answer; and when the Russian, irritated, begged him to speak French and the professor retorted that what he was saying could only be comprecunsible in German, the Russian revenged himself by the hetting remark that he believed, like Byron, that Goethe was nowhere so misunderstood as in Germany. Goethe changed the thorny subject by asking if supper was ready. Stiff and laconic with the Russian, he nevertheless shot a couple of stolen glances at him, which did not seem to be angry ones.

The next morning the Count was surprised at being invited to take a drive with the poet. "Yesterday," said Goethe, in the carriage, "you let fall some valuable remarks which made me anxious to know you better, for I am like Voltaire in this—that I desire nothing so ardently as the praise of those who refuse me their applause." Then he opened his mind about the worthlessness of fame, the pure love of humanity which had inspired all his works, saying that Byron had understood him better than the Germans did, only unfortunately he had never heard anything very directly about Byron's opinion of him. The Russian, who saw what Goethe wanted, had in fact seen a good deal of Byron in Venice—and that in his character of libertine and gambler.

So he had many a titbit for Goethe, and these were thoroughly appreciated; but he took care not to impart all Byron's comments. For Byron—so this Russian informs us—had often spoken of Goethe's hypocrisy with a great deal of humour but very little reverence, and had once said of him that he was an old fox who never came out of his den, and from there took a very high tone indeed. He had called *Werther* and *Elective Affinities* such skits upon marriage as Mephisto himself could not have bettered, both novels ending on so strongly ironical a note. Instead of these sallies, the Russian retailed only Byron's genuine admiration for Goethe's achievement as a whole. But Goethe very eagerly explained to his astonished companion that most of that achievement was in the Second *Faust*—wherefore the Germans would one day declare it to be the most tedious of all his works.



AGED 79

This anecdote is a tragi-comic revelation of the narrowness of Goethe's social life at the end of his career—for what could be more grotesque than the anxiety of a very old man to win the confidence of an aristocratic cosmopolitan roué, who had nothing to contribute but a few remarks of Byron's about Goethe, dropped between women and wine at the Carnival of Venice? To say nothing of the cautious way the young cavalier avoided telling anything that might wound the old gentleman! Since the Herder and Schiller days, Goethe had perhaps never listened with such eagerness to a verdict upon himself as on that morning drive with a nobody of a Crimean Count whom he barely knew—for when he spoke of Voltaire's jealous craving, he was not thinking of the Count, but of Byron.

What could fame signify to him now? In his youth it had not dazzled him; in his middle-age its default had sometimes embittered him; when he began to grow old he had included it, as a hard-won treasure, in the catalogue of his possessions; now it was a factor with which to reckon when something had to be achieved.

For now the old man was world-renowned, as he had not been since he was twenty-five; and truly it was a hard-won treasure, and centuries would not behold it fade! The youth of France made pilgrimages to Weimar, bringing translations and tributes; Carlyle begged for a testimonial from the German Goethe, to support his candidacy for a chair in a Scottish University; from England came a letter addressed "To His Highness, Prince Goethe"; and the young Berlioz, dedicating his *Damnation de Faust* to him, erased the word Monsieur in his letter, to improve it into "Monseigneur"! Geologists named a stone after Goethe; one German king sent him the cast of an antique he had procured, another that of a recently excavated Jupiter, and a third the old grandfather's-clock which had once struck the hours in his ancestral home.

But amid all this homage, he was not to be led away by

the seductions of Fame—many decades had taught him too much about her fickleness!

"In reality, they were never satisfied with me. . . . When I had laboured day and night at some piece of work, the world demanded, over and above, that I should prostrate myself in gratitude because it found the thing tolerable. When they applauded me, I was not to be so vain as to take it for a tribute; no, they expected some modest phrase of self-depreciation. But as I was strong-minded enough to show exactly what I felt, they called me arrogant, and to this day they call me so! . . . And of my lyrics, which survives? One or another may be sung now and again by a pretty girl at her piano, but for the real public they're as dead as mutton. . . . I'll tell you a secret—my things could never be popular . . . they are only for the few who desire and look out for that kind of thing, and are doing something like it themselves."

When the engraver Schwerdgeburth, in Goethe's last months, expressed a desire to make a drawing of him, he said he did not wish to be done again. But while he was giving his reasons for this refusal, the artist was devouring him with his eyes. He rushed home, drew him from memory, brought Ottilie the sketch; she showed it to her father-in-law—and, conquered by its excellence, the old man offered to sit as often as the artist liked. Even in his last days he eagerly inquired how the engraving was getting on. Thus, it appears, did Goethe wish posterity to see him. But when the Frankfurt Memorial, about which he had had some correspondence, fell through, he jotted down this haughtily ironic epigram:

"Zu Goethe's Denkmal was zahlst du jetzt?"
Fragt dieser, jener, und der.
Hätt' ich mir nicht selbst ein Denkmal gesetzt,
Das Denkmal, wo käm' es denn her?[1]

[1] "What price the Goethe Memorial now?"
Says he, and the same says she.
If I had not erected my own somehow,
Where *would* the Memorial be?

To complete this Memorial of his own, to round off his work, to protect it, became Goethe's last passion; and so far as that task involved him in worldly affairs, it shows the man of seventy-five as equal to the most exacting demands of business.

For now, and not till now, he grasped his works as a whole. He had begun by regarding them as "Vestigia," and had half unwittingly, and then only piecemeal, collected these mementoes of his long pilgrimage; but now, when at this last his personality was in solution, when fellow-creatures and affections, the past and the present, all swam before his gaze as symbols of the whole, remotely distant—now there came to pass what had come to pass with other artists in youth or at any rate in middle-age. Goethe began to forget his life, from whose ever-climbing crest those works had fallen to him as fruits may fall—and he discovered that though the trunk was withering away, the fruits would endure, for they were apples from the Garden of the Hesperides.

With amazing energy, with a nervous eagerness, impatience, and enthusiasm which seemed to say that this was the one chance left for salvage of the grand total, he set about making a final collection of his works, after a method never before attempted by anyone. He gathered round him a group of five men, including Riemer and Eckermann, and gave each a share in the critical and grammatical revision of all the text for sixty volumes, of which twenty were not to appear till after his death. He included all his magazine-writings, was indefatigable in arranging and re-arranging; and kept this up, as of yore his Ministerial labours, no matter what new work he was engaged in—for four whole years!

And what was the good of it, in the end? Could not the German commentators have done nearly as much, leaving Goethe to reserve his own time and energies for fresh productions? Was it not only an excessively subtle form of his characteristic pedantry?

No; it was more. It was a daemonic determination to

bring order, with his own hands, into the infinite endeavour, the straggling abundance; and so from a hundred separate works to shape, when all was done, a new, a single masterpiece—the Life-work of Goethe.

But above all he wanted, by this achievement, to leave his house in order after the grand manner. Behind him stood his son, driving the old man on to "cut up well" when his eyes should be closed in death.

And so Goethe began by mustering up everyone he knew in the way of powerful personages—Kings and Dukes, Ambassadors, Ministers, and noblemen, to the end that Germany and its great ones should grant him a fifty-years' copyright, thus protecting his work for wellnigh two generations.

But once he was in possession of this magic key, still greater pressure was put upon him by his family to get the great business finished once for all.

Endless disagreeable negotiations—in the course of which Goethe himself dictated proposals "on my father's behalf" to be signed by August, thus submitting to the urgency of his heirs—led to friction with Cotta. In these incidents Goethe appears as the aggressive author, half-persuasive, half-menacing, while the publisher smoothes him down by tactful prevarications.

When all was settled Goethe declared he had got very much the better of the publisher, and wrote two highly excited letters, one immediately after the other, with his own hand to Boisserée, who had acted as agent. He said that he looked upon him as Hercules coming to the help of Prometheus, and concluded with the heartfelt cry: "If you knew what I have gone through this year, you would not think such comparisons exaggerated!" Another hint at the pressure put upon him by the unsympathetic heirs who from their ambush lashed the aged poet mercilessly on.

Such was the passion which informed the veteran's anticipation of the completed great edition. There was a kindred monomania in his retrospect on his own life. He now

regarded it as little more than the instrument of those works; and so he was for the most part critical in his view of the course it had taken—often bitter, many times enraged. His survey was vehement and unjust, in these days, even of what his life in the great world had brought him; he grudged his misdirected efforts and his wasted time. "My only pleasure was my poetic meditation and creation. But how sadly that was disturbed, restricted, and hindered by my public position! If I had held more aloof from official and business-affairs and claims, and been able to live more alone, I should have been a happier man, and have done far more as a writer. But it was written that the wise words spoken to me soon after my *Götz* and my *Werther* should be proved true: 'If a man has once done anything for love of humanity, humanity takes good care that he shan't do it again.'"

When he considered the colossal achievement of Lope de Vega, he regretted not having stuck more to his own craft. If he had remained in his summer-villa, he could have prosecuted his Nature-study with ever-increasing insight. If Schiller had not lured him on to aesthetic experiments, he would have had more in the way of actual achievement to show. And were not his earlier works, written from sheer intuition, when he *knew* nothing, sufficient proof that a man does not need knowledge of the world before he can represent it?

It was thus that Goethe, reflecting, lamented his wasted youth; and he went on to lay stress on the contrast between the body of an adolescent, which is an ally to his energies, and that of an old man, which is their adversary. True, he had lived strictly by the best régime that science then knew how to prescribe—changing his food and drink from time to time so as not to be dependent on any, avoiding highly spiced dishes, being solicitous about sleep and wine, as productive of energy; and his health had been consistently good except for the inflammations which close work and shortsightedness repeatedly caused in his retina. How well he could take his wine is shown by his prowess

at an Archery-banquet given one autumn, when he—at seventy-eight—could drink the young men under the table. But from his eightieth year onwards he was more abstemious in this respect, and contented himself with a glass of madeira and a bottle of light Würzburger a day.

Yet there were moods in which retrospection on his endeavour and frustrations went deeper, piercing to the core of his being. On a few autograph sheets—fragments on no particular theme and in no sequence—he (probably not until this period) communed with himself in this dispassionate, stern strain: "I have never known a more presumptuous human being than myself.... I never could believe that anything was to be striven for—I always thought I already possessed it. If a crown had been set upon my head, I should have taken it as a matter of course. And yet I was, in every fibre, a man like other men. But because I was always trying to put through something I had been fascinated by, which was beyond my powers, and to merit something which had been granted me, and was beyond my deserts—I do discriminate between myself and the man who is really no more than a visionary. First it was my follies which made me objectionable to other people, and then my serious aims. So do what I would, I was alone."

"I was conscious of noble, lofty aims, but could never grasp the conditions under which I had to work. I was well aware of my deficiencies, and of my redundancies too; and so I was always trying to develop myself both outwardly and inwardly. And yet I remained as I was. I pursued my every aim earnestly, with all my strength and all my loyalty; and I did often succeed in wholly overcoming adverse circumstances, but often too was broken by them, because I could not learn to concede and evade. And so my life went by in doing and enjoying, suffering and resisting, amidst the love, satisfaction, hatred, dissatisfaction of others. Let him who has known a like destiny, look in this mirror."

They are like a Largo on the organ in his Temple of

Life—these sonorous phrases in which he seems to speak for Destiny, calling upon him to review his course. In them Goethe surveys with "cold commemorative eyes" the strivings and the frustrations imposed upon him by his nature—but that "And yet," which sounds in the heart of each fragment, suffuses the dark stormy atmosphere of those self-revelations with the warm sense of tears in human things.

These gentler moods would also bring some colour into the old man's retrospect, in that they induced remembrance of the women in his life. It is true that he gives but an impersonal sort of summary; and we find it difficult to believe that it is a man untiring in his devotion to women who says, at last: "Women are silver dishes, in which we lay our apples of gold. My idea of women has not been divorced from actualities; but it was born in me, or else came to exist in me, God knows how. So my female characters have all been indulgently conceived; they are better than those one encounters in real life."

This glacial comment was doubtless inspired by annoyance at the eternal curiosity about the original models for his personages.

Soon after their parting he wrote a few friendly letters to Ulrike's mother, clearing up all misunderstandings, and always inquiring for the whole family. When he met Minna Herzlieb again, twenty years after their farewell to each other, he said it was a strange sensation, and spoke of her charming, pretty manners; and now he gave the last of the sonnets to the world—that charade upon her name. Whether he ever heard of Lotte Kestner's death, we do not know.

When Frau von Stein, now in her eighty-fourth year, congratulated him for the last time on his birthday, he answered with some vague lines of verse, and concluded: "The enclosed poem, my dearest, ought really to end: 'But to find affection and love enduring for so many a long year in the lives of such close neighbours is the very best and highest blessing that can be granted to mortals.' And

so for evermore! Goethe." Strange, that for the woman with whom his intercourse had been longest he could find nothing better than such stilted prose to express the sublimation of experience, now so familiar to his own spirit!

Marianne alone was still a living memory—because he never saw her again. To the end she remained for him the incarnation of pure blitheness of spirit, and of a passion for which art had been the only medium. He wrote to her often, and with his own hand: "Open your dear heart to me again, turn your sweet eyes to me" . . . so he would say, when she was too long silent.

Even his dead friends he seldom now called to mind. There is hardly a word of Lavater, an occasional allusion to Merck and Jacobi; and Herder, with whom he had never been able to strike just the right note, is most frequently mentioned. And when Eckermann (who knew *Dichtung und Wahrheit* by heart) speaks with Goethe of these men, and also of the women of Goethe's younger days, exactly as though they were historical characters, there is something eerie in the thought that the old man sitting by the big stove and answering his questions is one and the same person as the man in the book.

Schiller gave him a great deal to work upon. Their friendship is immortalized in what might be called an extensive dossier; and so, crown-witness as it were for Goethe's middle-period, Schiller is continually in the box. When Goethe was revising this dossier, he felt that Schiller's letters were more pregnant than his own, and he contrasts them as though he had never before laid eyes on the correspondence. But to Zelter he had something to say in strictest privacy: "Yet in truth there is something really instructive in the situation—two men, equally ardent in the pursuit of their aims, throw precious time away because they are both over-intellectualized, and moreover excited and perturbed by outside matters; so that in the end we have nothing that can be called a truly valuable outcome of their powers, tendencies, and points of view." Thus we see that he had come to regard the work

of this decade—which has been thought so important—as purely experimental.

Meanwhile it had been decided that Schiller's remains must be removed from their unworthy surroundings. Goethe was prominent in this exhumation; the moment came when Schiller's skull was brought to him for identification. And in the grinning object Goethe not only discerned the genius of the man—he had the courage to put the skull into a poem! The poet's soul took fire from the scientist's vision, and leaped into a glorious blaze of inspiration.

> . . . Wie mich geheimnisvoll die Form entzückte!
> Die gottgedachte Spur, die sich erhalten!
> Ein Blick, der mich an jenes Meer entrückte,
> Das flutend strömt gesteigerte Gestalten. . . .
> Geheim Gefäss! Orakelsprüche spendend!
> Wie bin ich wert, dich in der Hand zu halten,
> Dich höchsten Schatz aus Moder fromm entwendend
> Und in die freie Luft, zu freiem Sinnen,
> Zum Sonnenlicht andächtig hin mich wendend?
> Was kann der Mensch im Leben mehr gewinnen,
> Als dass sich Gott-Natur ihm offenbare:
> Wie sie das Feste lässt zu Geist verrinnen,
> Wie sie das Geisterzeugte fest bewahre.[1]

What other scientist has ever been privileged to behold thus transfigured the relics of a human existence? What artist, to put the experience into such lambent words with

[1] That form—I gazed in awe and fascination!
Upon it still the stamp of thought supreme!
A sight that rapt me hence in contemplation
Of radiant hosts that people shores of dream. . . .
Chalice occult, thine oracles outpouring,
Set in this hand unworthy thou dost seem
To bid me turn, the grave like thee ignoring,
And, opening all my sense to open Heaven,
Feel the broad sunlight bathe my brow adoring!
What holier boon has life to mortals given
Than thus God-Nature's mysteries to range—
See how pure mind the stubborn bone can leaven,
See how the mind-engendered mocks at change!

the cold skull between his hands? What friend, thus fearlessly to ignore his memories, his tenderness, and—where survivors are wont to weep and shudder—be conscious only of the "incessant soul" in Nature? Nowhere else does the warm stream of Goethe's ultimate sense of the cosmos so interpenetrate the ice of his impersonal intellect.

And while he was writing those glowing lines he was assisting the anatomists to assemble Schiller's bones; he was ordering designs for a little chapel, near the Royal Vault, in which he was to be laid at Schiller's side—yet, occupied with these things, he could close a letter telling a friend about them all with: "Work, while yet it is day!"

Still more instinct with emotion was Goethe's last Italian retrospect. He seemed determined to make those two years historic as the zenith of his life: "Yes, I may say that only in Rome did I feel what it really means to be a man. I never again touched such heights of exalted, enraptured sensibility. Compared with what I felt in Rome, I was never truly happy again." Was he conscious that it was not only Rome—that it was freedom, above all, which had made him so peculiarly happy there?

At eighty he had young acacia-trees planted with branches so grafted as to hang downwards, because they reminded him of orange-trees; and the division of his affections between the North and the South seems typified in his sending the gardener in Jena some grains for planting, taken by him from ears of Sicilian corn those forty years ago.

The old man's outlook on the times to come was quite in keeping with his review of those gone by—looking back, he was critical of details; looking forward, of things in general. Everything that opened a wider field for action was irresistibly attractive to his tireless spirit; everything that brought the nations nearer to one another charmed his super-national feeling. Steamships and the acceleration of mails were stimulating to his imagination; in the *Wanderjahre* he foresees a successful experiment in tele-

graphy accomplishing the great end of wiring the course of time both by day and night all over the world—for he insisted on Time being held in the utmost respect as the highest gift of God to men. He sent most of his " wanderers " to America, as a final resort; for he admired the new outlook—in those days unsophisticated too—of her young men.

So far he could welcome the nineteenth century, which he saw as shedding the spirit of Romanticism for that of productive energy. But though he was thus prescient of the international and socialistic ideas of our twentieth century, Goethe did not fail to indicate the dangers implicit in over-population, financial expansion, speed, machines, and the Mechanical Age in general. He was fond of calling it the " velocipedic " age, said he would not care to be young in " such an utterly artificial century," held riches and rapidity of communication to be corrupters of the youth of the period, and thought they tended to encourage mediocrity. " I cannot help thinking that the greatest evil of our times, impatient of slow growth as they are, is that one moment is swallowed up in the next, one day squandered for the sake of the next, and that people thus live from hand to mouth and take no time to dwell upon anything whatever. Why, we can get a newspaper at every hour of the day! . . . And hence every single thing that anyone does, attempts, writes—nay, every single thing he even hopes to do—is dragged into the light of publicity. No one may be glad or sorry, but all the rest must batten on it; and so the vortex spreads from house to house, from city to city, from realm to realm, and in the end from continent to continent, with incredible velocity."

He certainly may be called a seer in that passage; and writing to Zelter in a similar strain he concluded with the proudly prophetic words: " Let us preserve, so far as we may, the principles to which we were born; then we, with perhaps a few others, shall be the last representatives of an epoch whose like will not soon be seen again."

The enormous amount of work done by Goethe in the last eight years of his life was almost entirely that of a writer, and a writer was what he finally felt himself—as in the past—to be. The revision of finished works, the completion of those begun, represent only a portion of his labours. His official position and his fame no longer pressed so hard upon him, and anything he was called upon to do in those respects could be done by letter. It is in this period that his letters rank with his conversations as part of the Goethe canon: there are from three to four hundred for every year.

He pursued a similar method to that with his visitors. Only those who had something to contribute were answered quickly. He found it more arduous work than in the past; and liked his letters to be dispatched directly he had dictated them, for when he read the fair copy next day he was often dissatisfied—and then he would put off his answer for weeks. Frequently he would stop at the end of a page—in the middle of a sentence, or even of a word; and conclude with a promise to continue, which he would do, after weeks had gone by, with the very same word. And so it once came to pass that Goethe implored one friend to get another to forgive him—he having found the latter's last letter of twenty-three years ago still unanswered when he was arranging his papers!

For he could not teach himself a curt business-like style of answering. On important letters, often filling several pages of print, he would call in Riemer to advise him; for Goethe never really mastered either punctuation or correct spelling, and whenever he wrote with his own hand, the orthography is that of the rococo-period.

He became addicted to ceremonious ways of signing himself—we find an instance of *hochachtungsvoll ergebenst* (Your most respectful and obedient servant); and even to those he knew best he nearly always signed his full name. But for his few friends there would usually be some special little flight of fancy at the end; not now " Love me," but such vaguer phrases as " And thus to the end of time," or

"For ever and ever." On very rare occasions he would conclude with a boyish appeal: "Indulgence! Sympathy! Goodwill!"

These letters range over every province of the mind; and if we combine them with his short studies and essays on artistic and scientific matters (which now filled fresh volumes), Goethe will seem to us, in the end, like a composer who spends blissful evening-hours at his piano, playing variations on the themes of his works.

While he was reading Scott, Manzoni, Victor Hugo in the originals; while he was writing studies in the minor modes, and sealing them up like a boy until Zelter sent *his* for comparison; while he was reading, on an average, one octavo volume a day—he was also writing on Serbian folk-poetry, inquiring for the passage in Vitruvius where he decries fresco-painting, arguing about Mondragone's head of Antinous, about the difference between the haloes in the wall-paintings of Pompeii and of the Catacombs, answering questions upon the kind of stone used in the building of an antique Roman fortress in Bohemia, and finding, after a Jamaican visitor had been with him, that his information about that island was "pleasantly refreshed." Simultaneously he would be writing about water-caltrops, mango-seeds, Batavian vegetation; about Mexican mines, Heligoland granite, and stearine-acids, about soot from plants, cuckoo-spit, and the entrails of the kangaroo.

His purely literary work took three principal forms in this final period—the lyrics, the *Wanderjahre*, and the second *Faust* are the last monuments of the octogenarian poet.

Ripe wisdom falls naturally into a sententious form—and so some hundreds of *Zahme Xenien* (*Tame Epigrams*) are one of the principal legacies of his last decade. He liked the method, and used it for syllogisms upon God, upon reason and the universe, art and politics, his adversaries, contemporary productions, and the spirit of the age. With these may be classed some other hundreds of short apophthegms addressed to individuals.

It was only very rarely that a lyric poem shed its tranquil planetary radiance upon these intellectual fireworks. Only once (at any rate until he was eighty) does such a star shine forth, as though miraculously—equal to the supreme creations of his muse; and ultimately the outmoded "Luna" makes her appearance, as though the hoary poet were fondly recalling his juvenile effort:

Dämmrung senkte sich von oben. . . .[1]

On the other hand, the two final volumes of *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* display all the eccentricities of old age. The profoundest prophecies upon social and academic matters, a golden rain of wisdom in the form of aphorisms, are here mixed up with passages which are either too prolix or too confused to capture the attention.

If we read, together with this novel, the exquisite short stories of the same period (whose subjects had, thirty years earlier, been fortunate enough to elude the hexameter) it is clear that failing creative energy was not the essential reason for this deterioration in the *Wanderjahre*. It was rather that Goethe regarded the work as the great larder of his old age, and crammed into it things which properly belonged to newspaper-articles or letters.

And then, all of a sudden, the whole thing blazes up into so splendid a final chapter that we ask ourselves if this is not poetry in the disguise of prose! But not at all—for a pregnant parenthesis makes us feel as though saluted by a stiff-necked Indomitable: "*To be continued.*"

Goethe's dread was of having to add a similar parenthesis to *Faust*. True, *Meister* had been with him almost as long as *Faust* had, and no less urgently; but he felt that the former was a pastime, the latter a parable of life; and so he devoted his last, his sublimest powers to the poem first conceived nearly sixty years ago:

In goldnen Frühlings-Sonnen-Stunden
Lag ich gebunden

[1] Twilight mists from heaven were falling.

An dies Gesicht.
In holder Dunkelheit der Sinnen
Konnt' ich wohl diesen Traum beginnen—
Vollenden nicht.[1]

The more he felt that here alone could he display all his genius, the more passionately did he desire to rescue *Faust* from its fragmentary state. It was impossible that he should regard the first part as anything but a fragment—and yet it is as though he dreaded the sight of the manuscript, as though his genius were awaiting some external impulse which should stir that valley of dry bones.

Just then, Byron died.

Goethe, already fired by the poet's Greek campaign, was now kindled afresh. To him that figure of Byron was simply incommensurable, and—between his critical faculty and his infatuation—he involved himself in a labyrinth of contradictions. Of no men did he talk so constantly in his old age, nor did he reflect so much on any (Schiller excepted), as Napoleon and Byron. He never unravelled the enigma of either, and indeed said little of their actions and works, but much of their personalities and careers. Before Byron's death he had divined the real motive—desperation—for that Grecian adventure which at first he had regarded as pure heroism; he even came to describe it as a means of recreation, since a genius could not but be exhausted after such works; and when he heard of the death he was not overwhelmed, and said it had come at the right moment for Byron and poetry.

But, dead or alive, Byron haunted him perpetually. He had too well discerned in that phenomenon the alternative possibilities of a poet's life, barred to him by his chosen destiny. A few months sufficed to make him again

[1] When April's golden voices called me,
This face enthralled me
Long, long ago.
Englamoured then by youth and passion,
The dream I could begin to fashion,
But finish—no!

see Byron as a radiant unblemished being, a "latter-day Lycurgus or Solon"—had he but survived; and he ended a poem on his death with the passionate words:

Lasst ihn der Historia,
Bändigt euer Sehnen,
Ewig bleibt ihm Gloria,
Bleiben uns die Tränen.[1]

Not long afterwards he deplored the lawlessness which had ruined Byron. He had then been reading some English articles upon the Greek War and Byron's death.

About this time, a year after the tragedy of Missolonghi, he spent an entire February evening in talking of the scapegrace poet. Now he cast all the blame upon Byron's rank, told anecdote after anecdote, and was "inexhaustible" on the topic.

And in that same February Goethe, in the seventy-sixth year of his life, untied the string he had fastened round the *Faust* manuscript when he was fifty-two. Helen, sketched nearly thirty years ago in a few hundred lines, now came to life in a flash—through the remembrance of Byron; and when Goethe thus recalled his spirits from the vasty deep, the whole work, at one stroke, awoke from its trance-like sleep.

A visitor tells us that Goethe spoke of Byron as a father may speak of a son. And into a son he now made him—Byron became Euphorion, Faust's son by Helen. That was the highest honour Goethe could bestow—and the only means by which he could lay Byron's ghost.

Indubitably it is to him, as the Boy-Charioteer, that Goethe speaks (in the First Act) as Plutus-Faust. No poet but might envy Byron that recalling!

Wenn's nötig ist, dass ich dir Zeugnis leiste,
So sag' ich gern: Bist Geist von meinem Geiste.

[1] Leave him to Story!
Crave not more years-
His be the glory,
Ours be the tears.

Du handelst stets nach meinem Sinn,
Bist reicher, als ich selber bin. . . .
Ein wahres Wort verkünd' ich allen:
Mein lieber Sohn, an dir hab' ich Gefallen.[1]

On one other man only did Goethe ever in his life confer the title of son. That was the farmer, Batty, from whom he had learnt husbandry at thirty. But the Boy-Byron is made to answer Goethe thus:

So acht' ich mich als werten Abgesandten,
So lieb' ich dich als nächsten Anverwandten.
Wo du verweilst, ist Fülle. Wo ich bin,
Fühlt jeder sich im herrlichsten Gewinn. . . .
Bin der Poet, der sich vollendet,
Wenn er sein eigenst Gut verschwendet.[2]

The second *Faust*—as Goethe remarked—ranges from the burning of Troy to the taking of Missolonghi; and yet, though he could jestingly say: " It would be too amazing if I really brought it off! " he could not get rid of the uncomfortable feeling that it *was* beyond his power to finish it. When he began to work at it again, he first wrote the long-drafted conclusion, and then the *Helena*, hitherto a mere interlude. At the last moment he suppressed an introductory passage in which he had thought of preparing for her appearance and making the transitions smoother. Instead, he suffered the Interlude to stand by itself as a surprise, in the first edition of his Works.

The success achieved by the Interlude so stimulated this

[1] If I must needs bear witness, from my heart
I gladly say : Soul of my soul thou art.
Ever for me thine actions shine,
And thou hast riches more than mine. . .
For all I make this proclamation :
Dear son, thou hast my approbation.

[2] Thy proud ambassador myself is now,
So loving thee as nearest kin wert thou.
Thou dwellest in thy fullness. I on men
Lavish a splendour erst beyond their ken. . . .
The poet I, who best himself fulfils,
When recklessly his holiest wine he spills.

poet of seventy-eight, who certainly had not been spoiled by over-appreciation, that he now entered upon long digressions both prospective and retrospective. But he was saddened by the inevitable discovery that, at nearly eighty, he no longer had the same creative abundance as at fifty and during the *Divan* period. Now: " I can work only in the morning hours, when I feel refreshed by sleep and have not yet been put off by the little everyday worries. And even so, how much do I accomplish! At the very best one written page; as a rule no more than one could write on the palm of one's hand; and often, in an unproductive mood, even less than that."

No matter which we take for comparison, this second *Faust* is the most effective stage-play that Goethe had written since the dramas of his youth. He knew this and was glad of it, and often said the conclusion was operatic. So that, aesthetically speaking, it is an important legacy as representing Goethe's lifelong wrestle, half-affectionate, half-hostile, with the dramatic form—a wrestle in which he never wholly conquered.

For he was by no means first the dramatic, then the epic, and finally the lyric, poet. The *Divan* and the second *Faust* are far more indicative of the great curve which makes him seem, at last, to hover lovingly over his early works. After having scorned the stage for decades and resolutely ignored his own dramatic efforts, he declared in his eightieth year that he would have liked to dictate a comic and a tragic piece, each in a week, if there had only been a few decent actors left in Weimar. " For a closet-play is no use at all. The poet must know what instruments he has to work with, and he must write his parts with full knowledge of the people who are going to play them." But that was precisely what Goethe never did; and even of the one apparent exception—*Iphigenie*—it cannot be said for certain how far the character was an anticipation or a portrait of the lovely Corona.

A tragic turn of mind, which at this last became evident in various ways, is clearly to be perceived in the realm of his

art. In *Tasso* and *Iphigenie* (he said at this time) he had been able to colour the idealistic material with the sensual emotions of youth; but now he preferred material which (like the motley world of the second *Faust*) was itself in some sort sensual; and he often regretted not having written, in his twenties, half a dozen pieces like *Clavigo*. For it was not until late in life—and too late for his happiness!—that Goethe perceived how the richness of his youth might have abounded in its own sense, might have enhanced his life with its own exuberance; and how seriousness and melancholy, passivity, all that his daemon signified, had cheated even the poet in him of the moment which was now irretrievable. He would in these days often speak of that tardy recognition of the right tactics which comes upon a man when the campaign is over.

It was only now at the end that Goethe again professed the creed of spontaneous, as it were hallucinatory, creation, from which at one time he had declared he must escape to lucid possession of himself, to clarity and consciously pursued development—"if he were to survive!" After his long struggle for classic serenity (even when the Muse was prompting), after his perpetual theorizing about poetry and his frequent obedience to his theories, he now finished by applauding that which was the outcome of a vague poetic impulse, of a beautiful accident as it were; he scouted all inquiries about the "idea" in *Faust*, in *Tasso*, and cared only for the sensuous appeal that they might have.

Indeed, when in its final phase we set ourselves to solve the great enigma of his soul, it is anything but harmony that we perceive in the picture so nearly finished. Neither love nor serenity, neither contemplativeness nor wise indulgence, characterizes the Goethe of this decade. He is equally removed from Zeus and from Apollo—a defiant youth, a restless man, a stoical veteran confronts us now, whose aim is a purely literary one, though to him it shows as universal. It is only by the greatest perspicacity that we

shall be able to discern the organic connection between the warring forces.

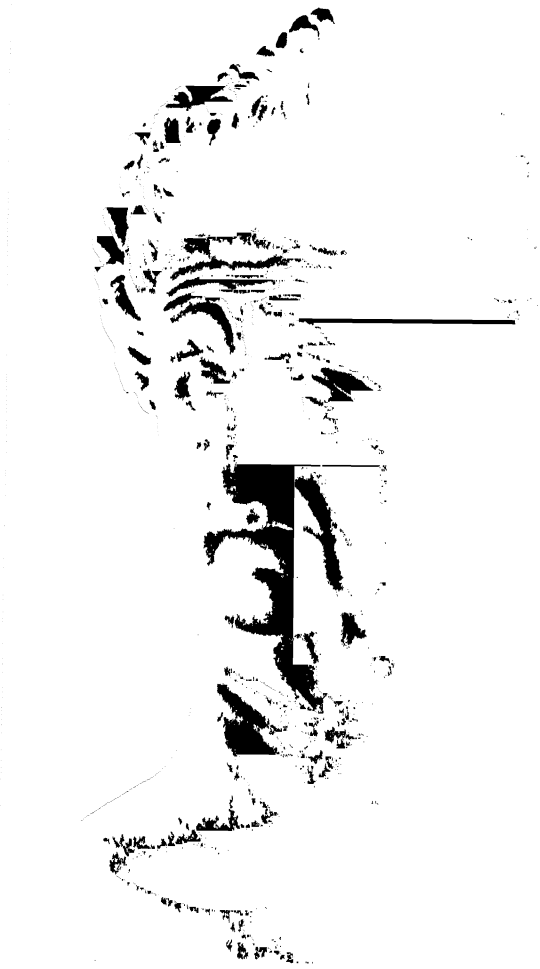
Vigour is predominant. *Faust* had slumbered in him for twenty years; and when he waked him from his haunted dreams in the beginning of the Second Part, the first word spoken by the sleeper refreshed was: "*Des Lebens Pulse schlagen frisch lebendig!*"[1] The cry might be taken as a parable of Goethe's final period.

He flung himself like a boy into the business of completing his works, for at his advanced age he felt that death was drawing nearer every day. To this final outburst of energy it is not alone the result which testifies, but the splendid words of proud humility which he utttered in confidence to his most intimate friends:

"Every morning challenges us to do what in us lies, and await possibilities.... Since God and his Nature have given me so many years for my possession, I know not what better I should do with them than express my grateful recognition by working like a young man. I want to show myself worthy of the blessings I have received, and I spend my days and nights in thinking and doing all I may to that end. 'Days and nights' is no mere phrase, for many and many of the sleepless nights that a man of my age must spend are dedicated—not to aphorisms and general ideas, but to planning very carefully what I intend to do on the morrow.... And so I perhaps do more, and think to more purpose, in my doled-out days than others who can look forward to a longer future, who have the right to believe in and reckon on the day after to-morrow, and days and days after that."

And the old man was so adamantine in endeavour that he once accused himself of the "two greatest errors"—procrastination and hurry; and it was now that the whole question of how to keep research and daily life from encroaching on one another was decisively summed-up in the fine saying: "The highest art, both in study and social life, consists in turning your problem into a postulate—

[1] The vital pulses beat with life renewed!



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that's the way to get through." Did ever anyone more forcibly state the case for work as the core of life than the veteran poet in that monumental utterance?

It was just such a manful steady gaze, objective and unregretful, that Goethe in his ripest years could bend upon Eros:

> Und ringsum ist alles vom Feuer entronnen;
> So herrsche denn Eros, der alles begonnen! [1]

In that mighty Chorus of the Sirens the great line of cleavage is drawn through the second *Faust*, and the clarion note of his life peals out once more.

Everything now—even Eros—was pressed into the one service of "heightening his faculties," an expression which frequently recurs in these concluding years. He always now shows Eros as healthy, sensual, normal; designates marriage, which must be preserved in the interest of social order, as "essentially abnormal"; and when admiring a Danaë gives vent to some sarcasms on the people who go into raptures over every Holy Family they see. And now, at long last, he upbraids himself for his final re-modelling of *Götz*—meaning that he felt the loss of Adelheid's passion, which had made the original *Götz* so electric. He makes Faust on Peneus delight in the "fair young limbs of women"; in his last *Epigrams* the language is so frank that it can only be represented in print by asterisks; and one day he held this trenchant dialogue with himself:

> Wie bist du so ausgeartet?
> Sonst warst du am Abend so herrlich und hehr!—
> Wenn man kein Schätzchen erwartet,
> Gibt's keine Nacht mehr.[2]

[1] And round us the blaze leaps, devouring and tall;
Then hail to thee, Eros, beginner of all!

[2] You've sadly degenerated;
Time was when at evening you glowed like the light!—
When no sweetheart is ever awaited,
How empty is night!

Penetrated by the sense of this, he entirely abandoned any attempt at depicting love; and it is pathetic to find that master of love-scenes avoiding one at the end of the *Wanderjahre* for fear that "here youthful vigour might be found to fail me."

Since everything turned on his work, Goethe now in the service of his energies erected the hygienic practices, begun sixty years ago, into a very stringent system. Anything that made for productiveness was carefully cultivated; anything that frustrated it, given up. On books: "The little book will find it difficult to outwit the sentries at my frontiers." Or on his fellow-creatures: "One must not see old friends again. . . . Anyone to whom his inward development is a matter of importance should avoid this, for the dissonance can only perturb him, and the picture of the earlier relationship will be obscured." Or on his own works: "Why should I try (it was thus that he rejected the impulse to finish *Die Natürliche Tochter*) "to recall to memory the uncanny things which lurk in that quarter?"

He refused to see or discuss anything unpleasant. When the old Theatre was burnt down, he would not let anyone come near him, for useless lamentations would have been intolerable; and he set to work at once on plans for the new building! When Ottilie was thrown from her horse and carried into the house, he never went to see her until her disfigured face had healed. When someone began to describe the condition of a man well known to him, who had broken both legs, he exclaimed: "Don't spoil my idea of him! I can see him now, full of energy and activity!" When an old actor died, Goethe sent for his son, came into the room, and said: "I have lost a faithful old friend, and you an excellent father. Enough!"—and pressing his hand, he vanished. When Zelter, whose step-son had killed himself in the past, now lost a son, Goethe looked at even this from an objective point of view: "A similar misfortune brought us very near to one another.

. . . The present one leaves us as we are, and even that is a great deal."

Goethe's ultimate political attitude was the outcome of energy and the dissolution of personality. His conservative spirit became more and more manifest, more and more inclusive, towards the end—a confession of faith not only in social order but above all in authority. Now, far from the crowd, his outlook on these questions was as generalized as on other things—he saw them in the light of necessity. So it had been ordered—and he, who had revered the Emperor in the advocate's son because the man had known how to make himself accepted of the people, ended by revering every manifestation of power, whether conferred by God, ancestral right, or personality.

When Wellington's dictatorship was the theme of censure, the octogenarian Goethe defended the man who, be he what he might, had conquered Napoleon and India; and he made his position clear in these words: " Who has the highest power is right. We must bend our heads to him."

He felt that contemporary events now justified him by upholding his instinctive sympathy—classic in its ignoring of the moral standpoint—for men and deeds whose only vindication was success. " We don't ask what right we have to govern " (this extremely broad generalization comes from the *Wanderjahre*) "—we govern. We don't trouble to ask whether the nation has a right to depose us—we merely take care that it has no temptation to do so." But in none of such sayings does he designate or mean the Divine Right only.

" I rank myself higher than the commonplace well-intentioned politician; and I say straight out that no king keeps faith—he cannot keep it, being constantly obliged to yield to the pressure of circumstances. On us poor Philistines duty lays the opposite obligation—not on the great ones of the earth! " That is Goethe's legacy to *Real-politik*, vehemently delivered two months before he died.

And yet there was no one, at that time, whose vision of twentieth-century conditions was so piercing as his. His last political aspirations were for a League of Nations for foreign affairs, and socialized co-operation for internal ones.

He held that Free Trade in ideas and sentiments would be no less stimulating to the realm and the general welfare than to commerce; but that hitherto there had been none of the fixed laws and principles which were so useful, even in private life, for smoothing down innumerable contentions and fusing the communal existence into a more or less harmonious unity. Here he pointed out prophetically —and actually in the very words which are to-day on everybody's lips—the way to a League of Nations; and after having, in addition, designated national hatreds as typical of a very low degree of development, he had himself in mind when he spoke of a plane " on which all this kind of thing vanishes into thin air, on which one as it were looks down upon the nations, and feels the weal or woe of a neighbouring people as intimately as if it were the lot of one's own." To sum up, at the end of the *Wanderjahre* his ideal state is animated by the principle of a League of Nations—nay, the community itself is so described by its members.

Likewise with his last social conceptions—they are a whole century in advance of his time. Complete tolerance for all forms of religion and the service of God rules in Wilhelm Meister's Utopia. As regards property, Goethe points the way to Communism; but leaves us strangely in the dark about what definite measures he proposed to that end.

" If the whole community regards proprietorial rights as sacred, still more does the proprietor. Custom, youthful impressions, reverence for his forebears, aversion from his neighbour, and a hundred other things make the proprietor stubbornly opposed to any change in conditions. The more time-honoured such conditions are . . . the more difficult it becomes to accomplish in any wide sense that which, while despoiling the individual in some degree, would be

of advantage to the community, and would moreover by reaction and co-operation prove unexpectedly so to the individual as well." But it was to a song to be sung in his Utopia—a song which held the leader up to admiration—that Goethe entrusted his view of the widely differing forms of communal activity:

Du verteilest Kraft und Bürde
Und erwägst es ganz genau,
Gibst dem Alten Ruh' und Würde,
Jünglingen Geschäft und Frau.
Wechselseitiges Vertrauen
Wird ein reinlich Häuschen bauen,
Schliessen Hof und Gartenzaun,
Auch der Nachbarschaft vertraun.

Wo an wohlgebahnten Strassen
Man in neuer Schenke weilt,
Wo dem Fremdling reicher Massen
Ackerfeld ist zugeteilt,
Siedeln wir uns mit den andern.
Eilet, eilet, einzuwandern
In das feste Vaterland!
Heil dir, Führer! Heil dir, Band![1]

With this confession of his social faith Goethe's energy

[1] To the back you fit the burden,
Giving each your careful thought—
Rest and honour, old man's guerdon,
Young man's, wife and work well-wrought.
Garden-hedge no segregation,
Mutual co-operation
Helping modest homes to build;
Neighbours all a friendly guild.

Well-laid streets, where men at leisure
Drink their glass in hostels new,
Where the fields in ample measure
Yield the stranger pasture too:
Such the realm that lieth yonder—
Thither, thither let us wander!
March we to the Fatherland!
Hail, O Leader! Hail, O Band!

died down—until the finishing of *Faust*. That energy, in former decades baffled by alternating moods of resignation, depression, and cynicism, was in his advanced old age no longer exposed to cross-currents such as these. But—in accordance with the law of Goethean polarity—all his other characteristics had meanwhile been reduced to a state of passive acquiescence.

Scepticism and imagination, irony and sense of beauty, now renewed their conflict. Never in all his dramas and novels, and only in a very few poems, had Goethe sung the beauty of a woman's body; nowhere had that beauty determined the fate of his heroines or of his own affections—possibly because absolute beauty had never been the object of his desire. But now, in his eightieth decade, Helen makes her appearance—by no means as a classic symbol only, but in all her supremacy as the loveliest of women; and in that character she irradiates the central portion of the second *Faust*. No other Goethean hero ever spoke as Faust speaks to Helen at first sight.

This second *Faust* developed into the most fantastic of his creations. There are moments when one could think that the veteran who declared that his mind had never been clearer than when this work was written, had on the contrary been completely carried away by his phantom-forms; and that he might as in a parable have adjured himself in the words of his Mephisto to the jealous and indignant Faust, during the Court-entertainment: "*Machst du's doch selbst, das Fratzengeisterspiel!*"[1] Where in the whole range of Goethe's collected works (the additions to *Pandora* alone excepted) are to be found such fairylands as bewilder us in the second *Walpurgisnacht*—such tossing seas with their griffins and sphinxes, their sirens, nymphs, and phorkyads? Where else has he been so inexhaustible in wizardry?

And yet this classic Phantom-Festival is nothing but one long succession of silvery ironies upon science and research, upon God, Art, and the Universe!

[1] 'Twas thou thyself who set these ghosts grimacing!

In the *Zahme Xenien* his irony is more acrimonious. Taken altogether, they represent a great outburst of wrath against opponents, dunces, hypocrites, Philistines. He saves his face when he advises a touch of irony in every positive statement—otherwise we should be bewildered and angered at each re-reading. At large receptions he liked to withdraw into a window-recess with an intimate, and deliver himself of malicious remarks on any guests whom he did not know.

This soon led to a still more lamentable frame of mind—that of a universal scepticism. Of youth and life he remarked that we never learn strategy until the campaign is over; and in his eightieth year he traced the course of man's development from the sensual child and the idealistic lover to the premature sceptic—" the rest of life is of no consequence; we let it take its course, and end up with quietism, as do the Indian philosophers."

One step farther, and the veteran shows as a complete Mephisto. On the death of Zelter's son he wrote: " A long life means surviving many things—so runs the melancholy refrain of our dawdling comic-opera sort of an existence. It's for ever sounding in our ears, vexing us, and yet making us resolve to work more assiduously than ever. To me the circle of those most nearly affecting me appears as a sibylline scroll of which one leaf after another gets consumed by the devouring flame of life, and vanishes like dust in the air. . . ."

Not otherwise had imagination and scepticism dwelt together in the Leipzig student; and just as of those conflicting forces neither had prevailed over the other, so now in the old man the combination of self-consciousness and humility which had marked his youth was as conspicuous as ever. In the Utopia of the *Wanderjahre* he makes reverence an essential element in education.

And certainly he was aware of his own significance, especially now when he could feel and display his work as a totality. He was quick to acknowledge Tieck's merits; " but when they insist on comparing him with me, they

make a mistake. I may be frank about this, for such as I am, I did not make myself. It is just as though I were to compare myself with Shakespeare, who did not make himself either, and who is undoubtedly a being of a higher order, to whom I look up, and who claims my veneration. . . . Anyone who has really learnt to understand my works and my character is bound to acknowledge that he has thereby attained to a certain freedom of the spirit." Such were the final words of the man who very nearly *had* " made himself."

Still more vehemently, at this last, did he resent the restrictions and withdrawals whereby in his youth he had learnt to control his passions. The same impetuosity which marked his final bout of energy made Goethe's ageless heart pulse to anger and impatience, defiance and daemonic pride. In the Chorus of the Passions, Eros alone was mute.

Like a champion the veteran now stood, erect and wrathful, before his works:

> Wie mancher Misswillige schnuffelt und wittert
> Um das von der Muse verliehne Gedicht.
> Sie haben Lessing das Ende verbittert—
> Mir sollen sie's nicht! [1]

The Chancellor, who would fain have seen him chastened and rational, had frequently to see him rude and contradictious, violent and impossible.

His nervous irritability grew more and more marked. No one was suffered to interrupt him. If anyone used a phrase like " no other than," Goethe would snap his head off. And as to him who came in with spectacles on his nose, or was slow in taking the chair offered him, the old man could not contain himself. He so dreaded the shortest

[1] They sniff and they snort with their ill-natured noses
Round song that the Muses have poured in their ear.
They embittered poor Lessing, in earth who reposes;
But me—never fear!

day that he had to help himself over the critical date by incessant reading—but by the 17th of December he was already aglow with the thought that in a few days the sun would be coming closer. To the end he was a slave to the state of the barometer. Illness he feared as the worst of earthly evils.

He fell into rages more frequently than of old; and if at table he had been long and loud in abuse of anything, he would actually finish up with: " So I've been bad-tempered again! That's a good thing—it stimulates me! " True, only intimates saw him like this. When Cotta procrastinated over the publication of his works, the aged Goethe wrote a furious letter to his agent Boisserée, blew him sky-high, and told others of it afterwards. This dispassionate friend and disciple took notes of an evening at Goethe's: " Then invectives began again on Paris, German and French party-spirit, royal caprices, corruption of taste, idiocies, priest-ridden France and heresy-hunts in ' enlightened ' Germany, and so forth."

Even his tidiness began to fall away from him, for at the end (as in his youth) he would seize upon torn bits of packing-paper or theatre-tickets, and use them for writing notes, verses, even ideas for the second *Faust*.

A demagogue, whom he could not bear, inspired him to these words: " Well, at any rate he stirs people up! That's the point, whether it's by hate or love. One must always be on the look-out for stimulation, so as to combat depression. . . . Yes, anyone who wants my society must sometimes put up with my bearish moods, as he would with the foible or hobby of another. Old Meyer is clever, very clever, but he won't come out of his shell, he won't contradict me—I can't stand it. Not a doubt but in his heart he's ten times more captious than I am, and simply thinks he would snuff me out if he began. If only he would storm and thunder at me—that would be fine fun! "

Is this Byron at thirty, insatiable for excitement? It is Goethe at eighty; and it is again this old, old Goethe who

like the youth he once was exclaims in a sudden access of black rage and despair:

> Könnt' ich vor mir selber fliehn!
> Das Mass ist voll.
> Ach! warum streb' ich immer dahin,
> Wohin ich nicht soll?[1]

Such lines afflict us. We feel as though there had been no assuagement—as though a pilgrimage without its parallel had done nothing to soothe that fierce spirit. But suddenly the old man's impetuous vehemence will melt into such wonderful strains as this:

> Immer wieder in die Weite,
> Über Länder, an das Meer,
> Phantasien, in der Breite
> Schwebt am Ufer hin und her!
> Neu ist immer die Erfahrung:
> Immer ist dem Herzen bang,
> Schmerzen sind der Jugend Nahrung,
> Tränen seliger Lobgesang.[2]

It is true that those passionate voices, contradicting one another in a duet of Goethe's composition, were now less insistent than of yore. In the second *Faust* his aesthetic aim was harmony; and anything that has the old effect of duality seems to have burst forth against his will, or else

[1] Could I from myself but flee!
My day is past.
Ah, wherefore struggle incessantly
To fail at the last?

[2] Ever farther through creation,
Over countries, to the sea,
Take thy flight, Imagination,
Here and there to hover free!
New is our experience ever;
Ever in the heart are fears—
Sorrows foster youth's endeavour,
Songs of praise are in our tears.

is treated as symbolic. Goethe's great dialogue with his own heart, which he had scored for the voices of Faust and Mephisto, is only twice resumed in the second part.

And it was long before he could make up his mind to send Faust straight to Heaven. In one of the old drafts we even find: "Epilogue in Chaos on the way to Hell!" So baffling were Goethe's native reactions to his desire for unity.

The champion whose youth had been perpetually renewed (and hence perpetually exposed to fresh perils) by aggression, wrath, and daemonic pride, was finally confronted by misanthropy, equanimity, isolation—and these too bade his ageless passions strive towards stoicism.

Sometimes the traits are indistinguishable. After all, is not misanthropy a genuine passion, and at the same time a renunciation? In such moods he perpetually arraigned the world, the public, and the age:

Das geht so fröhlich
Ins Allgemeine;
Ist leicht und selig,
Als wär's auch reine.
Sie wissen gar nichts
Von stillen Riffen;
Und wie sie schiffen,
Die lieben Heitern,
Sie werden wie gar nichts
Zusammen scheitern.[1]

And it was actually Goethe, entering on his eightieth year, who declared it to be the wish of his heart "to have

[1] They venture lightly
On seas uncharted,
So gay, so sprightly,
No leak yet started.
And ne'er a notion
Of rocky places
That show no traces—
Good luck attend them!
But I've a notion
Some reef will end them.

been born on a South-Sea island as a so-called savage, for then I could have enjoyed existence in its purest essence, without any artificial flavourings!"

"I know very well," he said at eighty-one, "that I am a thorn in the side of many people—they would all like to be rid of me; and as they can't attack my talent now, they fix upon my character. One day I am arrogant, the next egotistic, the next a prey to envy.... If you want to know what I have suffered, read my *Xenien*.... A German author—a German martyr!"

And so all his humane pleasure in imparting instruction was a thing of the past. Even as a poet, Goethe had in the end completely given up the idea of influencing his time; nor was he interested in what the future might make of his work. "As a matter of fact, I always studied Nature and Art in a purely egotistic spirit—that is, for my own edification. And I write about them merely for my own further development. What other people make of them is a matter of indifference to me."

Inevitably came the days when the old man—not from senility, as many visitors believed, but from a sense of isolation—let every conversation drop, and would merely make some such remark as "My good people, you're beyond help," or "You young folk must see to that," or "Well, that is really very fine"—or else he would do no more than grunt out his "Hm-hm!" But all the while, this was the sort of thing he was thinking:

Die stille Freude wollt ihr stören?
Lasst mich bei meinem Becher Wein!
Mit andern kann man sich belehren,
Begeistert wird man nur allein.[1]

He was unhappy until the door had shut for the last

[1] My wordless peace ye fain would shatter?
Leave me to wine, and go your ways!
With others one may learn some matter;
Inspired? That's for lonely days!

time, and work could begin again in the form of self communion:

> Da ich viel allein verbleibe,
> Pflege weniges zu sagen.
> Da ich aber gerne schreibe,
> Mögen's meine Leser tragen.
> Sollte heissen: gern diktiere;
> Und das ist doch auch ein Sprechen,
> Wo ich keine Zeit verliere:
> Niemand wird mich unterbrechen.[1]

And yet in his misanthropic seclusion he taught himself the lesson of complete acquiescence; and then he ceased to be contradictious, and felt (as he says) that he and his contemporaries were in their way historic figures, so that he must not quarrel with anyone whatever. Thus he kept his best things for himself, in order—as he makes his Montan express it—that his equilibrium might not be disturbed by arguing about his dearest convictions. He said in his own person at the end that we should display only so much of our profoundest certainties as is necessary for retaining some advantage over others; and that even this would shed a mild radiance, like that of a hidden sun, over the things we did.

So in those hours of utter loneliness he was able to epitomize the history of his renunciation in pregnant epilogues; and his friends were told in confidence of the secret motives and instincts—now and immediately before now—sustaining him in his mortal combat, between genius and daemon, for development and acquiescence.

"It never was my way to fight against institutions—that always seemed to me presumptuous; and it is possible

[1] Since I often now am lonely,
Speech upon my lips is rare;
Good for composition only—
Readers, this ye'll have to bear.
Rather should I say "Dictation";
That, though speech it is, I know,
Wastes no time in explanation,
No one interrupts my flow.

that I entered Court-life at too early an age. . . . I never did more than touch it with the tips of my fingers. . . . My political colour was always subdued, say a pretty blue; I should have come to utter grief if I had taken it into my head to try for a glaring red. . . . I have always been regarded as a man specially favoured by Fortune. . . . But at bottom it has all been labour and sorrow, and I might go so far as to say that in my seventy-five years I have not known four weeks of genuine ease of mind. It was like the stone of Sisyphus, always having to be rolled uphill again."

Seldom did the old man reveal the joints in his armour more frankly than in these conversations, which at the same time rather confirm than refute the charge of egoism. But we must avoid the primitive error of regarding him as a man who in any sense designed to make his life a work of art. His own statement does a great deal to throw new light on his whole endeavour, in that it so very dispassionately sets forth what had animated him throughout his lifelong struggle.

In the second *Faust* renunciation finds its most definite expression. Here, though the treatment is more vigorous, more luminous, and therefore more effective than in the tumultuous whirl of the First Part, renunciation is at the heart of all. The adolescent Goethe had aspired to godhead when in his attic-room he made his Magician, his other self, cry into the rising fumes:

> Soll ich dir, Flammenbildung, weichen?
> Ich bin's, bin Faust, bin deinesgleichen![1]

But now the old man's heart was rent by no such jealous emulation. Yonder, where the mountain hid the morning-sun from the eyes that would fain look up into its glory—there, there only was the light that could dazzle his vision,

[1] Flinch before thee, thou flame-born incarnation?
I am myself, am Faust, of like creation!

and thence he looked down on the cataract, and when the rainbow shimmered in it—

> Der spiegelt ab das menschliche Bestreben.
> Ihm sinne nach, und du begreifst genauer:
> Am farbigen Abglanz haben wir das Leben.[1]

So profound was Goethe's acquiescence.

For always he reminded himself, when *Faust* was resumed at varying points and he found that the central motive of the Second Part was still to be defined, that he had made a certain note in his diary which ran: " Remorse for the earlier days, so overshadowed by sadness. Hardihood, self-possession—these alone can redress our liability to disaster." That is the same spirit which prompted him to reverence for constituted authority, in whatever form, and made him devote his last energies to the rounding-off of his work. But it is also the same which inspired his lifelong wrestle with the Here and Now; and assuredly, when in his middle-period he wrote the scene of the wager with Mephisto, it was that spirit which enabled him, as his Faust, to scorn the fair fleeting moment.

And now, at the end of his days, Goethe was to be filled with regret, as his Faust was with vexation of spirit. Now he would fain have retrieved the vanished Present, that he might take more pleasure in it.

But so rigorously was that spirit denied enjoyment of the Ideal Now that he never could even imagine its joys until he betook himself to the inanimate. He recommended the keeping of a diary because it was instructive for the future, as shedding light upon inadequacies and errors. " We learn to appreciate the momentary, when we immediately make it historic." So completely was Goethe, even in his ripest years, debarred from possession of the instant's joys.

Is it surprising, then, that he perpetually postponed the

[1] See mirrored here man's conflict, man's persistence.
Think upon this—thou'lt comprehend more clearly:
That iridescent gleam is our existence.

issue of Faust's wager, attacking everything else rather than that solution—of which indeed he was not himself quite certain? He keeps his audience in suspense up to Faust's very last moments; so doubtful was Goethe, in the last year of his life, about the dénouement of *Faust*!

Among the many contradictions of his final phase one thing alone emerges clearly—his faith. To his ninth decade Goethe remained what he had been in his third—religious but not a Christian, upright but not a moralist, open to the invisible but not contemptuous of the visible, a believer in eternity but not in judgment.

The Christian teaching was to the end entirely alien to him, though the vehemence of his earlier attacks upon it had now been softened into irony. Except for an extremely apocryphal passage, which Eckermann—fifteen years after Goethe's death—theatrically includes among his last words, he only once expressed any recognition of it; but how? "Who in these days is a Christian, as Christ would have him be? Myself alone, perhaps, though you all think me a pagan!" This utterance occurred in a conversation about marriage and divorce; and the occasion, together with the key in which it was spoken, testify to no more than the old man's anger at the perversion of a teaching which he had always held in high estimation for its social value—just as in his old age he described Christ as a most interesting but enigmatic character.

The utterances which belie that isolated testimony are not to be overlooked. Not even to his secret diary did the Chancellor venture to confide what Goethe said in the way of invective about a new canon-law; he merely notes: "Acrid sallies upon the mysteries of the Christian religion, especially on the Immaculate Conception of Mary, whose mother Anna herself is supposed to have immaculately conceived." Standing before a crucifix, Goethe observed that everyone who looks at it feels better, because he sees before him someone who has had more to bear; and of the latest religious poetry he said derisively that it was "slip-slop for invalids."

The Bible he declared to be a purely historical book. In the Utopia of his *Wanderjahre* three creeds are held in equal honour—the pagan, the philosophic, and the Christian, which as a trinity evolved true religion. Upon a man who held such ideas, the theologians of Jena could certainly not have conferred, at their Jubilee, the Doctorate Honoris Causâ, as was done in the other faculties; and so they had to confine themselves to a diplomatic message of congratulation. And they did not as yet know anything about his very far from "tame" *Xenien*, for it was posterity which first read Goethe's terse quatrain:

> Wer Wissenschaft und Kunst besitzt,
> Hat auch Religion.
> Wer jene beiden nicht besitzt,
> Der habe Religion![1]

The conclusion of *Faust* has led to the fallacy that Goethe turned religious in old age. In reality Faust, like Goethe himself, shows no sign of a conscience or of a longing for pardon. Nor is there any trace of a proposed sublimation—such as, for instance, in Dante's Rose of Heaven; indeed, the end of *Faust* was undecided right up to the last pages. Only a few years earlier Mephisto was to have been pardoned by God himself, his wager half won; "and if Faust is to bear part of the blame, the Old Gentleman's clemency will but enhance the cheeriness of the conclusion!"

But Goethe himself expressly said that everything in the conclusion which might seem to uphold the Catholic faith was merely a matter of treatment. On one occasion he even described it as a Bacchanal, and seemed anxious to account for it by saying earnestly that he had found the conclusion very difficult to render; and that, "treating of such supersensual, such almost inconceivable things, I might easily have lost myself in the void if I had not restrained my

[1] He who has Science and has Art,
Religion too has he.
Who has not Science, has not Art,
Let him religious be!

poetic flights by the use of clearly defined personages and conceptions borrowed from Christianity and the Church."

Nor did Goethe's ultimate ideas about ethics conform to gospel-principles. His ethic was " pure humanity." After a life spent in the untiring service of the spirit and of Nature, a life of infinite self-conquest, all ethical conceptions must of necessity have struck him as insipid—and so he ignored them.

At the end of his days he was not afraid to stand by the axioms which others, when they feel the approach of death, are prone (in view of possibilities) to guard themselves by at any rate glossing-over. And when someone happened to speak of the conscience, this dauntless veteran exclaimed: " And are we really obliged to have a conscience? Who demands it of us? "

In the same way as he had admired the strong men in politics, he now at this last bestowed his deepest reverence on the two contemporaries who had been the great non-moralists of their epoch—Napoleon and Byron. Napoleon alone he recognized as his superior; Byron alone as his equal. He often spoke of a great man of action as greater than a poet. Eckermann questioned whether Byron's works were of any real value for the human mind; and Goethe answered: " The daring, dash, and grandiosity of Byron—was that not formative? We must be careful not to attribute value only to the accepted Good and Beautiful! Everything that is great is formative, so soon as we apprehend it." He went so far as to declare that the First Roman Republic, entirely free from crime as it was, must have been to a certain extent tedious and tame, and that no self-respecting man could wish to have lived in it.

This great non-moralist's unbosomings were at the end as racy as those of his youth had been. Do they imply that he had shed the all-reconciling kindliness which had animated the younger man? Was this heart, which strove to soar above our earthly spheres, to merge itself in the All, so frozen that at last it had no feeling for mere fellow-creatures?

August had an accident on his travels—and Goethe wrote to him with his own hand, fearing that his amanuensis might reveal the bad news to Ottilie. Rauch wrote to tell him of a family-misfortune, without saying what it was. In the hour of receiving the tidings, Goethe answered in a long, a wonderful letter, saying what he did in such events to restore himself. To a poverty-stricken, unknown young man, who asked him for his works because he could not buy them, Goethe sent the necessary sum of money. He wrote a whole series of letters in recommendation of one of his disciples, told him exactly how to frame his official reports, what it was necessary to say and what to keep silence about in the service. He wrote detailed recommendations of the library-attendants, so that Orders might be conferred on them on festival occasions.

When the Court-gardener procured some acacias for him, Goethe sent a message to say that he would always remember him when he watched them growing. He sent a Governmental Secretary some grafts from his fruit-garden. To the widow of one of his gardeners, who gave him a blue hortensia on his birthday, he sent the plant back after it had stopped flowering, saying that he entrusted it to her care and begging that he might have it again on his next birthday, if he lived to see it, " as a sign of your affectionate remembrance." In the country, where there was not much to do, he let his servant take lessons in barbering and do a little gardening, so that he might be more useful to any future employer.

Neither Christianity nor ethics gives the clue to Goethe's faith. But science does—and especially now, when in that too he had left the particular behind, and attained a universality which in earlier days had seemed little more than a visionary aim. Not that his meteorological and botanical observations had been given up; but they all formed part of a great synthetic vision, for " the supreme thing would be to comprehend that everything actual is in itself theoretical. . . . We must not try to get behind phenomena—they themselves are the lesson."

This is the keyword to Goethe's final perception of the full identity of observation and vision, of insight and research, towards which he had been progressing for decades.

He more and more abjured any pretension to knowledge of objective truth. The physicist, he said, had nothing to do but adapt himself to phenomena—from that not only the human being, but the subjective truth, resulted. And while here too he returned to the intuitions and visions of his youth, he felt that all his relinquishments had raised him to a higher plane; and discriminated between the thoughtless ignoramus and himself in words whose proud humility is reminiscent of Plato: "Man's loftiest experience is that of awe; and if the phenomenon as such can awe him, let him be satisfied. He will get no higher, and should not seek to go behind the experience. . . . If ultimately I am content to stop at the pure phenomenon, that merely resolves itself into another acquiescence. But there remains a wide distinction—whether I acquiesce in the limitations of humanity, or at heart in a hypothetical inadequacy of my own restricted individuality."

On the whole, his transcendental creed inclined at the end to resemble that of his middle-years, but to depart from that of his youth and early old age. "In Nature there is a Knowable and an Unknowable; we must distinguish between them, reflect upon them, and have respect for both."

He took a magnificent stride from scientific knowledge to the unknowable, and was inevitably a foe to all symbolists, of whose growing influence he was now made aware. "I am a 'plasticist,'" he said, pointing to the head of the Juno Ludovisi. "I have tried to make my mind clear about the world and Nature. And now come these fellows and kick up their dust, showing me things at a distance one moment, and in oppressive proximity the next, like *ombres chinoises*—Devil take them!" In the same way he hated all sectarianism, and advised against

making incomprehensible things the subject of daily thought and speculation. "Let him who believes in survival be happy and hold his tongue, but there is nothing for him to plume himself upon. . . . Absorption in ideas of immortality is for those in high positions, and especially for ladies who have nothing to do."

In such robust fashion the veteran even now showed his anger or scorn for pretensions of every kind. He did try to save something for science; and revealed all his tenacity in the confession that there might certainly be things that were hidden from research, but one could not desist from the attempt to come to close quarters until one was forced to acknowledge defeat.

Speaking quite generally, he confided to Zelter, in words which command our reverence: "I have the good-fortune, in my old age, to find thoughts arising in me which to pursue . . . it would be well worth while to live life over again."

But he was always and ever the devotee of the thing in evolution. "Evolution is a finer thing than completion." And again: "The Godhead is active in evolution and metempsychosis, not so in completion and torpor." Or in Faust's mystic words:

> Doch im Erstarren such' ich nicht mein Heil,
> Das Schaudern ist der Menschheit bestes Teil.
> Wie auch die Welt ihm das Gefühl verteure,
> Ergriffen fühlt er tief das Ungeheure.[1]

All the master-forces in the oldest Goethe—energy, acquiescence, faith—urged him to prove metempsychosis; and in his eightieth year he found these words, Promethean in their ageless vitality: "My conviction of our survival results from my view of energy—for if I work unrestingly to the end of my days, Nature is bound

[1] Yet will I not in torpor seek salvation,
For man through awe doth reach his consummation.
Though for that sense the world exact its price,
The Vast will grip his soul as in a vice.

to assign me another form of existence, since this one can no longer contain my spirit." And with pagan simplicity he developed this idea to Zelter: " Let us work on until one or other of us is summoned back to the ether by the Cosmic Spirit! And may the Eternal One not deny us new activities, akin to those in which we have proved ourselves! If to these he should paternally add memory and an after-taste of the Right and Good that here below we have willed and achieved, we shall assuredly be but the better prepared to take our place as cogs in the cosmic mechanism." The freedom of thought, the irrepressible vitality, which speaks in these sense-images of a supersensual world, entitle us to say of the oldest Goethe that by his vision of metempsychosis he vanquished death—now, though his days were nearly told, regaining a youth which, when it had been actually his, was sometimes overwhelmed by the suggestions of that mystery of change.

Halte dich nur im Stillen rein
Und lass es um dich wettern!
Je mehr du fühlst, ein Mensch zu sein,
Desto ähnlicher bist du den Göttern.[1]

There we have Goethe's ultimate faith: acquiescence that transcended death, life's battle well-fought establishing a claim—not before any judge, but as an appeal to the Reason inherent in Nature, who will not suffer such an exemplar to vanish from her ken. Steadily—nay, almost cheerfully—he envisaged the bourne from which he had nothing to fear and everything to hope. Yet not as a " Beyond "—rather, as a more strenuous Here, an interpretation of things past, a fulfilment of things purposed; for " no organic being entirely corresponds to the Idea therein implicit—the Supreme Idea is always unrevealed. . . . That is my God! "

[1] Do thou but hold thy peace and wait,
Though round thee storms be blowing!
And, conscious thus of mortal fate,
More Godlike wilt be growing.

Destiny was twice more to put this acquiescence to the proof.

In Goethe's seventy-ninth year the Duke died, on his return from a trip to Berlin. His last days, which were spent with Alexander von Humboldt, showed that his tameless nature had reached its breaking-point. He died, very characteristically, without being really ill; it was simply that new energies failed him in his fierce assault on life. He passed away between sleeping and waking, buoyant but worn-out.

It was as though this friend's loss had given Goethe a new lease of life. His son brought him the tidings on an afternoon in June. He at once busied himself with a hundred unimportant matters, because his " painful state of mind " permitted of no continuous work; refusing to see anyone, but likewise to give any assistance in the aftermath of official business. He did not pay his respects to the widow at her country-seat, nor did he even write to her.

When the day of the funeral drew near he fled the place, " to escape those dismal functions whereby, as is only right and fitting, the crowd is symbolically shown what it has just lost "; and took up his abode in a pleasant little country-house which the new ruler had offered him.

Scarcely had he set foot in this Dornburg, which stands above the city of Jena—scarcely, after long years of town-life, had he felt the soil under his feet, seen vegetation and gardens around him, and the broad expanse of Heaven above—than his mind and body seemed purged to youth and freshness; and these two summer months, at the end of which he concluded his seventy-ninth year, were epoch-making for him. He was soon calling it his " as it were daemonically directed sojourn."

He would not suffer his grief to cloud the halcyon summer of those weeks—the Duke was hardly ever mentioned.

In Dornburg the old man was alone again for the first—and last—time. Though rejoiced to be away from his

family and the town, he was by no means strictly reclusive. He was accessible to children, friends, guests; sent for wine and oil, books and maps, prisms and lenses, and had his secretary and his valet with him.

But when, before daybreak, he stood at his high-perched window and saw Venus retreat before the sun—when in the long summer-evenings, between mallows and roses, wind and sun, he strode up and down the little mountain-path . . . he would be penetrated by the sense of something symbolic, something that stood for his old age as a whole; and the sublime serenity of that silence born of the hills—he could not but feel it to be the expression of his final loneliness.

> Es spricht sich aus der stumme Schmerz,
> Der Äther klärt sich, blau und bläuer—
> Da schwebt sie ja, die goldne Leier,
> Komm, alte Freundin, komm ans Herz![1]

And after those four throbbing lines it was given him to write four of his most exquisite Nature-poems—the last; for what followed was no more than aphorism or flash of thought.

To Zuleika, after all those fifteen years, his loveliest verses were written; the half-forgotten names fell from his lips once more; and as if in a last pang, such formless rhythms as these might seem to hover sighingly round the crystalline rhymes and measures of the far-away *Divan*:

> Nicht mehr auf Seidenblatt
> Schreib' ich symmetrische Reime,
> Nicht mehr fass' ich sie
> In goldene Ranken. . . .[2]

[1] Speaks now at last the speechless pain,
To bluer blue the ether clears—
And lo! the golden lyre appears:
Come to this heart, old friend, again!

[2] No more on silken page
I write symmetrical verses,
No more framing them
In golden tendrils. . . .

To the rhythms of his youth, pulsating with emotion, the old man now went back. But gazing at the full moon, which had once enthralled him as the symbol of Zuleika, all the vigour in him poured itself into the gracious form that had inspired his happiest lyrics, and he wrote the invocation which ends thus:

So hinan denn! hell und heller,
Reiner Bahn, in voller Pracht!
Schlägt mein Herz auch schmerzlich schneller,
Überselig ist die Nacht.[1]

And like a boy he sent the poem to Marianne, as a sign that he had been thinking of her; but, characteristically stoical, asked if " they " had thought of *him* when looking at the same full moon.

And since for him individuality had ceased to be important, our picture too must make the transition and seek to show how Goethe's character, already delineated in some detail for the whole of his last decade, did now—in these closing years—attain to a yet higher sublimation of itself, so long as external circumstances were not of an agitating kind. We speak of the years between eighty and eighty-two.

His continuous good health enhanced his energies. In his eighty-second year he had a sort of head-rest attached to his old wooden writing-chair; the grandfather-chair he never used.

Everything was subordinate to work and the saving of time. He now entirely abjured the reading of newspapers, received only a few visitors, refused to answer any attacks that were made upon him, and was so sedulous about his health that he refused to inspect the Schiller-Album of Schiller's friend Caroline, because it was not good for him to look back on things of the distant past.

[1] Onward, upward! Still more purely
Shines thy path of cloudless light!
Heart that, throbbing, aches too surely,
Pulse to this transcendent night!

He regarded everything in an historical light—things which had happened long ago in foreign lands were no farther and no nearer than those which had happened yesterday in his own house. He did not even want to look at his own works again, once they were finished with.

Energy, vitality—these must be stimulated!

Came the death of the old Duchess Luise, whom Goethe had personally venerated for half a century—but he was sitting at wine with his friends; and while they talked louder so that he might not hear the passing-bell, he was telling them of new scenes for the second Walpurgisnacht, " for which he was daily bringing off the most astonishing things." Then he talked about people who had lived to be very old, and about Ninon de Lenclos. His tendency now was to insist upon an extension of the normal span of life. He said it was a pity that the Duke should have had to go " so prematurely "—at seventy-three. " Have I reached the age of eighty, to go doing the same things every day? I try much more than others to think daily of something new, so that I mayn't become tedious. We must be always changing, always rejuvenating, ourselves—else we grow mouldy! "

He had never talked so much of the daemonic element in him as he did after his eightieth birthday—because now the daemonic mood was inhibited by lack of excitements, scope, and even volition. It was an octogenarian who launched this thunder-bolt: " If I were to let myself go, I am capable of annihilating myself and my environment! "

Of his daemon he said: " That element in me was not divine, for it showed in unreason; not human, for it had no understanding; not devilish, for it was beneficent; not angelic, for it could take pleasure in the pain of others. It was like chance, because it was inconsequent; it had something of prescience, because it pointed to connections. . . . It seemed to deal arbitrarily with the necessary elements of our existence. . . . It seemed as if nothing but the impossible could satisfy it. . . . I tried to rescue myself

from this terrible being by my usual method of sheltering behind an image."

When Mendelssohn, who again was called upon to enliven him in Weimar, insisted upon his hearing some Beethoven, and Goethe from his corner listened to the first movement of the C Minor Symphony—he, who had always refused to acknowledge a world fashioned by hostile hands, cried out: "That's grandiose! That's very great! Quite mad! One could think the house was tumbling about one's ears!"—and he often spoke again of the tremendous effect it had had upon him.

The forces which made for stoicism likewise took a new lease of life. Irony, instead of being modified, became more blasting—the higher the Faust in Goethe raised the pyramid of his life, the more sedulously did the Mephisto in him seek to undermine it. Of existence he spoke as "a fool's life"; to Zelter he once signed himself "Reineke Fuchs"; one evening he egged Mendelssohn on to deride women with him; and at noon on a certain day he talked the wildest nonsense about America to a couple of Russians, who did not dare to open their lips. Through an entire evening with Müller and Riemer he was the complete cynic, and said he wished he was an English Bishop with thirty thousand a year.

Three months before Goethe's death, the Chancellor declared that irony was his favourite mode of expression!

His final loneliness became sheer desolation. Goethe, who had always hymned the Here and Now and striven to grasp it—he, who like Faust attributed all the tragedy in his life to his having failed to seize the moment—Goethe arrived at last at this grotesque consolation: "There is something narrowing, restrictive, often painful, about the thing that is there. The thing that is not there, on the contrary, leaves us free, puts us at our ease, refers us to ourselves alone!"

Such were the bewildering consolations he had to clutch at in his old age, when his spirit had grown

impatient of this mode of existence. The young Goethe had revolved in a circle which had wellnigh driven him crazy; and the old man still revolved in it, but now with smiling stoicism.

And was there nothing in his environment which could give him pleasure? Yes, there was something. A little bust of Napoleon in opalescent glass, "which alone is worth a journey round the world. It stands facing the rising sun. At the first beam it seems to sing with the glittering glory of all—all the colours, such as no jewel in the world can come near." Napoleon in opalescent glass, lit up by the morning-sun; the miracle of colour in the head of the conqueror; his Theory of Colour as it were vindicated by the Emperor—that was Goethe's last daily restorative.

In his faith, too, he got closer still to the phenomenon pure and simple. "But I," he cried, "I worship him who has endowed the Cosmos with such creative energy that if a mere millionth part of it took life unto itself, the world would so pullulate with living creatures that no war, no pestilence, no deluge, no burning, could stem the tide. That is my God." So chaotic was his sense of the Cosmos. But he gave no name to that sense—until at the last he heard of a communion to which he expressed a desire to belong.

A year before his death—to the very day—he wrote that he had lately heard of the sect of the Hypsistarians, who, "wedged between pagans, Jews, and Christians," had declared their intention to reverence the best they knew, and inasmuch as that must necessarily stand in close relation to the Godhead, to worship it. "And it was as if, from some Dark Age, a joyous gleam had flashed upon me, for I felt that all my life I had been aspiring to qualify for an Hypsistarian. But that is no small endeavour; for how is one to become aware of the best there is?"

There is Goethe's ultimate creed, clothed on with dogma.

That creed was soon to be tested for the last time.

August had got away at length. At forty he had suc

ceeded in persuading his father to let him go; and it only because Goethe no longer hoped to save him by his vigilance that he yielded.

Rome was the objective, Eckermann the companion. Like one seeking liberation and development after an overburdened decade, Goethe had fled southward a few years before August's birth; like one desirous of ending tumultuously a lifetime of failure, August his son now fled —the one from activity and superfluity, the other from emptiness and passive despair. All that is implied in the contrast must have been a source of silent anguish to Goethe, when he let his son go free.

There was an unhealthy sort of exaltation in August's last letters from Rome—indeed, he wrote to his father twelve days before he died: " It is the first time in forty years that I have had a sense of independence, and that among foreign poeple. . . . They have tried to lure me on —gaming, girls, women—these three last I had forsworn. So I shall return with clean hands, though in some ways I may have squandered more money than others have. . . ." This letter, from a man who was drinking himself to death, is full of subterfuges and reservations, and was written with an eye to the rarefied atmosphere of the bureaucratic Goethe-household—and the old man knew it was.

Then, at the end of October, August von Goethe died— the last of five children born to Goethe. When his body was dissected, the liver was found to be five times the normal size—the so-called " drunkard's-liver." There were no tears for him.

When Goethe's friends began to falter out the tidings, he cut them short, and only said like some ancient stoic: " I am aware that I engendered a mortal son."

But now there came a sudden pause in the slow work at *Faust.*

Perhaps Goethe—after the first shock—was relieved at the news. His son had long been too utterly lost to him. But the more implacably he had taught himself to see all things as parables, the more deeply must he have felt that

son's death as a lesson in human destiny, and his childless old age as the revenge of that daemon who had ever meddled with the destiny which was his own.

"Look for trials even unto the end!" he wrote to Zelter. "They have not failed you, my dear friend, or me either. . . . At such times nothing but a strong sense of duty can keep us going. I have no other anxiety than to preserve my physical equilibrium—everything else goes of itself. The body *must*, the spirit *wills*; and he who sees clearly marked out for him the path his will is bound to take, has no great use for reflection. . . . And so, over the graves—forward!"

From the time of writing this letter, Goethe's life was heroic.

Again his personal grief seemed to stimulate his energies, again loss and sorrow bore him upward, again a new work forced its way upon the stage, just as the curtain seemed about to fall upon the drama of one man's life. For ten years the synopsis for the last volume of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* had been awaiting the working-out. Now, in a fortnight, he dictated nearly the whole volume! There are passages which make it the most impassioned portion of the whole book.

There he stood—alone, with no son, no one to love him—turning over the leaves of ancient diaries, and dictating such a sentence as this for his narrative: "Laughter and revelry lasted till midnight." He apologizes to the reader for the lack of youthful vigour; yet lavishes wild gestures and excited words, speaks of his love for Lili, fifty-five years gone by, as a foretaste of hell—and on every page of this work of his old age breaks out the forcibly repressed sorrow of yesterday, fused with the mighty sorrow that of yore had rent his very soul for the girl who had meant to him the Song of the Sirens.

And yet the remembrance of her loveliness excited him to hymn it again and again; again—after half a century—he wondered if they could not have married *quand même*; and he for whom love was over confessed to an inti-

mate: "She was, in very truth, the first woman whom I loved deeply and truly; and I may say she was also the last, for all the little fancies I have cherished in the course of my life were slight and superficial compared with that first one. I never was so near to my true happiness as at that time. The obstacles were not really insurmountable—and yet I lost her! . . . I am not saying too much when I declare that my coming to Weimar, and my presence in it now, were the direct consequences of that."

It was his re-awakened sense of the beautiful creature whom he had so often called a divine enchantress, which lured him into these exaggerated statements—apparently so oblivious of the moderation ruling his whole life. And indeed when he had brought the narrative to an end, his doubly overwrought being suffered a collapse—there was haemorrhage from the lung. He was bled, and once again he recovered. With such marvellous precision did Goethe's body, after his eightieth birthday, respond to the agitations of his soul! After a few days the veteran was himself again—and again, as thirty, as sixty years ago, the crisis enhanced his vigour. "Still the individual hangs together, and is in possession of his senses. Good luck to him!" Yes—as one saved by special providence he resolved to earn the new gift of days, so as to make them truly his own.

At first, indeed, he had to resume the part of paterfamilias, for Ottilie was useless. Goethe had to reorganize everything, and alter his will—wherein he sought to restrain Ottilie from a second marriage by moral and pecuniary arguments. He had now no direct heir, and this so modified his views about his possessions that he even thought of selling his collections to the State. Again bequests and volumes of correspondence were divided among his fellow-workers. Before now he had said earnestly to a Bohemian friend that he would very much like to bequeath him "his affairs in Bohemia."

As this took up several weeks, the references to August himself were usually in this strain: "Since it was her husband's choice to live retired from the world in the

aforesaid capital. . . ." The tone of the household improved after his death; Ottilie became fonder of the old man, there was no more quarrelling—but still disorder reigned unless Goethe saw to everything himself. For weeks the diary is almost daily concerned with household-matters. " Vulpius dismissed the cook with a fair indemnity. . . . This off my shoulders, I could attend to more important affairs." Two days later: " Household-matters going on better. The supreme affair attacked—bravely and well."

The " supreme affair " was the finishing of *Faust.*

It was February. Goethe was in his eighty-second year. The most important parts of the work of his life were still to be added—the issue of the wager, Faust's victory or defeat; part of the Fourth Act was unwritten and about half of the Fifth. " And so, over the graves—forward! " Goethe cried to himself for the last time. He had set his house in order, had protected his works; everything was done except the making of the final decision, postponed for years, but lacking which his great work would be left a fragment. It makes one think of an aged monarch, hesitating over his last signature.

And then his creative energy blazed up for the last time. For thirty years he had known nothing like it, as he confessed to his doctor—who shook his head, knowing the aftermath in that nature of critical periods such as this. Goethe made up his mind to finish his work before his birthday—the birthday which was to be his last. Like Manto he felt: " I love the man who craves the Impossible! "

Thenceforward he called the finishing of *Faust* " the supreme affair "—and so in the last year of his life he set himself to an heroic self-abnegation, like Faust in the last year of his. For that neither had ever had, throughout a lifetime, " a supreme affair " was all too surely the outcome of both Goethe's and Faust's essential natures. Now—when the door was about to shut—the first, the only one was snatched at, as though it might really offer a solution of the insoluble problem.

It was strange how, at this last, Goethe's ideas about Faust were bound up with the name of Napoleon. He grieved that there was no Napoleonic progeny—a son, he said, would not only have done heroic deeds, but would long years ago have joined with him in the great project of connecting the Rhine and the Danube by a canal. In Goethe's eightieth year a friend had awakened his interest in the new harbour at Bremen, the embankment of the fruitful Fenland region, and the Weser estuary; and Eckermann had found the old man surrounded by maps and plans for embankments, quays, and harbours. At the same period he had been excited about the Panama Canal, of which Humboldt had told him. He would have liked to see the three canals—the Rhine, the Panama, and the Suez—before he died; indeed, "it would be well worth while to hold out for fifty years more, for the sake of those three great things."

This was worked into the conclusion of *Faust*. But even now he had no sort of fixed plan in his head. So late as the May of this last year of his life a draft for the Fourth Act says no more than: "Faust envies the dwellers by the sea, who resolve to stem the tides. He wishes to associate himself with them." He did not go any further with this idea until his last weeks of work.

And Goethe, very old, walking up and down and thinking, in these summer-mornings dictated his Last Act: "Faust, very old, walking up and down and thinking." At eighty-two he conceived his centenarian Faust. Himself must surely have inspired that heading—he must have felt how like he looked to his hoary hero, in whom he had been mirrored sixty years ago.

And, thus thinking, he winged his last stupendous flight:

> Noch hab' ich mich ins Freie nicht gekämpft . . .
> Stünd' ich, Natur, vor dir ein Mann allein,
> Da wär's der Mühe wert, ein Mensch zu sein. . . .

[1] I have not yet won through to liberty! . . .
Confronting thee to stand alone, a man,
O Nature! that were worth our mortal span. . . .

Then Care comes to him; she asks if he has not known her. And Goethe gives himself this answer, as from one born of Prometheus:

> Ich bin nur durch die Welt gerannt. . . .
> Ich habe nur begehrt und nur vollbracht
> Und abermals gewünscht und so mit Macht
> Mein Leben durchgestürmt; erst gross und mächtig,
> Nun aber geht es weise, geht bedächtig.
> Der Erdenkreis ist mir genug bekannt—
> Nach drüben ist die Aussicht uns verrannt. . . .
> Dem Tüchtigen ist diese Welt nicht stumm.
> Was braucht er in die Ewigkeit zu schweifen!
> Was er erkennt, lässt sich ergreifen.
> . . . Im Weiterschreiten find' er Qual und Glück,
> Er! unbefriedigt jeden Augenblick![1]

Here and nowhere else we have the last word of Faust, of the "very old" Goethe. By the deepest law of his being must Faust, must Goethe, cause the Devil to lose the great wager of supreme contentment. Even in this penultimate moment sounds the defiant cry of Faust's and Goethe's unrest. Perpetually urged by his senses to let the Devil win, yet by virtue of his soul the victor when all seems lost, Faust can still, at this point, claim to have won; Goethe is still his daemon's conscious thrall, yet master of his steadfast acquiescence; and when Care—as though she were the Devil's procuress—seeks to undermine that

[1] Over the world I have but scoured. . . .
I have but wished, and seen my wish come true,
And wished again; and so, existence through,
Have stormed; at first an elemental being,
But now I'm something sager, more far-seeing.
The universe—of that my fill I know—
Beyond, our mortal vision may not go. . . .
The world will speak to him who has the pluck.
Then wherefore through Eternity go trailing?
The tangible is here for man's unveiling. . . .
Man must march on, his pain or bliss to buy—
He! whom the moment ne'er can satisfy!

stoical courage, it is the veteran Goethe who shouts, in the character of Faust:

> Unselige Gespenster! So behandelt ihr
> Das menschliche Geschlecht zu tausend Malen;
> Gleichgültige Tage selbst verwandelt ihr
> In garstigen Wirrwarr netzumstrickter Qualen.[1]

She breathes in his ear that he is blind—and so, as though he were Destiny herself, in this last hour Goethe ceases to stand for his hero. Blindness was the heaviest trial that Goethe, the Light-Worshipper, could lay upon his Other Self. Yet Faust does not flinch. Extolling the inward eye, he turns to his work; and though Mephisto—still with no reason to hope he has won—has his grave dug before his blinded eyes, Faust, like Goethe, presses on in his last moments to achievement. He proposes to drain a marsh, to do battle with the elements, to look into the " bright eyes of danger "—every man's restorative.

And the old seer makes his blinded hero at last discern an ultimate purpose, through his inward vision of new contests on this scale. Once more he gives voice to his deepest faith, and it seems a variant of those Bible-words in the Authorized Version: *In the end was the Act.* So it is that Faust can cry, presciently:

> Im Vorgefühl von solchem hohen Glück
> Geniess' ich jetzt den höchsten Augenblick.[2]

Is this the solution? Has he not just told the spectre to her face how it is only by marching on that the man who has pluck can appease his ever-unsatisfied heart with momentary joys? It is no more than an evasion—this

[1] Accursed spectres! Yours it is to tell
The human race of ills it never knows;
Even on pulseless days ye cast your spell,
Your hideous network of imagined woes.

[2] In foretaste of such bliss supreme, I know
That moment, the supremest, here below!

issue that Goethe found from the problem which had robbed his own life of happiness. To consummation, the thing for ever denied him, he ultimately looks forward: the figment of a future state, the fantasy—" My genius must save me! " so that for one brief instant he may delude himself into being master of his daemon. It is an arbitrary identification of Faust, dying upon a dream, with a poet who rejects the piercing insight of his daemonic human heart, that he may enjoy what is never to be his.

In all equity—so the lawyers say—Faust had lost his wager with the Devil; and had Goethe entered upon such an one, he—whose heart even to the last laboured under the Mephistophelian incubus—would for sure have morally lost it too. Because he " wanted to have done with it," he snatched at a solution for the insoluble, a solution invented *ad hoc* at the last moment, merely that he might attain to a consummation. And Faust, like Goethe, wanted to have done with it; and since he, like Goethe, suddenly took to believing in " a supreme affair," he lost all sovereignty over the devil, lost the salvation of his soul for an eidolon, for the belief in " a ditch." [1]

And yet he regained it—not as a victor, but through grace. In very truth the end of Faust was as that recent draft had foreseen; he did bear half the blame, but " the clemency of the Old Gentleman " took immediate effect, and the legal loser soared into the skies.

Thus, as it lies before us, the solution affects us as the brilliant artifice of a man who has set himself a problem, and will have harmony at any price. It is only when we look back upon Goethe's whole life, in its rhythmic alternation between action and acquiescence, that the end of *Faust* is irradiated by the sunlight of the Supreme Justice; and that to Goethe, the Wanderer, the word of grace is uttered from that sphere as erst to Gretchen: " Nay—is saved."

[1] This refers to Mephisto's gibe, when Faust speaks of the draining of the marsh, of the " ditch." *Man spricht . . . von keinem Graben, doch vom Grab* (They speak not of a ditch, but of a grave).—*Translator's Note.*

But the work was finished, if not consummated: "The supreme affair brought to an end. . . . All that had been fair-copied incorporated."

For the final pages had been ready for some years. Goethe had never let them out of his hands. He had fastened up the manuscript, and sealed it with his Morning Star seal.

But he could not stop work just yet! Was it not only the end of July, so that he had reached his goal a few weeks too soon? He still had time. Instantly he began on all sorts of supplements to the finished works; but though his usual activities were gradually resumed, this final summer campaign had drained his last energies. He felt it, and regarded any future days that might be his as an indulgence, for "it is really of no consequence now what I do, or whether I do anything."

With his household he lived in peace at last. Ottilie was older, quieter, readier for the duties that lay nearest. The old man was tactful with her; he let her tell him about her balls, minutely discussed some forthcoming charades, was still the one to look after the kitchen and the household.

The children too were easier to do with. Alma was beautiful and self-willed; Walter was composing arias, because he was in love with a singer; Wolf "writes tragedies and comedies, collects theatre-tickets, reads incessantly." Patiently the old man taught the boys to seal letters, keep drawers tidy, did not hinder them from going far too often to the theatre like their father before them, even allowed himself to be persuaded to listen to their rendering of one of Kotzebue's plays. When they drove out with him, they vied with each other in theatrical projects, and he would sit in the carriage, smiling and observing how "exactly like real poets they were, for when one was lost in enthusiasm the other was yawning, and when it was *his* turn the other began whistling." But on one of their birthdays he "was deep in Nature-study, and could only manage to be good-humoured."

He still occasionally sent beetles and butterflies to collectors, in exchange for rare stones. And there was also some official work, for in his last months there was a very weighty correspondence with the Secretary of the Mineralogical Society in Jena about the paragraphing of diplomas, in which Goethe complained that the word "President" came too near the end of the page. There were continual advances of money, recommendations, patronage for artists. But the life seems to have gone out of it all, and a letter at this time concludes: "Peace and joy to all men of goodwill, especially the near and dear! And so henceforth!"

For his last birthday he withdrew to Ilmenau with his grandchildren, "so as to salute the ghosts of the past in a steady and settled frame of mind, with posterity around me"; and while in Weimar his bust was being unveiled amid ceremonial speech-making, exactly as though he were already a dead man, he himself was gazing at the tall lindens that he had planted with his own hands, here where he "had experienced as much of bliss as of trial, only to be reconciled in any lot by boundless activities—and where at least much was done which still has its own quiet influence." The grandsons, of course, wanted to see the colliers, wood-cutters, glass-burners. So he climbed, on foot, the heights where the belvedere stood. And where was that window-recess? He found it, and found too the words he had written more than fifty years ago on the wall:

Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh.[1]

He stood silent for a while; then he went down to the valley.

Science in every department was in a state of commotion. Still he had outbursts of derision and rage because they were trying to squash his Theory of Colour, and his joy was great when a scientist at Prague arranged his

[1] Over all the hills is repose.

studies in historical order. Again he made a vain attempt at accounting for the rainbow. In a long letter he advised a student to make some new chromatic experiments with the aid of a ball of cobbler's-wax.

Fossil animals and vestiges of plants, elephant's teeth which had been found in a Thuringian gravel-pit—these and many other things littered his table, "and would inevitably drive one mad if one plunged into the subtler modes of meditation on the aeons." He was going on with his osteological studies, his ideas about plant-organisms. The conflict between Geoffroy St. Hilaire and Cuvier afforded him further proof of his metamorphic principles, and he wrote upon it once again. He was re-reading the whole of Plutarch with Ottilie, evening after evening—and at the same time was perusing, with amazement, the descriptions of the first English railway.

And when, a few weeks before the end, the talk turned upon his influence, he thus summed himself up:

"What, if we wish to be honest, did I possess that was really my own, beyond capacity and inclination to see and hear . . . and render with some skill? I owe my achievements . . . to thousands of things and persons outside myself, which constituted my material. Fools and sages, clear-brained men and narrow-minded men, children and young people, to say nothing of ripe seniors—they all came to me, all told me how things struck them . . . and all I had to do was to catch hold of it, and reap what others had sown for me. . . . The main thing is to have a great desire, and skill and perseverance to accomplish it. . . . Mirabeau was quite right to make as much use as he could of other people and their capabilities. . . . My work is that of a composite being, and happens to be signed Goethe."

So, for ever unsatisfied with the momentary, he looked back upon his work and life; and one day he ventured once more to break the sacred seal he had set upon *Faust*, that he might add to the great scene, "which, so as to have done with it, I treated all too cursorily."

It was the middle of January. He glanced over the pages, on several days read long passages to Ottilie, touched it up in one place. But soon he sealed the manuscript again—almost unchanged.

On a mild day in February he drove out to his old garden. There, four weeks before the end, he spent some hours alone.

Old Meyer still came and went and sat silently with him; and after Zelter's last visit Goethe noted: "Interesting talk about the past, present, and future." Both friends survived him only a short time—the one was to die seven weeks, the other seven months, after Goethe.

Only one woman's name still echoed through his heart. Six weeks before his death Goethe took Marianne's letters and sent them to her in a sealed packet: "Certain sheets of paper which point me back to the fairest days of my life . . . to guard them against all contingencies"—but she was to promise to leave them unopened till "an hour as yet uncertain." But the tender message did not satisfy him; once more a vision of Zuleika stirred his rhythmical sense to life, and he wrote:

Vor die Augen meiner Lieben,
Zu den Fingern, die's geschrieben—
Einst mit heissestem Verlangen
So erwartet wie empfangen—
Zu der Brust, der sie entquollen,
Diese Blätter wandern sollen,
Immer liebevoll bereit,
Zeugen allerschönster Zeit.[1]

That was Goethe's last love-token to woman.

Now it was March. He was hoping for the spring,

[1] Once with beating heart awaited,
Heart with reading never sated,
Now these letters home are going
To the other heart o'er-flowing;
Soon my loved one's eyes shall light them,
Soon the hand that then did write them,
Once again shall touch the page,
Telling of the golden age.

which he was never to see again. In the last three weeks of his life, Goethe unintentionally touched once more upon all the strings which had most affected his life and his work —all the regions of the mind, the subject-motives, the materials. What follows needs no commentary.

He spoke of the inadequacy of speech, for "often we do not know whether we are seeing, observing, thinking, remembering, imagining, or believing." He fulminated against patriotic poetry, for the poet resembled the eagle "which soars over countries, taking a bird's-eye view of them, and caring nothing whether the hare he swoops upon is running through Prussia or Saxony." He derided the sentimentalists who accounted for Lady Macbeth's deeds by love for her husband, and thought it "terrible, the way the century played up to and defended its weaknesses." He wrote to the astronomers in Jena, saying that they might now be preparing to give "a worthy reception" to the great comet which would appear in two years. He called the earth's motion round the sun the most sublime discovery of the human mind, more important than the whole Bible put together. He described a rare fossil as an interesting transition from the fern to the cactus. In the middle of March he wrote to W. von Humboldt, suddenly, almost without preamble: "The ancients held that animals learn from their natural enemies. I go further, and say that so do men, though *they* have the privilege of passing on the instruction to their organs. . . . The sooner man realizes that there is a craft, an art, which can assist him in the systematic enhancement of his innate capacities, the happier he will be. . . . Suppose a man with musical talent, scoring an important composition—the conscious and the unconscious will stand in a relation similar to that of note-book and entry. . . . The human organs, by means of practice, training, reflection, success or failure, furtherance or resistance—and then again reflection—learn to make the necessary connections unconsciously, the acquired and the innate working hand-in-hand, so that a unison results which is the world's wonder. . . . It is over

sixty years since my adolescent mind conceived *Faust* from beginning to end, and clearly.... But of course I was confronted with the great difficulty that purpose and strength of character had to achieve what really should have been done by the light of Nature, working in me of her own free will. But it would be a poor thing if, after so long, so active, and so reflective a life, it had proved impossible....

"The world is ruled by bewildered theories of bewildering operations; and nothing is to me more important than, so far as is possible, to turn to the best account what is in me and persists in me, and keep a firm hand upon my idiosyncrasies....

"Forgive this belated answer! In spite of my seclusion, the hours are rare in which I can find time to dwell upon and realize these mysteries of life.

"Weimar. March 17, 1832.
"J. W. von Goethe."

That is Goethe's last important letter. The last books he read were Balzac and Plutarch.

At this time a young man presented his album, and Goethe wrote his last verses in it—these admonitory, indeed misanthropic, lines:

Ein jeder kehre vor seinen Tür,
Und rein ist jedes Stadtquartier.
Ein jeder übe sein' Lektion,
So wird es gut im Rate stohn.[1]

The recipient of this was Bettina's son.

The visitors' door closed behind this youth. On the 15th of March the old man caught cold, out driving. In three days he was so much better that he could get up; he looked over his engravings, and a new cholera-medal inspired him with ribald remarks as to the best design for

[1] If each to his own business kept,
Clean were the town of scandal swept;
If all would practise what they preach,
Then were it well with all and each.



A LAST PORTRAIT

such a thing. In this vivacious mood he did not fail to tell his doctor of hospitals and functionaries, invalids and poor folk needing assistance—all of whose names the doctor recognized. The next day he put his last signature to a subscription for a young woman-artist—forty-eight hours before his death, with a trembling hand.

For on this twentieth of March he suddenly collapses. "Terrible nervous restlessness," reports his doctor, "made the old man like a hunted creature—one moment in his bed, the next in his armchair. The pain, which was settling more and more definitely in the chest, wrung moans and loud cries from the tortured sufferer. His features were distorted, his face ashen, his eyes were sunken deep in the livid sockets, colourless, filmed over—he looked as though in the last throes of dissolution."

The doctor hastens to assuage his anguish. At last the invalid falls asleep in his chair. The next day, and the morning after, he seems a little better. On this last morning he asks for a French work on the July Revolution; it lies open before him, but he can do no more than turn the pages. He eats and drinks a little.

"Are you sure you haven't filled my glass too full?"

Then he calls for his amanuensis, and with his help and a servant's he rises and stands near his chair.

"What day of the month is this?"

"The twenty-second, Your Excellency."

"Then spring has begun. Maybe that will help us to get well."

It is past nine o'clock. He sits down again in the chair beside his bed; and now, when the mortal battle of one morning, the mortal battle of eight decades, is over—now at last he falls into a light slumber with continual dreams, for he talks in his sleep more than once. His friends catch the words: "Look—that beautiful woman's head with dark curls—splendid colouring—on a dark background——"

Then he says: "Please open the shutters, so that more light may come in. . . ."

And then: "Friedrich, give me that portfolio there, with the drawings. . . . No, not the book—the portfolio." And when they can find none: "Well, it must have been the ghost of it."

About ten o'clock he asks for a little more wine. After that he ceases to speak. But once more he looks round for Ottilie, and these are Goethe's last words: "Come, my daughterling, and give me your little hand——"

But the mind is still active, for in his semi-slumber he begins to write with the middle finger of his right hand in the air, until the hand sinks slowly down. They think they can distinguish the beginning of a "W."

Then he lay back in his chair and passed away, at the hour of his birth, towards noonday.

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