

## BETTINE BRENTANO AND HER FRIEND GÜNDERODE.

BETTINE BRENTANO'S letters to Goethe, published under the title of Goethe's correspondence with a Child, are already well known among us and met with a more cordial reception from readers in general than could have been expected. Even those who are accustomed to measure the free movements of art by the conventions that hedge the path of daily life, who, in great original creations, seek only intimations of the moral character borne by the author in his private circle, and who, had they been the contemporaries of Shakspeare, would have been shy of visiting the person who took pleasure in the delineation of a Falstaff;—even those whom Byron sneers at as "the garrison people," suffered themselves to be surprised in their intrenchments, by the exuberance and wild, youthful play of Bettine's genius, and gave themselves up to receive her thoughts and feelings in the spirit which led her to express them. They felt that here was one whose only impulse was to live, — to unfold and realize her nature, and they forgot to measure what she did by her position in society.

There have been a few exceptions of persons who judged the work unworthily, who showed entire insensibility to its fulness of original thought and inspired fidelity to nature, and vulgarized by their impure looks the innocent vagaries of youthful idolatry. But these have been so few that, this time, the vulgar is not the same with the mob, but the reverse.

If such was its reception from those long fettered by custom, and crusted over by artificial tastes, with what joy was it greeted by those of free intellect and youthful eager heart. So very few printed books are in any wise a faithful transcript of life, that the possession of one really sincere made an era in many minds, unlocking tongues that had long been silent as to what was dearest and most delicate in their experiences, or most desired for the future, and making the common day and common light rise again to their true value, since it was seen how fruitful they had been to this one person. The meteor playing in our sky diffused there an electricity and a light, which revealed unknown attractions in seemingly sluggish substances, and lured many secrets from the dim recesses in which they had been cowering for years, unproductive, cold, and silent.

Yet, while we enjoyed this picture of a mind tuned to its highest pitch by the desire of daily ministering to an idolized object; while we were enriched by the results of the Child's devotion to him, hooted at by the Philistines as the "Old Heathen," but to her poetic apprehension "Jupiter, Apollo, all in one," we must feel that the relation in which she stands to Goethe is not a beautiful one. Idolatries are natural to youthful hearts noble enough for a passion beyond the desire for sympathy or the instinct of dependence, and almost all aspiring natures can recall a period when some noble figure, whether in life or literature, stood for them at the gate of heaven, and represented all the possible glories of nature and art. This worship is in most instances, a secret worship; the still, small voice constantly rising in the soul to bid them harmonize the discords of the world, and distill beauty from imperfection, for another of kindred nature has done so. This figure whose achievements they admire is their St. Peter, holding for them the keys of Paradise, their model, their excitement to fulness and purity of life, their external conscience. When this devotion is silent, or only spoken out through our private acts, it is most likely to make the stair to heaven, and lead men on till suddenly they find the golden gate will open at their own touch, and they need neither mediator nor idol more. The same course is

observable in the religion of nations, where the worship of Persons rises at last into free thought in the minds of Philosophers.

But when this worship is expressed, there must be singular purity and strength of character on the part both of Idol and Idolater, to prevent its degenerating into a mutual excitement of vanity or mere infatuation.

“Thou art the only one worthy to inspire me;” cries one.

“Thou art the only one capable of understanding my inspiration,” smiles back the other. And clouds of incense rise to hide from both the free breath of heaven!

But if the idol stands there, grim and insensible, the poor votary will oftentimes redouble his sacrifices with passionate fervor, until the scene becomes as sad a farce as that of Juggernaut, and all that is dignified in human nature lies crushed and sullied by one superstitious folly. An admiration restrained by self-respect; (I do not mean pride, but a sense that one's own soul is, after all, a regal power and a precious possession, which, if not now of as apparent magnificence, is of as high an ultimate destiny as that of another) honors the admirer no less than the admired. But humility is not groveling weakness, neither does bounty consist in prodigality; and the spendthrifts of the soul deserve to famish on husks for many days; for, if they had not wandered so far from the Father, he would have given them bread.

In short we are so admirably constituted, that excess anywhere must lead to poverty somewhere; and though he is mean and cold, who is incapable of free abandonment to a beautiful object, yet if there be not in the mind a counterpoising force, which draws us back to the centre in proportion as we have flown from it, we learn nothing from our experiment, and are not vivified but weakened by our love.

Something of this we feel with regard to Bettine and Goethe. The great poet of her nation, and representative of half a century of as high attainment as mind has ever made, was magnet strong enough to draw out the virtues of many beings as rich as she. His greatness was a household word, and the chief theme of pride in the city of her birth. To her own family he had personally been well known in all the brilliancy of his dawn. She had grown up in the atmosphere he had created. Seeing him up there on the mountain, he seemed to her all beautiful and majestic in the distant rosy light of its snow-peaks. Add a nature, like one of his own melodies, as subtle, as fluent, and as productive of minute flowers and mosses, we could not wonder if one so fitted to receive him, had made of her whole life a fair sculptured pedestal for this one figure.

All this would be well, or rather, not ill, if he were to her only an object of thought; but when the two figures are brought into open relation with one another; it is too unequal. Were Bettine, indeed, a child, she might bring her basket of flowers and strew them in his path without expecting even a smile in return. But to say nothing of the reckoning by years, which the curious have made, we constantly feel that she is not a child. She is so indeed when compared with him as to maturity of growth, but she is not so in their relation, and the degree of knowledge she shows of life and thought compels us to demand some conscious dignity of her as a woman. The great art where to stop is not evinced in all passages. Then Goethe is so cold, so repulsive, diplomatic, and courteously determined not to compromise himself. Had he assumed truly the paternal attitude, he might have been far more gentle and tender, he might have fostered all the beauteous blossoms of this young fancy, without ever giving us a feeling of pain and inequality.

But he does not; there is an air as of an elderly guardian flirting cautiously with a giddy, inexperienced ward, or a Father Confessor, who, instead of through the holy office raising and purifying the thoughts of the devotee, uses it to gratify his curiosity. We cannot accuse him of playing with her feelings. He never leads her on. She goes herself, following the vision which gleams before her. "I will not," he says, "wile the little bird from its nest," and lie does not. But he is willing to make a tool of this fresh, fervent being; he is unrelenting as ever in this. What she offers from the soul the artist receives, — to use artistically. Indeed we see, that he enjoyed as we do the ceaseless bee-like hum of gathering from a thousand flowers, but only with the cold pleasure of an observer; there is no genuine movement of a grateful sensibility. We often feel that Bettine should perceive this, and that it should have modified the nature of her offerings. For now there is nothing kept sacred, and no balance of beauty maintained in her life. Impatiently she has approached where she was not called, and the truth and delicacy of spiritual affinities has been violated. She has followed like a slave where she might as a pupil. Observe this, young idolaters. Have you chosen a bright particular star for the object of your vespers? you will not see it best or revere it best by falling prostrate in the dust; but stand erect, though with upturned brow and face pale with devotion.

An ancient author says, "it is the punishment of those who have honored their kings as gods to be expelled from the gods," and we feel this about Bettine, that her boundless abandonment to one feeling must hinder for a time her progress and that her maturer years are likely to lag slowly after the fiery haste of her youth. She lived so long, not for truth, but for a human object, that the plant must have fallen into the dust when its prop was withdrawn, and lain there long before it could economize its juices enough to become a tree where it had been a vine.

We also feel as if she became too self-conscious in the course of this intimacy. There being no response from the other side to draw her out naturally, she bunts about for means to entertain a lordly guest, who brings nothing to the dinner but a silver fork. Perhaps Goethe would say his questions and answers might be found in his books; that if she knew what he was, she knew what to bring. But the still human little maiden wanted to excite surprise at least if not sympathy by her gifts, and her simplicity was perverted in the effort. We see the fanciful about to degenerate into the fantastic, freedom into lawlessness, and are reminded of the fate of Euphorion in Goethe's great Rune.

Thus we follow the course of this intimacy with the same feelings as the love of Tasso, and, in the history of fiction, of Werther, and George Douglas, as also those of Sappho, Eloisa, and Mlle. de L'Espinasse. There is a hollowness in the very foundation, and we feel from the beginning,

"It will not, nor cannot come to good."

Yet we cannot but be grateful to circumstances, even if not in strict harmony with our desires, to which we owe some of the most delicate productions of literature, those few pages it boasts which are genuine transcripts of private experience. They are mostly tear-stained; — by those tears have been kept living on the page those flowers, which the poets present to us only when distilled into essences. The few records in this kind that we possess remind us of the tapestries woven by prisoners and exiles, pathetic heir-looms, in noble families.

Of these letters to Goethe some have said they were so pure a product, so free from any air of literature, as to make the reader feel he has never seen a genuine book before.

Another, "She seems a spirit in a mask of flesh, to each man's heart revealing his secret wished and the vast capacities of the narrowest life."

But the letters of Goethe are not my present subject; and those before me with the same merits give us no cause however trifling for regret. They are letters which passed between Bettine, and the Canoness G nderode, the friend to whom she was devoted several years previous to her acquaintance with Goethe.

The readers of the Correspondence with a Child will remember the history of this intimacy, and of the tragedy with which it closed, as one of the most exquisite passages in the volumes. The filling out of the picture is not unworthy the outline there given.

G nderode was a Canoness in one of the orders described by Mrs. Jameson, living in the house of her order, but mixing freely in the world at her pleasure. But as she was eight or ten years older than her friend, and of a more delicate and reserved nature, her letters describe a narrower range of outward life. She seems to have been intimate with several men of genius and high cultivation, especially in philosophy, as well as with Bettine; these intimacies afforded stimulus to her life, which passed, at the period of writing either in her little room with her books and her pen, or in occasional visits to her family and to beautiful country-places.

Bettine, belonging to a large and wealthy family of extensive commercial connexions, and seeing at the house of grandmother Me. La Roche, most of the distinguished literati of the time, as well as those noble and princely persons who were proud to do honor to letters, if they did not professedly cultivate them, brings before us a much wider circle. The letters would be of great interest, if only for the distinct pictures they present of the two modes of life; and the two beautiful figures which animate and portray these modes of life are in perfect harmony with them.

I have been accustomed to distinguish the two as Nature and Ideal. Bettine, hovering from object to object, drawing new tides of vital energy from all, living freshly alike in man and tree, loving the breath of the damp earth as well as that of the flower which springs from it, bounding over the fences of society as easily as over the fences of the field, intoxicated with the apprehension of each new mystery, never hushed into silence by the highest, flying and signing like the bird, sobbing with the hopelessness of an infant, prophetic yet astonished at the fulfilment of each prophecy, restless, fearless, clinging to love, yet unwearied in experiment — is not this pervasive vital force, cause of the effect which we call nature?

And G nderode, in the soft dignity of each look and gesture, whose lightest word had the silvery spiritual clearness of an angel's lyre, harmonizing all objects into their true relations, drawing from every form of life its eternal meaning, checking, reproving, and clarifying all that was unworthy by her sadness at the possibility of its existence. Does she not meet the wild, fearless bursts of the friendly genius, to measure, to purify, to interpret, and thereby to elevate? As each word of Bettine's calls to enjoy and behold, like a free breath of mountain air, so each of G nderode's comes like the moonbeam to transfigure the landscape, to hush the wild beatings of the heart and dissolve all the sultry vapors of day into the pure dewdrops of the solemn and sacred night.

The action of these two beings upon one another, as representing classes of thoughts, is thus of the highest poetical significance. As persons, their relation is not less beautiful. An intimacy between two young men is heroic. They call one another to combat with the wrongs of life; they buckler one another against the million; they encourage each other to ascend the steeps of knowledge; they hope to aid one another in the administration of justice, and the diffusion of prosperity. As the life of man is to be active, they have still more the air of brothers in arms than of fellow students. But the relation between two young girls is essentially poetic. What is more fair than to see little girls, hand in hand, walking in some garden, laughing, singing, chatting in low tones of mystery, cheek to cheek and brow to brow. Hermia and Helena, the nymphs gathering flowers in the vale of Enna, sister Graces and sister Muses rise in thought, and we feel how naturally the forms of women are associated in the contemplation of beauty and the harmonies of affection. The correspondence between very common-place girls is interesting, if they are not foolish sentimentalists, but healthy natures with a common groundwork of real life. There is a fluent tenderness, a native elegance in the arrangement of trifling incidents, a sincere childlike sympathy in aspirations that mark the destiny of woman. She should be the poem, man the poet.

The relation before us presents all that is lovely between woman and woman, adorned by great genius and beauty on both sides. The advantage in years, the higher culture, and greater harmony of G nderode's nature is counter-balanced, by the ready springing impulse; richness and melody of the other.

And not only are these letters interesting as presenting this view of the interior of German life, and of an ideal relation realized, but the high state of culture in Germany which presented to the thoughts of those women themes of poesy and philosophy as readily, as to the English or American girl come the choice of a dress, the last concert or assembly, had made them expressions of the noblest aspirations, filled them with thoughts and oftentimes deep thoughts on the great subjects. Many of the poetical fragments from the pen of G nderode are such as would not have been written had she not been the contemporary of Schelling and Fichte, yet are they native and original, the atmosphere of thought reproduced in the brilliant and delicate hues of a peculiar plant. This transfusion of such energies as are manifested in Goethe, Kant, and Schelling into these private lives is a creation not less worthy our admiration, than the forms which muse had given them to bestow on the world through their immediate working by their chosen means. These are not less the children of genius than his statue or the exposition of his method. Truly, as regards the artist, the immortal offspring of the Muse,

“Loves where (art) has set its seal,”

are objects of clearer confidence than the lives of which has had breathed; they are safe as the poet tells us death alone can make the beauty of the actual; they will ever bloom as sweet and fair as now, ever, thus radiate pure light, nor degrade the prophecy of high moments, but compromise, fits of inanity, or folly, as the living poems do. But to the universe, which will give time and room to correct the bad lines in those living poems, it is given to wait as the artist with his human feelings cannot, though secure that a true thought never dies, but once gone forth must work and live forever.

We know that cant and imitation must always follow a bold expression of thought in any wise, and reconcile ourself as well as we can to those insects called by the very birth of the rose to prey upon its sweetness. But pleasure is unmingled, where thought has done its proper work and fertilized while it modified each being in its own kind. Let him who has seated himself beneath the great German oak, and gazed upon the growth of poesy, of philosophy, of criticism, of historic painting, of the drama, till the life of that last fifty years seems well worth man's living, pick up also these little acorns which are dropping gracefully on the earth, and carry them away to be planted in his own home, for in each fairy form may be read the story of the national tree, the promise of future growths as noble.

The talisman of this friendship may be found in G nderode's postscript to one of her letters, "If thou findest Muse, write soon again," I have hesitated whether this might not be, "if thou findest Musse (leisure) write soon again;" then had the letters wound up like one of our epistles here in America. But, in fine, I think there can be no mistake. They waited for the Muse. Here the pure products of public and private literature are on a par. That inspiration which the poet finds in the image of the ideal man, the man of the ages, of whom nations are but features, and Messiahs the voice, the friend finds in the thought of his friend, a nature in whose positive existence and illimitable tendencies he finds the mirror of his desire, and the spring of his conscious growth. For those who write in the spirit of sincerity, write neither to the public nor the individual, but to the soul made manifest in the flesh, and publication or correspondence only furnish them with the occasion for bringing their thoughts to a focus.

The day was made rich to Bettine and her friend by hoarding its treasures for one another. If we have no object of the sort, we cannot live at all in the day, but thoughts stretch out into eternity and find no home. We feel of these two that they were enough to one another to be led to indicate their best thoughts, their fairest visions, and therefore theirs was a true friendship. They needed not "descend to meet."

Sad are the catastrophes of friendships, for they are mostly unequal, and it is rare that more than one party keeps true to the original covenant. Happy the survivor if in losing his friend, he loses not the idea of friendship, nor can be made to believe, because those who were once to him the angels of his life, sustaining the aspiration of his nobler nature, and calming his soul by the gleams of pure beauty that for a time were seen in their deeds, in their desires, unexpectedly grieve the spirit, and baffle the trust which had singled them out as types of excellence amid a sullied race, by infirmity of purpose, shallowness of heart and mind, selfish absorption or worldly timidity, that there is no such thing as true intimacy, as harmonious development of mind by mind, two souls prophesying to one another, two minds feeding one another, two human hearts sustaining and pardoning one another! Be not faithless, thou whom I see wandering alone amid the tombs of thy buried loves. The relation thou hast thus far sought in vain is possible even on earth to calm, profound, tender, and unselfish natures; it is assured in heaven, where only chastened spirits can enter, — pilgrims dedicate to Perfection.

As there is no drawback upon the beauty of this intimacy — there being sufficient nearness of age to give G nderode just the advantage needful with so daring a child as Bettine, and a sufficient equality in every other respect — so is every detail of their position' attractive and picturesque. There is somewhat fantastic or even silly in some of the scenes with Goethe; there is a slight air of travestie and we feel sometimes as if we saw rather a masque aiming to

express nature, than nature's self. Bettine's genius was excited to idealize life for Goethe, and gleams of the actual will steal in and give a taint of the grotesque to the groupes. The aim is to meet as nymph and Apollo, but with sudden change the elderly prime minister and the sentimental maiden are beheld instead. But in the intercourse with G nderode there is no effort; each mind being at equal expense of keeping up its fires. We think with unmingled pleasure of the two seated together beside the stove in G nderode's little room, walking in Madame La Roche's garden, where they "*founded a religion for a young prince,*" or on the Rhine, or in the old castle on the hill, as described in the following beautiful letters.

"She (G nderode) was so timid; a young Canoness, who feared to say grace aloud; she often told me that she trembled when her turn came to pronounce the benedicite; — our communion was sweet, — it was the epoch in which I first became conscious of myself. She had sought me out in Offenbach; she took me by the hand and begged me to visit her in the town; afterwards we came every day together; with her I learned to read my first books with understanding; she wanted to teach me History, but soon saw that I was too busy with the *present*, to be held long by the *past*. How delighted I was to visit her; I could not miss her for a single day; but ran to her every afternoon; when I came to the chapter-gate I peeped through the key-hole of her door, till I was let in. The little apartment was on the ground-floor, looking into the garden; before the window, grew up a silver poplar, up which I climbed to read; at each chapter, I clambered one bough higher, and then read down to her; — she stood at the window and listened, speaking to me above; every now and then she would say, 'Bettine, don't fall. I now for the first time, know how happy I then was; for all, even the most trifling thing is impressed on my mind as the remembrance of enjoyment. She was as soft and delicate in all her features as a blonde. She had brown hair, but blue eyes, that were shaded by long lashes; When she laughed it was not loud, it was rather a soft, subdued *crooing*; in which joy and cheerfulness distinctly spoke; she did not walk, she *moved*, if one can understand what I mean by this; her dress was a robe which encompassed her with caressing folds; this was owing to the gentleness of her movements. She was tall of stature; her figure was too flowing, for the word slender to express; she was *timid-friendly* and much too yielding to make herself prominent in society. She once dined with all the baronesses at the Royal Primate's table, she wore the black chapter-dress with long train, white collar and cross of the order; some one remarked that she looked amidst the others like a phantom — a spirit about to melt into air. She read her poems to me and was as well pleased with my applause, as if I had been the great Public; and indeed I was full of lively eagerness to hear them, not that I seized upon the meaning of what I heard, on the contrary, it was to me an 'element unknown' and the smooth verses affected me like the harmony of a strange language, which flatters the ear, though one cannot translate it.

"We laid the plan of a journey, — devised our route and adventures, wrote everything down, pictures all before us — our Fancy was so busy that Reality could hardly have afforded us a better experience. We often read in this fictitious journal and delighted in the sweetest adventures, which we had these met with; invention thus became as it were a *remembrance*, whose relations still continued their connexions with the *present*. Of that which happened in the real world we communicated to each other nothing, the kingdom in which we met sank down like a cloud, parting to receive us to a secret Paradise, there all was new — surprising, but congenial to spirit and heart, and thus the days went by.

"She wished to teach me Philosophy; what she imparted to me, she expected me to comprehend, and to give again in my way under a written form. The Essays which I wrote on these subjects, she read with wonder; they did not contain the most distant idea of what she had communicated; but I maintained that I had so understood it; she called these themes, Revelations, enhanced by the sweetest colorings of an extasied imagination; she collected them carefully, and once wrote to me; Thou dost not yet understand,

how deep these openings lead into the mine of the mind; but the time will come, when it will be important to thee; for man often goes through desert paths — the greater of his way, the more endless the wilderness. But when thou becomes aware how deep thou hast descended into the spring of thought and how there below, thou findest a new dawn, risest with joy again to the surface and speakest of thy deep-hid world, then will it be thy consolation; for thou and the world can never be united; thou wilt have no other outlet, except back through this spring, into the magic garden of thy fancy; but it is no fancy, it is *Truth* which is merely reflected from it. Genius makes use of Fancy, to impart or instil the Divine, which the mind of man could not embrace under its ideal form; yes! thou wilt have no other way of enjoyment in thy life, than that, which children promise themselves from magic-caverns and deep fountains, through which one comes to blooming gardens, wonderful fruits and crystal palaces, where yet unimagined music sounds, and the sun builds bridges of its rays, upon the centre of which one may walk with a firm foot. All this in these pages of thine will form a key, with which thou mayest perhaps unlock deep-hid kingdoms; therefor, lose nothing nor content against that incentive which prompts thee to write, but learn to *labor in thought*, without which Genius can never be born in the spirit; when it becomes incarnate in thee, then wilt thou rejoice in inspiration, even as the dancer in music.” — *Correspondence with a Child*.

These inspired sayings look almost as beautiful in the German-English of Bettine’s translation as in the original. I cannot hope for equal success in the following extracts from “Die G nderode;” but the peculiar grace and originality of expression cannot be quite lost. I have followed as much as possible the idiom of the writer as well as her truly girlish punctuation. Commas and dashes are the only stops natural to girls; their sentences flow on in little minim ripples, unbroken as the brook in a green field unless by some slight waterfall or jet of Ohs and Ahs.

“To G nderode. I did not think that I could be so these beautiful days. In thy letter, line for line, read I nothing mournful and yet, it makes me sad. Thou speakest of thyself as if thou wert wholly other than I, — wholly of other nature. Ah! and yet thou alone standest opposite t me among all men. When we talked together, we were not one; thou wert one way minded, and I another. Certainly I am different from thee; I feel it to-day from every line of thy letter; and yet it is so true to me, illuminating the deep ground of thy soul! How is each man a great mystery! Until all is transfigured into the heavenly, how much remains that is not understood! Wholly to be understood — that seems to me the true only metamorphosis; the proper ascension. In the summer-house where we last saw one another for the first time, — yes, a whole year have we been good friends to one another????!!!! This could I continue to make signs of admiration, of mute surprise of thought, of sighing; or if I knew a sign for shuddering, for tears, I could mark the leaves full of the deepest feelings for which I know no name. the woodbine that then grew over the lattice, blooms this year much more luxuriant. Dost thou remember that was our first word? I said to thee ‘this was a very cold winter the Hahnenfuss<sup>1</sup> has almost all its twigs frozen; the leaves give little shade.’ Then sadist thou, the sun gives and the leaves take; what they cannot receive of the light, they must let pass to us; and thou sadist this plant is fairer named Geisblatt, than Hahnenfuss, — because then we think of a pretty goat, who with pleasure eats the fragrant flowers; and that nature offers an ideal life to every creature. And as the elements in undisturbed working produce, sustain, nourish, and fulfil life, so in enjoyment of undisturbed development, is preparing the some-time element in which the ideal of the Spirit may bloom, thrive, and be fulfilled. And then thou sadist that I ought to wear white, if I love Nature; for as she round about us strewed such lovely flowers, to wear a robe with painted flowers is tasteless, — and we ought to live in harmony with Nature, — otherwise the buds of the human spirit could not bloom out. I thought awhile about thy sayings, — so were we both silent. For it was my place to



answer, and I did not venture, Thou seemedst to me so full of wisdom; thy thought really seemed to be at one with nature and thy soul to tower above men, as the tree-tops full of fragrant flowers in sunshine, rain, and wind, through night and day, and ever striving up into the air. Indeed thou didst seem to me a lofty tree, inhabited and nourished by the spirits of Nature. And when I heard mine own voice that would answer thee, then was I abashed, as if its tone were not noble enough for thee. I could not say it out, though wouldst help me; and didst say ‘the spirit streams into feeling, — and that goes forth from all which Nature produces. Man has reverence before nature, because she is the mother who nourishes the soul with that which she gives to feel.’ How very much have I thought of thee and on thy words, and thy black eye-lashes that covered thy blue eyes, even as I saw thee that very first time of all; and thy tender gesture, and thy hand that smoothed my hair. I wrote, ‘to-day have I seen Gnderode, it was a gift from God.’ Now I read that again, and I would fain do all for thy love. Do not tell me if thou hast tenderness for other men; I mean to say, be to others as thou wilt, only let that be separate from us. We must be secluded one with another, in nature; we must go hand in hand, speak with one another not of things, but a great speech; — Let there be nothing about learning, — I cannot us that; what shall I learn which others know already? That may not be entirely lost; but what happens only just for love of us, that would I not neglect to live with thee; when with thee I would put aside all the superfluous world-stuff, for truly all the *comme-il-faut* is but an injustice that cries to heaven, contradicting the great voice of poesy in us, which points the soul to all which is right. How hateful is that courtesy which ever bows before others, and yet has no real intercourse with any, as if I were discourteous to put aside what does not belong to us. Were nature so perverted, intriguing and irrational as men are, there could not be even a potato ripened, — much less a tree blossom. All is the pure consequence of magnanimity in nature, — each ear of corn which doubles its seed, bears witness. — Narrow-heartedness will never open its seeds to the light. It blights them in the bud. — Now I begin to feel why I am here; each morning prayed I when I awoke, ‘dear God, why was I born;’ and now I know; that I may not be so senseless as the other are; that I should walk the true path marked out in my heart; for why has the finger of God stamped it there? — and taken my five sense to school? so that each one may learn the letters, it is were not to confirm this way. — One would attribute wisdom to man, and prescribe it to him as the simple way of nature; but the denial of a great mighty world-mind in us, is ever the consequence of our conventional life with others; till at last one can draw no free breath, nor have a great thought, or great feeling, from mere courtliness and decorum. Let the Devil be grateful for great actions; — they must happen of themselves; if all went on naturally in life. — It is a shame that men should give such things the name of magnanimity; as if an earnest fire, what they name great actions. — The tiresome race of men cackle like geese; they do not hear the sobs of Love. This must I say, because the nightingales are sobbing so sweetly above me. Four nightingales are there; also last year were there four. Truly I will never love for I should be abashed before the nightingales, that I could not sing like them. How they breathe out their souls in the art of extasy, in music, and in such a tone, so pure, so innocent, so pure and deep, such as no human soul can produce, either from the voice, or an instrument. Why must man learn to sing, while the nightingale so purely, with such unalloyed beauty, understands to sing deep into the heart. I have never heard a song of man’s that touched me like the nightingale’s. Just not thought I, because I heard them so deeply, I would try whether they would hear me. When they made a pause I raised my voice; Instantly they all four burst out together, as if to say ‘leave us our empire.’ Arias, operas, songs, are mere false tendencies of the conventional world; the declamation of a false inspiration. Yet is man carried away by sublime music. Wherefore, if he be not himself sublime? Yes, there is a secret will in the sould to be great, it refreshes like dew to hear one’s proper genius in its original speech. Is not that true? Oh we also would be like these tones, which swiftly reach their aim without ever faltering; there embrace they fulness — in each rhythmus a deep mystery of inward formation, as man does not. Surely melodies are God-created beings, with a continuous life of their own, each thought living forth out of the soul. Man produces thoughts not — They produce

man. — Ah! there falls a Linden-flower on my nose; and now it rains a little. Here am I writing stupid stuff, I can scarcely read it now; it is fast growing dark; how fair nature spreads out her veil! so light, so transparent. Now begin the souls of the plants to hover round about; and the oranges in the grove, and the Linden-fragrance comes steaming wave over wave. It is now dark; the nightingales become more zealous; they sing indeed in the silence of the moon; ah! we will do something really great, we will not in vain have met one another in this world. Let us found a religion for mankind, and make it well again. A life with God. Thy Mahomet did a great deal by only two or three rides into heaven; let us ride a little into heaven. —

“Yesterday I forgot to write thee, because I sent thy poem to Clemens; but I first copied it for myself. And wished to say to thee how beautiful I find it. Through gratitude that I have thee to my friend, have I neglected it. Thou seest it in the letter; that it is thy great heart that touches me, and that I hold myself unworthy to loose thy shoe-ties. Thou chooseth a fair thought, and putteth it in rhyme as a mantle of honor for Clemens; what a fair virtue hast thou! raising the spirit from the life of earth. God made the world from nothing, preached ever the nuns, then would I ask how that was done? They could not tell me, and bid me be silent. But I went about and looked at all the growing things, as if I must know out of what they are made. Now I know he has not made them out of nothing. He has made them out of spirit. That I learn from the Poet; from thee. God is a Poet. Indeed, then I understand him.”

In another letter, after describing her bringing back to town a poor woman whom she found ill beyond the gates.

“Then came the good doctor Neville and to him I gave the woman. When I came to the Horse-market, Moritz met me and said, ‘how pale you look, what is the matter.’ I am so very hungry, said I; and it was true; the anxiety about the woman had made me hungry. Moritz had a pocket full of dried olives; I like them much. He emptied his pocket into my glove which I had drawn off to have it filled. Just at that moment the cuckoo brought Lotte in my way. Moritz went away, and Lotte came to me and asked, ‘how canst thou stand in the open street hand in hand with Moritz.’ That vexed me. I went into the convent to thee, where I ate my olives and laid all the stones in a row on the window-sill. In the dusk thou wast standing beside me, entirely sunk in silence. At last thou saidst, ‘why art thou to-day so silent?’ I said ‘I am eating my olives, — that occupies me, but thou also art silent; why art thou silent?’ ‘There is a silence of the soul,’ saidst thou, ‘where all is dead in the breast;’ ‘is it so in thee?’ asked I. Thou Overt silent awhile, and then thou saidst ‘It is just so in me, as out there in the garden; the dusk lies on my soul as on those bushes. She is colorless, but she knows herself — but she is colorless,’ saidst thou yet again. And this time in a tone so without vibration, that I looked on thee in the night-shimmer, wondering and affrighted, for I ventured to speak no more. I thought what words I could use to thee, I sought in wide circles round about. Nothing seemed to me suited to interrupt this silence, — which ever deeper and deeper took root, — till it streamed through my head like a slumber which I could no more resist. — I laid my head dreaming on the window-board and know not how much time passed. Then came light into the chamber, and when I looked up thou wert leaning over me, and when I looked inquiringly on thee, then gavest thou as answer, ‘Yes, I feel often as it were a chasm here in the breast; I may not touch it, — it pains me.’ I said ‘can I not fill it? this chasm?’ ‘That also would pain me,’ saidst thou. Then I gave thee my hand and went away. — And long followed me thy look, it was so still and so profound, and yet seemed to pass away over me. Oh, as I went home I loved thee so! In thought I wound my arms about thee so close; I thought I would bear thee in my arms to the end of the world, and set thee down on a fair mossy place there would I serve thee, — and let nothing touch thee which could give thee pain. — Yes, so was it in my childish heart; perforce would I make thee happy, and thought a moment I must succeed; but I know well that such a thing cannot succeed to me, and that it is only the illusion of my thoughts, for

even as children cannot separate the far and near, and think they can reach down the moon with their hand, to comfort the playmate with, when he is silent and sorrowful, — so was it with me when I came home, they were all at the tea-table and I was mute, for I thought of thee, and sat down on a stool by the stove; then went I deep into my heart, and waked there an inner life for my spirit, which might touch thee a little, — for until now thou only hast given me all. And before thee I have never been able to make audible the voice within my breast. Then thought I, when I should be far from thee I should more surely come to myself, because the manifold, indeed the thou — ‘ever new and living is the desire in me to express my life in a permanent form; in a shape that may be worthy to advance towards the most excellent, to greet them and claim community with them. Yes, after this community have I constantly longed. This is the church, towards which my spirit constantly makes pilgrimages upon the earth.’ — But now thou sayest, we will trifle, — because thou wouldn’t remain untouched; because thou findest no community, and yet thou believest that there is somewhere a height where the air blows pure, and a longed for shower rains down upon the soul, making it freer and stronger. But certainly this is not in philosophy; I do not quote this from Boigt; my own feeling bears witness to me. Healthful breathing men cannot so narrow themselves. Imagine to thyself a philosopher, living quite alone on an island, where it should be beautiful as only spring can be, where all was blooming, free, and living, birds signing, and all the births of nature perfectly fair, but no creature there to whom the Philosopher could interpret anything. Dost thou believe that he would take such flights as those which I cannot constrain with thee? I believe he would take a bite from a beautiful apple, rather than make dry wooden scaffoldings for his own edification from the high cedars of Lebanon. The Philosopher combines, and transposes, and considers, and writes the process of thought, not to understand himself, that is not the object of this expense, but to let others know how high he has climbed. He does not wish to impart his wisdom to his low-stationed companions, but only the hocus-pocus of his superlatively excellent machine, the triangle which binds together all circles. — But it is only the idle man who has never realized his own being that is taken by this.

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“‘To know much, to learn much,’ sadist thou, ‘and then die young.’ Why sadist thou that? — With each step in life meets thee some one who has somewhat to ask of thee, — how wilt thou satisfy them all? Say, wilt thou let one pass hungry from thee, who asks thee for alms? No, that wilt thou not! Therefore live with me. I have every day something to ask of thee. Ah! where should I go, if thou wert no more! Never again would I seek the path of happiness. — I would let myself go, and never ask after myself, for only for thy sake do I ask after myself, and I will do all which though wishest. — Only for thy sake do I live, dost thou hear? I am afraid, for thou art great, I know it; and yet I will not speak to thee thus loudly, — no, thou art not. Thou art a soft child, and because it cannot endure pain, it denies it wholly. I know it, for so hast thou veiled many a loss. — But in thy neighborhood, in the atmosphere of thy spirit, the world seems to me great, — thou not, do not be afraid! But because all life is so pure in thee, each sign so simply received by thee, the spirit must find a place to dilate and become great. Forgive me to-day, but a mirror is before my eyes, and as if some one had withdrawn the veil from it, and I am so sad to see nothing but clouds in the mirror, and winds are mourning, as if I forever weep because I think on thee. This evening I was out beside the Maine; then rustled the sedges so wondrously, and because I in loneliness am ever with thee, I asked thee in my soul, ‘what is that? does the sedge speak to thee?’ — For I will confess it — I should not be willing to be spoken to so, — so mournful, so complaining, I wished to put it from me. Ah Günderode, I am so sad, — was not that cowardly in me that I wished to turn lamentations of Nature from myself, and address them to thee, as if she talked with thee, when she so woefully moaned in the sedge? Yet I would willingly share all with thee. It is to me happiness, great happiness to take thy pains upon myself; I am strong, I am hard, I feel them not so easily. I can endure tears, and then Hope springs up again so quickly in me, as is all might return again, and better yet than what the soul desires. — Rely on my when it seizes thee, as if it would cast thee into the pit. I will

accompany thee every where. No way is too gloomy for me; when thine eye cannot look at the light; it is so mournful. — I am willingly in darkness, dear G nderode. I am not alone there, I am full of new thoughts which will make Day in the soul. Precisely in the darkness rises up to me clear, glittering Peace. Oh despair not of me, though I went in my letters on lonely paths, — truly too much as if I sought myself only. Yet it was not so; I sought thee, I sought intimacy with thee, that I might drink with thee of the fountains of life which flow along our course. I feel it well in thy letter, that thou wilt withdraw from me. That will I not permit. I cannot lay down my pen, — I think thou must spring from the wall, all in armor like Minerva, and must swear to me, must swear to my friendship which is nothing but in thee; from that time forth thou wilt swim in the blue ether, walk with a lofty step like her, with thy crest in the sunlight like her, no more dwelling mournfully in the shadows. Adieu, I go to bed, and go from thee; although I could wait the whole night until thou shouldst show thyself, beautiful as thou art, and in peace, and breathing freedom as it becomes thy spirit, capable of the best and fairest. — Let there be one place of repose to thee in earth, on my breast. Good night, love me, if only a little. —”

To G nderode.

“But this one thing have I kept. God is Poesy. Man created in his image is also born a Poet, but also all are called and few chosen. That must I alas! experience in myself. Yet I too am a Poet, although I can make no rhyme. I feel it when I go into the open air, in the wood, or up on the hill, there lies a rhythmus in my soul according to which I am obliged to think and my mood gives it measure. And then when I am among men, I let myself be carried away by their vulgar street-balled measure or metrum, then feel I myself a pitiful person, and know nothing more but mere stupid stuff. Dost thou not feel also that stupid men can make one much stupider than one naturally is? They are not altogether wrong to say I am stupid, but heart which understands me, come only — and I will give thee a banquet that shall do thee honor. Listen yet a little further. Every great action is a poem. Is transformation of the personality into divinity. If an action is not a poem, it is not great. — Yet great is all which is discerned with the light of reason, — that is to say — all which thou canst seize in its true sense, must have a root which is planted in the ground of wisdom, and a flower which blooms in divine light. We must pass from the ground of the soul into the image of God, over and up to our origin. — Am I not in the right? And if it is true that man can be such, why should it be otherwise? I understand it not. All men are other than it would have been so easy to be. They hang upon what they should not regard, and disdain that which they should hold fast. —

“Oh I have a longing to be pure from these faults. To enter the bath, and wash myself from all these corruptions. The whole world seems to me crazy, and ever I play the fool with them, and yet there is in me a voice which teaches me better. Let us then found a religion, I and thou. And let us therein for a while be both priest and layman, and live wholly in silence, and live severely in it and develop its laws as a young king’s sons are developed, — who sometime shall be the great ruler of the whole world. — So must it be if he were a Hero, and through his will could reprove all frailties, and so embrace the whole world that is must grow better. — I believe also that God has only let the races of kings exist, that they may be seen on all sides. — The king has power over all; thus men who see his public actions perceive how badly he acts, or if he does anything good how great they themselves might be. — Then if the king is so that he does all which no other can, a genial ruler draws his people perforce, to step whither they never would have come without him. — We must mould our religion entirely fir for such a young Ruler; oh wait only! that has wholly turned me to the East. I shall soon understand it all now. Ah! I pray thee take a little heart sympathy in it, — that will animate me so! like God to think it all out of pure nothing. Then am I too a poet. I know the way how we can consider it all. We will walk together here, in Grandmama’s garden up and down in these splendid summer days, or in the bosquet which has such dark avenues; we can seem to be only walking, and unfold it all in our conversation; then evenings will I write all down, and send it into the city to thee by the Jew. And thou shalt put it into a poetic form; so that when men sometime find it, they will have the more reverence and faith in it; this is a fair jest, — yet take it not so; it is my earnest, for wherefore should we not think together over the weal and wants of humanity. For every germ which sprouts up, from the earth, or from the spirit, may be expected to bring forth fruit in time, — and I know not why we should not expect a good harvest, which may profit humanity. Humanity, poor

humanity! it is like a will-o-the wisp caught in a net, quite dull and slimy. — Ah God! I shall sleep no more, good night, only I will say our religion must be called the *hovering religion*. That I will tell thee about to-morrow. —

“Yet one law in our religion must I propose for thy consideration, truly a first fundamental law. Namely, man shall always do a great action, — never another. And then I will come to thee and say that each action can and shall be a very greatest. Ah hear! I see already in spirit, when we go into the council what clouds of dust there will be!

“‘Who prays not cannot think.’ I shall have that painted on an earthen spoon, with which our disciples shall eat their porridge. On other spoons we might have painted, ‘who thinks not, learns not to pray.’ The Jew is coming, I must make haste to put our world-revolution in his sack; and we sometime shall be able to say, what wonderful instruments God has chosen to accomplish his aims, like the old nun in Fritzier. —’

### To Bettine.

“Best were it we should say thinking is praying; then something good would be expressed, — we should win time; thinking with praying, and praying with thinking. — Thou art mighty cunning, to think of making me rhyme thy unrhymed stuff. — Thy projects are ever uncommonly venturesome like a rope dancer who feels sure that he can balance himself, or one who has wings and know he can spread them out, if the hurricane should take him from the height. — For the rest I have understood thee well, notwithstanding the many sweet praises which thou scatterest like grass for the victim, that I am the victim and know that I am too timid, and cannot what I inly think right, outwardly defend against the reasonings of falsehood. I am mute and ashamed just where others should be ashamed; that goes so far in me that I beg people for forgiveness when they have injured me, for fear they should observe what they have done. — Truly I cannot endure that any one should believe I could distrust him, rather I smile like a child at all which meets me, I cannot endure those whom I cannot convince of the better, should have the idea that I am better and wiser than they. If two understand one another, to that belongs the living action of a divine third. — Thus recognize I our relation, as a present from the Gods, in which they themselves play the most happy part; but my inner feelings, my inconsequent propositions to display to light, for that lends me neither the blue eyes Minerva, nor Areus god of the combat, a support<sup>2</sup>. — I agree with thee it would be better could I bear myself more manly, and laid not aside this powerful thought of the world, in intercourse with other men. But what wouldst thou have in one so timid, that she fears in the convent to say at table the blessing oud enough to be heard. — Let me alone, and bear with me as I am — if I have not the heart to raise my voice against all madness, yet at least I have never permitted any, the least wave of thy rushing life-blood to dash itself against that hard rock. — It sands dry and untouched by thy holy inspirations, and thou canst untroubled let thy life flow tither. — I know thou art grieved that we did not visit Holderlin; before St. Clair went away yesterday he came to see me. Seeing thy thick letter, he was very desirous of hearing something from it and the timid one was bold enough to read him the passage where Bettine speaks of *Ædipus* — he would copy it, he must copy it, else had his soul passed; and the timid one was too cowardly to refuse him. He said, ‘I will read it to him; perhaps it will work like balsam on his soul. If not, still it must be that the highest excitement produced through his poetic nature should find an echo in him. I must read it to him.’ I will at least win from him a smile. Now see me already again full of timidity, lest my boldness displease thee. Yet if my ear did not deceive me, that hymn on the dove-house was sing for the poor Poet, that it might make an echo to his broken lute.

“I have now much society distress. This week the second time must I creep into the black Canoness-roe in which persecutes me my silly timidity. I seem to myself so strangely in it, it is so unusual to me publicly to maintain a borrowed dignity, that I must always hang my head and look away when I am spoken to. Yesterday we dined in a body with the Primate. I lost my order-cross. It lay under the stool, I felt it with the point of my foot, that made me much embarrassed; and think only, the primate himself picked it up, and begged leave to fasten it on my shoulder. But heaven be praised! our duenna came up, and took the trouble on herself. I could not sleep the whole night for this adventure, — it made me blush to think of it. I went out to ride, and met Moritz in his cabriolet; then to the comedy in your box. George

took me. The play was the ‘Brother and Sister.’ — The house was very empty on account of the heat. The Frau Rath sat quite alone at my side. She called into the theatre, ‘Mr. Berdy, play well, I’m here,’ it made me quite confused. I thought if he answered, a conversation might arise, in which perhaps I might be called on to take part. — There were no fifty men in the pit; but Berdy played extremely well; and the Frau Rath clapped at each scene so as to make the house echo. Then Berdy would make her profound bows. — It was very droll, the empty house, — the box-doors open, on account of the heat, through which the day shone in. then came wind, — and played with the tattered decorations. Then Madame Goethe called to Berdy, ‘ah what a superb wind,’ — and fanned herself. It was just as if she played too. And they seemed in the theatre as if they were alone, in confidential domestic intercourse. I thought of the great Poet, who disdained not so simply to speak out his deep nature. — Yes, thou mayst be right, — there is something great in it. It was awing, even tragic, this void, this silence, the open doors, — the unique mother full of delight, as if her son had built her a throne on which she, far elevated above the dust of the earth, received the homage of Art. — They played admirably, indeed with inspiration, merely on account of the Frau Rath. She knows how to inspire respect. — At the end she called out, ‘She was much obliged, and would write about it to her son.’ — Then began a conversation, to which the public was very attentive; but which I did not hear because I was sent for.”

This little sketch of Goethe’s mother will remind the reader of the humorous letter, in which Bettine, writing to him, describes the meeting between this woman of lively simple genius, and her whose mind was “truly an ant-hill of thoughts” the French Corinne, Madame de Staël.

The two following letters passed between the friends while Bettine was at the watering-place, where she became acquainted with the Duke of Gotha. They were written at different times, but give an idea so distinct of the habits and tendencies of the two persons, that they seem to answer one another; therefore I have given them together.

Bettine to Gùnderode.

“Twice, three times between oaks and beeches and young light bushes, hill up, hill down — then comes one to a rock, — smooth shining basalt-surfaces, catching the sunbeams like a morning went to thither; it is my usual walk when I am alone, not too long and yet secluded, — there saw I the mist like young down between the rock-clefts floating hither and thither, and above me was it ever more golden, the morning shadows drew aside, the sun crowned me, it struck back sharply from the black stone, it burned very fiercely, yet oppressed not my forehead; I would willingly wear a crown, if it pressed no harder than the hot August sun, so sat I and sang to the rocks and listened for the echos, and thoughts of empire rose into my head. To govern the world according to the maxims which have been produced in the innermost work shop of my feelings and to drive out Philistines everywhere, such are the wishes that rise to my head in such a hot summer-morning, and to which Boigt’s speech of the stars had now given a powerful excitement; he said each feeling, each conception becomes a capacity and a possession; it draws itself back indeed, but at a wholly unexpected hour, it comes forth again, and then I seated myself in a lonely place, and feigned such things out into the blue and came to nothing, except tameless heart-beating as I thought that I might quiet the shrieking of the Philistines, who stifle by their formulas the voice of the spirit, merely by the government of my feelings; indeed this would be a heavenly compensation for those blows of the rod with which they blindly persecute all inspiration. Gùnderode I would thou wert a ruler and I thy Kobold; that would be my province and I know certainly that I should be discreet before the pure life-flame. But now, is it a wonder that one is stupid. Thus was I beneath the burning sun, sunk in meditation, chasing on a steed like the wind to all quarters of the globe, and as thy delegate of lofty inspiration set the world to rights commanding hither and thither, sometimes with a stamp of the foot or threatening word to make matters go on quick — meanwhile I had neglected to read thy dramalet which I took out with me, intending to study it really; but now the impetuous motions of my soul I felt compelled to soothe in sleep, as always I do when my temples burn thus from zeal about the future. O goblet of the

soul, how artistic-rich and divinely gifted is thy rim made so that it may restrain the rushing floods of life, inevitably else should I have overflowed thee. — My friend, the spaniel, scented me out, he waked me with his barking and wanted me to play with him, he barked so loud that all the rocks groaned and echoed; it seemed as if a whole hunt were out; I must shout too for joy and gayety; he brought me my straw-hat which I had thrown down the steep rock with such graceful leaps — so is it when we wish the dangers of the pit, but trust in our own powers and succeed. — Ah G nderode, it would be much if man would trust his own Genius as this spaniel. He laid his paws on my shoulders when he had brought me back the hat without hurting it; in jest I named him Erodion, thinking he must even so have looked up to the Goddess Immortalita, for he was so noble and fair and bold; men look not easily out so simply great and undisturbed in their own wise, as animals do. The Duke had followed the barking of his dog, and now came forth from behind the trees; he asked why I gave that name to the dog which he calls Cales, this he said was the name of a charioteer slain before Tray by Diomed; I showed him thy poem to explain when I took the name Erodion. He sat down on the rock, and read it partly aloud, making notes with a pencil; I send these to thee, he has read it with self-collection, and thus truly with love. I know not how often chance may favor thee so that thou mayst touch the more delicate strings of the soul; thus will it rejoice thee. He asked whether I understood the poem; I said No! but I like to read it because thou art my friend who educates me. He said, ‘A bud is this little work, carefully guarded from each foreign influence which the great soul of the friend embraces, and in this softly folded germ of a yet undeveloped speech slumber giant powers. The inspiration to recreate lifts up its wings within thee, full of presentiment, and because the world is too unclean for such childlike pure essays to express thy presentiments, wo will it not unfold this unpretending veil which embraces thy far reaching imagination and thy high philosophic spirit,’ With surprise I received the pleasure of this praise. He walked on with me, and as we would have me talk of thee, of our life together, of thy character, of thy form; then have I for the first time reflected how fair thou art; we saw a well-grown white silver birch in the distance, with its hanging boughs, which had grown up out of a cleft in the midst of the rock, and , softly moved by the wind, bent downwards toward the valley; to this I involuntarily pointed, as I spoke of thy spirit and thy form; the Duke said, ‘then is the friend like that birch?’ — I said, ‘yes, so would he go with me and look on thee nearer; the path was so steep and slippery, I thought we could not go; but he said Cales would find us out a way. ‘What sort of hair has she? — ‘Glossy black-brown hair, which flows freely in loose soft curls on her shoulders.’ — ‘And her eyes?’ — ‘Pallas-eyes, blue in color, full of fire but also liquid and calm.’ — ‘Her forehead?’ — ‘Soft and white as ivory, nobly arched and free, small, yet broad like Plato’s; eyelashes that smiling curl backward, brows like two black dragons that measuring one another with sharp look, neither seizing nor leaving one another, proudly raise their crests, then fearfully smooth them again. Thus watches each brow, defying yet timid, over the soft glances of her eyes.’ — ‘And the nose and cheek?’ — ‘The nose has been censured as a little proud and disdainful, but that is because the nostril trembles with every feeling, hardly taming the breath, as thoughts rise upwards from the lip, which swells out fresh and powerful, guarded and gently restrained by the delicate upper lip.’ Even the chin must I describe, truly I have not forgotten that Erodion had has his seat there and left a little hollow, which the finger is pressed into as poetry full of wisdom expands her spirit. Meanwhile there stood the birch so gorgeous, so filled with gold, so whispered through, by the sun, by the breeze, so willing to bow itself gently to the stream of the morning wind, waving its green leaves joyfully into the blue heaven, that I could not decide, what lay between both, suits one, and not the other. Cales found with many leaps the way to the birch; the Duke followed; I remained behind; I could easily have followed, but I would not in his presence. He cut letters in the bark quite low down near to the foot and said he wished it might be called the Friendship-birch, and that he also might be our friend. I was willing. Ah let him; he will come this winter to Frankfort, at first a prince forgets easily such a matter among many other distractions, for he cannot believe it possible that, is a man but gave himself entirely to one thing, through this alone the penetration, the force of judgement, the all-sidedness can arise, for which they are all hunting and fluttering about; — besides he is sick and has few good days; for such an one must we fill out from all healing fountains, — Adieu, — To-morrow morning a great party is formed for a donkey excursion, and to-morrow before noon goes the good Electress away, and very early, about three o’clock, the Englishman wish to climb the hill with us to see

the sun ride; the others did not wish to have Boigt, but I would have him, for else I am weary, though the others say it makes them weary to have him there. Early to-morrow comes the carrier woman, I shall send this letter by her, though it is not yet so alarmingly long as my first, but thou art melancholy and I would fain amuse thee a little, and I know the pretty story of the Duke will make thee laugh, however thou mayest draw thy lips together. Grant it may make thee pleasure also? I have copied his declaration of love from thy Immortalita, that from his own hand belongs to thee; I hear he is celebrated, of noble nature, witty and on that account much feared by many; he is also very generous and kindly, but many would rather have nothing to do with him, fearing his best friendliness covers a secret satire. How foolish is that, about me might any one make merry as much as he would; it would be pleasant to me, if he enjoyed it.

Paper sent back to G nderode with the preceding letter.

IMMORTALITA.

*Dramatis persona.*

IMMORTALITA, a goddess.

ERODION.

CHARON.

HECATE.

FIRST SCENE.

A dark cavern at the entrance of the lower world. In the back-ground of this cavern are seen the Styx and Charon's bark passing hither and thither, in the fore-ground a black altar on which a fire is burning. The trees and plants at the entrance of the cavern, and indeed all the decorations, and the figures of Hecate and Charon are flame-color and black, the shadows light grey, Immortalita white; Erodion dressed like a Roman youth. A great fiery snake, which has its tail in its mouth, forms a circle out of which Immortalita does not pass.

IMMORTALITA. (*awakening*) Charon! Charon! Charon!

CHARON. (*stopping his boat.*) Why dost thou call me?

IMMORTALITA. When will the time come?

CHARON. Look at the snake at thy feet, so long as the circle is unbroken the spell lasts also, thou knowest it; then why dost thou ask me?

IMMORTALITA. Unkind old man, if it comforts me yet once again to hear the promise of a better future, why dost thou deny me a friendly word?

CHARON. We are in the land of silence.

IMMORTALITA. Prophecy to me yet once again, —

CHARON. I hate speech.

IMMORTALITA. Speak — speak.

CHARON. Ask Hecate. (*he rows away*).

IMMORTALITA. (*strewing incense on the altar.*) Hecate, goddess of midnight, discoverer of the future which yet sleeps in the bosom of chaos, mysterious Hecate! Appear.

HECATE. Powerful exorcist, — why callest thou me from out the caves of eternal midnight; this shore is hateful to me; its gloom too full of light; it seems to me that gleams from the land of life have wandered hither.

IMMORTALITA. O Hecate, forgive, and hear my prayer.

HECATE. Pray not; thou art queen here, thou reignest, and knowest it not.



IMMORTALITA. I know it not; and wherefore do I not know it?

HECATE. Because thou canst not see thyself.

IMMORTALITA. Who will show me a mirror in which I may behold myself?

HECATE. Love.

IMMORTALITA. And wherefore Love?

HECATE. Because the infinity of that alone answers to thine.

IMMORTALITA. How far does my kingdom extend?

HECATE. Everywhere, if once beyond that barrier.

IMMORTALITA. How? shall the impenetrable well that separates my province from the upper world ever fall asunder?

HECATE. It will fall asunder, thou wilt dwell in light, all shall find thee.

IMMORTALITA. O when shall this be?

HECATE. When believing Love tears thee away from night.

IMMORTALITA. When — in hours — or years?

HECATE. Count not by hours — with thee time is not. Look down; the snake winds about as if in pain, but vainly he fixes his teeth more firmly to keep close the imprisoning circle — vain is the resistance; the empire of unbelief, or barbarism, and night must fall to ruins. (*She vanished.*)

IMMORTALITA. O future — wilt thou but resemble that blessed distant past when I dwelt with the gods in perpetual glory. I smiled on them all, and at y smile their looks lightened as never from the nectar, and Hebe thanked me for her youth, and the every-blooming Aphrodite for her charms. But separated from me by the darkness of time, before my breath had lent them permanence, they fell from their thrones, those serene Gods, and went back into the elements of life. Jupiter into the power of the primæval heavens, Eros into the hearts of men, Minerva into the minds of the wise, the Muses into the songs of the poets, and I most unhappy of all, was not permitted to bind the unfading laurel upon the brows of the hero, of the poet. Banished into this kingdom of night, a land of shadows, this gloomy other-side; I must live only for the future.

CHARON. (*passing in his boat with shades*). Bow yourselves, Shades, this is the queen of Erebus, and that you still like after your earthly life is her work.

#### CHORUS OF SHADES.

Silent guides us the bark  
To the unknown land,  
Where the sun never dawns  
On the always dark strand, —  
Reluctantly we see it go,  
No other sphere our looks would know  
Than life's bright-colored land.

#### SAME SCENE.

(*Charon's bark lands. Erodion springs on shore. Immortalita still seen in the back-ground.*)

ERODION. Back, Charon, from this shore, which no shade may tread. Why lookest thou upon me? I am not a shadow like you; a joyful hope, a faith full of visions have kindled the spark of my life to flame.

CHARON. (*aside*.) Surely this must be the youth who bears in himself the golden future. (*He rows away.*)

IMMORTALITA. Yes, thou art he, prophesied to me by Hecate; through thy look will the light of day break into these ancient caverns, and dispel the night.

ERODION. If I am he prophesied to thee, maiden or Goddess, however thou art named, believe thou fulfilllest to me the inmost presentiment of the heart.

IMMORTALITA. Say, who art thou? — what is thy name, and how didst thou find the way to this pathless shore, where neither shades nor men dare wander, but only subterranean Gods.

ERODION. I am unwilling to speak to thee of anything but my love; indeed to speak of my love is to speak of my life. Then hear me. I am the son of Eros and Aphrodite; the double-union of love and beauty has implanted in my being an idea of bliss which I nowhere find, yet must everywhere foresee and seek. Long was I a stranger upon earth. I could not enjoy its unsubstantial goods, till at last come into my soul a dim presentiment of thee. Everywhere was I accompanied by the idea reflected from thee, everywhere I followed the trace of the beloved, even when it plunged me down into the realm of dreams, thus guiding me to the gates of the lower world, but never could I press through to thee, an unhappy fate drew me ever back to the upper world.

IMMORTALITA. How youth, hast thou so loved me that rather than not find me thou wouldst have forsaken Helios and the rosy dawn?

ERODION. So have I loved thee, and without thee the earth no more could give me joy, neither the flowery spring, the sunny day, nor dewy night, which to possess, the gloomy Pluto would willingly resign his scepter. But as the love of my parents was beyond all other, for they were love itself, so the desire which has drawn me to thee was most powerful, and my faith in finding thee victorious over all obstacles, for my parents knew that the child of love and beauty could find nothing higher than itself, and gave me this faith in thee that my powers might not be exhausted by striving after somewhat higher out of myself.

IMMORTALITA. But how camest thou to me at last? Unwillingly does Charon receive the living into the brittle bark made only for the shades.

ERODION. Once was my longing to see thee so great, that all men have invented to surround thee with uncertainty, seemed to me little and vain. Courage inspired my whole being; my goods of this earth, and steered my bark hitherward to the perilous rock where everything earthly is wrecked. A moment I thought, what if thou shouldst lose all, and find nothing; but high confidence pressed doubt aside, joyously I said to the upper world a last farewell, night embraced me. — a ghastly pause, — and I found myself with thee. The torch of my life still burns the other side of the Stygian water.

IMMORTALITA. The heroes of the former world have already tried this same path, courage enabled them to pass the river, but to love only is it given to find here a permanent empire. The dwellers here say my breath bestows immortal life, then be thou immortal, for thou hast worked in me an inexpressible change; before I lived a mummy life, but thou hast breathed into me a soul. Yes, dear youth, in thy love I behold myself transfigured, I know now who I am, know that the sunny day must fill with light these ancient caverns.

(HECATE comes from behind the altar.)

HECATE. Erodion, enter into the snake circle. (*He does so, and the snake vanishes.*) Too long, Immortalita, wert thou in the night of unbelief and barbarism, known by the few, despaired of by the many, confined by a spell within this narrow circle. An oracle, as old as the world, says, “believing love will find thee even in the darkness of Erebus, draw thee forth, and found thy throne in everlasting glory, accessible to all.” The time has come, but to thee, Erodion, remains yet somewhat to be done.

(*The scene changes into a part of the Elysian garden, faintly illuminated, shadows are seen gliding hither and thither, on one side a rock, in the black ground the Styx and Charon’s bark.*)

HECATE. See, Erodion, this threatening rock is the impassable wall of separation, which divides the realm of mortal life from that of thy mistress; it intercepts from this place the sunbeams, and prevents severed loved from meeting again. Erodion, try to throw down the rock, that thy beloved may ascend on the ruins from the narrow dominion of the lower world, that in future no impassable barrier may separate the land of the dead from that of the living.

(*Erodion strikes the rock, it falls, full daylight shines in.*)

IMMORTALITA. Triumph! the rock is sunken, and from this time it shall be permitted the thoughts of love, the dreams of hope, the inspiration of the poet to descend hither and to return.

HECATE. All hail! Threefold, immortal life will fill the pale realm of shades now thy empire is founded.

IMMORTALITA. Come, Erodion, ascend with me into eternal light, and all love, all nobleness shall share my empire. Thou, Charon, smooth thy brow, be friendly guide to those who enter my kingdom.

ERODION. Well for me that I faithfully tended as a vestal fire the holy presentiment of my heart; well for me, that I had courage to die to mortality, to live for immortality, to offer up the visible to the invisible.

The following note was written by the hand of the Duke Emil August von Gotha upon the manuscript of Immortalita.

“It is a little thing not worthy thy attention, that I esteem it a gift from heaven to understand thee, thou noble life. Looking down upon the earth, thou mayst, like the sun, give it a full day; but thou wouldst look in vain for thy peer beneath the stars.

“Like fresh flower-stalks comes the careless life of thy thoughts before the subdued man; his bosom heaves with deep breathings, as thy spirit plays round him like loose tressed, just escaped from the band.

“He gazes on thee, a lover! like still roses, and waving lilies, hover before him thy thoughts bearing blessings on their glances beautify his aims and his vocation, and on the silent paths of night are the stars looking from on high, the witnesses of his vow to thee.

“Yet it is a little thing only, not worthy thy attention, that I esteem it a gift from heaven to understand thee, thou noble life.”

The letter of G nderode to Bettine introduces livelier images, and though we may suppose it to exaggerate in playful malice the picture of Bettine’s environment, corresponds with what we should imagine to be her habits.

To Bettine.

“It seems to me sometimes quite too absurd, dear Bettine, that thou shouldst with such solemnity declare thyself my scholar when I might as well hold myself thine, yet it gives me much pleasure, and there is also a truth in it if the teacher feels himself stimulated by the scholar; thus may I with some reason call myself thine. Many new insights are brought me by thy options and by thy divinations in which I confide, and since thou art so loving as to name thyself my scholar, I may sometime marvel to see over what a bird I have been brooding.

“Thy story of Vostel is quite pleasant; nothing dost thou love better than to take the sins of the world upon thyself — to thee they are no burden, they give thee wings rather for gayety and whim; we may think God himself takes pleasure with thee. But thou wilt never be able to make men esteem thee something better than themselves. Yet however genius makes to itself air and light, it is always ethereal-wise, even when it bears on its pinions all the load of Philisterei. In such matters thou art a born genius, and in these can I only be thy scholar, toiling after thee with diligence. It is amusing play in the circle that while others complain of thy so called inconsequences I secretly lament that my genius does not lead to such “Careless away over the plains where thou seest no path dug before thee by the boldest pioneers.” Yet always do only one thing at a time, do not being so many confusedly. In thy chamber it looked like the shore where a fleet lies wrecked. Schlosser wanted two great folios that he lent you now there months ago from the city library and which you have never read. Homer lay open on the ground, and thy canary-bird had not spared it. Thy fairly designed map of the voyages of Odysseus lay near, as well as the shell box with all the Sepia saucers and shells of colors; they have made a brown spot on thy pretty straw carpet, but I have tried to put all once more into order. Thy flageolet which thou couldst not find to take with thee; guess where I found it; in the orange tree box on the balcony; it was buried in the earth up to the mouth-piece; probably thou hast desired on thy return to find a tree of flageolets sprouting up. Liesbet has bountifully watered the tree and the instrument has been all drenched. I have laid it in a cool place

that it may dry gradually and not burst, but but what to do with the music that lay nearby I cannot tell; I put it in the sun, but before human eyes cant thou never show it again. The blue ribbon of thy guitar has been fluttering out in the window to the great delight of the school children opposite ever since thy departure. I chid Liesbet a little for not having shut the window; she excused herself because it was his by the green silk curtain, yet whenever the door is open there is a draught. The sedge upon the glass is still green. I have given it fresh water. In thy box where are sowed oats and I know not what else, all has grown up together; I think there are many weeds, but, as I cannot be sure, I have not ventured to pull any thing up. Of books I have found on the floor Ossain, — Sacontala, — the Frankfort Chronicle, the second volume of Hemsterhuis which I took home with me because I have the first already; in Hemsterhuis lay the accompanying philosophical essay, which I pray thee present to me, unless thou hast some special value for it; I have more of the same sort from thee and as thy dislike to philosophy makes thee esteem them so lightly I should like to keep together these studies against thy will, perhaps in time they will become interesting to thee. Siegwart, a romance of the olden day, I found on the harpsicord with the inkstand lying on it; luckily there was little ink, yet wilt thou find thy moonlight composition, over which it has flowed, not easy to decipher. I heard something rattle in a little box in the window sill and had the curiosity to open it, then flew out two butterflies which thou hast put in as chrysalises. Liesbet and I chased them into the balcony where they satisfied their first hunger in the bean blossoms. From under the bed Liesbet swept out Charles the Twelfth, the Bible, and also a glove which belongs not to the hand of a lady, in which was a French poem; this glove seems to have lain under thy pillow; I do not know thou hadst ever busied thyself with writing French poems in the old style. The perfume of the gloves is very pleasant and reminds me of something which gives me a notice where its fello may be, yet be easy about thy treasure, I have fastened it up behind Kranch's Lucretia, and there at thy return it may be found. I saw two letters among many written papers, the seals were unbroken, one was from young Lichtenberg of Darmstadt, the other from Vienna. What acquaintances hast thou there, and how is it possible that one who so seldom receives letters should not be more curious or rather so heedless about them? I left them on thy table. All is now in tolerable order so that thou mayst diligently and comfortably continue thy studies.

“I have with true pleasure described to thee thy chamber, for it, like an optic mirror, expresses thy apart manner of being and gives the range of thy whole character; thou hast brought together various and strange materials to kindle the sacrificial flame; it is burning; whether the Gods are edified thereby is to me unknown.

“If thou findest muse, write soon again. — Caroline.”

A feeling of faithlessness, almost of remorse, comes over me, on rereading the few extracts for which room could be found here. Surely in their own place these field flowers were beautiful; the dullest observer was pleased to see them enamel the green earth. But here, torn asunder from their proper home, they look as soiled and forlorn as might a bunch of cowslips, dropped by chance in the public street beneath the feet of busy men. Half the purpose of placing them here was to draw attention to the translation of these volumes soon to be published, and now it seems as if the delicate music of the fairy bells cannot possibly make itself heard beside the din of the forge or factory; yet courage! for they tell us it is a property of the simplest tone to cleave straight through a world of mere *noise*.

The acceptance that a book, of the same delicate beauty, and somewhat the same scope met among us, is an encouraging fact. I refer to “Pericles and Aspasia.” There, in artistic form, the author has presented what, in these letters, lives and grows before us. Here we find a little circle of intimacies, noble enough to excite and gratify the high desires of heart and mind. Each relation is peculiar, each harmonious with all the rest. The statesman, the philosopher, the enchanting woman of the world, the lay nun, the profuse and petulant nature, for which we know no better name than Alcibiades, all are shown, on the private as well as the public side, with

admirable force and distinctness. None could read this book without feeling love, friendship, and the daily business of life to be ennobled and enriched at least for that day. None could fail to feel the eternal leading of every true relation. Yet, withal, Landor's book is marble-cold compared with the one before us. Those divinely human figures convey to us life as it ought to be, as it might be, but only in statuesque representation. Yet, if cold, it is pure, and earth may cover, but cannot consume the sculptures, as it does the living forms. We are deeply indebted to the book which presents this portraiture of a home, a home in mutually enchained hearts, too wise to expect perfection, too noble to pardon imperfection, worthy to demand the best and — to wait for it. Here are intimacies so rooted in the characters of the parties that this book, with all its singular beauty of detail, presents to us but a beginning. How happily is reverence tempered by playfulness, conscious worth by tenderness and knowledge. Yes! all who read this book must be, at least for the day, shamed out of frivolous and vulgar intercourse, intellectual sloth, or distempered care.

The intimacy between Aspasia and Cleone is not unlike this between Bettine and G nderode, in the influences of the two characters upon one another. The two women are both in different ways as remarkable in intellect, as in character, and the intellect of both feminine in its modification. They study no less than love one another; they cannot flatter, neither make weak exactions; the sentiment is too true to allow of sentimentality. It is founded on no illusion, but a parallelism of lives that was written in the stars.

Without full confidence no friendship can subsist, none without generosity, without unwearied sympathy, and the modesty that permits, when suffering, to receive this balm. But also none can subsist and grow, without mutual stimulus, without an infinite promise, a stern demand of excellence from either side, and revelations of thoughts not only hoarded from the past, but constantly new-born from intercourse between the two natures. There must be faith in one another, action upon one another, love, patiently to wait for one another.

All these we find in these two friendships. Bettine feels in her friend the same joy and pride which is expressed in Aspasia, where Acibiades tells us she was accustomed to fly to Pericles with the letters of Cleone, and read them [????] his shoulder. Cleone regards Aspasia with the same admiration, angelic in its pure humility, though melancholy in its smile, as G nderode does Bettine.

The book of "G nderode" is more poetic than "Pericles and Aspasia," in this, that we see living and changing before us what is only given us as results, of fixed outline in Landor's book. This breathing life makes us living; that pictured life only commanded us to live.

A few words more in answer to the queries of a friend Bettine is accused of interpolating passages into these letters from a more advanced period of her existence, and there certainly are pages which look like it. The past seems the canvas on which she paints. The fears of those who loved her best, that the exuberant, but unstable nature could not economize sufficiently to live princely in its later days, are justified by her devotion to the past.

"Bettine!

In this fair book from thy letters compiled  
Shall the woman be made thus to wait on the child?  
Not so the oak gathers his first summer's leaves,  
But new strength every year with new branches receives."

We learn by excess, we thrive on error, but only where reactions and convictions come in their due alteration. The way God leads man is the only way, but man must learn to understand

that it is so. — What seems to the youthful aspirant so true as the path Bettine took? Straight forward pursuing her own genius, headlong down precipices, indefatigable up hill, and through bog, in the most important step as the least whimsy, she acted out her nature, would recognize no compromise, knew no society, only the natures “that stood opposite to her” could she see. Here then is one wise, here is one free! Alas no! Heavens has not permitted such manacles to be forged for man without a cause, and the bold outlaw blackens and blasphemes, while the willing prisoner soars and sings.

If any quarrel with the law that “care is taken that the trees grow not up into the heavens,” let him watch the progress of such a character as Bettine’s, and see that tree which defied the law mar its own growth. Sorrow must alternate with joy, or the character is shallow; patient toil with inspiration, or there is no noble growth; the most ardent imagination must demand and elicit the severest judgement. In the mind of the Child was no patience, no power of adaptation, nothing that fitted her to reach maturity and uphold or reconstruct a world. She must always be a child; the actual world intervened and she became a Phantast. Yet not the less welcome this radiant picture of a peculiar state, that period of keen perception and intuitive glances, which so many know only in some holy dream, or beneath the first illusions of earthly love. Here is the picture of all-promising, all discerning youth; let some other life join to this a fitting sequel.

Whoever has closely observed the dramatic tendency in man will see that its first demonstrations must be in the way of what the many call falsehood, if only for this reason, that the poetic eye cannot even *see* a fact bare and solitary as it appears to the prose observer. O such a mind the actual only exists as representing the ideal, and each object seen by the bodily eye becomes the centre to a throng of visionary shapes. Even as in the pictures of Magdalens and Madonnas, cherub faces start from every side, created as it were by the expression of the face which occupies the centre, so each new object beheld, each new thought apprehended, brings to the poetic mind accessories natural if not yet realized by nature.

It is from this cause that children, fitted by imagination to appreciate the noblest exhibitions of truth, are often blamed as false or inaccurate, while those of meagre faculties and limited vision are praised for their correctness. Yet, paradoxical as it may seem to the superficial, there is often more hope of truth in the liar than in the truth-teller, for the former may learn to prune his fancy and turn romance into its legitimate channels, but the latter will have to feed and train his powers by ways and means yet unknown, before he can comprehend in its fulness.

The romantic or dramatic tendency, which leads those who do not absolutely recreate in play or novel, to embellish a narrative of their daily walk, by giving the facts higher coloring, embellishing them by the invention of incidents, rounding and filling out where there were pauses or languors, and casting over all the soft ideal light of the thought derived by the narrator from the passage which is obvious in many parts of these letters, and makes them poetical still more than historical, may also have induced Bettine to interpolate sentences or even paragraphs. If she has done so, it is not from motives of vanity, but from a poetical growth in herself, since the period of the correspondence, which makes what really happened seem an inadequate expression of what really was. Whatever has been added is in such harmony with the scenes and personages, that you are only led to doubt, because it is too good, because all is said and done with a fulness, which is elsewhere discovered only in that liberty of law which art grants to her votaries.

It is in reference to this that Goethe said with one of his calm ironical smiles, when Richter (I think it was Richter) published his memoirs as “Truth out of my Life,” intending to

reprove Goethe for his title “Poesy and Truth out of my Life.” — “As if the bare truth from the life of such a man could be other than that he was a Philistine.”

There comes indeed a time when Poesy and truth, though twinborn in the thought can be separate in the expression and the groundwork, no longer all shot through and interwoven by the bright threads of imagination, appears in clear relief beneath the beautiful patterns emblazoned upon it. But this is in the perfection of the faculties, when reason, imagination, and the perceptive organs are in entire harmony, when the meaning of great world-poem is so distinctly seen, that details are never unmeaning, because incomplete, nor do we need perpetually to evolve fabrics of art as from a chaos. It is the highest attainment of man to be able to tell the truth, and more hardly achieved by the chronicler than the Phantast.

This much may be granted to the caviller. Bettine has missed her way to this excellence from undue indulgence of one or two powers.

But all the drawbacks are upon her own character; her book is true, and of the rarest excellence, a many-petalled flower on the bosom of nature, from which the dew shall never varnish. Like the flights often seen on a smaller scale in common lives, it attains a perfection which the complete sum of the character entirely misses. Like the sky lark’s, these morning songs drop from the clouds which upbear the songster dew from heaven, such as active, lustrous, enduring, prying day shall never boast.

Let us conclude by the last letter addressed to Bettine by G nderode, while meditating her voluntary death. On this subject I have said nothing; it involves too much for the space to let me venture. This letter has the true tone of G nderode’s genius, and is no less worthy of attention for the distinct idea it gives of the friend she loved, but not well enough to love to live for her sake.

To Bettine.

“I was obliged to set out on my journey without writing to thee, for my sister who has long been unwell required my presence. Think not I neglect thee, dear Bettine, but the impossibilities of realizing the objects of my thoughts, crowd upon me; I know not how to overcome them, but must let myself be driven where chance wills; resistance brings only loss of time and no success. Thou hast a much more energetic nature than I, indeed than almost any of whom I am able to judge; to me are set, not only through my relations, but also through my character, narrower limits for my activity, therefore it may well happen that things to me impossible may not be so to thee. Bear this in mind while looking into the future. If thou wilt persist to walk the same path of life with me, mightst thou not be obliged to sacrifice to my timidity or rather to my incapacity what thy spirit requires, for I see not how I could follow thee, my wings are not full-grown for such a flight. I pray thee, fix thy eyes betimes on this fact, and think of me as of a being who must leave many things untired to which thou wilt feel thyself impelled. Even if thou shouldst resolve to give up many of thy claims on life, or let me rather say if thou wouldst refuse to let the element which is active within thee work itself clear, rather than thus be divorced from me, thy refusal would be vain. There are laws in the soul which must manifest themselves, else the whole man is ruined; this cannot happen to thee, the life must again and again rise up, for in thee dwells the right of conquest, and that which would perchance only sing me to sleep wakes thee to impetuous freewill existence; for when thou wouldst converse with the stars of heaven and boldly constrain them to answer would give myself up rather to their soft shining as the child is smoothed by the motion of his cradle. All men are against thee, the whole world wilt thou feel and experience only through the contradiction in thy soul, there is no other possible way for thee to comprehend it. Where wilt thou ever find an action how much less a nature in harmony with thine, it has never yet been so and will also never be (of myself will I speak to this by and by). What experience has taught to others, that to which they accommodate themselves, is to thee folly and falsehood. The actual world has presented itself to thee as a deformed

monster, but it did not terrify thee; thou hast at once set thy foot upon it, and although it whirls beneath thee and forever moves itself, thou lettest thyself be borne by it, without ever in thought dreaming the possibility that thou couldst for a moment be at one with it. I speak of to-day, and more yet of the future, I would wish there might come moments into the life when this flowing together with the energies of other natures might be granted thee. Dost thou remember thy dream in the mountain castle which thou wert weeping bitterly in thy sleeps? It was that a man, who for the good of mankind had done. I know not what heroic deed, was brought to the scaffold in consequence of his great deed. The people shouted in its ignorant joy, but in thee rose great desire to ascend to him there on the scaffold, only the blow fell just as thou wert hoping to reach him. Thou canst not have forgotten the dream, for thy painful weeping moved me too, so much that I hardly dared remind thee it was only a dream, and then found this was the very reason of the being inconsolable, for thou sadist not even in a dream was it granted thee to fulfil the desire of thy soul, how much less so would it be in reality. Then in the night have I jested that I might comfort thee a little, but to-day I feel impelled once more to take up the question whether it was not a misfortune, for the awaking, the living on after endured proof of thy inmost dispositions, which can so seldom in actual life be verified and confirmed, must be to thee a triumph, aye a happiness, even though only in a dream, for in dreams the noblest convictions may meet shipwreck elsewhere. And I agree with thee that it was a trick played by thy demon, yet one with a meaning wisdom; for if thou hadst been satisfied in the dream so perhaps had also been satisfied thy longing for great deeds, and what would that have availed thee? would it not have increased that careless self-reliance to which Savigny must positively give the name of arrogance; no, that would not have been, yet would there not have been that exaltation which is now continually renewed by the lightest excitement of that unsatisfied longing.

“I would wish for thee, Bettine (to speak between ourselves, for this may no man hear) that those deeply implanted dispositions might be called forth by destiny, and no trial omitted which either in dream or life might aid gloriously to solve the problem why it has been worth the pain and trouble to have lived. Plans are easily baffled, therefore must we make none. The best way is to find oneself ready for all which offers itself as worthiest to do, and that alone which obliges us to act, the holy principle which springs up of itself on the ground of our conviction, never to violate, but ever to unfold it more and more through our thoughts and actions, so that we at least recognize nothing in ourselves, but the originally divine. There are many who have taken with them great Christmas presents from the Gods, and yet never learn to make use of any of them, to these it suffices to believe themselves raised above the ground of the community, merely because the alphabet of a higher of the community, merely because the alphabet of a higher law is stamped within them, yet the spirit has never risen up within them, and they know not how far they are from having realized that nobility of soul, of which they are so proud. — This seems to me the noblest school of life, constantly to take heed that nothing bellies those principles through which our inner being is consecrated, never in thought nor in deed. From this school the noble man is not released to the last breath of his life. thy Ephraim will agree with me, and is himself a proof of this; I believe also that it is the highest distinction of destiny to be called to always severer trials. And one must indeed be able to prophesy the destiny of a noble man from his dispositions. Thou hast energy and courage enough for severe truth, and at the same time art the most gladsome nature which hardly can perceive any injustice that is done towards it. To thee it is a light thing to bear what others could not at all endure, and yet thou art not compassionate, it is energy which leads thee to assist others. If I wished briefly to express thy character I would prophesy that hadst thou been a boy, thou wouldst have become a hero, but as thou art a girl I interpret all these dispositions as furnishing materials for a future life, preparation for an energetic character which perhaps in a living active time will be born. — As the sea, so the ages seem to me to have their ebb and flow. We are now in a time of ebb, where it is indifferent who makes himself valid, because it is not now the hour for the waves to ride up; the human race sinks its breath, and whatever of significant occurs in history is only prelude, to awaken feelings, to practice and collect the faculties to seize upon a higher potency of spirit. Spirit rules and raises the world, through this alone life is living, through this alone moment is joined to moment, all else is fleeting shadow, each man who makes true a moment in time is a great man, and however forcible are many apparitions in time, I cannot reckon them among realities because no deep recognition, no pure will of the absolute spirit bids them rise and rule, but



wholly vulgar motives of passion. Napoleon is an example. — Yet are such not without use for the human capacities of the spirit. Partialities and prejudices must be satiated, even let me say sated, before they can leave free the spirit of the time. Now what prejudices may not this hero of all have shaken to pieces, — what will he not satiate even to disgust, how many will the future time root up with detestation, to which it now clings with passionate, blind devotion. — Or can it be possible that after such terrible ghostly destinies, time should not be given to reflect. — I doubt not of this, all things find their end, and only that lives which is able to awake life, of this I have said to thee enough, thou wilt understand me. Why should not each one begin his career of life with solemnity and consecration, regarding himself as a development of the divine which is the aim of us all, seeking where and how it may be furthered. Indeed I have now said to thee enough to bring close to thee the thought that the higher powers of the spirit of man must be the only real aim of thy inner contemplation, so that all may be to thee for one purpose, however far thy faculties may be brought into action. Nothing can remain untried in man which his higher ideal nature is capable of producing. For our destiny is the mother which bears beneath its heart this fruit of the ideal. — Take from these lines all that bears upon the heaped up leaves thou hast sent me, and soothe therewith thy anxiety on my account. Farewell, and take my thanks for all thy love.”

Such Beauty is not given, only lent,  
 Darts winged by love divine, the speedier spent,  
 Frail effigies of that most seen Unseen,  
 What is and must be, yet hath never been; —  
 O teach the ear to catch the under-tone,  
 Which draws the earth to know the Unknown, Alone!  
 I see thee passing, once incarnate Soul,  
 From sphere to sphere seeking the only goal,  
 Where though and love and life together flow,  
 And the Above smiles back from the Below.  
 This earthly life to thee was but as glass,  
 Seeing beyond thy thoughts and wishes pass,  
 Thou couldst not stay behind to water flowers,  
 Upon the pathway of these puny Hours.  
 With tears undue. — O solitary flame  
 We will not stir thee by a human blame,  
 Ask mercy from the heaven thou techiest us to name.

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F.

Author's Notes:

1. Hahnenfuss and Geisblatt are German names for the woodbine, Geisblatt, leaf for the goat.
  2. To whom maidens offered up a ram, when they ran for a wager in public.
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