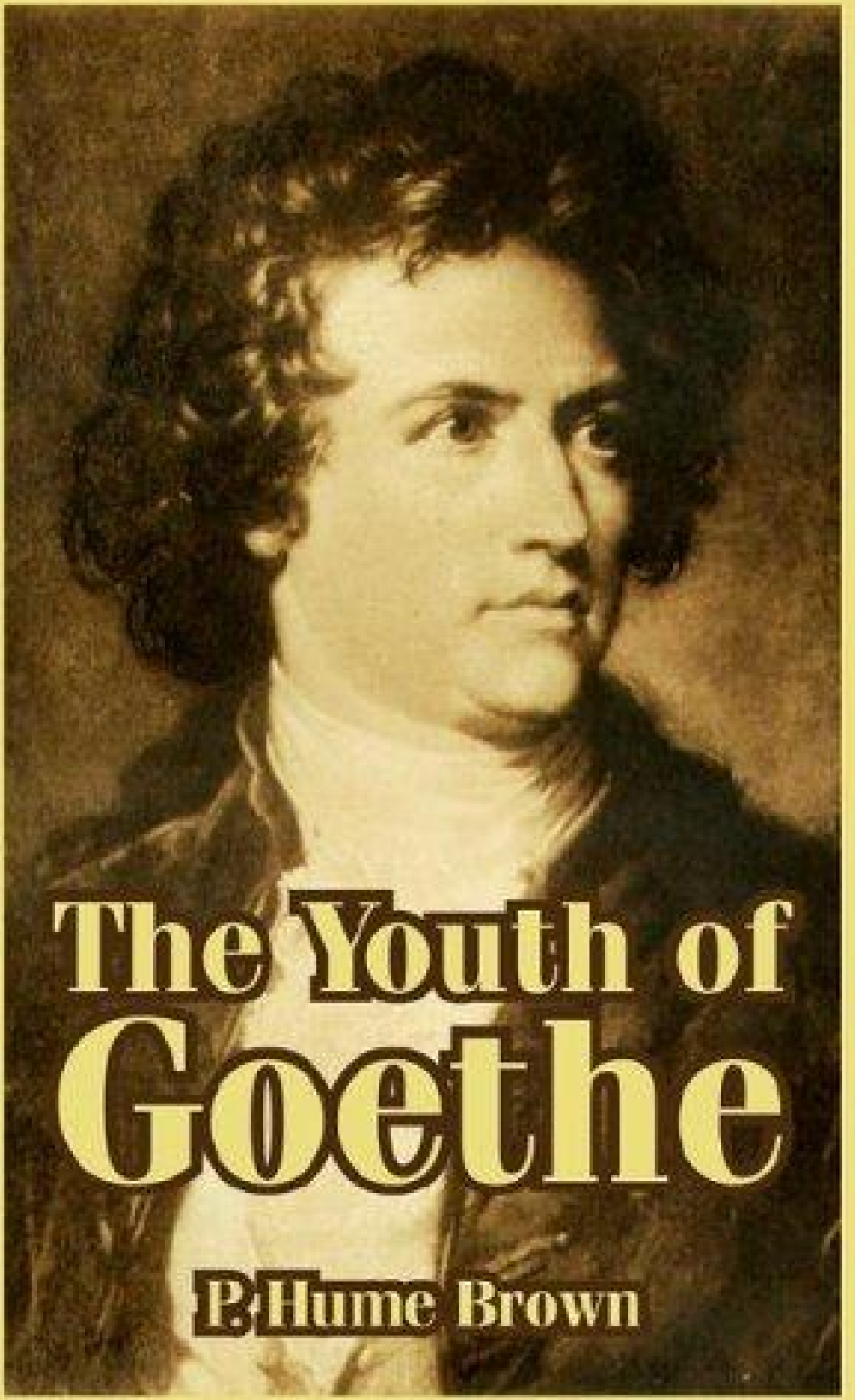

The Youth of Goethe
P. Hume Brown

The Project Gutenberg eBook of The Youth of Goethe

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: The Youth of Goethe

Author: P. Hume Brown

Release date: November 11, 2006 [eBook #19753]

Language: English

Other information and formats: www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/19753

Credits: Produced by Suzanne Lybarger, Linda Cantoni, and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at http://www.pgdp.net (This file was produced from images generously made available by The Internet Archive/Canadian

Libraries)

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK
THE YOUTH OF GOETHE ***

THE YOUTH OF GOETHE

BY P. HUME BROWN, LL.D., F.B.A.

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.
1913

TO

**THE VISCOUNT HALDANE OF CLOAN,
LORD CHANCELLOR OF GREAT BRITAIN.**

MY DEAR CHANCELLOR,—AS THE "ONLY BEGETTER" OF THIS BOOK, IT SEEMS ALMOST OBLIGATORY THAT IT SHOULD BE ASSOCIATED WITH YOUR NAME.

THE AUTHOR.

GOETHE'S BIOGRAPHIE.

"Anfangs ist es ein Punkt der leise zum Kreise sich öffnet,
Aber, wachsend, umfasst dieser am Ende die Welt."
FRIEDRICH HEBBEL.

"In the beginning a point that soft to the circle expandeth,
But the circle at length, growing, enclaspeth the world."

CONTENTS

Preface

CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS IN FRANKFORT

1749—1765

PAGE

GOETHE'S BIRTHPLACE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON HIM 1

PERIOD OF HIS BIRTH 4

HIS FATHER 6
HIS MOTHER 8
HIS SISTER 10
FAMILY FRIENDS 11
HIS EDUCATION 12
RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES 14
THE *SEVEN YEARS' WAR* 18
FRENCH OCCUPATION OF FRANKFORT 19
GOETHE'S FIRST LOVE 21
DESTINED FOR THE STUDY OF LAW 23
THE BOY THE FATHER OF THE MAN 25
HIS CHARACTER AND EARLY TASTES 27

CHAPTER II

STUDENT IN LEIPZIG

OCTOBER, 1765—SEPTEMBER, 1768

GOES TO LEIPZIG 29
HIS WILD LIFE THERE 29
SOCIETY OF LEIPZIG 31
HIS IRREGULAR STUDIES 33
ADOPTS LEIPZIG FASHIONS 35
FEMININE INFLUENCES 36
DANDYISM 37
FALLS IN LOVE WITH KÄTHCHEN SCHÖNKOPF 38

FRIENDSHIP WITH BEHRISCH 39
HIS RELATIONS TO KÄTHCHEN 40
MISCELLANEOUS INTERESTS 44
FRIENDSHIP WITH OESER 46
STATE OF GERMAN LITERATURE 48
POEMS OF THE PERIOD 49
DIE LAUNE DES VERLIEBTEN 51
DIE MITSCHULDIGEN 52
INSPIRATION 54

CHAPTER III

AT HOME IN FRANKFORT

SEPTEMBER, 1768—APRIL, 1770

RETURNS TO FRANKFORT 57
HIS BROKEN HEALTH 58
RELATIONS TO HIS FATHER 58
HIS SISTER 60
INTEREST IN RELIGION 61
FRIENDSHIP WITH FRÄULEIN VON KLETTENBERG 62
A MYSTERIOUS MEDICINE 63
EVOLVES A RELIGIOUS CREED 65
INFLUENCE OF FRÄULEIN VON KLETTENBERG 66
INTEREST IN LITERATURE AND ART 67
LESSING AND WIELAND 70
RIPENING POWERS 71

CHAPTER IV

GOETHE IN STRASSBURG

APRIL, 1770—AUGUST, 1771

SETTLEMENT IN STRASSBURG	75
INFLUENCES OF STRASSBURG	75
CHANGE IN HIS RELIGIOUS FEELINGS	76
MANNER OF LIFE IN STRASSBURG	78
FRIENDSHIP WITH DR. SALZMANN	79
RELATIONS TO JUNG STILLING	83
COMES UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF HERDER	84
YOUNG'S *CONJECTURES ON ORIGINAL COMPOSITION*	90
ITS INFLUENCE ON GOETHE'S GENIUS	93
FRIEDERIKE BRION	95
HIS RELATIONS TO HER	96
PARTING FROM HER	101
MISCELLANEOUS STUDIES	102
SELF-DISCIPLINE	103
POEMS ADDRESSED TO FRIEDERIKE	105

CHAPTER V

FRANKFORT—*GÖTZ VON BERLICHINGEN*

AUGUST, 1771—DECEMBER, 1771

GOETHE'S RETURN TO FRANKFORT 108
CREATIVE PRODUCTIVENESS OF THE PERIOD 108
POET OR ARTIST? 111
MENTAL CONFLICT 112
EPOCHS IN HIS LAST FRANKFORT YEARS 113
HIS SISTER CORNELIA 116
GROWING DISTASTE FOR FRANKFORT 117
DEPRESSION 119
WORSHIP OF SHAKESPEARE 120
GÖTZ VON BERLICHINGEN 121
ITS INFLUENCE ON EUROPEAN LITERATURE 131

CHAPTER VI

INFLUENCE OF MERCK AND THE DARMSTADT CIRCLE

1772

FRIENDSHIP WITH MERCK 133
CHARACTER OF MERCK 133
HIS INFLUENCE ON GOETHE 135
THE DARMSTADT CIRCLE 136
ITS INFLUENCE ON GOETHE 136

CAROLINE FLACHSLAND AND GOETHE 137
POEMS OF GOETHE INSPIRED BY THE DARMSTADT CIRCLE 138
WANDERERS STURMLIED 139
DER WANDERER 141

CHAPTER VII

WETZLAR AND CHARLOTTE BUFF

MAY—SEPTEMBER, 1772

DEPARTURE FROM WETZLAR 143
WETZLAR AND ITS SOCIETY 144
LOTTE BUFF 147
GOETHE'S RELATIONS TO HER 147
KESTNER, LOTTE'S BETROTHED 148
GOETHE, KESTNER, AND LOTTE 149
DEPARTURE FROM WETZLAR 150
KESTNER'S CHARACTERISATION OF GOETHE 151

CHAPTER VIII

AFTER WETZLAR

1772—1773

SUICIDE OF JERUSALEM 154

GOETHE VISITS THE FAMILY VON LA ROCHE 155
FRAU VON LA ROCHE 155
MAXIMILIANE VON LA ROCHE 157
UNREST 158
LETTERS TO KESTNER 159
ESTRANGEMENT FROM HIS FATHER 161
SOLITUDE 162

CHAPTER IX

SATIRICAL DRAMAS AND FRAGMENTS

POET OR ARTIST? 163
LITERARY ACTIVITY 164
FRANKFURTER GELEHRTEN ANZEIGEN 165
LETTER OF THE PASTOR 166
TWO BIBLICAL QUESTIONS 167
RECASTS *GÖTZ VON BERLICHINGEN* 167
SATIRICAL PLAYS 169
PROMETHEUS 175
MAHOMET 181
ADLER UND TAUBE 183
KÜNSTLERS ERDEWALLEN 184

CHAPTER X

WERTHER—CLAVIGO

1774

GOETHE'S NEED OF EXTERNAL STIMULUS 185
GOETHE AND THE BRENTANOS 186
ORIGIN OF *WERTHER* 187
ENGLISH INFLUENCE ON *WERTHER* 188
PUBLICATION OF *WERTHER* 189
GOETHE AND WERTHER 190
SECOND PART OF *WERTHER* 191
WERTHER AND GOETHE 193
INFLUENCE OF *WERTHER* 196
THE KESTNERS AND *WERTHER* 198
WERTHERISM 199
CLAVIGO 200
DRAMATISED FROM BEAUMARCHAIS 200
ORIGIN OF *CLAVIGO* 202
ITS PLOT 202
CONSTRUCTED ON CLASSICAL MODELS 205
CLAVIGO AND GOETHE 206

CHAPTER XI

GOETHE AND SPINOZA—*DER EWIGE JUDE*

1773—1774

GOETHE'S DEBT TO SPINOZA 209

MISDATES SPINOZA'S INFLUENCE 210
DER EWIGE JUDE 212
ORIGINAL PLAN OF IT 213
AS IT WAS ACTUALLY WRITTEN 216
ITS DIVISIONS 216
ITS CHARACTERISTICS 216
UNPUBLISHED TILL AFTER GOETHE'S DEATH 218

CHAPTER XII

GOETHE IN SOCIETY

1774

JOHANN KASPAR LAVATER 220
HIS CHARACTER 220
HIS INTEREST IN GOETHE 222
VISITS FRANKFORT 224
HIS INTERCOURSE WITH GOETHE 225
JOHANN BERNHARD BASEDOW 227
HIS CHARACTER AND CAREER 227
HIS VISIT TO FRANKFORT 228
GOETHE, LAVATER, AND BASEDOW AT EMS 228
THEIR VOYAGE DOWN THE RHINE 230
JUNG STILLING 231
SCENE AT ELBERFELDT 232
FRITZ JACOBI 233

GOETHE MAKES HIS ACQUAINTANCE 233
THEIR INTERCOURSE 234
JACOBI'S ESTIMATE OF GOETHE 237
KLOPSTOCK 238
GOETHE'S ADMIRATION OF HIM 238
THEIR MEETING IN FRANKFORT 239
AN SCHWAGER KRONOS 240
BOIE AND WERTHES ON GOETHE 241
MAJOR VON KNEBEL AND GOETHE 242
GOETHE AND THE PRINCES OF WEIMAR 243
VON KNEBEL ON GOETHE 244
DEATH OF FRÄULEIN VON KLETTENBERG 245

CHAPTER XIII

LILI SCHÖNEMANN

1775

THE SCHÖNEMANN FAMILY 247
GOETHE'S INTRODUCTION TO LILI SCHÖNEMANN 248
HIS SUBSEQUENT MEMORY OF HER 249
LILI COMPARED WITH HIS PREVIOUS LOVES 250
GOETHE'S SONGS ADDRESSED TO HER 251

COUNTESS STOLBERG 253
GOETHE'S RELATIONS TO HER 253
ERWIN UND ELMIRE 255
STELLA 257
CLAUDINE VON VILLA BELLA 263
A DISTRACTED LOVER 266
BETROTHED TO LILI 268
SHRINKS FROM MARRIAGE 269
COUNTS STOLBERG IN FRANKFORT 270
GOETHE STARTS WITH THEM FOR SWITZERLAND 271
VISITS HIS SISTER AT EMMENDINGEN 273
WITH LAVATER IN ZURICH 275
ACCOMPANIES PASSAVANT TO ST. GOTHARD 276
LYRICS TO LILI 276
RETURN TO FRANKFORT 278

CHAPTER XIV

LAST MONTHS IN FRANKFORT—THE *URFAUST*

1775

RELATIONS TO LILI ON HIS RETURN 279
A CRISIS IN THEIR RELATIONS 281
MISCELLANEOUS INTERESTS 282

ESTIMATES OF GOETHE BY SULZER AND ZIMMERMANN 283
INVITATION TO WEIMAR 284
PROPOSED JOURNEY TO ITALY 285
A DELAYED MESSENGER 286
DEPARTS FOR WEIMAR 287
EGMONT AND THE *URFAUST* 287
THE *URFAUST* 288
CHARACTERISTICS 293

Index

PREFACE

"GENERALLY speaking," Goethe has himself said, "the most important period in the life of an individual is that of his development—the period which, in my case, breaks off with the detailed narrative of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*." In reality, as we know, there is no complete breach at any point in the lives of either nations or individuals. But if in the life of Goethe we are to fix upon a dividing point, it is his departure from Frankfort and his permanent settlement in Weimar in his twenty-seventh year. Considered externally, that change of his surroundings is the most obvious event in his career, and for the world at large marks its division into two well-defined periods. In relation to his inner development his removal from Frankfort to Weimar may also be regarded as the most important fact in

his life. From the date of his settlement in Weimar he was subjected to influences which equally affected his character and his genius; had he continued to make his home in Frankfort, it is probable that, both as man and literary artist, he would have developed characteristics essentially different from those by which the world knows him. There were later experiences—notably his Italian journey and his intercourse with Schiller—which profoundly influenced him, but none of these experiences penetrated his being so permanently as the atmosphere of Weimar, which he daily breathed for more than half a century.

As Goethe himself has said, the first twenty-six years of his life are essentially the period of his "development." During that period we see him as he came from Nature's hand. His words, his actions have then a stamp of spontaneity which they gradually lost with advancing years as the result of his social and official relations in Weimar. He has told us that it was one of the painful conditions of his position there that it made impossible that frank and cordial relation with others which it was his nature to seek, and from which he had previously derived encouragement and stimulus; as a State official, he adds, he could be on easy terms with nobody without running the risk of a petition for some favour which he might or might not be able to confer.

For the portrayal of the youthful Goethe materials are even superabundant; of no other genius of the same order, indeed, have we a record comparable in fulness of detail for the same period of life. And it is this abundance of information and the extraordinary individuality to whom it relates that give specific interest to any study of Goethe's youth. From month

to month, even at times from day to day, we can trace the growth of his character, of his opinions, of his genius. And the testimonies of his contemporaries are unanimous as to the unique impression he made upon them. "He will always remain to me one of the most extraordinary apparitions of my life," wrote one; and he expressed the opinion of all who had the discernment to appreciate originality of gifts and character. What they found unique in him was inspiration, passion, a zest of life, at a pressure that foreshadowed either a remarkable career or (at times his own dread) disaster.

It was said of Goethe in his latest years that the world would come to believe that there had been, not one, but many Goethes; and, as we follow him through the various stages of his youth, we receive the same impression. It results from this manifoldness of his nature that he defies every attempt to formulate his characteristics at any period of his life. In the present study of him the object has been to let his own words and actions speak for themselves; any conclusions that may be suggested, the reader will thus have it in his own power to check.

After Goethe's own writings, the works to which I have been chiefly indebted are *Goethes Gespräche, Gesamtausgabe von Freiherrn v. Biedermann*, Leipzig, 1909-11 (5 vols.), in which are collected references to Goethe by his contemporaries; and *Der junge Goethe: Neue Ausgabe in sechs Bänden, besorgt von Max Morris*, Leipzig, 1910-12, containing the literary and artistic productions of Goethe previous to his settlement in Weimar. The references throughout are to the Weimar edition of Goethe's works. Except where otherwise indicated, the author is responsible

for the translations, both in prose and verse.

I have cordially to express my gratitude to Dr. G. Schaaffs, Lecturer in German in the University of St. Andrews, and to Mr. Frank C. Nicholson, Librarian in the University of Edinburgh, for the trouble they took in revising my proofs.

P.H.B.

Edinburgh.

THE YOUTH OF GOETHE

CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS IN FRANKFORT

1749—1765

IN his seventy-fifth year Goethe remarked to his secretary, Eckermann, that he had always been regarded as one of fortune's chiefest favourites, and he admitted the general truth of the impression, though with significant reserves. "In truth," he added, "there has been nothing but toil and trouble, and I can affirm that throughout my seventy-five years I have not had a month's real freedom from care."[1]

Goethe's biographers are generally agreed that his good fortune began with his birth, and that the circumstances of his childhood and boyhood were eminently favourable for his future development. Yet Goethe himself apparently did not, in his reserves, make an exception even in favour of these early years; and, as we shall see, we have other evidence from his own hand that these years were not years of unmingled happiness and of entirely auspicious augury.

In one circumstance, at least, Goethe appears to have considered himself well treated by destiny. From the vivid and sympathetic description he has given of his native city of Frankfort-on-the-Main we may infer that he considered himself fortunate in the place of his birth.[2] It is concurrent testimony that, at the date of Goethe's birth, no German city could have offered greater advantages for the early discipline of one who was to be Germany's national poet. Its situation was central, standing as it did on the border line between North and South Germany. No German city had a more impressive historic past, the memorials of which were visible in imposing architectural remains, in customs, and institutions. It was in Frankfort that for generations the German Emperors had received their crowns; and the spectacle of one of these ceremonies remained a vivid memory in Goethe's mind throughout his long life. For the man Goethe the actual present counted for more than the most venerable past;[3] and, as a boy, he saw in Frankfort not only the reminders of former generations, but the bustling activities of a modern society. The spring and autumn fairs brought traders from all parts of Germany and from the neighbouring countries; and ships from every part of the globe deposited their miscellaneous cargoes on

the banks of the river Main. In the town itself there were sights fitted to stir youthful imagination; and the surrounding country presented a prospect of richness and variety in striking contrast to the tame environs of Goethe's future home in Weimar. Dr. Arnold used to say that he knew from his pupils' essays whether they had seen London or the sea, because the sight of either of these objects seemed to suggest a new measure of things. Frankfort, with its 30,000 inhabitants, with its past memories and its bustling present, was at least on a sufficient scale to suggest the conception of a great society developing its life under modern conditions. For Goethe, who was to pass most of his days in a town of some 7,000 inhabitants, and to whom no form of human activity was indifferent, it was a fortunate destiny that he did not, like Herder, pass his most receptive years in a petty village remote from the movements of the great world.[4] In these years he was able to accumulate a store of observations and experiences which laid a solid foundation for all his future thinking.

If Goethe was fortunate in the place of his birth, was he equally fortunate in its date (1749)? He has himself given the most explicit of answers to the question. In a remarkable paper, written at the age of forty-six, he has described the conditions under which he and his contemporaries produced their works in the different departments of literature. The paper had been called forth by a violent and coarse attack, which he described as *literarischer Sansculottismus*, on the writers of the period, and with a testiness unusual with him he took up their defence. Under what conditions, he asks, do classical writers appear? Only, he answers, when they are members of a great nation and when great events are

moving that nation at a period in its history when a high state of culture has been reached by the body of its people. Only then can the writer be adequately inspired and find to his hand the materials requisite to the production of works of permanent value. But, at the epoch when he and his contemporaries entered on their career, none of these conditions existed. There was no German nation, there was no standard of taste, no educated public opinion, no recognised models for imitation; and in these circumstances Goethe finds the explanation of the shortcomings of the generation of writers to which he belonged.

On the truth of these conclusions Goethe's adventures as a literary artist are the all-sufficient commentary. From first to last he was in search of adequate literary forms and of worthy subjects; and, as he himself admits, he not unfrequently went astray in the quest. On his own word, therefore, we may take it that under other conditions he might have produced more perfect works than he has actually given us. Yet the world has had its compensations from those hampering conditions under which his creative powers were exercised. In the very attempt to grope his way to the most expressive forms of artistic presentation all the resources of his mind found their fullest play. It is in the variety of his literary product, unparalleled in the case of any other poet, that lies its inexhaustible interest; between *Götz von Berlichingen* and the Second Part of *Faust* what a range of themes and forms does he present for his readers' appreciation! And to the anarchy of taste and judgment that prevailed when Goethe began his literary career we in great measure owe another product of his manifold activities. He has been denied a place in the

very first rank of poets, but by the best judges he is regarded as the greatest master of literary and artistic criticism. But, had he found fixed and acknowledged standards in German national literature and art, there would have been less occasion for his searching scrutiny of the principles which determine all art and literature. As it was, he was led from the first to direct his thoughts to the consideration of these principles; and the result is a body of reflections, marking every stage of his own development, on life, literature, and art, which, in the opinion of critics like Edmond Scherer and Matthew Arnold, gave him his highest claim to the consideration of posterity.

As human lot goes, Goethe was fortunate in his home and his home relations, though in the case of both there were disadvantages which left their mark on him throughout his later life. He was born in the middle-class, the position which, according to Schiller, is most favourable for viewing mankind as a whole, and, therefore, advantageous for a poet who, like Goethe, was open to universal impressions. Though his maternal grandfather was chief magistrate of Frankfort, and his father was an Imperial Councillor, the family did not belong to the *élite* of the city; Goethe, brilliant youth of genius though he was, was not regarded as an eligible match for the daughter of a Frankfort banker. It was the father who was the dominating figure in the home life of the family; and the relations between father and son emphasise the fact that the early influences under which the son grew up left something to be desired. Their permanent mutual attitude was misunderstanding, resulting from imperfect sympathy. "If"—so wrote Goethe in his sixty-fourth year regarding his father and himself

—"if, on his part as well as on the son's, a suggestion of mutual understanding had entered into our relationship, much might have been spared to us both. But that was not to be!" It is with dutiful respect but with no touch of filial affection that Goethe has drawn his father's portrait in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. As the father is there depicted, he is the embodiment of Goethe's own definition of a Philistine—one naturally incapable of entering into the views of other people.[5] Yet Goethe might have had a worse parent; for, according to his lights, the father spared no pains to make his son an ornament of his generation. Strictly conscientious, methodical, with a genuine love of art and letters, he did his best to furnish his son with every accomplishment requisite to distinction in the walk of life for which he destined him—the profession of law, in which he had himself failed through the defects of his temperament. Directly and indirectly, he himself took in hand his son's instruction, but without appreciation or consideration of the affinities of a mind with precociously developed instincts. The natural result of the father's pedantic solicitude was that his son came to see in him the schoolmaster rather than the parent. Knowledge in abundance was conveyed, but of the moulding influence of parental sympathy there was none. What dubious consequences followed from these relations of father and son we shall afterwards see.

Goethe's mother has found a place in German hearts which is partly due to the portrait which her son has drawn of her, but still more to the impression conveyed by her own recorded sayings and correspondence. Goethe's tone, when he speaks of his father, is always cool and critical; of his mother, on

the other hand, he speaks with the feelings of a grateful son, conscious of the deep debt he owed to her.[6] His relations to her in his later years have exposed him to severe animadversion, but their mutual relations in these early years present the most attractive chapter in the record of his private life. Married at the age of seventeen to a husband approaching forty, the mother, as she herself said, stood rather as an elder sister than as a parent to her children. And her own character made this relation a natural one. An overflowing vitality, a lively and never-failing interest in all the details of daily life, and a temperament responsive to every call, kept her perennially young, and fitted her to be the companion of her children rather than the sober helpmate of such a husband as Herr Goethe.[7] How, by her faculty of story-telling, she ministered to the side of her son's nature which he had inherited from herself Goethe has related with grateful appreciation. But he owed her a larger debt. It was her spirit pervading the household that brought such happiness into his early home life as fell to his lot. A commonplace mother and a prosaic father would have created an atmosphere which, in the case of a child with Goethe's impressionable nature, would permanently have affected his outlook on life. For the future poet, the mother was the admirable nurse; she fed his fancy with her own; she taught him the art of making the most of life—a lesson which he never forgot; and she gave him her own sane and cheerful view of the uncontrollable element in human destiny. For the future man, however, we may doubt whether she was the best of mothers. Her education was meagre—a defect which her conscientious husband did his best to amend; and all her characteristics were fitted rather to evoke

affection than to inspire respect. Though her son always speaks of her with tender regard, his tone is that of an elder brother to a sister rather than of a son to a parent. She was herself conscious of her incompetence to discharge all the responsibilities of a mother which the character of the father made specially onerous. "We were young together," she said of herself and her son, and she confessed frankly that "she could educate no child." Thus between an unsympathetic father and a mother incapable of influencing the deeper springs of character, Goethe passed through childhood and boyhood without the discipline of temper and will which only the home can give. And the lack of this discipline is traceable in all his actions till he had reached middle life. Wayward and impulsive by nature, he yielded to every motive, whether prompted by the intellect or the heart, with an abandonment which struck his friends as the leading trait of his character. "Goethe," wrote one of them, "only follows his last notion, without troubling himself as to consequences," and of himself, when he was past his thirtieth year, he said that he was "as much a child as ever."

There was another member of the family of whom Goethe speaks with even warmer feeling than of his mother. This was his sister Cornelia, a year younger than himself, and destined to an unhappy marriage and an early death. Of the many portraits he has drawn in his Autobiography, none is touched with a tenderer hand and with subtler sympathy than that of Cornelia. Goethe does not imply that she permanently influenced his future development; for such influence she possessed neither the force of mind nor of character.[8] But to her even more than to the mother he came to owe such home happiness as he enjoyed in the hours of freedom from the

father's pedagogic discipline. She was his companion alike in his daily school tasks and his self-sought pleasures—the confidant and sharer of all his boyish troubles. To no other person throughout his long life did Goethe ever stand in relations which give such a favourable impression of his heart as his relation with Cornelia. The memory of her was the dearest which he retained of his early days; and the words in which he recalls her in his old age prove that she was an abiding memory to the end.

It was an advantage on which Goethe lays special stress that, outside his somewhat cramping home circle, he had a more or less intimate acquaintance with a number of persons, who by their different characters and accomplishments made lasting impressions on his youthful mind. The impressions must have been deep, since, writing in advanced age, he describes their personal appearance and their different idiosyncrasies with a minuteness which is at the same time a remarkable testimony to his precocious powers of observation. What is interesting in these intimacies as throwing light on Goethe's early characteristics is, that all these persons were of mature age, and all of them more or less eccentric in their habits and ways of thinking. "Even in God I discover defects," was the remark of one of them to his youthful listener—to whom he had been communicating his views on the world in general. In the company of these elders, with such or kindred opinions, Goethe was early familiarised with the variability of human judgments on fundamental questions. And he laid the experience to heart, for on no point in the conduct of life does he insist with greater emphasis than the folly of expecting others to think as ourselves.

The method of Goethe's education was not such as to compensate for the lack of moral discipline which has already been noted. With the exception of a brief interval, he received instruction at home, either directly from his father or from tutors under his superintendence. Thus he missed both the steady drill of school life and the influence of companions of his own age which might have made him more of a boy and less of a premature man.[9] It is Goethe's own expressed opinion that the object of education should be to foster tastes rather than to communicate knowledge. In this object, at least, his own education was perfectly successful; for the tastes which he acquired under his father's roof remained with him to the end. What strikes us in his course of study is its desultoriness and its comprehensiveness. At one time and another he gained an acquaintance with English, French, Italian, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. He read widely in history, secular and sacred, and in the later stage of his early studies he took up law at the express desire of his father. It was the aim of his father's scheme of education that accomplishments should form an essential part of it. So his son was taught music, drawing, dancing, riding, and fencing. But there was another side to Goethe's early training which, in his case, deserves to be specially emphasised. A striking characteristic of Goethe's writings is the knowledge they display of the whole range of the manual arts, and this knowledge he owed to the circumstances of his home. His father, a virtuoso with the means of gratifying his tastes, freely employed artists of all kinds to execute designs of his own conception; and, as part of his son's education, entrusted him with the superintendence of his commissions. Thus, in accordance with modern ideas, were combined in Goethe's training the

practical and the theoretical—a combination which is the distinguishing characteristic of his productive activity. Generally considered, we see that the course of his studies was such as in any circumstances he would himself have probably followed. Under no conditions would Goethe have been content to restrict himself to a narrow field of study and to give the necessary application for its complete mastery. As it was, the multiplicity of his studies supplied the foundation for the manifold productivity of his maturer years. In no branch of knowledge was he ever a complete master; he devoted a large part of his life to the study of Greek and Roman antiquity, yet he never acquired a scholar's knowledge either of Greek or Roman literature.[10] If on these subjects he has contributed many valuable reflections, it was due to the insight of genius which apprehends what passes the range of ordinary vision.

A striking fact in Goethe's account of his early years is the emphasis he lays on the religious side of his education. Judging from the length at which he treats the subject, indeed, we are bound to assume that in his own estimation religion was the most important element in his early training, and in the case of one who came eventually to be known as the "great Pagan" the fact is remarkable. Had he sat down to write the narrative of these years at an earlier period of his life—after his return, say, from his Italian journey—we may conceive that in his then anti-Christian spirit he would have put these early religious experiences in a somewhat different light, and would hardly have assigned to them the same importance. But when he actually addressed himself to tell the story of his development, he had passed out of his anti-Christian phase, and was fully convinced of the importance of religion in human

culture. Regarding this portion of his Autobiography, as regarding others, we may have our doubts as to how far his record is coloured by his opinions when he wrote it. Yet, after every reserve, there can be no question that religion engaged both his intellect and his emotions as a boy; and the fact is conclusive that religious instincts were not left out of his nature. [11]

There was nothing in the influence of his home that was specially fitted to awaken religious feeling or to occasion abnormal spiritual experiences. In religion as in everything else the father was a formalist, and such religious views as he held were those of the *Aufklärung*, for which all forms of spiritual emotion were the folly of unreason. Religion was a permanent and sustaining influence in the life of Goethe's mother, but her religion consisted simply in a cheerful acquiescence in the decrees of Providence. Of the soul's trials and sorrows, as they are recorded in the annals of the religious life, her nature was incapable, and she was always perfectly at ease in Zion. By his mother, therefore, the son could not be deeply moved to concern regarding his spiritual welfare, nor to make religion the all-engrossing subject of his thoughts and affections. There was one friend of the family, indeed, the Fräulein von Klettenberg (the *Schöne Seele* of *Wilhelm Meister*), in whom Goethe saw the exemplar of the religious life in its more ecstatic manifestations, but her special influence on him belongs to a later date. In accordance with the family rule he regularly attended church, but the homilies to which he listened were not of a nature to quicken his religious feelings, while the doctrinal instruction he received at home he has himself described as "nothing but a dry kind of morality." Against one article of the creed

taught him—the doctrine of original and inherited sin—all his instincts rebelled; and the antipathy was so compact with all his later thinking that we may readily believe that it manifested itself thus early. If we may accept his own account of his youthful religious experiences, he was already on the way to that *Ur-religion*, which was his maturest profession of faith, and which he held to be the faith of select minds in all stages of human history. Now, as at all periods of his life, it was the beneficent powers in nature that most deeply impressed him, and he records how in crude childish fashion he secretly reared an altar to these powers, though an unlucky accident in the oblation prevented him from repeating his act of worship.

Like other children, he was quick to see the inconsistency of the creed he was taught with the actual facts of experience. One event in his childhood, the earthquake of Lisbon, especially struck him as a confounding commentary on the accepted belief in the goodness of God; and the impression was deepened when in the following summer a violent thunder-storm played havoc with some of the most treasured books in his father's library. In all his soul's troubles, however, Goethe, according to his own account, found refuge in a world where questionings of the ways of Providence had never found an entrance. In the Old Testament, and specially in the Book of Genesis, with its picture of patriarchal life, he found a world which by engaging his feelings and imagination worked with tranquilising effect (*stille Wirkung*) on his spirit, distracted by his miscellaneous studies and his varied interests. Of all the elements that entered into his early culture, indeed, Goethe gives the first place to the Bible. "To it, almost alone," he expressly says,

"did I owe my moral education." To the Bible as an incomparable presentment of the national life and development of a people, and the most precious of possessions for human culture, Goethe bore undeviating testimony at every period of his life. It need hardly be said that his attitude towards the Bible was divided by an impassable gulf from the attitude of traditional Christianity. For Goethe it was a purely human production, the fortunate birth of a time and a race which in the nature of things can never be paralleled. What the Churches have found in it was not for him its inherent virtue. Even in his youth it was in its picturesque presentation of a primitive life that he found what satisfied the needs of his nature. The spiritual aspirations of the Psalms, the moral indignation of the prophets, found no response in him either in youth or manhood. His ideal of life was never that of the saints, but it was an ideal, as his record of his early religious experience shows, which had its roots in the nature which had been allotted him.

To certain events in his early life Goethe assigned a decisive influence on his future development. To the gift of a set of puppets by his grandmother he attributes his first awakened interest in the drama; and the extraordinary detail with which Wilhelm Meister describes his youthful absorption in the play of his puppets proves that in his Autobiography Goethe does not lay undue stress on the significance of the gift. To another event which occurred when he was entering his seventh year, he ascribes the origin of an attitude of mind which in his own opinion he did not overcome till his later years. In 1756 broke out the Seven Years' War, in the course of which there was a cleavage in German public opinion that disturbed the peace of families and set the nearest

relatives at bitter feud. Such was the case in the Goethe circle—the father passionately sympathising with Frederick; the maternal grandfather, Textor, the chief magistrate of Frankfort, as passionately taking the side of Maria Theresa. In this case the son's sympathies were those of his father, and in boyish fashion he made a hero of the king of Prussia, though, as he himself is careful to tell us, Prussia and its interests were nothing to him. It was to the pain he felt when his hero was defamed by the supporters of Austria that he traced that contempt of public opinion which he notes as a characteristic of the greater part of his manhood, yet we may doubt if any external event was needed to develop in him this special turn of mind. As his whole manner of thinking proves, it was neither in his character nor his genius to make a popular appeal like a Burns or a Schiller.[12] In his old age Goethe said of himself that he was conscious of an innate feeling of aristocracy which made him regard himself as the peer of princes; and we need no further explanation of his contempt of public opinion. Yet if the worship of heroes has the moulding influence which Carlyle ascribed to it, in Goethe's youthful admiration of Frederick this influence could not be wanting. To the end Frederick appeared to him one of those "demonic" personalities, who from time to time cross the world's stage, and whose action is as incalculable as the phenomena of the natural world. "When such an one passes to his rest, how gladly would we be silent," were his memorable words when the news of Frederick's death reached him during his Italian travels, and the remark proves how deeply and permanently Frederick's career had impressed him.

More easily realised is the direct influence on Goethe's youthful development of another event of

his boyhood. As a result of the Seven Years' War, 7,000 French troops took possession of Frankfort in the beginning of 1759, and occupied it for more than three years. In the ways of a foreign soldiery at free quarters the Frankforters saw a strange contrast to their own decorous habits of life, but the French occupation was brought more directly home to the Goethe household. To the disgust and indignation of the father, to whom as a worshipper of Frederick the French were objects of detestation, their chief officer, Count Thoranc, quartered in his own house. Goethe has told in detail the history of this invasion of the quiet household—the never-failing courtesy and considerateness of Thoranc, the abiding ill-humour of the father, the reconciling offices of the mother, exercised in vain to effect a mutual understanding between her husband and his unwelcome guest. As for Goethe himself, devoted to Frederick though he was, the presence of the French introduced him to a new world into which he entered with boyish delight. With the insatiable curiosity which was his characteristic throughout life, he threw himself into the pleasures and avocations of the novel society. Thoranc was a connoisseur in art, and gave frequent commissions to the artists of the town; and Goethe, already interested in art through his father's collections, found his opportunity in these tastes of Thoranc, who was struck by the boy's precocity and even took hints from his suggestions.

A theatre set up by the French was another source of pleasure and stimulus. The sight of the pieces that were acted prompted him to compose pieces of his own and led him to the study of the French classical drama. In the *coulisses*, to which he was admitted by special favour, he observed the ways of actors—an experience which supplied the materials for the

portraiture of the actor's life in *Wilhelm Meister*. A remark which he makes in connection with the French theatre is a significant commentary on his respective relations to his father and mother, and indicates the atmosphere of evasion which permanently pervaded the household. It was against the will of his father, but with the connivance of his mother, that he paid his visits to the theatre and cultivated the society of the actors, and it was only by the consideration that his son's knowledge of French was thus improved that the practical father was reconciled to the delinquency. The direct results of his intercourse with the French soldiery on Goethe's development were at once abiding and of high importance. It extended his knowledge of men and the world, and, more specifically, it gave him that interest in French culture and that insight into the French mind which he possessed in a degree beyond any of his contemporaries.

But the most notable experience of these early years under his father's roof still remains to be mentioned. When he was in his fourteenth year, Goethe fell in love—the first of the many similar experiences which were to form the successive crises of his future life. There can be little doubt that in his narrative of this his first love there is to the full as much "poetry" as "truth"; but there also can be as little doubt that all the circumstances attending it made his first love a turning-point in his life. It is a peculiarity of all Goethe's love adventures that between him and the successive objects of his affections there was always some bar which made a regular union impossible or undesirable. So it was in the case of the girl whom he calls Gretchen, and of whom we know nothing except what he chose to tell us. He made her acquaintance through his association with a set of

youths of questionable character whom we are surprised to find as the chosen companions of the son of an Imperial Councillor. Of all Goethe's loves this was the one that was accompanied by the least pleasant complications and the most painful of disillusions. Through his intercourse with Gretchen's intimates he was led to recommend one of them for a municipal post in Frankfort—a post which he did not hold long before he was found guilty of embezzlement and defalcation. The discovery was disastrous to Goethe's relations with Gretchen, and the disaster involved an experience of conflicting emotions which produced a crisis in his inner life. He had been rudely awakened to mistrust of mankind, and it was an awakening which, as he has himself emphasised, influenced all his thinking and feeling for many years to come. He had lived in a dream of phantasy and passion, and he learned to the shock of his whole nature that the object of his dreams had never at any moment regarded him otherwise than as an interesting boy whose talents and connections made him a desirable acquaintance. In the strained and morbid condition of his body and mind, which was the result of his disillusion, we see an experience which was often to be repeated in his maturer years, and which points to elements in his nature which were ever ready to pass beyond his control. As in the case of all his subsequent experiences of the same nature, he finally regained self-mastery, but a revolution had been accomplished in him as the result of the struggle. His boyhood was at an end, and it is with the consciousness of awakened manhood that he now looks out upon life. More than once in his future career a similar transformation was to be repeated—a great passion followed by a new direction of his activities, involving a saving

breach with the past.

Goethe's father had determined from the beginning that his only son should follow the profession of law, in which, as we have seen, he had himself failed owing to his peculiarities of mind and temper. In this determination there was no consideration of the predilections of his son, and in this fact lay the permanent cause of their estrangement. The father's choice of a university for his son was another illustration of their divergent sympathies and interests. Left to his own choice, the son would have preferred the university of Göttingen as his place of study, but his father ruled that Leipzig, his own university, was the proper school for the future civilian. In connection with his departure for Leipzig Goethe makes two confessions which are a striking commentary on the conditions of his home life in Frankfort. He left Frankfort, he tells us, with joy as intense as that of a prisoner who has broken through his gaol window, and finds himself a free man. And this repugnance to his native city, as a place where he could not expand freely, remained an abiding feeling with him. The burgher life of Frankfort, he wrote to his mother during his first years at Weimar, was intolerable to him, and to have made his permanent home there would have been fatal to the fulfilment of every ideal that gave life its value. His other confession is a still more significant illustration of the vital lack of sympathy between father and son. He left Frankfort, he says, with the deliberate intention of following his own predilections and of disregarding the express wish of his father that he should apply himself specifically to the study of law. Only his sister Cornelia was made the confidant of his secret intention, and apparently no attempt was made to effect even a compromise between the aims

of the father and those of the son. Plain and direct dealing was a marked characteristic of Goethe at every period of his life; that he should thus have deceived his father in a matter that lay nearest his heart is therefore the final proof that father and son were separated by a gulf which could not be bridged. As it was, in the course of life which Goethe was to follow in Leipzig we may detect a certain defiant heedlessness which points to an uneasy consciousness of duty ignored.

We have it on Goethe's own word that with his departure for Leipzig begins that self-directed development which he was to pursue with the undeviating purpose and the wonderful result which make him the unique figure he is in the history of the human spirit. What, we may inquire, as he is now at the commencement of this career unparalleled, so far as our knowledge goes, in the case of any other of the world's greatest spirits—what were the specific characteristics, visible in him from the first, which gave the pledge and promise of this astonishing career? In his case, we can say with certainty, was fully verified the adage, that the boy is father of the man. Alike in internal and external traits we note in him as a boy characteristics which were equally marked in the mature man. In his demeanour, he himself tells us, there was a certain stiff dignity which excited the ridicule of his companions. It was in his nature even as a boy, he also tells us, to assume airs of command: one of his own acquaintance and of his own years said of him, "We were all his lacqueys." Here we have in anticipation the aged Goethe whose Jove-like presence put Heine out of countenance; the god "cold, monosyllabic," of Jean Paul. But behind the stiff demeanour, in youth as in age, there was the

mercurial temperament, the *etwas unendlich Rührendes*, which made him a problem at all periods of his life even to those who knew him most intimately. He has himself noted his youthful reputation for eccentricity, "his lively, impetuous, and excitable temper"; and this was the side of him that most impressed his associates till he was past middle age. In boyhood, also, as even in his latest years, he was subject to bursts of violence in which he lost all self-control. When attacked by three of his schoolmates, he fell upon them with the fury of a wild beast, and mastered all three. On the loss of Gretchen he "wept and raved," and, as the result of his morbid sensibility, his constitution, always abnormally influenced by his emotions, was seriously impaired. Here we have the *Weiblichkeit*, the feminine strain in his nature, which was noted by Schiller, and which explains the shrinking from all forms of pain which he inherited from his mother.

More than once these emotional elements in his nature were to bring him near to moral shipwreck, and it was doubtless the consciousness of such a possibility in his own case that explains his haunting interest in the character and career of Byron. But underneath his "chameleon" temperament (the expression is his own[13]) there was a solid foundation, the lack of which was the ruin of Byron. Goethe has himself told us what this saving element in him was. It was a strenuousness and seriousness implanted in him by nature (*von der Natur in mich gelegter Ernst*), which, he says, "exerted its influence [on him] at an early age, and showed itself more distinctly in after years." This side of his complex nature did not escape the notice even of his youthful contemporaries. "Goethe," wrote one of them from Leipzig, "is as great a philosopher as ever." Here

again we see in the boy the father of the man. Increasingly, as the years went on, his innate tendency to reflection asserted itself, till at length in his latest period it so completely dominated him that the sage proved too much for the artist.

If the character of the boy foreshadowed that of the man, so did the tendencies of his genius the lines they were afterwards to follow. "Turn a man whither he will," he remarks in his Autobiography, "he will always return to the path marked out for him by nature," and his own development signally illustrates the truth of the remark. From his earliest youth, he tells us, he had "a passion for investigating natural things"; and towards middle life his interest in physical science became so absorbing as for many years to stifle his creative faculty. But in the retrospect of his life as a whole he had no doubt as to the supreme bent of his genius. The "laurel crown of the poet" was the goal of his youthful ambition, and the last bequest he made to posterity was the Second Part of *Faust*. Among the miscellaneous intellectual interests of his boyhood poetry evidently held the chief place, and, partly out of his own inspiration and partly at the suggestion of others, he diligently tried his hand at different forms of poetical composition. Yet, if we may judge from his most notable boyish piece—*Poetische Gedanken über die Höllenfahrt Jesu Christi*—there have been more "timely-happy spirits" than Goethe. Not, indeed, as we shall see, till his twentieth year, the age when, according to Kant, the lyric poet is in fullest possession of his genius, does his verse attain the distinctiveness of original creative power. [14]

CHAPTER II

STUDENT IN LEIPZIG

OCTOBER, 1765—SEPTEMBER, 1768

As we follow the life of Byron, it has been said, we seem to hear the gallop of horses,[15] and we are conscious of a similar tumult as we follow the career of Goethe from the day he entered Leipzig till the close of the "mad Weimar times," when he was approaching his thirtieth year. *Jugend ist Trunkenheit ohne Wein*, he says in his *West-Ostlicher Divan*, and, when he wrote the words, he may well have had specially in view the three whirling years he spent in Leipzig. "If one did not play some mad pranks in youth," he said on another occasion, "what would one have to think of in old age?" Assuredly during these Leipzig years Goethe played a sufficient number of pranks to supply him with materials for edifying retrospection.

Our difficulty in connection with these three years is to seize the essential lineaments in a character so full of contradictions that it eludes us at every turn, and has presented to each of his many biographers a problem which each has sought to solve after his own fashion. Of materials for forming our conclusions there is certainly no lack. In his Autobiography he has related in detail, even to tediousness, the events and experiences of his life in Leipzig. Contemporary testimony, also, we have in abundance. We have the letters of friends who freely

wrote their impressions of him, and from his own hand we have poems which record the passing feelings of the hour; we have two plays which reveal moods and experiences more or less permanent; and above all we have a considerable number of his own letters addressed to his sister and different friends, all of which, it may be said, appear to give genuine expression to the promptings of the moment. The materials for forming our judgment, therefore, are even superabundant, but in their very multiplicity lies our difficulty. The narrative in the Autobiography doubtless gives a correct general outline of his life in Leipzig and of its main results for his general development, but its cool, detached tone leaves a totally inadequate impression of the froward youth, torn to distraction by conflicting passions and conflicting ideals. With the contemporary testimonies our difficulties are of another kind. The testimonies of his friends regarding his personal traits are often contradictory, and equally so are his own self-revelations. On one and the same day he writes a letter which exhibits him as the helpless victim of his emotions, and another which shows him quite at his ease and master of himself. And he himself has warned us against taking his wild words too seriously. In a letter to his sister (September 27th, 1766), he expressly says: "As for my melancholy, it is not so deep as I have pictured it; there are occasionally poetical licences in my descriptions which exaggerate the facts."[16]

Fortunately or unfortunately, the town of Leipzig, which his father had chosen for his first free contact with life, was of all German towns the one where he could see life in its greatest variety. "In accursed Leipzig," he wrote after his three years' experience of

its distractions, "one burns out as quickly as a bad torch." Even the external appearance of the town was such as to suggest another world from that of Frankfort. In Frankfort the past overshadowed the present; while Leipzig, Goethe himself wrote, recording his first impressions of the place, "evoked no memories of bygone times." And if the exterior of the town suggested a new world, its social and intellectual atmosphere intensified the impression. "Leipzig is the place for me," says Frosch in the Auerbach Cellar Scene in *Faust*; "it is a little Paris, and gives its folks a finish."[17] The prevailing tone of Leipzig society was, in point of fact, deliberately imitated from the pattern set to Europe by the Court of France. In contrast to the old-fashioned formality of Frankfort, the Leipziger aimed at a graceful *insouciance* in social intercourse and light, cynical banter in the interchange of his ideas on every subject, trifling or serious. In such a society all free, spontaneous expression of emotions or opinions was a mark of rusticity, as Goethe was not long in discovering. The true Leipziger was, of course, a Gallio in religion, and Goethe, who, on leaving his father's house, had resolved to cut all connection with the Church, found no difficulty in carrying out his intention during his residence in the little Paris. But, so far as Goethe was concerned, the most notable circumstance connected with Leipzig was that it had long been the literary centre of Germany. There the most eminent representatives of literature had made their residence, and thence had gone forth the dominant influences which had given the rule to all forms of literary production—poetry and criticism alike. At the time when Goethe took up his residence in the town the two most prominent German men of letters, Gellert and Gottsched (the latter dubbed the

"Saxon Swan" by Frederick the Great) were its most distinguished ornaments, though the rising generation was beginning to question both the intrinsic merit of their productions and the principles of taste which they had proclaimed. What these principles were and how Goethe stood related to them we shall presently see.

Into this world Goethe was launched when he had just turned his sixteenth year—"a little, odd, coddled boy," and, as he elsewhere describes himself, with a tendency to morbid fancies. If he had come to Leipzig with the resolve to fulfil his father's intentions, his course was clearly marked out for him. He would diligently sit at the feet of the professors of law in the university, and at the end of three years he would return to Frankfort with the attainments requisite to make him a future ornament of the legal profession. But, as we have seen, he had other schemes in his head than the course which his father had prescribed for him, and, if we are to accept his own later testimony, in forming these schemes he was but following the deepest instincts of his nature. "Anything," he exclaimed to his secretary Riemer, when he was approaching his sixtieth year, "anything but an enforced profession! That is contrary to all my instincts. So far as I can, and so long as the humour lasts, I will carry out in a playful fashion what comes in my way. So I unconsciously trifled in my youth; so will I consciously continue to do to the end."[18] The step he now took is a curious illustration of the solemn self-importance which was one of his characteristics as a youth. To the professor of history and law of all people he chose to announce his intention of studying *belles lettres* instead of jurisprudence. The professor sensibly pointed out to him the folly and impropriety of his conduct in view

of his father's wishes; and his counsels, seconded by the friendly advice of his wife, Frau Böhme, turned the youthful aspirant from his purpose for a time. On his own testimony he now became a model student, and was "as happy as a bird in a wood." He heard lectures on German history from Böhme, though history was distasteful to him at every period of his life; lectures on literature from the popular Gellert, on style from Professor Clodius, and on physics, logic, and philosophy from other professors.

But alike by temperament and previous training, Goethe was indisposed to profit by professorial prelections, however admirable. He had brought with him to the university a store of miscellaneous information which deprived them of the novelty they might have for the average listener. "Application," he says, moreover, "was not my talent, since nothing gave me any pleasure except what came to me of itself." So it was that by the close of his first semester his attendance at lectures became a jest, and the professors the butt of his wit. It was characteristic that he found the prelections on philosophy and logic specially tedious and distasteful. Of God and the world he thought he knew as much as his teacher, and the scholastic analysis of the processes of thought seemed to him only the deadening of the faculties which he had received from nature. Of these dreary hours in the lecture-rooms the biting comments of Faust and Mephistopheles on university studies in general are the lively reminiscence.

But while he was putting in a perfunctory attendance at lectures, his education was proceeding in another school—the school which, as in his after years he so insistently testified, affords the only real discipline for life—the world of real men and women.[19] And

the lessons of this school he took in with a zest that well illustrates what he called his "chameleon" nature. Within a year the "little, odd, coddled boy" who had left his father's house was transformed into a fashionable Leipzig youth who went even beyond his models. His home-made suit, which had passed muster in Frankfort, but which excited ridicule in Leipzig, was exchanged for a costume which went to the other extreme of dandyism. His inner man underwent a corresponding transformation, and, as was so often to be the case with him, it was a woman who was the efficacious instrument of the change. We have just seen how Frau Böhme seconded her husband's attempts to dissuade him from abandoning his legal studies, but her good offices did not end there. A woman of cultivated mind and considerable literary attainments, she evidently saw the promise of the raw Frankfort youth, and, with a feminine tact, to which Goethe bore grateful testimony, she set herself to correct his manners and his tastes. He had brought with him his Frankfort habits of speech, and these under protest he was forced to give up for the modish forms of the smooth-speaking Leipzigers. [20] Before Frau Böhme took him in hand, he assures us, he was not an ill-mannered lad, but she impressed on him the need of cultivating the external graces of social intercourse and even of acquiring a certain skill in the fashionable games of the day—an accomplishment, however, which he never succeeded in attaining. More important for his future development was Frau Böhme's influence on his literary tastes. As was his habit among his friends, he would declaim to her passages from his favourite poets, and she, "an enemy to all that was trivial, feeble, and commonplace," would unsparingly point out their essential inanity. When he ventured to

recite his own poetical attempts, her criticism was equally unsparing. The discipline was sharp, but for the "coddled" boy, who had been regarded at home as a youthful prodigy, it was entirely wholesome. Yet, if we may judge from a description of him some ten months after his arrival in Leipzig, the chastening does not appear to have lessened his buoyant self-confidence. The description is from the hand of a comrade of his own in Frankfort, Horn by name, the son of a former chief magistrate of the city. Horn, like Goethe, had come to study in Leipzig, and on his arrival there, 1766, he thus (August, 1766) records his impressions of Goethe to a common friend: "If you only saw him, you would be either furious with rage or burst with laughing. It is beyond me to understand how anyone can change so quickly. Besides being arrogant, he is also a dandy, and his clothes, though fine, are in such ridiculous taste that they attract the attention of the whole university. [21] But he does not mind that a bit, and it is useless to tell him of his follies.... He has acquired a gait which is simply intolerable. Could you only see him!" Such was Horn's first impression of his former comrade, but it is right to say that a few months later he could tell the same correspondent that they had not lost a friend in Goethe, who had still the same good heart and was as much a philosopher and a moralist as ever.

In his second letter Horn gives a singular reason for the preposterous airs which Goethe had lately put on. Goethe, wrote Horn, had fallen in love with a girl "beneath him in rank," and his antics were assumed to disguise the fact from his friends who might report it to his father. Goethe's relations to this girl were to be his liveliest experience in Leipzig, and an

experience frequently to be repeated at different periods of his life. Like his other adventures of the same nature, it was to supply him with a fund of emotions and reflections which at a future day were to serve him as literary capital. The tale of his passion, if passion it was, is, therefore, an essential part of his biography, both as a man and a literary artist.

The girl in question was Käthchen (or, as Goethe calls her in his Autobiography, Ännchen) Schönkopf, the daughter of a wineseller and lodging-house keeper in Leipzig, whose wife, we are informed, belonged to a "patrician" family in Frankfort. As described by Horn, she was "well-grown though not tall, with a round, pleasant face, though not particularly pretty, and with an open, gentle, and engaging air"; and in a letter to his sister Goethe gives the further information that she had a "good heart, not bewildered with too much reading," and that her spelling was dubious. And it may be noted in passing that Goethe apparently had a preference for women who were not sophisticated with letters, as was notably shown in the case of the woman whom he eventually made his wife.

It was on April 26th, 1766, that he first made the declaration of his passion, so that, when Horn wrote, we are to suppose that its course was in full tide.[22] But now, as always, Goethe had room for two objects in his affections. On October 1st, 1766, he wrote letters to two friends, in the second of which he expressed his passion for Käthchen, and in the first an equally ardent emotion for another maiden who had crossed his path in Frankfort.[23] Goethe's confidant throughout his relations with Käthchen was one of those peculiar persons whom we meet

with in following his career. He was one Behrisch, now residing in Leipzig in the capacity of tutor to a young German count. In his Autobiography Goethe has given a large place to Behrisch, who, as there depicted, comes before us as an accomplished man of the world, something of a *roué*, and a humorist in the old English sense of the word. He never appeared without his periwig, invariably wore a suit of grey, and was never seen in public without his sword, hat under arm. Of a caustic wit, of considerable literary attainments, and approaching his thirtieth year, he had evidently an influence on Goethe which was not wholly for good. He took a genuine interest in Goethe's literary efforts, gave him good advice on points of style, and dissuaded him from hasty publication. On the other hand, it was under his influence that Goethe began to assume the tone and airs of a Don Juan, which are an unpleasant characteristic of his recently published correspondence with Behrisch. It is in this correspondence that we have the record of Goethe's dallyings with Käthchen, and, take it as we may, the record is as vivid a presentment as we could wish of a nature as complex in its emotions as it was steadfast in its central bent.

The letters to Behrisch begin in October, 1766, and present Goethe in the light of a happy lover. There is an assiduous rival, but his addresses are coldly received.[24] In an ecstasy of delight, after a four hours' *tête-a-tête* with Käthchen, he treats Behrisch to some lines of English verse which may be produced here as exhibiting the state of his feelings and the extent of his acquaintance with the English language: —

What pleasure, God! of like a flame to born,
A virteous fire, that ne'er to vice kan turn.
What volupty! when trembling in my arms,
The bosom of my maid my bosom warmeth!
Perpetual kisses of her lips o'erflow,
In holy embrace mighty virtue show.

In letters written to his sister Cornelia about the same date, however, we see another side of his life in Leipzig. He has been excluded from the society in which he was formerly received, and he assigns as reasons that he is following the counsels of his father in refusing to engage in play, and that he cannot avoid showing a sense of his superiority in taste which gives offence. But, as we learn that Behrisch was also excluded from the same society, and that he was dismissed from the charge of his pupils on the ground of his loose life, we may infer that Goethe does not state all the reasons for his own social ostracism. [25]

So things stood with him in October, 1766, and it is not till the following May that we hear of him again through his correspondence. In a letter to Cornelia written in that month he excuses himself for his long neglect of her. He has been busy, he has been ill, and the spring has come late. In this letter he writes of Käthchen as follows: "Among my acquaintances who are alive (he has just mentioned the death of Frau Böhme) the little Schönkopf does not deserve to be forgotten. She is a very good girl, with an uprightness of heart joined to agreeable *naïveté*, though her education has been more severe than good. She looks after my linen and other things when it is necessary, for she knows all about these matters, and is pleased to give me the benefit of her knowledge; and I like her well for that. Am I not a

bit of a scamp, seeing I am in love with all these girls? Who could resist them when they are good; for as for beauty, that does not touch me; and, indeed, all my acquaintances are more good than beautiful."[26] This is not the tone of an ardent lover speaking of his mistress, and it is evident that Cornelia was not the confidant of his real relations to Käthchen, which, indeed, would have been as distasteful to her as to their father. In another letter, addressed to her in the following August, he is not more frank. There he tells her that Annette is now his muse, and that, as Herodotus names the books of his History after the nine muses, so he has given the name of Annette to a collection of twelve poetical pieces, magnificently copied in manuscript.[27] But, he significantly adds, Annette had no more to do with his poetry than the Muses had to do with the History of Herodotus.[28] To what extent this statement expressed the truth we shall presently see.

In October, 1767, Goethe resumed his correspondence with Behrisch, and it is in this part of it that we have the fullest revelation of his state of mind during the last year of his residence in Leipzig. With the exception of occasional digressions these letters are solely concerned with his relations to Käthchen, and their outpourings afterwards received their faithful echo in the incoherences of Werther. Here is the beginning of a letter to Behrisch (October 13th), in which he described his feelings as evoked by the appearance of two rivals for the favours of Käthchen. "Another night like this, Behrisch, and, in spite of all my sins, I shan't have to go to hell. You may have slept peacefully, but a jealous lover, who has drunk as much champagne as is necessary to put his blood in a pleasant heat and to inflame his imagination to the highest point! At first I could not

sleep, I tossed about in my bed, sprang up, raved; then I grew weary and fell asleep." And he proceeds to relate a wild dream in which Käthchen was the distracting image; and he concludes: "There you have Annette. She is a cursed lass!"[29] Yet on the same day or the day following he could thus describe his mode of life in a letter to his sister: "It is very philosophical," he writes; "I have given up concerts, comedies, riding and driving, and have abandoned all societies of young folks who might lead me into more company. This will be of great advantage to my purse."[30] Very different is the picture of his mode of life in his subsequent letters to Behrisch at the same period. If we are to take him literally, it was the life of a veritable Don Juan who had learned all the lessons of his instructor. "Do you recognise me in this tone, Behrisch?" he writes; "it is the tone of a conquering young lord.... It is comic. Aber ohne zu schwören ich unterstehe mich schon ein Mädgen zu verf—wie Teufel soll ich's nennen. Enough, Monsieur, all this is but what you might have expected from the aptest and most diligent of your scholars."[31] That all this was not mere bravado is distinctly suggested even in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, where the wild doings of Leipzig are so decorously draped.

Goethe knew from the first that he could never make Käthchen his wife, and that sooner or later his lovemaking must come to an end. The end came in the spring of 1768 after two years' philandering which had not been all happiness. In a letter to Behrisch he thus relates the *dénouement*: "Oh, Behrisch," he writes, "I have begun to live! Could I but tell you the whole story! I cannot; it would cost me too much. Enough—we have separated, we are happy.... Behrisch, we are living in the pleasantest,

friendliest intercourse.... We began with love and we end with friendship."[32] Goethe makes one of his characters say that estranged lovers, if they only manage things well, may still remain friends, and the remark was prompted by more than one experience of his own.

When he was past his seventieth year, Goethe made a remark to his friend, Chancellor von Müller, which is applicable to every period of his life: "In the hundred things which interest me," he said, "there is always one which, as chief planet, holds the central place, and meanwhile the remaining Quodlibet of my life circles round it in many-changing phases, till each and all succeed in reaching the centre." Even in these distracted Leipzig years the mental process thus described is clearly visible. Neither Goethe's loves nor his other dissipations ever permanently dulled the intellectual side of his nature. While he was writing morbid letters to Behrisch, he was directing the studies of his sister with all the seriousness of a youthful pedagogue. Though he neglected the lectures of his professors, he was assimilating knowledge on every subject that appealed to his natural instincts. In truth, all the manifold activities of his later years were foreshadowed during his sojourn in Leipzig, as, indeed, they had already been foreshadowed during his boyhood in Frankfort.

As in Frankfort, he took in knowledge equally from men, books, and things.[33] In the house of a Leipzig citizen, a physician and botanist, he met a society of medical men, and he records how his attention was directed to an entirely new field through listening to their conversation. Now, apparently for the first time, he heard the names of Haller, Buffon, and

Linnæus, the last of whom he, in later years, named with Spinoza and Shakespeare as one of the chief moulding forces of his life. Through the influence and example of other men he intermittently practised etching, drawing, and engraving—all arts in which he retained a lifelong interest. But among all the persons in Leipzig who influenced him Goethe gave the first place to Friedrich Oeser, director of the academy of drawing in the city. Oeser was about fifty years of age, jovial in disposition, and an experienced man of the world. Though as an artist he is now held in little regard, his reputation was great in his own day,[34] and he had a reflected glory in being the friend of Winckelmann, who was reputed to have profited by his teaching in art. Under the inspiration of Oeser Goethe's interest in the plastic arts in general, which had received its first impulse at home, became a permanent preoccupation for the remainder of his life. He took regular lessons in drawing from Oeser, made acquaintance with all the collections, public and private, to be found in Leipzig, and even made a secret visit to the galleries in Dresden, where, he tells us, he gave his exclusive attention to the works of the great Dutch masters. As was always his habit, Goethe generously acknowledged his obligations to Oeser. "Who among all my teachers, except yourself," he afterwards wrote on his return to Frankfort, "ever thought me worthy of encouragement? They either heaped all blame or all praise upon me, and nothing can be so destructive of talent.... You know what I was when I came to you, and what when I left you: the difference is your work ... you have taught me to be modest without self-depreciation, and to be proud without presumption."[35] And elsewhere he declares that the great lesson he had learned from

Oeser was that the ideal of beauty is to be found in "simplicity and repose." But the main interest of Goethe's intercourse with Oeser in connection with his general development is that it strengthened an illusion from which he did not succeed in freeing himself till near his fortieth year—the illusion that nature had given him equally the gifts of the painter and the poet. Many hours of the best years of his life were to be spent in laboriously practising an art in which he was doomed to mediocrity; and it must remain a riddle that one, who like Goethe was so curiously studious of his own self-development, should so long and so blindly have misunderstood his own gifts.[36]

It may partly explain his addiction to art that the poetical productions which he had brought from Frankfort, and which had been applauded by the circle of his friends there, did not meet with the approval of the critics in Leipzig. We have seen how sharply Frau Böhme commented on their shortcomings, but he was specially disheartened by the severe criticism passed on one of his poems by Clodius, the professor of literature. "I am cured of the folly of thinking myself a poet,"[37] he wrote to his sister about a year after his arrival in Leipzig. Some six months later he writes to her in a more hopeful spirit: "Since I am wholly without pride, I may trust my inner conviction, which tells me that I possess some of the qualities required in a poet, and that by diligence I may even become one."[38] In his Autobiography and elsewhere Goethe has spoken at length of the disadvantages under which youthful geniuses laboured at the period when he began his literary career.[39] As Germany then existed, there was no national feeling to inspire great themes, no standard of taste, and no worthy models for

imitation. There was, indeed, no lack of literature on all subjects; Kant speaks sarcastically of "the deluge of books with which our part of the world is inundated every year." But the fatal defects of the poetry then produced was triviality and the "wateriness" of its style. Yet it was during the years that Goethe spent in Leipzig that there appeared a succession of works which mark a new departure in German literature. In 1766 Herder, who was subsequently to exercise such a profound influence over Goethe, published his *Fragments on Modern German Literature*; in the same year appeared Lessing's *Laokoon*, which, in Goethe's own words, transported himself and his contemporaries "out of the region of pitifully contracted views into the domain of emancipated thought"; and in 1767 Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm*, Germany's "first national drama." Greatly as Goethe was impressed by both of these works of Lessing, however, he was not mature enough to profit by them[40]; and, in point of fact, all the work, poems and plays, which he produced during his Leipzig period, is solely inspired by the French models which had so long dominated German literature.

Considering his other manifold preoccupations, the amount of Goethe's literary output during his three years in Leipzig is sufficient evidence that his poetic instincts remained the dominant impulses of his nature. He sprinkled his letters to his friends with poems in German, French, and English, and he composed twenty lyrics which were subsequently published in the autumn of 1769 under the title of *Neue Lieder*[41]; and two plays, entitled *Die Laune des Verliebten* and *Die Mitschuldigen*. The biographic interest of all these productions is the light which they throw on the transformation which Goethe had

undergone during his residence in Leipzig. In the poems he had written in Frankfort religion had been the predominant theme; in his Leipzig effusions it was love, and love in a sufficiently Anacreontic sense. Regarding the poetic merit of the *Neue Lieder* German critics are for the most part at one. With hardly an exception the love lyrics are mere imitations of French models; their style is as artificial as their feeling; and they give little promise of the work that was to come from the same hand a few years later. As the expression of one of his lover's moods, one of them, reckoned the best in the collection, may here be given. It is entitled *Die schöne Nacht.*

Die schöne Nacht.

Nun verlass' ich diese Hütte,
Meiner Liebsten Aufenthalt;
Wandle mit verhülltem Schritte
Durch den öden, finstern Wald.
Luna bricht durch Busch und Eichen,
Zephyr meldet ihren Lauf;
Und die Birken streun mit Neigen
Ihr den süssten Weihrauch auf.

Wie ergötz' ich mich im Kühlen
Dieser schönen Sommernacht!
O wie still ist hier zu fühlen
Was die Seele glücklich macht!
Lässt sich kaum die Wonne fassen,
Und doch wollt' ich, Himmel! dir
Tausend solcher Nächte lassen,
Gäb' mein Mädchen Eine mir.

The Beautiful Night.

Now I leave the cot behind me
Where my love hath her abode;
And I wander with veiled footsteps
Through the drear and darksome wood.
Luna's rays pierce oak and thicket
Zephyr heraldeth her way;
And for her its sweetest incense
Sheddeth every birchen spray.

How I revel in the coolness
Of this beauteous summer night!
Ah! how peaceful here the feeling
Of what makes the soul's delight,
Bliss wellnigh past comprehending!
Yet, O Heaven, I would to thee
Thousand nights like this surrender,
Gave my maiden one to me.

But it is in the two plays produced during this period that Goethe most fully reveals both his literary ideals and the essential traits of his own character. The first of the two, *Die Laune des Verliebten* ("The Lover's Caprices"), is based on his own relations to Käthchen Schönkopf, and is cast in the form of a pastoral drama, written in Alexandrines after the fashion of the time.[42] The theme is a satire on his own wayward conduct towards Käthchen, as he has depicted it in his Autobiography. The plot is of the simplest kind. Two pairs of lovers, Egle and Lamon, and Amine and Eridon, the first pair happy in their loves, the second unhappy, make up the characters of the piece. The leading part is taken by Egle, who is distressed at the misery of her friend Amine, occasioned by the jealous humours of her lover Eridon. Complications there are none, and the sole interest of the play consists in the vivacity of the

dialogues and in the arch mischief with which Egle eventually shames Eridon out of his foolish jealousy of his maiden, who is only too fondly devoted to him. What strikes us in the whole performance is that Goethe, if he was so madly in love with Käthchen as his letters to Behrisch represent him, should have been capable of writing it. From its playful humour and entirely objective treatment it might have been written by a good-natured onlooker amused at the spectacle of two young people trifling with feelings which neither could take seriously.

Equally objective is Goethe's handling of the very different theme of the other play, *Die Mitschuldigen* ("The Accomplices"),[43] and in this case the objectivity is still more remarkable in a youth who had not yet attained his twentieth year. This second piece belongs to the class of low comedy, and is as simple in construction as its companion. The scene is laid in an inn, and the characters are four in number: the Host, whose leading trait is insatiable curiosity; his daughter Sophia, represented as of easy virtue; Söller, her husband, a graceless scamp; and Alcestes, a former lover of Sophia, and for the time a guest in the inn. In the central scene of the play there come in succession to Alcestes' room in the course of one night Söller, who steals Alcestes' gold; the Host, to possess himself of a letter with the contents of which he has a burning curiosity to become acquainted; and Sophia by appointment with Alcestes. As father and daughter have caught sight of each other on their respective errands, each suspects the other of being the thief, and in a sorry scene the father, on the condition of being permitted to read the letter, which turns out to be a trivial note, informs Alcestes that Sophia is the delinquent. Finally, Söller, under the threat of a prick from Alcestes' sword, confesses

to the theft, and the piece ends with a mutual agreement to condone each other's delinquencies. [44] The play is not without humour, and the different characters are vivaciously presented, but the blindest admirers of the master may well regret, as they mostly have regretted, that such a work should have come from his hands. The most charitable construction we can put on the graceless production is that Goethe, out of his abnormal impressionability, for the time being deliberately assumed the tone of cynical indifference with which he had become familiar in his intercourse with his friend Behrisch.

In direct connection with the shorter poems which Goethe wrote in Leipzig, there is a passage in his Autobiography which has perhaps been more frequently quoted than any other, and which, according as we interpret it, must materially influence our judgment at once on his character and his genius. The passage is as follows: "And thus began that tendency of which, all my life through, I was never able to break myself; the tendency to transmute into a picture or a poem whatever gave me either pleasure or pain, or otherwise preoccupied me, and thus to arrive at a judgment regarding it, with the object at once of rectifying my ideas of things external to me and of calming my own feelings. This gift was in truth perhaps necessary to no one more than to me, whose temperament was continually tossing him from one extreme to another. All my productions proceeding from this tendency that have become known to the world are only fragments of a great confession which it is the bold attempt of this book to complete."

From the context of this passage it is to be inferred

that the habit which Goethe describes applied only to the occasional short poems which he threw off at the different periods of his life. But are we to infer that the account here given of Goethe's occasional poems applies to the passionate lyrics which a few years later he was to pour forth in such abundance? To a very different purport is another passage in the Autobiography, which is at the same time a striking commentary on Wordsworth's remark that Goethe's poetry was "not inevitable enough." "I had come," he there says, "to look upon my indwelling poetic talent altogether as a force of nature; the more so as I had always been compelled to regard outward nature as its proper object. The exercise of this poetic faculty might indeed be excited and determined by circumstances; but its most joyful and richest action was spontaneous—even involuntary. In my nightly vigils the same thing happened; so that I often wished, like one of my predecessors, to have a leathern jerkin made, and to get accustomed to writing in the dark, so as to be able to fix on paper all such unpremeditated effusions. It had so often happened to me that, after composing some snatch of poetry in my head, I could not recall it, that I would now hurry to my desk and, without once breaking off, write off the poem from beginning to end, not even taking time to straighten the paper, if it lay crosswise, so that the verses often slanted across the page. In such a mood I preferred to get hold of a lead pencil, because I could write most readily with it; whereas the scratching and spluttering of a pen would sometimes wake me from a poetic dream, confuse me, and so stifle some trifling production in its birth."[45]

Poetry produced as here described may certainly be regarded as part of the poet's "confession," but in the

circumstances of its origin it is a world apart from the poetry composed in the fashion described in the passage preceding. The poet here does not coolly say to himself: "Go to, I will make a poem to relieve my feelings"; he sings, to quote Goethe's own expression, "as the bird sings," out of the sheer fulness of his heart, which insists on immediate expression. [46] True it is that Goethe, like all other poets, frequently wrote under no immediate pressure of inspiration, but to affirm this of the highest efforts of his genius is at once to contradict his own testimony and to misinterpret the conditions under which genius produces its results.

CHAPTER III

AT HOME IN FRANKFORT

SEPTEMBER, 1768—APRIL, 1770

ON August 28th, 1768, Goethe left Leipzig after a residence of nearly three years. He had gone to Leipzig in the spirit of a prisoner released from his gaol; he left it in the spirit of one returning to durance. In his Autobiography he has described the depressing conditions under which he re-entered his father's house. In body and mind he had found that in "accursed Leipzig one burns out as quickly as a bad torch." In body he was a broken man. One night in the beginning of August he had been seized with a violent hemorrhage, and for some weeks his life

hung by a thread. In his Autobiography he assigns various reasons for his illness. As the result of an accident on his journey from Frankfort to Leipzig he had strained the ligaments of his chest, and the mischief was aggravated by a subsequent fall from his horse; he had suffered from the fumes of the acids he had inhaled in the process of etching; he had ruined his digestion by drinking coffee and heavy beer; and, in accordance with the precepts of Rousseau, he had adopted a *régime* which proved too severe for his enfeebled constitution. So he wrote in his old age, but his contemporary letters leave us in little doubt regarding the cause of his breakdown. He had, in fact, during the latter part of his sojourn in Leipzig lived the life of the average German student of his day. He had fought a duel, and had been wounded in the arm; he had drunk more than was good for him, and we have seen that he had followed other courses not conducive to his bodily health.

His mental condition was equally unsatisfactory. There was not a friend, he tells us, whom at one time or another he had not annoyed by his caprice, or offended by his "morbid spirit of contradiction" and sullen avoidance of intercourse. All through his life Goethe seems to have tried his friends by his variable humours,[47] but it was seldom that he completely alienated them, and he gratefully records how in his present stricken condition they rallied to his side, and put him to shame by their assiduous attentions. One of these friends, Langer by name, who had succeeded Behrisch as tutor to the young Count, he specially mentions as helping to give a new turn to his thoughts. Langer was religiously disposed, and found in Goethe, now in a mood to receive them, a sympathetic listener to his theological views. Under Langer's influence he resumed his youthful study of

the Bible—not in the Old Testament, however, but in the New, which he read, he tells us, with "emotion and enthusiasm." It was the beginning of a new phase in his life which was to last for about a year and a half, a phase in which religion, if we are to accept the testimony of his Autobiography, held the uppermost place in his thoughts.

It was with the feelings of "a shipwrecked seaman," he tells us, that he found himself again under his father's roof, though he characteristically adds that "he had nothing specially to reproach himself with." The atmosphere he found at home was not such as to put him in better spirits. Father, mother and daughter had been living in mutual misunderstanding during the whole period of the son's absence in Leipzig. Cornelia had been made the sole victim of her father's pedagogic discipline which had been partially alleviated when it was shared with her brother, and she had come to regard her over-anxious parent with a hardness which Goethe describes as having something dreadful (*fürchterliches*) in it. The arrival of Goethe could not improve the existing relations in the household. As in the time before his going to Leipzig, Cornelia drew to him as the only member of the family who sympathetically understood her, and she remained as obdurate as ever in her sullen attitude towards her father. Between Goethe himself and his father their former estrangement continued, and we are given to understand that during the year and a half he now spent under the paternal roof there was no cordial understanding regarding the son's pursuits and his future career.[48] Dissatisfied with his son, as from his point of view he had every reason to be, Herr Goethe nevertheless cherished a secret pride in his genius. With a paternal pride, which is even touching

in the circumstances, he carefully framed the drawings executed by his son, and collected and stitched together his letters from Leipzig.

As in the case of his Leipzig period, Goethe's reminiscent account of his present sojourn in Frankfort gives a somewhat different impression of his main interests from that conveyed by his contemporary letters. If we accept the testimony of his Autobiography, his attention was mainly turned to religion and to chemical and cabbalistical studies; from his correspondence, on the other hand, it would appear that his thoughts at least occasionally ran on subjects that had little to do with his spiritual welfare. At the same time, the apparent discrepancy need not imply self-contradiction. The correspondents to whom his letters were addressed were not persons specially interested in religion or chemistry or the cabbala, and, of all men, Goethe was least likely to be obsessed by any set of ideas to the exclusion of all others. There can be little doubt, indeed, that during his year and a half in Frankfort religion was a more predominant interest in his life than at any other period; and the fact is sufficiently explained by the circumstances in which he then found himself. From the condition both of his mind and body he was disposed to self-searching. Regret for the past was foreign to his nature; in his mature judgment, indeed, such a feeling was resolutely to be checked in the interest of healthy self-development. Yet in the retrospect of his Leipzig days it seems to have crossed his mind that he might have spent them more wisely. "O that I could recall the last two years and a half,"[49] he wrote to Käthchen Schönkopf, and he warns a male correspondent in Leipzig to "beware of dissoluteness."[50] And the state of his health during the greater part of this time in

Frankfort was such as to strengthen this mood. Immediately after his return from Leipzig he was threatened with pulmonary disease, and the state of his digestion became such as to alarm himself and his friends. On December 7th he was attacked by a violent internal pain, and for some days there were the gravest fears for his life. After two months' confinement to his room there was a partial recovery, but it was not till the spring of 1770 that his health was completely restored.

But the truth is that Goethe's temporary preoccupation with religion is only another illustration of his "chameleon" temperament. In gay Leipzig he had promptly taken on the ways of a man about town; now in Frankfort he found himself in a very different society, and he as promptly entered into the spirit of it. The circle of which he now became a member was a company of religious persons, mostly women, friends or acquaintances of his mother. Its most prominent member was that Fräulein von Klettenberg, already mentioned, a woman of high rank, culture, and refinement. To moral beauty of character in man or woman, Goethe, at all periods of his life, was peculiarly sensitive,[51] and in the Fräulein he saw a woman who combined at once the most winning graces of her sex and the virtues of a saint. For women of all ages and all types Goethe had always a singular attraction, and, though the Fräulein must have discerned that he could never be a son or brother in the spirit, she was profoundly interested in the wayward youth in whom she saw a brand that deserved to be plucked from the burning.

With a kind of half consent Goethe entered into the spirit of the pious circle; he even attended communion in spite of his unhappy memories of that

sacrament, and was present at a Synod of the Herrnhut Community to which Fräulein von Klettenberg belonged. Bound up with the Fräulein's religion was a curious interest in the occult powers of nature from the point of view of their relation to the human body. It is with evident irony that Goethe relates how in his own case the efficacy of these occult powers was tried. Among the members of the religious community was a mysterious physician who was credited with possessing certain medicines of peculiar virtue. He was believed to have in store one drug—a powerful salt—which he reserved only for the most dangerous cases, and regarding which, though they had never seen the result of its operation, the community spoke with bated breath. At the vehement request of his mother the mysterious medicine was administered to Goethe at the crisis of his malady, at the hour of midnight, and with all due solemnity. From that moment his illness took a favourable turn, and he steadily progressed towards recovery. "I need not say," is his comment, "how greatly this result strengthened and heightened our faith in our physician and our efforts to share such a treasure." Partly, therefore, out of his own insatiable curiosity and partly out of sympathy with his new friends, Goethe now betook himself to occult studies, and, in imitation of the Fräulein von Klettenberg, had a room fitted up with the necessary chemical apparatus. It was the first practical commencement of those scientific studies which were subsequently to occupy such a large part of his life. Along with his chemical experiments went the study of such visionaries in science as Paracelsus, Van Helmont, and others, but also of the great Boerhaave, whose *Institutes of Medicine and Aphorisms*, containing all that was then known of

medical theory, he "gladly stamped on his mind and memory."

To what extent are we to infer that Goethe really shared the religious views of the circle of pious persons with whom he was now living in daily contact? His own account we can only regard as half jesting, half serious. He would never have spiritual peace, Fräulein von Klettenberg told him till he had a "reconciled God." Goethe's rejoinder was that it should be put the other way. Considering his recent sufferings and his own good intentions, it was God who was in arrears to him and who had something to be forgiven. The Fräulein charitably condoned the blasphemy, but she and her fellow-believers were assuredly in the right when they denied the blasphemer the name of *Christian*. Yet, as has been said, Goethe in his own way was seriously in search of a faith that would satisfy both his intellect and his heart, and he even attempted to construct one. A book that fell into his hands, Gottfried Arnold's *Impartial History of the Church and of Heretics*,[52] prompted the attempt. From this book, he tells us, he received a favourable impression of heretics, and the impression was comforting to one who, like himself, was looked on as a heretic by all his friends. Moreover, he had often heard it said that in the long run every man must have his own religion; why, therefore, should he not essay to think out a creed that would at least satisfy himself? In brief outline he has described the system which he evolved from his miscellaneous historical and scientific studies. It is, as he himself says, a strange composite of Neo-Platonism, and of hermetical, mystical, and cabbalistical speculations, all leading by a necessary logic to the dogmas of Redemption and the Incarnation—a conclusion which at least points to

the fact that for Goethe at this time Christianity was a religion specifically predestined for man's salvation. "We all become mystics in old age," is a remark of his own at that period of life; and the conclusion of the Second Part of Faust, as well as other indications, proves that the remark was at least true of himself. But, as has often been pointed out, not only in old age, but at every period of his life, there was a mystic strain in him which was only kept in check by what was the strongest instinct of his nature—the instinct that demanded the direct vision of the concrete fact as the only condition on which he could build "the pyramid of his life."

Goethe's experience derived from his intercourse with Fräulein von Klettenberg and her friends undoubtedly enriched his own nature and enlarged his conceptions of the content of human life, of its possible motives and ideals. It was not a circle into which his own affinities would have led him, but being in it, he, as was his invariable habit, drew from it to the full all that it could give for his own building-up. And in enriching his own nature and widening his outlook, the experience enlarged the scope of his creative productiveness. But for his intercourse with these pious enthusiasts the Confessions of a Beautiful Soul would not have found a place in *Wilhelm Meister*, and from the general picture of human life and its activities which it is the object of that book to present, there would have been lacking one conception of life and its responsibilities, not the least interesting in the history of the human spirit. Most specific and important of all his gains from his association with the Frankfort community, however, was that from it directly emerged what is universally regarded as his greatest creative effort—the First Part of Faust. The conception of that work

was closely associated with the chemical experiments and cabbalistic studies suggested by his intercourse with Fräulein von Klettenberg and her circle, and not only suggested but carried out on the foundation that had thus been laid.[53]

As has been said, Goethe's contemporary letters addressed from Frankfort to his friends bring a different side of his life before us from that presented in the Autobiography. From these letters we gather that he was by no means wholly engrossed in religious or mystical studies. "During this winter," he wrote to his friend Oeser, about two months after his arrival in Frankfort, "the company of the muses and correspondence with friends will bring pleasure into a sickly, solitary life, which for a youth of twenty years would otherwise be something of a martyrdom."[54] In spite of the affectionate solicitude of Fräulein von Klettenberg and other friends, he found Frankfort a depressing place after gay Leipzig. "I could go mad when I think of Leipzig," wrote his sprightly friend Horn, who had also tasted the pleasures of that place; and Goethe shared his opinion. Both also agreed that the girls of Frankfort were vastly inferior creatures to those of Leipzig. "I came here," Goethe wrote in a poetical epistle to the daughter of Oeser, "and found the girls a little—one does not quite like to speak it out—as they always were; enough, none has as yet touched my heart."[55] It would appear, nevertheless, that he did find certain Frankfort girls to his taste. "I get along tolerably here," he wrote to another correspondent. "I am contented and quiet; I have half-a-dozen angels of girls whom I often see, though I have lost my heart to none of them. They are pleasant creatures, and make my life uncommonly agreeable. He who has seen no Leipzig might be very well off here."[56]

His life in Frankfort was, in short, what he himself called it, an exile (*Verbannung*).

Among his correspondents was Käthchen Schönkopf with whom, as we have seen, he had come to what he thought a satisfactory arrangement before leaving Leipzig. In this correspondence it is the Leipzig student, not the associate of the Fräulein von Klettenberg, who is before us. There is the same waywardness, there are the same irresponsible sallies which made him such a difficult lover. If we are to take him seriously, he still suffered from the pangs of rejected love and regretted that his former relations to Käthchen had not continued. "A lover to whom his love will not listen," he writes, "is by many degrees not so unfortunate as one who has been cast off; the former still retains hope and has at least no fear of being hated; the other, yes, the other, who has once experienced what it is to be cast out of a heart which once was his, gladly avoids thinking, not to say speaking, of it."[57] When this passage was written (June, 1769) he had received the news that Käthchen was betrothed to another. In a final letter addressed to her (January 23rd, 1770) occur these characteristic words: "You are still the same loveable girl, and you will also be a loveable wife. And I, I shall remain Goethe. You know what that means. When I mention my name, I mention all; and you know that, as long as I have known you, I have lived only as part of you."[58] So closed a relation of which it is difficult to say how much there was in it of genuine passion, how much of artificial sentiment. Serious intention in it there was none; from the first Goethe perfectly realised the fact that he could never make Käthchen his wife.[59]

As at Leipzig, his other distractions did not divert

him from his interests in art and literature. When the state of his health permitted, he assiduously practised drawing and etching. "Now as formerly," he wrote to Oeser, "art is almost my chief occupation." But he also found time for wide excursions into the fields of general literature. Before leaving Leipzig he had exchanged with Langer "whole baskets-full" of German poets and critics for Greek authors, and these (though his knowledge of Greek remained to the end elementary) he must have read in a fashion. Latin authors he read were Cicero, Quintilian, Seneca, and Pliny. Among the moderns Shakespeare and Molière already held the place in his estimation which they always retained. Shakespeare he as yet knew only from the selections in Dodd's *Beauties* and Wieland's translation, but he already felt his greatness, and, as we have seen, names him with Wieland and Oeser as one of his masters. "Voltaire," he wrote to Oeser, "has been able to do no harm to Shakespeare; no lesser spirit will prevail over a greater one."[60] The German writers who now stood highest in his esteem were Lessing and Wieland. Lessing's æsthetic teaching he accepted with some reserves, but this did not abate the admiration which he retained for him at every period of his life. "Lessing! Lessing!" he wrote in the same letter to Oeser; "if he were not Lessing, I might say something. Write against him I may not; he is a conqueror.... He is a mental phenomenon, and, truly, such apparitions are rare in Germany."[61] That Goethe, at this period, should have had such an unbounded admiration for Wieland is an interesting commentary on his pietistic leanings; for Wieland was now in his full pagan phase, so distasteful to moral Germany, as Goethe himself indicates. "I have already been annoyed on Wieland's account," he writes—"I think

with justice. Wieland has often the misfortune to be misunderstood; frequently, perhaps, the fault is his own, but as frequently it is not." At a later day Goethe clearly saw and marked in Wieland that lack of "high seriousness" on which he himself came to lay such stress as all-important in literature and life, but in the meantime he freely acknowledged what Wieland had been to him.[62] "After him (Oeser) and Shakespeare," he wrote in the letter just quoted, "Wieland is still the only one whom I can hold as my true master; others had shown me where I had gone astray; they showed me how to do better."

What is noteworthy in the serious passages of Goethe's Frankfort letters is the advance in maturity and self-knowledge which they reveal when compared with those written from Leipzig. Penetrative remarks on men and things, such as give its value to his later correspondence, now begin to fall from his pen by the way. He consciously takes the measure of his own powers, and forms clear judgments on the literary and artistic tastes of the time. The poems which he had written in Leipzig now seemed to him "trifling, cold, dry, and superficial," and, as in Leipzig he had made a holocaust of his boyish poems, so he made a second holocaust of those produced in Leipzig. In a long letter addressed (February 13th, 1769) to Friederike Oeser he thus expounds the artistic ideals at which he had then arrived: "A great scholar is seldom a great philosopher, and he who has laboriously thumbed the pages of many books regards with contempt the simple, easy book of nature; and yet nothing is true except what is simple—certainly a sorry recommendation for true wisdom. Let him who goes the way of simplicity go it in quiet. Modesty and circumspection are the essential characteristics

of him who would tread this path, and every step will bring its reward. I have to thank your dear father for these conceptions; he it was who prepared my mind to receive them; time will give its blessing to my diligence which may complete the work he began."[63] In point of fact, partly owing to the depressing conditions in which he found himself, and partly, it may be, out of his own deliberate purpose, Goethe produced no work of importance during the year and a half he spent in Frankfort. It was a period of incubation, and the stimulus to production was to come to him in another environment.

In the spring of 1770 Goethe recovered his normal health and spirits, and, in accordance with his father's wish, he proceeded to Strassburg to complete his legal studies. He left home with as intense a feeling of relief as he had left it on the previous occasion. Between him and his father there had been growing estrangement, and the estrangement had ended in an open quarrel when he ventured to criticise the architecture of the paternal house, which had been constructed under his father's own directions. Thwarted though the father had been in his hopes of his son, however, he was not turned from his purpose of affording him every opportunity of laying a broad foundation of general culture. It was his express wish that Wolfgang, after completing his studies in Strassburg, should travel in France and spend some time in Paris.

CHAPTER IV

GOETHE IN STRASSBURG

APRIL, 1770—AUGUST, 1771

GOETHE was in his twenty-first year when he entered Strassburg in the beginning of April, 1770. From his maturer age and the chastening experience of the preceding eighteen months, therefore, it was to be expected that his management of his life in his new home would be more in accordance with his father's wishes than his wild ways in Leipzig. In sending his son to Strassburg it was the father's intention that he should complete those legal studies of which he had made a jest in Leipzig, and qualify himself for the profession by which he was to make his future living. During his residence of some sixteen months in Strassburg Goethe did actually fulfil his father's wish, and returned to Frankfort as a full-fledged Licenciate of Laws, but as little as at Leipzig did the interests which engrossed him suggest future eminence in his profession.

What again strikes us is the rapidity with which he caught the tone of his new surroundings. In Strassburg he found a society whose ways of living and thinking were equally different from those of Frankfort and of Leipzig. Strassburg had not the bounded intellectual horizon which made him feel himself an alien in his native town, nor, on the other hand, did it offer the opportunities for frivolous distraction which he found in the "little Paris." Strassburg had been a French town for a hundred years, but there was no town in Germany more intensely German in its sympathies and aspirations.

The officials and the upper classes in the town spoke French and were French in their tastes and habits, but the great majority of its citizens clung to their national traditions with the tenacity of the conquered. It is Goethe's own testimony that his residence in Strassburg precisely at this period of his life was a decisive circumstance for his future development. At the moment of his arrival, he had not yet completely broken with French models, and he would even appear to have had vague dreams that he would eventually choose the French language as his literary medium.[64] Ever responsive to the intellectual and spiritual atmosphere in which he found himself, however, the intensely German sympathies of his Strassburg circle definitely turned him from a career which would have cut off his genius from its profoundest sources.

His decisive rejection of French for German ideals was the governing fact of his sojourn in Strassburg, but he had other experiences there which show that he was the same variable being of the Leipzig days. His first letters from his new home would seem to show that he had brought with him something of the pious sentiments he had acquired from his association with Fräulein von Klettenberg, though his expression of them has a singular savour. About a fortnight after his arrival in Strassburg he writes as follows to one Limprecht, a theological student whose acquaintance he had made in Leipzig: "I am now again *Studiosus*, and, thank God, have now as much health as I need, and spirits in superabundance. As I was, so am I still; only that I stand better with our Lord God and with his dear Son Jesus Christ. It follows that I am a somewhat wiser man; and have learned by experience the meaning of the saying, 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of

wisdom.' To be sure, we first sing Hosanna to him who cometh yonder; well and good! even that is joy and happiness; the King must first enter before he ascends his throne." A week later he writes again to the same correspondent in a similar strain [65]: "I am a different man, very different: for that I thank my Saviour; and I am thankful also that I am not what I pass for." [66]

Two months later (July 28th) he appears to be in the same pious frame of mind. "I still live somewhat at random," he writes to another correspondent, "and I thank God for it; and often, when I dare, I thank His Son also that I am in circumstances which seem to enjoin this random mode of life.... Reflections are very light wares, but prayer is a profitable business; a single welling-up of the heart to Him whom we call *a* God till we can name Him *our* God, and we are overwhelmed by the multitude of our mercies." [67]

This mood, we cannot help feeling, sits ill on Goethe; pious as are his expressions, they have not the ring of the genuine believer. Yet it would be unjust to charge him with deliberate hypocrisy. The truth is that at this time, and indeed throughout all his sojourn in Strassburg, he was in a state of nervous irritability of which both himself and his friends were aware. [68] Other expressions in letters of the same date reveal a variability of moods, the only explanation of which is that he had not fully recovered from the depressed mental condition consequent on his long illness in Frankfort. But his unnatural mood of piety did not long withstand the new influences to which he was now subjected, and it is in a letter to Fräulein von Klettenberg herself, written towards the end of August, that he intimates his growing distaste for the religious set to whom she

had introduced him in Strassburg. After telling her that he had been to Holy Communion "to remind him of the sufferings and death of our Lord," he proceeds: "My intercourse with the religious people here is not quite hearty, though at first I did turn very heartily to them; but it seems as if it were not to be. They are so deadly dull when they begin that my natural vivacity cannot endure it." He goes on to say that he has made the acquaintance of one who is of a different way of thinking from these people—one "who from the coolness of blood with which he has always regarded the world thinks he has discovered that we are put in this world for the special purpose of being useful in it; that we are capable of making ourselves so; that religion is of some help in this; and that the most useful man is the best." [69]

The acquaintance to whom Goethe thus refers was the most important person in the circle with which he was mainly associated during his residence in Strassburg. It was a circle widely different in tastes and ways of thinking from that which he had left at Frankfort. Boarded in one house, the persons who composed it, about ten in number, daily met at a common table. Of different ages, and mostly medical students, their talk, as Goethe tells us, mainly turned on their professional studies. The talk of medical students is not favourable to the cultivation of a mystical piety, and it need not surprise us that a few weeks in this atmosphere were sufficient to give Goethe a growing distaste for those religious sentiments which in his case were only a morbid distortion of his natural instincts. Yet during these Strassburg days there is no trace in him of that anti-Christian attitude of mind which was to be one of his later phases. He decisively dissociated himself from the Herrnhut society, and he ceased to speak in their

language, but, as we have seen, he was still disposed to assign to religion a due place in the lives of reasonable men.

In the president of the common table, Dr. Salzmann, the acquaintance to whom he referred, Goethe found one who by his personal character and general views of life appealed to what was deepest in his own nature. Salzmann's belief that "the most useful man is the best," may be said, indeed, to sum up Goethe's own maturest conviction regarding the conduct of life. In his relations to Salzmann, therefore, so far as Goethe's ethical and religious ideals are concerned, we have the clearest light thrown on his Strassburg period. As described by Goethe himself, Salzmann was a man of the world, characterised by a tact, good sense, and personal dignity which gave him an undisputed ascendancy over the miscellaneous company which met at the common table. From another member of the circle[70] we have this additional tribute to Salzmann's high character: "His place (at table) was the uppermost, and that would have been his natural place, even had he sat behind the door. His modesty does not permit me to pass a panegyric on him.... Let my readers imagine a philosophy, based at once on feeling and a thorough grasp of principles, conjoined with the most genuine Christianity, and he will have an idea of a Salzmann." Goethe and he, the same writer adds, were "the most cordial friends (*Herzensfreunde*)." In Leipzig the cynical *roué* Behrisch had been Goethe's mentor; in Strassburg his mentor was Salzmann, and the fact emphasises all the difference between Goethe's Leipzig and Strassburg days. That he chose Salzmann as his chiefest friend and confidant at a period when self-control was still far from his reach, is the proof that *des Lebens ernstes Führen*—the

strenuous conduct of life—was in reality, as he himself claimed, an imperative instinct of his nature. Certainly he did not regulate his life in Strassburg in accordance with the maxim of his self-chosen counsellor, yet we may conjecture that but for Salzmann's restraining influence he would have gone further and faster than he actually did. In the extremity of what was to be his most passionate experience in Strassburg, it was to Salzmann that he poured forth all the tumult of his passion, and the very act of laying bare his heart to such a counsellor was a suggestion of the necessity of a certain measure of self-control. In connection with Goethe's relations to Salzmann we have also to note what is true of his relations to everyone at whose feet he chose for the time to sit. When a youth of eighteen he had written to Behrisch, a man of thirty, on terms of perfect equality. He was now a little over twenty, and Salzmann was approaching fifty and a man of the stamp we have seen, yet in Goethe's letters to him there is no trace of the modest diffidence with which a youth usually addresses his seniors. A forward self-confidence, which some found objectionable, was in fact a characteristic of his youth and early manhood which is noticed by more than one observer. He entered a room, we are told, with a bold and confident air; and we have it from another witness that he was *d'une suffisance insupportable*.[71] Be it remarked, however, that there is equal testimony to the overpowering charm of his bearing and conversation—a charm due, as we learn, to a spontaneity of feeling and exuberance of youthful spirits which broke through all conventions and gave the tone to every company in which he found himself.

Goethe's relations to another member of the circle,

who joined it somewhat later, show him in his most attractive light. This was Johann Heinrich Jung, better known as Jung Stilling, now about thirty years of age. Stilling was another of those originals who crossed Goethe's path at different periods, and to whom he was at all times specially attracted. Stilling had had a remarkable career; he had been successively charcoal-burner, tailor, schoolmaster, and private tutor, and he had come to Strassburg to qualify himself for the practice of medicine. What attracted Goethe to him was a type of mind and character at every point dissimilar from his own. With a simple mystical piety, which led him to believe that he was a special child of Providence, Stilling combined an intelligence and a zeal for knowledge which gave his words and his actions an individual stamp. It is from Stilling that we have the most vivid description of Goethe in these Strassburg days. As he sat with a friend at the common table for the first time, they saw a youth enter who, by his "large bright eyes, magnificent forehead, handsome person, and confident air," arrested their attention. [72] "That must be a fine fellow," remarked Stilling's friend, but both agreed that they might look for trouble with him, as he seemed *ein wilder Kamerad*. They were mistaken, and Goethe was to prove one of Stilling's warmest friends. Stilling himself relates how, when one at the table directed a gibe at him, it was Goethe who rebuked the railer. When Stilling was in despair at the news of the illness of his betrothed, it was to Goethe he flew for comfort, and he found him a friend in need. At a later date Goethe published Stilling's Autobiography without his knowledge, and presented him with the copyright. It was with the lively recollection of these and other acts of friendship that Stilling wrote the words which

are the finest tribute ever paid to Goethe: "Goethe's heart, which few knew, was as great as his intellect, which all knew." [73]

Neither in Frankfort, nor in Leipzig, nor in Strassburg had Goethe as yet met the man in whom he could recognise his intellectual peer. In the beginning of September, 1770, however, there came to Strassburg one who, for the first time, impressed him with a sense of inferiority. This was Johann Gottfried Herder, who, some five years Goethe's senior, had a career behind him widely different from that of the fortunate son of the Imperial Councillor of Frankfort. Born of poor parents, he had had to fight his way at every step to the distinction which he had already attained. He had studied under Kant at Königsberg, had been successively assistant teacher, assistant pastor, and private tutor. In this last capacity he had travelled in France, and visited Paris, where he had made the acquaintance, among others, of Diderot and D'Alembert. In Hamburg he had for several weeks been in intercourse with Lessing, whom Goethe in a moment of caprice had neglected to visit in Leipzig. Already, moreover, he had produced work in literary criticism which by its suggestiveness and originality had attracted much attention, and notably among the youth of Germany. In hard-won experience, in extent of knowledge and range of ideas, therefore, Herder, as Goethe himself speedily saw and acknowledged, was far ahead of him along those very paths where he himself was ambitious of distinction.

The association of Herder and Goethe in these Strassburg days is one of the interesting chapters in European literary history. Goethe himself bears emphatic testimony to Herder's determining

influence at once on his mind and character. "The most significant event of that time, he tells us, "and one which was to have the weightiest consequences for me, was my acquaintance with Herder and the closer bond that resulted from it." Bond there was between them, but it was not the bond of genuine friendship. No two men, indeed, could be more essentially antipathetic by nature than Herder and Goethe. Their antagonism was clearly apparent during their intercourse in Strassburg, and in the end, after many years of uneasy relations, their alienation became complete. Be it said that the traits in Herder which estranged Goethe from him were equally recognised and felt by others. Naturally querulous, splenetic, and inconsiderate of others' feelings, the adverse circumstances of his early life had made him something of a Timon among his fellows.[74] His favourite author was Swift, and from this preference and from the peculiarities of his own temper he was known among his acquaintances as the "Dean." But there were sides to his nature which certainly did not exist in the "terrible" Dean. Herder was an enthusiast for his own ideas, and these ideas were of a quality and range that marked him as one of the pioneers of his time. Religion as a primary instinct in man and the principal factor in his development was Herder's lifelong and predominant interest. He identified himself with Christianity, but it was a Christianity understood by him in the most liberal sense, a Christianity free from dogma, a spirit rather than a creed. As kindred to religion, poetry in his conception was inseparable from it in the essential being of man—poetry not as expressed in conventional forms but as the breath of the human spirit, and one of the most precious gifts for the purifying and elevation of humanity. These

conceptions he owed, not to Kant, to whom he had listened in Königsberg, but to a less systematic teacher, J.G. Hamann, whose eccentric character and visionary speculations had gained for him the designation of the "Magus of the North." Goethe came to be acquainted with the writings of Hamann, and had a genuine admiration of him as a seer struggling with visions to which he was unable to give adequate utterance.[75] It was in his conversations with Herder, however, that he was introduced to those deeper conceptions of man and his possibilities which implied a complete emancipation from the mechanical philosophy which he had hitherto been endeavouring to find in a mystical religion.

During the six months that Herder resided in Strassburg he was under treatment for a serious ailment of his eyes, and Goethe was assiduous in his attendance on him, often remaining with him for whole days. Their intercourse was not an unmixed pleasure for either. Herder's mordant humour and spirit of contradiction were a daily trial to Goethe's temper, and he describes his feelings of alternating attraction and repulsion as a wholly new experience in his life. Herder, who had known Diderot and D'Alembert and Lessing, appears, indeed, to have treated Goethe as an undisciplined boy, spoilt by flattery, with no serious purpose in life, inconsequent and irresponsible.[76] Nor does he seem to have been specially impressed by any promise in the youth who was so completely to eclipse him in the eyes of the world. In his letters from Strassburg he does not even mention Goethe's name; and, when he subsequently referred to him, it was in terms he might have applied to any clever and confident youth. "Goethe," he wrote, "is at bottom a good

fellow, only somewhat superficial and sparrow-like, [77] faults with which I constantly taxed him." If Herder's moods frequently jarred on Goethe, it is evident that the experience was mutual. The physical and mental restlessness, which is suggested by the epithet "sparrow-like," and which was noted by others as characteristic of Goethe at this period, could not fail to irritate one like Herder, naturally grave, sobered by hard experience, and then suffering from a painful and serious ailment. Equally distasteful to Herder were Goethe's explosive outbursts in general conversation and his liking for practical jokes at the expense of his friends. To Herder as to everyone else Goethe aired his opinions with the "frank confidingness" which he notes as a trait of his own character, and which gave Herder frequent opportunities for scathing criticism. Herder gibed at his youthful tastes—at his collection of seals, at his elegantly-bound volumes which stood unread on his shelves, at his enthusiasms for Italian art, for the writings of the Cabbalists, for the poetry of Ovid. [78]

At bottom, as Herder said, Goethe was a "good fellow," slow to take offence, and as little vindictive as is possible to human nature. This easy temper doubtless stood him in good stead under the fire of Herder's sarcasms, but he himself specifies another reason for his docility which is equally characteristic: he endured all Herder's satirical spleen because he had learned to attach a high value to everything that contributed to his own culture. According to his own account, he owed a double debt to Herder—a determining influence on his character, and an equally determining influence on his intellectual development. Till he met Herder he had been treated as a youthful genius, as a "conquering lord," whose

eccentricities were only a proof of his originality. Very different was the measure he received from Herder, who showed no mercy for "whatever of self-complacency, egotism, vanity, pride and presumption was latent or active" in him. Herder, he says elsewhere, "exercised such a blighting influence on me that I began to doubt my own powers." Whether or not Goethe learned from Herder the lesson of modesty regarding his own gifts, it is the truth that of all the sons of genius none has been freer than Goethe was in his maturer years from every form of vanity and self-consciousness.

It is on his intellectual debt to Herder, however, that Goethe dwells most emphatically in his account of their personal intercourse. Daily and even hourly, he says, Herder's conversation was a summons to new points of view. Poetry was the subject in which both had a common interest, and from Herder Goethe learned to regard poetry "in another sense" from that in which he had hitherto regarded it. He had hitherto regarded poetry as an accomplishment; Herder taught him that it was a gift of nature, of the essence of humanity, "the mother-speech of the human race." This expression was Hamann's, who had been inspired to utter it out of his revulsion against French literature and his study of the literature of England. From England, indeed, came those conceptions of the nature and function of poetry which, as expounded and exemplified in the writings of Hamann, Herder, Goethe, and others, were to effect a revolution in German literature. In a literary manifesto, written by an Englishman, but apparently better known in Germany than in England, German historians of their own literature have found the main impulse that gave occasion to this revolution. This manifesto was a pamphlet written by Edward Young, the author of

Night Thoughts, entitled *Conjectures on Original Composition, in a Letter addressed to the Author of Sir Charles Grandison*. The dithyrambic style of the Letter manifestly exercised a powerful influence on the prose of Herder and Goethe—prose charged with perfervid feeling, and hitherto unknown in German literature. Young's main contention is that in literature genius must make rules for itself, and that imitation is suicidal. "Genius," he says, "can set us right in composition, without the rules of the learned; as conscience sets us right in life, without the laws of the land." He lays it down as a maxim that "the less we copy the renowned ancients, we shall resemble them the more." The two golden rules in composition as in ethics are: know thyself and reverence thyself. Such were the "conjectures on original composition," expounded to him by Herder which led Goethe to regard poetry in "another sense" from that in which he had hitherto understood it. And in confirmation of his views Herder directed him to the exemplars where he would find their illustration—to the Bible, to Homer and Pindar, to Shakespeare and Ossian, and, above all, to the primitive poetry of all peoples.

As we shall see, Goethe laid these counsels even too faithfully to heart; the first composition [79] in which he attempted to realise them drew upon him Herder's characteristic censure. And it is in this connection that we have to note the reserves which Goethe makes in the acknowledgment of his debt to Herder, "Had Herder been more methodical in his mental habit," he says, "he would have afforded the most valuable guidance for the permanent direction of my culture; but he was more disposed to probe and to stimulate than to give guidance and leading." So it was, as Goethe adds elsewhere, that the result of

Herder's influence on him was a mental confusion and tumult, plainly visible in another of his early writings,[80] where "quite simple thoughts and observations are veiled in a dust-cloud of unusual words and phrases."

The homage which Goethe pays to Herder in the retrospect of his Strassburg days is equally emphasised in his contemporary letters. "Herder, Herder," he writes in one place, "remain to me what you are. If I am destined to be your planet I will be it; be it willingly, faithfully."[81] Yet we may doubt whether Herder's influence was, in truth, so determining a factor in his life as Goethe himself represents it. Herder, he tells us, first taught him a wise self-distrust, but we have seen that one of the lessons he professes to have learned from Oeser was "to be modest without self-depreciation, and to be proud without presumption." Before he saw Herder, also, he had already divined the greatness of Shakespeare and the futility of Voltaire's criticisms of him. Herder's ideas regarding the human spirit and its possibilities were in the air, and, had the two men never met, the probability is that Goethe's development would not have been different from what it actually was. Herder's general views were already incipient in him; and what Herder did was to deepen and intensify them.[82] Nevertheless the collision for the first time with a mind that revealed to him his own immaturity was for Goethe, as for every youth, a formative influence of the highest import and an epoch in his mental history. Yet in his association with Herder one fact has to be noted: Goethe was not subjugated by him. He frankly recognised Herder's superiority to himself in knowledge and experience, but he retained his mental independence. In his letters to Herder, as in

those to Salzmann, he writes in terms of equality. In such words as the following, for example, we have not the attitude of the unquestioning disciple to his master. "Pray let us try to see each other oftener. You feel how you would embrace one who could be to you what you are to me. Don't let us be frightened like weaklings because we must often disagree: should our passions collide, can we not endure the collision?"[83] Might we not infer from this passage that not Herder but Goethe was the dominating spirit in their intercourse?[84]

Goethe found another source of inspiration in Strassburg besides Herder, and one which, as he describes it both in his Autobiography and in a contemporary effusion, moved him even more powerfully. His first act on his arrival in Strassburg, he tells us, was to visit its cathedral whose towers had caught his eye long before he reached the town. He had been taught by his old master Oeser, who only represented the general opinion of the time in Germany, that Gothic architecture was the product of a barbarous age and could be regarded only with amazed disgust by every person of educated taste. But Goethe's mystical studies and religious experiences in Frankfort had not left him what he was in his Leipzig days, and had given him an insight into movements of the human spirit which did not come within the cognizance of Oeser. It was with predisposed sympathy, therefore, that he looked for the first time on a specimen of Gothic architecture in its most august form. His first impression was of "a wholly peculiar kind"; and, without seeking to analyse the impression, "he surrendered himself to its silent working." Thenceforward, during his stay in Strassburg, the cathedral exercised a fascination upon him that evoked a new world of thought and

feeling. It was his delight to ascend its tower at sunset and gaze on the rich landscape of Alsace, whose beauty made him bless the fate that had placed him for a time amid such surroundings. He studied its structure with such minute care that he correctly divined the additions to the great tower which the original architect had contemplated, but which he had been unable to carry out.

Goethe has himself indicated how the impressions he received from the cathedral influenced his first literary productions which bore the stamp of his individuality. It formed a fitting background, he says, for such poetical creations as *Götz von Berlichingen* and *Faust*. To the cathedral and its suggestions, even more than to Herder, perhaps, we should trace the inspiration that produced these works—the former of which met with Herder's questioning approval. To the full force of that inspiration Goethe gave direct expression in a composition which is the most characteristic product of his Strassburg period—a short essay, entitled *Of German Architecture*. Probably sketched in Strassburg, it was not published till his return to Frankfort. Its rhapsodical style, as well as the conceptions of art and nature which it embodies, directly recall Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition*. Like Young he proclaims that genius is a law to itself, that all imitation and subservience to rule is disastrous to imaginative production. "Principles," he declares, "are even more injurious to genius than examples." The burden of the Essay is the glorification of the genius of the architect of Strassburg cathedral, and of Gothic architecture in general, which, Goethe maintained, should be correctly designated "German" architecture, as having had its origin on German soil. With this youthful sally of Goethe, time was to deal with its

unkindest irony. Later research has proved that Gothic architecture is of French and not of German origin, and Goethe himself did not remain faithful to his youthful enthusiasm. On his way home from Strassburg, he relates, the sight of some specimens of ancient art in Mannheim "shook his faith in northern architecture," and the impression he thus received was to become a permanent conviction. It was in the art of classical antiquity that he was to find the expression of his maturest ideal; when in later years his attention was temporarily turned to Gothic architecture, it was with little of his youthful enthusiasm that he admitted its claim to our regard.

"I cannot go on long without a passion," Goethe wrote in his twenty-third year, and we have no difficulty in believing him. In Strassburg he lived through a passion which was to be the occasion of his giving the first clear proof to the world that he was to be among its original poets. On the 14th of October, 1770, more than five months after his arrival in Strassburg, he wrote these words to a correspondent: "I have never so vividly experienced what it is to be content with one's heart disengaged as now here in Strassburg."[85] In the same letter in which these words occur he casually mentions that he has just spent a few days in the country with some pleasant people. These pleasant people were a pastor Brion and his family living at Sesenheim, an Alsace village some twenty miles from Strassburg. These few days spent with the Brion family were to be the beginning of a history which, as Goethe relates it in his Autobiography, has the character of an idyll, but, when stripped of the poetic haze which he has thrown around it, is not far from tragedy. He himself is our sole authority for its incidents, and he chose so to tell them that the exact truth of the

whole history can never be known. [86]

The day following the writing of the letter just quoted, Goethe wrote another letter which proves that his heart was no longer "disengaged." This letter is, in fact, a declaration of love to the youngest daughter of the Sesenheim pastor, Friederike—name of pleasantest suggestions in the long list of Goethe's loves. The letter, it may be said, does not strike us as a happy introduction to the relations that were to follow; it would not have been written had Friederike been the daughter of a house of the same social standing as his own. All through his relations to the Sesenheim family, indeed, there is an unpleasant suggestion that it is the son of the Imperial Councillor who is indulging a passion which he is fully aware must one day end in a more or less bitter parting. "Dear new Friend," he begins, "Such I do not hesitate to call you, for, if in other circumstances I have not much insight into the language of the eyes, at the first glance I saw in yours the hope of this friendship; and for our hearts I would swear. How should you, tender and good as I know you to be, not be a little partial to me in return?" [87] In this strain the letter continues, and with a skill of approach that reminds us of his boast to his former confidant Behrisch.

Goethe's relations with Friederike lasted till the end of June, 1771—a period of some ten months. Of this period the first half would seem to have been passed by both in idyllic oblivion of consequences; during the second there came painful awakening to realities on the part of one of the lovers. As they lived in his memory, those first months that Goethe spent in intercourse with the Sesenheim circle were a long dream of happiness; and nowhere in his

Autobiography is he so obviously moved by his recollection of the past.[88] The picture he has drawn of that time is, indeed, an idyll in every sense. We have the setting of a primitive home in a country Arcadian in its bountifulness and beauty; in the centre of this home is the father, whose simple piety is in perfect keeping with his office and his surroundings; and the home is brightened by the presence of two daughters,[89] the one of whom, Friederike, appears as a vision of rustic grace and modest maidenhood. In the midst of this circle moves the richly-gifted youth, laying under a spell father, daughters, and all who come within the magnetism of his presence. In no other situation, indeed, are the attractive sides of Goethe's character so strikingly manifest as in his intercourse with the Sesenheim family and the friendly group attached to them. It is without a touch of egotism that he brings himself before us in all the buoyant spirits, the quickness of sympathy, the diversity of interests, the splendour of his gifts, which made Wieland speak of him as "a veritable ruler of spirits." He humours the good father by drawing a plan for a new parsonage and painting his coach, he charms the daughters by his various accomplishments, and the neighbours who came about the parsonage are carried away by his frolicsome humour. "When Goethe came among us girls when we were at work in the barn," related one who had seen him, "his jests and droll stories almost made work impossible."[90]

The beginning of disillusion came on the occasion of a visit made by the two sisters to Strassburg. In a world that was alien to her Friederike lost something of the charm which was derived from her perfect fitness to her native surroundings, and it was brought home to Goethe that there must be a rude awakening

from the dream of the last few months. In May, 1771, he paid a visit to Sesenheim which lasted several weeks, and the picture we have of his state of mind during his visit shows that he felt that the time of reckoning had come. His mind was already clear that he and Friederike must separate, but he was fully conscious that he was playing a sorry part. Exaggerated language was such an inveterate habit with him at this period of his life that it is difficult to know with what exactness his words express his real feelings.[91] That he was unhappy, however, we cannot doubt, make what reserves we may for rhetorical excesses of style. Here are a few passages from letters addressed to his friend Salzmann during his stay at Sesenheim: "It rains without and within, and the hateful evening winds rustle among the vine leaves before my window, and my *animula vagula* is like yonder weather-cock on the church tower." "For the honour of God I am not leaving this place just at present.... I am now certainly in tolerably good health; my cough, as the result of treatment and exercise, is pretty nearly gone, and I hope it will soon go altogether. Things about me, however, are not very bright; the little one [Friederike] continues sadly ill, and that makes everything look out of joint —not to speak of *conscia mens*, unfortunately not *recti*, which I carry about with me." "It is now about time that I should return [to Strassburg]; I will and will, but what avails willing in the presence of the faces I see around me? The state of my heart is strange, and my health is as variable as usual in the world, which it is long since I have seen so beautiful. The most delightful country, people who love me, a round of pleasures! Are not the dreams of thy childhood all fulfilled?—I often ask myself when my eye feeds on this circumambient bliss. Are not these

the fairy gardens after which thy heart yearned? They are! They are! I feel it, dear friend; and feel that we are not a whit the happier when our desires are realised. The make-weight! the make-weight! with which Fate balances every bliss that we enjoy. Dear friend, there needs much courage not to lose courage in this world of ours." [92]

The day of parting came at the end of June; on August 6th he passed the tests necessary for the Licentiate of Laws, and at the end of that month he left Strassburg for home. He left Friederike, he tells us, at a moment when their parting almost cost her her life [93]; did he do her a greater wrong than his own narrative would imply? We cannot tell; but one thing is certain, from the first he never intended marriage. That he had pangs of self-reproach for the part he had played, his words above quoted may be taken as sufficient evidence, but alike from temperament and deliberate consideration of the facts of life he was incapable of the contrition that troubles human nature to its depths. [94] Yet in our judgment of him it is well to remember the ideas then current in Germany regarding the relations between love and marriage. In his seventy-fourth year Goethe himself said: "Love is something ideal, marriage is something real; and never with impunity do we exchange the ideal for the real." The severest of moralists, Kant, was of the same opinion. "The word *conjugium* itself," he says, "implies that two married people are yoked together, and to be thus yoked cannot be called bliss." And to the same purport Wilhelm von Humboldt, one of the finest spirits of his time, declared that "marriage was no bond of souls." It was in a world where such opinions were entertained by men of the highest character

and intelligence that Goethe made his irresponsible addresses to the successive objects of his passion.

The distractions of Strassburg, no more than the distractions of Leipzig, diverted Goethe from what were his ruling instincts from the beginning—to know life and to be master of himself. As in Leipzig, his professional studies in Strassburg held little place in his thoughts; his law degree, he tells us, he regarded as a matter of "secondary importance." The subject he chose as his thesis—the obligation of magistrates to impose a State religion binding on all their subjects—was of a nature that had no living interest for him at any period of his life, and he wrote the thesis "only to satisfy his father." If his law studies were neglected, however, it was almost with feverish passion that he coursed through other fields of knowledge. In the *Ephemerides*—a diary he kept in Strassburg and in which he noted his random thoughts and the books that happened to be engaging him—we can see the range of his reading and the scope of his interests. Occultism, metaphysics, science in many departments, literature ancient and modern, all in turn absorbed his attention and suggest a mental state impatient of the limits of the human faculties—the state of mind which he was afterwards so marvellously to reproduce in his *Faust*.[95] Inspired by the conversation of the medical students who met at the common table, as well as by his own natural bent, he attended the university lectures on chemistry and anatomy, and thus laid a solid foundation for his subsequent original investigations in these sciences. Extensive travels in the surrounding country were among the chief pleasures of his sojourn in Strassburg, and these travels, as was the case with him always, were voyages of discovery. Architecture,

machinery, works of engineering, Roman antiquities, the native ballads of the district—on all he turned an equally curious eye, and with such vivid impressions that they remained in his memory after the lapse of half a lifetime.

In Goethe the instinct for self-mastery was as remarkable as his instinct for knowledge. As the result of his illness in Frankfort, his organs of sense were in a state of morbid susceptibility which "put him out of harmony with himself, with objects around him, and even with the elements." It throws a curious light on the nature of the man that amid all the preoccupations of his mind and heart in Strassburg he could deliberately turn his thoughts to the cure of his jarred nerves. Loud sounds disturbed him, and to deaden the sensitiveness of his ears he attended the evening tatoo; to cure himself of a tendency to giddiness he practised climbing the cathedral; partly to rid himself of a repugnance to repulsive sights he attended clinical lectures; and by a similar course of discipline he so completely delivered himself from "night fears" that he afterwards found it difficult to realise them even in imagination.

In his old age Goethe said of himself: "I have that in me which, if I allowed it to go unchecked, would ruin both myself and those about me." Was it, as Goethe would have us believe, by sheer purposive will that he kept this dangerous element in him under check and saved himself at critical moments from disaster? When we regard his life as a whole, the actual facts hardly justify such a conclusion. Nature had given him two safeguards which, without any effort of will on his own part, assured him deliverance where the risk of wreckage was greatest

—a consuming desire to *know* which grew with every year of his life, and a versatility of temperament which necessitated ever-renewed sensations equally of the mind and heart. Of the working of these two elements in him we have already had illustration; they will receive further illustration as we proceed.

It would be within the truth to say that the period of Goethe's sojourn in Strassburg was the most memorable epoch of his life. During the eighteen months he spent there he received an intellectual stimulus from which we may date his dedication to the unique career before him, in which self-culture, the passion for knowledge, and the impulse to produce were all commensurate ends. Moreover, as has already been said, it was in Strassburg that his genius found its first adequate expression. And, what is worth noting in the case of one who was to range over so many fields, it was in lyric poetry that his genius first expressed itself. The problem with Goethe is to discover which among his various gifts was nature's special dowry to him. What, at least, is true is that at different periods of his life he produced numbers of lyrics which the world has recognised as among the most perfect things of their kind. And among these perfect things are the few songs and other pieces inspired by Friederike Brion. Doubtless his genius would have flowered had he never seen Friederike, but it was among the many kind offices that fortune did him that he found the theme for his muse in one whose simple charm, while it excited his passion, at the same time chastened and purified it, and compelled a truthful simplicity of expression in keeping with her own nature. It was to Friederike that Goethe owed the pure inspiration which gives his verses to her a quality rare in lyric poetry, but to the writing of

them there went all the forces that were then working in him. In these verses we have the conclusive proof that he now both understood and felt poetry "in another sense" from that in which he had hitherto understood and felt it. Through them we feel the breath of another air than that which he had breathed when he strained his invention to make poetic compliments to Käthchen Schönkopf. In the intensity and directness of passion which they express we may trace all the new poetic influences which he had come under in Strassburg—Shakespeare, Ossian, the popular ballad, the inspiration of Herder. What is remarkable in these early lyrics, however, is that though they vibrate with the emotion of the poet, the emotion is under strict restraint and never passes into the watery effusiveness which is the inherent sin of so much German lyrical poetry. That "brevity and precision" which was the ideal he now put before him he had attained at one bound, and in none of his later work did he exemplify it in greater perfection. As his countrymen have frequently pointed out, these firstfruits of Goethe's genius mark a new departure in lyrical poetry. In them we have the direct simplicity of the best lyrics of the past, but combined with this simplicity a depth of introspection and a fusion of nature with human feeling which is a new content in the imaginative presentation of human experience. In connection with Goethe's Leipzig period we gave a specimen of the best work he was then capable of producing; when we place beside it such a poem as the following, we are reminded of the saying of Emerson that "the soul's advances are not made by gradation ... but rather by ascension of state."

Wilkommen und Abschied.

Es schlug mein Herz; geschwind zu Pferde,
Und fort, wild, wie ein Held zur Schlacht!
Der Abend wiegte schon die Erde,
Und an den Bergen hing die Nacht;
Schon stund im Nebelkleid die Eiche,
Wie ein getürmter Riese da,
Wo Finsternis aus dem Gesträuche
Mit hundert schwarzen Augen sah.

Der Mond von einem Wolkenhügel
Sah kläglich aus dem Duft hervor;
Die Winde schwangen leise Flügel,
Umsausten schauerlich mein Ohr;
Die Nacht schuf tausend Ungeheuer;
Doch frisch und fröhlich war mein Mut;
In meinen Adern welches Feuer!
In meinem Herzen welche Glut!

Dich sah ich, und die milde Freude
Floss aus dem süssen Blick auf mich,
Ganz war mein Herz an deiner Seite,
Und jeder Athemzug für dich.
Ein rosenfarbnes Frühlingswetter
Umgab das liebliche Gesicht,
Und Zärtlichkeit für mich, ihr Götter!
Ich hofft' es, ich verdient' es nicht.

Doch ach, schon mit der Morgensonne
Verengt der Abschied mir das Herz:
In deinen Küssen, welche Wonne,
In deinem Auge, welcher Schmerz!
Ich ging, du standst und sahst zur Erden,
Und sahst mir nach mit nassem Blick;
Und doch, welch Glück geliebt zu werden!
Und lieben, Götter, welch ein Glück!

Welcome and Parting.

Throbbed high my breast! To horse, to horse!
Raptured as hero for the fight;
Soft lay the earth in eve's embrace,
And on the mountain brooded night.
The oak, a dim-discovered shape,
Did, like a towering giant, rise—
There whence from forth the thicket glared
Black darkness with its myriad eyes.

From out a pile of cloud the moon
Peered sadly through the misty veil;
Softly the breezes waved their wings;
Sighed in my ears with plaintive wail.
Night shaped a thousand monstrous forms;
Yet fresh and frolicsome my breast;
And what a fire burned in my veins,
And what a glow my heart possessed!

I saw thee: in thine eye's soft gaze
A tender, calm delight I knew;
All motions of my heart were thine.
And thine was every breath I drew.
The freshest, richest hues of Spring
Enhaloëd thy lovely face,—
And tenderest thoughts for me!—my hope!
But, undeserved, ye Powers of Grace!

But, ah! too soon, with morning's dawn,
The hour of parting cramps my heart;
Then, in thy kisses, O what bliss!
And in thine eye, what poignant smart!
I went; thou stood'st and downward gazed,
Gazed after me with tearful eyes;
Yet, to be loved, what blessedness,
And, oh! to love, ye Gods, what bliss!

CHAPTER V

FRANKFORT—*GÖTZ VON BERLICHINGEN*

AUGUST, 1771—DECEMBER, 1771

GOETHE returned to Frankfort at the end of August, 1771, and, with the exception of two memorable intervals, he remained there till November, 1775, when he left it, never again to make it his permanent home. This period of four years and two months is in creative productiveness unparalleled in his own career, and is probably without a parallel in literary history. During these years he produced *Götz von Berlichingen* and *Werther*, both of which works, whatever their merits or demerits, are at least landmarks, not only in the history of German, but of European literature. To the same period belong the original scenes of *Faust*, in which he displayed a richness of imagination with a spontaneity of passion, of thought and of feeling, to which he never attained in the subsequent additions he made to the poem. In these scenes are already clearly defined the two figures, Faust and Mephistopheles, which have their place in the world's gallery of imaginative creations beside Ulysses and Don Quixote, Hamlet and Falstaff; and there, too, in all her essential lineaments, we have Gretchen, the most moving of all the births of a poet's mind and heart. And, besides these three works of universal interest, there belong to the same period a series of productions—plays, lyrics, essays—which, though at a lower level of

inspiration, were sufficient to mark their author as an original genius with a compass of thought and imagination hitherto unexampled in the literature of his country. Had Goethe died at the age of twenty-six, he would have left behind him a legacy which would have assured him a place with the great creative minds of all time.

This extraordinary productiveness of itself implies an intellectual and spiritual ferment which receives further illustration from the poet's letters written during the same period. In these letters we have the expression of a mind distracted by contending emotions and conflicting aims, now in sanguine hope, now paralysed with a sense of impotence to adjust itself to the inexorable conditions under which life had to be lived. Moods of thinking and feeling follow each other with a rapidity of contrast which are bewildering to the reader and hardly permit him to draw any certain inference as to the real import of what is written. In one effusion we have lachrymose sentiment which suggests morbid self-relaxation; in another, a bitter cynicism equally suggestive of ill-regulated emotions. We have moods of piety and moods in which the mental attitude towards all human aspirations can only be described as Mephistophelian.

Goethe himself was well aware of a congenital morbid strain in him which all through his life demanded careful control if he were to avert bodily and mental collapse. And at no period of his life did external conditions and inward experiences combine to put his self-control to a severer test than during these last years in Frankfort. Frankfort itself, as we shall see, had become more distasteful to him than ever, and his abiding feeling towards it, now as

subsequently, was that he could not breathe freely in its atmosphere. On his return from Strassburg his father received him with greater cordiality than on his return from Leipzig, but the lack of real sympathy between them remained, and was undoubtedly one of the permanent sources of Goethe's discontent with his native town. With no interest in his nominal profession, he had at the same time no clear conception of the function to which his genius called him. Throughout these years in Frankfort he continued uncertain whether Nature meant him for a poet or an artist, and we receive the impression that his ambition was to be artist rather than poet. From the varied literary forms in which he expressed himself, also, we are led to infer that in the domain of literature he was still only feeling his way.

If the diversity of his gifts thus distracted him, his emotional experiences, it will appear, were not more favourable to a settled aim and purpose. One paroxysm of passion succeeded another, with the result that he was eventually, in self-preservation, driven to make a complete breach with his past, and to seek deliverance in a new set of conditions under which he might attain the self-control after which he had hitherto vainly striven. This prolonged conflict with himself was doubtless primarily due to his own inherited temperament, but it was also in large measure owing to the character of the society and of the time in which the period of his youth was passed. Had he been born half a century earlier—that is to say, in a time when the current speculation was bound up with a mechanical philosophy, and when the limits of emotion were conditioned by strict conventional standards—he might have been a youth of eccentric humours, but the morbid fancies and wandering affections that consumed him could not

have come within his experience. But by the time when he began to think and feel, Rousseau had written and opened the flood-gates of the emotions, and Sterne had shown how accepted conventions might appear in the light of a capricious wit and fancy which probed the surface of things. In Goethe's letters, which are the most direct revelation of his mental and moral condition during the period, the influence of Rousseau and Sterne is visible on every page, and the fact has to be remembered in drawing any conclusions as to the real state of his mind from his language to his various correspondents. The fashion of giving exaggerated expression to every emotion was, in fact, the convention of the day, and we find it in all the correspondence, both of the men and women of the time. That it was in large degree forced and artificial and must be interpreted with due reserves, will appear in the case of Goethe himself.

There are three critical epochs during these Frankfort years, each marked by a central event which resulted in new developments of Goethe's character and genius. In the period between his return to Frankfort in August, 1771, and May, 1772, was written the first draft of *Götz von Berlichingen*, the eventual publication of which made him the most famous author in Germany. During these months the memories of Strassburg are fresh in his mind, and the recollection of Friederike and the teaching of Herder are his chief sources of inspiration. In May, 1772, he went to Wetzlar, where, during a residence of three months, he passed through another emotional experience which, two years later, found expression in *Werther*, of still more resounding notoriety than *Götz*. The opening of 1775 saw him entangled in a new affair of the heart of another nature than those

which had preceded it, and resulting in a mental turmoil that drove him to seek deliverance in a new field of life and action. There were other incidents and other experiences that moved him less or more during this period of his career, but it is in connection with these three central events that his character and his genius are presented in their fullest light, and are best known to the world.

We have it on Goethe's own testimony that, on his return from Strassburg to Frankfort, he was healthier in body and more composed in mind than on his return from Leipzig two years before. Still, he adds, he was conscious of a sense of tension in his nature which implied that his mind had not completely recovered its normal balance. So he writes in his Autobiography, and his contemporary letters fully bear out his memories of the period. He certainly returned from Strassburg with a more satisfactory record than from Leipzig. He had actually completed the necessary legal studies, and was now Licentiate of Laws. His *Disputation* had won the approval of his father, who was even prepared to go to the expense of publishing it. In his son's purely literary efforts during his Strassburg sojourn, also, he showed an undisguised pleasure, and he would evidently have been quite content to have seen him combine eminence in his profession with distinction in literature. When Goethe, therefore, immediately on his arrival in the paternal home, took the necessary steps to qualify himself for legal practice, it seemed that the father's ambition for his wayward son was at length about to be realised.[96] But the apparent reconciliation of their respective aims was based on no cordial understanding, and the son, it is evident, made no special effort to adapt himself to his father's idiosyncrasies. An incident he himself relates

curiously illustrates his careless disregard of the conventions of the family home. On his way from Strassburg he picked up a boy-harper who had interested him, and seriously thought of making him a member of the household. The reconciling mother realised the absurdity of lodging in the mansion of an Imperial Rath a strolling musician, who would have to earn his living by daily visits to the taverns of the town, and she met her son's good-humoured whim by finding a home for the boy in more fitting quarters. These noble Bohemian humours of his son, which, as we shall see, displayed themselves in other unconventional habits, were not likely to propitiate a father who, as we are told, "leading a contented life amid his ancient hobbies and pursuits, was comfortably at ease, like one who has carried out his plans in spite of all hindrances and delays." In point of fact, as during Goethe's former sojourn at home, his estrangement from his father increased from year to year, and he came to speak of him with a bitterness which proves that, for a time at least, any kindly feeling that existed between them was effaced.

Again, as after his return from Leipzig, it was his sister Cornelia who made home in any degree tolerable for the brother whom she alone of the family was sufficiently sympathetic and sufficiently instructed fully to understand. She had gathered round her a circle of attractive and educated women, of whom she was the dominating spirit, and in whose company her brother, always appreciative of feminine society, now found a congenial atmosphere. Associated with the circle were certain men with kindred interests, among whom Goethe specially names the two brothers Schlosser as esteemed counsellors.[97] Both were accomplished men of the

world, the one a jurist, the other engaged in the public service; and both were keenly interested in literature. It was a peculiarity of Goethe, even into advanced life, that he seems always to have required a mentor, whose counsels, however, he might or might not choose to follow. At this time it was the elder of these two brothers who played this part, and Goethe testifies that he received from him the sagest of advice, which, however, he was prevented from following by "a thousand varying distractions, moods, and passions."

What these distractions were is vividly revealed in his correspondence of the time. First, his whole being was in disaccord with the social, religious, and intellectual atmosphere of Frankfort; he felt himself cribbed, cabined, and confined in all the aspirations of his nature; and the future seemed to offer no prospect of more favouring conditions. Two months after his return he communicates to his friend Salzmann in Strassburg his sense of oppression in his present surroundings. Arduous intellectual effort is necessary to him, he writes, "for it is dreary to live in a place where one's whole activity must simmer within itself.... For the rest, everything around me is dead.... Frankfort remains the nest it was—*nidus*, if you will. Good enough for hatching birds; to use another figure, *spelunca*, a wretched hole. God help us out of this misery. Amen."[98]

In himself, also, there was a turmoil of thoughts and emotions which, apart from depressing surroundings, was sufficient to occasion alternating moods of exaltation and despair. The upbraiding memory of Friederike pursued him, and we may take it that in his Autobiography he faithfully records his continued self-reproach for his abrupt desertion of her.

"Friederike's reply to a written adieu lacerated my heart. It was the same hand, the same mind, the same feeling that had been educed in her to me and through me. For the first time I now realised the loss she suffered, and saw no way of redressing or even of alleviating it. Her whole being was before me; I continually felt the want of her; and, which is worse, I could not forgive myself my own unhappiness." We may ascribe it either to delicacy of feeling or to the consideration that their further intercourse was undesirable, that he ceased to communicate directly with her. A drawing by his own hand, which he thought would give her pleasure, he sends to her through Salzmann, who is requested to accompany it with or without a note, as he thinks best. Through the same hands he sends to her a play (*Götz von Berlichingen*), in which a lover plays a sorry part, and adds the comment that "Friederike will find herself to some extent consoled if the faithless one is poisoned."

But the profoundest source of his unrest was neither the distastefulness of Frankfort society nor his remorse for his conduct to Friederike. It was his concern with his own life and what he was to make of it. It is this concern that gives interest to his letters of the period which otherwise possess little intrinsic value, either in substance or form. What we find in them, and what is hardly to be found elsewhere, is a mirror of one of the world's greatest spirits in the process of attaining self-knowledge and self-mastery in the direction of powers which are not yet fully revealed to him. At times, it appears to him as if the task were hopeless of establishing any harmony between his own nature and the nature of things. Now he is filled with an exhilarating confidence in his own gifts and in his destiny to bring them to full

fruition; now he seems to be paralysed with a sense of impotence in which we see all the perils attending his peculiar temperament. In his letters to his Strassburg friend Salzmann we have the frankest communications regarding his alternating moods of depression and hopefulness. "What I am doing," he writes immediately after his settlement in Frankfort, "is of no account. So much the worse. As usual, more planned than done, and for that very reason nothing much will come of me."[99] To a different purport are his words in a later note (November 28th) to the same correspondent: "In searching for your letter of October 5th, I came upon a multitude of others requiring answers. Dear man, my friends must pardon me, my *nisus* forwards is so strong that I can seldom force myself to take breath, and cast a look backwards."[100] In the opening of the year, 1772 (February 3rd), he is in the same sanguine temper: "Prospects daily widen out before me, and obstacles give way, so that I may confidently lay the blame on my own feet if I do not move on."[101]

The "*nisus* forwards," of which he speaks, had no connection with the worldly ambition for success in his profession. What was consuming him was the double desire of mastering himself and at the same time of giving expression to the seething ideas and emotions which rendered that self-mastery so hard of attainment. From the moment of his return to Frankfort we see all the seeds fructifying which had taken root in him during his residence in Strassburg. He sends to Herder the ballads he had collected in Alsace, and sends him, also, translations from what he considered the original of the adored Ossian. But the overmastering influence in him at this time was the genius of Shakespeare, as it had been interpreted for him by Herder. Goethe's unbounded admiration

for Shakespeare had already found expression in the rhapsody composed in Strassburg to which reference has been made, and to the circle of men and women who had gathered round his sister, he communicated his enthusiasm. Their enthusiasm took a form perfectly in keeping with the spirit of the time. Shakespeare's birthday occurred on October 14th, [102] and it was resolved that, at once as a tribute to their divinity and a challenge to all his gainsayers, the auspicious day should be celebrated with due rites. At Cornelia's instance, Herder, as high-priest of the object of their worship, was invited to honour the occasion. If he could not be present in body, he was at least to be present in spirit, and he was to send his essay on Shakespeare that it might form part of the day's liturgy. So under the roof of the precise Imperial Rath, to whom Klopstock's use of unrhymed verse in his *Messias* was an unpardonable innovation in German literature, the memory of the "drunken barbarian," as with Voltaire he must have regarded him, was celebrated—whether in his presence or not, his son does not record. [103]

But Goethe was about to pay more serious homage to the Master, as he then understood him. On November 28th, he informed Salzmann that he was engaged on a work which was absorbing him to the forgetfulness of Homer, Shakespeare, and everything else. He was dramatising the history of "one of the noblest of Germans," rescuing from oblivion the memory of "an honest man." The "noblest of Germans" was Gottfried von Berlichingen (1482-1562), one of those "knights of the cows," whose predatory propensities were the terror of Germany throughout the Middle Ages, and who appears to have been neither better nor worse than the rest of his class. While still in Strassburg, Goethe

had noted Gottfried as an appropriate subject for dramatic treatment, but, as he records in his Autobiography, it was immediately after his return to Frankfort that he first put his hand to the work. Stimulated to his task by his sister Cornelia, in the course of six weeks he had completed the play which, on its publication two years later, was to make him the most famous author in Germany.

Goethe's choice of Götz as a theme on which to try his powers is a revelation of the motives that were now compelling him. Of the nature of these motives he has himself given somewhat conflicting accounts. He tells his contemporary correspondents that the play was written to relieve his own bosom of its perilous stuff; to enable him "to forget the sun, moon, and dear stars," and, again, that its primary object was to do justice to the memory of a great man. Writing in old age, he assigns still another motive as mainly prompting him to the production of the play: it was written, he says, with the express object of improving the German stage, of rescuing it from the pitiful condition into which it had fallen during the first half of the eighteenth century. What is entirely obvious, however, is that Shakespeare is the beginning and end of the inspiration of the *Geschichte Gottfriedens von Berlichingen mit der eisernen Hand*, as the play in its original form was entitled. In its conception and in its details Shakespeare is everywhere suggested, though it may be noted that the comic element with which Shakespeare flavours his tragedies is absent from *Götz*. But for Shakespeare the play could not have taken the shape in which we have it. Given the model, however, Goethe had to infuse it with motives which would have a living interest for his own time. One of these motives was the admiration of great men which Goethe shared

with the generation to which he belonged. During this Frankfort period he was successively attracted by such contrasted types of heroes as Julius Cæsar, Socrates, and Mahomet as appropriate central figures for dramatic representation. "It is a pleasure to behold a great man," one of the characters in *Götz* is made to say; and, if Goethe had any determinate aim when he took his theme in hand, it was to present the spectacle of a hero for admiration and inspiration. As it was, deeper instincts of his nature asserted themselves as he proceeded with his work, and Götz is overshadowed by other characters in the drama in whom the poet himself, by his own admission, came to find a more congenial interest.

The play exists in three forms—the first draft being recast for publication in 1773, which second version was adapted for the Weimar theatre in collaboration with Schiller in 1804. It is generally admitted that in its first form we have the fullest manifestation of its author's genius, and equally the fullest expression of the original inspiration that led to its production. Like Shakespeare he had a book for his text—the Memoirs of Gottfried, written by himself; and like Shakespeare he took large liberties with his original —no fewer than six characters in the play, two of whom are of the first importance, being of Goethe's own invention. The plot may be briefly told. Adelbert von Weislingen, a Knight of the Empire, had been the early friend of Gottfried, but under the influence of the Bishop of Bamberg and others he had taken a line which led him into direct conflict with Gottfried. While the latter, identifying himself with the lesser German nobles, was for supporting the power of the Emperor, Weislingen had identified himself with the princes whose object was to cripple it. Gottfried seizes Weislingen while on his way to

the Bishop of Bamberg, and bears him off to his castle at Jaxthausen. The contrasted characters of the two chief personages in the play are now brought before us—Gottfried the rough soldier, honest, resolute, and Weislingen, more of a courtier than a soldier, weak and unstable. Overborne by the stronger nature of Gottfried, Weislingen agrees to break his alliance with the Bishop, and, as a pledge for his future conduct, betroths himself to Gottfried's sister Marie, who, weakly devout, is a counterpart to Gottfried's wife Elizabeth, who is depicted as a Spartan mother.[104] To square accounts with the Bishop, Weislingen finds it necessary to proceed to Bamberg, and the second act tells the tale of his second apostacy. At Bamberg he comes under the spell of an enchantress in the shape of a beautiful woman, Adelheid von Walldorf, a widow, whose physical charms are represented as irresistible. Weislingen becomes her creature, forswears his bond with Gottfried, and rejoins the ranks of his enemies—news which Gottfried is reluctantly brought to credit. In the third act we find Gottfried in a coil of troubles. He has robbed a band of merchants on their way from the Frankfort Fair, and, at the prompting of Weislingen, the Emperor puts him under the ban of the Empire, and dispatches an armed force against him. Beaten in the field and besieged in his own castle, he is at length forced to surrender. In the fourth act he is a prisoner in Heilbronn, but is rescued by Franz von Sickingen, a knight of the same stamp and with the same political sympathies as himself. Sickingen, who is on friendly terms with the Emperor, does him the still further service of securing his relief from the ban, whereupon Gottfried settles down to a peaceful life in his own castle, and to relieve its monotony betakes himself to the

uncongenial task of writing his own memoirs. In the fifth act we sup with horrors. The peasants rise in rebellion and wreak frightful vengeance on their oppressors. In the hope of controlling them, Gottfried, at their own request, puts himself at their head, but finds himself powerless to check their excesses, and on their defeat he is again taken prisoner. But the main interest of the last act is concentrated in Adelheid, who now reveals all the depths of her sensual nature and her unscrupulous ambition. Weislingen she has discovered to be a despicable creature, and she attaches herself to Sickingen, in whom she finds a man after her own heart, able to satisfy all the cravings of her nature. She poisons Weislingen, who dies as he has lived, the victim of weakness rather than of wickedness. Her crimes are known to the judges of the Vehmgericht, who in their mysterious tribunal adjudge her to death, which is effected in a curious scene by one of their agents. The drama closes with the death of Gottfried in prison, baffled in his dearest schemes, blasted in reputation, and with gloomy forebodings for the future of his country.

Such is an outline of the production in which Goethe made his first appeal to his countrymen at large, [105] and which is in such singular contrast to the ideals of his maturity. That it was not the inevitable birth of his whole heart and mind is proved by the fact that he never repeated the experiment. Neither the incidents nor the hero of the piece, indeed, were of a nature to elicit the full play of his genius. Goethe had not, like Scott, an inborn interest in the scenes of the camp and the field, and could not, like Scott, take a special delight in describing them for their own sake. To the portrayal of a character like Gottfried Scott could give his whole heart, but

Goethe required characters of a subtler type to enlist his full sympathies and to give scope to his full powers. Goethe himself has told us how, as he proceeded in the writing of the play, his interest in his hero gradually flagged. In depicting the charms of Adelheid, he says, he fell in love with her himself, and his interest in her fate gradually overmastered him. In truth, it is in scenes where Gottfried is not the principal actor that any originality in the play is to be found, for in these scenes Goethe was drawing from his own experience and recording emotions that had distracted himself. In the unstable Weislingen he represents a weakness of his own nature of which he was himself well aware. "You are a chameleon," Adelheid tells Weislingen; and, as we have seen, Goethe so described himself. It is, therefore, in the relations of Weislingen to Marie and Adelheid that we must look for the spontaneous expression of the poet's genius, working on material drawn from self-introspection. In Weislingen's hasty wooing and equally hasty desertion of Marie we have an exaggerated presentment of Goethe's own conduct to Friederike, to which objection may be taken on the score of delicacy, though he himself suggests that it is to be regarded as a public confession of his self-reproach. In depicting Marie and Weislingen he had Friederike and himself before him to restrain his imagination within the limits of nature and truth. In the case of Adelheid he had no model before him, and the result is that, with youthful exaggeration, he has made her a beautiful monster with no redeeming touch, and, therefore, of little human interest. Such a character was essentially alien to Goethe's own nature, and so are the melodramatic scenes which depict her desperate attempts to escape from her toils and the proceedings of the avenging tribunal

that had marked her for judgment.

As in the case of all Goethe's longer productions, critical opinion has been divided from the beginning regarding the intrinsic merits of *Götz*. In the opinion of critics like Edmond Scherer it is a crude imitation of Shakespeare with little promise of its author's future achievement, while other critics, like Lewes, regard it as a "work of daring power, of vigour, of originality." On one point Goethe himself and all his critics are agreed: the play as a whole is only a succession of scenes, loosely strung together, with no inner development leading up to a determinate end. In his later life Goethe characterised Shakespeare's plays as "highly interesting tales, only told by more persons than one." Whatever truth there may be in this judgment in the case of Shakespeare, it exactly describes *Götz*. It is as a tale, a narrative, and not as a drama, that it is to be read if it is to be enjoyed without the sense of artistic failure. The anachronisms with which the piece abounds, and which Hegel caustically noted, have been a further stumbling-block to the critics.[106] In the second scene of the first Act, Luther is introduced for no other purpose than to expound ideas which come strangely from his mouth, but which were effervescing in the minds of Goethe and his contemporaries—the ideas which they had learned from Rousseau regarding the excellence of the natural man. Similarly, in the scene following, educational problems are discussed which sound oddly in the castle of a mediæval baron, but which were awakening interest in Goethe's own day. In the supreme moments of his career—on the occasion of the surrender of his castle and in his last hour—Gottfried is made to utter the word *freedom* as the watchword of his aspirations, but in so doing he is

expressing Goethe's own passionate protest against the conventions of his age in religion, in philosophy, and art, and not a sentiment in keeping with the class of which he is a type.

These blemishes in the play as a work of art are apparent, yet it may be said that it was mainly owing to these very blemishes that the "beautiful monster," as Wieland called it, took contemporaries by storm and retains its freshness of interest after the lapse of a century and a half. The successive scenes are, indeed, without organic connection, but each scene by itself has the vivacity and directness of improvisation. Nor do the anachronisms to which criticism may object really mar the interest of the work. Rather they constitute its most characteristic elements, proceeding as they do from the poet's own deepest intellectual interests, and, therefore, from his most spontaneous inspiration.

But the most conclusive testimony to the essential power of the play is the effect it produced not only in German but in European literature. Its publication in its altered form in 1773 had the effect of a bomb on the literary public of Germany. It sent a shudder of horror through the sticklers for the rules of the classical drama which it ignored with such contemptuous indifference; a shudder of delight through the band of effervescing youths who shared Goethe's revolutionary ideals, and to whom *Götz* was a manifesto and a challenge to all traditional conventions in literature and life. It was the immediate parent of that truly German growth—the literature of *Sturm und Drang*, whose exponents, says Kant, thought that they could not more effectively show that they were budding geniuses than by flinging all rules to the winds, and that one appears

to better advantage on a spavined hack than on a trained steed. The literature of *Sturm und Drang* was a passing phenomenon, but the influence of *Götz* did not end with its abortive life. But for *Götz* Schiller's early productions would have been differently inspired; and to *Götz* also was due much of the inspiration of the subsequent German Romantic School, though many of its developments were abhorrent to Goethe's nature both in youth and maturity. It emancipated the drama from conventional shackles, but it did more: it extended the range of national thought, sentiment, and emotion, and for good and evil introduced new elements into German literature which have maintained their place there since its first portentous appearance. And German critics are unanimous in assigning another result to the publication of *Götz*: in its style as in its form it set convention at naught, and thus marks an epoch in the development of German literary language. Not since Luther, "whose words were battles," had German been written so direct from the heart and with such elemental force as makes words living things.

It has been a commonplace remark that 1773, the year of the publication of *Götz*, corresponds in European literature to 1789 in European political history. The remark may be exaggerated, but, if a work is to be named which marks the advent of what is covered by the vague name of romanticism, *Götz* may fairly claim the honour. It had precursors of more or less importance in other countries, but, by the nature of its subject, by its audacious disregard of reigning models, and by its resounding notoriety, it gave the signal for a fresh reconstruction of art and life. It gave the decisive impulse to the writer who is the European representative of the romantic

movement, and whose genius specifically fitted him to work the vein which was opened in *Götz*—a task to which Goethe himself was not called. In 1799 Scott published his translation of *Götz*,[107] and followed it up by his series of romantic poems in which the influence of Goethe's work was the main inspiration. But it was in his prose romances, dealing with the Middle Ages, that he found the appropriate form for his inspiration—a form which ensured a popular appeal, impossible in the case of the severer form of the drama. In the enchanter's sway which Scott exercised over Europe during the greater part of the nineteenth century, the memories of *Götz* were not the least potent of his spells.

CHAPTER VI

INFLUENCE OF MERCK AND THE DARMSTADT CIRCLE

1772

SPECIALLY associated with *Götz von Berlichingen*, but associated also with Goethe's general development at this time, was another of those mentors whose counsel and stimulus were necessary to him at all periods of his life. This was Johann Heinrich Merck, the son of an apothecary in Darmstadt and now Paymaster of the Forces there. Of Merck Goethe says that "he had the greatest influence on my life," and he makes him the subject of one of his elaborate

character sketches in his Autobiography. To men of original nature, however discordant with his own, Goethe was always attracted. We have seen him in more or less close relations with Behrisch, Jung Stilling, and Herder, from all of whom he was divided by dissonances which made a perfect mutual understanding impossible. So it was in the case of Merck, as Goethe's references to him in his Autobiography and elsewhere clearly imply. In Merck there was apparently a mixture of conflicting elements which made him a mystery to his friends, and his suicide at the age of fifty points to something morbid in his nature. Of his real goodness of heart and of his genuine admiration for what he considered worthy of it, his own reported sayings and the testimony of others leave us in no doubt. Recording his impression of Goethe after a few interviews, he wrote: "I begin to have a real affection for Goethe. He is a man after my own heart, as I have found few." On the other hand, there were traits in him which Goethe did not scruple to call Mephistophelian—an opinion shared even by Goethe's mother, whose nature it was to see the best side of men and things. His variable humour and caustic tongue made him at once a terror and an attraction in whatever society he moved, and it is evident from the tone of Goethe's reminiscences of him that his intercourse with Merck was a mixed pleasure. But, as we have seen, it was an abiding principle of Goethe to be repelled by no one who had something to give him, and Merck possessed qualities and accomplishments which were of the first importance to him in the phase through which he was now passing. Merck was keenly interested in literature, especially in English literature, and had all Goethe's enthusiasm for Shakespeare. Though his

own original productions were of mediocre quality, he had an insight into the character and genius of others which Goethe fully recognised and to which he acknowledges his special obligation. His general attitude in criticism was "negative and destructive," but this attitude was entirely wholesome for Goethe at a period when instinct and passion tended to overbear his judgment. With admirable penetration he saw how Goethe during these Frankfort years occasionally wasted his powers in attempts which were unworthy of his gifts and alien to his real nature. It was in reference to these futile tendencies that Merck gave him counsel in words which subsequent critics have recognised as the most adequate definition of the essential characteristic of Goethe's genius as a poet. "Your endeavour, your unswerving aim," he wrote, "is to give poetic form to the real. Others seek to realise the so-called poetic, the imaginative; and the result is nothing but stupid nonsense." Like subsequent critics, also, Merck saw the superiority of the first draft of *Götz* to the second, but when the latter was completed, he played a friend's part. "It is rubbish and of no account," was his characteristic remark; "however, let the thing be printed";[108] and published it was, Merck bearing the cost of printing and Goethe supplying the paper.

It was towards the close of 1771 that Goethe had made Merck's acquaintance[109] on the occasion of a visit Merck had paid to Frankfort; and in March of the following year, in company with the younger Schlosser, they renewed their intercourse in Darmstadt, where Merck was settled. The visit lasted a few days, and was of some importance, as it introduced Goethe to a society of which he was to see much during the remainder of his stay in Frankfort, and which, according to his own

testimony, "invigorated and widened his powers." It was a society in which we are surprised to find the Mephistophelian Merck the leading and most admired member. It consisted of a group of men and women associated with the Court at Darmstadt, whose bond of union was the cult of sensibility as the rising generation of Germany had learned it from Rousseau, Richardson, and Sterne. They went by the name of the *Gemeinschaft der Heiligen*, and the fervours of the community were at least those of genuine votaries. So far as Goethe is concerned, it was in three of the priestesses, one of them Caroline Flachsland, the betrothed of Herder, that he found the attraction of the society. For the youth who two years later was to give classic expression to the cult of sensibility in his *Werther*, his intercourse with these ladies of Darmstadt was an appropriate schooling. For their sensibilities were boundless, and they did not shrink from giving them expression. Caroline relates to her future husband how one night in the woods she fell on her knees at sight of the moon and arranged some glow-worms in her hair so that their loves might not be disturbed. On one occasion when Merck and Goethe met two of the coterie, one of them embraced Merck with kisses and the other fell upon his breast. Goethe was not a youth to be indifferent to such favours, and the attentions of Caroline were such as to disquiet Herder and to occasion an estrangement between the two friends which lasted for nearly two years.

From the effusive Caroline herself we learn the impression Goethe made on the precious circle. "A few days ago" (in the beginning of March, 1772), she writes to Herder, "I made the acquaintance of your friend Goethe and Herr Schlosser.... Goethe is such a good-hearted, lively creature, without any parade of

learning, and has made such a to-do with Merck's children that my heart has quite gone out to him.... The second afternoon we spent in a pleasant stroll and over a bowl of punch in our house. We were not sentimental, but very merry, and Goethe and I danced a minuette to the piano. Thereafter he recited an excellent ballad of yours [the Scottish ballad *Edward*, translated by Herder]." On the occasion of a later visit (April) of Goethe to Darmstadt, she again writes to Herder: "Our Goethe has come on foot from Frankfort[110] on a visit to Merck. We have been together every day, and once, when we had gone together into the wood, we were soaked to the skin. We took refuge under a tree, and Goethe sang a little song, 'Under the Greenwood Tree,' which you translated from Shakespeare. Our common plight made us very confidential. He read aloud to us some of the best scenes from his *Gottfried von Berlichingen*.... Goethe is choke-full of songs. One about a hut built out of the ruins of a temple is excellent.[111] ... The poor fellow told my sister and myself a day ago that he had already been once in love, but that the girl had played with him for a whole year and then deserted him.[112] He believed, however, that she really loved him, but another had appeared on the scene, and he was made a goose of."

Under the inspiration of these caressing attentions Goethe's muse could not be silent, and in the course of the spring and autumn he threw off a succession of pieces which are the classical expression of the sentimentalism of the period. To the three ladies-in-chief, under the pseudonyms of Urania, Lila, and Psyche (Caroline Flachsland), he successively addressed odes in which he gave them back their own emotions with interest. Their inspiration is sufficiently suggested by these lines which conclude

the lines entitled *Elysium, an Uranien*:—

Seligkeit! Seligkeit!
Eines Kusses Gefühl.

In all the three poems we have another illustration of Goethe's susceptibility to immediate influences. Under the inspiration of Friederike's simplicity he had written lyrics which were as pure in form as direct in feeling. Now we have him indulging in a vein of artificial sentiment, which, it might have been supposed, he had for ever left behind as the result of his schooling in Strassburg.

In two pieces belonging to the same period, however, is revealed in fullest measure the true self of the poet, with all the emotional and intellectual preoccupations which he had brought with him from Strassburg. Of the one, *Wanderers Sturmlied*, he has given in his Autobiography an account which is fully borne out by the character of the poem itself. It was composed, he tells us, in a terrific storm on one of his restless journeys between Frankfort and Darmstadt, and at a time when the memory of Friederike was still haunting him. Of Friederike, however, there is no direct suggestion in the poem; from first to last it is a pæan of the *Sturm und Drang*, composed in a form directly imitated from Pindar, whom he had been ardently studying since his return to Frankfort. The theme is the glorification of genius —genius in its upwelling and original force as manifest in Pindar, not as in poets like Anacreon and Theocritus. He who is in possession of this genius is armed against all the powers of nature and fate, and his end can only be crowned with victory. Goethe himself calls the poem a *Halbunsinn*, and one of his most sympathetic critics—Viktor Hehn—admits that

to follow its drift requires some labour and some creative phantasy on the part of the reader.[113] But it is not its poetical merit that gives the poem its chief interest; it is to be taken, as it was meant, as a profession of the poet's literary faith at the period when it was written, and as such it is a historic document of the *Sturm und Drang*—at once an illustration and an exposition of its motives and ideals. "All this," is Goethe's mature comment on this and other productions of the same period, "was deeply and genuinely felt, but often expressed in a one-sided and unbalanced way."

Of far higher poetic value is the second poem, *Der Wanderer*,[114] in which Matthew Arnold found "the power of Greek radiance" which Goethe could give to his handling of nature. The scene of the poem is in southern Italy, near Cumæ. The Wanderer, wearied by his travel under the noonday sun, comes upon a woman by the wayside whom he asks where he may quench his thirst. She conducts him through the neighbouring thicket, when an architrave, half-buried in the moss, and bearing an effaced inscription, catches his eye. They reach the woman's hut, which he finds to have been constructed from the stones of a ruined temple. Asleep in the hut is the woman's infant son, whom she leaves in the arms of the Wanderer, while she goes to fetch water from the spring. She presses on him a piece of bread, the only food she has to offer, and invites him to remain till the return of her husband to the evening meal. He refuses her hospitality, and resumes his journey to Cumæ, his destination. Such is the outline of the poem, which is in the form of a dialogue, in the irregular measure common to the odes above mentioned. But in the *Wanderer* there is nothing dithyrambic; rather its characteristic is a reflective

repose, which is in strange contrast to the tumultuous outpouring of the *Wanderers Sturmlied*, and which might induce us to assign its production to a later day in Goethe's life, to the period of his sojourn in Italy, when years had somewhat chastened him, and when he was under the spell of the artistic remains of classical antiquity. Of the finest inspiration is the contrast between the remarks of the peasant woman wholly engrossed in the immediate needs of the day, and the speculations of the Wanderer as he comes upon the ruins that time has wrought upon the choicest works of man's hand. Here we are far from all vapid and artificial sentiment; we have philosophical meditation proceeding from the profoundest source of the pathos of human life, the transitoriness of man and his works. Completely in accord with the philosophy of his ripest years, however, the poet finds no ground for melancholy regrets in the spectacle of nature triumphing over man's handiwork. Even in her work of corrosion she provides for the welfare of her children; in a home reared out of a ruined temple happy human lives are spent. And it is in the spirit of the broadest humanity—a spirit that marks him off from the sentimentalists of the Darmstadt circle—that he regards the "ruins of time."

Natur! du ewig keimende,
Schaffst jeden zum Genuss des Lebens,
Hast deine Kinder alle mütterlich
Mit Erbteil ausgestattet, einer Hütte.

Nature! eternal engenderer,
Thou bring'st forth thy children for the joy of living,
With care all maternal thou providest
Each with his portion, with his cottage.

In reading this poem we feel the force of the words of the younger Schlosser in which he records his impression of Goethe at the moment when both first made the acquaintance of the Darmstadt society. "I shall be accompanied (to Darmstadt)," he wrote, "by a young friend of the highest promise who, through his strenuous endeavours to purify his soul, without unnerving it, is to me worthy of special honour."[115] The purification had indeed begun, but Goethe had to pass through many fires before the purification was complete. One such fire was immediately awaiting him.

CHAPTER VII

WETZLAR AND CHARLOTTE BUFF

MAY—SEPTEMBER, 1772

DURING the summer and autumn of 1772 Goethe

found himself in a society and surroundings which were in curious contrast to those of Darmstadt; and the next four months were to supply him with an experience which, wrought into one book of transcendent literary effect, was to make his name known, literally, to the ends of the earth,[116] and which may be regarded as the most remarkable episode in his long life. It was as "the author of *Werther*" that he was known to the reading world, until after his death the publication of the completed *Faust* gradually effaced the conception of Goethe as the master-sentimentalist of European literature.

It was mainly as a temporary escape from the tedium of Frankfort that, towards the end of May, 1772, Goethe proceeded to Wetzlar, a little town on the Lahn, a confluent of the Rhine. His settlement in Wetzlar had the semblance of a serious professional purpose, since Wetzlar was the historic legal capital of the Holy Roman Empire, and the seat of the Imperial Court of Justice. If he had any such serious purpose, his experience of the place speedily dispelled it. The place itself he found distasteful; a "little, ill-built town," he calls it, though the modern visitor finds it not unattractive, with its climbing, tortuous streets, reminiscent of the Middle Age, and with its impressive cathedral, one of the most interesting specimens of mediæval architecture to be found in Germany, and still unfinished in Goethe's day. Instead of the spectacle of an august tribunal administering prompt and even justice, what he saw was a multitude of corrupt officials, deluded litigants, and endless delays of law. Wetzlar, in fact, he gives us to understand, destroyed any respect he may ever have had alike for judges and the law they professed to administer. He duly enrolled himself as a "Praktikant,"[117] but, as was the case with the

majority of that class who haunted the town, his legal activity was confined to this step. "Solitary, depressed, aimless," so he described himself to his friends during his first weeks in Wetzlar.[118] Disgusted with law, he found refuge in the study of literature. In a long and rhapsodical letter to Herder he depicts the intellectual and spiritual experiences through which he was now passing. The Greeks were his one preoccupation. Homer, Xenophon, Plato, Theocritus, and Anacreon he had read in turn, but it was in Pindar he was now revelling, and from Pindar he was learning the lesson that only in laying firm hold of one's subject is the essence of all mastery. A sentence of Herder to the effect that "thought and feeling create the expression" had rejoiced his heart as expressing his own deepest experience. Herder had said of *Götz* that its author had been spoilt by Shakespeare, and he modestly accepted the censure. *Götz*, he admits, had been *thought*, not *felt*, and he would be depressed by his failure, were he not occasionally conscious that some day he would do better things.[119]

As in Strassburg, it was at a *table d'hôte*[120] that Goethe made the acquaintance of the youths who, like himself, were idling away their time in Wetzlar. To relieve the tedium of the place[121] they had formed a fantastic society on a feudal model, with a Grand-master, Chancellor, and all the other subordinate officials—the point of the jest being that each associate bore the name and played the part of his office and title. For frolic of all kinds Goethe was ever ready; his taste for practical joking, indeed, as we shall see, occasionally led him to play questionable pranks. Under the name of Götz von Berlichingen he became a member of the brotherhood, and, according to his own account, he

contributed to the gaiety of the proceedings. Among the company, however, there were a few serious persons with tastes kindred to his own, and he specially names F.W. Gotter, Secretary of the Gotha Legation at Wetzlar, as one who, like Salzmann and Schlosser, impressed him by his character and talent. In English literature they had a common interest, and, as a poem which both admired, they each made a translation of Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*—Gotter, according to Goethe, being the more successful in the attempt. Gotter was thus still another of those grave counsellors whom Goethe had the good fortune to discover and attach to himself amid the distracting frivolities of every society he frequented. [122]

"What happened to me in Wetzlar," Goethe writes in his Autobiography, "is of no great significance." But posterity has thought differently, and, if we are to judge by the consequences of what, happened to him in Wetzlar, both for himself and for the world, posterity is right. [123] Be it said also, that contemporary testimony at first hand leaves us in no doubt that, but for his Wetzlar experience, one of the most remarkable phases in Goethe's development would not have found expression, and one resounding note in European literature would have been unheard.

In Leipzig and Strassburg Goethe had found objects to engage his affections, and he was not to be without a similar experience in Wetzlar. During his first weeks there he had seen no maiden to interest him, and the fact may explain his dissatisfaction during that period. After leaving in succession the circles of Sesenheim, Frankfort, and Darmstadt, he tells us, he felt a void in his heart which he could not fill. An accident at length came to fill the void. On

June 9th (the date is carefully recorded) he met a girl at a ball in a neighbouring village (Garbenheim), who "made a complete conquest of him."[124] Her name was Charlotte Buff, the second daughter of an official of the Teutonic Order—a widower with twelve children. Charlotte, or Lotte, as he calls her, was of a different type from any of his previous loves, so that she possessed all the freshness of novelty. Though only nineteen, she had taken upon her the care of the numerous household, and discharged her duties with a motherly tact and good sense which excited general admiration. Over Lotte's personal appearance Goethe is not rapturous as in the case of Friederike; he simply says that she had a light and graceful figure, and in the same cool tone remarks that she was one of those women who do not inspire ardent passion, but who give general pleasure. So he chose to say in the retrospect, but neither his contemporary words nor actions permit us to believe that his feeling to Lotte was merely a calm regard. In the case of Lotte his situation was materially different from what it had been in the case of Friederike. He had no rival in his relations to Friederike; in his relations to Lotte he had one. Shortly after their first meeting he learned that Lotte was already betrothed, though the fact was not known to the world. The successful wooer was Johann Christian Kestner, a native of Hanover, and a Secretary of Legation settled in Wetzlar. Kestner was at every point the antithesis of his intruding rival. He was calm, deliberate, unimaginative, yet conspicuously a man of insight and character, with a fund of good sense and good temper, on which the situation made a large draft. "Kestner must be a very good man," was the frequent remark of Merck's wife in view of the relations of the three parties to each

other, and Kestner's own words prove it. It is in his Letters and Diary that we have the closest glimpse of all three, and all that he says of himself, of Lotte, and of Goethe, shows a tact and good feeling that inspire esteem.

After their first meeting at the ball, according to Goethe's own testimony, he became Lotte's constant attendant. "Soon he could not endure her absence." In her home he made himself the idol of the children; in the beautiful surrounding country they were inseparable companions—Kestner, when his avocations permitted, occasionally joining them. "So through the splendid summer," he records, "they lived a true German idyll." But the testimony of Kestner shows that the idyll was not without its discords. Goethe, he says, "with all his philosophy and his natural pride, had not such self-control as wholly to restrain his inclination.... His peace of mind suffered," and "there were various notable scenes," though Lotte showed herself a model of discretion. The situation was, in fact, an impossible one, and Goethe came to see it. Several times he made the effort to break his bonds and flee, but it was not till the beginning of September that he took the decisive step. Equally from his own and Kestner's account of the circumstances of his flight we receive the impression that his relation to Lotte was such as to make their further intercourse undesirable. The night before he went, according to Kestner, all three were together in Lotte's home, and their conversation, suggested by Lotte, turned upon the dead and the possibility of holding intercourse with them. Whichever of the three should die first, it was agreed, should, if possible, communicate with the survivors. All through the evening Goethe was in deep dejection, knowing, as he did, that it would be

the last they would spend together. The following morning he left Wetzlar without intimating his intention to any of his friends—a proceeding which his grand-aunt, resident in the town, characterised as "very ill-bred," declaring that she would let the Frau Goethe know how her son had behaved.[125] In three brief parting notes he addressed to Kestner and Lotte we have the expression of the mental tumult which his passion for Lotte had produced in him. On his return home, after the last evening he spent with them, he wrote as follows to Kestner: "He is gone, Kestner; by the time you receive this note, he is gone. Give Lotte the enclosed note. I was quite calm, but your conversation has torn me to distraction. At this moment I can say nothing more than farewell. Had I remained a moment longer with you, I could not have restrained myself. Now I am alone, and to-morrow I go. Oh, my poor head!" In the lines enclosed for Lotte he has this outburst with reference to the evening's conversation: "When I ventured to say all I felt, it was of the present world I was thinking, of your hand which I kissed for the last time."

From this record of the Wetzlar episode, directly reproducing the relations of all the persons concerned, it is clear that Lotte was for Goethe more than the pleasant companion he represents her in his Autobiography. If his own words and those of Kestner have any meaning, his feeling towards her amounted to a passion which only the singular self-control of her and Kestner prevented from breaking bounds. Strange as it may appear, neither Lotte nor Kestner regarded one whose presence was a menace to their own peace with other feelings than esteem, and apparently even affection. He parted from Lotte, he says, "with a clearer conscience" than from

Friederike, and the statement is at least borne out by what we know of the sequel to the "splendid idyll." As we shall see, he continued to remain on the most cordial terms with the two lovers, and, though with mingled feelings, he gave them his best blessing on the day which saw them united as husband and wife.

In what has been said of Goethe's relations to Lotte Buff it is the emotional side of his nature that has been before us, but from the hand of the judicious Kestner we have a portrait of the whole man which leaves nothing to be desired in its completeness and insight. Kestner's description of his first meeting with his formidable rival reminds us of the "conquering lord" whose self-assurance evoked Herder's stinging criticism. Stretched on his back on the grass under a tree, Goethe was carrying on a conversation with two acquaintances who stood by. Kestner's first decided impression was that the stranger was "no ordinary man," and that he had "genius and a lively imagination." His final and complete impression, after Goethe had left Wetzlar, he thus records:—

"He has very many gifts, is a real genius, and a man of character; he has an extraordinarily lively imagination, and so, for the most part, expresses himself in pictures and similes. He is himself in the habit of saying that he always expresses himself in general terms, can never express himself with precision; when he is older, however, he hopes to think and express the thought as it is. He is violent in all his emotions; yet often exercises great self-command. His manner of thinking is noble; as free as possible from all prejudices, he acts on the prompting of the moment without troubling whether it may please other people, is in the fashion, or whether convention permits it. All constraint is

hateful to him. He is fond of children and can occupy himself much with them. He is *bizarre*; in his conduct and manner there are various peculiarities which might make him disagreeable. But with children, with women, and many others he is nevertheless a favourite. For the female sex he has great respect. *In principiis* he is not yet fixed, and is still only endeavouring after a sure system. To say something on this point; he thinks highly of Rousseau, but is not a blind worshipper of him. He is not what we call orthodox; yet this is not from pride or caprice or from a desire to play a part. On certain important matters, also, he expresses himself only to few, and does not willingly disturb others in their ideas. He certainly hates scepticism, and strives after truth and settled conviction on certain subjects of the first importance; believes even that he has already attained conviction on the most important; but, so far as I have observed, this is not the case. He does not go to church; not even to communion, and he prays seldom. For, says he, I am not hypocrite enough for that. At times he seems at rest with regard to certain subjects; at other times, however, very far from being so. He reverences the Christian religion, but not as our theologians present it. He believes in a future life and a better state of existence. He strives after truth, and yet attaches more importance to feeling than to demonstration as the test of it. He has already accomplished much; has many acquirements and much reading, but has thought and reasoned still more. He has mainly devoted himself to *belles lettres* and the fine arts, or rather to all branches of knowledge, only not to the so-called bread-winning ones. I wished to describe him, but to do so I should run to too great length, for he is one of whom there is a great deal to be said. *In*

one word, he is a very remarkable man."[126]

CHAPTER VIII

AFTER WETZLAR

1772—1773

IN *Götz von Berlichingen* Goethe had given expression to the ideals and emotions he had brought with him from Strassburg; Shakespeare and the memory of Friederike had been the main impulses to its production. As the result of his experience at Wetzlar, he was filled with a new inspiration, which, though it did not immediately find utterance, left him no repose till it was embodied in a work in which the man and the artist in him equally found deliverance. That the conception came to him shortly after his leaving Wetzlar we have conclusive evidence. In the beginning of November, 1772, after his return to Frankfort from Wetzlar, he received the news that a youth named Jerusalem, a casual acquaintance of his own,[127] had committed suicide as the result of an unhappy love adventure. Instantly, Goethe tells us in his Autobiography, the plan of *Werther* shaped itself in his mind; and his contemporary letters bear out the statement. Immediately on receiving the news of Jerusalem's death, he wrote to Kestner for a detailed account of all the circumstances, and he made a careful copy of the information with which Kestner supplied him. In

point of fact, it was not till after more than a year that *Werther* came to fruition, but that he was in labour with the portentous birth all its lineaments were to show.

But before *Werther* came to birth, Goethe went through another experience which was to form an essential part of its tissue. Merck, to whom Goethe attributes the chief influence over him during this Frankfort period, was again the intermediary. Before Goethe left Wetzlar, Merck had arranged that they should meet at Ehrenbreitstein, where he would introduce Goethe to a family resident there. [128] The family was that of Herr von la Roche, a Privy Councillor in the service of the Elector of Trier, and it consisted of himself, his wife and two daughters. The head of the house, a matter-of-fact man of the world, plays no part in Goethe's relations to the family. It was Frau von la Roche to whom, as a desirable acquaintance, Merck specially wished to introduce his friend, and the sequel proved that he had rightly divined their mutual affinities. The cousin of Wieland, with whom she had had a *liaison* before her marriage, she was now past forty, but, according to Goethe's description of her, she possessed all the charm of youth with the dignity and repose of maturity. What is evident is, that Goethe saw in her the type of a high-bred woman such as had not yet crossed his path. In his reminiscence of her, his words have a warmth which is in notable contrast to the coldness of his portrait of Lotte Buff. "She was a most wonderful woman," he writes; "I knew no other to compare with her. Slight and delicately formed, rather tall than short, she had contrived even in advanced years to retain a certain elegance both of form and bearing which pleasingly combined the manner of a Court lady with that of a

dignified burgess's wife."[129] In addition to these graces, Frau von la Roche had precisely the temperament and the mental qualities that appealed to Goethe in the emotional phase through which he was now passing. She lived in the same world of sentiment as the ladies of the Darmstadt circle, and she had the gift of effusive utterance, as she had shown in a novel in the manner of Richardson which had brought her some celebrity.

With Frau von la Roche Goethe established a Platonic relation which he assiduously cultivated during the remainder of his residence in Frankfort, but there was another member of the household to whom he was attracted by a livelier feeling. This was the elder of the two daughters, Maximiliane by name, a girl of seventeen, whose charms were subsequently to be given to the lady of Werther's infatuation. From what we have seen of Goethe's inflammability, we are prepared for the naïve remark in which he records his new sensation. "It is a very pleasant sensation," he says, "when a new passion begins to stir in us before the old one is quite extinct. So, as the sun sets, we gladly behold the moon rise on the opposite horizon, and rejoice in the double splendour of the two heavenly lights." Be it said that the atmosphere of the household was provocative of relaxed feelings. Goethe was not the only guest. Besides Merck there was a youth named Leuchsenring whose special line of activity had endeared him to a wide circle. Leuchsenring made it his business to enter into correspondence with susceptible souls whose effusions he carried about with him in dispatch-boxes and was in the habit of reading aloud to sympathetic listeners. The reading of these precious documents was part of the entertainment of the circle in which Goethe now

found himself, and he assures us that he enjoyed it. We see, therefore, the world in which he was now moving—a world in which those who belonged to it made it their first concern to titillate their sensibilities, and squandered their emotions with a profusion and abandonment in which self-respecting reserve was forgotten. It was a world wide as the poles apart from that of Sesenheim, where human relations were founded on natural feeling and only the language of the heart was spoken. Once again Goethe had taken on the hue of his surroundings. In Leipzig he had been what we have seen him; now under the influence of Darmstadt he appears in still another phase—to be by no means the last.

From Goethe's connection with the family of von la Roche was to come the occasion which immediately prompted the production of *Werther*, but more than a year was to elapse before the occasion came, and in the interval his own mental experiences were to supply him with further materials which were to find expression in that work. In his correspondence of the period we have the fullest revelation of these experiences, and they leave us with the impression that he spoke only the literal truth when he tells us in his Autobiography that, on being delivered of *Werther*, he felt as if he had made a general confession. The same period, moreover, is signalised by a succession of minor productions which, though they did not attain to the celebrity of *Götz* and *Werther*, exhibit a range of intellectual interests and a play of varied moods which materially enhance our conceptions of his genius.

The circumstances in which Goethe had left Friederike had precluded subsequent communications with her and her family; in the case

of the Wetzlar circle there was no such impediment to future epistolary intercourse. He had left Lotte Buff, as he tells us, with a clearer conscience than he had left Friederike, and on the part of Lotte and Kestner there was apparently no feeling that prompted a breach of their relations with him. For more than a year he kept up assiduous communications with Wetzlar; then his letters became less frequent and finally ceased when changes in the circumstances of both parties effaced their mutual interests. While the correspondence was in full flood, however, Goethe's letters leave us in no doubt as to the real nature of his passion for Lotte; if words mean anything, his memories of her were a cause of mental unrest to which other distractions of the time gave a morbid direction, and which threatened to end in moral collapse.

A few extracts from his letters to Wetzlar will reveal his state of mind during the months that immediately followed his return to Frankfort. Within a week after his return we have these hurried lines addressed to Kestner: "God bless you, dear Kestner, and tell Lotte that I sometimes imagine I could forget her; but then comes the recitative, and I am worse than ever." In the same month (September) he again addresses Kestner: "I would not desire to have spent my days better than I did at Wetzlar, but God send me no more such days!... This I have just said to Lotte's silhouette." In the beginning of November he paid a flying visit to Wetzlar, and apparently had reason to regret it. "Certainly, Kestner," he wrote the day after he left, "it was time that I should go; yesterday evening, as I sat on the sofa, I had thoughts for which I deserve hanging." On Christmas Day he writes still at the same high pitch: "It is still night, dear Kestner, and I have risen to write again by the

morning light, which recalls pleasant memories of past days.... Immediately on my arrival here I had pinned up Lotte's silhouette; while I was in Darmstadt, they placed my bed here, and there to my great joy hangs Lotte's picture at its head." In April, 1773, Kestner and Lotte were married, and Goethe insisted, against Kestner's wish, on sending the bride her marriage-ring, which was accompanied by the following note: "May the remembrance of me as of this ring be ever with you in your happiness. Dear Lotte, after a long interval we shall see each other again, you with the ring on your finger, and me always *yours*. I affix no name nor surname. You know well who writes." A few days later we have the following words in a letter to Kestner: "To part from Lotte, I do not yet understand how it was possible.... It cost me little, and yet I don't understand how it was possible. There is the rub." In the course of the summer Kestner removed to Hanover, where he had received an official appointment, and took his wife with him. The correspondence then became less frequent, though on both sides it was maintained in the same friendly spirit. Only for a time, on the publication of *Werther*, as we shall see, was there the shadow of possible estrangement. "Alienated lovers," is Goethe's remark, already quoted, "become the best friends, if only they can be properly managed"; and Goethe showed himself an adept in this art of management.

While Goethe was pouring forth his confessions to Kestner and Lotte, his circumstances at home were not such as to conduce to calm of mind. Frankfort remained as distasteful to him as ever. "The Frankforters," he wrote to Kestner, "are an accursed folk; they are so pig-headed that nothing can be made of them." With his father his relations had not

become more cordial after his return from Wetzlar. "Lieber Gott," he wrote on receiving a letter from his father, "shall I then also become like this when I am old? Shall my soul no longer attach itself to what is good and amiable? Strange the belief that the older a man becomes, the freer he becomes from what is worldly and petty. He becomes increasingly more worldly and petty."[130] His father's insistence on his attention to legal business was a permanent cause of mutual misunderstanding. "I let my father do as he pleases; he daily seeks to enmesh me more and more in the affairs of the town, and I submit."[131]

In his sister Cornelia, as formerly, he had a sympathetic confidant equally in his affairs of the heart and in his literary and artistic ambitions, but in the course of the year 1773 he was deprived of her soothing and stimulating influence. In October she was betrothed to J.G. Schlosser, who has already been noted as one of Goethe's sager counsellors, and the marriage took place on November 1st. "I rejoice in their joy," he wrote to Sophie von la Roche, "though, at the same time, it is mostly to my own loss." Other friends, also, in the course of the same year, he complains, were departing and leaving him in dreary solitude. "My poor existence," he writes to Kestner, "is becoming petrified. This summer everyone is going—Merck with the Court to Berlin, his wife to Switzerland, my sister, and Fräulein Flachsland, you, everybody. And I am alone. If I do not take a wife or hang myself, say that life is right dear to me, or something, if you like, which does me more honour."[132] So in May he describes himself as alone and daily becoming more so; in October as "entirely alone," and as indescribably rejoiced at the return of Merck towards the close of the year.

CHAPTER IX

SATIRICAL DRAMAS AND FRAGMENTS

IF, during the year that followed his return from Wetzlar, Goethe was distracted by his wandering affections, he was no less divided in mind by his intellectual ambitions. The doubt which had possessed him since boyhood as to whether nature meant him for an artist or a poet remained still unsettled for him. In one of the best-known passages of his Autobiography he has related how he sought to resolve his difficulty. As he wandered down the banks of the Lahn, after he had torn himself away from Wetzlar, the beauty of the scenery awoke in him the artist's desire to transfer it worthily to canvas. The whim then occurred to him to let fate decide whether this was the work for which he was appointed. He would throw his knife into the river, and, if he saw it reach the surface, he would take it as a sign that art was his vocation. Unfortunately the oracle proved dubious. Owing to the intervening bushes he did not see the knife enter the river, but only the splash occasioned by its fall. As the result of the uncertainty of the oracle, he adds, he gave himself less assiduously than hitherto to the study of art. If this were indeed the case, it was only for a time, since the contemporary testimony, both of himself and his friends, shows that during the period that immediately followed his leaving Wetzlar, art received more of his attention than literature. Goethe, wrote Caroline Flachsland to Herder, "still

thinks of becoming a painter, and we strongly advise him to pursue that end."[133] "I am now quite a draughtsman," he himself wrote to Herder in December of the same year; and he tells another correspondent in the autumn of 1773 that "the plastic arts occupy him almost entirely."

Yet, since his return from Strassburg to Frankfort in August, 1771, his literary activity was never wholly intermitted. During the remainder of that year he wrote the first draft of *Götz von Berlichingen*, and in 1772, mainly under the inspiration of the Darmstadt circle, he produced the poems to which attention has already been drawn. In that year, also, he shared in an undertaking the main object of which was to proclaim those revolutionary ideas in literature, religion, and life that inspired the movement of the *Sturm und Drang*. In cooperation with Herder, Merck, and Schlosser, his future brother-in-law, and others, he conducted a journal which, under the title of the *Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen*, expounded these views to all who chose to read it. Merck, and afterwards Schlosser, acted as editors during the year that it existed, but Goethe was its principal contributor. In the preliminary announcement to the first issue (January 1st, 1772) it is stated that the reviews of books will range over science, philosophy, history, *belles-lettres*, and the fine arts, and particularly that no English book worthy of notice will escape attention. Of the successive reviews that appeared, only three are certainly known to be by Goethe, though he must have written or assisted in writing several others. With his usual causticity Herder characterised the manner of the two chief contributors. "You," he tells Merck, "are always Socrates-Addison; and Goethe is for the most part a young, arrogant lord, with horribly scraping cock's

heels, and, if I come among you some day, I shall be the Irish Dean with his whip." Goethe himself, reviewing these early efforts in the light of his maturity, is sufficiently modest regarding their intrinsic merit. He had then, he says, neither the knowledge nor the discipline requisite for adequate criticism. On the other hand, he claims to have given evidence in his notices of books of a gift, which no reader of them can fail to perceive—the gift of instinctive insight into the essentials of the subject in hand. In the business of reviewing, however, he seems to have taken little pleasure. "The day has begun festively," he wrote to Kestner on Christmas, 1772, "but, unfortunately, I must spoil the beautiful hours with reviewing; but I do so with good heart, as it is for the last issue." [134]

To the same year, 1772, belong two short productions of Goethe which deserve a passing notice as exhibiting his strange blending of interests at this period. The one is entitled *Brief des Pastors zu ... an den neuen Pastor zu ...*, and professes to have been translated from the French. The Letter is another illustration of his interest in religion and in the interpretation of the Bible which had begun with his early reading of the Old Testament, and which his intercourse with the Fräulein von Klettenberg and Herder had intermittently kept alive. The theological teaching of the Letter is, in point of fact, a compound of the teaching of these two. Its main object is to emphasise the necessity of toleration in the interest of religion itself, and nowhere was the monition more needed than in Frankfort, where the antipathy between those of the Reformed and the Lutheran communions was such as even to debar intermarriage. Rationalism and dogmatism are equally reprobated, and the sum of all true religion is

found to consist in the love of God and of our neighbour. The strain of mystical piety which runs through the whole production doubtless proceeds from imaginative sympathy and not from personal experience, and is to be regarded only as another illustration of Goethe's facility in identifying himself with emotions essentially alien to his own nature. The other piece, entitled *Zwo wichtige bisher unerörterte biblische Fragen, zum erstenmal gründlich beantwortet*, professing to be written by a Swabian pastor, is still more singular. In the first of the two questions he inquires whether it was the Ten Commandments or the prescriptions of ritual that were inscribed on the tables of stone, and concludes that it was the latter; and in the second he discusses the nature of the speaking with tongues that followed St. Paul's laying of hands on the newly-baptised Christians, and resolves the question in a purely mystical sense.

The year 1773 marks an epoch in Goethe's career, and an epoch also in the literary history of Germany. In that year he made his first appeal as a writer to the great German public which was to follow his successive productions with varying degrees of admiration during the next half-century. Dissatisfied with the first draft of *Götz von Berlichingen* as lacking in dramatic unity, in the beginning (February—March) of 1773 he recast the whole play, which in its new form was published in June. [135] As has already been said, the second form of *Götz* is generally recognised as inferior to the first, but, such as it was, it made the sensation we have seen. With as much truth as Byron, Goethe might have said that "he woke one morning and found himself famous." In 1772 he could be spoken of by an intelligent person in Leipzig as "one named Getté," and even in the

circles he frequented he had hitherto been known simply as a youth of extraordinary promise from whom great things were to be expected. Henceforth his name was on the tongue of all who were interested in German literature, and whatever he was likely to produce in the future was certain to command universal interest.

According to Merck, Goethe's head was turned for a time by the success of *Götz*. During the months that followed its publication, at all events, he was possessed with a wanton humour which spared neither friends nor foes, nor the society of which he had apparently caught the contagion as completely as any of its members. At a later date, Goethe speaks of his "considerate levity" and his "warm coolness"; [136] and in a succession of pieces which he threw off at this time we have an interesting commentary on this characterisation of himself. In these pieces we have an old vein reopened. We have seen how in Leipzig he had burlesqued the professor of literature, Clodius, but in the years that followed his departure from Leipzig—the depressing period in Frankfort and the period of rapid development in Strassburg—there was neither the occasion nor the prompting to personal or general satire. Now, however, in the tumult of his own feelings and in the follies of the society around him he found themes for satirical comment which afforded scope for a side of his genius rarely manifested in his later years. The short satirical dramas produced at this time on the mere impulse of the moment have in themselves only a local and temporary interest, but they derive importance from the fact that they proceed from the same mental attitude which was to find its definitive expression in the character of Mephistopheles—essentially the creation of this period of Goethe's

development. In these trivial exercises he was practising the craft which is so consummately displayed in the original fragments of *Faust*.

The first of these sallies—*Das Jahrmarktsfest zu Plundersweilern, Ein Schönbartspiel*—was written in March, 1773, and was sent as a birthday gift to Merck—an appropriate recipient. Written in doggerel verse, which Goethe took over from the shoemaker poet Hans Sachs, the piece brings before us the motley crowd of persons who frequented the fairs of the time, each vociferating the cheapness and excellence of his own wares. The humour of the spectacle, however, is that the *dramatis personæ* were individuals recognisable by contemporaries in traits which now escape us. Goethe himself appears in the guise of a doctor, Herder as a captain of the gipsies, and his bride, Caroline Flachsland, as a milkmaid. The satire is directed equally against the idiosyncrasies of individuals and against the follies of the time, the sentimentalism which Goethe himself had not escaped, but of which he saw the inanity, the petty jealousies of authors which had also come within his personal experience. A mock tragedy on the subject of Esther, which forms part of the burlesque, is a malicious parody of the French models which he had begun by imitating, but which were now the sport of the youths who led the *Sturm und Drang*.

The *Jahrmarktsfest* is a genial explosion of madcap humour. Not so another succession of scenes produced about the same time. The subject of them is that Leuchsenring whose acquaintance, we have seen, Goethe had made under the roof of Sophie von la Roche. Since then, apparently, Leuchsenring's proceedings had provoked a repugnance in Goethe

which displays itself in a strain of bitterness hardly to be found in any other of his works. It was Leuchsenring's habit to ingratiate himself with households where his pseudo-sentiment made him acceptable, and by questionable methods to make mischief between their members, and especially between the two sexes.[137] Goethe had seen the results of these intrigues in circles with which he was acquainted, and it was to punish the sinner that he wrote *Ein Fastnachtspiel, auch wohl zu tragieren nach Ostern, vom Pater Brey dem falschen Propheten*. Pater Brey, the false prophet, is Leuchsenring, and his sugared speech and shifty ways are the main object of the satire, but other persons are introduced into the piece and exhibited in lights which are a singular commentary on the taste of the time. The victim on whom Pater Brey plies his arts is Caroline Flachsland, who appears under the name of Leonora, and the injured lover is Herder (Captain Velandrino).[138] The Captain, who has been informed of Pater Brey's philanderings with his betrothed, appears on the scene, is assured of her faithfulness, and in concert with another character in the piece (Merck) plays a coarse trick on the Pater which makes him the laughing-stock of the neighbourhood.

Herder had good reason to resent the licence with which his private affairs had been obtruded on the public in *Pater Brey*,[139] but in the same year Goethe made him the main subject of another production which raises equally our astonishment at the manners of the time and at the wanton audacity of its author. In *Pater Brey* the prevailing sentimentalism, as veiling dubious motives, had been the theme of ridicule; in *Satyros, oder der vergötterte Waldteufel*, it was the extravagancies of the followers of Rousseau in their idealisation of the natural man.

According to Kestner, as we have seen, Goethe himself greatly admired Rousseau, but was not one of his blind worshippers, and *Satyros* is a sufficiently cogent proof of the fact. What is astounding is the means he chose to give point to his ridicule. Herder is Satyros, the Waldteufel,[140] who is represented as being humanely received by a hermit (Merck) while suffering from a wounded leg. Satyros requites his host with coarse abuse of himself and his religion, flings his crucifix into the neighbouring stream, and steals a valuable piece of linen cloth. Next by an enchanting melody he cajoles two maidens, Arsinoë and Psyche (Caroline Flachsland), into the belief that he is a superhuman being, and Psyche is so overcome that she submits to his embraces. The people of the neighbourhood flock to him, see in him a new god, and on his persuasion take to eating chestnuts, as the natural food of man—the priest of the community, Hermes, joining in their worship. The hermit appears on the scene, and on his abusing Satyros for the theft of his crucifix, the people decide to offer him as a sacrifice to their insulted divinity. By a stratagem of the wife of Hermes, the hermit is rescued and the bestiality of Satyros exposed. In no way disconcerted, Satyros leaves the throng with flouts at their asinine attachment to their conventional morality as opposed to the free life inculcated by nature. Goethe's later comment on this remarkable production is that it was "a document of the godlike insolence of our youth," and certainly no document could bring more vividly before us the world in which Goethe's genius came to fruition.[141]

Still another piece of the "godlike insolence of youth," though less offensive in its implications, is the farce, *Götter, Helden, und Wieland*, written in the autumn of the same year, 1773. At an earlier period

Wieland had been one of the gods of Goethe's idolatry, but Wieland was now the most distinguished champion of those French models against which Goethe and the youths associated with him had declared irreconcilable war. Moreover, in a journal recently started by Wieland, there had appeared an unfriendly review of *Götz von Berlichingen*. By the publication of a play, *Alceste*, in which he foolishly challenged comparison with Euripides' drama of the same name, Wieland gave the enemy his opportunity. On a Sunday afternoon, with a bottle of Burgundy beside him, as he tells us, Goethe tossed off his skit at one sitting. As a piece of improvisation, it certainly contains excellent fooling. We are introduced to the lower world, where the four characters in Euripides' play, Admetus, Alcestis, Hercules, and Mercury, as well as its author, are represented as in a state of high indignation at the liberties which Wieland has taken with them in his *Alcestes*. Summoned before them, Wieland appears in his nightcap, and has to run the gauntlet of their several reproaches—the purport of them all being that he has foolishly misunderstood the Greek world which he had undertaken to portray. Against Goethe's wish the satire was published in the following year, and rapidly ran through four editions, but Wieland had a genteel revenge. With that *Lebensweisheit* which Goethe long afterwards marked as his characteristic, he published in his review a notice of the burlesque, in which it is recommended as "a masterpiece of persiflage and of sophistical wit." "Wieland has turned the tables on me," was Goethe's own admission; "Ich bin eben prostituiert." **[142]**

These successive *jeux d'esprit* were merely the crackling fireworks of exuberant youth, and were

regarded as such by their author himself. At the very time he was writing them, he was planning and sketching works, the scope of which reveals the true bent of his genius, and of the ideals that were preoccupying him. "My ideals," he wrote to Kestner (September 15th, 1773), "grow daily in beauty and grandeur"; and when he penned these words he was engaged on a production which, though it remained a mere fragment, has justly been regarded as one of the most striking manifestations of his powers. The subject, the myth of Prometheus, he tells us, attracted him as one in which he could embody his own deepest experience and the conclusions regarding the individual life of man to which that experience had led him. In the crises of his past life, he tells us, he had found that no aid had been forthcoming either from man or any supernal power. "We must tread the wine-press alone." Only in one source had he discovered a stay and stimulus, which brought him the sense of individual self-subsistence —in the exercise of such creative talent as nature had bestowed upon him. Of this consciousness, no external power could deprive him, and it is this consciousness that is the governing idea of the fragment, and not the Titanism of the Prometheus of Æschylus. It was, moreover, an idea which permanently accompanied Goethe throughout life, and to which he frequently gave expression in his later correspondence. [143]

As, apart from its intrinsic power, *Prometheus* has an incidental interest in the history of philosophic thought, it may be worth while to sketch briefly the development it attained. When Prometheus is introduced to us, he is a rebel against Zeus and the other gods. He had rendered them allegiance so long as he believed that "they saw the past and the future

in the present and were animated by self-originated and disinterested wisdom," but, on the discovery of his error, he had renounced their authority, and, as an independent agent, he had fashioned images of human beings, to which, however, he was powerless to give the breath of life. In the first Scene of the first Act, Mercury appears as the messenger of the gods and reasons with Prometheus on the folly of his contending with their omnipotence. Prometheus denies their omnipotence either over nature or over himself. "Can they separate me from myself?" he asks, and Mercury admits that the gods are subject to a power stronger than their own—the power of Fate. "Go, then," is the reply, "I do not serve vassals." After a brief soliloquy, in which Prometheus expresses the passionate wish that he might impart feeling to his lifeless images, Epimetheus appears as a second representative of the gods. Their offer, he tells Prometheus, is reasonable; let him but recognise their supremacy, and he will be free of the heights of Olympus, from which he would rule the earth. "Yes," is the reply, "to be their burggrave, and defend their Heaven! My offer is more reasonable; their wish is to be a partner with me, and my thought is to have nothing to participate with them; they cannot rob me of what I have, and what they have, let them guard. Here is mine, and here is thine, and so are we apart." "But what is thine?" inquires Epimetheus; and the reply is, "The circle which my activity fulfils—*Der Kreis, den meine Wirklichkeit erfüllt*." And here follows one of the passages in the dialogue which, as expressing the pantheistic conception of the universe, gave occasion to the quarrel of the philosophers, to be presently noted. "Thou standest alone," is the comment of Epimetheus on the claim to independent self-subsistence asserted by Prometheus; "thou

standest alone; thy self-will fails to appreciate the bliss of the gods—thou, thine, the world and heaven, all feel themselves one intimate whole." Repelled like Mercury, Epimetheus departs, and Minerva, in whom Prometheus acknowledges his sole inspirer and instructress, appears. Minerva, who declares that she honours her father Zeus and loves Prometheus, repeats the offer of Zeus to animate the clay images if Prometheus will acknowledge his sovereignty; but when Prometheus passionately refuses to accept the offer, she bursts forth: "And they shall live! to fate and not to the gods it pertains to bestow life and to take it. Come, I conduct thee to the source of all life, which Jupiter may not close against us. They shall live, and through thee!"

Of the second Act only two Scenes were written. In the first, Mercury, proclaiming in Olympus that Minerva has given life to the clay images of Prometheus, calls on Zeus to destroy the new creatures with his thunder. Zeus calmly replies that they will only increase the number of his servants, and Mercury, changing his tone, prays that he may be sent to "the poor earthborn folk," to announce the goodness and wisdom of the father of all. "Not yet," is the reply. "In the newborn rapture of youth they dream that they are like unto the gods. Not till they need thee will they listen to thy words. Leave them to their own life!" In the second Scene, we see Prometheus in a valley at the base of Olympus, surrounded by the new race of animated beings engaged in business or pleasure. There follow three brief Scenes which are meant to depict the dawnings of human consciousness and the conditions under which life is to be lived. To one he shows how a hut to shelter him may be constructed with the branches he has lopped with the aid of an implement of stone.

In a dispute between two men, one of whom wounds the other and steals his goat, Prometheus pronounces the judgment that the hand of the offender will be against every man, and every man's hand against him. In the third and last Scene we have the most remarkable passage in the poem. Pandora, Prometheus' favourite creation, in dismay and bewilderment, describes the strange experience she has witnessed in the case of a friend, another maiden, and Prometheus tells her that what she had seen was death. What death meant Prometheus explains in the following passage, charged with the sensuous mysticism which was one of the elements of Goethe's own experiences when he wrote it:—

Wenn aus dem innerst tiefsten Grunde
Du ganz erschüttert alles fühlst,
Was Freud' und Schmerzen jemals dir ergossen,
Im Sturm dein Herz erschwillt,
In Tränen sich erleichtern will
Und seine Glut vermehrt,
Und alles klingt an dir und bebt und zittert,
Und all die Sinne dir vergehn,
Und du dir zu vergehen scheinst
Und sinkst,
Und alles um dich her versinkt in Nacht,
Und du, in inner eigenstem Gefühl,
Umfassest eine Welt;
Dann stirbt der Mensch.

When from thy inmost being's depths
Shattered to nought thou feelest all
Of joy and woe that e'er to thee hath flowed,
In storm thy heart hath swelled,
In tears doth find itself relief,
And doth its flow increase;
When all within thee thrills, and quakes, and quivers,
And all thy senses from thee part,
And from thyself thou seem'st to part,
And sink'st,
And all around thee sinketh deep in night,
And thou within thy inner very self
Encompassest a world;
Then dies the man.

To these two Acts Goethe subsequently added, as the opening of a third Act, a soliloquy of Prometheus, written in the following year. In this soliloquy Prometheus appears as the sheer Titan, the burden of his defiance being that Zeus merits no worship from

men to whose miseries he is deaf, and that such worship as he receives proceeds only from human folly and ignorance.[144] By its protest against the conception of the mechanical god who "pushes the universe from without," and by the Spinozistic pantheism which it implicitly proclaims, the ode dismayed the more timid spirits of the time. To the horror of Fritz Jacobi, Lessing, to whom he read it in manuscript in 1780, declared that its conception of the 'εν και παν was his own;[145] and when, in 1785, Jacobi published the poem without Goethe's knowledge, a controversy arose in which Lessing was charged with atheism and pantheism, and which, as Goethe records, cost the life of one of the combatants, Moses Mendelssohn.[146] Be it said that in his old age Goethe himself came to regard the sentiments of the soliloquy as *sansculottisch*, and in the time of reaction of the Holy Alliance forbade the publication of the fragment as likely to be received as an evangel by the revolutionary youth of Germany.[147]

To the same period as *Prometheus* belongs another fragment, inspired by an equally grandiose conception, which, like so many others with Goethe, was never to be realised. The theme of the projected drama was to be the career of Mahomet, and in his Autobiography Goethe has indicated the leading ideas it was to embody. Contrary to the prevailing opinion, which had received brilliant expression in Voltaire's play on the same subject, Mahomet was to be represented not as an impostor but as a prophet sincerely convinced of the truth of his message, and inflamed with a disinterested desire to give his countrymen a purer religion—a view of Mahomet, it may be said in passing, which Goethe's disciple,

Carlyle, was among the first to proclaim in this country.[148] The successive actions of the prophet were to illustrate the influence which character and genius combined have exercised on the destiny of men; but they were also to illustrate how the idealist in his contact with actualities is forced, in spite of himself, to compromise the purity of his original message, and, in consequence, to deteriorate in his own personal character.[149] Of the projected drama we have only two scenes, and a lyric in glorification of Mahomet which was to be sung by two of the characters. In contrast to *Prometheus*, not pantheism but monotheism, and not rebellion but submission, were to be the animating creed and motive of the protagonist. In the first of the two Scenes he addresses in succession the great heavenly lights, but in their mutability he finds no stay or solace for mind and heart, and he turns to the creator of them all. "Uplift thee, loving heart, to the creating One! Be thou my Lord, my God! Thou, all-loving One, Thou who didst create earth, heaven, and me." In the second Scene we have a dialogue between Mahomet and his foster-mother, Fatima, in which he communicates the religious experiences which it was to be his mission to proclaim to his people; and the manner in which Fatima receives them indicates the difficulties he would have to encounter in his *rôle* as prophet. "He is changed; his nature is transformed; his understanding has suffered. Better it is that I should restore him to his kinsfolk, than that I should draw the responsibility of evil consequences upon myself." But, as in the case of *Prometheus*, it is in the lyric that was to form part of the drama that we have the most arresting expression of the poet's genius—another proof of the fact that at this period it was in the lyric that Goethe found the most adequate

utterance for what was deepest in his nature. In a rush of unrhymed, irregular measures it describes the course of a river (the Rhine was in the poet's mind) from its source on the mountain summit, its impetuous progress among the obstacles that bar its passage, its gradually broadening current as it sweeps through the plains, undelayed by shady valley or by the flowers that adorn its banks; and finally losing itself in the ocean with all its tributary streams.

As sung by Ali and Fatima on the death of Mahomet, the ode was an allegory of his life from its beginning to its triumphant close when he passed from the present with the consciousness that he had won to his faith the nation from which he had sprung. But it also undoubtedly expressed the aspiration of the poet himself. The ambition to impress himself on the world, and the consciousness of powers to give effect to his ambition, were indeed the ruling impulses behind all his distracted activities. But he was thwarted in his ambition alike by external circumstances and by his own temperament, and there came occasions when he was disposed to accept failure as his wisest choice. In two poems of this period he gives expression to this mood, and the necessity for overcoming it. In the one, *Adler und Taube*, a young eagle is wounded by a fowler, but after three days recovers, though with disabled wings. Two doves alight near the spot, and one of them addresses soothing words to the crippled king of the birds. "Thou art in sorrow," he coos; "be of good courage, friend! hast thou not here all that peaceful bliss requires?... O friend, true happiness is content, and everywhere content has enough." "O wise one," spoke the eagle, and, moved to deep earnest, sinks more deeply into himself; "O wisdom!

thou speakest like a dove." In the other poem, *Künstlers Erdewallen* ("The Artist's Earthly Pilgrimage"), composed in the form of a dialogue, we have equally a draft from Goethe's own experience. To provide for his family needs, the artist is forced to prostitute his genius by painting pictures for the vulgar *connoisseur*, and he desponds at the prospect of a life spent under such conditions, but the muse whispers consolation: "Thou hast time enough to take delight in thyself, and in every creation which thy brush lovingly depicts." It was a consolation which at this time and at other periods of his life Goethe had to take home to himself.

CHAPTER X

WERTHER, CLAVIGO

1774

IN his fortieth year Goethe wrote to Wieland: "Without compulsion, there is in my case no hope."[150] So it was with him at every period of his life; without some immediate impulse out of his own experience or from the urgency of friends he was incapable of the sustained inspiration requisite to the execution of a prolonged artistic whole. We have seen how he dallied with the subject of *Götz von Berlichingen*, and how it was only at the instance of his sister Cornelia that he concentrated his energies in throwing it into dramatic form. In the case of

Werther we have an illustration of the same characteristic. Shortly after leaving Wetzlar, on hearing the news of Jerusalem's death, there arose in him a pressing desire to embody his late experience in some imaginative shape; and in the course of the following year he actually addressed himself to the task. But his inspiration flagged, and it was not till the beginning of 1774 that a new experience supplied a fresh impulse constraining him to complete the "prodigious little work" which was to take his contemporaries by storm.

We have it from Goethe's own hand that it was a new and "painful situation" that gave him the necessary stimulus to resume his work on *Werther* and to carry it to a conclusion. We have seen how on leaving Wetzlar in the autumn of 1772 he had made the acquaintance of the family von la Roche, and how he had been captivated by the elder daughter, Maximiliane. Since then he had kept up a sentimental correspondence with the mother in which we have occasional references to his continued interest in the daughter. "Your Maxe," he wrote in August, 1773, "I cannot do without so long as I live, and I shall always venture to love her." This was, of course, in the current style of the time, but a situation arose which made such amorous trifling dangerous. On January 9th, 1774, the Fräulein von la Roche was married to Peter Brentano, a dealer in herrings, oil, and cheese, a widower with five children, with whom she settled in Frankfort. Goethe immediately became an assiduous frequenter of the Brentano household, where he was not unwelcome to the young wife, whose new surroundings were in unpleasant contrast to those of the home she had left. But Brentano was not so magnanimous as Kestner, and a fortnight had not passed before there

were "painful scenes" between him and Goethe. On the 21st Goethe wrote as follows to the mother of Madame Brentano: "If you knew what passed within me before I avoided the house, you would not think, dear Mama, of luring me back to it again. I have in these frightful moments suffered for all the future; I am now at peace, and in peace let me remain." [151] He had now gone the round of all the experiences embodied in *Werther*; on February 1st he resumed the discontinued work, and, writing "almost in a state of somnambulism," finished it in a few weeks.

But besides his own immediate personal experience, there went other influences to the production of *Werther* which affected alike its form and its contents. In his Autobiography Goethe has minutely analysed these influences, and the most potent of them he traces to the impression made by English literature on himself and his contemporaries. What impressed them as the prevailing note of that literature was a melancholy disillusion which regarded life as a sorry business at the best, and Goethe specifies Young, Gray, and Ossian as representative interpreters of this mood. In verses like these, he says, we have the precise expression of the moral disease which he has depicted in *Werther*: —

> To griefs congenial prone,
> More wounds than nature gave he knew;
> While misery's form his fancy drew
> In dark ideal hues and horrors not its own! [152]

If English literature contributed to the tone of feeling in *Werther*, it also, though Goethe does not mention the fact, suggested the literary form in which it is

cast. In the case of his former loves, his emotions had found vent in a succession of lyrics thrown off as occasion prompted, but his later experiences had been of a more complex nature, and demanded a larger canvas for their development. It would appear that Goethe's original intention was to adopt the dramatic form which had been so successful in the case of *Götz*, and we are led to believe that, in accordance with this intention, he actually made a beginning of his work. In the interval between his discontinuing and resuming it, however, he changed his mind; and in the form in which we have it *Werther* is mainly composed of letters addressed by its central character to an absent friend. There can be little doubt that the epistolary form was suggested by a book with which Goethe was familiar, and which had been received with enthusiasm in Germany as in other continental countries—Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe* (1747-8). Richardson's example, moreover, had been followed in another work which had achieved as sensational as success as *Clarissa*—Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse*. In form and substance *Werther* was as much inspired by Richardson and Rousseau as *Götz* had been by Shakespeare, yet in *Werther*, as in *Götz*, the world recognised an original creation which bore a new message to every heart capable of receiving it.

The portentous work was published in the autumn of 1774, but the form in which we now have it belongs to a later date. In the first complete edition of Goethe's Works (1787), *Werther* appeared with certain modifications, which did not, however, as in the case of *Götz*, organically affect its original form. [153] Expressions which to Goethe's maturer taste appeared objectionable were altered—not always, German critics are disposed to think, in the direction

of improvement; the story of the unfortunate peasant in whose fate Werther saw an image of his own, was introduced; and, in deference to the feelings of Kestner and Lotte, the characters of the two persons in the book with whom readers identified them were presented in a somewhat more favourable light. [154]

With what degree of similitude Goethe has portrayed himself in the character of Werther must necessarily be matter of opinion, but that his work was essentially drawn from his own experience the merest outline of it conclusively shows. Equally in the case of the two parts of which the book is composed we have the presentment of successive phases of emotion through which we know that he had himself passed when he sat down to write it. The first part, the substance of which was probably drafted in the year 1773, is all but an exact transcript of Goethe's own experience from the day he settled in Wetzlar till the day he left it. Like Goethe himself, Werther settles in the spring of the year in a country town, unattractive like Wetzlar, but also, like Wetzlar, situated in a charming neighbourhood. His first few weeks there are spent as Goethe spent them —in daydreaming and vague longings; finding distraction alternately in sketching, in reading Homer, in intercourse with children and simple people, in contemplations on nature and the life of man, inspired by Spinoza and Rousseau. Then befalls the incident which also befell Goethe: he meets a girl at a ball, and he is overmastered by a passion which changes the current of his life and paralyses every other motive at its source. At the first meeting Werther learns that Charlotte is betrothed, [155] but her betrothed is absent, and, oblivious of the future, he for a few weeks lives in a state of intoxicating bliss. Albert, who, like Charlotte, has in the first part

all the characteristics of his original, at length appears on the scene, and all three are gradually convinced that the situation is intolerable. There are "painful scenes," such as, according to Kestner, actually happened in Goethe's own case; and after an agonising struggle with himself Werther succeeds in breaking away from the enchanted spot, the last conversation between the three turning on the prospect of a future life—a memory, as we have seen, of an actual talk between Lotte, Kestner, and Goethe. So ends the first part, which, with unimportant variations, is a close record of the circumstances of Goethe's own sojourn in Wetzlar.

A tragic end to *Werther* Goethe had before him from its first conception, as is proved by his eagerness to ascertain the details of Jerusalem's suicide. But to justify dramatically such an end to his hero, certain modifications in the relations of all the three characters were rendered necessary, and again his own experience suggested the mode of treatment. In the uncomfortable relations that had arisen between himself and the Brentanos, husband and wife, he found a situation which would naturally involve a catastrophe in the case of a character constituted like Werther. When in February, 1774, therefore, he sat down to complete the tale of Werther's woes, it was under a new inspiration that the characters of Albert and Charlotte fashioned themselves in his mind. Not Kestner and Lotte Buff, but the Brentanos, suggested their leading traits as well as the relations of all parties, which involved the closing tragedy. Albert becomes a jealous and somewhat morose husband, and Charlotte is depicted with the characteristics of Maxe Brentano rather than of Lotte Buff—with a more susceptible temperament and less self-control. [156]

In the opening of the second part the character of Werther is further revealed in a new set of circumstances. Against his own inclinations he accepts an official appointment under an ambassador at a petty German Court, and his helpless unfitness in this situation for the ordinary business of life may be regarded as a commentary on Goethe's own invincible distaste for the practice of his profession. Werther finds the ambassador intolerable; and a public insult to which, as a commoner, he is subjected at a social gathering of petty nobility, drives him to resign his post. After a few months' residence with a prince, whose company in the end he finds uncongenial, he is irresistibly drawn to the scenes of his former happiness and misery. But in the interval an event happens which makes the renewal of old relations impossible. Charlotte and Albert have married, and the sight of Albert enjoying the privileges of a husband is a constant reminder of the hopelessness of his passion. Blank despair gradually takes possession of Werther's soul; in the hopeless wail of Ossian he finds the only adequate expression of his fate.[157] In the commentary which Goethe introduces to prepare readers for Werther's suicide, he suggests another motive for the act besides Werther's infatuation for Charlotte, which Napoleon as well as other critics have regarded as a mistake in art. In his state of mental and moral paralysis, we are told, Werther recalled all the misfortunes of his past life, and specially the mortification he had received during his brief official experience. But on the mind of the reader this incidental suggestion of other motives makes little impression; he feels that Werther's helpless abandonment to his passion for Charlotte is the central interest of the author himself, as it is a wholly adequate cause of the final

catastrophe.

By the fulness of its revelation of himself and by the impression it made on the public mind *Werther* holds a unique place among the longer productions of Goethe. His own testimony, both at the time when it was written and in his later years, is conclusive proof of the degree to which it was a "general confession," as he himself calls it. "I have lent my emotions to his (Werther's) history," he wrote shortly after the completion of his work; "and so it makes a wonderful whole."[158] In one of the best-known passages of his Autobiography he tells how he morbidly dallied with the idea of suicide, and banished the obsession only by convincing himself that he had not the courage to plunge a dagger into his breast. In a remarkable passage, written in his sixty-third year to his Berlin friend, Zelter, whose son had committed suicide, he recalls with all seriousness the hypochondriacal promptings which in his own case might have driven him to the fate of Werther. "When the *tædium vitæ* takes possession of a man," he wrote, "he is to be pitied and not to be blamed. That all the symptoms of this wonderful, equally natural and unnatural, disease at one time also convulsed my inmost being, *Werther*, indeed, leaves no one in doubt. I know right well what resolves and what efforts it cost me at that time to escape the waves of death, as from many a later shipwreck I painfully rescued myself and with painful struggles recovered my health of mind." At a still later date (1824) Goethe expressed himself with equal emphasis to the same purport. "That is a creation (*Werther*)," he told Eckermann, "which I, like the pelican, fed with the blood of my own heart. There is in it so much that was deepest in my own experience, so much of my own thoughts and sensations, that, in truth, a romance extending to ten

such volumes might be made out of it. Since its appearance, I have read it only once, and have refrained from doing so again. It is nothing but a succession of rockets. I am uneasy when I look at it, and dread the return of the psychological condition out of which it sprang."

These repeated statements of Goethe, made at wide intervals of his life, sufficiently prove what a large part of himself went to the making of *Werther*. Yet Werther was not Goethe. From the fate of Werther he was saved by two characteristics of which we have seen frequent evidence in his previous history. It was not in his nature to be dominated for any lengthened period by a single passion to the exclusion of every other interest. No sooner had he left Wetzlar than his heart was open to the charms of Maxe Brentano, and, during the months that followed, her image and that of Lotte Buff alternately distracted his susceptibilities. Byron declared that he was capable of only one passion at a time, but Goethe was always capable of at least two. The other characteristic equally distinguishes Goethe from Werther. "I turn in upon myself," Werther writes, "and find a world—but a world of presentiments and of dim desires, not a world of definite outlines and of living force." Of a "living force" in himself Goethe was never wholly unconscious; the record of his creative efforts during the months that followed his leaving Wetzlar are sufficient evidence of the fact. The intellectual side of his nature—the impulse to know or to create—kept in check the emotional, and proved his safeguard in more crises than the Wertherian period during which, by his own testimony, he so narrowly escaped shipwreck.

The imprint of Goethe's character and genius which

Werther made on the mind of his contemporaries was never effaced during his lifetime, and was even a source of embarrassment to him in his future development. For years after its appearance he found it necessary to travel *incognito* to avoid being pointed at as "the author of *Werther*"; and in the case of each of his subsequent productions the reading public had a feeling of disappointment that they were not receiving what they expected from the writer who had once so profoundly moved them. In truth, probably no book ever given to the world has made such an instantaneous, profound, and general sensation as *Werther*. The effect of *Götz von Berlichingen* had as yet been confined to Germany; on the publication of *Werther* its author became a European figure in the world of letters. In Germany *Werther* was hawked about as a chap-book; within three years three translations appeared in France, and five years after its publication it was translated into English. The dress worn by Werther (borrowed from England), consisting of a blue coat, yellow vest, yellow hose, and top-boots, became the fashion of the day and was sported even in Paris.

Opinion in Germany had been divided on *Götz von Berlichingen*, but the conflicting judgments on that work had turned only on questions of dramatic propriety. The questions raised by *Werther*, on the other hand, appeared to many to concern the very foundations of morality and of human responsibility. Suicide, it was indignantly clamoured, was sophistically justified in the person of Werther, and was clothed in such specious hues as to present it in the light of a natural means of escape from the troubles of life. On the ground of these supposed sinister implications the sale of *Werther* was prohibited in Leipzig under a penalty of ten thalers, a

translation of it was forbidden in Denmark, and the Archbishop of Milan ordered it to be publicly burned in that town. There was, of course, no thought in Goethe's mind of recommending suicide by the example of Werther, but he felt the reproach keenly, and indignantly repudiated it. Yet, when a few years later, a young woman was found drowned in the Ilm at Weimar with a copy of *Werther* in her pocket, he was painfully reminded that the book might be of dangerous consequence to a certain class of minds. [159]

Werther has been described as "the act of a conqueror and a high-priest of art," [160] and of the truth of this description we have interesting proof from Goethe's own hand. In *Werther* he had not only given to the world a likeness of himself; in Albert and Charlotte he had exhibited two figures who were at once identified as Kestner and Lotte, now Kestner's wife. It was not only that domestic privacy was thus invaded, but the characters assigned to Albert and Charlotte were such as could not fail to give just offence to their originals. Yet in the triumph of the artist it seems never to have occurred to Goethe that Kestner and Lotte would resent the licence he had taken with them. On the eve of the publication of *Werther* he sent a copy of it to Lotte, informing her at the same time that he had kissed it a thousand times before sending it, and praying her not to make it public till it was given to the world at the approaching Leipzig fair. It came as a surprise to him, therefore, when he received a letter of reproach from Kestner, protesting against the injurious presentment of himself and his wife in the book. In a first reply, Goethe frankly admitted his indiscretion, but in a second letter he took a bolder tone. "Oh! ye unbelieving ones, I would proclaim ye of little faith,"

he wrote. "Could you but realise the thousandth part of what *Werther* is to a thousand hearts, you would not reckon the cost it has been to you."[161] Lotte and Kestner, from all we know of them, were both persons of sound nature, not unduly sensitive, and, in their hearts, they may not have been displeased at their association with the brilliant youth of genius on whom the eyes of the world were now turned. At all events, neither appears to have borne him a permanent grudge for presenting them to the public in such a dubious light. Though, as has already been said, correspondence between Goethe and them gradually became more and more intermittent, mutual respect and cordiality remained, and in later years we find Goethe in the capacity of sage adviser to the prudent Kestner.[162]

The subsequent influence of *Werther* was at once more powerful and more enduring than the influence of *Götz von Berlichingen*, and Goethe himself has suggested the reason. The so-called *Werther* "period," he says, belongs to no special age of the world's culture, but to the life of every free spirit that chafes under obsolete traditions, obstructed happiness, cramped activity, and unfulfilled desires. "A sorry business it would be," he adds, "if once in his life every one did not pass through an epoch when *Werther* appeared to have been specially written for him."[163] The long series of imitations of Werther—*René*, *Obermann*, *Childe Harold*, *Adolphe* (to mention only the best-known)—bears out Goethe's remark that Wertherism belongs to no particular age of the world, though it may assume various forms and be expressed in different tones.[164] But in Goethe's little book the name and the thing Wertherism has received its "immortal *cachet*." To the intrinsic power of *Werther* it is the supreme tribute that Napoleon,

the first European man in the world of action, as Goethe was the first in the world of thought, read it seven times in the course of his life, that he carried it with him as his companion in his Egyptian campaign, and that in his interview with Goethe he made it the principal theme of their conversation. To the literary youth of Germany, we are told, *Werther* no longer appeals; but such statements can be based only on conjecture, and we may be certain that in all countries there are still to be found readers to whom the record of Werther's woes seems to have been written for themselves. [165]

By a curious coincidence Goethe had hardly made a "general confession" in the writing of *Werther* when he was led to make another "confession" in a work of less resounding notoriety, but equally interesting as a revelation of himself. In his Autobiography he has related the origin of the piece. In the spring of 1774 there fell into his hands the recently published *Mémoires* [166] of the French playwright Beaumarchais, which told a story that reawakened painful memories of his own past. Beaumarchais had two sisters in Madrid, one married to an architect; the other, named Marie, betrothed to Clavigo, a publicist of rising fame. On Clavigo's promotion to the post of royal archivist he throws his betrothed over, and the news of his faithlessness brings Beaumarchais to Madrid. In an interview with Clavigo he compels him, under the threat of a duel, to write and subscribe a confession of his unjustifiable treachery. To avert exposure, however, Clavigo offers to renew his engagement to Marie, and Beaumarchais accepts the condition. Clavigo again plays false, and obtains from the authorities an order expelling Beaumarchais from Madrid. Through the good offices of a retired Minister, however,

Beaumarchais succeeds in communicating the whole story to the king, with the result that Clavigo is dismissed from his post.

We see the points in the narrative of Beaumarchais which must have touched Goethe to the quick. He also had played the false lover to Friederike Brion, who, however, had no brother like Marie to call him to account. It was characteristic of him that, on reading the *Mémoire*, it at once struck him as affording an appropriate theme for dramatic treatment, and it was further characteristic that he needed an immediate stimulus to incite him to the task. He has told us how the stimulus came. As a diversion to relieve the monotony of Frankfort society, the youths and maidens of Goethe's circle had arranged for a time to play at married couples, and, as it happened, the same maiden fell thrice to Goethe's lot.[167] At one of the meetings of the couples he read aloud the narrative of Beaumarchais, and his partner suggested that he should turn it into a play. The suggestion, he relates, supplied the needed stimulus, and a week later the completed play was read to the reassembled circle.

The first four Acts of the play, which Goethe entitled *Clavigo*, are simply the narrative of Beaumarchais cut into scenes, and they contain long passages directly translated from the original—a proceeding which Goethe justifies by the example of "our progenitor Shakespeare." In the first Scene of the first Act we are introduced to Clavigo and Carlos discussing the prospects of the former. Clavigo, who is represented as a publicist of genius, with a great career before him, is distracted by the conflict between his ambition and the sense of honour and gratitude which should bind him to his betrothed Marie, a

sickly girl, by position and character unsuited to be the helpmate of an ambitious man of the world. Unstable and irresolute, he is as clay in the hands of Carlos, who plays the part of the shrewd and cynical adviser to his friend, in whose genius and brilliant future he has unbounded confidence. As the result of their talk, Clavigo decides with some compunction to abandon Marie, and, as his fortunes rise, to find a more suitable mate. In the second Scene the other characters of the play are brought before us—Marie Beaumarchais, her sister Sophie, married to Guilbert, an architect, and Don Buenco, a disappointed lover of Marie. The theme of their conversation is the ingratitude and faithlessness of Clavigo, to whom, however, Marie, dying of consumption, still clings with fond idolatry. At the close of the Scene Beaumarchais appears, breathing vengeance on Clavigo if he finds him without justification for his conduct. In the second Act, which consists of only one Scene, Beaumarchais carries out his purpose and compels Clavigo under threat of a duel to write with his own hand an abject acknowledgment of his baseness. In consistency with his fickle nature, however, Clavigo prays Beaumarchais to report to Marie his unfeigned remorse and his desire to renew their former relations. Beaumarchais agrees to convey the message, and departs under the impression that he has saved the honour of his sister. In the third Act Clavigo and Marie are reconciled, their marriage is arranged, and Beaumarchais destroys the incriminating document. The fourth Act consists of two Scenes. In the first, Carlos convinces Clavigo of his folly in compromising his career by a foolish union, and persuades him to break his pledge, undertaking at the same time to get Beaumarchais out of the way. The second Scene represents the

dismay of the Guilbert household on the discovery of Clavigo's renewed treachery, Beaumarchais vowing vengeance on the double-dyed traitor, and Marie in a dying state attended by a hastily-summoned physician. In the fifth Act the play breaks with the narrative of Beaumarchais, which does not supply material for the necessary tragic conclusion, and is based on an old German ballad, with an evident recollection of the scene of Hamlet and Laertes at the grave of Ophelia. While stealing from his house under cover of night, as had been arranged with Carlos, Clavigo passes the Guilberts' door, where he sees three mourners standing with torches in their hands. On inquiry he learns that Marie Beaumarchais is dead; and presently the body is brought forth attended by Guilbert, Don Buenco, and Beaumarchais. Then ensues a passionate scene in which Beaumarchais slays Clavigo, and the Act closes with expressions of tenderness and compunction on the part of all the chief persons concerned.

In a letter to a friend [168] Goethe explained that in writing *Clavigo* he had blended the character and action of Beaumarchais with characters and actions drawn from his own experience; and this description strictly corresponds with the play as we have it. Though in the first four Acts, as we have seen, the incidents are directly taken from Beaumarchais and many passages in them are simply translations, the characters of the leading personages—Clavigo, Carlos, Marie, and Beaumarchais—are entirely of Goethe's own creation. Moreover, in what is original in the dialogues there are touches everywhere introduced which are not to be found in the original, and which are precisely those that are of special interest for the student of Goethe. Of the play as a

work of art he was himself complacently proud. It was written, as he tells us, with the express intention of proving to the world that he could produce a piece in strict accordance with the dramatic canons which he had flouted in *Götz von Berlichingen*.[169] "I challenge the most critical knife," he proudly wrote to the same correspondent, "to separate the directly translated passages from the whole without mangling it, without inflicting deadly wounds, not to say only on the narrative, but on the structure, the living organism of the piece." In *Clavigo*, at least, he has achieved what he failed to achieve in any other in the long series of his dramatic productions; it proved a successful acting play, and is still produced with acceptance to the present time. Yet from the beginning those who have admired Goethe's genius most have shaken their heads over *Clavigo*. It was to be expected that the youthful geniuses of the *Sturm und Drang* would be wrathful at the apostacy of their protagonist, who in *Götz von Berlichingen* had set at naught all the traditional rules of the drama. But more discerning critics, then and since, have expressed their dissatisfaction on other grounds. There are in *Clavigo* no elements of greatness such as appear even through the immaturities of *Götz* and *Werther*. Clavigo himself is so poor a creature as to leave the reader with no other feeling for him than contempt; Marie is characterless; and the other persons in the play have not sufficient scope to become well-defined figures. And the last Act, the only original addition to Beaumarchais' narrative, is in a style of cheap melodrama which, coming from the hand of Goethe, can be regarded only as a weak concession to the sentimentalism of the Darmstadt circle. "You must give us no more such stuff; others can do that," was Merck's mordant comment on

Clavigo. Merck's opinion may have been influenced by the fact that in the cynical Carlos there are unpleasing traits of himself, but succeeding admirers of the Master have for the most part been in agreement with him. [170]

But if *Clavigo* is not to be ranked among the greater works of Goethe, as a biographical document it is even more important than *Werther*. In the Weislingen of *Götz* he had drawn a portrait of himself, and in *Clavigo* he has drawn a similar portrait at fuller length. "I have been working at a tragedy, *Clavigo*," he wrote to a correspondent, "a modern anecdote dramatised with all possible simplicity and sincerity; my hero, an irresolute, half-great, half-little man, the pendant to Weislingen in *Götz* or rather Weislingen himself, developed into a leading character. In it," he adds, "there are scenes which I could only indicate in *Götz* for fear of weakening the main interest." In *Clavigo* we have at once a fuller revelation of himself and of his own personal experience. He is here, in a manner, holding a dialogue with himself regarding his own character and his own past life. In the first Scene of the first Act we must recognise a vivid presentment of the state of Goethe's own feelings at the crisis when he abandoned Friederike. In such a passage as the following Carlos only expresses what must then have passed through Goethe's own mind: "And to marry! to marry just when life ought to come into its first full swing; to settle down to humdrum domestic life; to limit one's being, when one has not yet done with half of one's roving; has not completed half of one's conquests!" Out of Goethe's own heart, also, must have come these words of Clavigo: "She [Marie] has vanished, clean vanished from my heart!... That man is so fickle a being!" What was said of Werther as the counterpart of Goethe applies,

of course, equally in the case of Clavigo. Goethe was not at any moment the feeble creature we have in Clavigo, yet in Clavigo's inconstancy and ambition, in his womanish susceptibility and the need of his nature for external stimulus and counsel, we have a portrayal of Goethe of which every trait holds true at all periods of his life. In the Maries of *Götz* and *Clavigo*, both betrayed by false lovers, Goethe tells us that we may find a penitent confession of his own conduct towards Friederike. But assuredly it was not with the primary intention of making this confession that either play was written. Both plays, in truth, are evidence of what is borne out in the long series of his imaginative productions from *Götz* to the Second Part of Faust: their conception, their informing spirit, their essential tissue come immediately from Goethe's own intellectual and emotional experience. Objective dramatic treatment of persons or events was incompatible with that passionate interest in the problems of nature and human life by which he was possessed at every stage of his development.

CHAPTER XI

GOETHE AND SPINOZA—*DER EWIGE JUDE*

1773-4

IF we are to accept Goethe's own statement, during the years 1773-4—the distracted period, that is to

say, which followed his experiences at Wetzlar, and of which *Werther* and *Clavigo* are the characteristic products—he came under the influence of a thinker who transformed his conceptions, equally of the conduct of life and of man's relations to the universe—the Jewish thinker, Benedict Spinoza. The passage in which he expresses his debt to Spinoza is one of the best known in all his writings, and is, moreover, a *locus classicus* in the histories of speculative philosophy. "After looking around me in vain for a means of disciplining my peculiar nature, I at last chanced upon the *Ethica* of this man. To say exactly how much I gained from that work was due to Spinoza or to my own reading of him would be impossible; enough that I found in him a sedative for my passions and that he appeared to me to open up a large and free outlook on the material and moral world. But what specially attached me to him was the boundless disinterestedness which shone forth from every sentence. That marvellous saying, 'Whoso truly loves God must not desire God to love him in return,' with all the premises on which it rests and the consequences that flow from it, permeated my whole thinking. To be disinterested in everything, and most of all in love and friendship, was my highest desire, my maxim, my constant practice; so that that bold saying of mine at a later date, 'If I love Thee, what is that to Thee?' came directly from my heart."[171]

What is surprising is that of this spiritual and intellectual transformation which Goethe avouches that he underwent there should be so little evidence either in his contemporary correspondence or in the conduct of his own life. In his letters of the period to which he refers he frequently names the authors with whom he happened to be engaged, but Spinoza he

mentions only once, and certainly not in terms which confirm his later testimony. In a letter to a correspondent who had lent him a work of Spinoza we have these casual words: "May I keep it a little longer? I will only see how far I may follow the fellow (*Menschen*) in his subterranean borings." Whether he actually carried out his intention, or what impression the reading of the book made upon him, we are nowhere told, though, if the impression had been as profound as his Autobiography suggests, we should naturally have expected some hint of it. In his *Prometheus*, indeed, as we have seen, there are suggestions of Spinozistic pantheism, but these may easily have been derived from other sources, and, moreover, in the passage quoted, the pantheistic conceptions of Spinoza are not specifically emphasised. We know, also, that in preparing his thesis for the Doctorate of Laws he had consulted Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, and the scathing criticism on the perversions of the teaching of Christ in that treatise may have suggested certain passages in a poem presently to be noted. [172] Yet, so far as his own contemporary testimony goes, we are led to conclude that in his retrospect he has assigned to an earlier period experiences which were of gradual growth, and which only at a later date were realised with the vividness he ascribes to them. If we turn to his actual life during the same period, it is equally hard to trace in it the results of the tranquillising influence which he ascribes to Spinoza. As we have seen him, he was in mind distracted by uncertainty regarding the special function for which nature intended him; and in his affections the victim of emotions which by their very nature could not receive their full gratification. Nor can we say that his relations to his father, to Kestner, or Brentano

were characterised by that "disinterestedness" which he claims to have attained from his study of Spinoza. As we shall presently see, Goethe was so far accurate in his retrospect that at the period before us he was already attracted by the figure of Spinoza, but it was not till many years later that a close acquaintance with Spinoza's writings resulted in that indebtedness to which he gave expression when he said that, with Linnæus and Shakespeare, the Jewish thinker was one of the great formative influences in his development.

To the same period to which Goethe assigns his transformation by Spinoza he also assigns the original conception of a work in which Spinoza was, at least, to find a place. As has been said, there are passages in the fragments of this poem that were actually written which may have been suggested by the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* of Spinoza, but the general tone and tendency of the fragments are equally remote from the temper and the contemplations of the Spinoza whom the world knows. The dominant note of *Der Ewige Jude*, as the fragments are designated, is, indeed, suggestive, not of Spinoza, but of him who may already have been in embryo in Goethe's mind—Mephistopheles. Mephistophelian is the ironical presentment in *Der Ewige Jude* of the follies, the delusions of man in his highest aspirations.

Near the close of his life it was said of Goethe that the world would come to believe that there had been not one but many Goethes,[173] and the contrast between the author of *Werther* and the author of *Der Ewige Jude* is an interesting commentary on the remark. Yet the subject of the abortive poem, as we have it—the perversions of Christianity in its

historical development—was not a new interest for him. During his illness after his return from Leipzig he had, as we saw, assiduously read Arnold's *History of Heretics*,[174] with the result that he excogitated a religious system for himself. His two contributions to the short-lived Review also show that religion, doctrinal and historical, was still a living interest for him. Moreover, as was usually the case with all his creative efforts, there were external promptings to his choice of the subject which is the main theme of the fragments in question. The religious world of Germany at this period was distracted by the controversies of warring theologians. There were the rationalists, who would bring all religion, natural and revealed, to the bar of human reason; there were the dogmatists, who thought religion could never rest on a secure foundation except it were embodied in an array of definite formulas; and, lastly, there were the pietists, or mystics, for whom religion was a matter of pious feeling independent of all dogma. In the spectacle of these Christians reprobating each others' creeds Goethe saw a theme for a moral satire which, fragment as it is, takes its place with the most powerful efforts of his genius.

Yet, as originally conceived, *Der Ewige Jude* was apparently to have been worked out along other lines. What this original conception was, Goethe tells in some detail in his Autobiography; and, as it is there expounded, we see the scope of a poem which, if the power apparent in the existing fragments had gone to the making of it, would have taken its place with *Faust* among the great imaginative works of human genius. The theme of the poem was to be the Wandering Jew, with whose legend Goethe was familiar from chap-books he had read in childhood. The poem was to open with an account of the

circumstances in which the curse of Cain was incurred by Ahasuerus, the name assigned in the legend to the Wandering Jew. Ahasuerus was to be represented as a shoemaker of the type of Hans Sachs —a kind of Jewish Socrates who freely plied his wit in putting searching questions to the casual passers-by. Recognised as an original, persons of all ranks and opinions, even the Sadducees and Pharisees, would stop by the way and engage in talk with him. He was to be specially interested in Jesus, with whom he was to hold frequent conversations, but whose idealism his matter-of-fact nature was incapable of understanding. When, in the teeth of his protestations, Jesus pursued his mission and was finally condemned to death, Ahasuerus would only have hard words for his folly. Judas was then to be represented as entering the workshop and explaining that his act of treachery had been intended to force Jesus to become the national deliverer and declare himself king, but Judas receives no comfort from Ahasuerus, and straightway takes his own life. Then was to follow the scene retailed in the legend—Jesus fainting at Ahasuerus's door on his way to death; Simon the Cyrenian relieving him of the burden of the Cross; the reproaches of Ahasuerus addressed to the Saviour for neglecting his counsel; the transfigured features on the handkerchief of St. Veronica; and the words of the Lord dooming his stiff-necked gainsayer to wander to and fro on earth till his second coming. As the subsequent narrative was to be developed, it was to illustrate the outstanding events in the history of Christianity—one incident in the experience of the Wanderer marked for treatment being an interview with Spinoza.

In concluding the sketch of the poem as he originally

conceived it, Goethe remarks that he found he had neither the knowledge nor the concentration of purpose necessary for its adequate treatment; and in point of fact, in the fragment as it exists there is little suggestion of the original conception. The title which Goethe himself gave it at a later date, *Gedicht der Ankunft des Herrn*, more fitly describes it than the title *Der Ewige Jude*. Of the two main sections into which the poem is divided, the first, extending to over seventy lines, corresponds most closely to the original conception. In twenty introductory lines the poet describes how the inspiration to sing the wondrous experiences of the much-travelled man had come to him. The note struck in these lines is maintained throughout the remainder of the fragment. It is a note of ironic persiflage which is plainly indicated to the reader. In lack of a better Pegasus, a broomstick will serve the poet's purpose, and the reader is invited to take or leave the gibberish as he pleases. Then follows a description of the shoemaker, who is represented as half Essene, half Methodist or Moravian, but still more of a Separatist—certainly not the type originally conceived by Goethe as that of the Wandering Jew. The shoemaker is, in fact, a sectary of Goethe's own time, discontented with the religious world around him, and convinced that salvation is only to be found in his own petty sect. Equally as a picture of historical Christianity in all ages is meant the satirical presentment of the religious condition of Judæa—of indolent and luxurious church dignitaries, fanatics looking for signs and wonders, denouncing the sins of their generation, and giving themselves up to the antics of the spirit.

But it is in the last and longest segment of the poem that its real power and interest are to be found. Its

theme is the second coming of Christ and his experiences in lands professing his religion. In a scene, compared with which the Prologue in Heaven of Faust is decorous, God the Father ironically suggests that the Son would find scope for his friendly feeling to the human kind if he were to pay a visit to the earth. Alighting on the mountain where Satan had tempted him, the Son, filled with tender yearning for the race for whom he had died, has already anxious forebodings of woe on earth. In a soliloquy, which we may take as the expression of Goethe's own deepest feelings, as it is the expression of his finest poetic gift, he gives utterance to his boundless love for man, and his compassion for a world where truth and error, happiness and misery, are inextricably linked. Continuing his descent, he first visits the Catholic countries where he finds that in the multitude of crosses Christ and the Cross are forgotten. Passing into a land where Protestantism is the professed religion, he sees a similar state of things. He meets by the way a country parson who has a fat wife and many children, and "does not disturb himself about God in Heaven." Next he requests to be conducted to the Oberpfarrer of the neighbourhood, in whom he might expect to find "a man of God," and the fragment ends with an account of his interview with the Oberpfarrer's cook, Hogarthian in its broad humour, but disquieting even to the reader who may hold with Jean Paul that the test of one's faith is the capacity to laugh at its object.

Goethe forbade the publication of *Der Ewige Jude*, and we can understand his reason for the prohibition.[175] To many persons for whose religious feelings he had a genuine respect—to his mother among others—the poem would have been a

cause of offence of which Goethe was not the man to be guilty. Moreover, a continuous work in such a vein was alien to Goethe's own genius. As we have them, the fragments are but another specimen of that "godlike insolence" which, in his later years, he found in his satires on Herder, Wieland, and others.

CHAPTER XII

GOETHE IN SOCIETY

1774

THE publication of *Götz von Berlichingen* in the spring of 1773, we have seen, had made Goethe known to the literary world of Germany, and a figure of prime interest to its leading representatives. Hitherto, nevertheless, with the exception of Herder, he had come into personal contact with no men of outstanding note who might hold intercourse with him on anything like equal terms. In the summer of 1774, however, when *Clavigo* and *Werther* were on the eve of publication, he was brought into contact with three men, all of whom had already achieved reputation in their respective spheres; and all of whom had visions as distinct from each other as they were distinct from Goethe's own. As it happens, we have records of their intercourse from the hands of three of the four, and, taken together, they present a picture of the youthful Goethe which leaves little to be desired in its fidelity, in its definiteness, in its

vividness of colour. During the greater part of two months (from the last week in June till the middle of August) he comes before us in all the splendour of his youthful genius, with all his wild humours, his audacities, his overflowing vitality.

The first of these three notabilities who came in Goethe's way was one of whom he himself said, "that the world had never seen his like, and will not see his like again." He was Johann Kaspar Lavater, born in Zurich in 1741, and thus eight years older than Goethe. Lavater had early drawn the attention of the world to himself. In his sixteenth year he had published a volume of poems (*Schweizerlieder*) which attained a wide circulation, and a later work (*Aussichten in die Ewigkeit*) found such acceptance from its vein of mystical piety that he was hailed as a religious teacher who had given a new savour to the Christian life. At the time when he crossed Goethe's path he was engaged on the work on Physiognomy with which his name is chiefly associated, and it was partly with the object of collecting the materials for that work that he was now visiting Germany. But the personality of Lavater was more remarkable than his writings. By his combination of the saint and the man of the world he made a unique impression on all who met him, on Goethe notably among others. That his religious feelings were sincere his lifelong preoccupation with the character of Christ as the great exemplar of humanity may be taken as sufficient proof. To impress the world with the conception he had formed of the person of Christ was the mission of his life, and it was in the carrying out of this mission that his remarkable characteristics came into play. With a face and expression which suggested the Apostle John, he exhibited in society a tact and address which, at this period at least, did

not compromise his religious professions. Next to his interest in the Founder of Christianity was his interest in human character, and his divination of the working of men's minds was such that, according to Goethe, it produced an uneasy feeling to be in his presence. Be it added that Lavater was in full sympathy with the leaders of the *Sturm und Drang* as emancipators from dead formalism, and the champions of natural feeling as opposed to cold intelligence. Such was the remarkable person with whom Goethe was thrown into contact during a few notable weeks, and who has recorded his impressions of him with the insight of a discerner of spirits. As time was to show, they were divided in their essential modes of thought and feeling by as wide a gulf as can separate man from man, and in later years Lavater's compromises with the world in the prosecution of his mission drew from Goethe more stinging comments than he has used in the case of almost any other person.[176] In the passages of his Autobiography, where he records his first intercourse with Lavater, though his tone is distinctly critical, of bitterness there is no trace, and there is the frankest testimony to Lavater's personal fascination and the stimulating interest of his mind and character.

Relations between the two had begun a year before their actual meeting. Lavater had read Goethe's *Letter of the Pastor*, and his interest in its general line of thought led him to open a correspondence with its author. The reading of *Götz*, a copy of which Goethe sent to him, convinced him that a portent had appeared in the literary world. "I rejoice with trembling," he wrote to Herder; "among all writers I know no greater genius." Before they met, indeed, Lavater was already dominated by a force that brought home to him a sense of his own weakness to

which he gave artless expression. In some lines he addressed to Goethe he takes the tone of a humble disciple, and prays that out of his fulness he would communicate ardour to his feelings and light to his intelligence. Yet in Lavater's eyes Goethe was a brand to be plucked from the burning, and, born proselytiser as he was, he even made the attempt to convert Goethe to his own views of ultimate salvation. In response to his appeal Goethe wrote a letter which should have convinced Lavater that he was dealing with a son of Adam with the ineradicable instincts of the natural man.[177] "Thank you, dear brother," he wrote, "for your ardour regarding your brother's eternal happiness. Believe me, the time will come when we shall understand each other. You hold converse with me as with an unbeliever—one who insists on understanding, on having proofs, who has not been schooled by experience. And the contrary of all this is my real feeling. Am I not more resigned in the matter of understanding and proving than yourself? Perhaps I am foolish in not giving you the pleasure of expressing myself in your language, and in not showing to you by laying bare my deepest experiences that I am a man and therefore cannot feel otherwise than other men, and that all the apparent contradiction between us is only strife of words which arises from the fact that I realise things under other combinations than you, and that in expressing their relativity I must call them by other names; and this has from the beginning been the source of all controversies, and will be to the end. And you will be for ever plaguing me with evidences! And to what end? Do I require evidence that I exist? evidence that I feel? I treasure, cherish, and revere only such evidences as prove to me that

thousands, or even one, have felt that which strengthens and consoles me. And, therefore, the word of man is for me the word of God, whether by parsons or prostitutes it has been brought together, enrolled in the canon, or flung as fragments to the winds. And with my innermost soul I fall as a brother on the neck of Moses! Prophet! Evangelist! Apostle! Spinoza or Machiavelli! But to each I am permitted to say: 'Dear friend, it is with you as it is with me; in the particular you feel yourself grand and mighty, but the whole goes as little into your head as into mine.'"

On June 23rd Lavater arrived in Frankfort, where during four days he was entertained as a guest in the Goethe household. The news of his coming had created a lively interest in all sections of the community, and during his stay he was besieged by admiring crowds, especially of women, who insisted even on seeing the bedchamber where the prophet slept. "The pious souls," was Merck's sardonic comment, "wished to see where they had laid the Lord"; but even Merck came under the prophet's spell. The meeting of Lavater and Goethe was characteristic of the time. "*Bist's?*" was Lavater's first exclamation. "*Ich bin's*," was the reply; and they fell upon each other's necks. On Lavater's indicating "by some singular exclamations" that Goethe was not exactly what he expected, Goethe replied in the tone of banter which he maintained throughout their personal intercourse, that he was as God and nature had made him, and they must be content with their work. "All spirit (*Geist*) and truth,"[178] is Lavater's comment on Goethe's conversation at the close of their first day's meeting.

The following days were taken up with excursions

and social gatherings in which Lavater was the central figure, entrancing his hearers by his social graces and his apostolic unction. In the Fräulein von Klettenberg he found a kindred soul, and Goethe listened, as he tells us, with profit as they discoursed on the high themes in which they had a common interest. If he derived profit, it was not of a nature that Lavater and the Fräulein would have desired. With the religious opinions of neither was he in sympathy, and when they rejected his own, he says, he would badger them with paradoxes and exaggerations, and, if they became impatient, would leave them with a jest. What is noteworthy in Lavater's record, indeed, is Goethe's communicativeness and spontaneity in all that concerned himself. "So soon as we enter society," is one of his remarks recorded by Lavater, "we take the key out of our hearts and put it in our pockets. Those who allow it to remain there are blockheads." [179]

During his stay in Frankfort Lavater was so constantly surrounded by his admirers that Goethe saw comparatively little of him. On June 28th Lavater left for Ems, and it is a testimony to their mutual attraction that Goethe accompanied him. The day's journey seems to have left an abiding impression on Goethe's memory, as he makes special reference to it in his record of Lavater's visit; and, as it happens, Lavater noted in his Diary the principal topics of their conversation. Travelling in a private carriage during the long summer day, they had an opportunity for abundant talk such as did not occur again. One theme on which Goethe spoke with enthusiasm, it is interesting to note, was Spinoza and his writings, but, as his talk is reported by Lavater, there was no hint in it of the profound change which the study of Spinoza had effected in him. It was to

the man and not the thinker that he paid his reverential tribute—to the purity, simplicity, and high wisdom of his life. But Goethe's own literary preoccupations appear to have been the chief subject of their talk. He spoke of a play on Julius Cæsar on which he was engaged, and which remained one of his many abortive ambitions; he read passages from *Der Ewige Jude*, "a singular thing in doggerel verse," Lavater calls it; recited a romance translated from the Scots dialect; and narrated for Lavater's benefit the whole story of the Iliad, reading passages of the poem from a Latin translation. The memorable day was not to be repeated. At Ems, as at Frankfort, Lavater was taken possession of by a throng of worshippers, and the state of his own affairs at home afforded Goethe an excuse for leaving him.

By a curious coincidence, shortly after Goethe's return, there arrived another prophet in Frankfort—also, like Lavater, out on a mission of his own. This was Johann Bernhard Basedow, whose character and career had made him one of the remarkable figures of his time in Germany. Born in Hamburg in 1723, the son of a peruke-maker there, in conduct and opinions he had been at odds with society from the beginning. In middle age he had come under the influence of Rousseau, and thenceforth he made it his mission by word and deed to realise Rousseau's ideals in education. He had expounded his theories in voluminous publications which had attracted wide attention, and the object of his present travels was to collect funds to establish a school at Dessau in which his educational views should be carried into effect. [180] Goethe, as he himself tells us, had as little sympathy with the gospel of Basedow as with that of Lavater, but, always attracted to originals, Basedow's personality amused and interested him. What gave

point to his curiosity was the piquancy of the contrast between the two prophets. Lavater was all grace, purity, and refinement; "in his presence one shrank like a maiden from hurting his feelings." In appearance, voice, manner, on the other hand, Basedow was the incarnation of a hectoring bully, as regardless of others' feelings as he was impermeable in his own. His personal habits, also, were a further trial, as he drank more than was good for him and lived in an atmosphere of vile tobacco smoke. Such was the singular mortal whose society Goethe deliberately sought and cultivated during the next few weeks as opportunity offered.

After spending some days in Frankfort, Basedow, on July 12th, set out to join Lavater at Ems, whether at Goethe's suggestion or of his own accord we are not told. Goethe had seen enough of Basedow to make him wish to see more of him, and, moreover, it would be a piquant experience to see the two incongruous apostles together. "Such a splendid opportunity, if not of enlightenment, at least of mental discipline," he says, "I could not, in short, let slip." Accordingly, leaving some pressing business in the hands of his father and friends, he followed Basedow to Ems on July 15th. Ems, then as now, was a gay watering-place crowded with guests of all conditions, and therefore an excellent field for the two proselytisers. Goethe did not spend his days in the company of the two lights; while they were plying their mission, he threw himself into the distractions of the town, as usual making himself a conspicuous figure by his overflowing spirits and his practical jokes. Only at night, when he did not happen to have a dancing partner, did he snatch a moment to pay a visit to Basedow, whom he found in a close, unventilated room, enveloped in tobacco

smoke, and dictating endlessly to his secretary from his couch; for it was one of Basedow's peculiarities that he never went to bed. On one occasion Goethe had an excellent opportunity of observing the contrasted characters of the two prophets. The three had gone to Nassau to visit the Frau von Stein, mother of the statesman, and a numerous company had been brought together to meet them. All three had the opportunity of displaying their special gifts; Lavater his skill in physiognomy, Goethe the gift he had inherited from his mother of story-telling to children; but in the end Basedow asserted himself in his most characteristic style. With a power of reasoning and a passionate eloquence, to which both Goethe and Lavater bear witness, he proclaimed the conditions of the regeneration of society—the improved education of youth and the necessity for the rich to open their purses for its accomplishment. Then, his wanton spirit as usual getting the better of him, he turned the torrent of his eloquence in another direction. A thorough-going rationalist, his pet aversion was the dogma of the Trinity, and on that dogma he now directed his batteries, with the effect of horrifying his audience, most of whom had come to be edified by the pious exhortations of Lavater. Lavater mildly expostulated; Goethe endeavoured by jesting interruptions to change the subject, and the ladies to break up the company. All their efforts were in vain, and the apostle of Rousseau had the satisfaction of completely unbosoming himself and at the same time forfeiting some contributions to his educational scheme. As they drove back to Ems, Goethe took a humorous revenge. The heat of a July day and his recent vocal exertions had made the prophet thirsty, and as they passed a tavern he ordered the driver to pull up.

Goethe imperiously countermanded the order, to the wrath of Basedow, which Goethe turned aside, however, with one of his ever-ready quips.

The strangely-assorted trio were not yet tired of each other's company, for, when on July 18th Lavater left Ems, both Goethe and Basedow accompanied him. Their way lay down the Lahn and the Rhine, and on the voyage Basedow and Goethe conducted themselves like German students on holiday—the former discoursing on grammar and smoking everlastingly, the latter improvising doggerel verses and the beautiful lines beginning: *Hoch auf dem alten Turme steht*. On landing at Coblenz the behaviour of the pair was so outrageous that all three were apparently taken by the crowd for lunatics. At Coblenz they dined, and the dinner has its place in literature, for both in his Autobiography and in some sarcastic lines (*Diné zu Coblenz*) Goethe has commemorated it. He sat between Lavater and Basedow, and during the meal the former expounded the Revelation of St. John to a country pastor, and the latter exerted himself to prove to a stolid dancing-master that baptism was an anachronism.

On the 20th they continued their voyage down the Rhine as far as Bonn—Goethe still in the same madcap humour. Lavater gives us a picture of him at one moment on the voyage—with gray hat, adorned with a bunch of flowers, with a brown silk necktie and gray collar, gnawing a *Butterbrot* like a wolf. From Bonn they drove to Cologne, Goethe on the way inscribing in an album the concluding lines of the *Diné zu Coblenz*:—

Und, wie nach Emmaus, weiter ging's
Mit Geist und Feuerschritten,
Prophete rechts, Prophete links,
Das Weltkind in der Mitten.

At Cologne they parted for the day, Lavater proceeding to Mülheim [181] and Goethe to Düsseldorf. On the 21st Goethe was at Elberfeld, where his former friend Jung Stilling was settled as a physician. Stilling has related how Goethe made him aware of his presence. A message came to him that a stranger, who had been taken ill at an inn, wished to see him. He found the stranger in bed with head covered, and when at his request he leant over to feel his pulse, the patient flung his arms round his neck. On the evening of the same day there was a social gathering at the house of a pious merchant in the town in honour of Lavater, who had come to Elberfeld and was the merchant's guest. As described by Stilling, the guests, chiefly consisting of persons of the pietist persuasion, were as remarkable for their appearance as for their opinions, and the artist who accompanied Lavater in his travels busily sketched their heads throughout the evening. Goethe was in his wildest mood, dancing round the table in a manner familiar to those who knew him, but which led the strangers present to doubt his sanity. It was apparently during the same evening that there occurred an incident which, as recorded by Lavater, shows us another side of Goethe. Among the guests was one Hasenkamp, a pietistic illuminist, who suddenly, when the company was in the full flow of amicable conversation, turned to Goethe and asked him if he were the Herr Goethe, the author of *Werther*. "Yes," was the answer. "Then I feel bound in my conscience to express to you my abhorrence of

that infamous book. Be it God's will to amend your perverted heart!" The company did not know what to expect next, when Goethe quietly replied: "I quite understand that from your point of view you could not judge otherwise, and I honour you for your candour in thus taking me to task. Pray for me!" [182]

Among the guests who were present at the same motley gathering was the third distinguished personage whose acquaintance Goethe made during these memorable weeks. This was Fritz Jacobi, one of the interesting figures in the history of German thought, alike by his personal character and the nature of his speculations. Goethe and he had common friends before they met, but their relations had been such as to make their meeting a matter of some delicacy. Goethe had satirised the poetry of Jacobi's brother Georg, and in his correspondence even vehemently expressed his dislike to the characters of both brothers as he had been led to conceive them. Three women—Sophie von la Roche, Johanna Fahlmer, the aunt of the Jacobis, and Betty Jacobi, their sister, all of whom Goethe counted among his friends—had endeavoured to effect a reconciliation between Goethe and the two brothers, but eventually it was Goethe's own impulsive good nature that led to their meeting. The Jacobis lived in Düsseldorf, and the morning after his arrival in the town he called at their house, but found that Fritz had gone to Pempelfort, a place in the neighbourhood where he had an estate. Goethe at once set out for Pempelfort, and in a letter to the wife of Fritz he characteristically describes the circumstances of the meeting. "It was glorious that you did not happen to be in Düsseldorf and that I did what my simple heart prompted me. Without introduction, without being marshalled in, without

excuses, just dropping straight from heaven before Fritz Jacobi! And he and I, and I and he! And, before a sisterly look had done the preliminaries, we were already what we were bound to be and could be."[183]

Fritz Jacobi possessed a combination of qualities that were expressly fitted to impress Goethe at the period when they met. Handsome in person, and with the polished manners of a man of the world, he conjoined a practical talent for business with a passionate interest in all questions touching human destiny. About six years Goethe's senior, he was, on Goethe's own testimony, far ahead of him in the domain of philosophical thought. After Herder, Jacobi was indeed the most stimulating personality Goethe had met. While his intercourse with Lavater and Basedow had been only a source of entertainment, from Jacobi he received a stimulus which opened up new depths of thought and feeling.

Both Goethe and Jacobi have left records of their intercourse, and both are equally enthusiastic regarding the profit they derived from it. From the first moment of their meeting there was a spontaneous interchange of their deepest thoughts and feelings, unique in the experience of both. In Jacobi's company Goethe became another man from what he had been in the company of Lavater and Basedow. "I was weary," he says, "of my previous follies and wantonness, which, in truth, only concealed my dissatisfaction that this journey had brought so little profit to my mind and heart. Now, therefore, my deepest feelings broke forth with irrepressible force." After a few days spent at Pempelfort, during which Georg Jacobi joined them, the two brothers accompanied Goethe to Cologne on

his homeward journey. It was during the hours they were together at Cologne that the conversation of Fritz and Goethe became most intimate, and these hours remained a moving memory with both even when in after years divided aims and interests had estranged them. A visit to the cathedral of Cologne recalled Goethe's enthusiasm for the cathedral of Strassburg, but its unfinished condition depressed him with the sense of a great idea unrealised, for in his own words "an unfinished work is like one destroyed." The emotions evoked by another spectacle in Düsseldorf, according to Goethe's own testimony, had the instantaneous effect of his gaining for life the confidence of both Jacobis. The sight which equally moved all three was the unchanged interior of the mansion of a citizen of Cologne named Jabach, who a century before had been distinguished as an amateur of the fine arts. But what specially impressed them was a picture by Le Brun representing Jabach and his family in all the freshness of life, and the consequent reflection that this picture was the sole memorial that they had ever lived. "This reflection," Georg Jacobi comments, "made a profound impression on our stranger,"[184] and the impression must have been abiding, since in no passage of his Autobiography does he recall more vividly the emotions of a vanished time.

The evening of the day they spent in Cologne is noted both by Goethe and Fritz Jacobi as marking a point in their intellectual development. The inn in which they were quartered overlooked the Rhine, the murmur of whose moonlit waters was attuned to the sentiments that had been evoked in the course of the day. In the prospect of their near parting all three were disposed to confidential self-revelations, and the conversation ran on themes regarding which they

had all thought and felt much—on poetry, religion, and philosophy. As usual with him when he was in congenial company, Goethe freely declaimed such pieces of verse as happened at the time to be interesting him—the verses on this occasion being Scottish ballads and two poems of his own, *Der König von Thule*, and *Der untreue Knabe*. In philosophy the talk turned mainly on Spinoza, of whom Goethe spoke "unforgettably." [185] "What hours! what days," wrote Fritz immediately after their parting, "thou soughtest me about midnight in the darkness; it was as if a new soul were born within me. From that moment I could not let thee go." [186] Neither, in the ecstasy of these moments, dreamt that at a later day Spinoza, who was now their strongest bond of union, was to be the main cause of their estrangement. For Jacobi Spinoza became the "atheist," to be reprobated as one of the world's false prophets; while for Goethe he remained to the end the man to whom God had been nearest and to whom He had been most fully revealed.

Shortly after parting with Goethe, Fritz Jacobi communicated his impression of him to Wieland in the following words: "The more I think of it, the more intensely I realise the impossibility of conveying to one who has not seen or heard Goethe any intelligible notion of this extraordinary creation of God. As Heinse [187] expressed it, 'Goethe is a genius from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot,' one possessed, I may add, for whom it is impossible to act from mere caprice. One has only to be with him for an hour to feel the utter absurdity of desiring him to think and act otherwise than he thinks and acts. By this I don't mean to suggest that he cannot grow in beauty and goodness, but that in his case such growth must be that of the unfolding

flower, of the ripening seed, of the tree soaring aloft and crowning itself with foliage."[188]

On leaving the Jacobis Goethe proceeded to Ems, where he again met Lavater and Basedow. On the day following Lavater went home, and Goethe and Basedow remained till the second week of August. On the 13th Goethe was in his father's house, and in a state of exaltation after his late experiences, to which he gives lively expression in a letter to Fritz Jacobi. "I dream of the moment, dear Fritz, I have your letter and hover around you. You have felt what a rapture it is to me to be the object of your love. Oh! the joy of believing that one receives more from others than one gives. Oh, Love, Love! The poverty of riches—what force works in me when I embrace in him all that is wanting in myself, and yet give to him what I have.... Believe me, we might henceforth be dumb to each other, and, meeting again after many a day, we should feel as if we had all along been walking hand in hand."[189]

In the first weeks of October Goethe made personal acquaintance with a more distinguished personage than either Lavater or Basedow or Jacobi—"the patriarch of German poetry," Klopstock, the author of the *Messias*.[190] Since his childhood, the name of Klopstock had been familiar to Goethe. To his conservative father, the *Messias*, as written in unrhymed verse, was a monstrosity in German literature, and he refused to give it a place in his library. Surreptitiously introduced into the house, however, Goethe had read it with enthusiasm and committed its most striking passages to memory. And he had retained his admiration throughout all the successive changes in his own literary ideals. Like all the youth of his generation, he saw in Klopstock a

great original genius to whom German poetry owed emancipation from conventional forms and new elements of thought, feeling, and imagination. Klopstock, on his part, had been interested in the rising genius whose *Götz von Berlichingen* had taken the world by storm, and had signified through a common friend that he would be gratified to see other works from his hand. Goethe had responded in the spirit of a youthful adorer, conscious of the honour which the request implied. "And why should I not write to Klopstock," he wrote, "and send him anything of mine, anything in which he can take an interest? May I not address the living, to whose grave I would make a pilgrimage?" [191]

These communications took place in May, and in the beginning of October Goethe received an invitation from Klopstock to meet him at Friedberg. Owing to some delay on his journey, however, Klopstock did not appear at the time appointed, but, gratified by Goethe's eagerness to meet him, he shortly afterwards came to Frankfort and was for a few days a guest in the Goethe household. From Goethe's account of their intercourse we gather that their intercourse was not wholly satisfactory to either. Klopstock was in his fiftieth year, and his somewhat self-conscious and pedantic manner did not encourage effusion. [192] Like certain other poets he affected the tone of a man of the world and deliberately avoided topics relative to his own art. The two themes on which he expanded were riding and skating—of which latter pastime he had indeed made himself the laureate. Goethe himself was passionately fond of both exercises, but from "the patriarch of German poetry" he might have expected discourse on higher themes. Apparently, however, their relations remained sufficiently cordial, as, when

Klopstock took his departure, Goethe accompanied him to Mannheim. On his way home in the post-carriage Goethe gave utterance to his feelings in some rhapsodical lines—*An Schwager Kronos*—(To Time the Postillion)—which may be regarded as a commentary on his impressions of the great man. Written in the unrhymed, irregular measure which Klopstock had been the first to employ, and containing phrases directly borrowed from Klopstock, they give passionate expression to his desire for a life, brief it might be, but a life alive to the end with the zest of living. It was the sentiment of the youth of the *Sturm und Drang*, which the chilling impression he had received from Klopstock doubtless evoked with rebounding force during his solitary drive home in the post-carriage. [193]

In the same month of October Goethe had other visitors less distinguished, youths of his own age, who came to pay homage to him as their acknowledged leader in the literary revolution of which *Götz* had been the manifesto. We have seen the impressions Goethe made upon his seniors like Lavater and Fritz Jacobi; how he struck his more youthful acquaintances is recorded by two of them—both poets of some promise who had attracted attention by their contempt of conventionalities. It will be seen that their language shows that Goethe's own exuberant style in his correspondence of the period was not peculiar to himself. The first to come was H.C. Boie, an ardent worshipper of Klopstock, and one of the heroes of the *Sturm und Drang*. "I have had a superlative, delightful day," Boie records, "a whole day spent alone and uninterrupted with Goethe—Goethe whose heart is as great and noble as his mind! The day passes my description." The other visitor, F.A. Werthes, who comprehensively

worshipped both Klopstock and Wieland, leaves Boie behind in the exuberance of his impressions. "This Goethe," he wrote to Fritz Jacobi, "of whom from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof and from the going down thereof to its rising I should like to speak and stammer and rhapsodise with you ... this Goethe has, as it were, transcended all the ideals I had ever conceived of the direct feeling and observation of a great genius. Never could I have so well explained and sympathised with the feelings of the disciples on the way to Emmaus when they said: 'Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way?' Let us make of him our Lord Christ for evermore, and let me be the least of His disciples. He has spoken so much and so excellently with me; words of eternal life which, so long as I live, shall be my articles of faith."[194] Apart from its relation to Goethe, it will be seen that Werthes' letter is a document of the time, bringing before us, as it does, the strained and distorted sentiment, sufficiently apparent in Goethe himself, but which he, almost alone of the youths of his generation, was strong enough to hold in check.

In the following month (December) Goethe received still another visit—a visit which was directly to lead to the most decisive event in his life. As he was sitting one evening in his own room, a stranger was ushered in, whom in the dusk he mistook for Fritz Jacobi. The stranger was Major von Knebel, who had served in the Prussian army, but was now on a tour with the young princes of Weimar, Carl August and Constantin, to the latter of whom he was acting as tutor. Knebel was keenly interested in literature, was a poet himself, and an ardent admirer of Goethe. There followed congenial talk which was to be the beginning of a friendship that, unlike most of

Goethe's youthful friendships, was to endure into the old age of both. But Knebel had come on a special errand; the young princes had expressed the desire to become acquainted with the man who had made merry with their instructor Wieland, and whose name was in all men's mouths as the author of the recently published *Werther*. Nothing loth, Goethe accompanied Knebel to the princes, and in the interviews that followed he displayed all the tact that characterised his subsequent intercourse with the great. Studiously avoiding all reference to his own productions, he turned the conversation on subjects of public interest, on which he spoke with a fulness of knowledge that convinced his hearers that the author of *Werther* was not an effeminate sentimentalist. So favourable was the impression he made on the princes that they expressed a wish that he would follow them to Mainz and spend a few days with them there. The proposal was highly acceptable to Goethe, but there was a difficulty in the way. The Herr Rath was a sturdy republican, and had an ingrained aversion to the nobility as a class. In his opinion, for a commoner to seek intercourse with that class was to compromise his self-respect and to invite humiliation, and he roundly maintained that in seeking his son's acquaintance the princes were only laying a train to pay him back for his treatment of Wieland. When the Goethe household was divided on important questions, it was their custom to refer to the Fräulein von Klettenberg as arbiter. That sainted lady was now on a sick-bed, but through the Frau Rath she conveyed her opinion that the invitation of the princes should be accepted. To Mainz, therefore, Goethe went in company with Knebel, who had remained behind to see more of him, and his second meeting with the two boys

completed his conquest of them. Any resentment they may have entertained for his attack on Wieland was removed by his explanation of its origin, and it was with mutual attraction that both parties separated after a few days' cordial intercourse. Thus were established the relations which within a year were to result in Goethe's departure from "accursed Frankfort," and his permanent settlement at the Court of Weimar.

As it happens, we have a record of Knebel's impression of Goethe during their few days' intercourse, which as a characterisation comes next in interest to that of Kestner already quoted. "From Wieland," he writes, "you will have been able to learn that I have made the acquaintance of Goethe, and that I think somewhat enthusiastically of him. I cannot help myself, but I swear to you that all of you, all who have heads and hearts, would think of him as I do if you came to know him. He will always remain to me one of the most extraordinary apparitions of my life. Perhaps the novelty of the impression has struck me overmuch, but how can I help it if natural causes produce natural workings in me?... Goethe lives in a state of constant inward war and tumult, since on every subject he feels with the extreme of vehemence. It is a need of his spirit to make enemies with whom he can contend; moreover, it is not the most contemptible adversaries he will single out. He has spoken to me of all those whom he has attacked with special and genuinely felt esteem. But the fellow delights in battle; he has the spirit of an athlete. As he is probably the most singular being who ever existed, he began as follows one evening in Mainz in quite melancholy tones: 'I am now good friends again with everybody—with the Jacobis, with Wieland; and this is not as it should be with me. It is

the condition of my being that, as I must have something which for the time being is for me the ideal of the excellent, so also I must have an ideal against which I can direct my wrath.'"[195]

On Goethe's return to Frankfort sad news awaited him; during his absence the Fräulein von Klettenberg, whom he had left on her sick-bed, had died. It was the severest personal loss he had yet sustained by death. After his sister she had been the chief confidant of all his troubles, his hopes, and ambitions, and he never left her presence without feeling that for the time he had been lifted out of himself. The relations between Goethe and her, indeed, show him in his most attractive light. He had never disguised from her the fact that he could not share the faith by which she lived; he was, as we have seen, even in the habit of jesting at her most cherished beliefs; but there was never a shade of alienation between them. "Bid him adieu," was her last message to him through his mother; "I have held him very dear."[196] Take it as we may, it is the singular fact that by none was Goethe regarded with more affectionate esteem than by the two pious mystics, Jung Stilling and Fräulein von Klettenberg.

CHAPTER XIII

LILI SCHÖNEMANN

1775

To the year 1775 belongs the third critical period of Goethe's last years in Frankfort. The autumn of 1771 following his return from Strassburg had been the first of these periods, and was signalised by *Götz von Berlichingen*, the product of his contrition for Friederike and of the inspiration of Shakespeare. In the summer and autumn of 1772 came the Wetzlar episode, which found expression in *Werther*; and in the opening weeks of 1775 begins the third period of crisis, the issue of which was to be his final leave-taking of Frankfort.

On an evening near the close of 1774 or at the beginning of 1775, a friend introduced Goethe to a house in Frankfort which during the next nine months was to be the centre of his thoughts and emotions. There was a crowd of guests, but Goethe's attention became fixed on a girl seated at a piano, and playing, as he informs us, with grace and facility. The house was that of Frau Schönemann, the widow of a rich banker, and the girl who had excited Goethe's interest was her only daughter, Anna Elisabeth, known by the pet name of Lili—the name by which she is designated in Goethe's own references to her. The musician having risen, Goethe exchanged a few polite compliments with her, and when he took his leave for the evening, the mother

expressed the wish that he would soon repeat his visit, the daughter at the same time indicating that his presence would not be disagreeable to her.

The houses of the Goethes and the Schönemanns were only some hundred paces apart, but there had hitherto been no intercourse between the two families, and the reason for this isolation is a significant fact in the relations between Goethe and Lili that were to follow. The Schönemanns moved in a social circle which was rigidly closed to the burgher element in the city, and, when Frau Schönemann gave Goethe the *entrée* to her house, it was because he was an exceptional member of the class to which he belonged. In making the acquaintance of the Schönemanns, therefore, he had already to a certain degree compromised himself. [197] In his own account of his relations to Lili he does not disguise the fact that her mother and the friends of the family hardly concealed their feeling that the Goethes were not of their order. In seeking further intercourse with the Schönemanns he was thus putting himself in a delicate position, and the fact that he deliberately chose to do so is proof that his first sight of Lili must have touched his inflammable heart.

During the month of January Goethe became a frequent visitor at the Schönemanns, and there began those relations with Lili which, according to his own later testimony, were to give a new direction to his life, as being the immediate cause of his leaving Frankfort and settling in Weimar. If we are to accept his own averment two years before his death, Lili was the first whom he had really loved, all his other affairs of the heart being "inclinations of no importance." [198] So he spoke in the retrospect

under the influence of an immediate emotion, but his own contemporary testimony proves that his love for Lili was at least not unmingled bliss. Make what reserves we may for the artificial working up of sentiment which was the fashion of the time, that testimony presents us with the picture of a lover who has not only to contend with obstacles which circumstances put in his way, but with the haunting conviction that his passion was leading him astray and that its gratification involved the surrender of his deepest self. As in the case of others of his love passages, his relations with Lili evoked a series of literary productions of which they are the inspiration and the commentary, and which exhibit new developments of his genius. We have lyrics addressed to her which, though differently inspired from those addressed to Friederike, take their place with the choicest he has written; we have plays more or less directly bearing on the situation in which he found himself; and, finally, we have his letters to various correspondents in which every phase of his passion is recorded at the moment.

In Lili Schönemann Goethe had a different object from any of his previous loves. Käthchen Schönkopf, Friederike, Lotte Buff had all been socially his inferiors, and he could play "the conquering lord" with them. Lili, on the other hand, was his superior socially—a fact of which her relatives and friends seem to have made him fully conscious. Moreover, though he was in his twenty-sixth year, and she only in her sixteenth, her personal character and her upbringing had given her a maturity beyond that of any of his previous loves. She was clever and accomplished, and already, as a desirable *partie*, she had a considerable experience of masculine arts. As she is represented in her portraits, the firm poise of

her head and her clear-cut features suggest the dignity, decision, and self-control of which her subsequent life was to give proof. [199]

The first two lyrics he addressed to Lili reveal all the difference between his relations to her and to Friederike. Those addressed to Friederike breathe the confidence of returned affection unalloyed by any disturbing reserves; in the case of his effusions to Lili there is always a cloud in his heaven which seems to menace a possible storm. In the first of these two lyrics, *Neue Liebe, neues Leben* ("New Love, New Life"), there is even a suggestion of regret to find that he is entangled in a new passion. What is noteworthy in connection with all his poems inspired by Lili, however, is that they are completely free from the sentimentality of those he had written under the influence of the ladies of Darmstadt. Though differing in tone from the lyrics addressed to Friederike, they have all their directness, simplicity, and economy of expression. In his Autobiography he tells us that there could be no doubt that Lili ruled him, and in *Neue Liebe, neues Leben*, he acknowledges the spell she has laid upon him with a highly-wrought art without previous example in German literature.

Herz, mein Herz, was soll das geben?
Was bedränget dich so sehr?
Welch ein fremdes neues Leben!
Ich erkenne dich nicht mehr.
Weg ist alles, was du liebtest,
Weg, warum du dich betrübtest,
Weg dein Fleiss und deine Ruh'—
Ach, wie kamst du nur dazu!

Fesselt dich die Jugendblüte,
Diese liebliche Gestalt,
Dieser Blick voll Treu' und Güte
Mit unendlicher Gewalt?
Will ich rasch mich ihr entziehen,
Mich ermannen, ihr entfliehen,
Führet mich im Augenblick
Ach, mein Weg zu ihr zurück.

Und an diesem Zauberfädchen,
Das sich nicht zerreissen lässt,
Hält das liebe, lose Mädchen
Mich so wider Willen fest;
Muss in ihrem Zauberkreise
Leben nun auf ihre Weise.
Die Veränd'rung, ach, wie gross!
Liebe! Liebe, lass mich los!

Say, heart of me, what this importeth;
What distresseth thee so sore?
New and strange all life and living;
Thee I recognise no more.
Gone is everything thou loved'st;
All for which thyself thou troubled'st;
Gone thy toil, and gone thy peace;
Ah! how cam'st thou in such case?

Fetters thee that youthful freshness?
Fetters thee that lovely mien?
That glance so full of truth and goodness,
With an adamantine chain?
Vain the hardy wish to tear me
From those meshes that ensnare me;
For the moment I would flee,
Straight my path leads back to thee.

By these slender threads enchanted,
Which to rend no power avails,
That dear wanton maiden holds me
Thus relentless in her spells.
Thus within her charméd round
Must I live as one spellbound;
Heart! what mighty change in thee;
Love, O love, ah, set me free!

In the second lyric, *An Belinden*, he pictures in the same tone of half regret the case in which he finds himself, and the picture has an eloquent commentary in his letters of the time. He who had lately spent his peaceful evenings in the solitude of his own chamber dreaming of her image had through her been irresistibly drawn into an alien and uncongenial world. Is he the same being who now sits at the card-table amid the glaring lights of a fashionable drawing-room in the presence of hateful faces? For her, however, he will gladly endure what he loathes with his whole soul.

Reizender ist mir des Frühlings Blüte
Nun nicht auf der Flur;
Wo du, Engel, bist, ist Lieb' and Güte,
Wo du bist, Natur.

Now the blooms of springtide on the meadow
Touch no more my heart;
Where thou, angel, art, is truth and goodness;
Nature, where thou art.

So he sang in tones befitting the true lover, but, as it happens, we have a prose commentary from his own hand which gives perhaps a truer picture of his real state of mind. Towards the end of January, when he was already deep in his passion for Lili, he received a letter which opened a new channel for his emotions. The letter came from an anonymous lady who, as she explained, had been so profoundly moved by the tale of Werther that she could not resist the impulse to express her gratitude to its author. The fair unknown, as he was subsequently to discover, was no less distinguished a person than an Imperial Countess—the Countess Stolberg, sister of two equally fervid youths, of whom we shall presently hear in connection with Goethe. It was quite in keeping with the spirit of the time that two persons of different sexes, who had never seen each other, should proceed mutually to unbosom themselves with a freedom of self-revelation which an age, habituated to greater reticence, finds it difficult to understand; and there began a correspondence between Goethe and his adorer in which we have the astonishing spectacle of her becoming the confidant of all his emotions with regard to another woman, while he is using the language of passion towards herself. [200] Here is the opening sentence of his first

letter to her, and it strikes the note of all that was to follow: "My dear, I will give you no name, for what are the names—Friend, Sister, Beloved, Bride, Wife, or any word that is a complex of all these, compared with the direct feeling—with the—— I cannot write further. Your letter has taken possession of me at a wonderful time."[201]

In his second letter to her, while she was still unknown to him, written about three weeks later (February 13th), he depicts the condition in which we are to imagine him at the time it was penned. It will be seen that it is a prose rendering of the lines *An Belinden*, to which reference has just been made. "If, my dear one, you can picture to yourself a Goethe who, in a laced coat, and otherwise clad from head to foot with finery in tolerable keeping, in the idle glare of sconces and lustres, amid a motley throng of people, is held a prisoner at a card-table by a pair of beautiful eyes; who in alternating distraction is driven from company to concert and from concert to ball, and with all the interest of frivolity pays his court to a pretty blonde, you have the present carnival-Goethe.... But there is another Goethe—one in grey beaver coat with brown silk necktie and boots—who already divines the approach of spring in the caressing February breezes, to whom his dear wide world will again be shortly opened up, who, ever living his own life, striving and working, according to the measure of his powers, seeks to express now the innocent feelings of youth in little poems, and the strong spice of life in various dramas; now the images of his friends, of his neighbourhood and his beloved household goods, with chalk upon grey paper; never asking the question how much of what he has done will endure, because in toiling he is always ascending a step

higher, because he will spring after no ideal, but, in play or strenuous effort, will let his feelings spontaneously develop into capacities." [202]

The plays to which Goethe refers in this letter form part of his intellectual and emotional history during the period of his relations to Lili. In themselves these plays have little merit, and, had they come from the hand of some minor poet, they would deservedly have passed into oblivion, but as part of his biography they call for some notice. The first of them, *Erwin und Elmire*, is a sufficiently trivial vaudeville, and appears to have been begun in the autumn of 1773. [203] He must have retouched it in January—February (1775), however, as it contains distinct suggestions of his experiences with the Schönemann family. As he himself tells us in his Autobiography, the piece was suggested by Goldsmith's ballad, *Edwin and Angelina*, and both the choice and handling of the subject illustrate his remark in the foregoing letter regarding the fugitive nature of the various things which he threw off at this time. [204] There are four characters,—Olimpia and her daughter Elmire, Bernardo, a friend of the family, and Erwin, Elmire's lover. Elmire plays the part of capricious coquette with such effect that she drives her despairing lover to hide himself from the world and to retreat to a hermitage which he constructs for himself in the neighbouring wilds. Elmire now realises her hard-heartedness, and exhibits such symptoms of distress as to waken the concern of her mother and Bernardo. Bernardo, however, is in Erwin's secret, and contrives to bring the two lovers together and to effect a happy reconciliation, to the satisfaction of all parties—the mother included. The play was dedicated to Lili in the following lines:—

Den kleinen Strauss, den ich dir binde,
Pflückt' ich aus diesem Herzen hier;
Nimm ihn gefällig auf, Belinde!
Der kleine Strauss, er ist von mir.

This posy that I bind for thee
I cull'd it from my very heart;
This little posy, 'tis from me;
Take it, Belinda, in good part.

There was a sufficient reason for Goethe's praying Lili to take the piece "in good part." In the cruel coquette Elmire Lili could not but see a portrait of herself, and there are expressions in the play which she could not but regard as home-thrusts. "To be entertained, to be amused," says Erwin to Bernardo, "that is all they (the maidens) desire. They value a man who spends an odious evening with them at cards as highly as the man who gives his body and soul for them." In another remark of Erwin's there is a reference to Goethe's own relations to Lili and her family which she could not misunderstand. "I loved her with an enduring love. To that love I gave my whole heart. But because I am poor, I was scorned. And yet I hoped through my diligence to make as suitable a provision for her as any of the beplastered wind-bags." Trivial as the play is, it was acted in Frankfort during Goethe's absence,[205] and at a later date he considered it worth his while to recast it in another form.

Erwin und Elmire was followed by another play, more remarkable from its contents, but by general agreement of as little importance from a literary point of view. This was *Stella*, significantly designated in its original form as *A Play for Lovers*.

Unlike *Erwin und Elmire*, it was wholly the production of this period—the end of February and the beginning of March being the probable date of its composition. Though written at the height of his passion for Lili, however, it contains fewer direct references to his experiences of the moment than *Erwin und Elmire*. Any interest that attaches to *Stella* lies in the fact of its being a lively presentment of a phase of Goethe's own experience and of the world of factitious sentiment which made that experience possible. No other of Goethe's youthful productions, indeed, better illustrates the literary emotionalism of the time when it was written, and some notion of its character and scope is desirable in view of all his relations to Lili.

The drama opens in a posting-house, where two travellers, Madame Sommer (Cäcilie) and her daughter Lucie, have alighted. The object of their journey is to place Lucie as a companion with a lady living on an estate in the neighbourhood. From the conversation of the mother and daughter we learn that Cäcilie had been deserted by her husband, and was now in such reduced circumstances as to necessitate her daughter's finding some employment. On inquiring of the postmistress they gain some information regarding the lady they are in search of. She also had been deserted by one who was her reputed husband, and since then had spent her days in mournful solitude and good works. Fatigued by her journey, Cäcilie retires to rest, and Lucie, carefully instructed not to reveal the position of herself and her mother, sets out to interview the strange lady. During her absence there arrives at the posting-house a gentleman in military dress, who presently falls into a tearful soliloquy, from which we learn that he is no other than Fernando, the

husband of Cäcilie, and that the strange lady is Stella, whom he had also deserted and with whom he now proposes to renew his former relations. Lucie returns delighted with her visit to Stella, and there ensues a bantering conversation between the father and daughter, both, of course, equally ignorant of their relation to each other. So ends the first Act; with the second begin the embarrassments of the difficult situation. Cäcilie and Lucie repair to Stella, and, after an effusive exchange of memories between the two deserted ones, Stella invites both mother and daughter to make their home with her. Unfortunately Stella brings forth the portrait of her former lover, in whom to her horror Cäcilie recognises her husband, and Lucie to her surprise recognises the officer at the posting-house—a fact which she makes known to Stella. In an ecstasy of excited expectation Stella dispatches a servant with the order to fetch the long-lost one, and Cäcilie, retiring to the garden, communicates to Lucie the discovery of her father. In the rapidly succeeding Scenes that follow the three chief persons experience alternations of agony and bliss which find facile expression in many sighs, tears, and embraces. Fernando and Stella, lost in the present and oblivious of the past, melt in their new-found bliss, but are interrupted in their raptures by the announcement that Cäcilie and Lucie are preparing to take their departure. At Stella's request Fernando finds Cäcilie, whom he at first does not recognise. Mutual recognition follows, however, when Fernando vows that he will never again leave her, and proposes that he and she and Lucie should make off at once. Meanwhile, Stella is pouring forth her bliss over the grave which, like one of the Darmstadt ladies, she has had dug for herself in her garden. Here she is joined by Fernando, whose

altered mood fills her with a vague dread which is converted into horror when, on the entrance of Cäcilie and Lucie, Fernando acknowledges them as his wife and daughter. After paroxysms of emotion all the parties separate, and Stella prepares to take her flight after a vain attempt to cut Fernando's portrait out of its frame. She is interrupted in her intention of flight by the appearance of Fernando, and there follows a dialogue in which we are to look for the drift of the play. Cäcilie insists on departing and leaving the two lovers to their happiness. "I feel," she says, "that my love for thee is not selfish, is not the passion of a lover, which would give up all to possess its longed-for object ... it is the feeling of a wife, who out of love itself can give up love." Fernando, however, passionately declares that he will never abandon her, and Cäcilie makes a happy suggestion that will solve all difficulties. Was it not recorded of a German Count that he brought home a maiden from the Holy Land and that she and his wife happily shared his affections between them? And such is the solution which commends itself to all parties. Fernando impartially embraces both ladies, and Cäcilie's concluding remark is: "We are thine!"[206]

Such is the play which, in a bad English translation that did not mitigate its absurdities, provoked the wit of the *Anti-Jacobin*.[207] In Fernando, the central figure of the play, we are, of course, to recognise Goethe himself,[208] and in no other of his dramas has he presented a less attractive character. Weislingen, Clavigo, and Werther have all their redeeming qualities, but Fernando is an emotional egotist incapable of any worthy motive, and it is the most serious blemish in the play, even in view of the factitious world in which it moves, that he is made

the adored idol of two such different women as Cäcilie and Stella. The situation, as Goethe himself tells us, was suggested by the relations of Swift to Stella and Vanessa, but he did not need to go so far afield for a motive. In the world around him he was familiar both with the creed and the practice which the conclusion of the play approves. As we have seen, it was openly held by enlightened and moral persons that marriage, as being a mere contract, was incompatible with a true union of souls, and that such a union was only to be found in irresponsible relations. In the case of his friend Fritz Jacobi, whose character and talents had all his admiration, he had a practical illustration of the creed; for Jacobi had a wife and also a friend (his step-aunt Johanna Fahlmer) in whom he found a more responsive recipient of his emotions. But it is rather in Goethe's own character and experience that we are to look for the origin of *Stella*; it is in truth an analytic presentment of what he had himself known and felt. As we have seen, one object was incapable of engrossing all his affections; while he was paying court to Lili, his wandering desires went out to the fair correspondent who had evinced such interest in his troubles and aspirations. It would seem that he required two types of woman such as he has depicted in *Stella* to satisfy at once his mind and heart: a Cäcilie who inspired him with respect as well as affection, and a Stella whose self-abandonment left his passions their free course.

Nauseous as *Stella* must appear to the modern reader, it found wide acceptance at the period it was written, though its moral was generally condemned. Herder was enthusiastic in its praise, and on its publication at the end of January, 1776, it passed through four editions in a single week. In 1805, with

its altered *dénouement*, in which the hero shoots himself, it was performed with applause in Berlin, and was afterwards frequently produced. Goethe himself continued to retain a singular affection for the most sickly sentimental of all his literary offspring, and he subsequently sent a copy of his work to Lili, accompanied by some lines which were worthy of a better gift. [209]

Im holden Thal, auf schneebedeckten Höhen
War stets dein Bild mir nah!
Ich sah's um mich in lichten Wolken wehen;
Im Herzen war mir's da.
Empfinde hier, wie mit allmächt'gem Triebe
Ein Herz das andre zieht,
Und dass vergebens Liebe
Vor Liebe flieht.

In the dear vale, on heights the snow had covered,
Still was thine image near;
I saw it round me in the bright clouds hover;
My heart beheld it there.
Here learn to feel with what resistless power
One heart the other ties;
That vain it is when lover
From lover flies.

Still another piece belongs to the first months of Goethe's relations to Lili—*Claudine von Villa Bella*, which appears to have been written intermittently in April and May. Like *Erwin und Elmire* it is in operatic form—the prose dialogue being diversified with outbursts of song. Entirely trivial as a work of art, it calls for passing notice only on account of certain characteristics which distinguish it as a product of the period when it was written. The intention of the

play, Goethe wrote at a later time, was to exhibit "noble sentiments in association with adventurous actions," and the conduct of his hero and heroine is certainly unconventional, if their feelings are exalted. Claudine is the only daughter of a fond and widowed father, and her dreamy emotionalism would have made her a welcome member of the Darmstadt circle of ladies. She is in love with Pedro, but Pedro is not the hero of the piece. That place is assigned to his eldest brother Crugantino, a scapegrace, with a noble heart, who, finding the ordinary bonds of society too confined for him, has taken to highway robbery. "Your burgher life," he says—and we know that he is here uttering Goethe's own sentiments—"your burgher life is to me intolerable. There, whether I give myself to work or enjoyment, slavery is my lot. Is it not a better choice for one of decent merit to plunge into the world? Pardon me! I don't give a ready ear to the opinion of other people, but pardon me if I let you know mine. I will grant you that if once one takes to a roving life, no goal and no restraints exist for him; for our heart —ah! it is infinite in its desires so long as its strength remains to it." Crugantino, who with his band is housed at a wretched inn in the neighbourhood, catches sight of Claudine, is bewitched by her beauty, and resolves to gain possession of her. On a beautiful moonlight night, attended by only one companion, he makes his adventurous attempt. Of the charivari that follows it is only necessary to say that Pedro is wounded in a hand-to-hand encounter by his unknown brother Crugantino, and is conveyed to the inn where the band have their quarters. And now comes the turn of Claudine to show her disregard of conventionalities. In agonies for her wounded lover, she dons male attire, and in the

middle of the night sets out for the inn where he is lying. She encounters Crugantino at the door, and their dialogue is overheard by the wounded Pedro who rushes forth to rescue her. A duel ensues between Pedro and Crugantino; the watch appears, and all parties are conveyed to the village prison. Here they are found by the distracted father and his friend Sebastian, and a general explanation follows—Pedro being made secure of Claudine, and Crugantino showing himself a repentant sinner. With this fantastic production, which, beginning in an atmosphere of pure sentiment, ends in broad farce, Goethe was even in middle life so satisfied that he recast it in verse, and made other alterations which in the opinion of most critics did not improve the original. [210]

The triviality of these successive performances, so void of the mind and heart displayed in the fragmentary *Prometheus* and *Der Ewige Jude*, have their commentary in his continued relations to Lili Schönemann. They even raise the question whether his passion for her were really so consuming as in his old age he declared it to have been. They at least speak a very different language from that of the simple lyrics in which he expressed his love for Friederike Brion. Yet when we turn to his correspondence, written on the inspiration of the moment, we find all the indications of a genuinely distracted lover.

During the month of March we are to believe that he underwent all the pangs of a passionate wooer. Surrounded by numerous admirers, Lili was difficult of access, and apparently took some pleasure in reminding him that he was only one among others. [211] "Oh! if I did not compose dramas," he wrote on

the 6th to his confidant the Countess, "I should be shipwrecked." A few days of unalloyed bliss he did enjoy, and the length at which he records them in his Autobiography shows that they remained a vivid memory with him. In the course of the month Lili spent some time with an uncle at Offenbach on the Main, and, joining her there, Goethe found her all that his heart could wish. "Take the girl to your heart; it will be good for you both," he wrote out of his bliss to his other female confidant, Johanna Fahlmer.[212]

On their return to Frankfort, however, his former griefs were renewed, and a new distraction was added to them. "I am delighted that you are so enamoured of my *Stella*," he writes to Fritz Jacobi on March 21st, immediately after his return; "my heart and mind are now turned in such entirely different directions that my own flesh and blood is almost indifferent to me. I can tell you nothing, for what is there that can be said? I will not even think either of to-morrow or of the day after to-morrow."[213] The truth is that, as he tells us in his Autobiography, he was now in an embarrassing position. His relations to Lili had become such that a decisive step was necessary in the interests of both. During the last fortnight of March his mood was certainly not that of a happy lover. To break with Lili was a step which circumstances as well as his own attachment to her made a dire alternative. On the other hand, from the bond of marriage, as we know, he shrank with every instinct of his nature. Only a few weeks before, doubtless with his own possible fate in front of him, he had put these words in the mouth of Fernando in his *Stella*: "I would be a fool to allow myself to be shackled. That state [marriage] smothers all my

powers; that state robs me of all my spirits, cramps my whole being. I must forth into the free world."[214] Goethe did eventually take the decision of Fernando, but not just yet. On March 25th he wrote to Herder: "It seems as if the twisted threads on which my fate hangs, and which I have so long shaken to and fro in oscillating rotation, would at last unite."[215] On the 29th, Klopstock, who had come on a few days' visit to Frankfort, found him in "strange agitation." As so often happened in Goethe's life, it was an accident that determined his wavering purpose. In the beginning of April there came to Frankfort a Mademoiselle Delf, an old friend of the Schönemann family, whom Goethe made acquainted with his father and mother. A person of strenuous character, she took it upon her to bring matters to a point between the two households. With the consent of Lili's mother, she brought Lili one evening to the Goethe house. "Take each other by the hand," she said in commanding tones; and the two lovers obeyed and embraced. "It was a remarkable decree of the powers that rule us," is the characteristic reflection of the aged Goethe, "that in the course of my singular career I should also experience the feelings of one betrothed."

Goethe's feelings as a betrothed were from the first of a mingled nature. No sooner had he given his pledge than all the complications which must result from his union with Lili stared him in the face. Even after the betrothal the relations between the two families did not become more cordial. Not only were they divided by difference of social standing; a deeper ground of mutual antagonism lay in their religion. The Schönemanns belonged to the Reformed persuasion, the Protestantism of the higher classes, while the Goethes were Lutheran, as were the majority of the

class to which they belonged; and between the two denominations there was bitter and permanent estrangement.[216] And there was still another stumbling-block in the way of a probable happy union. Goethe was not earning an independent income, and, in the event of his marriage, he and his bride would have to take up their quarters under his parental roof. But, accustomed to the gay pleasures of a fashionable circle, how would Lili accommodate herself to the homely ways and surroundings of the Goethe household? Moreover, we have it from Goethe himself that Lili was distasteful equally to his father and mother—the former sarcastically speaking of her as "Die Stadtdame." Such, he realised, was the future before him as the husband of Lili; and he had no sooner bound himself to her than he was reduced to distraction by conflicting desires. In some words he wrote to Herder within a fortnight after his betrothal we have a glimpse of his state of mind. "A short time ago," he wrote, "I was under the delusion that I was approaching the haven of domestic bliss and a sure footing in the realities of earthly joy and sorrow, but I am again in unhappy wise cast forth on the wide sea."[217] He was already, in fact, contemplating the desirability of bursting his bond; and an opportunity came to assist him in his resolve.

In the second week of May there came to Frankfort three youths whose rank and personal character created a flutter in the Goethe household. Two of them were the brothers of the Countess Stolberg,[218] with whom Goethe had been carrying on his platonic correspondence during the previous months, and were on their way to a tour in Switzerland. All were enthusiastic adherents of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, and Goethe had long been the object of their distant adoration. They were not disappointed

in their idol, and the first meeting, according to both Stolbergs, sufficed to establish a general union of hearts. "Goethe," wrote the elder, "is a delightful fellow. The fulness of fervid sensibility streams out of his every word and feature."[219] During the few days they spent in Frankfort the three scions of nobility were frequent guests in the Goethe house, and their talk must have been enlivening if we may judge from the specimen of it recorded by Goethe himself. The conversation had turned on the ill-deeds of tyrants, a favourite theme with the youth of the time, and, heated with wine, the three youths expressed a vehement desire for the blood of all such. The Herr Rath smiled and shook his head, but his helpmate hastily ran to the wine-cellar and produced a bottle of her best, exclaiming, "Here is the true tyrant's blood. Feast on it, but let no murderous thoughts go forth from my house."

In the company of these choice spirits Goethe decided to leave Frankfort for a time, and with the set resolve, if possible, to efface all thoughts of Lili. Characteristically he did not take a formal leave of her, a proceeding which was naturally resented both by herself and her relatives. The quartette started on May 14th, and from the first they made it appear that they meant to travel as four geniuses who set at naught all accepted conventions.[220] Before departing they all procured Werther costume—blue coat, yellow waistcoat and hose and round grey hat; and in this array they disported themselves throughout their travels. Darmstadt was their first halting-place, and at the Court there they conducted themselves with some regard to decorum. Outside its precincts, however, they gave full rein to their eccentricities, and so scandalised the Darmstadters by publicly bathing in a pond in the neighbourhood

that they found it advisable to beat a hasty retreat from the town. In Darmstadt Goethe had met his old mentor, Merck, who with his usual caustic frankness told him that he was making a fool of himself in keeping company with such madcaps.[221] At Mannheim, their next stage, the whole party signalised themselves by smashing the wine-glasses from which they had drunk to the ladylove of the younger Stolberg. The presence of distinguished personages at Carlsruhe, their next stage, kept their vivacity within bounds so long as they remained there. Just at this moment the young Duke of Weimar had come to Carlsruhe to betroth himself to the Princess Luise of Hesse-Darmstadt, and from both Goethe received a cordial invitation to visit them at Weimar. Another distinguished person then in the town was Klopstock, who received Goethe with such undisguised kindness that he was induced to read aloud to him the latest scenes of a work of which we shall hear presently.[222] At Carlsruhe Goethe parted company from his fellow-travellers with the intention of visiting his sister at Emmendingen. On May 22nd he was at Strassburg, where he spent several days, renewing old acquaintances, especially with his former monitor, Salzmann, but, for reasons we can appreciate, did not present himself at Sesenheim.

From Strassburg he proceeded to Emmendingen, where he spent the first week of June with his sister, whom he had not seen since her marriage with Schlosser. For various reasons he had looked forward to their meeting with painful feelings. He knew that she had been unhappy in her marriage, and must expect to find her naturally depressed temper soured by her conjugal experience. Their main theme of conversation was his betrothal to Lili, and it was

with a vehemence born of her own bitter experience that Cornelia urged him to break off a connection which the relations of all immediately concerned too surely foreboded must end in disaster. The warning of Cornelia, we might have expected, should have been welcome as confirming his own struggling attempts to break loose from his bonds, but, if his later memories did not betray him, it only laid a heavier load on his heart. His real state of mind at the time we have in a letter to Johanna Fahlmer, written while he was still with his sister. "I feel," he wrote, "that the chief aim of my journey has failed, and when I return it will be worse for the Bear [223] than before. I know well that I am a fool, but for that very reason I am I." [224] The parting of the brother and sister—and the parting was to be for ever [225]—must have been with heavy misgivings for both. To her brother alone had Cornelia been bound by any tender tie; he alone of her family had understood and sympathised with her singular temperament, and her greatest happiness had been derived from following his career of brilliant promise and achievement. It must, therefore, have been with dark forebodings that she saw before him the possibility of a union which in her eyes must be fatal alike to his peace of mind and the development of his genius. On his side, also, Goethe must have parted from his sister with the sad conviction that the gloom that lay upon her life could never be lifted. She had been the one never-failing confidant equally of the troubles of his heart and of his intellectual ambitions, and it was from her that in his present distraction he had naturally sought sympathy and counsel. It is with the tenderest touch that in his reminiscent record of this their last meeting he depicts her "problematical" nature, and pays his tribute to all that she had been

to him.[226]

It had been Goethe's original intention to end his travels with the visit to his sister, but, as their main object was as far off as ever, he decided to rejoin his late companions and to accompany them to Switzerland. By way of Schaffhausen they proceeded to Zurich, where Goethe's first act was to seek Lavater. Their talk during his stay in Zurich mainly turned on Lavater's great work on Physiognomy, to which Goethe had continuously contributed by help and counsel, though from the first he was sceptical of its scientific value. Their intercourse was as cordial as it had been in the previous year, and Lavater was subjugated more than ever by the personality of Goethe. "Who can think more differently than Goethe and I," he wrote to Wieland, who was still suspicious of his youthful adversary, "and yet we are devoted to each other.... You will be astonished at the man who unites the fury of the lion with the gentleness of the lamb. I have seen no one at once firmer in purpose and more easily led.... Goethe is the most lovable, most affable, most charming of fellows."[227]

In Zurich happened what Merck had foreseen. Goethe had grown tired of his over-exuberant fellow-travellers, whose ways, moreover, did not commend them to the sensitive Lavater. Goethe himself indeed was capable of wild enough pranks, but behind his wild humours lay ever the "serious striving" which was the regulative force of his nature, and which Lavater had recognised from the beginning of their intercourse. A lucky accident gave Goethe the opportunity of escaping from his late comrades without an open breach. In Zurich he found a friend whom he had looked forward to meeting there. This was a native of Frankfort, Passavant by name, who

was settled in Switzerland as a Reformed pastor. Passavant was a man of intelligence and attractive character, and when he proposed that they should make a tour together through the smaller Swiss Cantons, Goethe jumped at the suggestion.

From Goethe's own narrative of his tour with Passavant we are to infer that the distracting image of Lili was never absent from his mind, and that all the glories of the scenery through which they passed were only its background seen through the haze of his wandering imaginations. And the testimony of the prose narrative in his Autobiography is confirmed by the successive lyrics, prompted by the intrusive image of Lili, which fell from him by the way. In the following lines, composed on the Lake of Zurich on the first morning of their journey, he clothes in poetical form the confession he had made to Johanna Fahlmer from Emmendingen:—

Und frische Nahrung, neues Blut
Saug' ich aus freier Welt;
Wie ist Natur so hold und gut,
Die mich am Busen hält!

Die Welle wieget unsern Kahn
Im Rudertakt hinauf,
Und Berge, wolkig himmelan,
Begegnen unserm Lauf.

Aug', mein Aug', was sinkst du nieder?
Goldne Träume, kommt ihr wieder?
Weg, du Traum! so Gold du bist;
Hier auch Lieb' und Leben ist.

Auf der Welle blinken
Tausend schwebende Sterne;
Weiche Nebel trinken
Rings die türmende Ferne;

Morgenwind umflügelt
Die beschattete Bucht,
Und im See bespiegelt
Sich die reifende Frucht.

Fresh cheer and quickened blood I suck
From this wide world and free;
How dear is Nature and how good!
A mother unto me!

Rocked by the wavelets speeds our skiff
To the oar's measured beat;
Cloudclapt, the heaven-aspiring hills
Appear our course to meet.

Why sink my eyelids as I gaze?

Ye golden dreams of other days,
Come ye again? Though ne'er so dear,
Begone! Are life and love not here?

The o'erhanging stars are twinkling
In myriads on the mere;
In floating mists enfolded
The far heights disappear.

The morning breeze is coursing
Round the deep-shadowed cove;
And in its depths are imaged
The ripening fruits above.

Looking down on the same lake from its southern ridge, he writes these lines, the concentrated expression of distracted emotions:—

Wenn ich, liebe Lili, dich nicht liebte,
Welche Wonne gäb' mir dieser Blick!
Und doch, wenn ich, Lili, dich nicht liebte,
Fänd' ich hier und fänd' ich dort mein Glück?

If I, loved Lili, loved thee not,
In this prospect, ah! what bliss;
Yet, Lili, if I loved thee not,
Where should I find my happiness?

In the cloister of the church at Einsiedeln he saw a beautiful gold crown, and his first thought was how it would become the brows of Lili. On the night of June 21st the two travellers reached the hospice in the pass of St. Gothard—the term of their journey. Next morning they saw the path that led down to Italy, and, according to Goethe's account, Passavant vehemently urged that they should make the descent

together. For a few moments he was undecided, but the memories of Lili conquered. Drawing forth a golden heart, her gift, which he wore round his neck, he kissed it, and his resolution was taken. Hastily turning from the tempting path, he began his homeward descent, his companion reluctantly following him. [228]

On July 22nd, after a leisurely journey homewards, he was again in Frankfort, and in a state of mind as undecided as ever regarding his future course. Fortunately or unfortunately for himself and the world, circumstances independent of his own will were to decide between the alternatives that lay before him.

CHAPTER XIV

LAST MONTHS IN FRANKFORT—THE *URFAUST*

1775

As he represents it in his Autobiography, this was the situation in which Goethe found himself on his return to Frankfort. All his personal friends warmly welcomed him back, though his father did not conceal his disappointment that he had not continued his travels into Italy. As for Lili, she had taken it for granted that the departure of her betrothed without a word of leave-taking could only

imply his intention to break with her. Yet it was reported to him that in the face of all obstacles to their union she had declared herself ready to leave her past behind her and share his fortunes in America. Their intercourse was resumed, but they avoided seeing each other alone, as if conscious of some ground of mutual estrangement. "It was an accursed state, in some ways resembling Hades, the meeting-place of the sadly-happy dead." In view of these relations between Lili and himself, he further adds, all their common friends were decidedly opposed to their union.

Such is the account which, in his retrospect, Goethe gives of his situation after his return to Frankfort, but his correspondence at the time shows that it cannot be accepted as strictly accurate. During the three remaining months he spent in Frankfort he on four different occasions visited Offenbach, where he must often have seen her alone. What his letters indeed prove is that he was characteristically content to let each day bring its own happiness or misery, and to leave events to decide the final issue. On August 1st, a few days after his return, he writes to Knebel: "I am here again ... and find myself a good deal better, quite content with the past and full of hope for the future."[229] Two days later he was in Offenbach, and from Lili's own room he writes as follows to the Countess: "Oh! that I could tell you all. Here in the room of the girl who is the cause of my misery—without her fault, with the soul of an angel, over whose cheerful days I cast a gloom, I.... In vain that for three months I have wandered under the open sky and drunk in a thousand new objects at every pore."[230] To Lavater on the following day he writes that he has been riding with Lili, and adds these words with an N.B.: "For some time I have been

pious again; my desire is for the Lord, and I sing psalms to him, a vibration of which shall soon reach you. Adieu. I am in a sore state of strain; I might say over-strain. Yet I wish you were with me, for then it goes well in my surroundings."[231] A letter addressed to Merck later in the same month would seem to show that he had at least no intention of seeking an immediate union with Lili. By the end of the year at the latest, he says, he must be off to Italy, and he prays Merck to prevail with his father to grant his consent.

A crisis in the relations between the lovers came on the occasion of the Frankfort fair in the second week of September. The fair brought a crowd of males, young, middle-aged, and old, all on more or less intimate terms with the Schönemann family, and their familiarities with Lili were gall and wormwood to Goethe, though he testifies that, as occasion offered, she did not fail to show who lay nearest her heart. Even in his old age the experience of these days recalled unpleasant memories. "But let us turn," he exclaims, "from this torture, almost intolerable even in the recollection, to the poems which brought some relief to my mind and heart."[232] A remarkable contemporary document from his hand proves that his memory did not exaggerate his state of mind at the time.[233] In the form of a Diary, expressly meant for his Countess, he notes day by day the alternating feelings which were distracting him. The Countess had urged him once for all to break his bonds, and in these words we have his reply: "I saw Lili after dinner, saw her at the play. I had not a word to say to her, and said nothing! Would I were free! O Gustchen! and yet I tremble for the moment when she could become indifferent to me, and I become hopeless. But I abide true to

myself, and let things go as they will."[234]

In all this tumultuous effusion we see the side of Goethe's nature which he has depicted in Werther, in Clavigo, and Fernando. Yet all the while he was completely master of his own genius. Throughout all his alternating raptures and despairs he was assiduously practising the arts to which his genius called him. He diligently contributed both text and drawings to Lavater's *Physiognomy*; he worked at art on his own account, making a special study of Rembrandt; and, as we shall see, even at the time when his relations to Lili were at the breaking-point he was producing poetical work which he never surpassed at any period of his life. From two distinguished contemporaries, both men of mature age, who visited him during this time of his intensest preoccupation with Lili, we have interesting characterisations of him which complement the impressions we receive from his own self-portraiture. The one is from J.G. Sulzer, an author of repute on matters of art. "This young scholar," Sulzer writes, "is a real original genius, untrammelled in his manner of thinking, equally in the sphere of politics and learning.... In intercourse I found him pleasant and amiable.... I am greatly mistaken if this young man in his ripe years will not turn out a man of integrity. At present he has not as yet regarded man and human life from many sides. But his insight is keen."[235] The other writer is J.G. Zimmermann, one of the remarkable men of his time, whose book on *Solitude*, published in 1755, had brought him a European reputation. "I have been staying in Frankfort with Monsieur Göthe," he writes, "one of the most extraordinary and most powerful geniuses who has ever appeared in this world.... Ah! my friend, if you had seen him in his paternal home, if

you had seen how this great man in the presence of his father and mother is the best conducted and most amiable of sons, you would have found it difficult not to regard him through the medium of love." [236]

On October 12th, 1775, happened an event which was to be the decisive turning-point in Goethe's life. On that day the young Duke of Weimar and his bride arrived in Frankfort on their way home from Carlsruhe, where they had just celebrated their marriage, and again both warmly urged him to visit them at Weimar. [237] We have it on Goethe's own word that he had decided on a second flight from Frankfort as the only escape from his unendurable situation, but the invitation of the ducal pair brought his decision to a point. He accepted the invitation, announced his resolve to all his friends, and made the necessary preparations for his journey. The arrangement was that a gentleman of the Duke's suite, then at Carlsruhe, was to call for him on an appointed day and convey him to Weimar. The appointed day came, but no representative of the Duke appeared. To avoid the embarrassment of meeting friends of whom he had formally taken leave, he kept within doors, working off his impatience in the composition of a play which the world was afterwards to know as *Egmont*. More than another week passed, and, weary of his imprisonment, he stole out in the darkness enveloped in a long cloak to avoid recognition by chance friends. In his memory there lived one of these night-wanderings when he stood beneath Lili's window, heard her sing the song, beginning *Warum ziehst du mich unwiderstehlich*, in which, in the first freshness of his love, he had described the witchery with which she had bound him, and, the song ended, saw from her moving shadow that she paced up and

down the room, evidently deep in thoughts which he leaves us to divine. Only his fixed resolve to renounce her, he adds in his narrative of the incident, prevented him from making his presence known to her.

There was one member of the Goethe household who was not displeased at the non-appearance of the ducal representative. The father had from the first been strenuously opposed to his son's going to Weimar, and in his opinion the apparent breach of the appointment was only an illustration of what a commoner was to expect in his intercourse with the great. His own desire was that his son should proceed to Italy with the double object of breaking his connection with Lili, and of enlarging his experience by an acquaintance with that country and its treasures. The embarrassing predicament of his son offered the opportunity of realising his desire, and he now proposed to him that he should at once start for Italy and leave his cares behind him. In the circumstances there appeared to be no other alternative, and on October 30th Goethe left Frankfort with Italy as his intended goal. Heidelberg was to be his first stage, and on the way thither he began the Journal in which he meant to record the narrative of his travels. The two pages he wrote are the intense expression of the mental strain in which he set forth on a journey which was to have such a different issue from what he dreamt. The parting from Lili was uppermost in his thoughts. "Adieu, Lili," he wrote, "adieu for the second time! The first time we parted I was full of hope that our lots should one day be united. [238] Fate has decided that we must play our *rôles* apart."

At Heidelberg he spent a few days in the house of a

lady of whom we have already heard—that Mademoiselle Delf who had so effectually brought matters to a point between Goethe and Lili. She was now convinced that the betrothal had been a mistake, but, undismayed, she now suggested to him that there was a lady in Heidelberg who would be a satisfactory substitute for the lost one. One night he had retired to rest after listening to a protracted exposition of the Fräulein's projects for his future, when he was roused by the sound of a postilion's horn. The postilion brought a letter which cleared up the mystery of the delayed messenger. Hastily dressing, Goethe ordered a post-chaise, and, amid the vehement expostulations of his hostess, began the first stage of the journey which was to lead him not to Italy but to the Court of Weimar. It was the most momentous hour of his life, and, as he took his place in the carriage, he called aloud, in mock heroics, to the excited Fräulein words which he may have recently written in *Egmont*, and which had even more significance as bearing on his own future than he could have dreamed at the moment: "Child! Child! Forbear! As if goaded by invisible spirits, the sun-steeds of time bear onward the light car of our destiny; and nothing remains for us but, with calm self-possession, firmly to grasp the reins, and now right, now left, to steer the wheels here from the precipice and there from the rock. Whither he is hasting, who knows? Does anyone consider whence he came?" [239]

With him to Weimar Goethe bore two manuscripts to which, during his last years in Frankfort, he had, at one time and another, committed his deepest feelings as a man, his profoundest thoughts as a thinker, and his finest imaginations as a poet. The one contained the first draft of the drama which, as we have seen,

was written in those days of torturing suspense preceding his final departure from his paternal home, and which, subsequently recast, was to take its place among the best known of his works—the tragedy of *Egmont*. Of far higher moment for the world, however, was the matter contained in the other of these manuscripts. Therein were set down the original portions of a poem which was eventually to fructify into one of the great imaginative products of all time—the drama of *Faust*.

Beyond all other of Goethe's productions previous to his settling in Weimar, these original scenes of *Faust* bring before us his deepest and truest self. In all the other longer works of that period, in *Götz*, in *Werther*, in *Clavigo*, and the rest, one side—the emotional side—of his nature had been predominantly represented; but in what he wrote of *Faust* we have all his mind and heart as he had them from nature, and as they had been schooled by time. It is one of the fortunate incidents in literary history that we now possess these fragments in which the genius of Goethe expressed itself with an intensity of imaginative force which he never again exemplified in the same degree. The original text was unknown till 1887, when Erich Schmidt found it in the possession of a grandnephew of a lady of the Court of Weimar,[240] who had copied it from the manuscript received by her from Goethe. It is uncertain whether the manuscript thus discovered exactly corresponds to the manuscript which Goethe took with him to Weimar, but the probability is that their contents are virtually identical.

As in the case of *Der Ewige Jude*, *Prometheus*, and other fragments of the Frankfort period, the successive scenes of the *Urfaust* were thrown off at

different times on the inspiration of the moment, and the exact date of their production can only be a matter of conjecture. What we do know is that the figure of the legendary Faust had early attracted his attention. As a boy he had read at least one of the chap-books which recorded the wondrous history of the scholar who had sold himself to the devil, and, as a common spectacle in Germany, he must have seen the puppet-show in which the story of Faust was dramatised for the people. According to his own statement, it was in 1769 that the conception of a poem, based on the Faust legend, first suggested itself to him, but it was during the years 1774 and 1775 that most of the scenes of the *Urfaust* were written. Both by himself and others there are references during these years to his work on *Faust*, and as late as the middle of September, 1775, he tells the Countess Stolberg that, while at Offenbach with Lili, he had composed another scene.

What attracted Goethe to the legend of Faust was that it presented a framework into which he could dramatically work his own life's experience, equally in the world of thought and feeling. The story that depicted a passionate searcher for truth, rebelling against the limits imposed by the place assigned to man in the nature of things, who at all costs dared to burst these limits in order to enjoy life in all its fulness—this story had a suggestiveness that appealed to Goethe's profoundest consciousness. "I also," he says in his Autobiography, "had wandered at large through all the fields of knowledge, and its futility had early enough been shown to me. In life also I had experimented in all manner of ways, and always returned more dissatisfied and distracted than ever." Of this correspondence which Goethe recognised between the legendary Faust and his own

being, the final proof is that on the basis of the legend he eventually constructed the work in which he embodied all that life had taught him of the conditions under which it has to be lived.

When Goethe first put his hand to the *Urfaust*, he had no definite conception of an artistic whole in which the suggestions of the legend should be focussed in view of a determinate end. As we have it, the *Urfaust* consists of twenty-two scenes—those that relate the Gretchen tragedy alone having any necessary connection with each other. All the successive parts, including the Gretchen tragedy, suggest improvisation under a compelling immediate impulse with no reference to what had gone before or what might come after. Apart from its poetic value, therefore, the *Urfaust* is the concentrated expression of what had most intensely engaged Goethe's mind and heart previous to the period when it was produced.

In the *Urfaust* we have neither the Prologue in the Theatre nor the Prologue in Heaven, but, with the exception of some verbal changes, the opening scene which introduces us to Faust is identical with that of the poem in its final form. Seated at his desk in a dusty Gothic chamber, furnished with all the apparatus for scientific experiment, Faust reviews his past life, and finds that he has been mocked from the beginning. In every department of boasted knowledge he has made himself a master, but it has brought satisfaction neither to his intellect nor his heart, and he has turned to magic in the hope that it would reveal to him the secrets that would make life worth living. As in the completed *Faust*, he opens the book of Nostradamus and finds the signs of the Macrocosmus and of the Earth-Spirit, by both of

which he is baffled in his attempt to enter the *arcana* of being.

In the *Urfaust*, also, we have, with a few verbal alterations, the Scene in which Faust communicates to his famulus Wagner his cynical view of the value of human knowledge. In the *Urfaust*, however, are lacking the Scenes that follow in the completed poem —Faust's soliloquy and meditated suicide, the Easter walk, the appearance of Mephistopheles in the shape of a poodle, and the compact that follows. In place of these scenes we have but one, in which Mephistopheles, without previous introduction, is represented as a professor giving advice to a raw student who has come to consult him as to his future course of conduct and study. Of all the Scenes in the *Urfaust* this is the feeblest, and its immaturity, as well as its evident references to Goethe's own experiences at Leipzig, suggest that it was the earliest written. This Scene is followed by another reminiscent of Leipzig—the Scene in Auerbach's cellar, which mainly differs from the later form in being written in prose and not in verse—Faust and not Mephistopheles playing the conjuror in drawing wine from a table. In the completed poem we are next introduced to the Witches' Kitchen, where Faust is rejuvenated, and where he sees Margaret's image in a mirror—the reader being thus prepared for the tragedy that is to follow. In the *Urfaust* we pass with no connecting link from the Scene in Auerbach's Cellar to Faust's meeting with Margaret and the successive Scenes which depict her self-abandonment to Faust and her consequent misery and ruin. The content of these Scenes is virtually the same in both forms—the most important difference being that, while the concluding Prison Scene is in prose in the *Urfaust*, it is in verse in the later form. Of the three

songs which Margaret sings, only the first, "There was a King in Thule," was retouched. In the *Urfaust* the duel between Valentin and Mephistopheles does not occur, and we have only Valentin's soliloquy on the ruin of his sister; and the scenes, *Wald und Höhle*, the *Walpurgis Nacht*, the *Walpurgisnachtstraum*, generally condemned by critics as inartistic irrelevancies, are likewise lacking. [241]

The *Urfaust* is the crowning poetic achievement of the youthful Goethe, and by general consent, as has already been said, he never again achieved a similar intense fusion of thought, feeling, and imagination. Apart from the opening Scenes, which have no dramatic connection with it, the Gretchen tragedy constitutes an artistic whole which by its perfection of detail and overwhelming tragic effect must ever remain one of the marvels of creative genius. Not less astonishing as a manifestation of Goethe's youthful power is the creation in all their essential lineaments of the three figures, Faust, Mephistopheles, and Margaret—figures stamped ineffaceably on the imagination of educated humanity. Be it said also that from the *Urfaust* mainly come those single lines and passages which are among the memorable words recorded in universal literature. Such, to specify only a few, are the Song of the Earth-Spirit; the lines commenting on man's vain endeavour to comprehend the past, and on the dreariness of all theory, [242] contrasted with the freshness and colour of life; Faust's confession of his religious faith, and Margaret's songs. To have added in this measure to the intellectual inheritance of the race assures the testator his rank among the great spirits of all time.

With the *Urfaust*, marking as it does the highest

development which Goethe attained in the years of his youth, this record of these years may fitly close. His characteristics as they present themselves during that period are certainly in strange contrast to the conception of the matured Goethe which holds general possession of the public mind, at least in this country. In that conception the world was for the later Goethe "a palace of art," in which he moved—

"as God holding no form of creed
But contemplating all." [243]

But such transformations of human character are not in the order of nature, and, due allowance made for the numbing hand of time, the youthful Goethe remained essentially the same Goethe to the end. Behind the mask of impassivity which chilled the casually curious who sought him in his last years there was ever that *etwas weibliches* which Schiller noted in him in his middle age. In the critical moments of life he was in his maturity as in his youth subject to emotions which for the time seemed to be beyond his control. On the death of his wife his behaviour was that of one distracted. He described himself at the age of fifteen as "something of a chameleon," and, as already remarked, Felix Mendelssohn, who saw him a year before his death, declared that the world would one day come to believe that there had not been one but many Goethes. We have seen that throughout the period of his youth some external impulse to production was a necessity of his nature, and so it was to the close. What Behrisch and Merck and his sister Cornelia did for him in these early years, had to be done for him in later life by similar friends and counsellors. If, like Plato and Dante, he was "a great lover" in his youth,

"a great lover" he remained even into time-stricken age; when past his seventieth year he was moved by a passion from which, as in youth, he found deliverance by giving vent to it in passionate verse. It is in the youthful Goethe, before time and circumstance had dulled the spontaneous play of feeling, that we see the man as he came from nature's hand, with all his manifold gifts, and with all his sensuous impulses, tossing him from one object of desire to another, yet ever held in check by the passion that was deepest in him—the passion to know and to create.

GARDEN CITY PRESS LIMITED, LETCHWORTH, HERTS.

INDEX

Adler und Taube, poem by Goethe, 183, 184.

Æschylus, 175.

An Belinden, lyric addressed by Goethe to Lili Schönemann, 252.

An Schwager Kronos, poem by Goethe, 240.

Arnold, Gottfried, his *History of the Church and of Heretics*, Goethe's study of it, 64, 65.

Arnold, Matthew, 6;
quoted, 140.

Basedow, Johann Bernhard, his character, 227, 228;
his intercourse with Goethe, 228-231.

Beaumarchais, his *Mémoires* suggest Goethe's *Clavigo*, 200, 201.

Behrisch, friend of Goethe in Leipzig, his character and influence on Goethe, 39-41, 43, 44.

Bergson, quoted, 175 note.

Berlichingen, Gottfried von, hero of Goethe's play *Götz von Berlichingen*, 121;
his *Memoirs*, *ib.*

Boerhaave, Goethe's study of him, 64.

Böhme, Professor of History in Leipzig, Goethe attends his lectures, 34.

Böhme, Frau, her influence on Goethe, 34, 36.

Boie, H.C., his description of Goethe, 241.

Bonn, 231.

Brentano, Peter, married to Maxe von la Roche, 186;
Goethe's relations to him, *ib.*;
his traits assigned to Albert in *Werther*, 191.

Brion, Friederike, Goethe's relations to her, 96-101;
his poems inspired by her, 105-108;

Goethe's remorse for parting from her, 117, 118;
nature of Goethe's love for her, 249 note.

Brion, Pastor, father of Friederike Brion, 96.

Byron, Lord, resemblance of his career to Goethe's, 26, 27, 29;
referred to, 168.

Buff, Charlotte (Lotte), loved by Goethe, 147;
his relations to her, 147-151;
her displeasure with *Werther*, 198.

Carl August, Duke of Weimar, his intercourse with Goethe, 242;
meets Goethe at Carlsruhe, 272;
visits Frankfort and invites Goethe to Weimar, 283-284.

Carlsruhe, 272.

Carlyle, Thomas, 181.

Chateaubriand, 249 note.

Claudine von Villa Bella, play by Goethe, 263-265.

Clavigo, play by Goethe: its origin, 200, 201;
argument of it, 202-204;
its classical form, 205.

Clavigo, character of, compared with that of Goethe, 206-208.

Clodius, Professor in Leipzig; Goethe attends his

lectures, 34.

Coblenz, 230.

Cologne, 235, 236.

Cologne cathedral, 235.

Constantin, brother of Carl August, 242.

Darmstadt, 272.

Darmstadt, Court of, the coterie associated with it, 136, 138;
its influence on Goethe, *ib.*

Das Jahrmarktsfest zu Plundersweilern, satirical play by Goethe, 169, 170.

Daudet, Alphonse, 180 note.

Delf, Mademoiselle, effects the betrothal of Goethe and Lili Schönemann, 268;
suggests to Goethe a substitute for Lili, 286.

Der Ewige Jude, poetic fragment by Goethe: its origin, 212-215;
account of it, 216-218.

Der König von Thule, poem by Goethe, 236.

Der Untreue Knabe, poem by Goethe, 236.

Der Wanderer, poem by Goethe, 140-142.

Deserted Village, translated by Goethe, 146.

Die Laune des Verliebten, play by Goethe: its argument, 51, 52.

Die Mitschuldigen, play by Goethe: its argument, 52, 53.

Diné zu Coblenz, poem by Goethe, 230, 231.

Disputation of Goethe for the Licentiate of Laws, 114.

Dresden, Goethe's secret visit to, 46.

Düsseldorf, 231, 235, 236.

Edwin and Angelina, Goldsmith's ballad, suggested Goethe's *Erwin und Elmire*, 256.

Egmont, play by Goethe, 284;
quoted by Goethe on his proceeding to Weimar, 287;
manuscript of, taken to Weimar by Goethe, 287.

Ehrenbreitstein, 155.

Einsiedeln, 278.

Elberfeld, 231.

Elysium, an Uranien, ode by Goethe, 138.

Emerson, quoted, 106, 107.

Emmendingen, 272.

Ems, 225.

English literature, its influence on *Werther*, 187, 188.

Ephemerides, Diary kept by Goethe, 102;
quoted, 211 note;
referred to, 212.

Erwin und Elmire, vaudeville by Goethe, 255-257.

Euripides, 173.

Fahlmer, Johanna, letter of Goethe to, 248 note.

Flachsland, Caroline, member of the *Gemeinschaft der Heiligen*, 136;
her letters describing Goethe, 137, 138;
his ode addressed to her as Psyche, 138;
on Goethe's ambition to be a painter, 164;
character in *Das Jahrmarktsfest*, 170;
in *Pater Brey*, 171;
in *Satyros*, 172.

Flaubert, 180 note.

Frankfort-on-the-Main, Goethe's birthplace, description of: its influence on Goethe, 2, 3;
Goethe's return to, 109;
Goethe's distaste for, 111.

Frankforters, Goethe's description of, 161.

Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen, journal expounding the aims of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, 164, 165.

Frederick the Great, Goethe's admiration for, 18, 19.

French literature, its domination in Germany; imitated by Goethe, 49, 75.

French troops in Frankfort, 19-21.

Friedberg, 239.

Gedicht der Ankunft des Herrn, another title for *Der Ewige Jude*, 216.

Gellert, Professor, German poet resident in Leipzig, 32;
Goethe attends his lectures, 34.

Gemeinschaft der Heiligen at the Court of Darmstadt, 136.

Göchhausen, Fräulein Luise von, and the manuscript of the *Urfaust*, 288 and note.

Goethe, Cornelia, Goethe's sister: her character, her influence on Goethe, Goethe's affection for her, 10, 11;
his letters to her from Leipzig, 40, 41;
her father's hardness to, 59;
her home influence, 116;
stimulates Goethe to write *Götz von Berlichingen*, 121;
married to J.G. Schlosser, 162;
Goethe's last meeting with her, 273-274.

Goethe, Elizabeth, Goethe's mother: her character, her relations to her son, 8-10;

her religion, 15.

Goethe, Johann Kaspar, Goethe's father: his character, not in sympathy with his son, his method of education, 6-7;
determines, against his son's will, to send him to University of Leipzig, 23, 24;
his severity towards his daughter, Cornelia, 59;
estrangement from his son, 60;
his pride in his genius, *ib.*;
his son's characterisation of him, 161;
his republican opinions, 243;
objects to his son's intercourse with Carl August, Duke of Weimar, 244;
his opposition to his son's going to Weimar, 285;
wishes him to go to Italy, *ib.*

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang, his birth in Frankfort-on-the-Main, 4;
influence of his birthplace, 2, 3;
influence of the period on his development, 4-6;
his debt to his father, 6-7;
to his mother, 8-10;
relations to his sister, 10-11;
his education, 14;
religious influences, 14-17;
influence of the French theatre in Frankfort on him, 20, 21;
in love with Gretchen, 22, 23;
father resolves to send him to the University of Leipzig, 24;
his characteristics as a boy, 25-27;
his early devotion to poetry, 28;
his stormy career throughout his youth, 29;
goes to the University of Leipzig, 31;
his studies there, 33-35;

influence of Leipzig society on him, 35-38;
influence of Frau Böhme on his character and literary tastes, 36;
falls in love with Käthchen Schönkopf, 38;
friendship with Behrisch, 39, 40;
a jealous lover, 43, 44;
artistic studies, 45;
influence of Friedrich Oeser on his artistic ideals, 46, 47;
Neue Lieder, 49, 50;
Die Laune des Verliebten and *Die Mitschuldigen*, 51-53;
his ideas of poetry, 54-57;
returns to Frankfort, 57;
his unsatisfactory condition of mind and body, 57, 58;
estrangement from his father, 60;
his interest in religion, 60-67;
influence of Fräulein von Klettenberg, 62-64;
his dangerous illness, 63, 64;
works out a creed of his own, 65, 66;
mystical and chemical studies, 66;
interests in art and literature, 69-71;
departs for the University of Strassburg, 74;
influence of Strassburg society, 76, 77;
finds a mentor in Dr. Salzmann, 79, 80;
acquaintance with Jung Stilling, 81-83;
influence of Herder, 83-93;
inspired by Strassburg Cathedral, 93-95;
his love experiences with Friederike Brion, 95-102;
his manifold interests in Strassburg, 102-104;
development of his poetic gift, 105;
lyrics to Friederike, 105-108;
returns to Frankfort, 108;
state of mind on his return, 110-113;
continued estrangement from his father, 114, 115;
his sister Cornelia, 116;

makes acquaintance with the brothers Schlosser, *ib.*;
his distraction in Frankfort, 118-120;
admiration of Shakespeare, 121;
writes *Götz von Berlichingen*, 122;
makes acquaintance with Merck, 132;
comes under the influence of the Darmstadt circle, 136;
his poems inspired by that circle, 138;
his visit to Wetzlar, 143;
his mode of life there, 144;
marks the acquaintance of Charlotte Buff, 147;
and of Kestner, 148;
his subsequent relations to them, 149;
characterised by Kestner, 152;
returns to Frankfort, 154;
conceives *Werther*, 154;
makes acquaintance with the family von la Roche, 155;
his relations to Frau von la Roche and her daughter, 156;
his unrest after his experiences at Wetzlar, 158;
his dislike of Frankfort, 161;
his solitude, 162;
uncertain whether he should devote himself to literature or art, 163;
co-editor of the *Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen*, 164;
his *Letter of a Pastor*, 166;
paper on *Two Biblical Questions*, 167;
publishes the second draft of *Götz von Berlichingen*, 167;
writes a succession of satirical plays, 169;
his fragmentary drama, *Prometheus*, 175;
his fragment of a drama on Mahomet, 181;
produces *Werther*, 184;
his own character compared with that of Werther, 193;

his *Clavigo*, 200;
Goethe and Spinoza, 209;
his fragment, *Der Ewige Jude*, 212;
his intercourse with Lavater, 220;
with Basedow, 227;
with Fritz Jacobi, 233;
with Klopstock, 238;
characterised by Boie and Werthes, 241-2;
makes acquaintance with the Princes of Weimar, 243;
characterised by von Knebel, 244-5;
falls in love with Lili Schönemann, 247;
his songs addressed to her, 251;
relations with the Countess Stolberg, 253;
his infatuation for Lili, 254;
his succession of plays relative to her, 255-265;
shrinking from marriage, 267;
betrothed to Lili, 268;
persuaded of his mistake, 269;
sets out for Switzerland with the Counts Stolberg, 270;
his travels, 272;
visit to his sister, 273;
meets Lavater at Zurich, 275;
parts company with the Stolbergs, and accompanies Passavant to the pass of St. Gothard, 276;
returns to Frankfort, 278;
his relations to Lili on his return, 279;
invited by the Duke of Weimar to visit Weimar, 284;
opposition of his father, 284;
decides to go to Italy as the Duke's messenger does not appear, 285;
goes to Heidelberg on the way to Italy, 285;
appearance of the Duke's messenger decides him to visit Weimar, 286;
the *Urfaust*, 287-293;

characteristics, 293.

Goncourt, Edmond de, 180 note.

Götter, Holden, und Wieland, satirical play on Wieland by Goethe, 173, 174.

Gotter, F.W., friend of Goethe in Wetzlar, 146.

Gottsched, German poet resident in Leipzig, 32.

Götz von Berlichingen, drama by Goethe, 109, 113;
its origin, 121;
its plot, 123-126;
its characteristics, 126-129;
second draft of, 167, 168.

Gray, Thomas, 187.

Gretchen, Goethe's first love, 22, 23.

Hamann, J.G., the "Magus of the North," teacher of Herder, 86;
Goethe's interest in him, *ib.*

Hanover, 160.

Hasenkamp, rebukes Goethe for *Werther*, 232.

Haugnitz, Count, travels with Goethe to Switzerland, 270-275.

Heidelberg, 285, 286.

Hehn, Viktor, quoted, 139, 180 note.

Heine, Heinrich, 26.

Heinse, J.J.H., his opinion of Goethe, 237.

Herder, his *Fragments on Modern German Literature*, 48;
Johann Gottfried, 83-93;
his career, character and speculations, 84-86;
his admiration of Shakespeare, 120;
his opinion of *Götz von Berlichingen*, 145;
one of the editors of the *Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen*, 164, 165;
as captain of the gipsies in *Das Jahrmarktsfest zu Plundersweilern*, 170;
satirised in *Pater Brey*, 171;
and in *Satyros*, 172;
letters of Goethe to, 268, 270.

Herrnhut Community, Goethe attends a synod of, 63;
dissociates himself from the community, 79.

Hoch auf dem alten Turme steht, lines by Goethe, 230.

Holy Alliance, 180.

Homer, Goethe's study of him, 145.

Horn, a friend of Goethe: his description of Goethe in Leipzig, 37;
quoted, 38;
quoted, 67.

Humboldt, Wilhelm von, his opinion of marriage, 101, 102.

Jabach, family of, 235.

Jacobi, Fritz, his horror at Lessing's approval of Spinoza, 180, 233;
his character and attainments, 234;
his intercourse with Goethe, 234-238;
letter of Goethe to, 267.

Jacobi, Georg, 235, 236.

Jean Paul, 26.

Jerusalem: his suicide prompts Goethe to *Werther*, 154, 155;
Lessing's esteem for him, 154 note.

Jung, Johann Heinrich. (*See* Stilling, Jung.)

Kant, Immanuel, quoted, 28;
quoted, 48;
his opinion of marriage, 101;
his judgment on the *Sturm und Drang* movement, 130.

Kestner, Johann Christian, betrothed to Lotte Buff, 148;
his character, *ib.*;
his relations to Goethe, 149-151;
his characterisation of Goethe, 151-153;
letters of Goethe to, 159, 160, 174;
his displeasure with *Werther*, 198.

Klettenberg, Fräulein von, the *Schöne Seele* of *Wilhelm Meister*, 15;

Goethe's intimacy with, 62;
her influence on his religious opinions, 63, 64, 66, 67;
letter of Goethe to, 77, 78;
her intercourse with Lavater, 225;
adviser of the Goethe family, 244;
her death, 245-246;
her affection for Goethe, 246.

Klopstock, his *Messias*, 238;
admired by Goethe, 239;
his visit to Goethe's home, 239, 240;
Goethe accompanies him to Mannheim, 240;
Goethe's opinion of him, 241 note;
visits Frankfort, 268;
Goethe meets him at Carlsruhe, 272.

Knebel, Major von, his visit to Goethe, 242;
his characterisation of him, 244;
letter of Goethe to, 280.

Künstlers Erdewallen, poem by Goethe, 184.

La Roche, family, its influence on *Werther*, 158.

La Roche, Frau von, Goethe's relations to her 155, 156;
letters of Goethe to, 162, 186, 187, 245 note.

La Roche, Herr von, 155.

La Roche, Maximiliane von, Goethe's relations to her, 157;
married to Peter Brentano, 186;
her relation to *Werther*, 186, 191.

Langer, his influence on Goethe's religious opinions, 58, 59.

Lavater, Johann Kaspar, his character, 220;
his intercourse with Goethe, 222-232;
Goethe's intercourse with him at Zurich, 275 and note, 280;
his *Physiognomy*, Goethe's contributions to it, 282.

Leipzig, description of, 31, 32;
Goethe a student there, 31-56;
called "little Paris," 32.

Lessing, his *Laokoon* and *Minna von Barnhelm*, 49;
Goethe's opinion of, 70;
his approval of Spinoza's philosophy, 180;
his opinion of *Werther*, 197 note.

Letter of the Pastor written by Goethe, 166.

Leuchsenring, his sentimentalism, 157;
his meeting with Goethe, *ib.*;
satirised in *Pater Brey*, 171.

Lilis Park, poem by Goethe addressed to Lili Schönemann, 266 note, 281 note.

Limprecht, Goethe's letter to, 76.

Lisbon, earthquake of, its influence on Goethe, 16.

Luise, Princess of Hesse-Darmstadt, betrothed to Carl August, Duke of Weimar, 272.

Mahomet, fragment of a drama by Goethe, 181-183.

Mainz, 244, 245.

Mannheim, 240, 272.

Maria Theresa, 18.

Mendelssohn, Moses, his relation to Spinoza, 180.

Mephistopheles, 109.

Merck, Johann Heinrich, friend of Goethe, 133;
his character and influence on Goethe, 133-135;
introduces Goethe to the family von la Roche, 155;
his visit to Berlin and return, 162;
one of the editors of the *Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen*, 164, 165;
in *Pater Brey*, 171;
in *Satyros*, 172;
his mordant comment on *Clavigo*, 206;
comes under the spell of Lavater, 224;
meeting with Goethe in Mannheim, 272.

Milan, Archbishop of, orders *Werther* to be burned, 197.

Mülheim, 231.

Müller, Chancellor von, quoted, 44;
quoted, 58 note.

Münch, Anna Sibylla, suggests *Clavigo*, 201, 202.

Napoleon, and *Werther*, 192, 193, 199.

Neo-Platonism, 65.

Neue Lieder, collection of Goethe's poems written in Leipzig, 49.

Neue Liebe, neues Leben, poem of Goethe addressed to Lili Schönemann, 251.

New Testament, Goethe's study, 59.

Oeser, Friedrich, director of the academy of drawing in Leipzig: his influence on Goethe, 46, 47;
letters of Goethe to him, 67, 69.

Offenbach on the Main, 266, and note.

Old Testament, Goethe's study of, 16, 17.

Ossian, 187, 192, and note.

Palace of Art, Tennyson's, 294.

Paracelsus, Goethe's study of him, 64.

Passavant, Reformed Pastor, travels with Goethe in Switzerland, 276;
tradition in his family regarding Goethe, 278 note.

Pater Brey, satirical piece by Goethe, 170, 171.

Pfenninger, Heinrich, letter of Goethe to, 223, 224.

Pindar, Goethe's study of, 139, 145.

Plato, Goethe's study of him, 145.

Poetische Gedanken über die Höllenfahrt Jesu Christi, early poem of Goethe, 28.

Pollock, Sir Frederick, on "modern Spinozism," 180 note.

Prometheus, fragment of a play by Goethe, 174-180.

Rembrandt, Goethe's study of, 282.

Renan, Ernest, 181 note.

Richardson, Samuel, 156;
his *Clarissa Harlowe*, 188.

Riemer, Goethe's secretary, quoted, 33.

Robinson, Henry Crabb, quoted, 192 note.

Rousseau, 58, 112, 129;
Goethe's opinion of him, 152;
his *Nouvelle Héloïse*, 188.

Rumohr, W. von, letter of Goethe to him quoted, 56 note.

Sachs, Hans, Goethe's imitation of, 169, 214.

St. Gothard, pass of, 278.

Salzmann, Dr., Goethe's mentor in Strassburg: his

character, 79-81;
letters of Goethe to, 99, 100, 119, 121.

Satyros, satirical play by Goethe, 171-173.

Schaffhausen, 275.

Scherer, Edmond, 6;
his estimate of *Götz von Berlichingen*, 128.

Schlosser, J.G., friend of Goethe, 116;
his impressions of Goethe, 142;
married to Goethe's sister, 162;
one of the editors of the *Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen*, 164, 165.

Schmidt, Erich, his discovery of the *Urfaust*, 288.

Schönemann, Anna Elisabeth (Lili): Goethe's first meeting with her, 248;
beginning of Goethe's attachment to her, 249;
Goethe's lyrics addressed to her, 251-253;
Goethe's tribute to her in later life, 251 note;
Goethe sends his *Stella* to her, 263;
Goethe's strained relations with her, 267-270;
poems of Goethe addressed to, 276-278;
Goethe's relations to her after his return from Switzerland, 279-286;
her subsequent marriage, 286 note.

Schönemann family, 247;
their social position superior to that of the Goethes, 248;
intercourse of Goethe with them, 249.

Schönemann, Lili. (*See* Schönemann, Anna

Elisabeth.)

Schönkopf, Käthchen, Goethe's love in Leipzig: her appearance and character, 38;
Goethe's philandering with her, 38-44;
Goethe's poems addressed to her, 42;
Goethe's letters to, 61, 68, 69, 138 note.

Scott, Sir Walter, his translation of *Götz von Berlichingen*, 131;
his writings influenced by it, 132.

Sesenheim, residence of the Brion family:
Goethe's visits there, 96-100.

Seven Years' War, its influence on the Goethe household, 18.

Shakespeare, Goethe's debt to, 45, 122.

Song of Solomon, translated by Goethe, 281 note.

Spinoza, Goethe's debt to, 45;
his influence on Goethe, 209-212;
Goethe and Lavater discuss his writings, 226;
discussed by Goethe and Fritz Jacobi, 237.

Stein, Frau von, quoted, 150 note.

Stella, play by Goethe, 257-263;
ridiculed in the *Anti-Jacobin*, 261 and note;
admired by Herder, 262;
its popularity, *ib.*

Sterne, 112.

Stevenson, R.L., his admiration of *Werther*, 200 note.

Stilling, Jung, friend of Goethe in Strassburg:
his career and character, 81, 82;
Goethe's kindness to, 82-83;
prank played on him by Goethe, 231;
his affection for Goethe, 246.

Stolberg, Count Christian, comes to Frankfort and travels with Goethe to Switzerland, 270-275.

Stolberg, Count Frederick Leopold, younger brother of Christian, 270-275.

Stolberg, Countess, beginning of Goethe's acquaintance with her, 253;
his letters to, 254, 255, 266, 280, 282 and note.

Strassburg, Goethe's residence in, 74-108;
description of its society, 75, 273.

Strassburg Cathedral, Goethe's interest in, and its influence on his development, 93-95;
Goethe's essay on, 94.

Sturm und Drang movement in German literature, inspired by *Götz von Berlichingen*, 130, 139, 140;
its aims expounded in the *Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen*, 164, 165.

Sulzer, J.G., his characterisation of Goethe, 283.

Swift, his relations to Stella and Vanessa suggest Goethe's *Stella*, 261.

Tennyson, 294 and note.

Textor, J.W., Goethe's maternal grandfather, 18.

Theatre set up by the French in Frankfort, Goethe's interest in it, 20, 21.

Theocritus, Goethe's study of him, 145.

Thoranc, Count, commander of French forces in Frankfort, quartered in Goethe's home: his interest in Goethe, 20-21.

Turgenieff, 180 note.

Two Biblical Questions, piece written by Goethe, 167.

Urfaust, The, 287;
account of it, 288-293.

Ur-Religion, Goethe's conception of, 16.

Van Helmont, Goethe's study of him, 64.

Vicar of Wakefield, 96 note.

Voltaire, his criticism of Shakespeare, 70, 181 and note.

Wanderers Sturmlied, poem by Goethe, 139, 140.

Werther, 109;
analysis of, 186-200;

its influence, 196, 199;
public opinion regarding it, 196, 197;
prohibited in Leipzig and Denmark, 197;
burned at Milan, *ib.*

Werther, how far he resembled Goethe, 193-195.

Wertherism, 199.

Werthes, F.A., his description of Goethe, 241.

Wetzlar, Goethe's residence there, 143-153;
description of, 144;
its society, 145;
Goethe's flying visit to, 160.

Wieland, his translation of Shakespeare, 70;
one of Goethe's masters, 70, 71;
his description of Goethe, 98;
his opinion of *Götz von Berlichingen*, 129;
satirised by Goethe, 173, 174;
his *Alceste*, *ib.*;
letter of Goethe to, 185;
his approval of *Clavigo*, 205 note.

Wilhelm Meister, 21.

Winckelmann, influenced by Oeser, 46.

Wilkommen und Abschied, lyric of Goethe addressed to Friederike Brion, 107, 108.

Wordsworth, his remark on Goethe's poetry, 54.

Xenophon, Goethe's study of him, 145.

Young, Edward, his *Conjectures on Original Composition*: its influence on German literature, 90, 187.

Zelter, friend of Goethe, letter of Goethe to him, 193-194.

Zimmermann, J.G., his characterisation of Goethe, 283.

Zurich, 275;
lake of, 276.

FOOTNOTES

[1] *Gespräche mit Eckermann*, January 27th, 1824.

[2] In 1792, on the occasion of his being offered the honour of *Rathsherr* (town-councillor) in Frankfort, he wrote to his mother that "it was an honour, not only in the eyes of Europe, but of the whole world, to have been a citizen of Frankfort." (Goethe to his mother, December 24th, 1792). So, in 1824, he told Bettina von Arnim that, had he had the choice of his birthplace, he would have chosen Frankfort. As we shall see, Goethe did not always speak so favourably of Frankfort.

[3]

> Die Abgeschiednen betracht' ich gern,
> Stünd' ihr Verdienst auch noch so fern;
> Doch mit den edlen lebendigen Neuen
> Mag ich wetteifernd mich lieber freuen.

[4] In his later years Goethe preferred life in a small town. "Zwar ist es meiner Natur gemäss, an einem kleinen Orte zu leben." (Goethe to Zelter, December 16th, 1804.)

[5] To Chancellor von Müller Goethe said: "Mein Vater war ein tüchtiger Mann, aber freilich fehlte ihm Gewandtheit und Beweglichkeit des Geistes."

[6] Writing to her grandchild, Goethe's mother says: "Dein lieber Vater hat mir nie Kummer oder Verdruss verursacht."

[7] When the son of Frau von Stein was about to visit her, Goethe wrote: "Da sie nicht so ernsthaft ist wie ich, so wirst du dich besser bei ihr befinden."

[8] Goethe's letters addressed to Cornelia from Leipzig, when he was in his eighteenth year, are in the tone at once of an affectionate brother and of a schoolmaster. Their subsequent relations to each other will appear in the sequel.

[9] It was doubtless due to the absence of strict drill in his youth that Goethe, as he himself tells us, never acquired the art of punctuating his own writings.

[10] Goethe said of himself that he had no "grammatical vein."

[11] With reference to what he says of his Biblical studies he wrote as follows to a correspondent (January 30th, 1812): "Dass Sie meine asiatischen Weltanfänge so freundlich aufnehmen, ist mir von grossem Wert. Es schlingt sich die daher für mich gewonnene Kultur durch mein ganzes Leben...."

[12] His remark to Eckermann (1828) is well known: "Meine Sachen können nicht populär werden; wer daran denkt und dafür strebt, ist in einem Irrthum."

[13] So Weislingen (in *Götz von Berlichingen*), whom Goethe meant to be a double of himself, says: "*Ich bin ein Chamaeleon*."

[14] All Goethe's boyish productions that have been preserved will be found in *Der junge Goethe, Neue Ausgabe in sechs Bänden besorgt von Max Morris*, Leipzig, 1909.

[15] X. Doudan, *Mélanges et Lettres*, i. 524.

[16] *Werke, Briefe*, Band i., 68-9.

[17] On the occasion of a visit he paid to Leipzig in 1783, Goethe says: "Die Leipziger sind als eine kleine, moralische Republik anzusehn. Jeder steht für sich, hat einige Freunde und geht in seinem Wesen fort."

[18] *Gespräche mit Riemer*, Anfang 1807.

[19]

> Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,
> Sich ein Character in dem Strom der Welt.

[20] In point of fact Goethe retained to the end the intonation and the idioms of his native speech.

[21] In his Autobiography Goethe states as the reason for his casting off the home-made suit he had brought with him from Frankfort, that a person entering the Leipzig theatre in similar costume excited the ridicule of the audience.

[22] *Werke, Briefe*, Band i. 159.

[23] *Ib.* pp. 60-3.

[24] *Ib.* pp. 61-2.

[25] *Ib.* pp. 81-2.

[26] *Ib.* p. 86. The passage is in French.

[27] This was the work of Behrisch, who was a virtuoso in calligraphy.

[28] *Werke, Briefe*, i. 96-7.

[29] *Ib.* p. 105.

[30] *Ib.* p. 116.

[31] *Ib.* p. 133.

[32] *Ib.* pp. 158-9.

[33] "Das Bedürfnis meiner Natur zwingt mich zu einer vermannigfaltigten Thätigkeit," he wrote of himself in his thirty-second year.

[34] When, in his thirty-sixth year, Goethe renewed his acquaintance with Oeser, he wrote of him to Frau von Stein: "C'est comme si cet homme ne devroit pas mourir, tant ses talents paroissent toujours aller en s'augmentant."

[35] *Werke, Briefe*, Band i. 179.

[36] In later years he consoled himself with the reflection that the time he had spent on the technicalities of art was not wholly lost, as he had thus acquired powers of observation which were valuable to him both as a poet and as a man of science.

[37] *Werke, Briefe*, Band i. 67.

[38] *Ib.* p. 88.

[39] Notably in his paper, entitled *Literarischer Sansculottismus*. See above, p. 4. Regarding Lessing he made this remark to Eckermann (February 7th, 1827): "Bedauert doch den ausserordentlichen Menschen, dass er in einer so erbärmlichen Zeit leben musste, die ihm keine bessern Stoffe gab, als in seinen Stücken verarbeitet sind!"

[40] "Lessing war der höchste Verstand, und nur ein ebenso grosser konnte von ihm wahrhaft lernen. Dem Halbvermögen war er gefährlich." (To Eckermann, January 18th, 1825.)

[41] Nine of these *Lieder* Goethe thought worthy of a permanent place in his collected works.

[42] This play was based on an earlier attempt made in Frankfort.

[43] The exact time and place of its composition is uncertain, but Goethe's own testimony seems to indicate that it was mainly written in Leipzig, in 1769. It was first published in 1787, with some modifications, which affect only the form.

[44] With a fatuity into which he occasionally fell, Goethe in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* remarks that his two plays are an illustration of that most Christian text, "Let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone."

[45] The translation of this passage is by Miss Minna Steele Smith.—*Poetry and Truth from My Own Life* (London, 1908.)

[46] In a letter to W. von Rumohr (September 28th, 1807), Goethe calls "unaufhaltsame Natur, unüberwindliche Neigung, drängende Leidenschaft" the "Haupterfordernisse der wahren Poesie." In two of his *Zahme Xenien* Goethe has expressed his opinion on the necessity of inspiration in poetic production:—

Ja das ist das rechte Gleis,
Dass man nicht weiss,
Was man denkt,
Wenn man denkt:
Alles ist als wie geschenkt.

All unser redlichstes Bemühn
Glückt nur im unbewussten Momente.
Wie möchte denn die Rose blühn,
Wenn sie der Sonne Herrlichkeit
erkennte!

[47] When approaching his eightieth year, Goethe remarked to Chancellor von Müller (March 6th, 1828): "Wer mit mir umgehen will, muss zuweilen auch meine Grobianslaune zugeben, ertragen, wie eines andern Schwachheit oder Steckenpferd."

[48] Referring to the time he now spent in Frankfort, Goethe says in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*: "Mit dem Vater selbst konnte sich kein angenehmes Verhältniss

knüpfen."

[49] *Werke, Briefe*, Band i. 215.

[50] *Ib.* p. 217.

[51] *Cf.* his beautiful characterisation of Louis Bonaparte, King of Holland, in whom he found the embodiment at once of the Christian graces and of *reine Menschlichkeit*.

[52] Probably Goethe had this book in his mind when he wrote the sarcastic epigram:—

"Es ist die ganze Kirchengeschichte
Mischmasch von Irrthum und von
Gewalt."

[53] Yet at a later date he would seem to have regarded his mystical studies as among the errors of his youth. In his *Tagebuch*, under date August 7th, 1779, he writes as follows, and the passage may be taken as a commentary on the whole period of his life with which we are dealing: "Stiller Rückblick auf's Leben auf die Verworrenheit Betriebsamkeit, Wissbegierde der Jugend, wie sie überall herumschweift, um etwas Befriedigendes zu finden. Wie ich besonders in Geheimnissen, dunklen imaginativen Verhältissen eine Wollust gefunden habe."

[54] *Werke, Briefe*, Band i. 179, November 7th, 1768.

[55] *Ib.* p. 173.

[56] *Ib.* p. 217.

[57] *Ib.* p. 211.

[58] *Ib.* p. 224.

[59] Goethe saw Käthchen as a married woman in Leipzig in 1776, when he wrote to the lady who then held his affections (Frau von Stein): "Mais ce n'est plus Julie."

[60] *Werke, Briefe*, Band i. 205.

[61] *Ib.* p. 230.

[62] Goethe has this entry in his *Tagebuch* (April 2nd, 1780): "Wieland sieht ganz unglaublich alles, was man machen will, macht, und was hangt und langt in einer Schrift."

[63] *Werke, Briefe*, Band i. 200.

[64] So we are led to infer from what he says in Part iii., Book ii. of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*.

[65] *Werke, Briefe*, Band i. 232.

[66] *Ib.* p. 234.

[67] *Ib.* pp. 240, 241.

[68] Lerse, one of Goethe's friends in Strassburg, said: "Da geriet Goethe oft in hohe Verzückung, sprach Worte der Prophezeiung und machte Lerse Besorgnisse, er werde überschnappen." (Goethe's *Gespräche*. Gesamtausgabe von

Freiherrn v. Biedermann, Leipzig, 1909, i. p. 19.)

[69] *Werke, Briefe*, Band i. pp. 245-7.

[70] Jung Stilling.

[71] Biedermann, *op. cit.*, i. pp. 15, 19. At an earlier period Goethe was thus described: "Er mag 15 oder 16 Jahr alt sein, im übrigen hat er mehr ein gutes Plappermaul als Gründlichkeit." *Ib.* p. 6.

[72] Goethe's personal appearance made such a remarkable impression on all who met him that it deserves to be more minutely described. In stature he was slightly over the middle height, though the poise of his head, both in youth and age, gave the impression of greater tallness. Till past his thirtieth year he was notably slender in figure, a defect in symmetry being the observable shortness of the legs, and he walked with swift, elastic step. The foot was elegantly shaped, but the hand was that of the descendant of ancestors who had been engaged in manual labour. The head was of oval form, the chin small and feminine, the height of the forehead remarkable. The face, which (in youth) gave the impression of smallness, was brown in complexion; the nose was delicately formed and slightly curved; the hair brown, abundant, and usually dishevelled. The feature which struck all who met him for the first time was the eyes, which were brown in colour, large, and widely-

opened, with the white conspicuous, and piercingly bright.—An exhaustive study of the portraits and busts of Goethe will be found in *Goethes Kopf und Gestalt von Karl Bauer*, Berlin, 1908.

[73] Stilling elsewhere says: "Schade, dass so wenige diesen vortrefflichen Menschen seinem Herzen nach kennen!" Others used similar expressions regarding Goethe's mind and heart.

[74] R. Haym, Herder's biographer, says of him: "Einen unbedingt erfreulichen, harmonischen Eindruck kann dieser Mann, der selbst von den 'gräulichen Dissonanzen' redet, in die Äussererungen zuweilen ausklingen möchten, auch auf den günstigst gestimmten Betrachter nimmermehr machen." (*Herder nach seinem Leben und seinen Werken*, Berlin, 1887, i. p. 396.)

[75] Goethe attached so much importance to many of Hamann's utterances that, as late as 1806, he had thoughts of bringing out an edition of Hamann's works.

[76] Herder thought that Goethe was lacking in enthusiasm.

[77] Elsewhere Herder calls Goethe a *Specht*, a wood-pecker.

[78] Writing to a correspondent in 1780, Goethe says: "Herder fährt fort, sich und andern das Leben sauer zu machen."

[79] *Götz von Berlichingen.*

[80] Von deutcher Baukunst.

[81] *Werke, Briefe*, Band i. p. 264. He adds that he would prefer to be Mercury, the least of the seven planets that revolve round the sun, than first among the five that revolve round Saturn.

[82] Herder himself says of his influence on Goethe: "Ich glaube ihm, ohne Lobrednerei, einige gute Eindrücke gegeben zu haben, die einmal wirksam werden können."—Haym, *op. cit.* i. 392.

[83] *Ib.* Band ii. p. 18.

[84] Schiller, in a letter to C.G. Körner, the father of the poet, writes (July, 1787): "He [Herder] said that Goethe had greatly influenced his intellectual development."

[85] *Ib.* Band i. p. 250.

[86] Subsequent investigation has proved that Goethe has committed several errors of fact in his narrative. For example, he relates that on his first visit to the Sesenheim family he was vividly reminded of the family of the Vicar of Wakefield. In point of fact, he was introduced to Goldsmith's work by Herder, who came to Strassburg subsequent to Goethe's first visit to Sesenheim.

[87] *Ib.* p. 251.

[88] It is recorded that his voice trembled as he dictated the passages referring to Sesenheim and Friederike.

[89] In reality, there were four daughters, but Goethe omits mention of the other two in order to make more striking the resemblance between the family of the Vicar of Wakefield and that of Sesenheim.

[90] Biedermann, *op. cit.* i. pp. 16-17.

[91] In the recently discovered manuscript of *Wilhelm Meisters Theatralische Sendung* occurs this passage, evidently self-descriptive: "Als Knabe hatte er zu grossen prächtigen Worten und Sprüchen eine ausserordentliche Liebe, er schmückte seine Seele damit aus wie mit einem köstlichen Kleide, und freute sich darüber, als wenn sie zu ihm selbst gehörten kindlisch über diesen äussern Schmuck."

[92] *Werke, Briefe*, Band i. p. 258 *ff.*

[93] Friederike died in 1815. She was still alive when Goethe was writing the story of their love.

[94]

Nichts taugt Ungeduld,
Noch weniger Reue;
Jene vermehrt die Schuld,
Diese schafft neue.

[95] "I, too," Goethe wrote in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, "had trodden the path of knowledge, and had early been led to see the vanity of it."

[96] In point of fact, only two legal cases

passed through Goethe's hands during the first seven months after his return. During the later period of his stay in Frankfort he was more busily engaged with law.

[97] The younger brother, Georg, subsequently married Cornelia.

[98] *Werke, Briefe*, Band 2, pp. 7-8.

[99] *Ib.* p. 6.

[100] *Ib.* p. 8.

[101] *Ib.* p. 14.

[102] So it was then thought, but the exact date is uncertain.

[103] The toast of the evening—"The Will of all Wills"—was given by Goethe, who thereupon delivered the panegyric on Shakespeare which he had composed in Strassburg. This toast was followed by one to the health of Herder.

[104] In the characters of Marie and Elizabeth we have traits of Friederike and of Goethe's mother.

[105] As we have seen, the Leipzig book of verses did not attract general attention.

[106] Lessing strongly disapproved of *Götz* as flouting the doctrines laid down in his *Dramaturgie*. When his brother announced to him that *Götz* had been played with great applause in Berlin, his cold comment was that no doubt the chief credit was due to the decorator.

[107] Two of the scenes in *Götz* were imitated by Scott in his own work—the Vehmgericht scene in *Anne of Geierstein* and the description of the siege of Torquilstone by Rebecca to the wounded Ivanhoe. Scott also borrowed from *Egmont*.

[108] Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe*, November 9th, 1824.

[109] It was Schlosser who had made Goethe and Merck acquainted. Herder, to whom Merck was known, had been a previous intermediary.

[110] A six hours' walk.

[111] The poem, entitled *Der Wanderer*, noted below.

[112] The girl meant was no doubt Käthchen Schönkopf.

[113] *Über Goethe's Gedichte* (1911), p. 157.

[114] On account of his constant travels between Frankfort and Darmstadt, Goethe was known among his friends as the *Wanderer*. The poem was written in the autumn, during Goethe's residence in Wetzlar.

[115] Biedermann, *op. cit.* i. 19-20.

[116] Werther, as Goethe reminds us in one of his Venetian epigrams, was known in China:—

Doch was fördert es mich, dass auch
sogar der Chinese
Malet mit ängstlicher Hand Werthern
und Lotten auf Glas?

[117] The *Praktikanten* were voluntary attendants on the Imperial Court, had little or no dependence on the authorities, and lived on their own resources.

[118] Caroline Flachsland to Herder, May 25th, 1772.

[119] Goethe to Herder, *Werke, Briefe*, Band ii. 15.

[120] In the *Kronprinz*, the principal hotel in the town.

[121] Goethe's own lodging (still shown) was in the *Gewandsgasse*, a narrow, dirty street, whence sun or moon could be seen at no season of the year.

[122] In his contemporary letters, Goethe does not always speak of Gotter so favourably as he does in his Autobiography.

[123] An exhaustive account of Goethe's sojourn in Wetzlar will be found in W. Herbst's *Goethe in Wetzlar*, 1772. *Vier Monate aus des Dichters Jugendleben*, Gotha, 1881.

[124] This is the expression of Kestner, Lotte's betrothed.

[125] Such abrupt departures were

characteristic of Goethe. We shall find him taking similar unceremonious leave of another of his loves. Goethe, wrote Frau von Stein to her son (May, 1812), "kann das Abschied nehmen nicht leiden, er ging ohne Abschied neulich von mir."

[126] Kestner's characterisation of Goethe will be found in Biedermann, *op. cit.* i. pp. 21-3.

[127] Goethe had made Jerusalem's acquaintance in Leipzig. Jerusalem called Goethe a *Geck*, a coxcomb, a description which, as we have seen, was not inapplicable to him in his Leipzig days. Jerusalem was a friend of Lessing, who highly esteemed him, and after his death published his MSS.

[128] In point of fact, Goethe announced himself. Merck arrived after him.

[129] In a letter to Schiller (July 24th, 1799) Goethe gives a much less favourable estimate of Frau von la Roche, whom he had just met: "Sie gehört zu den nivellierenden Naturen, sie hebt das Gemeine herauf und zieht das Vorzügliche herunter...."

[130] Goethe to Kestner, November 10th, 1772. *Werke, Briefe*, Band ii. 35.

[131] To the same, September 15th, 1773. *Ib.* p. 104.

[132] *Ib.* pp. 82-3.

[133] November 27th, 1772.

[134] Goethe wrote the epilogue to the last number of the Review, of which he says to Kestner, "hat ich das Publikum und den Verleger turlipinirt."

[135] In its new form *Götz* was no better adapted for the stage. "Eine angeborne Unart ist schwierig zu meistern," is Goethe's own remark on his attempt to make it a good acting play.

[136] Ich bin wie immer der nachdenkliche Leichtsinn und die warme Kälte.—Goethe to Sophie von la Roche, September 1st, 1780.

[137] A quarrel had arisen between Merck and Leuchsenring, and Goethe had warmly taken Merck's side.

[138] As we have seen, Herder was jealous of Goethe's own attentions to Caroline.

[139] It was published in the autumn of the following year, 1774.

[140] W. Scherer was the first to identify Herder with Satyros.

[141] *Satyros* was not published till 1814, after Herder's death, but he was aware of its existence.

[142] Max Morris, *op. cit.* iv. 81.

[143] The following passage from an article in the *Hibbert Journal*, by M.

Bergson (October, 1911, pp. 42-3), is an interesting commentary on Goethe's conception: "If, then, in every province the triumph of life is expressed by creation, might we not think that the ultimate reason of human life is a creation which, in distinction from that of the artist or man of science, can be pursued at every moment and by all men alike; I mean the creation of self by self, the continual enrichment of personality, by elements which it does not draw from outside, but causes to spring forth from itself?"

[144] Viktor Hehn pointed out that the drama and the ode are inspired by different motives, and that it was in forgetfulness that Goethe associated them. —*Über Goethe's Gedichte*, p. 160. Bielschowsky (*Goethe, Sein Leben und Seine Werke*, i. 510) suggests that the ode may have been intended as the opening of Act ii.

[145] Sir Frederick Pollock dates "modern Spinozism" from this incident.—*Spinoza: His Life and Opinions* (London, 1880), p. 390.

[146] While writing a defence of his friend Lessing against the charge of atheism, Mendelssohn's mental agitation was such that it was believed to have occasioned his death.

[147] Turgenieff relates that on translating passages from *Satyros* and *Prometheus* to Flaubert, Edmond de

Goncourt, and Daudet, all three were profoundly impressed by the range and power displayed in them.

[148] It is one of the ironies of Goethe's literary career that, in his later years, in the period of his reaction against the formlessness that had invaded German literature, he, with the approval of Schiller, translated Voltaire's *Mahomet*, and staged it in Weimar.

[149] It is this conception, as he himself tells us, that Renan applied to the life and teaching of Jesus.

[150] In his sixty-second year Goethe also said of himself: "Denn gewöhnlich, was ich ausspreche, das tue ich nicht, und was ich verspreche, das halte ich nicht."

[151] *Werke, Briefe*, ii. 140.

[152] These lines are by the Earl of Rochester. On reading the first English translation of *Werther* (1783), Goethe wrote: "It gave me much pleasure to read my thoughts in the language of my instructors."

[153] In making these modifications Goethe was advised by Herder and Wieland.

[154] Though to the satisfaction of neither Kestner nor Lotte.

[155] It was shortly after his meeting with Lotte Buff that Goethe learned that she

was engaged to Kestner.

[156] Goethe gave the blue eyes of Maxe to Charlotte. Lotte Buff's eyes were brown.

[157] "Werther," Goethe remarked to Henry Crabb Robinson, "praised Homer while he retained his senses, and Ossian when he was going mad."

[158] *Werke, Briefe*, ii. 156.

[159] The judgment of Lessing, who had no sympathy with the effeminate sentimentality of the time, was severe. "We cannot," he said, "imagine a Greek or a Roman *Werther*; it was the Christian ideal that had made such a character possible." Goethe, he thought, should have added a cynical chapter (the more cynical the better) to put *Werther's* character in its true light. As the friend of Jerusalem, Lessing naturally resented the liberty which Goethe had taken with him.

[160] By Sainte-Beuve.

[161] *Werke, Briefe*, ii. 207.

[162] The family of Kestner eventually published the correspondence of Goethe with their parents.—A. Kestner, *Goethe und Werther, Briefe Goethes, meistens aus seiner Jugendheit, mit erläuternden Documenten* (Stuttgart und Tübingen, 1854).

[163] Eckermann, *op. cit.*, January 2nd, 1824.

[164] The *accidie* of the Middle Ages was a form of Wertherism. *Cf.* Chaucer's *Parson's Tale*.

[165] It may be recalled that *Werther* was throughout his life one of R.L. Stevenson's favourite books. See his Letter to Mrs. Sitwell, September 6th, 1873, and ch. xix. of *The Wrecker*.

[166] *Fragment de mon voyage d'Espagne.—Mémoires de Monsieur Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais*, tome ii.

[167] Of all the women who came in her son's way, Frau Goethe thought that this lady, Anna Sibylla Münch by name, would have made him the most suitable partner in life.

[168] To Fritz Jacobi, August 21st, 1774.

[169] In language, as well as in form, *Clavigo* followed traditional models. Wieland was naturally gratified by Goethe's return to those models which he had set at defiance in *Götz*.

[170] In his Autobiography Goethe expresses the opinion that Merck's advice was not sound, and that he might have done wisely in producing a succession of plays like *Clavigo*, some of which, like it, might have retained their place on the stage.

[171] Saying of Philine in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, bk. iv. ch. ix.

[172] An entry in his *Ephemerides*, the diary which he kept in his 21st year (see above, p. 102), shows that Spinoza's philosophy, as he conceived it, was then repugnant to him. The passage is as follows: "Testimonio enim mihi est virorum tantorum sententia, rectae rationi quam convenientissimum fuisse systema emanativum (he is thinking specially of Giordano Bruno); licet nulli subscribere velim sectae, valdeque doleam Spinozismum, teterrimis erroribus ex eodem fonte manantibus, doctrinae huic purissimae, iniquissimum fratrem natum esse."—Max Morris, *op. cit.* ii. 33.

[173] By Felix Mendelssohn.

[174] See above, p. 65.

[175] It was first published in 1836, four years after his death.

[176] In one of his *Xenien* Goethe speaks thus of Lavater:—

"Schade, dass die Natur nur einen
Menschen aus dir schuf,
Denn zum würdigen Mann war und zum
Schelmen der Stoff."

[177] The letter is addressed to Heinrich Pfenninger, an engraver in Zurich, who engraved some of the plates in Lavater's book on Physiognomy.—*Werke, Briefe*, Band ii. pp. 155-6.

[178] Biedermann, *op. cit.* i. 33.

[179] *Ib.* p. 34.

[180] The school was actually founded in 1774, but subsequently, owing to quarrels with his colleagues, Basedow had to leave it. It was closed in 1793.

[181] Basedow remained for a time at Mülheim. As we shall see, he and Goethe met again later in the month.

[182] As *Werther* was not published till the autumn of 1774, there must be some confusion in Lavater's narrative.

[183] *Werke, Briefe*, ii. 180.

[184] Biedermann, *op. cit.* i. 45.

[185] As Goethe at this time knew little of Spinoza's philosophy, it was probably on Spinoza's personal character that he enlarged. On this theme, we have seen, he had discoursed with Lavater.

[186] Biedermann, *op. cit.* i. 45.

[187] Johann J.W. Heinse, a minor poet of the time, and one of Goethe's most fervent admirers.

[188] Biedermann, *op. cit.* i. 45-6.

[189] *Werke, Briefe*, ii. 182.

[190] Klopstock came from Göttingen, where he was the idol of a band of youthful poets.

[191] *Werke, Briefe*, ii. 182.

[192] Merck found in Klopstock "viel Weltkunde und Weltkälte."

[193] Writing to Sophie von la Roche on November 20th, Goethe calls Klopstock "a noble, great man, on whom the peace of God rests," *Werke, Briefe* ii. 206.

[194] Biedermann, *op. cit.* i. 46.

[195] Max Morris, *op. cit.* iv. 370-1. About the same date as Knebel's letter, Goethe wrote to Sophie von la Roche: "Das ist was Verfluchtes dass ich anfange mich mit niemand mehr misszuverstehen." In his 49th year Goethe said of himself: "Opposition ist mir immer nötig."

[196] *Ib.* p. 370.

[197] In a letter written to Johanna Fahlmer from Weimar (April 10th, 1776) Goethe vehemently expresses his dislike of the Schönemann kin. "I have long hated them," he says; "from the bottom of my heart.... I pity the poor creature [Lili] that she was born into such a race."

[198] Eckermann, March 5th, 1830. What has been said of Chateaubriand, who made use of a similar expression, may probably be said with greater truth of Goethe, "Il ment à ses propres souvenirs et à son coeur." In a letter to Frau von Stein (May 24th, 1776) Goethe describes his relation to Friederike Brion as "das reinste, schönste, wahrste, das ich ausser meiner Schwester je zu einem Weibe gehabt."

[199] She is described as a pretty blonde, with blue eyes and fair hair. In a letter (March 30th, 1801) addressed to Lili, then a widow, Goethe writes: "Sie haben in den vergangenen Jahren viel ausgestanden und dabei, wie ich weiss, einen entschlossenen Mut bewiesen, der Ihnen Ehre macht."

[200] It may be regarded as significant that Goethe makes no reference to the Countess in his Autobiography.

[201] *Werke, Briefe*, ii. 230.

[202] *Ib.* pp. 233-4.

[203] *Ib.* p. 113.

[204] He says of the piece that it cost him "little expenditure of mind and feeling." *Ib.*

[205] Goethe was not known to be the author. In a letter to Johanna Fahlmer, he expresses his curiosity to know if Lili was present at its performance. *Erwin und Elmire*, it should be said, contains two of Goethe's most beautiful songs, the one beginning "Ein Veilchen auf der Wiese stand," and the other "Ihr verblühet, süsse Rosen."

[206] In deference to the general opinion that this ending was immoral, Goethe, in a later form of the play, makes Fernando shoot himself.

[207] *Stella* and other German plays are wittily parodied in *The Rovers; or, The*

Double Arrangement.

[208] Goethe gives Fernando his own brown eyes and black hair.

[209] After he had broken with her, and was settled in Weimar.

[210] During his residence in Rome in 1787. He recast *Erwin und Elmire* at the same time.

[211] To this period probably belongs *Lilis Park*, the most playfully humorous of Goethe's poems, in which he banters Lili on her capricious treatment of himself (represented as a bear) as one of her menagerie—the motley crowd of her suitors.

[212] Certain pranks played by Goethe during his stay in Offenbach show that he was not wholly given up to "lover's melancholy." On a moonlight night, robed in a white sheet, and mounted on stilts (a form of exercise to which he was addicted), he went through the town and created a panic among the inhabitants by looking into their windows. On another occasion, at a baptism, he secretly deposited the baby in a dish, and covering it with a towel, placed the dish on a table where the company were assembled. It was only after some time that the contents of the dish were revealed.

[213] *Werke, Briefe*, ii. 246.

[214] *Werke, Briefe*, ii. 249.

[215] *Ib.* p. 255.

[216] Frau Schönemann is recorded to have said that the different religion of the two families was the cause of the match being broken off.

[217] *Werke, Briefe*, ii. 261-2.

[218] The third was Count Haugnitz, of more subdued temper than his companions.

[219] Biedermann, *op. cit.* i. 55.

[220] According to Goethe, Count Haugnitz was the only one of the four who showed any sense of propriety.

[221] It was at this time that Merck gave his famous definition of Goethe's genius. See above, p. 135.

[222] The *Urfaust*.

[223] Goethe was known as the "Bear" or the "Huron" among his friends.

[224] *Werke, Briefe*, ii. 266.

[225] Cornelia died in June, 1777, when Goethe was settled in Weimar.

[226] On Cornelia's death he wrote to his mother: "Mit meiner Schwester ist mir so eine starcke Wurzel die mich an der Erde hielt abgehauen worden, dass die Aeste von oben, die davon Nahrung haben, auch absterben müssen."

[227] Biedermann, *op. cit.* i. 59. Goethe

made Lavater the victim of one of the practical jokes which he was in the habit of playing on his friends. Seeing an unfinished sermon of Lavater on his desk, he completed it during the absence of Lavater, who, in ignorance of the addition, preached the whole sermon as his own.—*Ib.* p. 58.

[228] According to a tradition in the Passavant family, it was Goethe, not Passavant, who was so eager to descend into Italy.—Biedermann, *op. cit.* i. 58.

[229] *Werke, Briefe*, ii. 272.

[230] *Ib.* p. 273.

[231] *Ib.* pp. 277-8.

[232] The two poems, *Lilis Park* and the song beginning "Ihr verblühet, süsse Rosen," which Goethe refers to this period, were really written at an earlier date. The latter, we have seen, appears in *Erwin und Elmire*.

[233] It was at this time that he translated the Song of Solomon, which he calls "the most glorious collection of love-songs God ever made."

[234] *Werke, Briefe*, ii. 294. In a letter to the Countess's brothers about the same date, Goethe writes: "Gustchen [the Countess] is an angel. The devil that she is an Imperial Countess."—*Ib.* p. 298.

[235] Biedermann, *op. cit.* i. p. 60.

[236] Max Morris, *op. cit.* v. 470.

[237] The Duke had previously passed through Frankfort on his way to Carlsruhe. On that occasion, also, Goethe had been in intercourse with him.

[238] This, as we have seen, is not consistent with certain of his former statements.—In June of 1776 Lili was betrothed to another, but, owing to his bankruptcy, marriage did not follow. In 1778, however, she was married to a Strassburg banker. Like all Goethe's loves, she retained a kindly memory of him. She is reported to have said that she regarded herself as owing her best self to him.—Max Morris, *op. cit.* v. 468.

[239] Miss Swanwick's translation. Goethe concludes his Autobiography with these words.

[240] Fräulein Luise von Göchhausen.

[241] The words "[Sie] ist gerettet" are not in the *Urfaust*.

[242]

Grau, theurer Freund, ist alle Theorie,
Und grün des Lebens goldner Baum.

[243] Tennyson disclaimed having Goethe in his mind when he wrote *The Palace of Art*.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK
THE YOUTH OF GOETHE ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—
the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG™ LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg License when you share it without

charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

> This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project

Gutenberg™ License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg License terms from this work,

or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project

Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability

to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR

IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg

Project Gutenberg is synonymous with the free

distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg's goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 41

Watchung Plaza #516, Montclair NJ 07042, USA, +1 (862) 621-9288. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the

solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate.

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.