

GOETHE.

Nemo contra deum nisi deus ipse.

Wer Grosses will muss sich zusammen raffen;
In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister,
Und der Gesetz nur kann uns Freiheit geben.

THE first of these mottoes is that prefixed by Goethe to the last books of "Dichtung und Wahrheit." These books record the hour of turning tide in his life, the time when he was called on for a choice at the "Parting of the Ways." From these months, which gave the sum of his youth, the crisis of his manhood, date the birth of Egmont; and of Faust too, though the latter was not published so early. They saw the rise and decline of his love for Lili, apparently the truest love he ever knew. That he was not himself dissatisfied with the results to which the decisions of this era led him, we may infer from his choice of a motto, and from the calm beauty with which he has invested the record.

The Parting of the Ways! The way he took led to court-favor, wealth, celebrity, and an independence of celebrity. It led to large performance, and a wonderful economical management of intellect. It led Faust the Seeker from the heights of his own mind to the trodden ways of the world. There; indeed, he did not lose sight of the mountains, but he never breathed their keen air again.

After this period we find in him rather a wide and deep Wisdom, than the inspirations of Genius. His faith, that all *must* issue well, wants the sweetness of piety, and the God he manifests to us is one of law or necessity, rather than of intelligent love. As this God makes because he must, so Goethe, his instrument, observes and recreates because he must, observing with minutest fidelity the outward exposition of nature, never blinded by a sham, or detained by a fear, he yet makes us feel that he wants insight to her sacred secret. The calmest of writers does not give us repose, because it is too difficult to find his centre. Those flame-like natures, which he undervalues, give us more peace and hope through their restless aspirations, than he with his hearth-enclosed fires of steady fulfilment. For, true as it is, that God is everywhere, we must not only see him, but see him acknowledged. Through the consciousness of man "shall not Nature interpret God?" We wander in diversity, and, with each new turning of the path, long anew to be referred to the One.

Of Goethe, as of other natures, where the intellect is too much developed in proportion to the moral nature, it is difficult to speak without seeming narrow, blind, and impertinent. For such men *see* all that others *live*, and, if you feel a want of a faculty in them, it is hard to say they have it not, lest next moment they puzzle you by giving some indication of it. Yet they are not, nay *know* not, they only discern. The difference is that between sight and life, prescience and being, wisdom and love. Thus with Goethe. Naturally of a deep mind and shallow heart, he felt the sway of the affections enough to appreciate their working in other men, but never enough to receive their inmost regenerating influence.

How this might have been had he ever once abandoned himself entirely to a sentiment, it is impossible to say. But the education of his youth seconded, rather than balanced his natural

tendency. His father was a gentlemanly Martinet; dull, sour, well-informed, and of great ambition as to externals. His influence on the son was wholly artificial. He was always turning this powerful mind from side to side in search of information, for the attainment of what are called accomplishments. The mother was a delightful person in her way; open, genial, playful, full of lively talent, but without earnestness of soul. She was one of those charming, but not noble persons, who take the day and the man as they find them, seeing the best that is there already, but never making the better grow there. His sister, though of graver kind, was social and intellectual, not religious or tender. The mortifying repulse of his early love checked the few pale buds of faith and tenderness that his heart put forth. His friends were friends of the intellect merely; — although he seemed led by destiny to the place he was to fill.

Pardon him, World, that he was too worldly. Do not wonder, Heart, that he was so heartless. Believe, Soul, that one so true, as far as he went, must yet be initiated into the deeper mysteries of Soul. Perhaps even now he sees that we must accept limitations, only to transcend them; work in processes, only to detect the organizing power which supersedes them; and that Sphynxes of fifty-five volumes might well be cast into the abyss before the single word that solves them all.

Now when I think of Goethe, I seem to see his soul, all the variegated plumes of knowledge, artistic form “und so weiter” burnt from it by the fires of divine love, wingless, motionless, unable to hide from itself in any subterfuge of labor, saying again and again the simple words which he would never directly say on earth — God beyond Nature — Faith beyond Sight — the Seeker nobler than the Meister.

For this mastery that Goethe prizes seems to consist rather in the skilful use of means than in the clear manifestation of ends. His Master, indeed, makes acknowledgment of a divine order, but the temporal uses are always uppermost in the mind of the reader. But of this more at large in reference to his works.

Apart from this want felt in his works, there is a littleness in his aspect as a character. Why waste his time in Weimar court entertainments? His duties as minister were not unworthy of him, though it would have been, perhaps, finer, if he had not spent so large a portion of that prime of intellectual life from five and twenty to forty upon them.

But granted that the exercise these gave his faculties the various lore they brought, and the good they did to the community made them worth his doing, — why that perpetual dangling after the royal family, why all that verse-making for the albums of serene highnesses, and those pretty poetical entertainments for the young princesses, and that cold setting himself apart from his true peers, the real sovereigns of Weimar, Herder, Wieland, and the others? The excuse must be found in circumstances of his time and temperament, which made the character of man of the world and man of affairs more attractive to him than the children of nature can conceive it to be in the eyes of one who is capable of being a consecrated bard.

The man of genius feels that literature has become too much a craft by itself. No man should live by or for his pen. Writing is worthless except as the record of life; and no great man ever was satisfied thus to express all his being. His book should be only an indication of himself. The obelisk should point to a scene of conquest. In the present state of the division of labor, the literary man finds himself condemned to be nothing else. Does he write a good book? it is not received as evidence of his ability to live and act, but rather the reverse. Men do not offer him

the care of embassies, as an earlier age did to Petrarca; they would be surprised if he left his study to go forth to battle like Cervantes. We have the swordsman, and statesman, and penman, but it is not considered that the same mind which can rule the destiny of a poem, may as well that of an army or an empire.¹ Yet surely it should be so. The scientific man may need seclusion from the common affairs of life, for he has his materials before him; but the man of letters must seek them in life, and he who cannot act will but imperfectly appreciate action.

The literary man is impatient of being set apart. He feels that monks and troubadours, though in a similar position, were brought into more healthy connexion with man and nature, than he who is supposed to look at them merely to write them down. So he rebels; and Sir Walter Scott is prouder of being a good sheriff and farmer, than of his reputation as the Great Unknown. Byron piques himself on his skill in shooting and swimming. Sir H. Davy and Schlegel would be admired as dandies, and Goethe, who had received an order from a publisher "for a dozen more dramas in the same style as Goetz von Berlichingen," and though (in sadder sooth) he had already Faust in his head asking to be written out, thought it no degradation to become premier in the little duchy of Weimar.

Straws show which way the wind blows, and a comment may be drawn from the popular novels, where the literary man is obliged to wash off the ink in a violet bath, attest his courage in the duel, and hide his idealism beneath the vulgar nonchalance and coxcombrity of the man of fashion.

If this tendency of his time had some influence in making Goethe find pleasure in tangible power and decided relations with society, there were other causes which worked deeper. The growth of genius in its relations to men around must always be attended with daily pain. The enchanted eye turns from the far off star it has detected to the short-sighted bystanders, and the seer is mocked for pretending to see what others cannot. The large and generalizing mind infers the whole from a single circumstance, and is reproved by all around for its presumptuous judgment. Its Ithuriel temper pierces shams, creeds, covenants, and chases the phantoms which others embrace, till the lovers of the false Florimels hurl the true knight to the ground. Little men are indignant that Hercules, yet an infant, declares he has strangled the snake; they demand a proof, they send him out into scenes of labor to bring hence the voucher that his father is a God. What the ancients meant to express by Apollo's continual disappointment in his loves, is felt daily in the youth of genius. The sympathy he seeks flies his touch, the objects of his affection jeer at his sublime credulity, his self-reliance is arrogance, his far sight infatuation, and his ready detection of fallacy fickleness and inconsistency. Such is the youth of genius, before the soul has given that sign of itself which an unbelieving generation cannot controvert. Even then he is little benefited by the transformation of the mockers into Dalai-Lama worshippers. For the soul seeks not adorers but peers, not blind worship but intelligent sympathy. The best consolation even then is that which Goethe puts into the mouth of Tasso: "To me gave a God to tell what I suffer." In Tasso Goethe has described the position of the poetical mind in its prose relations with equal depth and fulness. We see what he felt must be the result of entire abandonment to the highest nature. We see why he valued himself on being able to understand the Alphonsos, and meet as an equal the Antonios of every-day life.

But, you say, there is no likeness between Goethe and Tasso. Never believe it, such pictures are not painted from observation merely. That deep coloring which fills them with light

and life is given by dipping the brush in one's own life-blood. Goethe had not from nature that character of self-reliance and self-control in which he so long appeared to the world. It was wholly acquired and so highly valued because he was conscious of the opposite tendency. He was by nature as impetuous though not as tender as Tasso, and the disadvantage at which this constantly placed him was keenly felt by a mind made to appreciate the subtlest harmonies in all relations. Therefore was it that, when he at last cast anchor, he was so reluctant again to trust himself to wave and breeze.

I have before spoken of the antagonist influences under which he was educated. He was driven from the severity of study into the world, and then again drawn back, many times in the course of his crowded youth. Both the world and the study he used with unceasing ardor, but not with the sweetness of a peaceful hope. Most of the traits which are considered to mark his character at a later period were wanting to him in youth. He was very social, and continually perturbed by his social sympathies. He was deficient both in outward self-possession and mental self-trust. "I was always," he says, "either *too volatile or too infatuated*, so that those who looked kindly on me did by no means always honor me with their esteem." He wrote much and with great freedom; the pen came naturally to his hand, but he had no confidence in the merit of what he wrote, and much inferior persons to Merck and Herder might have induced him to throw aside as worthless what it had given him sincere pleasure to compose. It was hard for him to isolate himself, to console himself, and, though his mind was always busy with important thoughts, they did not free him from the pressure of other minds. His youth was as sympathetic and impetuous as any on record.

The effect of all this outward pressure on the poet is recorded in *Werther*, a production that he afterwards undervalued, and to which he even felt positive aversion. It was natural that this should be. In the calm air of the cultivated plain he attained, the remembrance of the miasma of sentimentality was odious to him. Yet sentimentality is but sentiment diseased, which to be cured must be patiently observed by the wise physician; so are the morbid desire and despair of *Werther* the sickness of a soul aspiring to a purer, freer state, but mistaking the way.

The best or the worst occasion in man's life is precisely that misused in *Werther*, when he longs for more love, more freedom, and a larger development of genius than the limitations of this terrene sphere permit. Sad is it indeed if, persisting to grasp too much at once, he lose all as *Werther* did. He must accept limitation, must consent to do his work in time, must let his affections be baffled by the barriers of convention. Tantalus like, he makes this world a Tartarus, or like Hercules, rises in fires to heaven, according as he knows how to interpret his lot. But he must only use, not adopt it. The boundaries of the man must never be confounded with the destiny of the soul. If he does not decline his destiny as *Werther* did, it is his honor to have felt its unfitness for his eternal scope. He was born for wings, he is held to walk in leading strings; nothing lower than faith must make him resigned, and only in hope should he find content, a hope not of some slight improvement in his own condition or that of other men, but a hope justified by the divine justice, which is bound in due time to satisfy every want of his nature.

Schiller's great command is, "Keep true to the dream of thy youth." The great problem is how to make the dream real, through the exercise of the waking will.

This was not exactly the problem Goethe tried to solve. To *do* somewhat became too important, as is indicated both by the second motto to this essay and by his maxim, "It is not the knowledge of what *might* be, but what *is*, that forms us."

Werther, like his early essays now republished from the Frankfort Journal, is characterized by a fervid eloquence of Italian glow, which betrays a part of his character almost lost sight of in the quiet transparency of his later productions, and may give us some idea of the mental conflicts through which he passed to manhood.

Exceedingly characteristic of his genius is a little tale, which he records as having frequently been told by him to his companions when only eight or nine years of age. I think it is worth insertion here.

THE NEW PARIS.

"The night before Whitsunday I dreamed that I stood before a mirror, examining the new summer clothes which my kind parents had ordered to be made for me to wear on that occasion. This dress consisted, as you know, in handsome leather shoes, with large silver buckles, fine cotton stockings, black sarsnet trowsers, and a green coat with gold trimmings. The vest of gold stuff was cut out of the vest my father wore at his wedding. My hair was curled and powdered, so that the locks stood out from my head like wings. But I could not manage to finish dressing myself, for always one thing would fall off as I put on another. While I was in this dilemma came up a handsome young man and accosted me in the most friendly manner. 'Ey, you are welcome,' said I, 'I am delighted to see you here.' 'You know me then,' said he with a smile. 'Why not,' said I, smiling also, 'you are Mercury; I have often seen your picture.' 'Yes,' said he, 'that is my name, and the gods have sent me to you with an important commission. Do you see these three apples?' He stretched out his hand and showed me the three apples, so large that he could hardly hold them, and very beautiful, one red, one green, and one yellow. I thought them jewels to which the form of those fruits had been given. I wished to take hold of them, but he drew back, saying, 'you must first understand that they are not intended for yourself. You must give them to the three handsomest young men in the city, who then, each according to his lot, shall find consorts such as they would wish. Take them and do well what I ask of you' So saying he put the apples into my hands and went away. They seemed to me to have grown larger; I held them up to the light and found that they were transparent. As I looked at them they lengthened out into three beautiful, beautiful ladies, not larger than dolls, whose clothes were each of the color of her apple. They glided gently up my fingers, and, as I tried to grasp them, or at least to hold fast some one of the three, floated up into the air. I stood astonished, holding up my hands and looking at my fingers as if there were still somewhat to be seen there. Suddenly appeared dancing on the points of my fingers a lovely maiden, smaller than the others, but elegantly shaped and very lively. She did not fly away like the others, but kept dancing up and down while I stood looking at her. But at last she pleased me so much that I tried to lay hold of her, when I received a blow on the head which felled me to the earth, where I lay senseless till the hour came to get ready for church.

"During the service; and at my grandfather's, where I dined, I thought over again and again what I had seen. In the afternoon I went to a friend's house, partly to show myself in my new dress, my hat under my arm, and my sword by my side, partly because I owed a visit there. I did not find the family at home, and hearing that they had gone to their garden, I thought I would follow and enjoy the afternoon with them. My way led past the prison to that place which is justly named that of the bad wall, for it is never quite safe there. I walked slowly, thinking of my three goddesses, and still more of the little nymph; often, indeed, I held up my finger, hoping she would have the politeness to balance herself on it. While engaged with these thoughts, my attention was arrested by a little door in the wall, which I could not recollect ever to have seen before. It looked very low, but the tallest man could have passed through the arch above it. Both arch and wall were most elegantly ornamented with carving and sculpture, but the door especially

attracted my attention. It was of an ancient brown wood, very little adorned, but girt with broad bands of iron, on whose metal foliage sat the most natural seeming birds. But what struck me most was that I saw neither key-hole, latch, nor knocker; and I thought the door could be opened only from within. I was right, for as I drew nearer and put my hand upon the ornaments, it opened, and a man appeared, whose dress was very long, wide, and of singular fashion. A venerable beard flowed on his breast, which made me fancy he might be a Jew. But he, as if he guessed my thought, made the sign of the holy cross, thus giving me to understand that he was a good Catholic. 'How came you here, young gentleman, and what do you want?' said he with friendly voice and gesture. 'I am admiring,' said I, 'the workmanship of this door; I have never seen anything like it, though there must be specimens in the cabinets of amateurs.' 'I am glad,' said he, 'that you like the work. But the door is much more beautiful on the inner side; come in and examine it, if you like.' I did not feel perfectly easy as to this invitation. The singular dress of the porter, my solitary position, and a certain something in the atmosphere disturbed me. I delayed therefore, under the pretext of looking a little longer at the outside, and stole a glance into the garden, for it was a garden which lay behind the wall. Immediately opposite the door I saw a square, so overshadowed by ancient lindens, planted at regular distances one from another that a very numerous company could have been sheltered there. Already I was upon the threshold, and the old man easily allured me a step farther. Indeed I did not resist, for I had always understood that a prince or sultan would not in such a situation inquire whether he was in any danger. And had I not a sword by my side, and should I not easily be even with the old man, if he should manifest a hostile disposition? So I went confidently in, and he put to the door, which fastened so easily that I scarcely observed it. He then showed me the delicate workmanship of the door within, and seemed really very kind. Quite set at ease by this, I went yet farther to look at the leaf-work of the wall, and admired it very much. I saw many niches adorned with shells, corals, and minerals, also Tritons spouting water into marble basins, cages with birds and squirrels, Guinea pigs running up and down, and all sorts of such pretty creatures. The birds kept calling and singing to us as we walked, especially the starlings said the oddest things; one would call Paris, Paris, and the other Narciss, Narciss, as plain as any schoolboy could speak. I thought the old man looked earnestly at me whenever the birds called these names, but I pretended not to observe him; indeed I was too busy with other matters to think much about it, for I perceived that we were going round and that the lindens inclosed a circle, probably much more interesting. We reached the door, and the old man seemed inclined to let me out, but my eyes were fixed on a golden lattice which I now saw surrounded the middle of this marvellous garden, though the old man had tried to hide it by keeping me next the wall. As he was about to open the door, I said to him with a low reverence, 'you have been so very polite to me, that I venture on asking one other favor before I go. Might I look nearer at the golden grate which seems to surround the centre of the garden?' 'Certainly,' he replied, if you will submit to the conditions.' 'What are they?' I asked hastily. 'You must leave behind your hat and sword, and I must keep hold of your hand all the while.' 'Willingly,' cried I, laying my hat and sword on the nearest stone bench. He then seized my right hand and drew me forward with force. When we came near the grate, my admiration was changed into astonishment; nothing like it had I ever seen! On a high ledge of marble stood innumerable spears and partizans arranged side by side, whose singularly ornamented upper ends formed a fence. I looked through the interstices, and saw water flowing gently in a marble channel, in whose clear current I saw many gold and silver fishes, which, sometimes singly, sometimes in numbers, sometimes slow, and sometimes quickly, moved hither and thither. Now I wanted to look beyond this canal and see what was going on in the heart of the garden; but I found to my great trouble, that there was on the opposite side a similar grate, and so made, that there was a spear or a partizan opposite to every interstice of the one at which I stood, so that, look what way I would, I could see nothing beyond it. Beside, the old man held me so fast that I could not move with any freedom. But the more I saw the more curious I grew, and I summoned up courage to ask if I could not pass the grates. 'Why not?' said he, 'yet are there new conditions.' When I asked what they were, he gave

me to understand that I must change my dress. I consented, and he conducted me to a neat little room near the wall, on whose walls hung many dresses, in fashion very like the oriental costume. I was soon drest in one, and my guide to my horror, shook all the powder out of my hair, and stroked it back under a variegated net. I looked in a large mirror and was well pleased with my new apparel, which, I thought, became me far more than my stiff Sunday dress. I made some gestures and leaps, like what I had seen at the theatre at the time of the fair. Looking in the glass as I did this, I saw behind me a niche, where on a white ground were some green cords, wound up in a way I did not understand. I asked the old man about it, and he very politely took down a cord and showed it to me. It was a green silk cord of some strength, whose ends drawn through two cuts in a piece of green morocco, gave it the air of being intended for no very agreeable purpose. This disturbed me, and I asked the old man what it meant. He answered in a kind and sedate manner, 'It is intended for those who abuse the trust that is here shown them. So saying, he hung the noose up again and desired me to follow him. This time he did not take my hand, but left me free.

"I was most of all curious to see where the door or bridge might be, by which I was to cross the canal, for I had not been able to find anything of the sort. I therefore looked earnestly at the golden grate as we went up to it, but I almost lost the power of sight, when suddenly spears, halberds, and partizans began to rattle and shake, and at last all their points sank downwards, just as if two squadrons, armed in the old-fashioned way with pikes, were to rush upon one another. Eyes and ears could scarcely endure the clash and confusion. But when they were all lowered, they covered the canal, making the finest of bridges, and the gayest garden lay before me. It was divided into many beds, which formed a labyrinth of ornaments, all set in green borders of a low, woolly plant, which I never saw before. Each bed was of some particular sort of flower, and all of kinds that grow but little way from the ground, so that the eye could pass with ease over the whole parterre and take in its design. This beautiful scene, now lying in full sunshine, completely captivated my eyes. The winding paths were of a pure blue sand, which seemed to represent on earth a darker sky, or a sky in the water. In these I walked, my eyes cast downwards, sometimes by the side of the old man, till at last I perceived in the midst of this flower garden a circle of cypresses or poplar shaped trees, through which the eye could not penetrate, because their lower branches seemed to come directly from the ground. My guide led me into this circle, and how was I surprised to find there a pavilion supported by pillars, with entrances on every side. Even more than the sight of this beautiful building enchanted me the celestial music that proceeded from it. Sometimes I seemed to hear a harp, sometimes a lute, sometimes a guitar, and at intervals a tinkling unlike any of these instruments. We went to one of the doors, which opened at a slight touch from the old man. How astonished was I to see in the portress a perfect likeness of the pretty little maiden, who in the dream had danced on my fingers. She greeted me with the air of an acquaintance, and asked me to come in. The old man remained without, and I went with her through an arched and highly ornamented passage, into the saloon, whose fine, lofty dome immediately excited my attention and wonder. Yet my eyes were soon diverted by a charming spectacle. On a carpet spread directly underneath the cupola, sat three women in the three corners, drest in the three different colors, one red, the second yellow, the third green; the seats were gilt, the carpet a perfect flower-bed. They held the three instruments which I had been able to distinguish from without, but had stopped playing on my entrance. 'You are welcome,' said she who sat in the middle facing the door, drest in red, and holding the harp. 'Sit down beside Alerte and listen, if you love music. Now I saw a rather long bench placed obliquely, on which lay a mandolin. The little maiden took it, sat down, and called me to her side. Then I looked at the lady on my right, she wore the yellow dress, and had a guitar in her hand. And as the harp player was of stately shape, dignified aspect, and majestic mein, so was the guitar player gay, light, and attractive in her appearance and manner. She was slender and flaxen haired, the other had dark chestnut tresses. But the variety and harmony of their music could not prevent my fixing my attention on the beauty in green, whose performance on the lute seemed to me peculiarly admirable and

moving. She it was also, who seemed to pay most heed to me, and to direct her playing to me, yet I knew not what to make of her, for she seemed sometimes tender, sometimes whimsical, sometimes frank, and then again capricious, according as she varied her playing and her gestures. Sometimes she seemed desirous to move me, sometimes as if she made a jest of me. But do what she would she won little on me, for my little neighbor, by whom I sat elbow to elbow, charmed me, and seeing in the three ladies the sylphides of my dream, and the colors of the three apples, I well understood, that they were not to be obtained by me. I should willingly have laid hold of the little one, had I not too well remembered the box of the ear with which she had repulsed me in the dream. Hitherto she had not used her mandolin, but when her mistresses had finished, they bid her play some lively air. Scarcely had she begun the merry dancing tune, than she jumped up. I did the same. She played and danced. I imitated her steps, and we performed a sort of little ballet, with which the ladies seemed to be well pleased; for when we had finished, they bade the little maid give me something good, to refresh me until supper should be prepared. Alerte led me back into the passage through which I had come. It had at the sides two well arranged rooms, in one in which she lived she set before me oranges, figs, peaches, and grapes, and I enjoyed with keen appetite the fruits of foreign lands and of this season. There was also confectionary in abundance, and she filled for me a crystal cup of foaming wine, but I had sufficiently refreshed myself with the fruit, and did not need it. 'Now let us go and play,' said she, and led me into the other room. Here it looked like a Christmas market, yet at none did you ever see such splendid, elegant things. There were all sorts of dolls, dolls' clothes and furniture, kitchens, parlors, and shops, and single playthings innumerable. She led me about to all the glass cases in which these fine things were kept. But the first one she soon shut, saying, I know you will not care for these matters. From this next we might take building blocks, and make a great city of walls and towers, houses, palaces, and churches. But I don't like that; we must find something which may entertain us both.' She then brought some boxes, full of the prettiest little soldiers that ever were seen. She took one of these and gave me the other. 'We will go to the golden bridge,' said she, 'that is the best place to play with soldiers, the spears make lines on which it is easy to arrange the armies.' When we reached the golden floor, I heard the water ripple, and the fishes splash beneath me, as I knelt down to arrange my lines. All the soldiers were on horseback. She boasted of the Queen of the Amazons with her host of female troopers, while I had Achilles, and a squadron of stately Greek horsemen. The armies stood opposite one another. Never was seen anything finer. These were not flat, leaden horsemen, like ours, but both man and horse round and with perfect bodies, worked out in the most delicate manner. It was not easy to understand how they kept their balance so perfectly, for each stood by itself without the aid of a foot-board.

"After we had surveyed them for a while with great satisfaction, she gave the signal for the attack. We had found artillery in the chests, namely, boxes full of polished agate balls. With these we were to fight at a given distance, but under the express condition, that no ball was to be thrown with force enough to hurt a figure, only to throw it down. For a while, the cannonade went on agreeably enough. But, when my antagonist observed that I aimed truer than she, and was likely to beat her, she drew nearer, and then her girlish way of throwing the balls was very successful. She threw down my best men in crowds, and the more I protested, the more zealously she threw her balls. This vexed me, and I declared I would do the same. Then I not only went nearer, but in my anger threw my balls so violently, that two of her little centaureesses were snapt in pieces. In her eagerness she, at first, did not remark this; but I stood petrified, as the broken figures, joining together again, and becoming a living whole, left the golden bridge at full gallop, and after running to and fro as in the lists, were lost, I knew not how, against the wall. My pretty antagonist no sooner was aware of this, than she broke out into loud weeping and wailing. She cried, that I had been to her the cause of an irreparable loss, far greater than she could say. But I, who was in a passion, was rejoiced to vex her, and threw a couple more balls with blind fury into her army. Unluckily I hit the Queen, who was not engaged in our regular play. She fell in pieces, and her adjutants

were also shattered, but they recovered themselves like the others, galloped through the lindens, and were lost against the wall.

“My antagonist scolded and abused me, while I stooped to pick up other balls, which were rolling about on the golden spears. In my anger I should have destroyed her army, but she sprang upon me, and gave my ears a box which made my head resound. I, who had always heard, that when a maiden boxes your ears, a good kiss is to follow, seized her head in my hands and kissed her again and again. But she screamed so loudly, that she frightened me, and luckily I let her go, for at that moment the flooring began to quake and rattle. I observed the grate was rising, and was fearful of being spitted on one of the spears, as indeed the partizans and lances, as they rose up, did tear my clothes. I scarcely know how I got away. I lost my sight and hearing. When I recovered, I found myself at the foot of a linden, against which the now erected barricade had thrown me. My anger was again aroused by the jests and laughter of my antagonist, who probably had fallen more gently on the other side of the grate. I jumped up, and, seeing my little army had been thrown down with me, seized Achilles, and threw him against a tree. His recovery and flight pleased me doubly, as gratifying my resentment, and giving me the prettiest sight in the world, and I should have sent all his Greeks after him, but that at once water began to spout and sprinkle from the wall, stones, branches, and ground, wetting me on every side. My light robe was soon wet through; it was torn before, and I did not hesitate to cast it from me. Then I threw off my slippers, and piece by piece all the rest of my apparel, and began to think it very pleasant to have a shower bath on so warm a day.

“I then walked up and down with a grave, dignified mien, amid this welcome water, and enjoyed myself highly. As my anger cooled I wished nothing more than to make peace with the pretty maiden. But now in an instant the water ceased to spout, and I stood dripping on the wet ground. The presence of the old man, who now approached me, was far from welcome. I wished I could, if not hide, yet at least cover myself. Ashamed, shivering, trying in some way to cover myself, I made but a pitiful figure; and the old man took the occasion to reprove me severely. ‘What hinders me,’ cried he, ‘from using the green cord if not upon your neck, at least upon your back?’ I was much incensed by this threat. ‘You had best,’ cried I, ‘avoid such words, or even such thoughts, if you would not ruin yourself and your mistresses.’ ‘Who are you,’ said he, contemptuously, ‘that you should presume to speak thus?’ ‘A darling of the gods,’ said I, ‘on whom it depends, whether those ladies shall find proper bridegrooms, or whether they shall languish away and grow old in this magical cloister.’ The old man drew back several steps. ‘Who has revealed this to thee?’ asked he, astonished and thoughtful. ‘Three apples,’ said I, ‘three jewels.’ ‘And what dost thou ask as a reward?’ said he. ‘Above all things,’ I replied, ‘the little creature who has brought me into this annoying situation. The old man threw himself on his knees before me, without regarding the wet and mud; then he rose, quite dry, and taking me affectionately by the hand, led me into the dressing room, and assisted me to put on my Sunday clothes, and dress my hair. He said no word more, but as he let me out, directed my attention by signs to the opposite wall, and then again to the little door. I understood well, that he wished I should impress these objects on my memory, in order that I might be able again to find the door, which shut suddenly behind me. I now looked attentively at the opposite side. Above a high wall rose the boughs of some ancient walnut trees, partly covering the cornice which finished it. They reached to a stone tablet, whose ornamental border I could perceive, but could not read what was inscribed upon it. It rested on the projection of a niche, in which an artificially wrought fountain poured its waters from cup to cup, into a basin, as large as a little pond, imbedded in the earth. Fountain, tablet, walnut-trees, stood directly one above the other. I could paint the spot just as I saw it.

“You may imagine how I passed this evening, and many following days, and how often I repeated to myself the particulars of this history, which I myself can hardly believe. As soon as possible I went in search of the place, in order at least to refresh my memory, and look once more at the wonderful door. But, to my astonishment, I found things much changed. Walnuts rose indeed above the wall, but not near one another. There was a tablet, but far to the right of the trees, and with a legible inscription. A niche on

the left hand contains a fountain, but one not to be compared with that I saw the other time, so that I was ready to believe the second adventure as much a dream as the first, for of the door I found no trace. The only thing that comforts me is to observe, that these three objects seem constantly to be changing place, for in my frequent visits I think I see that trees, tablet, and fountain seem to be drawing nearer together. Probably when they get into their places, the door will once more be visible, and I will then attempt to take up again the thread of the adventure. I cannot say whether it may be in my power to tell you the sequel, or whether it may not expressly be forbidden me."

"This tale, of whose truth my companions were passionately desirous to convince themselves, was greatly applauded. They visited singly, without confiding their intention to me or to each other, the spot I had indicated, found the walnuts, the tablet, and the fountain, but at a distance from one another. They at last confessed it, for at that age, it is not easy to keep a secret. But here was the beginning of strife. One declared the objects never changed their places, but preserved always the same distance from one another. The second, that they changed, and went farther apart. A third agreed that they moved, but thought they approached one another. A fourth had seen something still more remarkable, the walnut-trees in the midst, and tablet and fountain on the sides opposite the spot where I had seen them. About the door they varied as much in their impressions. And thus I had an early example how men, in cases quite simple and easy of decision, form and maintain the most contrary opinions. As I obstinately refried a sequel to the adventure, a repetition of this first part was frequently solicited. I took care never materially to vary the circumstances, and the uniformity of the narration converted fable into, truth for my hearers." —*Dichtung und Wahrheit*.

The acting out the mystery into life, the calmness of survey, and the passionateness of feeling, above all the ironical baffling at the end, and want of point to a tale got up with such an eye to effect as he goes along, mark well the man that was to be. Even so did he demand in Werther, even so resolutely open the door in the first part of Faust, even so seem to play with himself and his contemporaries in the second part of Faust and Wilhelm Meister.

Yet was he deeply earnest in his play, not for men, but for himself. To himself as a part of nature it was important to grow, to lift his head to the light. In nature he had all confidence; for man, as a part of nature, infinite hope; but in him as an individual will, seemingly net much trust, at the earliest age.

The history of his intimacies marks his course; they were entered into with passionate eagerness, but always ended in an observation of the intellect, and he left them on his road as the snake leaves his skin. The first man he met of force sufficient to command a large share of his attention was Herder, and the benefit of this intercourse was critical, not general. Of the good Lavater he soon perceived the weakness. Merck, again, commanded his respect, but the force of Merck also was cold.

But in the Grand Duke of Weimar he seems to have met a character strong enough to exercise a decisive influence upon his own. Goethe was not so politic and worldly, that a little man could ever have become his Mæcenas. In the Duchess Amelia and her son he found that practical sagacity, large knowledge of things as they are, active trace, and genial feeling, which he had never before seen combined.

The wise mind of the Duchess gave the first impulse to the noble course of Weimar. But that her son should have availed himself of the foundation she laid is praise enough, in a world where there is such a rebound from parental influence, that it generally seems that the child makes use of the directions given by the parent only to avoid the prescribed path. The Duke

availed himself of guidance, though with a perfect independence in action. The Duchess had the unusual wisdom to know the right time for giving up the reins, and thus maintained her authority as far as the weight of her character was calculated to give it.

Of her Goethe was thinking when he wrote, “The admirable woman is she, who, if the husband dies, can be a father to the children.”

The Duke seems to have been one of those characters, which are best known by the impression their personal presence makes on us, resembling an elemental and pervasive force, rather than wearing the features of an individuality. Goethe describes him as “Dämonische,” that is, gifted with an instinctive, spontaneous force, which at once, without calculation or foresight, chooses the right means to an end. As these beings do not calculate, so is their influence incalculable. Their repose has as much influence over other beings as their action, even as the thundercloud, lying black and distant in the summer sky, is not less imposing than when it bursts and gives forth its quick lightnings. Such men were Mirabeau and Swift. They had also distinct talents, but their influence was from a perception in the minds of men of this spontaneous energy in their nature. Sometimes, though rarely, we see such a man in an obscure position; circumstances have not led him to a large sphere; he may not have expressed in words a single thought worth recording; but by his eye and voice he rules all around him.

He stands upon his feet with a firmness and calm security, which make other men seem to halt and totter in their gait. In his deep eye is seen an infinite comprehension, an infinite reserve of power. No accent of his sonorous voice is lost on any ear within hearing; and, when he speaks, men hate or fear perhaps the disturbing power they feel, but never dream of disobeying.

But hear Goethe himself.

“The boy believed in nature, in the animate and inanimate, the intelligent and unconscious to discover somewhat which manifested itself only through contradiction, and therefore could not be comprehended by any conception, much less defined by a word. It was not divine, for it seemed without reason, not human, because without understanding, not devilish, because it worked to good, not angelic, because it often betrayed a petulant love of mischief. It was like chance, in that it proved no sequence; it suggested the thought of Providence, because it indicated connexion. To this all our limitations seem penetrable; it seemed to play at will with all the elements of our being; it compressed time and dilated space. Only in the impossible did it seem to delight, and to cast the possible aside with disdain.

“This existence which seemed to mingle with others, sometimes to separate, sometimes to unite, I called the Dämonische, after the example of the ancients, and others who have observed somewhat similar.” —*Dichtung und Wahrheit*.

“The Dämonische is that which cannot be explained by reason or understanding; it lies not in my nature, but I am subject to it.

“Napoleon was a being of this class, and in so high a degree, that scarce any one is to be compared with him. Also our late Grand Duke was such a nature, full of unlimited power of action and unrest, so that his own dominion was too little for him, and the greatest would have been too little. Demoniac beings of this sort the Greeks reckoned among their demi-gods.” — *Conversations with Eckernmann*.

This great force of will, this instinctive directness of action, gave the Duke an immediate ascendancy over Goethe, which no other person had ever possessed. It was by no means mere

sycophancy that made him give up, the next ten years, the prime of his manhood, to accompanying the Grand Duke in his revels, or aiding him in his schemes of practical utility, or to contriving elegant amusements for the ladies of the court. It was a real admiration for the character of the genial man of the world and its environment.

Whoever is turned from his natural path may, if he will, gain in largeness and depth what he loses in simple beauty, and so it was with Goethe. Faust became a wiser if not a nobler being. Werther, who must die because life was not wide enough and rich enough in love for him, ends as the Meister of the Wanderjahre, well content to be one never inadequate to the occasion, "help-full, comfort-full."

A great change was during these years perceptible to his friends in the character of Goethe. From being always "either too volatile or infatuated," he retreated into a self-collected state, which seemed at first even icy to those around him. No longer he darted about him the lightnings of his genius, but sat Jove-like and calm, with the thunderbolts grasped in his hand, and the eagle gathered at his feet. His freakish wit is subdued into calm and even cold irony, his multiplied relations no longer permitted him to abandon himself to any, the minister and courtier could not expatiate in the free regions of invention, and bring upon paper the signs of his higher life, without subjecting himself to an artificial process of isolation. Obligated to economy of time and means, he made of his inmates not objects of devout tenderness, of disinterested care, but the crammers and feeders of his intellect. The world was to him an arena or a studio, but not a temple.

"Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

Had Goethe entered upon practical life from the dictate of his spirit, which bade him not be a mere author, but a living, loving man, that had all been well. But he must also be a man of the world, and nothing can be more unfavorable to true manhood than this ambition. The citizen, the hero, the general, the poet, all these are in true relations, but what is called being a man of the world is to truckle to it, not truly serve it.

Thus fettered in false relations, detained from retirement upon the centre of his being, yet so relieved from the early pressure of his great thoughts as to pity more pious souls for being restless seekers, no wonder that he wrote

"Es ist dafur gesorgt dass die Bäume nicht in Himneel washsen"
Care is taken that the trees grow not up into the heavens.

Ay, Goethe, but in proportion to their force of aspiration is their height!

Yet never let him be confounded with those who sell all their birthright. He became blind to more generous virtues, the nobler impulses, but ever in self-respect was busy to develop his nature. He was kind, industrious, wise, gentlemanly, if not manly. If his genius lost sight of the highest aim, he is the best instructor in the use of means, ceasing to be a prophet poet, he was still a poetic artist. From this time forward he seems a listener to nature, but not himself the highest product of nature, a priest to the soul of nature. His works grow out of life, but are not instinct with the peculiar life of human resolve, as Shakespeare's or Dante is.

Faust contains the great idea of his life, as indeed there is but one great poetic idea possible to man, the progress of a soul through the various forms of existence. All his other

works, whatever their miraculous beauty of execution, are mere chapters to this poem, illustrative of particular points. Faust, had it been completed in the spirit in which it was begun, would have been the *Divina Commedia* of its age.

But nothing can better show the difference of result between a stern and earnest life, and one of partial accommodation, than a comparison between *Paradiso* and that of the second part of *Faust*. In both a soul, gradually educated and led back to God, is received at last not through merit, but grace. But O the difference between the grandly humble reliance of old Catholicism, and the loop-hole redemption of modern sagacity. Dante was a *man*, of vehement passions, many prejudices, bitter as much as sweet. His knowledge was scanty, his sphere of observation narrow, the objects of his active life petty, compared with those of Goethe. But, constantly retiring on his deepest self, clear-sighted to the limitations of man, but no less so to the illimitable energy of the soul, the sharpest details in his work convey a largest sense, as his strongest and steadiest fights only direct the eye to heavens yet beyond.

Yet perhaps he had not so hard a battle to wage, as this other great Poet. The fiercest passions are not so dangerous foes to the soul as the cold skepticism of the understanding. The Jewish demon assailed the man of Uz with physical ills, the Lucifer of the middle ages tempted his passions, but the Mephistopheles of the eighteenth century bade the finite strive to compass the infinite, and the intellect attempt to solve all the problems of soul.

This path Faust had taken: it is that of modern necromancy. Not willing to grow into God by the steady worship of a life, man would enforce his presence by a spell; not willing to learn his existence by the slow process of their own, they strive to bind it in a word, that they may wear it about the neck as a talisman.

Faust, bent upon reaching the centre of the universe through intellect alone, naturally, after a length of trial, which has prevented the harmonious unfolding of his nature falls into despair. He has striven for one object, and that object eludes him. Returning upon himself, he finds large tracts of his nature lying waste and cheerless. He is too noble for apathy, too wise for vulgar content with the animal enjoyments of life. Yet the thirst he has been so many years increasing is not to be borne. Give me, he cries, but a drop of water to cool my burning tongue. Yet, in casting himself with a wild recklessness upon the impulses of his nature yet untried, there is a disbelief that anything short of the All can satisfy the immortal spirit. His first attempt was noble, though mistaken, and under the saving influence of it, he makes the compact, whose condition cheats the fiend at last.

Kannst du mich schmeichelnd je belügen
Dass ich mir selbst gefallen mug,

Kannst du mich mit Genüs betrogen:
Das sey für mich der letzte Tag.

Werd ich zum Augenblicke sagen:
Verweile doch! du bist so schön!

Dann magst du mich in Fesseln schlagen,
Dann will ich gem zu Grunde gehen.

Canst thou by falsehood or by flattery
Make me one moment with myself at peace,
Cheat me into tranquillity? Come then

And welcome, life's last day.

Make me but to the moment say,
Oh fly not yet, thou art so fair,
Then let me perish, &c.

But this condition is never fulfilled. Faust cannot be content with sensuality, with the charlatantry of ambition, nor with riches. His heart never becomes callous, nor his moral and intellectual perceptions obtuse. He is saved at last.

With the progress of an individual soul is shadowed forth that of the soul of the age, beginning in intellectual skepticism, sinking into license, cheating itself with dreams of perfect bliss, to be at once attained by means no surer than a spurious paper currency, longing itself back from conflict between the spirit and the flesh, induced by Christianity, to the Greek era with its harmonious development of body and mind, striving to reembody the loved phantom of classical beauty in the heroism of the middle age, flying from the Byron despair of those, who die because they cannot soar without wings, to schemes, however narrow, of practical utility, — redeemed at least through mercy alone.

The second part of Faust is full of meaning, resplendent with beauty; but it is rather an appendix to the first part than a fulfilment to its promise. The world, remembering the powerful stamp of individual feeling, universal indeed in its application, but individual in its life, which had conquered all its scruples in the first part, was vexed to find, instead of the man Faust, the spirit of age, — discontented with the shadowy manifestation of truths it longed to embrace, and, above all, disappointed that the author no longer met us face to face, or riveted the ear by his deep tones of grief and resolve.

When the world shall have got rid of the still overpowering influence of the first part, it will be seen that the fundamental ideal is never lost sight of in the second. The change is that Goethe, though the same thinker, is no longer the same person.

The continuation of Faust in the practical sense of the education of a man is to be found in Wilhelm Meister. Here we see the change by strongest contrast. The main-spring of action is no longer the impassioned and noble Seeker, but a disciple of Circumstance, whose most marked characteristic is a *taste* for virtue and knowledge. Wilhelm, certainly prefers these conditions of existence to their opposites, but there is nothing so decided in his character as to prevent his turning a clear eye on every part of that variegated world-scene, which the writer wished to place before us.

To see all till he knows all sufficiently to put objects into their relations, then to concentrate his powers and use his knowledge under recognized conditions, such is the progress of man from Apprentice to Master.

'Tis pity that the volumes of the "Wanderjahre" have not been translated entire, as well as those of the "Lehrjahre," for many, who have read the latter only, fancy that Wilhelm becomes a Master in that work. Far from it, he has but just become conscious of the higher powers that have ceaselessly been weaving his fate. Far from being as yet a Master, he but now begins to be a Knower. In the "Wanderjahre" we find his gradually learning the duties of citizenship, and hardening into manhood, by applying what he has learnt for himself to the education of his child.

He converses on equal terms with the wise and beneficent, he is no longer duped and played with for his good, but met directly mind to mind.

Wilhelm is a Master when he can command his actions, yet keep his mind always open to new means of knowledge. When he has looked at various ways of living, various forms of religion and of character, till he has learned to be tolerant of all, discerning of good in all. When the astronomer imparts to his equal ear his highest thoughts, and the poor cottager seeks his aid as a patron and counsellor.

To be capable of all duties, limited by none, with an open eye, a skillful and ready hand, an assured step, a mind deep, calm, foreseeing without anxiety, hopeful without the aid of illusion, such is the ripe state of manhood. This attained, the great soul should seek and labor, but strive and battle never more.

The reason for Goethe's choosing so negative a character as Wilhelm, and leading him through scenes of vulgarity and low vice, would be obvious enough to a person of any depth of thought, even if he himself had not announced it. He thus obtained room to paint life as it really is, and bring forward those slides in the magic lantern which are always known to exist, though they may not be spoken of to ears polite.

Wilhelm cannot abide in tradition, nor do as his fathers did before him, merely for the sake of money or a standing in society. The stage, here an emblem of the ideal life as it gleams before unpracticed eyes, offers, he fancies, opportunity for a life of thought as distinguished from one of routine. Here, no longer the simple citizen, but Man, all Men, he will rightly take upon himself the different aspects of life, till poet-wise, he shall have learnt them all.

No doubt the attraction of the stage to young persons of a vulgar character is merely the brilliancy of its trappings, but to Wilhelm, as to Goethe, it was this poetic freedom and daily suggestion, which seemed likely to offer such an agreeable studio in the green-room.

But the ideal must be rooted in the real. Else the poet's life degenerates into buffoonery or vice. Wilhelm finds the characters formed by this would-be ideal existence more despicable than those which grew up on the track, dusty and busting and dull as it had seemed, of common life. He is prepared by disappointment for a higher ambition.

In the house of the Count he finds genuine elegance, genuine sentiment, but not sustained by wisdom, or a devotion to important objects. This love, this life is also inadequate.

Now with Teresa, he sees the blessing of domestic peace. He sees a mind sufficient for itself, finding employment and education in the perfect economy of a little world. The lesson is pertinent to the state of mind in which his former experiences have left him, as indeed our deepest lore is won from reaction. But a sudden change in scene introduces him to the society of the sage and leaned Uncle, the sage and beneficent Natalia. Here he finds the same virtues as with Teresa and enlightened by a larger wisdom.

A friend of mine says, that his ideal of a friend is a worth Aunt, one who has the tenderness without the blindness of a mother, and takes the same charge of the child's mind, as the mother of its body. I don't know but this may have a foundation in truth, though, is so, Auntism, like other grand professions, has sadly degenerated. At any rate, Goethe seems to be possessed with a similar feeling. The Count de Thorane, a man of powerful character, who made a deep impression on his childhood, was, he says, "reverenced by me as an Uncle." And the ideal wise man of this common-life epic stands before us as "The Uncle."

After seeing the working of just views in the establishment of the Uncle, learning piety from the confessions of a Beautiful Soul, and religious beneficence from the beautiful life of Natalia, Wilhelm is deemed worthy of admission to the society of the Illuminati, that is, those who have pierced the secret of life, and know what it is to be and to do.

Here he finds the scroll of his life “drawn with large, sharp strokes,” that is, these truly wise read his character for him and “mind and destiny are but two names for one idea.”

He now knows enough to enter on the Wanderjahre.

Goethe always represents the highest principle in the feminine form. Woman is the Minerva, man is the Mars. As in the Faust, the purity of Gretchen, resisting the demon always, even after all her faults, is announced to have saved her soul to heaven; and in the second part she appears, not only redeemed herself, but by her innocence and forgiving tenderness hallowed to redeem the being who has injured her.

So in the Meister, these women hover around the narrative, each embodying the spirit of the scene. The frail Philina, graceful though contemptible, represents the degeneration incident to an attempt at leading an exclusively poetic life. Mignon, gift divine as ever the Muse bestowed on the passionate heart of Man, with her soft mysterious inspiration, her pining for perpetual youth, represents the high desire that leads to this mistake, as Aurelia the desire for excitement; Teresa, practical wisdom, gentle tranquility, which seem most desirable after the Aurelia glare. Of the beautiful soul and Natalia we have already spoken. The former embodies what was suggested to Goethe by the most spiritual person he knew in youth, Mademoiselle von Klettenberg, over whom, as he said, in her invalid loneliness the Holy Ghost brooded like a dove.

Entering on the Wanderjahre, Wilhelm becomes acquainted with another woman, who seems the complement of all the former, and represents the idea which is to guide and mould him in the realization of all the past experience.

This person, long before we see her, is announced in various ways as a ruling power. She is the last hope in cases of difficulty, and though an invalid, and living in absolute retirement, is consulted by her connexions and acquaintance as an unerring judge in all their affairs.

All things tend towards her as a centre; she knows all, governs all, but never goes forth from herself.

Wilhelm, at last, visits her. He finds her infirm in body, but equal to all she has to do. Charity and counsel to men who need her are her business; astronomy her pleasure.

After a while, Wilhelm ascertains from the Astronomer, her companion, what he had before suspected, that she really belongs to the solar system, and only appears on earth to give men a feeling of the planetary harmony. From her youth up, says the Astronomer, till she knew me, though all recognised in her unfolding of the highest moral and intellectual qualities, she was supposed to be sick at her times of clear vision. When her thoughts were not in the heavens, she returned and acted in obedience to them on earth; she was then said to be well.

When the Astronomer had observed her long enough, he confirmed her inward consciousness of a separate existence and peculiar union with the heavenly bodies.

Her picture is painted with many delicate traits, and a gradual preparation leads the reader to acknowledge the truth, but, even in the slight indication here given, who does not recognize thee, divine Philosophy, sure as the planetary orbits and inexhaustible as the fount of light, crowing the faithful Seeker at last with the privilege to possess his own soul.

In all that is said of Macaria,² we recognize that no thought is too religious for the mind of Goethe. It was indeed so; you can deny him nothing, but only feel that his works are not instinct and glowing with the central fire, and, after catching a glimpse of the highest truth, are forced again to find him too much afraid of losing sight of the limitations of nature to overflow you or himself with the creative spirit.

While the apparition of the celestial Macaria seems to announce the ultimate destiny of the soul of Man, the practical application of the Wilhelm has thus painfully acquired is not of pure Delphian strain. Goethe draws as he passed a dart from the quiver of Phæbus, but ends as Esculapius or Mercury. Wilhelm, at the school of the Three Reverences, thinks out what can be done for man in his temporal relations. He learned to practice moderation, and even painful renunciation. The book ends, simply indicating what the course of his life will be, by making him perform an act of kindness, with good judgement, and at the right moment.

Surely the simple soberness of Goethe should please at least those who style themselves, *par excellence*, people of common sense. The following remarks are by the celebrated Rahel, von Ense whose discernment as to his works was highly prized by Goethe.

“Don Quixote and Wilhelm Meister!

“Embrace one another, Cervantes and Goethe!

“Both, using their own clear eyes, vindicated human nature. They saw the champions through their errors and follies, looking down into the deepest soul, seeing there the true form. The Don as well as Meister is called a fool by *respectable* people, wandering hither and thither, transacting no business of real life, bringing nothing to pass, scarce even knowing what he ought to think on any subject, very unfit for the hero of a romance. Yet has our Sage known how to paint the good and honest mind in perpetual toil and conflict with the world, as it is embodied, never sharing one moment the impure confusion, always striving to find fault with and improve itself, always so innocent as to see others for better than they are, and generally preferring them to himself, learning from all, indulging all except the manifestly base; the more you understand, the more you respect and love this character.

“Cervantes has painted the knight, Goethe the culture of the entire man, — both their own time.”

But those who demand from him a life-long continuance of the early ardor of Faust, who wish to see throughout his works, not only such manifold beauty and subtle wisdom, but the clear assurance of divinity, the pure white light of Macaria, wish that he had not so variously unfolded his nature, and centred it more. They would see him slaying the serpent with the divine wrath of Apollo, rather than taming it to his service, like Esculapius. They wish that he had never gone to Weimar, had never become an universal connoisseur and dilettant in science, and courtier as "graceful as a born nobleman," but had borne the burden of life with the suffering crowd, and deepened its nature in loneliness and privation, till Faust had conquered, rather than cheated the devil, and the music of heavenly faith superseded the grave and mild eloquence of human wisdom.

The expansive genius which moved so gracefully in its self-imposed fetters, is constantly surprising us by its content with a choice low, in so far as it was not the highest of which the mind was capable. The secret may be found in the second motto of this slight essay.

“He who would do great things must quickly draw together his forces. The master can only show himself such through limitation, and the law alone can give us freedom.”

But there is a higher spiritual law always ready to supersede the temporal laws at the call of the human soul. The soul that is too content with usual limitations will never call forth this unusual manifestation.

If there be a tide in the affairs of men, which must be taken at the right moment to lead on to fortune, it is the same with inward as with outward life. He, who in the crisis hour of youth has stopped short of himself, is not likely to find again what he has missed in one life, for here are a great number of blanks to a prize in each lottery.

But the pang we feel that “those who are so much are not more,” seems to promise new spheres, new ages, new crises to enable these beings to complete their circle.

Perhaps Goethe is even now sensible that he should not have stopped at Weimar as his home, but made it one station on the way to Paradise; not stopped at humanity, but regarded it as symbolical of the divine, and given to others to feel more distinctly the centre of the universe, as well as the harmony in its parts. It is great to be an Artist, a Master, greater still to be a Seeker till the Man has found all himself.

What Goethe meant by self-collection was a collection of means for work, rather than to divine the deepest truths of being. Thus are these truths always indicated, never declared; and the religious hope awakened by his subtle discernment of the workings of nature never gratified, except through the intellect.

He whose prayer is only work will not leave his treasure in the secret shrine.

One is ashamed when finding any fault with one like Goethe, who is so great. It seems the only criticism should be to do all he omitted to do, and that none who cannot is entitled to say a word. Let one speak who was all Goethe was not; noble, true, virtuous, but neither wise nor subtle in his generation, a divine ministrant, a baffled man, ruled and imposed on by the pigmies whom he spurned, a heroic artist, a democrat to the tune of Burns:

"The rank is but the guinea stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that."

Hear Beethoven speak of Goethe on an occasion which brought out the two characters in strong contrast.

Extract from a letter of Beethoven to Bettina Brentano, Töplitz, 1812.

“Kings and Princes can indeed make Professors and Privy Councillors, and hang upon them titles; but great men they cannot make; souls that rise above the mud of the world, these they must let be made by other means than theirs, and should therefore show them respect. When two such as I and Goethe come together, then must great lords observe what is esteemed great by one of us. Coming home yesterday, we met the whole Imperial family. We saw them coming, and Goethe left me and insisted on standing one side; let me say what I would, I could not make him come on one step. I pressed my hat upon my head, buttoned my surtout, and passed on through the thickest crowd. Princes and parasites made way; the Arch-Duke Rudolph took off his hat; the Empress greeted me first. Their Highnesses Know MK. I was well amused to see the crowd pass by Goethe. At the side stood he, hat in hand, low

bowed in reverence till all had gone by. Then have I scolded him well. I gave no pardon, but reproached him with all his sins, most of all those towards you, dearest Bettina; we had just been talking of you.”

If Beethoven appears, in this scene, somewhat arrogant and bearish, yet how noble his extreme compared with the opposite! Goethe's friendship with, the Grand Duke we respect, for Karl-August was a strong man. But we regret to see at the command of any and all members of the ducal family, and their connexions, who had nothing but rank to recommend them, his time and thoughts, of which he was so chary to private friends. Beethoven could not endure to teach the Archduke Rudolph, who had the soul duly to revere his genius, because he, felt it to be “hofdienst,” court-service. He received with perfect nonchalance the homage of the sovereigns of Europe. Only the Empress of Russia and the Archduke Karl, whom he esteemed as individuals, had power to gratify him by their attentions. Compare with Goethe's obsequious pleasure, at being able gracefully to compliment such high personages, Beethoven's conduct with regard to the famous Heroic Symphony. This was composed at the suggestion of Bernadotte, while Napoleon was still in his first glory. He was then the hero of Beethoven's imagination, who hoped from him the liberation of Europe. With delight the great artist expressed in his eternal harmonies the progress of the Hero's soul. The symphony was finished, and even dedicated to Bonaparte, when the news came of his declaring himself Emperor of the French. The first act of the indignant artist was to tear off his dedication and trample it under foot, nor could he endure again even the mention of Napoleon till the time of his fall.

Admit, that Goethe had a natural taste for the trappings of rank and wealth, from which the musician was quite free, yet we cannot doubt that both saw through these externals to man as a nature; there can be no doubt on whose side was the simple greatness, the noble truth. We pardon thee, Goethe, —but thee, Beethoven, we revere; for thou hast maintained the worship of the Manly, the Permanent, the True.

The clear perception which was in Goethe's better nature of the beauty of that steadfastness, of that singleness and simple melody of soul, which he too much sacrificed to become “the many-sided One,” is shown most distinctly in his two surpassingly beautiful works, *The Elective Affinities* and *Iphigenia*.

Not *Werther*, not the *Nouvelle Heloise*, have been assailed with such a storm of indignation as the first named of these works on the score of gross immorality.

The reason probably is the subject; any discussion of the validity of the marriage vow making society tremble to its foundation; and secondly, the cold manner in which it is done. All that is in the book would be bearable to most minds, if the writer had had less the air of a spectator, and had larded his work here and there with ejaculations of horror and surprise.

These declarations of sentiment on the part of the author seem to be required by the majority of readers, in order to an interpretation of his purpose, as sixthly, seventhly, and eighthly were, in an old-fashioned sermon, to rouse the audience to a perception of the method made use of by the preacher.

But it has always seemed to me that those who need not such helps to their discriminating faculties, but read a work so thoroughly as to apprehend its whole scope and tendency, rather than hear what the author says it means, will regard the *Elective Affinities* as a work especially what is called moral in its outward effect, and religious even to piety in its spirit. The mental

aberrations of the consorts from their plighted faith, though in the one case never indulged, and though in the other no veil of sophistry is cast over the weakness of passion, but all that is felt expressed with the openness of one who desires to legitimate what he feels, are punished by terrible griefs and a fatal catastrophe. Ottilia, that being of exquisite purity, with intellect and character so harmonized in feminine beauty, as they never before were found in any portrait of woman painted by the hand of man, perishes, on finding she has been breathed on by unhallowed passion, and led to err even by her ignorant wishes against what is held sacred. The only personage whom we do not pity is Edward, for he is the only one who stifles the voice of conscience.

There is, indeed, a sadness, as of an irresistible fatality brooding over the whole. It seems as if only a ray of angelic truth could have enabled these men to walk wisely in this twilight, at first so soft and alluring, then deepening into blind horror.

But if no such ray came to prevent their earthly errors, it seems to point heavenward in the saintly sweetness of Ottilia. Her nature, too fair for vice, too finely wrought even for error, comes lonely, intense, and pale, like the evening star on the cold wintry night. It tells of other worlds, where the meaning of such strange passages as this must be read to those faithful and pure like her, victims perishing in the green garlands of a spotless youth to atone for the unworthiness of others.

An unspeakable pathos is felt from the minutest trait of this character, and deepens with every new study of it. Not even in Shakspeare have I so felt the organizing power of genius. Through dead words I find the least gestures of this person, stamping themselves on my memory, betraying to the heart the secret of her life, which she herself, like all these divine beings, knew not. I feel myself familiarized with all beings of her order. I see not only what she was, but what she might have been and live with her in yet untrodden realms.

Here is the glorious privilege of a form known only in the world of genius. There is on it no stain of usage or calculation to dull our sense of its immeasurable life. What in our daily walk, amid common faces and common places, fleets across us at moments from glances of the eye or tones of the voice, is felt from the whole being of one of these children of genius.

This precious gem is set in a ring complete in its enamel. I cannot hope to express my sense of the beauty of this book as a work of art. I would not attempt it, if I had elsewhere met any testimony to the same. The perfect picture always before the mind of the chateau, the moss hut, the park, the garden, the lake, with its boats and the landing beneath the platan trees; the gradual manner in which both localities and persons grow upon us, more living than life, inasmuch as we are, unconsciously, kept at our best temperature by the atmosphere of genius, and thereby more delicate in our preceptions than amid our customary fogs; the gentle unfolding of the central thought, as a flower in the morning sun; then the conclusion, rising like a cloud, first soft and white, but darkening as it comes, till with a sudden wind it bursts above our heads; the ease with which we everywhere find points of view all different, yet all bearing on the same circle, for, though we feel every hour new worlds, still before our eye lie the same objects, new, yet the same, unchangeable, yet always changing their aspects as we proceed, till at last we find we ourselves have traversed the circle, and know all we overlooked at first.

For myself, I never felt so completely that very thing which genius should always make us feel, that I was in its circle, and could not get out till its spell was done, and its last spirit

permitted to depart. I was not carried away, instructed, delighted more than by other works, but I was there, living there, whether as the platan tree, or the architect, or any other observing part of the scene. The personages live too intensely to let us live in them, they draw around themselves circles within the circle, we can only see them close, not be themselves.

Others, it would seem, on closing the book, exclaim, "what an immoral book!" I well remember my own thought: "It is a work of Art!" At last I understood that world within a world, that ripest fruit of human nature, which is called Art. With each perusal of the book my wonder and delight at this wonderful fulfillment of design grew. I understood why Goethe was well content to be called Artist, and his works, works of art, rather than revelations. At this moment, remembering what I then felt, I am inclined to class all my negations just written on this paper as stuff, and to look upon myself for thinking them, with as much contempt as Mr. Carlyle or Mrs. Austin, or Mrs. Jameson might do, to say nothing of the German Goetheans.

Yet that they were not without foundation I feel again when I turn to the Iphigenia; a work beyond the possibility of negation; a work where a religious meaning not only pierces but enfolds the whole; a work as admirable in art, still higher in significance, more single in expression.

There is an English translation (I know not how good) of Goethe's Iphigenia. But as it may not be generally known, I will give a sketch of the drama. Iphigenia, saved at the moment of the sacrifice made by Agamemnon in behalf of the Greeks, by the goddess, and transferred to the temple at Tauris, appears alone in the consecrated grove. Many years have passed since she was severed from the home of such a tragic fate, the palace of Mycenæ. Troy had fallen, Agamemnon been murdered, Orestes had grown up to avenge his death. All these events were unknown to the exiled Iphigenia. The priestess of Diana in a barbarous land, she had passed the years in the duties of the sanctuary, and in acts of beneficence. She had acquired great power over the mind of Thoas, king of Tauris, and used it to protect strangers, whom it had previously been the custom of the country to sacrifice to the goddess.

She salutes us with a soliloquy, of which this is a rude translation.

Beneath your shade, living summits
 Of this ancient, holy, thick-leaved grove,
 As in the silent sanctuary of the Goddess,
 Still I walk with those same shuddering feelings
 As when I trod these walks for the first time.
 My spirit cannot accustom itself to these places,
 Many years now has kept me here concealed
 A higher will to which I am submissive;
 Yet ever am I, as at first, the stranger;
 For ah! the sea divides me from the beloved ones;
 And on the shore whole days I stand,
 Seeking with my soul the land of the Greeks,
 And to my sighs brings the rushing wave only
 Its hollow tones in answer.

Woe to him who, far from parents, and brothers, and sisters,
 Drags on a lonely life. Grief consumes

The nearest happiness away from his lips;
 His thoughts crowd downwards—
 Seeking the hall of his fathers, where the Sun
 First opened heaven to him, and kindred-born
 In the first plays knit daily firmer and firmer
 The bond from heart to heart. —I question not the Gods,
 Only the lot of woman is one for sorrow;
 In the house and in the war man rules,
 Knows how to help himself in foreign lands,
 Possessions gladden and victory crowns him,
 And an honorable death stands ready to end his days.
 Within what narrow limits is bounded the luck of woman!
 To obey a rude husband even is duty and comfort; —how sad
 When, instead, a hostile fate drives her out of her sphere.
 So holds me Thoas, indeed a noble man, fast
 In solemn, sacred, but slavish bonds.
 O with shame I confess that with secret reluctance
 I serve thee, Goddess, thee, my deliverer;
 My life should freely have been dedicate to thee,
 But I have always been hoping in thee, O Diana,
 Who didst take in thy soft arms me, the rejected daughter
 Of the greatest king; yes, daughter of Zeus,
 I thought if thou gavest such anguish to him, the high hero,
 The godlike Agamemnon;
 Since he brought his dearest, a victim, to thy altar,
 That, when he should return, crowned with glory, from Ilium,
 At the same time thou shouldst give to his arms his other treasures,
 His spouse, Electra, and the princely son,
 Me also thou wouldst restore to mine own,
 Saving a second time me, whom from death thou didst save,
 From this worse death, the life of exile here.

These are the words and thoughts, but how give an idea of the sweet simplicity of expression in the original, where every word has the grace and softness of a flower petal.

She is interrupted by a messenger from the king, who prepares her for a visit from himself of a sort she has dreaded. Thoas, who has always loved her, now left childless by the calamities of war, can no longer resist his desire to reanimate by her presence his desert house. He begins by urging her to tell him the story of her race, which she does in a way that makes us feel as if that most famous tragedy had never before found a voice, so simple, so fresh in its naivety is the recital.

Thoas urges his suit undismayed by the fate that hangs over the race of Tantalus.

Was it the same Tantalus,
 Whom Jupiter called to his council and banquets,
 In whose talk so deeply experienced, full of various learning,
 The Gods delighted as in the speech of oracles?

IPHIGENIA.

It is the same, but the Gods should not
 Converse with men, as with their equals.
 The mortal race is much too weak
 Not to turn giddy on unaccustomed heights.
 He was not ignoble, neither a traitor,
 But for a servant too great, and as a companion
 Of the great Thunderer only a man. So was
 His fault also that of a man, its penalty
 Severe, and poets sing—Presumption
 And faithlessness cast him down from the throne of
 Into the anguish Jove of ancient Tartarus;
 Ah, and all his race bore their hate.

THOAS.

Bore it the blame of the ancestor or its own?

IPHIGENIA.

Truly the vehement breast and powerful life of the Titan
 Were the assured inheritance of son and grandchild,
 But the Gods bound their brows with a brazen band,
 Moderation, counsel, wisdom, and patience
 Were hid from their wild, gloomy glance,
 Each desire grew to fury,
 And limitless ranged their passionate thoughts.

Iphigenia refuses with gentle firmness to give to gratitude what was undue. Thoas leaves her in anger, and, to make her feel it, orders that the old, barbarous custom be renewed, and two strangers just arrived be immolated at Diana's altar.

Iphigenia, though distressed, is not shaken by this piece of tyranny. She trusts her heavenly protectress will find some way for her to save these unfortunates without violating her truth.

The strangers are Orestes and Pylades, sent thither by the oracle of Apollo, who bade them go to Tauris and bring back "The Sister," thus shall the heaven-ordained parricide of Orestes be expiated, and the Furies cease to pursue him.

The Sister they interpret to be Dian, Apollo's sister, but Iphigenia, sister to Orestes, is really meant.

The next act contains scenes of most delicate workmanship, first between the light-hearted Pylades, full of worldly resource and ready tenderness, and the suffering Orestes, of far nobler, indeed heroic nature, but less fit for the day, and more for the ages. In the first scene the characters of both are brought out with great skill, and the nature of the bond between "the butterfly and the dark flower" distinctly shown in few words.

The next scene is between Iphigenia and Pylades. Pylades, though he truly answers the questions of the priestess about the fate of Troy and the house of Agamemnon, does not hesitate to conceal from her who Orestes really is, and manufactures a tissue of useless falsehoods with the same readiness that the wise Ulysses showed in exercising his ingenuity on similar occasions.

It is said, I know not how truly, that the modern Greeks are Ulyssean in this respect, never telling straight-forward truth, when deceit will answer the purpose; and if they tell any truth, practising the economy of the king of Ithaca, in always reserving a part for their own use. The character which this denotes is admirably hit off with few strokes in Pylades, the fair side of whom Iphigenia thus paints in a later scene.

Bless, ye Gods, our Pylades,
 And whatever he may undertake!
 He is the arm of the youth in battle,
 The light-giving eye of the aged man in the council.
 For his soul is still; it preserves
 The holy possession of Repose unexhausted,
 And from its depths still reaches
 Help and advice to those tossed to and fro.

Iphigenia leaves him in sudden agitation, when informed of the death of Agamemnon. Returning, she finds in his place Orestes, whom she had not before seen, and draws from him by her artless questions the sequel to this terrible drama wrought by his hand. After he has concluded his narrative in the deep tones of cold anguish; she cries,

Immortals, you who your bright days through
 Live in bliss throned on clouds ever renewed,
 Only for this have you all these years
 Kept me separate from men, and so near yourselves,
 Given me the childlike employment to cherish the fires
 your altars,
 That my soul might, in like pious clearness,
 Be ever aspiring towards your abodes,
 That only later and deeper I might feel
 The anguish and horror that have darkened my house.

O, Stranger
 Speak to me of the unhappy one, tell me of Orestes.

ORESTES.

O might I speak of his death!
 Vehement flew up from the reeking blood
 His Mother's Soul!
 And called to the ancient daughters of Night,
 Let not the parricide escape;
 Pursue that man of crime. He is yours.
 They obey, their hollow eyes
 Darting about with vulture eagerness,
 They stir themselves in their black dens,
 From corners their companions
 Doubt and Remorse steal out to join them,
 Before them roll the mists of Acheron,
 In its cloudy volumes rolls

The eternal contemplation of the irrevocable,
 Bewildering round the head of the guilty.
 Permitted now in their love of ruin they tread
 The beautiful fields of a God-planted earth,
 From which they had long been banished by an
 Their swift feet follow the fugitive,
 They pause never except to gather more power to dismay.
 IPHIGENIA.

Unhappy man, thou art in like manner tortured,
 And feelest truly what he, the poor fugitive, suffers!
 ORESTES.

What sayest thou, what meanest of "like manner."
 IPHIGENIA.

Thee, too, the weight of a fratricide crushes to earth;
 I had from thy younger brother.
 ORESTES.

I cannot suffer that thou, great soul,
 Shouldst be deceived by a false tale,
 A web of lies let stranger weave for stranger,
 Subtle with many thoughts, accustomed to craft,
 Guarding his feet against a trap;
 But between us

Be Truth; —
 I am Orestes; —and this guilty head
 Bent downward to the grave seeks death,
 In any shape were he welcome.
 Whoever thou art, I wish thou mightst be saved,
 Thou and my friend; for myself I wish it not.
 Thou seem'st against thy will here to remain;
 Invent a way to fly and leave me here, &c.

Like all pure productions of genius, this may be injured by the slightest change, and I dare not flatter myself that the English words give an idea of the heroic dignity expressed in the cadence of the original by the words

“zwischen uns

Seg Wahrheit!
 ICH BIN OREST!”

where the Greek seems to fold his robe around him in, the full strength of classic manhood, prepared for worst and best, not like a cold Stoic, but a hero, who can feel all, know all, and endure all. The name of two syllables in the German is much more forcible for the pause than the three syllable Orestes.

“between us

Be Truth!”

is fine to my ear, on which our word Truth also pauses with a large dignity.

The scenes go on more and more full of breathing beauty. The lovely joy of Iphigenia, the meditative softness with which the religiously educated mind perpetually draws the inference from the most agitating event, impress us more and more. At last the hour of trial comes. She is to keep off Thoas by a cunningly devised tale, while her brother and Pylades contrive their escape. Orestes has received to his heart the sister long lost, divinely restored, and in the embrace the curse falls from him, he is well, and Pylades more than happy. The ship waits to carry her to the palace home she is to free from a century's weight of pollution, and already the blue heavens of her adored Greece gleam before her fancy.

But oh! the step before all this can be obtained. To deceive Thoas, a savage and a tyrant indeed, but long her protector, —in his barbarous fashion her benefactor. How can she buy life, happiness, or even the safety of those dear ones at such a price!

“Woe,

O Woe upon the lie. It frees not the breast,
Like the true-spoken word; it comforts not, but tortures
Him who devised it, and returns,
An arrow once let fly, God-repelled, back
On the bosom of the Archer!"
O must I then resign the silent hope
Which gave a beauty to my loneliness?
Must the curse dwell forever, and our race
Never be raised to life by a new blessing?
All things decay, the fairest bliss is transient,
The powers most full of life grow faint at last,
And shall a curse alone boast an incessant life
Then have I idly hoped that here kept pure,
So strangely severed from my kindred's lot,
I was designed to come at the right moment,
And with pure hand and heart to expiate
The many sins that spot my native home.
To lie, to steal the sacred image!
Olympians, let not these vulture talons
Seize on the tender breast. O save me,
And save your image in my soul.
Within my ears resounds the ancient lay,
I had forgotten it, and would so gladly;
The lay of the Parcae, which they awful sang,
As Tantalus fell from his golden seat
They suffered with the noble friend, wrathful
Was their heart, and fearful was the song.
In our childhood the nurse was wont to sing it
To me and the brother and sister. I marked it well.

Then follows the sublime song of the Parcae, well known through translations.

But Iphigenia is not a victim of fate, for she listens steadfastly to the god in her breast. Her lips are incapable of subterfuge. She obeys her own heart, tells all to the king, calls up his

better nature, wins, hallows, and purifies all around her, till the heaven-prepared way is cleared by the obedient child of heaven, and the great trespass of Tantalus cancelled by a woman's reliance on the voice of her innocent soul.

If it be not possible to enhance the beauty with which such ideal figures as the Iphigenia and the Antigone appeared to the Greek mind, yet Goethe has unfolded a part of the life of this being, unknown elsewhere in the records of literature. The character of the priestess, the full beauty of virgin womanhood, solitary but tender, wise and innocent, sensitive and self-collected, sweet as spring, dignified as becomes the chosen servant of God, each gesture and word of deep and delicate significance; —where else is such a picture to be found?

It was not the courtier, nor the man of the world, nor the connoisseur, nor the friend of Mephistopheles, nor Wilhelm the Master, nor Egmont the generous free liver, that saw Iphigenia in the world of spirits, but Goethe in his first-born glory, Goethe the poet, Goethe designed to be the keenest star in a new constellation. Let us not in surveying his works and life abide with him too much in the suburbs and outskirts of himself. Let us enter into his higher tendency, thank him for such angels as Iphigenia, whose simple truth mocks at all his wise “Beschränkungen,” and hope the hour when, girt about with many such, he will confess, contrary to his opinion, given in his latest days, that it is well worth while to live seventy years, if only to find that they are nothing in the sight of God.

F.

Author's Notes:

1. Except in “La belle France.”
 2. The name of Macaria is one of the noblest association. It is that of the daughter of Hercules, who devoted herself a voluntary sacrifice for her country. She was adored by the Greeks as the true Felicity.
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