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GERMANY

By MADAME

THE BARONESS DE STAËL-HOLSTEIN

WITH

NOTES AND APPENDICES

BY

O. W. WIGHT, A. M.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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object has been to give abundant and reliable information in regard to the period since Madame de Staël wrote.

Important Appendices have been added, which complete the survey of German Literature, Philosophy, and Theology.

We had intended to say something here in regard to the intellectual importance of Germany, but we find what we wished to say so much better expressed by Mr. Carlyle,—and who has a better title than he to speak of intellectual Germany?—that we gladly adopt his language :

“ There is the spectacle of a great people, closely related to us in blood, language, character, advancing through fifteen centuries of culture, with the eras and changes that have distinguished the like career in other nations. Nay, perhaps the intellectual history of the Germans is not without peculiar attraction on two grounds: first, that they are a separate unmixed people; that in them one of the two grand stem-tribes, from which all modern European countries derive their population and speech, is seen growing up distinct, and in several particulars following its own course; secondly, that by accident and by desert, the Germans have more than once been found playing the highest part in European culture; at more than one era the grand Tendencies of Europe have first imbodied themselves into action in Germany; the main battle between the New and the Old has been fought and gained there. We mention only the Swiss Revolt and Luther's Reformation. The Germans have not indeed so many classical works to exhibit as some other nations; a Shakspeare, a Dante, has not yet been recognized among them; nevertheless, they too have had their Teachers and inspired Singers; and in regard to popular Mythology, traditionary possessions, and spirit, what we may call the *inarticulate* Poetry of a nation, and what is the element of its spoken or written Poetry, they will be found superior to any other modern people.

“The Historic Surveyor of German Poetry will observe a remarkable nation struggling out of Paganism ; fragments of that stern Superstition, saved from the general wreck, and still, amid the new order things, carrying back our view, in faint reflexes, into the dim primeval time. By slow degrees the chaos of the Northern Immigrations settles into a new and fairer world ; arts advance ; little by little a fund of Knowledge of Power over Nature, is accumulated for man ; feeble glimmerings, even of a higher knowledge, of a poetic, break forth ; till at length in the *Swabian Era*, as it is named, a blaze of true though simple Poetry bursts over Germany, more splendid, we might say, than the Troubadour Period of any other nation ; for that famous *Nibelungen Song*, produced, at least ultimately fashioned in those times, and still so insignificant in these, is altogether without parallel elsewhere.

“To this period, the essence of which was young Wonder, and an enthusiasm for which Chivalry was still the fit exponent, there succeeds, as was natural, a period of Inquiry, a Didactic period ; wherein, among the Germans, as elsewhere, many a Hugo von Trimberg delivers wise saws and moral apothegms to the general edification : later, a Town-clerk of Strasburg sees his *Ship of Fools* translated into all living languages, twice into Latin, and read by Kings ; the Apologue of *Reynard the Fox*, gathering itself together from sources remote and near, assumes its Low-German vesture, and becomes the darling of high and low ; nay, still lives with us, in rude genial vigor, as one of the most remarkable indigenous productions of the Middle Ages. Nor is acted poetry of this kind wanting ; the Spirit of Inquiry translates itself into Deeds which are poetical, as well as into words : already at the opening of the fourteenth century, Germany witnesses the first assertion of political right, the first vindication of Man against Nobleman, in the early history of the German Swiss. And again, two centuries later,

the first assertion of intellectual right, the first vindication of Man against Clergyman, in the history of Luther's Reformation. Meanwhile the Press has begun its incalculable task; the indigenous Fiction of the Germans, what we have called their inarticulate Poetry, issues in innumerable *Volks-Bücher*, (People's-Books), the progeny and kindred of which still live in all European countries; the People have their Tragedy and their Comedy; *Tyll Eulenspiegel* shakes every diaphragm with laughter; the rudest heart quails with awe at the wild mythus of *Faust*.

“ With Luther, however, the Didactic Tendency has reached its poetic acme; and now we must see it assume a prosaic character, and Poetry for a long while decline. The Spirit of Inquiry, of Criticism, is pushed beyond the limits, or too exclusively cultivated: what had done so much, is capable of doing all; Understanding is alone listened to, while Fancy and Imagination languish inactive, or are forcibly stifled; and all poetic culture gradually dies away. As if with the high resolute genius, and noble achievements, of its Luthers and Hutten, the genius of the country had exhausted itself, we behold generation after generation of mere Prosaists succeed these high Psalmists. Science indeed advances, practical manipulation in all kinds improves; Germany has its Copernics, Hevels, Guerickes, Keplers; later, a Leibnitz opens the path of true Logic, and teaches the mysteries of Figure and Number: but the finer education of mankind seems at a stand. Instead of Poetic recognition and worship, we have stolid Theologic controversy, or still shallower Freethinking; pedantry, servility, mode-hunting, every species of Idolatry and Affectation holds sway. The World has lost its beauty, Life its infinite majesty, as if the Author of it were no longer divine: instead of admiration and creation of the True, there is at best criticism and denial of the False; to Luther there has succeeded Tho-

masius. In this era, so unpoetical for all Europe, Germany torn in pieces by a Thirty Years' War, and its consequences, is pre-eminently prosaic ; its few Singers are feeble echoes of foreign models little better than themselves. No Shakspeare, no Milton appears there ; such, indeed, would have appeared earlier if at all, in the current of German history ; but instead, they have only at best Opitzes, Flemmings, Logans, as we had our Queen Anne Wits ; or, in their Lohensteines, Gryphs, Hoffmannswaldaus, though in inverse order, an unintentional parody of our Drydens and Lees.

“ Nevertheless from every moral death there is a new birth ; in this wondrous course of his, man may indeed linger, but cannot retrograde or stand still. In the middle of last century, from among the Parisian Erotics, rickety Sentimentalism, Court aperies, and hollow Dulness, striving in all hopeless courses, we behold the giant spirit of Germany awoken as from long slumber ; shake away these worthless fetters, and, by its Lessings and Klopstocks, announce, in true German dialect, that the Germans also are men. Singular enough in its circumstances was this resuscitation ; the work as of a ‘ spirit on the waters,’—a movement agitating the great popular mass ; for it was favored by no court or king : all sovereignties, even the pettiest, had abandoned their native Literature, their native language, as if to irreclaimable barbarism. The greatest King produced in Germany since Barbarossa's time, Frederick the Second, looked coldly on the native endeavor, and saw no hope but in aid from France. However, the native endeavor prospered without aid : Lessing's announcement did not die away with him, but took clearer utterance, and more inspired modulation from his followers ; in whose works it now speaks, not to Germany alone, but to the whole world. The results of this last Period of German Literature are of deep significance, the depth of which is perhaps but now be

coming visible. Here, too, it may be, as in other cases, the Want of the age has first taken voice and shape in Germany ; that change from Negation to Affirmation, from Destruction to Reconstruction, for which all thinkers in every country are now prepared, is perhaps already in action there. In the nobler Literature of the Germans, say some, lie the rudiments of a new spiritual era, which it is for this, and for succeeding generations to work out and realize. The ancient creative Inspiration, it would seem, is still possible in these ages ; at a time when Skepticism, Frivolity, Sensuality, had withered Life into a sand desert, and our gayest prospect was but the *false mirage*, and even our Byrons could utter but a death-song or despairing howl, the Moses'-wand has again smote from that Horeb refreshing streams, towards which the better spirits of all nations are hastening, if not to drink, yet wistfully and hopefully to examine. If the older Literary History of Germany has the common attractions, which in a greater or less degree belong to the successive epochs of other such Histories, its newer Literature, and the historical delineation of this, has an interest such as belongs to no other."

Carlyle acknowledges that this book of Madame de Staël has done away with the prejudices against the Germans. We send it forth in a new dress, with careful and copious annotation, and hope it may prove a true guide to those who are seeking information in regard to a great people.

O. W. WIGHT.

JUNE, 1859.

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P R E F A C E .

1st October, 1813.

IN 1810, I put the manuscript of this work, on Germany, into the hands of the bookseller, who had published *Corinne*. As I maintained in it the same opinions, and preserved the same silence respecting the present government of the French, as in my former writings, I flattered myself that I should be permitted to publish this work also: yet, a few days after I had dispatched my manuscript, a decree of a very singular description appeared on the subject of the liberty of the press; it declared "that no work could be printed without having been examined by censors." Very well; it was usual in France, under the old *régime*, for literary works to be submitted to the examination of a censorship; the tendency of public opinion was then towards the feeling of liberty, which rendered such a restraint a matter very little to be dreaded; a little article, however, at the end of the new regulation declared, "that when the censors should have examined a work and permitted its publication, booksellers should be authorized to publish it, but that the Minister of the Police should still have a right to suppress it altogether, if he should think fit so to do." The meaning of which is, that such and such forms should be adopted until it should be thought fit no longer to abide by them: a law was not necessary to decree what was in fact the absence of all law; it would have been better to have relied simply upon the exercise of absolute power.

My bookseller, however, took upon himself the responsibility of the publication of my book, after submitting it to the censors, and thus our contract was made. I came to reside within

forty leagues of Paris, to superintend the printing of the work, and it was upon this occasion that, for the last time, I breathed the air of France. I had, however, abstained in this book, as will be seen, from making any reflections on the political state of Germany : I supposed myself to be writing at the distance of fifty years from the present time ; but the present time will not suffer itself to be forgotten. Several of the censors examined my manuscript ; they suppressed the different passages which I have now restored and pointed out by notes. With the exception, however, of these passages, they allowed the work to be printed, as I now publish it, for I have thought it my duty to make no alteration in it. It appears to me a curious thing to show what the work is, which is capable even now in France, of drawing down the most cruel persecution on the head of its author.

At the moment when this work was about to appear, and when the ten thousand copies of the first edition had been actually printed off, the Minister of the Police, known under the name of General Savary, sent his gendarmes to the house of the bookseller, with orders to tear the whole edition in pieces, and to place sentinels at the different entrances to the warehouses, for fear a single copy of this dangerous writing should escape. A commissary of police was charged with the superintendence of this expedition, in which General Savary easily obtained the victory ; and the poor commissary, it is said, died of the fatigue he underwent in too minutely assuring himself of the destruction of so great a number of volumes, or rather in seeing them transformed into paper perfectly white upon which no trace of human reason remained ; the price of the paper, valued at twenty louis by the police, was the only indemnification which the bookseller obtained from the minister.

At the same time that the destruction of my work was going on at Paris, I received in the country an order to deliver up the copy from which it had been printed, and to quit France in four-and-twenty hours. The conscripts are almost the only persons I know for whom four-and-twenty hours are considered

a sufficient time to prepare for a journey ; I wrote, therefore, to the Minister of the Police that I should require eight days to procure money and my carriage. The following is the letter which he sent me in answer :

GENERAL POLICE, *Minister's Office,* }
Paris, 3d October, 1810. }

“I received, Madam, the letter that you did me the honor to write me. Your son will have apprised you, that I had no objection to your postponing your departure for seven or eight days. I beg you will make that time sufficient for the arrangements you still have to make, because I cannot grant you more.

“The cause of the order which I have signified to you, is not to be looked for in the silence you have preserved with respect to the Emperor in your last work ; that would be a mistake ; no place could be found in it worthy of him ; but your banishment is a natural consequence of the course you have constantly pursued for some years past. It appeared to me, that the air of this country did not agree with you, and we are not yet reduced to seek for models among the people you admire.

“Your last work is not French ; it is I who have put a stop to the publication of it. I am sorry for the loss the bookseller must sustain, but it is not possible for me to suffer it to appear.

“You know, Madam, that you were only permitted to quit Coppet, because you had expressed a desire to go to America. If my predecessor suffered you to remain in the department of Loire-et-Cher, you were not to look upon that indulgence as a revocation of the orders which had been given with respect to you. At present, you oblige me to cause them to be strictly executed, and you have only yourself to accuse for it.

“I desire M. Corbigny¹ to suspend the execution of the order I had given him, until the expiration of the time I now grant you.

¹ Prefect of Loire-et-Cher.

"I regret, Madam, that you have obliged me to commence my correspondence with you by a measure of severity; it would have been more agreeable to me to have had only to offer you the testimonies of the high consideration with which I have the honor to be, Madam, your very humble and very obedient servant,

(Signed)

"THE DUKE DE ROVIGO."

"MAD. DE STAEL.

"P. S. I have reasons, Madam, for mentioning to you the ports of Lorient, la Rochelle, Bourdeaux, and Rochefort, as being the only ports at which you can embark; I beg you will let me know which of them you choose."¹

I shall add some reflections upon this letter, although it appears to me curious enough in itself. "It appeared to me," said General Savary, "that *the air of this country did not agree with you*;" what a gracious manner of announcing to a woman, then, alas! the mother of three children, the daughter of a man who had served France with so much fidelity, that she was banished forever from the place of her birth, without being suffered, in any manner, to protest against a punishment, esteemed the next in severity to death! There is a French vaudeville, in which a bailiff, boasting of his politeness towards those persons whom he takes to prison, says,

"Aussi je suis aimé de tout ceux que j'arrête."²

I know not whether such was the intention of General Savary.

He adds, that *the French are not reduced to seek for models among the people I admire*. These people are the English first, and in many respects the Germans. At all events, I think I cannot be accused of not loving France. I have shown but too much sensibility in being exiled from a country where I have so many objects of affection, and where those who are dear to me delight me so much! But, notwithstanding this

¹ The object of this Postscript was to forbid me the Ports of the Channel.

² "So I am loved by all I arrest."

attachment, perhaps too lively, for so brilliant a country, and its spiritual inhabitants, it did not follow that I was to be forbidden to admire England. She has been seen like a knight armed for the defence of social order, preserving Europe during ten years of anarchy, and ten years more of despotism. Her happy constitution was, at the beginning of the Revolution, the object of the hopes and the efforts of the French; my mind still remains where theirs was then.

On my return to the estate of my father, the Préfet of Geneva forbade me to go to a greater distance than four leagues from it. I suffered myself one day to go as far as ten leagues, merely for an airing: the gendarmes immediately pursued me, the postmasters¹ were forbidden to supply me with horses, and it would have appeared as if the safety of the State depended on such a weak being as myself. However, I still submitted to this imprisonment in all its severity, when a last blow rendered it quite insupportable to me. Some of my friends were banished, because they had had the generosity to come and see me; this was too much: to carry with us the contagion of misfortune, not to dare to associate with those we love, to be afraid to write to them, or pronounce their names, to be the object by turns, either of affectionate attentions which make us tremble for those who show them, or of those refinements of baseness which terror inspires, is a situation from which every one, who still values life, would withdraw!

I was told, as a means of softening my grief, that these continual persecutions were a proof of the importance that was attached to me; I could have answered that I had not deserved

“Ni cet excès d’honneur, ni cette indignité;”²

but I never suffered myself to look to consolations addressed

¹ The *Maitre de Poste* is one who has charge of a station of post-horses. Such stations are found, seven or eight miles from each other, on all the highways of Europe. They are regulated by government, and all travellers, by complying with certain forms, can demand horses at any station to convey them to the next. There is no corresponding system in this country.—*Ed.*

² “Neither this excess of honour, nor this indignity.”

to my vanity ; for I knew that there was no one then in France, from the highest to the lowest, who might not have been found worthy of being made unhappy. I was tormented in all the concerns of my life, in all the tender points of my character, and power condescended to take the trouble of becoming well acquainted with me, in order the more effectually to enhance my sufferings. Not being able then to disarm that power by the simple sacrifice of my talents, and resolved not to employ them in its service, I seemed to feel, to the bottom of my heart, the advice my father had given me, and I left my paternal home.

I think it my duty to make this calumniated book known to the public—this book, the source of so many troubles ; and, though General Savary told me in his letter that my work *was not French*, as I certainly do not consider him to be the representative of France, it is to Frenchmen such as I have known them, that I should with confidence address a production, in which I have endeavored, to the best of my abilities, to heighten the glory of the works of the human mind.

Germany may be considered, from its geographical situation, as the heart of Europe, and the great association of the Continent can never recover its independence but by the independence of this country. Difference of language, natural boundaries, the recollections of a common history, contribute altogether to give birth to those great individual existences of mankind, which we call nations ; certain proportions are necessary to their existence, certain qualities distinguish them ; and, if Germany were united to France, the consequence would be, that France would also be united to Germany, and the Frenchmen of Hamburg, like the Frenchmen of Rome, would by degrees effect a change in the character of the countrymen of Henry the Fourth : the vanquished would in time modify the victors, and in the end both would be losers.

I have said in my work that the Germans *were not a nation* ; assuredly, they are at this moment heroically disproving that assertion. But, nevertheless, do we not still see some German countries expose themselves by fighting against their country-

men, to the contempt even of their allies, the French? Those auxiliaries (whose names we hesitate to pronounce, as if it were not yet too late to conceal them from posterity)—those auxiliaries, I say, are not led either by opinion or even by interest, still less by honor; but a blind fear has precipitated their governments towards the strongest side, without reflecting that they were themselves the cause of that very strength before which they bowed.

The Spaniards, to whom we may apply Southey's beautiful line,

“And those who suffer bravely save mankind;”

the Spaniards have seen themselves reduced to the possession of Cadiz alone; but they were no more ready then to submit to the yoke of strangers, than they are now when they have reached the barrier of the Pyrenees, and are defended by that mar of an ancient character and a modern genius, Lord Wellington. But to accomplish these great things, a perseverance was necessary, which would not be discouraged by events.

The Germans have frequently fallen into the error of suffering themselves to be overcome by reverses. Individuals ought to submit to destiny, but nations never; for they alone can command destiny: with a little more exertion of the will, misfortune would be conquered.

The submission of one people to another is contrary to nature. Who would now believe in the possibility of subduing Spain, Russia, England, or France? Why should it not be the same with Germany? If the Germans could be subjugated, their misfortune would rend the heart; but, as Mlle. de Mancini said to Louis XIV, “*You are a king, sire, and weep!*” so we should always be tempted to say to them, “*You are a nation, and you weep!*”

The picture of literature and philosophy, seems indeed foreign from the present moment; yet it will be grateful, perhaps, to this poor and noble Germany, to recall the memory of its intellectual riches amid the ravages of war. It is three years since I designated Prussia, and the countries of the North

which surround it, as *the country of thought*; into how many noble actions has this thought been transformed! That to which the systems of Philosophers led the way is coming to pass, and the independence of mind is about to lay the foundation of the independence of nations.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

THE origin of the principal nations of Europe may be traced to three great distinct races,—the Latin, the German, and the Slavonic. The Italians, the French, the Spaniards, and the Portuguese, have derived their civilization and their language from Rome; the Germans, the Swiss, the English, the Swedes, the Danes, and the Hollanders, are Teutonic peoples;¹ the Poles and Russians occupy the first rank among the Slavonic. Those nations whose intellectual culture is of Latin origin were the earliest civilized; they have for the most part inherited the quick sagacity of the Romans in the conduct of worldly affairs. Social institutions, founded on the Pagan religion, preceded among them the establishment of Christianity; and when the peoples of the North came to conquer them, those very peoples adopted in many respects the customs of the countries which they conquered.

These observations must no doubt be modified by reference to climates, governments, and the facts of each individual history. The ecclesiastical power has left indelible traces in Italy. Their long wars with the Arabs have strengthened the military habits and enterprising spirit of the Spaniards; but, generally speaking, all that part of Europe, of which the languages are derived from the Latin, and which was early initiated in the Roman policy, bears the character of a long-existing civilization of Pagan origin. We there find less inclination to abstract reflection than among the Germanic nations; they are more

¹ This word, in the plural, which supplies a real need, may now be regarded as naturalized in the English language.—*Ed.*

addicted to the pleasures and the interests of the earth, and, like their founders, the Romans, they alone know how to practice the art of dominion.

The Germanic nations almost constantly resisted the Roman yoke; they were more lately civilized, and by Christianity alone; they passed instantaneously from a sort of barbarism to the refinement of Christian intercourse; the times of chivalry, the spirit of the middle ages, form their most lively recollections; and although the learned of these countries have studied the Greek and Latin authors more deeply even than the Latin nations themselves, the genius natural to German writers is of a color rather Gothic than classical. Their imagination delights in old towers and battlements, among sorceresses and spectres; and mysteries of a meditative and solitary nature form the principal charm of their poetry.

The analogy which exists among all the Teutonic nations is such as cannot be mistaken. The social dignity for which the English are indebted to their constitution, assures to them, it is true, a decided superiority over the rest; nevertheless, the same traits of character are constantly met with among all the different peoples of Germanic origin. They were all distinguished, from the earliest times, by their independence and loyalty; they have ever been good and faithful; and it is for this very reason, perhaps, that their writings universally bear an impression of melancholy; for it often happens to nations, as to individuals, to suffer for their virtues.

The civilization of the Slavonic tribes having been of much later date and of more rapid growth than that of other peoples, there has been hitherto seen among them more imitation than originality: all that they possess of European growth is French; what they have derived from Asia is not yet sufficiently developed to enable their writings to display the true character which would be natural to them. Throughout literary Europe, then, there are but two great divisions strongly marked: the literature which is imitated from the ancients, and that which owes its birth to the spirit of the middle ages; that which in its origin received from the genius of Paganism its color and

its charm, and that which owes its impulse and development to a religion intrinsically spiritual.

It might be said, with reason, that the French and the Germans are at the two extremes of the moral chain; since the former regard external objects as the source of all ideas, and the latter, ideas as the source of all impressions. These two nations, nevertheless, agree together pretty well in their social relations; but none can be more opposite in their literary and philosophical systems. Intellectual Germany is hardly known to France: very few men of letters among us have troubled themselves about her. It is true that a much greater number have set themselves up for her judges. This agreeable lightness, which makes men pronounce on matters of which they are ignorant, may appear elegant in talking, but not in writing. The Germans often run into the error of introducing into conversation what is fit only for books; the French sometimes commit the contrary fault of inserting in books what is fit only for conversation; and we have so exhausted all that is superficial, that, were it only for ornament, and, above all, for the sake of variety, it seems to me that it would be well to try something deeper.

For these reasons I have believed that there might be some advantage in making known that country in which, of all Europe, study and meditation have been carried so far, that it may be considered as the native land of thought. The reflections which the country itself and its literary works have suggested to me, will be divided into four sections. The first will treat of Germany and the Manners of the Germans; the second, of Literature and the Arts; the third, of Philosophy and Morals; the fourth, of Religion and Enthusiasm. These different subjects necessarily fall into one another. The national character has its influence on the literature; the literature and the philosophy on the religion; and the whole taken together can only make each distinct part properly intelligible: it was necessary, notwithstanding, to submit to an apparent division, in order ultimately to collect all the rays in the same focus.

I do not conceal from myself that I am about to make, in

literature as well as in philosophy, an exposition of opinions foreign to those which are dominant in France; but, let them appear just or not, let them be adopted or combated, they will, at all events, yield scope for reflection. "We need not, I imagine, wish to encircle the frontiers of literary France with the great wall of China, to prevent all exterior ideas from penetrating within."¹

It is impossible that the German writers, the best-informed and most reflecting men in Europe, should not deserve a moment's attention to be bestowed on their literature and their philosophy. It is objected to the one, that it is not in good taste; to the other, that it is full of absurdities. It is possible, however, that there may be a species of literature not conformable to our laws of good taste, and that it may nevertheless contain new ideas, which, modified after our manner, would tend to enrich us. It is thus that we are indebted to the Greeks for Racine, and to Shakspeare for many of the tragedies of Voltaire. The sterility with which our literature is threatened may lead us to suppose that the French spirit itself has need of being renewed by a more vigorous sap; and as the elegance of society will always preserve us from certain faults, it is of the utmost importance to us, to find again this source of superior beauties.

After having rejected the literature of the Germans in the name of good taste, we think that we may also get rid of their philosophy in the name of reason. Good taste and reason are words which it is always pleasant to pronounce, even at random; but can we in good faith persuade ourselves that writers of immense erudition, who are as well acquainted with all

¹ These commas are used to mark the passages which the censors of Paris required to be suppressed. In the second volume they discovered nothing reprehensible; but the chapters on Enthusiasm in the third, and, above all, the concluding paragraph of the work, did not meet their approbation. I was ready to submit to their censures in a negative manner; that is, by retrenching without making any further additions; but the *gensdarmes*, sent by the Minister of Police, executed the office of censors in a more brutal manner, by tearing the whole book in pieces.

French books as ourselves, have been employed for these twenty years upon mere absurdities?

In the ages of superstition, all new opinions are easily accused of impiety; and in the ages of incredulity, they are not less easily charged with being absurd. In the sixteenth century, Galileo was delivered up to the Inquisition for having said that the world went round; and in the eighteenth, some persons wished to make J. J. Rousseau pass for a fanatical devotee. Opinions which differ from the ruling spirit, be that what it may, always scandalize the vulgar: study and examination can alone confer that liberality of judgment, without which it is impossible to acquire new lights, or even to preserve those which we have; for we submit ourselves to certain received ideas, not as to truths, but as to power; and it is thus that human reason habituates itself to servitude, even in the field of literature and philosophy.

VOL. I.—2

PART I.

OF GERMANY,

AND

THE MANNERS OF THE GERMANS.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE ASPECT OF GERMANY.

THE number and extent of forests indicate a civilization yet recent: the ancient soil of the South is almost unfurnished of its trees, and the sun darts its perpendicular rays on the earth which has been laid bare by man. Germany still affords some traces of uninhabited nature. From the Alps to the sea, between the Rhine and the Danube, you behold a land covered with oaks and firs, intersected by rivers of an imposing beauty, and by mountains of a most picturesque aspect; but vast heaths and sands, roads often neglected, a severe climate, at first fill the mind with gloom; nor is it till after some time that it discovers what may attach us to such a country.

The south of Germany is highly cultivated; yet in the most delightful districts of this country there is always something of seriousness, which calis the imagination rather to thoughts of labor than of pleasure, rather to the virtues of the inhabitants than to the charms of nature.

The ruins of castles which are seen on the heights of the mountains, houses built of mud, narrow windows, the snows which during winter cover the plains as far as the eye can reach, make a painful impression on the mind. An indescriba-

ble silence in nature and in the people, at first oppresses the heart. It seems as if time moved more slowly there than elsewhere, as if vegetation made not a more rapid progress in the earth than ideas in the heads of men, and as if the regular furrows of the laborer were there traced upon a dull soil.

Nevertheless, when we have overcome these first unreflecting sensations, the country and its inhabitants offer to the observation something at once interesting and poetical; we feel that gentle souls and tender imaginations have embellished these fields. The high-roads are planted with fruit-trees for the refreshment of the traveller. The landscapes which surround the Rhine are everywhere magnificent: this river may be called the tutelary genius of Germany; his waves are pure, rapid, and majestic, like the life of a hero of antiquity. The Danube is divided into many branches; the streams of the Elbe and Spree are disturbed too easily by the tempest; the Rhine alone is unchangeable. The countries through which it flows appear at once of a character so grave and so diversified, so fruitful and so solitary, that one would be tempted to believe that they owe their cultivation to the genius of the river, and that man is as nothing to them. Its tide, as it flows along, relates the high deeds of the days of old, and the shade of Arminius seems still to wander on its precipitous banks.

The monuments of Gothic antiquity only are remarkable in Germany; these monuments recall the ages of chivalry; in almost every town a public museum preserves the relics of those days. One would say, that the inhabitants of the North, conquerors of the world, when they quitted Germany, left behind memorials of themselves under different forms, and that the whole land resembles the residence of some great people long since left vacant by its possessors. In most of the arsenals of German towns, we meet with figures of knights in painted wood, clad in their armor; the helmet, the buckler, the cuisses, the spurs,—all is according to ancient custom; and we walk among these standing dead, whose uplifted arms seem ready to strike their adversaries, who also hold their lances in rest. This motionless image of actions, formerly so

lively, causes a painful impression. It is thus that, long after earthquakes, the bodies of men have been discovered still fixed in the same attitudes, in the action of the same thoughts that occupied them at the instant when they were swallowed up.

Modern architecture in Germany offers nothing to our contemplation worthy of being recorded; but the towns are in general well built, and are embellished by the proprietors with a sort of good-natured care. In many towns, the houses are painted on the outside with various colors; one sees upon them the figures of saints, and ornaments of every description, which, though assuredly not the most correct in taste, yet cause a cheerful variety, and seem to indicate a benevolent desire to please both their fellow-countrymen and strangers. The dazzling splendor of a palace gratifies the self-love of its possessors; but the well-designed and carefully-finished decorations, which set off these little dwellings, have something in them kind and hospitable.

The gardens are almost as beautiful in some parts of Germany as in England: the luxury of gardens always implies a love of the country. In England, simple mansions are often built in the middle of the most magnificent parks; the proprietor neglects his dwelling to attend to the ornaments of nature. This magnificence and simplicity united do not, it is true, exist in the same degree in Germany; yet, in spite of the want of wealth and the pride of feudal dignity, there is everywhere to be remarked a certain love of the beautiful, which, sooner or later, must be followed by taste and elegance, of which it is the only real source. Often, in the midst of the superb gardens of the German princes, are placed *Æolian* harps close by grottoes encircled with flowers, that the wind may waft the sound and the perfume together. The imagination of the northern people thus endeavors to create for itself a sort of Italy; and, during the brilliant days of a short-lived summer, it sometimes attains the deception it seeks.¹

¹ We will here add, from the *Westminster Review* (July, 1856, p. 72), a summary of W. H. Riehl's admirable view of the physical-geographical

CHAPTER II.

OF THE MANNERS AND CHARACTER OF THE GERMANS.

ONLY a few general features are applicable to the whole German nation; for the diversities of this country are such, that it is difficult to bring together under one point of view, religions, governments, climates, and even peoples so different.

relations of the German people. Herr Riehl's three books,—*Land and People (Land und Leute)*, *Town Society (Bürgerliche Gesellschaft)*, and *The Family (Die Familie)*, which are the three parts of one work on the Natural History of the Germanic race (*Naturgeschichte des Volkes*), are incomparable models of their kind, at once interesting as literature, rich in reliable facts, and sober in theory.

“The natural divisions of Germany, founded on its physical geography, are threefold; namely, the low plains, the middle mountain region, and the high mountain region, or Lower, Middle, and Upper Germany; and on this primary natural division all the other broad ethnographical distinctions of Germany will be found to rest. The plains of North or Lower Germany include all the seaboard the nation possesses; and this, together with the fact that they are traversed to the depth of six hundred miles by navigable rivers, makes them the natural seat of a trading race. Quite different is the geographical character of Middle Germany. While the northern plains are marked off into great divisions by such rivers as the Lower Rhine, the Weser, and the Oder, running almost in parallel lines, this central region is cut up like a mosaic by the capricious lines of valleys and rivers. Here is the region in which you find those famous roofs from which the rain-water runs towards two different seas, and the mountaintops from which you may look into eight or ten German States. The abundance of water-power, and the presence of extensive coal mines, allow of a very diversified industrial development in Middle Germany. In Upper Germany, or the high mountain region, we find the same symmetry in the lines of the rivers as in the north; almost all the great Alpine streams flow parallel with the Danube. But the majority of these rivers are neither navigable nor available for industrial objects, and instead of serving for communication, they shut off one great tract from another. The slow development, the simple peasant life of many districts, is here determined by the mountain and the river. In the southeast, however, industrial activity spreads through Bohemia towards Austria, and forms a sort of balance to the industrial districts of the Lower Rhine. Of course, the

Southern Germany is, in very many respects, quite distinct from Northern; the commercial cities are altogether unlike those which are the seats of universities; the small States differ sensibly from the two great monarchies of Prussia and Aus-

boundaries of these three regions cannot be very strictly defined; but an approximation to the limits of Middle Germany may be obtained by regarding it as a triangle, of which one angle lies in Silesia, another in Aix-la-Chapelle, and a third at Lake Constance.

“This triple division corresponds with the broad distinctions of climate. In the northern plains the atmosphere is damp and heavy; in the southern mountain region it is dry and rare, and there are abrupt changes of temperature, sharp contrasts between the seasons, and devastating storms; but in both these zones men are hardened by conflict with the roughnesses of the climate. In Middle Germany, on the contrary, there is little of this struggle; the seasons are more equable, and the mild, soft air of the valleys tends to make the inhabitants luxurious and sensitive to hardships. It is only in exceptional mountain districts that one is here reminded of the rough, bracing air on the heights of Southern Germany. It is a curious fact that, as the air becomes gradually lighter and rarer from the North German coast towards Upper Germany, the average of suicides regularly decreases. Mecklenburg has the highest number; then Prussia; while the fewest suicides occur in Bavaria and Austria.

“Both the northern and southern regions have still a large extent of waste lands, downs, morasses, and heaths; and to these are added, in the south, abundance of snow-fields and naked rock; while in Middle Germany, culture has almost overspread the face of the land, and there are no large tracts of waste. There is the same proportion in the distribution of forests. Again, in the north we see a monotonous continuity of wheat-fields, potato-grounds, meadow-lands, and vast heaths, and there is the same uniformity of culture over large surfaces in the southern table-lands and the Alpine pastures. In Middle Germany, on the contrary, there is a perpetual variety of crops within a short space; the diversity of land surface, and the corresponding variety in the species of plants, are an invitation to the splitting up of estates, and this again encourages to the utmost the motley character of the cultivation.

“According to this threefold division, it appears that there are certain features common to North and South Germany in which they differ from Central Germany, and the nature of this difference Riehl indicates by distinguishing the former as *Centralized Land*, and the latter as *Individualized Land*; a distinction which is well symbolized by the fact, that North and South Germany possess the great lines of railway which are the medium for the traffic of the world, while Middle Germany is far richer in lines for local communication, and possesses the greatest length of railway within the smallest space. Disregarding superficialities, the East Frieslanders, the Schleswig-Holsteiners, the Mecklenburghers, and the Pomeranians, are much more nearly allied to the old Bavarians, the Tyrolese, and the

tria. Germany was formerly an aristocratical confederation, an empire without one common centre of intelligence and of public spirit; it did not form a compact nation, and the bond of union was wanting to its separate members. This division of Germany, fatal to her political force, was nevertheless very favorable to all the efforts of genius and imagination. In matters of literary and metaphysical opinion, there was a sort of gentle and peaceful anarchy, which allowed to every man the complete development of his own individual manner of perception.

As there is no capital city in which all the good company of Germany finds itself united, the spirit of society exerts but little power; and the empire of taste and the arms of ridicule are equally without influence. Most writers and reasoners sit down to work in solitude, or surrounded only by a little circle over which they reign. They abandon themselves, each separately, to all the impulses of an unrestrained imagination; and if any traces are to be found throughout Germany of the ascendancy of fashion, it is in the desire evinced by every man to show himself in all respects different from the rest. In France, on the contrary, every man aspires to deserve what Montesquieu said of Voltaire: *Il a plus que personne l'esprit*

Styrians, than any of these are allied to the Saxons, the Thuringians, or the Rhinelanders. Both in North and South Germany original races are still found in large masses, and popular dialects are spoken; you still find there thoroughly peasant districts, thorough villages, and also, at great intervals, thorough cities; you still find there a sense of rank. In Middle Germany, on the contrary, the original races are fused together, or sprinkled hither and thither; the peculiarities of the popular dialects are worn down or confused; there is no very strict line of demarkation between the country and the town population, hundreds of small towns and large villages being hardly distinguishable in their characteristics; and the sense of rank, as part of the organic structure of society, is almost extinguished. Again, both in the north and south, there is still a strong ecclesiastical spirit in the people, and the Pomeranian sees Antichrist in the Pope as clearly as the Tyrolese sees him in Doctor Luther; while in Middle Germany the confessions are mingled; they exist peaceably side by side in very narrow space, and tolerance or indifference has spread itself widely even in the popular mind."—*Ed.*

que tout le monde a. The German writers would yet more willingly imitate foreigners than their own countrymen.

In literature, as in politics, the Germans have too much respect for foreigners, and not enough of national prejudices. In individuals it is a virtue, this denial of self, and this esteem of others; but the patriotism of nations ought to be selfish.¹ The pride of the English serves powerfully their political existence; the good opinion which the French entertain of themselves has always contributed greatly to their ascendance over Europe; the noble pride of the Spaniards formerly rendered them sovereigns of one entire portion of the world. The Germans are Saxons, Prussians, Bavarians, Austrians; but the Germanic character, on which the strength of all should be founded, is like the land itself, parcelled out among so many different masters.

: "With the purest identity of origin, the Germans have shown always the weakest sentiment of nationality. Descended from the same ancestors, speaking a common language, unconquered by a foreign enemy, and once the subjects of a general government, they are the only people in Europe who have passively allowed their national unity to be broken down, and submitted, like cattle, to be parcelled and reparcelled into flocks, as suited the convenience of their shepherds. The same unpatriotic apathy is betrayed in their literary as in their political existence. In other countries, taste is perhaps too exclusively national; in Germany it is certainly too cosmopolite. Teutonic admiration seems, indeed, to be essentially centrifugal; and literary partialities have in the Empire inclined always in favor of the foreign. The Germans were long familiar with the literature of every other nation, before they thought of cultivating, or rather creating, a literature of their own; and when this was at last attempted, *θαύμα τῶν ἀπόντων* was still the principle that governed in the experiment. It was essayed, by a process of foreign infusion, to elaborate the German tongue into a vehicle of pleasing communication; nor were they contented to reverse the operation, until the project had been stultified by its issue, and the purest and only all-sufficient of the modern languages degraded into a Babylonish jargon, without a parallel in the whole history of speech. A counterpart to this overweening admiration of the strange and distant, is the discreditable indifference manifested by the Germans to the noblest monuments of native genius. To their eternal disgrace, the works of Leibnitz were left to be collected by a Frenchman; while the care denied by his countrymen to the great representative of German universality, was lavished, with an eccentric affection, on the not more important speculations of Giordano Bruno, Spinoza, and Cudworth." (Sir Wm. Hamilton. *Discussions*, etc., p. 204.)—*Ed.*

I shall separately examine Northern and Southern Germany ; but will for the present confine myself to those reflections which equally suit the whole nation. The Germans are, generally speaking, both sincere and faithful ; they seldom forfeit their word, and deceit is foreign to them. If this fault should ever introduce itself into Germany, it could only be through the ambition of imitating foreigners, of evincing an equal dexterity, and, above all, of not being duped by them ; but good sense and goodness of heart would soon bring the Germans back to perceive that their strength consists in their own nature, and that the habit of rectitude renders us incapable, even where we are willing, of employing artifice. In order to reap the fruits of immorality, it is necessary to be entirely light armed, and not to carry about you a conscience and scruples which arrest you midway, and make you feel, so much the more poignantly, the regret of having left the old road, as it is impossible for you to advance boldly in the new.

It is, I believe, easy to show that, without morality, all is danger and darkness. Nevertheless there has often been observed among the Latin nations a singularly dexterous policy in the art of emancipating themselves from every duty ; but, it may be said, to the glory of the German nation, that she is almost incapable of that practised suppleness which makes all truths bend to all interests, and sacrifices every engagement to every calculation. Her defects, as well as her good qualities, subject her to the honorable necessity of justice.

The power of labor and reflection is also one of the distinctive traits of the people of Germany. They are naturally a literary and philosophical people ; yet the separation into classes, which is more distinct in Germany than anywhere else, because society does not soften its gradations, is in some respects injurious to the understanding properly so called. The nobles have too few ideas, the men of letters too little practice in business. Understanding is a combination of the knowledge of men and things ; and society, in which men act without object, and yet with interest, is precisely that which best develops the most opposite faculties. It is imagination more

than understanding that characterizes the Germans. Jean Paul Richter, one of their most distinguished writers, has said *that the empire of the seas belonged to the English, that of the land to the French, and that of the air to the Germans*: in fact, we discover in Germany the necessity of a centre and bounds to this eminent faculty of thought, which rises and loses itself in vacuum, which penetrates and vanishes in obscurity, which perishes by its impartiality, confounds itself by the force of analysis, and stands in need of certain faults to circumscribe its virtues.

In leaving France, it is difficult to grow accustomed to the slowness and inertness of the German people; they never hasten to any object; they find obstacles to all; you hear "*it is impossible*" repeated a hundred times in Germany for once in France. When action is necessary, the Germans know not how to struggle with difficulties, and their respect for power is more owing to the resemblance between power and destiny than to any interested motive. The lower classes are sufficiently coarse in their forms of proceeding; above all, when any shock is intended to their favorite habits; they would naturally feel much more than the nobles that holy antipathy for foreign manners and languages, which in all countries seems to strengthen the national bond of union. The offer of money does not alter their plan of conduct; fear does not turn them aside from it; they are, in short, very capable of that fixedness in all things, which is an excellent pledge for morality; for he who is continually actuated by fear, and still more by hope, passes easily from one opinion to another, whenever his interest requires it.

As we rise a little above the lower class, we easily perceive that internal vivacity, that poetry of the soul, which characterizes the Germans. The inhabitants of town and country, the soldiers and laborers, are all acquainted with music. It has happened to me to enter small cottages, blackened by the smoke of tobacco, and immediately to hear not only the mistress but the master of the house improvising on the harpsichord, as the Italians improvise in verse. Almost

everywhere, on market-days, they have players on wind instruments placed in the balcony of the town-house, which overlooks the public square; the peasants of the neighborhood are thus made partakers in the soft enjoyment of that first of arts. The scholars walk through the streets, on Sunday, singing psalms in chorus. They say that Luther often took a part in these choruses in early life. I was at Eisenach, a little town in Saxony, one winter day, when it was so cold that the very streets were blocked up with snow. I saw a long procession of young people in black cloaks, walking through the town, and celebrating the praises of God. They were the only persons out of doors, for the severity of the frost had driven all the rest of the world to their firesides; and these voices, almost equally harmonious with those of the South, heard amid all this rigor of the season, excited so much the livelier emotion. The inhabitants of the town dared not in the intense cold to open their windows; but we could perceive behind the glasses countenances, sad or serene, young or old, all receiving with joy the religious consolations which this sweet melody inspired.

The poor Bohemians, as they wander, followed by their wives and children, carry on their backs a bad harp, made of common wood, from which they draw harmonious music. They play upon it while they rest at the foot of a tree on the high road, or near the post-houses, trying to awaken the attention of travellers to the ambulatory concert of their little wandering family. In Austria the flocks are kept by shepherds, who play charming airs on instruments at once simple and sonorous. These airs agree perfectly well with the soft and pensive impression produced by the aspect of the country.

Instrumental music is as generally cultivated throughout Germany as vocal music in Italy. Nature has done more in this respect, as in so many others, for Italy, than for Germany; for instrumental music labor is necessary, while a southern sky is enough to create a beautiful voice: nevertheless the men of the working classes would never be able to afford to music the time which is necessary for learning it, if they were not en-

dowed with an organization peculiarly adapted to the acquirement. Those people, who are musicians by nature, receive through the medium of harmony, sensations and ideas which their confined situations and vulgar occupations could never procure for them from any other source.

The female peasants and servants, who have not money enough to spend in dress, ornament their heads and arms with a few flowers, that imagination may at least have some part in their attire: those who are a little more rich, wear on holidays a cap of gold stuff, in sufficiently bad taste, which affords a strange contrast to the simplicity of the rest of their costume; but this cap, which their mothers also wore before them, recalls ancient manners; and the dress of ceremony, with which the lower classes of women pay respect to the Sunday, has something solemn in it which interests one in their favor.

We must also like the Germans for the good-will manifested in their respectful deference and formal politeness, which foreigners have so often turned into ridicule. They might easily have substituted a cold and indifferent deportment for that grace and elegance which they are accused of being unable to reach; disdain always silences ridicule, for it is principally upon useless efforts that ridicule attaches itself; but benevolent characters choose rather to expose themselves to pleasantry, than to preserve themselves from it by that haughty and restrained air, which it is so easy for any person to assume.

In Germany, we are continually struck by the contrast which exists between sentiments and habits, talents and tastes: civilization and nature seem to be not yet sufficiently amalgamated together. Sometimes the most ingenuous of men are very affected in their expressions and countenance, as if they had something to conceal; sometimes, on the other hand, gentleness of soul does not prevent rudeness in manners; frequently even this contradiction goes still further, and weakness of character shows itself through the veil of harshness in language and demeanor. Enthusiasm for the arts and poetry is joined to habits even low and vulgar in social life. There is no coun-

try where men of letters, and young men studying at the universities, are better acquainted with the ancient languages and with antiquity; yet there is none in which superannuated customs more generally exist even at the present day. The recollections of Greece, the taste for the fine arts, seem to have reached them through the medium of correspondence; but feudal institutions, and the ancient customs of the German nation, are always held in honor among them, even though, unhappily for the military power of the country, they no longer possess the same strength.

There is no assemblage more whimsical than that displayed in the military aspect of Germany: soldiers at every step, and all leading a sort of domestic life.¹ They are as much afraid of fatigue and of the inclemency of the air, as if the whole nation were composed of merchants and men of letters; and yet all their institutions tend, and must necessarily tend, to inspire the people with military habits. When the inhabitants of the North brave the inconveniences of their climate, they harden themselves in a wonderful manner against all sorts of evil; the Russian soldier is a proof of this. But where the climate is only half rigorous, where it is still possible to guard against the severity of the heavens by domestic precautions, these very precautions render them more alive to the physical sufferings of war.

Stoves, beer, and the smoke of tobacco, surround all the common people of Germany with a thick and hot atmosphere, from which they are never inclined to escape. This atmosphere is injurious to activity, which is of no less importance in war than courage itself; resolutions are slow, discouragement is easy, because an existence, void of pleasure in general, inspires no great confidence in the gifts of fortune. The habit

¹ Riehl tells the story of a "peasant youth, out of the poorest and remotest region of the Westerwald, enlisted as a recruit, at Weilburg in Nassau. The lad, having never in his life slept in a bed, when he had to get into one for the first time began to cry like a child; and he deserted twice because he could not reconcile himself to sleeping in a bed, and to the 'fine' life of the barracks."—*Ed.*

of a peaceable and regular mode of life is so bad a preparation for the multiplied chances of hazard, that even death, coming in a regular way, appears preferable to a life of adventure.

The demarcation of classes, much more positive in Germany than it used to be in France, naturally produced the annihilation of military spirit among the lower orders; this demarcation has in fact nothing offensive in it; for I repeat, a sort of natural goodness mixes itself with every thing in Germany, even with aristocratical pride; and the differences of rank are reduced to some court privileges, to some assemblies which do not afford sufficient pleasure to deserve envy: nothing is bitter, under whatever aspect contemplated, when society, and ridicule, which is the offspring of society, is without influence. Men cannot really wound their very souls, except by falsehood or mockery: in a country of seriousness and truth, justice and happiness will always be met with. But the barrier which separated, in Germany, the nobles from the citizens, necessarily rendered the whole nation less warlike.

Imagination, which is the ruling quality of the world of arts and letters in Germany, inspires the fear of danger, if this natural emotion is not combated by the ascendancy of opinion and the exaltation of honor. In France, even in its ancient state, the taste for war was universal; and the common people willingly risked life, as a means of agitating it and diminishing the sense of its weight. It is a question of importance to know whether the domestic affections, the habit of reflection, the very gentleness of soul, do not conduce to the fear of death; but if the whole strength of a State consists in its military spirit, it is of consequence to examine what are the causes that have weakened this spirit in the German nation.

Three leading motives usually incite men to fight,—the patriotic love of liberty, the enthusiasm of glory, and religious fanaticism. There can be no great patriotism in an empire divided for so many ages, where Germans fought against Germans, almost always instigated by some foreign impulse: the love of glory is scarcely awake where there is no centre, no society. That species of impartiality, the very excess of jus-

tice, which characterizes the Germans, renders them much more susceptible of being inflamed with abstract sentiments, than of the real interests of life; the general who loses a battle, is more sure of indulgence than he who gains one is of applause; there is not enough difference between success and reverse, in the opinions of such a people, to excite any very lively ambition.

Religion, in Germany, exists at the very bottom of the heart; but it possesses there a character of meditation and independence, which breathes nothing of the energy necessary to exclusive sentiments. The same independence of opinions, individuals, and States, so prejudicial to the strength of the Germanic empire, is to be found also in their religion: a great number of different sects divide Germany between them; and the Catholic religion itself, which, in its very nature, exercises a uniform and strict discipline, is nevertheless interpreted by every man after his own fashion. The political and social bond of the people, a general government, a general worship, the same laws, the same interests, a classical literature, a ruling opinion, nothing of all this exists among the Germans; each individual State is the more independent, each individual science the better cultivated; but the whole nation is so subdivided, that one cannot tell to what part of the empire this very name of nation ought to be granted.

The love of liberty is not developed among the Germans; they have not learned, either by enjoyment or by privation, the value which may be attached to it. There are many examples of federative governments, which give to the public spirit as much force as even a united administration, but these are the associations of equal States and free citizens. The German confederacy was composed of strong and weak, citizen and serf, of rivals, and even of enemies; they were old existing elements, combined by circumstances and respected by men.

The nation is persevering and just; and its equity and loyalty secure it against injury from any institution, however vicious. Louis of Bavaria, when he took the command of the army, intrusted to Frederic the Fair, his rival, and at that

time his prisoner, the administration of his States ; and he had not to repent of this confidence, which in those days caused no astonishment. With such virtues, they never found the ill consequences of the weakness, or even the complication of the laws ; the probity of individuals supplied their defects.

The very independence which the Germans enjoyed, in almost all respects, rendered them indifferent to liberty { independence is a possession, liberty its security } and on this very account nobody in Germany was molested either in his rights or his enjoyments : they could not feel the want of such an order of things as might secure them in the possession of this happiness. The imperial tribunals promised a sure though slow redress of every act of arbitrary power ; and the moderation of the sovereigns, and the wisdom of the governed, seldom gave room for any appeals to their interference : people, therefore, could not imagine that they stood in need of constitutional fortifications, when they saw no aggressors.

One has reason to be astonished, that the feudal code should have subsisted almost unaltered among a people so enlightened ; but as, in the execution of these laws, so defective in themselves, there was never any injustice, the equality with which they were applied made amends for their inequality in principle. Old charters, the ancient privileges of every city—all that family history, which constitutes the charm and glory of little States, were singularly dear to the Germans ; but they neglected that great national might, which it was so important to have founded among the colossal States of Europe.

The Germans, with some few exceptions, are hardly capable of succeeding in any thing which requires address and dexterity ; every thing molests and embarrasses them, and they have as much need of method in action as of independence in ideas. The French, on the contrary, consider actions with all the freedom of art, and ideas with all the bondage of custom. The Germans, who cannot endure the yoke of rules in literature, require every thing to be traced out before them in the line of their conduct. They know not how to treat with men ;

and the less occasion is given them in this respect to decide for themselves, the better they are satisfied.

Political institutions can alone form the character of a nation; the nature of the government of Germany was almost in opposition to the philosophical illumination of the Germans. From thence it follows, that they join the greatest boldness of thought to the most obedient character. The pre-eminence of the military States, and the distinctions of rank, have accustomed them to the most exact submission in the relations of social life. Obedience, with them, is regularity, not servility; they are as scrupulous in the execution of the orders they receive, as if every order became a duty.

The enlightened men of Germany dispute vehemently among themselves the dominion of speculations, and will suffer no shackles in this department; but they give up, without difficulty, all that is real in life to the powerful of the earth. "This reality, which they so much despise, finds purchasers, however, who in the end avail themselves of their acquisition to carry trouble and constraint into the empire of the imagination itself."¹ The understanding and the character of the Germans appear to have no communication together: the one cannot suffer any limits, the other is subject to every yoke; the one is very enterprising, the other very timid; in short, the illumination of the one seldom gives strength to the other, and this is easily explained. The extension of knowledge in modern times only serves to weaken the character, when it is not strengthened by the habit of business and the exercise of the will. To see all, and comprehend all, is a great cause of uncertainty; and the energy of action develops itself only in those free and powerful countries where patriotic sentiments are to the soul like blood to the veins, and grow cold only with the extinction of life itself.²

¹ A passage suppressed by the censors.

² I have no need of saying that it is England which I wished to point out by these words; but when proper names are not pronounced, the censors, in general, who are men of knowledge, take a pleasure in not comprehending. It is not the same with the police; the police has a sort of

CHAPTER III.

OF THE WOMEN.

NATURE and society give to women a habit of endurance; and I think it can hardly be denied that, in our days, they are generally worthier of moral esteem than the men. At an epoch when selfishness is the prevailing evil, the men, to whom all positive interests are related, must necessarily have less generosity, less sensibility, than the women. These last are attached to life only by the ties of the heart; and even when they lose themselves, it is by sentiment that they are led away: their selfishness is extended to a double object, while that of man has himself only for its end. Homage is rendered to them according to the affections which they inspire; but those which they bestow are almost always sacrifices. The most beautiful of virtues, self-devotion, is their enjoyment and their destiny; no happiness can exist for them but by the reflection of another's glory and prosperity; in short, to live independently of self, whether by ideas or by sentiments, or, above all, by virtues, gives to the soul an habitual feeling of elevation.

In those countries where men are called upon by political institutions to the exercise of all the military and civil virtues which are inspired by patriotism, they recover the superiority which belongs to them; they reassume with dignity their rights, as masters of the world; but when they are condemned, in whatever measure, to idleness or to slavery, they fall so much the lower as they ought to rise more high. The destiny of women always remains the same; it is their soul alone which creates it; political circumstances have no influence

instinct that is really extraordinary, in prejudice of all liberal ideas, under whatever form they present themselves; and traces out, with the sagacity of a good hound, all that might awaken in the minds of the French their ancient love for light and liberty.

upon it. When men are ignorant or unable to employ their lives worthily and nobly, Nature revenges herself upon them for the very gifts which they have received from her; the activity of the body contributes only to the sloth of the mind; the strength of soul degenerates into coarseness; the day is consumed in vulgar sports and exercises, horses, the chase, or entertainments which might be suitable enough in the way of relaxation, but brutalize as occupations. Women, the while, cultivate their understanding; and sentiment and reflection preserve in their souls the image of all that is noble and beautiful.

The German women have a charm exclusively their own—a touching voice, fair hair, a dazzling complexion; they are modest, but less timid than Englishwomen; one sees that they have been less accustomed to meet with their superiors among men, and that they have besides less to apprehend from the severe censures of the public. They endeavor to please by their sensibility, to interest by their imagination; the language of poetry and the fine arts are familiar to them; they coquet with enthusiasm, as they do in France with wit and pleasantry. That perfect loyalty, which distinguishes the German character, renders love less dangerous for the happiness of women; and, perhaps, they admit the advances of this sentiment with the more confidence, because it is invested with romantic colors, and disdain and infidelity are less to be dreaded there than elsewhere.

Love is a religion in Germany, but a poetical religion, which tolerates too easily all that sensibility can excuse. It cannot be denied, that the facility of divorce in the Protestant States is prejudicial to the sacredness of marriage. They change husbands with as little difficulty as if they were arranging the incidents of a drama; the good-nature common both to men and women is the reason that so little bitterness of spirit ever accompanies these easy ruptures; and, as the Germans are endowed with more imagination than real passion, the most extravagant events take place with singular tranquillity; nevertheless, it is thus that manners and character lose every thing like consistency; the spirit of paradox shakes the most sacred institutions, and there are no fixed rules upon any subject.

One may fairly laugh at the ridiculous airs of some German women, who are continually exalting themselves even to a pitch of affectation, and who sacrifice to their pretty softnesses of expression, all that is marked and striking in mind and character; they are not open, even though they are not false; they only see and judge of nothing correctly, and real events pass like a phantasmagoria before their eyes. Even when they take it into their heads to be light and capricious, they still retain a tincture of that *sentimentality* which is held in so high honor in their country. A German woman said one day, with a melancholy expression, "I know not wherefore, but those who are absent pass away from my soul." A French woman would have rendered this idea with more gayety, but it would have been fundamentally the same.

Notwithstanding these affectations, which form only the exception, there are among the women of Germany numbers whose sentiments are true and manners simple. Their careful education, and the purity of soul which is natural to them, render the dominion which they exercise gentle and abiding; they inspire you from day to day with a stronger interest for all that is great and generous, with more of confidence in all noble hopes, and they know how to repel that desolating irony which breathes a death-chill over all the enjoyments of the heart. Nevertheless, we seldom find among them that quickness of apprehension, which animates conversation, and sets every idea in motion; this sort of pleasure is scarcely to be met with anywhere out of the most lively and the most witty societies of Paris. The chosen company of a French metropolis can alone confer this rare delight; elsewhere, we generally find only eloquence in public, or tranquil pleasure in familiar life. Conversation, as a talent, exists in France alone; in all other countries it answers the purposes of politeness, of argument, or of friendly intercourse. In France, it is an art to which the imagination and the soul are no doubt very necessary, but which possesses, besides these, certain secrets, where, by the absence of both may be supplied.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT OF CHIVALRY ON LOVE
AND HONOR.

CHIVALRY is to modern, what the heroic age was to ancient times; to it all the noble recollections of the nations of Europe are attached. At all the great epochs of history, men have embraced some sort of enthusiastic sentiment, as a universal principle of action. Those whom they called heroes, in the most distant ages, had for their object to civilize the earth; the confused traditions, which represent them to us as subduing the monsters of the forests, bear, no doubt, an allusion to the first dangers which menaced society at its birth, and from which it was preserved by the supports of its yet new organization. Then came the enthusiasm of patriotism, and inspired all that was great and brilliant in the actions of Greece and Rome: this enthusiasm became weaker when there was no longer a country to love; and, a few centuries later, chivalry succeeded to it. Chivalry consisted in the defence of the weak, in the loyalty of valor, in the contempt of deceit, in that Christian charity which endeavored to introduce humanity even in war; in short, in all those sentiments which substituted the reverence of honor for the ferocious spirit of arms. It is among the northern nations that chivalry had its birth;¹

¹ The origin of chivalry has often been traced to a custom of the Germans, described by Tacitus:

“The Germans transact no business, public or private, without being armed; but it is not customary for any person to assume arms till the State has approved his ability to use them. Then, in the midst of the assembly, either one of the chiefs, or the father, or a relation, equips the youth with a shield and javelin. These are to them the manly gown; this is the first honor conferred on youth: before this they are considered as part of a household; afterwards, of the State. The dignity of chieftain is

but in the south of France that it was embellished by the charm of poetry and love. The Germans had, in all times, treated women with respect, but the French were the first that tried to please them; the Germans also had their chanters of love (*Minnesinger*), but nothing that could be compared to our Trouvères and Troubadours; and it is to this source, perhaps, that we must refer a species of literature strictly national. The spirit of northern mythology had much more resemblance¹ to Christianity than the Paganism of the ancient Gauls; yet is there no country where Christians have been better knights, or knights better Christians, than in France.

The Crusades brought together the gentlemen of all countries, and created out of the spirit of chivalry a sort of European patriotism, which filled every soul with the same sentiment. The feudal government, that political institution so gloomy and severe, but which, in some respects, consolidated the spirit of chivalry, by investing it with the character of love; the feudal government, I say, has continued in Germany even to our own days. It was overthrown in France by Cardinal Richelieu; and, from that epoch to the Revolution, the French have been altogether destitute of any source of enthusiasm. I know it will be said that the love of their king was such; but, supposing it possible that this sentiment could

bestowed even on mere lads, whose descent is eminently illustrious, or whose fathers have performed signal services to the public; they are associated, however, with those of mature strength, who have already been declared capable of service; nor do they blush to be seen in the rank of companions. For the state of companionship itself has its several degrees, determined by the judgment of him whom they follow; and there is a great emulation among the companions, which shall possess the highest place in the favor of their chief; and among the chiefs, which shall excel in the number and valor of his companions. It is their dignity, their strength, to be always surrounded with a large body of select youth—an ornament in peace, a bulwark in war. And not in his own country alone, but among the neighboring States, the fame and glory of each chief consists in being distinguished for the number and bravery of his companions. Such chiefs are courted by embassies, distinguished by presents, and often, by their reputation alone, decide a war.”—(Tacitus, *Germania*, vii.)—*Ed.*

² Or, rather, being less barbarous, it was less opposed to Christianity.
—*Ed.*

extend to a whole nation, still it is confined so entirely to the mere person of the sovereign, that during the administrations of the Regent and of Louis XV, it would have been difficult, I imagine, for the French to have derived any thing great from its influence. The spirit of chivalry, which still emitted some sparkles in the reign of Louis XIV, was extinguished with him, and succeeded, according to a very lively and sensible historian,¹ by the *spirit of Fatuity*, which is entirely opposite to it. Instead of protecting women, Fatuity seeks to destroy them; instead of despising artifice, she employs it against those feeble beings whom she prides herself in deceiving; and she substitutes the profanation of love in the place of its worship.

Even courage itself, which formerly served as the pledge of loyalty, became nothing better than a brilliant mode of evading its chain; for it was no longer necessary to be true, but only to kill in a duel the man who accuses you of being otherwise; and the empire of society in the great world made almost all the virtues of chivalry disappear. France then found herself without any sort of enthusiastic impulse whatever; and as such impulse is necessary to prevent the corruption and dissolution of nations, it is doubtless this natural necessity which, in the middle of the last century, turned every mind towards the love of liberty.

It seems, then, that the philosophical progress of the human race should be divided into four different periods: the heroic times, which gave birth to civilization; patriotism, which constituted the glory of antiquity; chivalry, which was the military religion of Europe; and the love of liberty, the history of which dates its origin from the epoch of the Reformation.

Germany, with the exception of a few of its courts, which were inspired with the emulation of imitating France, had not been tainted by the fatuity, immorality, and incredulity, which,

¹ M. de Cretelle. Two of the name have been distinguished in letters—Pierre-Louis and Charles-Joseph. The latter is here alluded to. He published his *Précis Historique de la Révolution Française* in 1801–1806.—Ed

since the time of the Regency, had debased the natural character of Frenchmen. Feudality still retained among the Germans the maxims of chivalry: they fought duels, indeed, seldomer than in France, because the Germanic nation is not so lively as the French, and because all ranks of people do not, as in France, participate in the sentiment of bravery; but public opinion was generally much more severe with regard to every thing connected with probity. If a man had, in any manner, been wanting to the laws of morality, ten duels a day would never have set him up again in any person's esteem. Many men of good company have been seen in France, who, when accused of some blamable action, have answered, "It may be bad enough; but nobody at least will dare to say so before my face." Nothing can imply a more utter depravation of morals; for what would become of human society, if it was only necessary for men to kill each other, to acquire the right of doing one another, in other respects, all the mischief possible; to break their word, to lie, provided nobody dared to say, "You have lied;" in short, to separate loyalty from bravery, and transform courage into a mode of obtaining social impunity?

Since the extinction of the spirit of chivalry in France; since she possessed no longer a Godefroi, a Saint Louis, or a Bayard, to protect weakness, and hold themselves bound by a promise as by the most indissoluble chain, I will venture to say, contrary to the received opinion, that France has perhaps been that country of the world in which women are the least happy at heart. France was called the Paradise of women, on account of the great share of liberty which the sex enjoyed there; but this very liberty arose from the facility with which men detached themselves from them. The Turk, who shuts up his wife, proves at least by that very conduct how necessary she is to his happiness; the man of gallantry, a character of which the last century furnished us with so many examples, selects women for the victims of his vanity; and this vanity consists not only in seducing, but in afterwards abandoning them. He must, in order to justify it, be able to declare, in

phrases light and irreprehensible in themselves, that such a woman has loved him, but that he no longer cares about her. "My self-love tells me, *let her die of chagrin*," said a friend of the Baron de Bezenval; and this very friend appeared to him an object of deep regret, when a premature death prevented him from the accomplishment of this laudable design. *One grows tired of every thing, my angel*, writes M. de la Clos, in a novel which makes one shudder at the refinements of immorality which it displays. In short, at this very period, when they pretended that love reigned in France, it seems to me that gallantry, if I may use the expression, really placed women out of the protection of the law. When their momentary reign was over, there was for them neither generosity nor gratitude—not even pity. They counterfeited the accents of love to make them fall into the snare, like the crocodile, which imitates the voices of children to entrap their mothers.

Louis XIV, so vaunted for his chivalrous gallantry, did he not show himself the most hard-hearted of men in his conduct towards the very woman by whom he was most beloved of all, Madame de la Vallière? The details which are given of that transaction in the *Mémoires de Madame* are frightful. He pierced with grief the unfortunate heart which breathed only for him, and twenty years of tears, at the foot of the cross, could hardly cicatrize the wounds which the cruel disdain of the monarch had inflicted. Nothing is so barbarous as vanity; and as society, *bon-ton*, fashion, success, all put this vanity singularly in play, there is no country where the happiness of women is in greater danger than that in which every thing depends upon what is called opinion, and in which everybody learns of others what it is good taste to feel.

It must be confessed, that women have ended by taking part in the immorality which destroyed their own true empire; they have learned to lessen their sufferings by becoming worthless. Nevertheless, with some few exceptions, the virtue of women always depends on the conduct of men. The pretended lightness of women is the consequence of the fear they

entertain of being abandoned ; they rush into shame from the fear of outrage.

Love is a much more serious quality in Germany than in France. Poetry, the fine arts, even philosophy and religion, have made this sentiment an object of earthly adoration, which sheds a noble charm over life. Germany was not infested, like France, with licentious writings, which circulated among all classes of people, and effected the destruction of sentiment among the high, and of morality among the low. It must be allowed, nevertheless, that the Germans have more imagination than sensibility ; and their uprightness is the only pledge for their constancy. The French, in general, respect positive duties ; the Germans think themselves less bound by duty than affection. What we have said respecting the facility of divorce affords a proof of this ; love is, with them, more sacred than marriage. It is the effect of an honorable delicacy, no doubt, that they are above all things faithful to promises which the law does not warrant ; but those which are warranted by law are nevertheless of greater importance to the interests of society.

The spirit of chivalry still reigns among the Germans, thus to speak, in a passive sense ; they are incapable of deceit, and their integrity discovers itself in all the intimate relations of life ; but that severe energy, which imposed so many sacrifices on men, so many virtues on women, and rendered the whole of life one holy exercise, governed by the same prevailing sentiment, that chivalrous energy of the times of old, has left in Germany only an impression long since passed away. Henceforward nothing great will ever be accomplished there, except by the liberal impulse which, throughout Europe, has succeeded to chivalry.

CHAPTER V.

OF SOUTHERN GERMANY.

It was pretty generally understood, that literature existed in the north of Germany alone, and that the inhabitants of the south abandoned themselves to the enjoyments of sense, while those of the north tasted more exclusively those of the soul. Many men of genius have been born in the South, but they have been formed in the North. Near the coasts of the Baltic we find the noblest establishments, the most distinguished men of science and letters; and from Weimar to Königsberg, from Königsberg to Copenhagen, fogs and frosts appear to be the natural element of men of a vigorous and profound imagination.

No country stands so much as Germany in need of the occupations of literature; for society there affording little charms, and individuals, for the most part, wanting that grace and vivacity which are inspired by nature in warm climates, it follows that the Germans are agreeable only when they are superior in mind, and that they want genius to be witty.

Franconia, Swabia, and Bavaria, before the illustrious establishment of the present academy at Munich, were countries singularly dull and monotonous: no arts, with the exception of music; no literature; a rude accent, which lent itself with difficulty to the pronunciation of the languages of Latin origin; no society; large reunions, which looked more like ceremonies than parties of pleasure; obsequious politeness to an inelegant aristocracy; goodness and integrity in every class; but a sort of simpering stiffness, which is the reverse at once both of ease and dignity. One should not therefore be surprised at the criticisms and pleasantries which have been passed on German tediousness. The literary cities are the only objects of real interest, in a country where society is nothing, and nature very little.

Letters might perhaps have been cultivated in the south of Germany with as much success as in the north, if the sovereigns had ever properly interested themselves in the advancement of them; nevertheless, it must be acknowledged, that temperate climates are more favorable to society than to poetry. When the climate is neither inclement nor beautiful, when people live with nothing either to fear or to hope from the heavens, the positive interests of existence become almost the only occupation of the mind; both the delights of the South, and the rigors of the North, have stronger hold over the imagination. Whether we struggle against nature, or intoxicate ourselves with her gifts, the power of the creation is in both cases equally strong, and awakens in us the sentiment of the fine arts, or the instinct of the soul's mysteries.

Southern Germany, temperate in every sense, maintains itself in a monotonous state of well-being, singularly prejudicial to the activity of affairs as well as of thought. The most lively desire of the inhabitants of this peaceful and fertile country is, that they may continue to exist as they exist at present; and what can this only desire produce? It is not even sufficient for the preservation of that with which they are satisfied.

CHAPTER VI.

OF AUSTRIA.¹

THE literati of Northern Germany have accused Austria of neglecting letters and sciences; they have even greatly exaggerated the degree of restraint imposed there by the censure of the press. If Austria has produced no great men in the literary career, it is to be attributed not so much to constraint as to the want of emulation.

¹ This chapter was written in the year 1808.

It is a country so calm, a country in which competence is so easily secured to all classes of its inhabitants, that they think but little of intellectual enjoyments. They do more for the sake of duty than of fame; the rewards of public opinion are so poor, and its punishments so slight, that, without the motive of conscience, there would be no incitement to vigorous action in any sense.

Military exploits must be the chief interest of the inhabitants of a monarchy, which has rendered itself illustrious by continual wars; and yet the Austrian nation had so abandoned itself to the repose and the pleasures of life, that even public events made no great noise till the moment arrived of their calling forth the sentiment of patriotism; and even this sentiment is of a tranquil nature in a country where there is nothing but happiness. Many excellent things are to be found in Austria, but few men really of a superior order; for it is there of no great service to be reckoned more able than another; one is not envied for it, but forgotten, which is yet more discouraging. Ambition perseveres in the desire of acquiring power; genius flags of itself; genius, in the midst of society, is a pain, an internal fever, which would require to be treated as real disease, if the rewards of glory did not soften the sufferings it produces.

In Austria, and all other parts of Germany, the lawyers plead in writing, never *viva voce*. The preachers are followed because men observe the practical duties of religion; but they do not attract by their eloquence. The theatres are much neglected; above all, the tragic theatre. Administration is conducted with great wisdom and justice; but there is so much method in all things, that the influence of individuals is scarcely perceptible. Business is conducted in a certain numerical order, which nothing can derange; it is decided by invariable rules, and transacted in profound silence; this silence is not the effect of terror; for what is there to be feared in a country, where the virtues of the sovereign and the principles of equity govern all things? but the profound repose of intellects, as of souls, deprives human speech of all its interests. Neither by

crime nor by genius, by intolerance nor by enthusiasm, by passion nor by heroism, is existence either disturbed or exalted. The Austrian Cabinet during the last century was considered as very adroit in politics,—a quality which little agrees with the German character in general; but men often mistake for profound policy that which is only the alternative between ambition and weakness. History almost always attributes to individuals, as to governments, more combination of plans than really existed.

Austria, concentrating within herself people so different from each other, as the Bohemians, Hungarians, &c., wants that unity which is so essential to a monarchy: nevertheless, the great moderation of her rulers has for a long time past produced a general bond of union out of the attachment to one individual. The emperor of Germany was at the same time sovereign over his own dominions and the constitutional head of the empire. In this latter character he had to manage different interests and established laws, and derived from his imperial magistracy a habit of justice and prudence, which he transferred from them to the administration of his hereditary States. The nations of Bohemia and Hungary, the Tyrolese and the Flemings, who formerly constituted the monarchy, have more natural vivacity than the genuine Austrians: these last employ themselves incessantly in the act of moderating instead of that of encouraging. An equitable government, a fertile soil, a wise and wealthy nation, all contributed to teach them, that for their well-being it was only necessary to maintain their existing condition, and that they had no need whatever for the extraordinary assistance of superior talents. In peaceable times, indeed, they may be dispensed with; but what can we do without them in the grand struggles of empires?

The spirit of Catholicism, which was uppermost at Vienna, though always with moderation, had nevertheless constantly during the reign of Maria Theresa, repelled what was called the progress of light in the eighteenth century. Then came Joseph the Second, who lavished all these lights on a country

not yet prepared either for the good or the evil which they were qualified to produce. He succeeded, for the moment, in the object of his wishes, because throughout Austria he met with no active emotion either in favor of, or contrary to his desires ; but, "after his death, nothing remained of all his establishments,"¹ because nothing can last but that which advances by degrees.

Industry, good living, and domestic enjoyments, are the principal interests of Austria ; notwithstanding the glory which she acquired by the perseverance and valor of her armies, the military spirit has not really penetrated all classes of the nation. Her armies are, for her, so many moving fortifications, but there is no greater emulation in this than in other professions ; the most honorable officers are at the same time the bravest ; and this reflects upon them so much the more credit, as a brilliant and rapid advancement is seldom the consequence of their efforts. In Austria they almost scruple to show favor to superior men, and it sometimes seems as if government wished to push equality even further than nature itself, and to treat talent and mediocrity with the same undistinguishing impartiality.

The absence of emulation has, indeed, one advantage—it allays vanity ; but often pride itself partakes of it ; and, in the end, there remains only a sort of easy arrogance, which is satisfied with the exterior of all things.

I think that it was also a bad system, that of forbidding the importation of foreign books. If it were possible to preserve to a country the energy of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by defending it from the writings of the eighteenth, this might perhaps be a great advantage ; but as it is absolutely necessary, that the opinions and the discoveries of Europe must penetrate into the midst of a monarchy, which is itself in the centre of Europe, it is a disadvantage to let them reach it only by halves ; for the worst writings are those which are most sure to make their way. Books, filled with immoral pleasantries and selfish principles, amuse the vulgar, and al-

¹ Suppressed by the censors.

ways fall into their hands; while prohibitory laws are absolutely effective only against those philosophical works, which tend to elevate the mind, and enlarge the ideas. The constraint which these laws impose is precisely that which is wanting to favor the indolence of the understanding, but not to preserve the innocence of the heart.

In a country where all emotion is of slow growth; in a country where every thing inspires a deep tranquillity, the slightest obstacle is enough to deter men from acting or writing, or even (if it is required) from thinking. What can we have better than happiness? they say. It is necessary to understand, however, what they mean by the word. Does happiness consist in the faculties we develop, or in those we suppress? No doubt a government is always worthy of esteem, so long as it does not abuse its power, and never sacrifices justice to its interest; but the happiness of sleep is deceitful; great reverses may occur to disturb it; and we ought not to let the steeds stand still for the sake of holding the reins more gently and easily.

A nation may easily content itself with those common blessings of life, repose and ease; and superficial thinkers will pretend, that the whole social art is confined to securing these blessings to the people. Yet are more noble gifts necessary to inspire the feeling of patriotism. This feeling is combined of the remembrances which great men have left behind them, the admiration inspired by the *chefs-d'œuvre* of national genius, and lastly, the love which is felt for the institutions, the religion, and the glory of our country. These riches of the soul are the only riches that a foreign yoke could tear away; if therefore material enjoyments were the only objects of thought, might not the same soil always produce them, let who will be its masters?

They believed in Austria, during the last century, that the cultivation of letters would tend to enfeeble the military spirit; but they were deceived. Rodolph of Habsburg¹ untied from

¹ Near the right bank of the Aar, in the Canton of Aargou, Switzerland, stands the village of Habsburg. There may be seen the ruins of a castle

his neck the golden chain which he wore, to decorate a then celebrated poet. Maximilian dictated the poem which he caused to be written. Charles the Fifth knew, and cultivated, almost all languages. Most of the thrones of Europe were formerly filled by sovereigns well informed in all kinds of learning, and who discovered in literary acquirements a new source of mental grandeur. Neither learning nor the sciences will ever hurt the energy of character. Eloquence renders men more brave, and courage renders them more eloquent; every thing that makes the heart beat in unison with a generous sentiment, doubles the true strength of man, his will: but that systematic selfishness, in which a man sometimes comprehends his family as an appendage of himself, but that philosophy which is merely vulgar at bottom, however elegant in appearance, which leads to the contempt of every thing that is called illusion, that is, of self-devotion and enthusiasm,—this is the sort of illumination most to be dreaded for the virtues of a nation; this, nevertheless, is what no censors of the press can ever expel from a country surrounded by the atmosphere of the eighteenth century: we can never escape from what is bad and hurtful in books, but by freely admitting from all quarters whatever they contain of greatness and liberality.

The representation of "Don Carlos" was forbidden at Vienna, because they would not tolerate his love for Elizabeth. In Schiller's "Joan of Arc," Agnes Sorel was made the lawful wife of Charles the Seventh. The public library was forbidden to let the "Esprit des Lois" be read; and while all this constraint was practised, the romances of Crébillon circulated in everybody's hands, licentious works found entrance, and serious ones alone were suppressed.

The mischief of bad books is only to be corrected by good ones; the bad consequences of enlightenment are only avoided by rendering the enlightenment more complete. There are two roads to every thing—to retrench that which is danger-

which was the original seat of the royal family of Austria. Hapsbourg, the usual orthography, is erroneous.—*Ed.*

ous, or to give new strength to resist it. The latter is the only method that suits the times in which we live; ignorance cannot now have innocence for its companion, and therefore can only do mischief. So many words have been spoken, so many sophisms repeated, that it is necessary to know much, in order to judge rightly; and the times are passed when men confined their ideas to the patrimony of their fathers. We must think, then, not in what manner to repel the introduction of light, but how to render it complete, so that its broken rays may not present false colors. A government must not pretend to keep a great nation in ignorance of the spirit which governs the age; this spirit contains the elements of strength and greatness, which may be employed with success, when men are not afraid boldly to meet every question that presents itself: they will then find, in eternal truths, resources against transitory errors, and in liberty itself, the support of order and the augmentation of power.

CHAPTER VII.

VIENNA.

VIENNA is situated in a plain, surrounded by picturesque hills. The Danube, which passes through and encircles it, divides itself into several branches, forming many pleasant islets; but this river loses its own dignity in so many windings, and fails to produce the impression which its ancient renown promises. Vienna is an old town, small enough in itself, but begirt with spacious suburbs. It is pretended that the city, surrounded by its fortifications, is not more extensive now than it was at the time when Richard Cœur-de-Lion¹ was

¹ Richard was arrested near Friesach, one hundred and fifty miles from Vienna, on the road to Venice; and it is not improbable that he was imprisoned at the castle of Dürrenstein, on the frontier between Styria and Carinthia, at the entrance of the beautiful valley of the Olza.—*Ed.*

imprisoned near its gates. The streets are as narrow as those in Italy; the palaces recall, in some degree, those of Florence; in short, nothing there resembles the rest of Germany, except a few Gothic edifices, which bring back the middle ages to the imagination.

The first of these edifices is the tower of St. Stephen, which rises above all the other churches of Vienna, and reigns majestically over the good and peaceful city, whose generations and glories it has seen pass away. It took two centuries, they say, to finish this tower, begun in 1100;¹ the whole Austrian history is in some manner connected with it. No building can be so patriotic as a church; in that alone all classes of the nation are assembled,—that alone brings to the recollection not merely public events, but the secret thoughts and inward affections which both chiefs and people have carried into its sanctuary. The temple of the divinity seems present, like God himself, to ages passed away.

The monument of Prince Eugene is the only one that has been, for some time past, erected in this church; he there lies waiting for other heroes. As I approached it, I saw a notice affixed to one of its pillars, that a young woman begged of those who should read this paper to pray for her during her sickness. The name of this young woman was not given; it was some unfortunate being, addressing herself to beings unknown, not for their alms, but for their prayers; and all this passed by the side of the illustrious dead, who had himself, perhaps, compassion on the unhappy living. It is a pious custom among the Catholics, and one which we ought to imitate, to leave the churches always open; there are so many moments in which we feel the want of such an asylum; and never do we enter it without feeling an emotion which does good to

¹ "The *South Tower*, begun in 1359, and carried to two thirds its present height, by an architect named George Hauser, was completed in 1423 by Anton Pilgram. It is a masterpiece of Gothic architecture, diminishing gradually from its base to its summit in regularly retreating arches and buttresses. It is four hundred and forty-four English feet high."—(*Murray's Hand-book for Southern Germany*, p. 198.)—Ed.

the soul, and restores it, as by a holy ablution, to strength and purity.

There is no great city without its public building, its promenade, or some other wonder of art or of nature, to which the recollections of infancy attach themselves; and I think that the *Prater* must possess a charm of this description for the inhabitants of Vienna. Nowhere do we find, so near the capital, a public walk so rich in the beauties at once of rude and ornamented nature. A majestic forest extends to the banks of the Danube; herds of deer are seen from afar passing through the meadow; they return every morning, and fly away every evening, when the influx of company disturbs their solitude. A spectacle, seen at Paris only three times a year, on the road to Longchamp,¹ is renewed every day, during the fine season, at Vienna. This is an Italian custom—the daily promenade at the same hour. Such regularity would be impracticable in a country where pleasures are so diversified as at Paris; but the Viennese, from whatever cause, would find it difficult to relinquish the habit of it. It must be agreed that it forms a most striking *coup d'œil*, the sight of a whole nation of citizens assembled under the shade of magnificent trees, on a turf kept ever verdant by the waters of the Danube. The people of fashion in carriages, those of the lower orders on foot, meet there every evening.² In this wise country, even pleasures are looked upon in the light of duties, and they have this advantage—that they never grow tedious, however uniform. The people preserve as much regularity in dissipation as in business, and waste their time as methodically as they employ it.

¹ The annual *promenade de Longchamp* takes place in the Champs Elysées and the Bois de Boulogne, on the Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of Passion Week.—*Ed.*

² “The *Prater*, the Hyde Park of Vienna, consists of a series of low and partly wooded islands, formed by arms of the Danube, which separate from the main trunk to rejoin it lower down. The entrance to it is situated at the extremity of the street called *Jägerzeile*. Here there is an open circular space, from which branch out six alleys or avenues. Close to the first alley is the *Terminus* of the *Northern Railroad*—Kaiser Ferdinand’s Nordbahn—extending to Brunn. The second, on the right (*Hauptallée*), is the

If you enter one of the redoubts where balls are given to the citizens on holidays, you will behold men and women gravely performing, opposite to each other, the steps of a minuet,¹ of

most frequented, and leads to the Panorama, the Circus, and the coffee-houses, the resort of the better classes, round which they sit under the shade in the open air, and take their tea or coffee. At the end of this alley is a sort of pavilion, called the Lusthaus, close to an arm of the Danube, commanding pleasing prospects through the trees. This building forms the boundary of 'the drive;' carriages turn at this point, and, in the summer season, they are often so numerous as to form an unbroken line from St. Stephen's Place in the city up to this pavilion.

"Upon Easter Monday, the great day for visiting the Prater, no less than twenty thousand persons collect here, and all the new equipages and liveries are then displayed for the first time. It is the Longchamps of Vienna. Paris, however, can hardly match the splendor of the Prater; and, except in London, such a display is probably nowhere to be seen. It is like the ring in Hyde Park, with this difference, that the humble *fiacre* is admitted by the side of the princely four-in-hand; and not unfrequently the emperor's ambling coursers are stopped by the clumsy hackney-coachman, who has cut into the line immediately before him. Thus, amid all the display of coats-of-arms, with quarterings innumerable, of crowns and coronets, scarlet and gold-laced liveries, Hungarian lacqueys in dolmans (the hussar dress), belted Bohemian Jägers, with swords at their sides and streaming feathers in their cocked hats, there is far less aristocratic exclusiveness than in England.

"He who confines himself to the drive, however, has seen but half of the Prater, and that not the most amusing or characteristic portion. A few steps behind the coffee-houses, the Prater of the great world ends and that of the common people begins. It is called the Würstl Prater, probably from the quantity of sausages (*würste*) which are constantly smoking and being consumed in it. On Sundays and holidays it has all the appearance of a great fair. As far as the eye can reach, under the trees and over the greensward, appears one great encampment of sutlers' booths and huts. The smoke is constantly ascending from these rustic kitchens, while long rows of tables and benches, never empty of guests, or bare of beer-jugs and wine-bottles, are spread under the shade. Shows and theatres, mountebanks, jugglers, punchinellos, rope-dancing, swings, and skittles, are the allurements which entice the holiday folks on every side. But in order to form any tolerable notion of the scene—the laughter, the joviality, the songs and the dances, the perpetual strains of music playing to the restless measure of the waltz, must be taken into consideration."—(*Handbook for Southern Germany*, p. 217.)—*Ed.*

¹ The waltz has now taken the place of the minuet; but the spirit of the people has not changed. We have heard more than once, at Vienna, Englishmen and Americans exclaim, "How conscientiously these people dance!"—*Ed.*

which they have imposed on themselves the amusement; the crowd often separates a couple while dancing, and yet each persists, as if they were dancing to acquit their consciences; each moves alone, to right and left, forwards and backwards, without caring about the other, who is figuring all the while with equal conscientiousness; now and then, only, they utter a little exclamation of joy, and then immediately return to the serious discharge of their pleasure.

It is above all on the Prater that one is struck with the ease and prosperity of the people of Vienna. This city has the reputation of consuming more victuals than any other place of an equal population; and this species of superiority, a little vulgar, is not contested. One sees whole families of citizens and artificers, setting off at five in the evening for the Prater, there to take a sort of rural refreshment, equally substantial with a dinner elsewhere, and the money which they can afford to lay out upon it proves how laborious they are, and under how mild a government¹ they live.

Tens of thousands return at night, leading by the hand their wives and children; no disorder, no quarrelling disturbs all this multitude, whose voice is hardly heard, so silent is their joy! This silence, nevertheless, does not proceed from any melancholy disposition of the soul; it is rather a certain physical happiness, which induces men, in the south of Germany, to ruminate on their sensations, as in the north on their ideas. The vegetative existence of the south of Germany bears some analogy to the contemplative existence of the north: in each, there is repose, indolence, and reflection.

If you could imagine an equally numerous assembly of Parisians met together in the same place, the air would sparkle with *bon mots*, pleasantries, and disputes; never can a Frenchman enjoy any pleasure in which his self-love would not in some manner find itself a place.

Noblemen of rank take their promenade on horses, or in

¹ It must be remembered that the Austrian government is oppressive only in a *political* sense.—*Ed.*

carriages of the greatest magnificence and good taste; all their amusement consists in bowing, in an alley of the Prater, to those whom they have just left in a drawing-room; but the diversity of objects renders it impossible to pursue any train of reflection, and the greater number of men take a pleasure in thus dissipating those reflections which trouble them. These grandees of Vienna, the most illustrious and the most wealthy¹ in Europe, abuse none of the advantages they possess; they allow the humblest hackney-coaches to stop their brilliant equipages. The emperor and his brothers even quietly keep their place in the string, and choose to be considered, in their amusements, as private individuals; they make use of their privileges only when they fulfil their duties. In the midst of the crowd you often meet with Oriental, Hungarian, and Polish costumes, which enliven the imagination; and harmonious bands of music, at intervals, give to all this assemblage the air of a peaceable fête, in which everybody enjoys himself without being troubled about his neighbor.

You never meet a beggar at these promenades; none are to be seen in Vienna; the charitable establishments there are regulated with great order and liberality; private and public benevolence is directed with a great spirit of justice, and the people themselves having in general more industry and commercial ability than in the rest of Germany, each man regularly pursues his own individual destiny. There are few instances in Austria of crimes deserving death; every thing, in short, in this country, bears the mark of a parental, wise, and religious government. The foundations of the social edifice are good and respectable; "but it wants a pinnacle and columns to render it a fit temple of genius and of glory."²

I was at Vienna, in 1808, when the Emperor Francis the Second married his first-cousin, the daughter of the Archduke of Milan and the Archduchess Beatrix, the last princess of that house of Este so celebrated by Ariosto and Tasso. The Arch-

¹ With the exception of the English.—*Ed.*

² Suppressed by the censors.

duke Ferdinand and his noble consort found themselves both deprived of their states by the vicissitudes of war, and the young empress, brought up "in these cruel times,"¹ united in her person the double interest of greatness and misfortune. It was a union concluded by inclination, and into which no political convenience had entered, although one more honorable could not have been contracted. It caused at once a feeling of sympathy and respect, for the family affections which brought us near to this marriage, and for the illustrious rank which set us at a distance from it. A young prince, the Archbishop of Waizen, bestowed the nuptial benediction on his sister and sovereign; the mother of the empress, whose virtues and knowledge conspire to exercise the most powerful empire over her children, became in a moment the subject of her daughter, and walked in the procession behind her with a mixture of deference and of dignity, which recalled at the same time the rights of the crown and those of nature. The brothers of the emperor and empress, all employed in the army or in the administration, all in different ranks, all equally devoted to the public good, accompanied them respectively to the altar, and the church was filled with the grandees of the State, with the wives, the daughters, and the mothers, of the most ancient of the Teutonic nobility. Nothing new was produced for the fête; it was sufficient for its pomp to display what each possessed. Even the women's ornaments were hereditary, and the diamonds that had descended in every family consecrated the remembrances of the past to the decoration of youth; ancient times were present to all, and a magnificence was enjoyed, which the ages had prepared, but which cost the people no new sacrifices.

The amusements which succeeded to the marriage consecration had in them almost as much of dignity as the ceremony itself. It is not thus that private individuals ought to give entertainments, but it is perhaps right to find in all the actions of kings the severe impression of their august destiny. Not

¹ Suppressed by the censors.

far from this church, around which the discharge of cannons and the beating of drums announced the renewal of the union between the houses of Este and Habsburg, we see the asylum, which has for these two centuries inclosed the tombs of the emperors of Austria and their family. There, in the vault of the Capuchins, it was that Maria Theresa, for thirty years, heard mass in the very sight of the burial-place which she had prepared for herself by the side of her husband.¹ This illustrious princess had suffered so much in the days of her early youth, that the pious sentiment of the instability of life never quitted her, even in the midst of her greatness. We have many examples of a serious and constant devotion among the sovereigns of the earth; as they obey death only, his irresistible power strikes them the more forcibly. The difficulties of life intervene between ourselves and the tomb; but every thing lies level before the eyes of kings, even to the last, and that very level renders the end more visible.

The feast induces us naturally to reflect upon the tomb; poetry has, in all times, delighted herself in drawing these two images by the side of each other; and fate itself is a terrible poet which has too often discovered the art of uniting them.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF SOCIETY.

THE rich and the noble seldom inhabit the suburbs² of Vienna; and, notwithstanding that the city possesses in other respects all the advantages of a great capital, the good company

¹ "Every Friday, for thirteen years after the death of her husband, Maria Theresa descended into this vault to pray and weep by the side of his remains." At the present time, the most interesting sarcophagus in this "last home" of kings, is that of young Napoleon, Duke of Reichstadt.—*Ed.*

² "Vienna differs from most other European capitals in this respect, that the old part of the town, and not the new, is the most fashionable. Within

is there brought together as closely as in a small town. These easy communications, in the midst of all the enjoyments of fortune and luxury, render their habitual life very convenient, and the frame of society, if we may so express it, that is, its habits, usages, and manners, are extremely agreeable. Among foreigners we hear of the severe etiquette and aristocratical pride of the great Austrian nobility; this accusation is unfounded; there is simplicity, politeness, and, above all, honesty, in the good company of Vienna; and the same spirit of justice and regularity, which governs all important affairs, is to be met with also in the smallest circumstances. People are as punctual to their dinner and supper engagements, as they would be in the discharge of more essential promises; and those false airs, which make elegance consist in a contempt of the forms of politeness, have never been introduced among them. Nevertheless, one of the principal disadvantages of the society of Vienna is, that the nobles and men of letters do not mix together. The pride of the nobles is not the cause of this; but as they do not reckon many distinguished writers at Vienna, and people read but little, everybody lives in his own particular coterie, because there is nothing but coteries in a country where general ideas and public interests have so small need of being developed. From this separation of classes it results that men of letters are deficient in grace, and that men of the world are rarely abundant in information.

The exactitude of politeness, which in some respects is a virtue, since it frequently demands sacrifices, has introduced into Vienna the most fatiguing of all possible forms. All the good company transports itself *en masse*, from one drawing-room to another, three or four times every week. A certain time is lost in the duties of the toilet, which are necessary in these great assemblies; more is lost in the streets, and on the

the bastions lie the palaces of the emperor and some of the principal nobility; the stately dwellings of the Harrachs, Starembergs, Trautmannsdorfs, etc.; the public offices, the finest churches, and most of the museums and public collections, together with the colleges, the exchange, and the most splendid shops."—*Ed.*

staircases, waiting till the carriages draw up in order; still more in sitting three hours at table; and, it is impossible, in these crowded assemblies, to hear any thing that is spoken beyond the circle of customary phrases. This daily exhibition of so many individuals to each other, is a happy invention of mediocrity to annul the faculties of the mind. If it were established that thought is to be considered as a malady, against which a regular course of medicine is necessary, nothing could be imagined better adapted for the purpose than a sort of distraction at once noisy and insipid; such as permits the following up of no ideas, and converts language into a mere chattering, which may be taught men as well as birds.

I have seen a piece performed at Vienna, in which Harlequin enters, clothed in a long gown and a magnificent wig; and all at once he juggles himself away, leaving his wig and gown standing to figure in his place, and goes to display his real person elsewhere. One might propose this game of legerdemain to those who frequent large assemblies. People attend them, not for the sake of meeting any object that they are desirous of pleasing; severity of manners and tranquillity of soul centre in Austria all the affections in the bosom of the family.¹ They do not resort to them for the purposes of ambition; for every thing passes with so much regularity in this country, that intrigue has little hold there; and besides, it is not in the midst of society that it can find room to exercise itself. These visits and these circles are invented for the sake of giving all people the same thing to do, at the same hour; and thus they prefer the *ennui*, of which they partake with their equals, to the amusement which they would be forced to create for themselves at home.

Great assemblies and great dinners take place in other cities besides Vienna; but as at such meetings we generally see all the distinguished individuals of the countries where we assemble, we there find more opportunities of escaping from those

¹ Vienna now has the reputation of being one of the most dissolute capitals in Europe.—*Ed.*

forms of conversation, which upon such occasions succeed to the first salutations, and prolong them in words. Society does not in Austria, as in France, contribute to the development or the animation of the understanding; it leaves in the head nothing but noise and emptiness; whence it follows, besides, that the more intelligent members of the community generally estrange themselves from it; it is frequented by women alone, and even that share of understanding which they possess is astonishing, considering the nature of the life they lead. Foreigners justly appreciate the agreeableness of their conversation; but none are so rarely to be met with in the drawing-rooms of the capital of Germany, as the men of Germany itself.

In the society of Vienna, a stranger must be pleased with the proper assurance, the elegance, and nobleness of manner, which reign throughout under the influence of the women; yet there is wanting to it something to say, something to do, an end, an interest. One feels a wish that to-day may be different from yesterday, yet without such variety as would interrupt the chain of affections and habits. In retirement, monotony tranquillizes the soul; in the great world, it only fatigues the mind.

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE DESIRE AMONG FOREIGNERS OF IMITATING THE FRENCH SPIRIT.

THE destruction of the feudal spirit, and of the old château life, which was the consequence of it, has introduced a great deal of leisure among the nobility; this leisure has rendered the amusement of society necessary to their existence; and, as the French are reputed masters in the art of conversation, they have made themselves throughout Europe the sovereigns of opinion, or rather of fashion, by which opinion is so easily counterfeited. Since the reign of Louis XIV, all the good so-

ciety of the continent, Spain and Italy excepted, has made its self-love consist in the imitation of the French. In England there exists a constant topic of conversation, that of politics, the interest of which is the interest of each individual and of all alike; in the South there is no society; there the brilliancy of the sun, love, and the fine arts, fill up the whole of existence. At Paris, we talk upon subjects of literature; and the spectacles of the theatre continually changing, give place to ingenious and witty remarks. But in most other great cities, the only subject that presents itself for conversation consists in the anecdotes and observations of the day, respecting those very persons of whom what we call good company is composed. It is a sort of gossip, ennobled by the great names that are introduced, but resting on the same foundation as that of the common people; for, except that their forms of speech are more elegant, the subject of it is the same—that is to say, their neighbors.

The only truly liberal subjects of conversation are thoughts and actions of universal interest. That habitual backbiting, of which the idleness of drawing-rooms and the barrenness of the understanding make a sort of necessity, is perhaps more or less modified by goodness of character; yet there is always enough of it to enable us to hear, at every step, at every word, the buzz of petty tattle, which, like the buzz of so many flies, has the power of vexing even a lion. In France, people employ the powerful arms of ridicule for mutual annoyance, and for gaining the vantage-ground, which they expect will afford them the triumph of self-love; elsewhere, a sort of indolent chattering uses up the faculties of the mind, and renders it incapable of energetic efforts of any description whatever.

Agreeable conversation, even when merely on trifles, and deriving its charm only from the grace of expression, is capable of conferring a high degree of pleasure; it may be affirmed, without extravagance, that the French are almost alone masters of this sort of discourse. It is a dangerous, but a lively exercise, in which subjects are played with like a ball, which in its turn comes back to the hand of the thrower.

Foreigners, when they wish to imitate the French, affect more immorality, and are yet more frivolous than they, from an apprehension that seriousness may be deficient in grace, and that their thoughts and reflections may fail of possessing the true Parisian accent.

The Austrians, in general, have at once too much stiffness and too much sincerity, to be ambitious of attaining foreign manners. Nevertheless, they are not yet sufficiently Germans, they are not yet sufficiently versed in German literature; it is too much the fashion at Vienna to believe that it is a mark of good taste to speak the French language only; forgetting that the true glory, the real charm, of every nation, must consist in its own national spirit and character.

The French have been the dread of all Europe, particularly of Germany, by their dexterity in the art of seizing and pointing out the ridiculous. The words elegance and grace possessed I know not what magical influence in giving the alarm to self-love. It seemed as if sentiments, actions, life itself, were, before all things, to be subjected to this very subtle legislation of fashion, which is a sort of treaty between the self-love of individuals and that of society; a treaty on which these several and respective vanities have erected for themselves a republican constitution of government, which pronounces the sentence of ostracism upon all that is strong and marked. These forms, these modes of agreement, light in appearance and despotic at bottom, regulate the whole of existence: they have by degrees undermined love, enthusiasm, religion, all things except that selfishness which cannot be reached by irony, because it exposes itself to censure, but not to ridicule.

The understanding of the Germans agrees less than that of any other people with this measured frivolity; that understanding has hardly any power over the surfaces of things; it must examine deeply in order to comprehend; it seizes nothing on the wing; and it would be in vain that the Germans disencumbered themselves of the properties and ideas instilled into them at their birth; since the loss of the substance would

not render them lighter in the forms, and they would rather become Germans without worth, than amiable Frenchmen.

It must not be thence concluded that grace is denied them; imagination and sensibility confer it upon them, when they resign themselves to their natural dispositions. Their gayety—and gayety they possess, particularly in Austria—has not the smallest resemblance to the gayety of the French. The Tyrolese farces, by which at Vienna the great are equally amused with the vulgar, are much more nearly allied to Italian buffoonery than to French ridicule: they consist in comic scenes of strong character, representing human nature with truth, but not social manners with delicacy. Yet still this gayety, such as it is, is worth more than the imitation of a foreign grace: such grace may well be dispensed with; but perfection, in whatever style, is still something. “The ascendancy obtained by French manners has perhaps prepared foreigners to believe them invincible. There is but one method of resisting this influence; and that consists in very decided national habits and character.”¹ From the moment that men seek to resemble the French, they must yield the advantage to them in every thing. The English, not fearing the ridicule of which the French are masters, have sometimes ventured to pay them in kind; and, so far from English manners appearing ungraceful even in France, the French, so generally imitated, became imitators in their turn, and England was for a long time as much the fashion at Paris, as Paris itself in all other parts of the world.

The Germans might create to themselves a society of a most instructive cast, and altogether analogous to their taste and character. Vienna being the capital of Germany, that place in which all the comforts and ornaments of life are most easily to be found collected, might in this respect have rendered great services to the German spirit, if foreigners had not almost exclusively presided at all their assemblies. The generality of Austrians, who know not how to conform to the French lan-

¹ Suppressed by the police.

guage and customs, lived entirely out of the world; from whence it resulted that they were never softened by the conversation of women, but remained at once shy and unpolished, despising every thing that is called grace, and yet secretly fearing to appear deficient in it; they neglected the cultivation of their understandings under the pretext of military occupations, and yet they often neglected those occupations also, because they never heard any thing that might make them feel the value and the charm of glory. They thought they showed themselves good Germans in withdrawing from a society in which foreigners had the lead, yet never dreamed of establishing another, capable of improving the understanding and unfolding the mind.

The Poles and Russians, who constituted the charm of society at Vienna, spoke nothing but French, and contributed to the disuse of the German language. The Polish women have very seductive manners; they unite an Oriental imagination with the suppleness and the vivacity of France. Yet, even among the Slavonic, the most flexible of all nations the imitation of the French style is often very fatiguing; the French verses of the Poles and Russians resemble, with some few exceptions, the Latin verses of the middle age. A foreign language is always, in many respects, a dead language. French verses are at the same time the easiest and the most difficult to be written. To tie hemistiches to one another, which are so much in the habit of being found together, is but a labor of the memory; but it is necessary to have breathed the air of a country, to have thought, enjoyed, or suffered, in its language, in order to describe poetically what is felt. Foreigners, who are above all things proud of speaking French correctly, dare not form any opinion of our writers otherwise than as they are guided by the authority of literary critics, lest they should pass for not understanding them. They praise the style more than the ideas, because ideas belong to all nations, and the French alone are judges of style in their own language.

If you meet a true Frenchman, you take a pleasure in speaking with him on subjects of French literature; you find your-

self at home, and talk about your mutual affairs; but a foreigner Frenchified does not allow himself a single opinion or phrase not strictly orthodox; and it is most frequently an obsolete orthodoxy that he takes for the current opinion of the day. In many northern countries, people still repeat anecdotes of the court of Louis the Fourteenth. Foreigners, who imitate the French, relate the quarrels of Mademoiselle de Fontanges and Madame de Montespan, with a prolixity of detail, which would be tedious even in recording a transaction of yesterday. This erudition of the boudoir, this obstinate attachment to some received ideas, for no other reason than the difficulty of laying in a new stock of provisions of the same nature—all this is tiresome and even hurtful; for the true strength of a country is its natural character; and the imitation of foreigners, under all circumstances whatever, is a want of patriotism.

Frenchmen of sense, when they travel, are not pleased with finding among foreigners the spirit of Frenchmen; and, on the contrary, look out for those who unite national to individual originality. French milliners export to the colonies, to Germany, and to the North, what they commonly call their *shop-fund* (*fonds de boutique*); yet they carefully collect the national habits of the same countries, and look upon them, with good reason, as very elegant models. What is true with regard to dress, is equally true with regard to the understanding. We have a cargo of madrigals, calembourgs, vaudevilles, which we pass off to foreigners when they are done with in France; but the French themselves value nothing in foreign literature but its indigenous beauties. There is no nature, no life, in imitation; and, in general, to all these understandings and to all these works, imitated from the French, may be applied the eulogium pronounced by Orlando, in Ariosto, upon his mare, while he is dragging her after him—"She possesses all the good qualities that can be imagined; but has one fault, that she is dead."

CHAPTER X.

OF SUPERCILIOUS FOLLY AND BENEVOLENT MEDIOCRITY.

SUPERIORITY of mind and soul is seldom met with in any country, and, for this very reason, it retains the name of superiority; thus, in order to judge of national character, we should examine the mass of the people. Men of genius are fellow-citizens everywhere; but, to perceive justly the difference between the French and Germans, we should take pains to understand the communities of which the two nations are composed. A Frenchman can speak, even without ideas; a German has always more in his head than he is able to express. We may be entertained by a Frenchman, even when he lacks understanding. He relates all he has done and seen, all the good that he thinks of himself, the praises he has received, the great lords he is acquainted with, the success he hopes for. A German, unless he thinks, can say nothing; he is embarrassed by forms, which he wishes to render polite, and by which he incommodes others, as well as himself. In France, Folly is animated, but supercilious. She boasts of not being able to comprehend, though you demand of her ever so little attention, and thinks to lessen what she does not understand, by affirming that it is obscure. The prevailing opinion of the country being, that success is the criterion of every thing; even fools, in the quality of spectators, think themselves capable of influencing the intrinsic merit of things, by refusing to afford them the distinction of their applause. People of mediocrity, in Germany, are, on the contrary, full of good-will; they would blush at finding themselves unable to rise to the level of the ideas of some distinguished writer; and, far from reckoning themselves judges, they aspire to become disciples.

In France, there are so many ready-made phrases on every

subject, that, with their assistance, a fool may discourse well enough for some time, and for a moment even seem a man of understanding; in Germany, an ignorant person never dares profess an opinion on any subject whatever with confidence; for, no opinion being received as incontestable, you can advance none without being previously armed to defend it; thus ordinary people are, for the most part, silent, and contribute nothing to the pleasure of society, except the charm of good-nature. In Germany, distinguished persons only know how to talk; while, in France, every one is ready to bear his share in conversation. People of superior minds are indulgent in France, and severe in Germany; on the contrary, French fools are malignant and jealous; while those of Germany, however bounded in intellect, are yet able to praise and admire. The ideas circulated in Germany, on many subjects, are new, and often whimsical; from whence it follows, that those who respect them appear, for some time, to possess a sort of borrowed profundity. In France, it is by manners that men give themselves an illusory importance. These manners are agreeable, but uniform; and the discipline of fashion wears away all the variety that they might otherwise possess.

A man of wit told me, that, one evening, at a masked ball, he walked before a looking-glass; and that, not knowing how to point himself out to himself, from the crowd of persons wearing similar dominos with his own, he nodded his head to recognize himself: the same may be said of the dress with which the understanding clothes itself in the world; we almost confound ourselves with others—so little is the real character shown in any of us! Folly finds herself well off in all this confusion, and would make advantage of it by contesting the possession of real merit. Stupidity and folly are essentially different in this,—stupid people voluntarily submit themselves to nature, while fools always flatter themselves with the hope of governing in society.

CHAPTER XI.

OF THE SPIRIT OF CONVERSATION.

IN the East, when men have nothing to say, they smoke; and, while they are smoking, from time to time, salute each other with their arms folded across their breasts, as a mark of friendship; but, in the West, people prefer to talk all day long—and the warmth of the soul is often dissipated in these conversations, where self-love is always on the wing to display itself, according to the taste of the moment, and of the circle in which it finds itself.

It seems to me an acknowledged fact, that Paris is, of all cities in the world, that in which the spirit and taste for conversation are most generally diffused; and that disorder, which they call the *mal du pays*, that undefinable longing for our native land, which exists independently even of the friends we have left behind there, applies particularly to the pleasure of conversation which Frenchmen find nowhere else in the same degree as at home. Volney relates, that some French emigrants began, during the revolution, to establish a colony and clear some lands in America; but they were continually quitting their work to go and talk, as they said, in town¹—and this town, New Orleans, was distant six hundred leagues from their place of residence. The necessity of conversation is felt by all classes of people in France: speech is not there, as elsewhere, merely the means of communicating from one to another ideas, sentiments, and transactions; but it is an instrument on which they are fond of playing, and which animates the spirits, like music among some people, and strong liquors among others.

¹ Only a Parisian fully knows what it is *causer à la ville*.—Ed.

That sort of pleasure, which is produced by an animated conversation, does not precisely depend on the nature of that conversation; the ideas and knowledge which it develops do not form its principal interest; it is a certain manner of acting upon one another, of giving mutual and instantaneous delight, of speaking the moment one thinks, of acquiring immediate self-enjoyment, of receiving applause without labor, of displaying the understanding in all its shades by accent, gesture, look; of eliciting, in short, at will, the electric sparks, which relieve some of the excess of their vivacity, and serve to awaken others out of a state of painful apathy.

Nothing is more foreign to this talent than the character and disposition of the German intellect; they require in all things a serious result. Bacon has said, that *conversation is not the road leading to the house, but a by-path where people walk with pleasure*. The Germans give the necessary time to all things, but what is necessary to conversation is amusement; if men pass this line, they fall into discussion, into serious argument, which is rather a useful occupation than an agreeable art. It must also be confessed, that the taste for society, and the intoxication of mind which it produces, singularly incapacitate for application and study, and the virtues of the Germans depend perhaps in some respects upon the very absence of this spirit.

The ancient forms of politeness, still in full force almost all over Germany, are contrary to the ease and familiarity of conversation; the most inconsiderable titles, which are yet the longest to be pronounced, are there bestowed and repeated twenty times at the same meal;¹ every dish, every glass of

¹ "One habit of German society, which cannot fail sometimes to occasion a smile to an Englishman, though it costs him some trouble to acquire it, is the necessity of addressing everybody, whether male or female, not by their own name, but by the titles of the office which they hold.

"To accost a gentleman, as is usual in England, with Sir (Mein Herr), if not considered among the Germans themselves as an actual insult, is at least not *complimentary*; it is requisite to find out his office or profession. Madame and Mademoiselle, addressed to German ladies, are equally terms of inferiority. The commonest title to which everybody aspires is that of

wine, must be offered with a sedulity and a pressing manner, which is mortally tedious to foreigners. There is a sort of goodness at the bottom of all these usages; but they could not subsist for an instant in a country where pleasantry may

Councillor (Rath), which is modified and extended by various affixes and prefixes. There is a *rath* for every profession: an architect is a Baurath; an advocate a Justizrath, &c., &c.; and a person with no profession at all contrives to be made a Hofrath (court councillor), a very unmeaning title, which is generally borne by persons who were never in a situation to give advice to the court. The dignity of Staatsrath (privy councillor) is given to members of the administration; some real dignity is attached to it, and the persons bearing it are further addressed by the title of *excellency*. The title of Professor is much abused, as it is certainly appropriated by many persons who have no real claim to it by their learning or office. It is better, in conversing with a German, to give a person a rank greater than he is entitled to than to fall beneath the mark. Geheimrath, for example, is higher than Professor. It is upon this principle that an Englishman is sometimes addressed by the common people, to his great surprise, as Herr Graf (Mr. Count), and often as Euer Gnaden (Your Grace).

“Every man who holds any public office, should it be merely that of an under clerk, with a paltry salary of £40 a year, must be gratified by hearing his title, not his name. Even absent persons, when spoken of, are generally designated by their official titles, however humble and unmeaning they may be. The ladies are not behind in asserting their claims to honorary appellations. All over Germany a wife insists upon taking the title of her husband, with a feminine termination. There is Madame General-ess, Madame Privy Councillor-ess, Madame Daybook-keeper-ess, and a hundred others.’—RUSSELL.

“Read and see Kotzebue’s amusing ridicule of this, in his comedy called *Die Deutschen Kleinstädter*.

“These titles sometimes extend to an almost unpronounceable length. Only think, for instance, of addressing a lady as Frau Oberconsistorial-directorin (Mrs. Directress of the Upper Consistory Court). This may be avoided, however, by substituting the words Gnädige Frau (Gracious Madame) in addressing a lady. It must at the same time be observed, that this fondness for titles, and especially for the prefix *von* (*of*, equivalent to the French *de*, and originally denoting the possessor of an estate), is, to a certain extent, a vulgarity from which the upper classes of German society are free. The rulers of Germany take advantage of the national vanity, and lay those upon whom they confer the rank under obligation; while they, at the same time, levy a tax upon the dignity proportionate to its elevation; thus a mere Hofrath pays from thirty to forty dollars annually, and the higher dignities a more considerable sum. If, however, the title is acquired by merit, no tax is paid, but merely a contribution to a fund for the widows and children of the class.

“Certain forms and titles are also prefixed on the address of a letter: thus

be risked without offence to susceptibility; and yet, where can be the grace and the charm of society, if it forbids that gentle ridicule which diverts the mind, and adds even to the charm of good-nature an agreeable mode of expression?

The course of ideas for the last century has been entirely

a count of the high nobility and ancient empire must be addressed *Erlaucht* (Illustrious); a count of the lesser noblesse, *Hochgeborener Herr* (High-born Sir); a baron and a minister, even though not of a noble birth, is called *Hochwohlgeboren*; a merchant or roturier must content himself with being termed *Wohl* (well) *Geboren*; while *Hochedel* (high noble) is ironically applied to tradesmen.

“‘In one respect, in Germany, I think politeness is carried too far—I mean in the perpetual act of pulling off the hat. Speaking ludicrously of it, it really becomes *expensive*, for, with a man who has a large acquaintance in any public place, his hat is never two minutes at rest.’—NIMROD’S *Letters from Holstein*.

“A curious instance of the extent to which this practice of bowing is carried, occurred to the writer in a small provincial town in the south of Germany. At the entrance of the public promenade in the *Grande Place* he observed notices painted on boards, which at first he imagined to contain some police regulations, or important order of the magistracy of the town; upon perusal, however, it proved to be an ordinance to this effect: ‘For the convenience of promenaders, it is particularly requested that the troublesome custom of saluting by taking off the hat should here be dispensed with.’ It is not to friends alone that it is necessary to doff the hat, for, if the friend with whom you are walking meets an acquaintance to whom he takes off his hat, you must do the same, even though you never saw him before.

“German civility, however, does not consist in outward forms alone; a traveller will do well to conform, as soon as possible, to the manners of the country, even down to the mode of salutation, troublesome as it is. If he continue unbending, he will be guilty of rudeness; and on entering any public office, even the office of the *schnellposts*, the underlings of the place, down to the book-keeper, will require him to take off his hat, if he does it not of his own accord. An English traveller repaired to the police office at Berlin to have his passport signed, and, having waited half an hour, said to the secretary to whom he had delivered it, ‘Sir, I think you have forgotten my passport.’ ‘Sir,’ replied the man of office, ‘I think you have forgotten your hat!’

“In thus recommending to travellers the imitation of certain German customs, it is not meant, be it observed, to insist on the practice prevalent among the German *men* of saluting their *male* friends with a kiss on each side of the cheek. It is not a little amusing to observe this, with us, *feminine* mode of greeting, exchanged between two whiskered and mustachioed giants of the age of fifty or sixty.”—(*Hand-book for Northern Germany*, pp. 214, 216.)—*Ed.*

directed by conversation. They thought for the purpose of speaking, and spoke for the purpose of being applauded, and whatever could not be said seemed to be something superfluous in the soul. The desire of pleasing is a very agreeable disposition; yet it differs much from the necessity of being beloved: the desire of pleasing renders us dependent on opinion, the necessity of being beloved sets us free from it: we may desire to please even those whom we would injure, and this is exactly what is called coquetry; this coquetry does not appertain exclusively to the women; there is enough of it in all forms of behavior adopted to testify more affection than is really felt. The integrity of the Germans permits to them nothing of this sort; they construe grace literally, they consider the charm of expression as an engagement for conduct, and thence proceeds their susceptibility; for they never hear a word without drawing a consequence from it, and do not conceive that speech can be treated as a liberal art, which has no other end or consequence than the pleasure which men find in it. The spirit of conversation is sometimes attended with the inconvenience of impairing the sincerity of character; it is not a combined, but an unpremeditated deception. The French have admitted into it a gayety which renders them amiable, but it is not the less certain, that all that is most sacred in this world has been shaken to its centre by grace, at least by that sort of grace that attaches importance to nothing, and turns all things into ridicule.

The *bon mots* of the French have been quoted from one end of Europe to the other. At all times they have displayed the brilliancy of their merit, and solaced their griefs in a lively and agreeable manner; at all times they have stood in need of one another, as alternate hearers and admirers; at all times they have excelled in the art of knowing where to speak and where to be silent, when any commanding interest triumphs over their natural liveliness; at all times they have possessed the talent of living fast, of cutting short long discourses, of giving way to their successors who are desirous of speaking in their turn; at all times, in short, they have known how to take from thought

and feeling no more than is necessary to animate conversation, without fatiguing the weak interest which men generally feel for one another.

The French are in the habit of treating their distresses lightly from the fear of fatiguing their friends; they guess the *ennui* that they would occasion by that which they find themselves capable of sustaining; they hasten to demonstrate an elegant carelessness about their own fate, in order to have the honor, instead of receiving the example of it. The desire of appearing amiable induces men to assume an expression of gayety, whatever may be the inward disposition of the soul; the physiognomy by degrees influences the feelings, and that which we do for the purpose of pleasing others soon takes off the edge of our own individual sufferings.

“A sensible woman has said, that *Paris is, of all the world, the place where men can most easily dispense with being happy.*”¹ it is in this respect that it is so convenient to the unfortunate human race; but nothing can metamorphose a city of Germany into Paris, or cause the Germans, without entirely destroying their own individuality, to receive, like us, the benefits of distraction. If they succeeded in escaping from themselves, they would end in losing themselves altogether.

The talent and habit of society conduce much to the discovery of human characters: to succeed in conversation, one must be able clearly to observe the impression which is produced at every moment on those in company, that which they wish to conceal or seek to exaggerate, the inward satisfaction of some, the forced smile of others; one may see, passing over the countenances of those who listen, half-formed censures, which may be evaded by hastening to dissipate them before self-love is engaged on their side. One may also behold there the first birth of approbation, which may be strengthened without however exacting from it more than it is willing to bestow.

¹ Suppressed by the literary censorship; because there must be happiness in Paris, where the emperor lives.

There is no arena in which vanity displays itself in such a variety of forms as in conversation.

I once knew a man, who was agitated by praise to such a degree, that whenever it was bestowed upon him, he exaggerated what he had just said, and took such pains to add to his success that he always ended in losing it. I never dared to applaud him, from the fear of leading him to affectation, and of his making himself ridiculous by the heartiness of his self-love. Another was so afraid of the appearance of wishing to display himself, that he let fall words negligently and contemptuously. His assumed indolence betrayed one more affectation only, that of pretending to have none. When vanity displays herself, she is good-natured; when she hides herself, the fear of being discovered renders her sour, and she affects indifference, satiety, in short, all that can persuade other men that she has no need of them. These different combinations are amusing for the observer, and one is always astonished that self-love does not take the course, which is so simple, of naturally avowing its desire to please, and making the utmost possible use of grace and truth to attain the object.

The tact which society requires, the necessity which it imposes of calling different minds into action, all this labor of thought, in its relation with men, would be certainly useful to the Germans in many respects, by giving them more of measure, of *finesse*, and dexterity; but in this talent of conversation there is a sort of address which always takes away something from the inflexibility of morality; if we could altogether dispense with the art of *managing* men, the human character would certainly be the better in respect of greatness and energy.

The French are the most skilful diplomatists in Europe; and the very same persons, whom the world accuses of indiscretion and impertinence, know better than all the world besides how to keep a secret, and how to win those whom they find worth the trouble. They never displease others but when they choose to do so; that is to say, when their vanity conceives that it will be better served by a contemptuous than by

an obliging deportment. The spirit of conversation has remarkably called out in the French the more serious spirit of political negotiation; there is no foreign ambassador that can contend with them in this department, unless, absolutely setting aside all pretension to *finesse*, he goes straight forward in business, like one who fights without knowing the art of fencing.

The relations of the different classes with one another were also well calculated to develop in France the sagacity, measure, and propriety of the spirit of society. The distinction of ranks was not marked in a positive manner, and there was constant room for ambition in the undefined space which was open to all by turns to conquer or lose. The rights of the Tiers-État, of the Parliaments, of the Noblesse, even the power of the King, nothing was determined by an invariable rule; all was lost, as may be said, in the address of conversation: the most serious difficulties were evaded by the delicate variations of words and manners, and it seldom happened to any one either to offend another or to yield to him; both extremes were avoided so carefully. The great families had also among themselves pretensions never decided and always secretly understood, and this uncertainty excited vanity much more than any fixed distinction of ranks could have done. It was necessary to study all that composed the existence of man or woman, in order to know the sort of consideration that was due to them. In the habits, customs, and laws of France, there has always been something arbitrary in every sense; and thence it happens that the French have possessed, if we may use the expression, so great a pedantry of frivolity: the principal foundations not being secured, consistency was to be given to the smallest details. In England, originality is allowed to individuals, so well regulated is the mass. In France, the spirit of imitation is like a bond of society; and it seems as if every thing would fall into confusion if this bond did not make up for the instability of institutions.

In Germany, everybody keeps his rank, his place in society, as if it were his established post, and there is no occasion for

dexterous turns, parentheses, half-expressions, to show the advantages of birth or of title which a man thinks he possesses above his neighbor. Good company, in Germany, is the court ; in France it consisted of all who could put themselves on an equality with the court ; and every man could hope it, and every man also fear that he might never attain to it. Hence it resulted, that each individual wished to possess the manners of that society. In Germany you obtained admission by patent ; in France, an error of taste expelled you from it ; and men were even more eager to resemble the *gens du monde* than to distinguish themselves, in that same world, by their personal merit.

An aristocratical ascendancy, fashion, and elegance, obtained the advantage over energy, learning, sensibility, understanding itself. It said to energy, " You attach too much interest to persons and things ;" to learning, " You take up too much of my time ;" to sensibility, " You are too exclusive ;" to understanding, " You are too individual a distinction." Advantages were required that should depend more on manners than ideas, and it was of more importance to recognize in a man the class to which he belonged than the merit he possessed. This sort of equality in inequality is very favorable to people of mediocrity, for it must necessarily destroy all originality in the mode of seeing and expressing one's self. The chosen model is noble, agreeable, and in good taste, but it is the same for all. This model is a point of reunion ; in conforming to it, everybody imagines himself more associated with others. A Frenchman would grow as much tired of being alone in his opinion as of being alone in his room.

The French do not deserve to be accused of flattering power from the calculations which generally inspire this flattery ; they go where all the world goes, through evil report or good report, no matter which ; if a few make themselves pass for the multitude, they are sure that the multitude will shortly follow them. The French revolution in 1789 was effected by sending a courier from village to village to cry, " Arm yourselves ; for the neighboring village is armed ;" and so all the world found

itself risen up against all the world, or rather against nobody. If you spread a report that such a mode of viewing things is universally received, you would obtain unanimity in spite of private opinions; you would then keep the secret of the comedy, for every one would in private confess that all are wrong. In secret scrutinies the deputies have been seen to give their white or black ball contrary to their opinion, only because they believed the majority to be of different sentiments from their own, and because, as they said, *they would not throw away their vote.*

It is by this necessity imposed in society of thinking like other people, that the contrast of courage in war and pusillanimity in civil life, so often displayed during the revolution, may be best explained. There is but one mode of thinking with respect to military courage; but public opinion may be bewildered as to the conduct to be pursued in political life. You are threatened with the censure of those around you, with solitude, with desertion, if you decline to follow the ruling party; but in the armies there is no other alternative than that of death or distinction—a dazzling situation for the Frenchman, who never fears the one, and passionately loves the other. Set fashion, that is, applause, on the side of danger, and you will see the Frenchman brave it in every form; the social spirit exists in France from the highest to the lowest: it is necessary to hear one's self approved by one's neighbors; nobody will at any price expose himself to censure or ridicule; for in a country where conversation has so much influence, the noise of words often drowns the voice of conscience.

We know the story of that man who began by praising with enthusiasm an actress he had just heard; he perceived a smile on the lips of those near him, and softened his eulogium; the obstinate smile did not withdraw itself, and the fear of ridicule made him conclude by saying, *Ma foi! the poor shrew did all she could.* The triumphs of pleasantry are continually renewed in France; at one time it is thought fit to be religious, at another, the contrary; at one time to love one's wife, at another to appear nowhere in her company. There have been moments even, in which men have feared to pass for idiots if

they evinced the least humanity; and this terror of ridicule, which in the higher classes generally discovers itself only in vanity, is transformed into ferocity in the lower.

What mischief would not this spirit of imitation do among the Germans! Their superiority consists in independence of spirit, love of retirement, and individual originality. The French are all-powerful only *en masse*, and their men of genius themselves always rest on received opinions when they mean to push onward beyond them. In short, the impatience of the French character, so attractive in conversation, would deprive the Germans of the principal charm of their natural imagination, that calm reverie, that deep contemplation, which calls in the aid of time and perseverance to discover all things.

These are qualities almost incompatible with vivacity of spirit; and yet this vivacity is what above all things renders conversation delightful. When an argument tires, or a tale grows tedious, you are seized with I know not what impatience, similar to that which is experienced when a musician slackens the measure of an air. It is possible, nevertheless, to fatigue by vivacity even as much as by prolixity. I once knew a man of much understanding, but so impatient, as to make all who talked with him feel the same sort of uneasiness that prolix people experience when they perceive that they are fatiguing. This man would jump upon a chair while you were talking to him, finish your sentences for you that they might not be too long: he first made you uneasy, and ended by stunning you; for, however quick you may be in conversation, when it is impossible to retrench any further, except upon what is necessary, thoughts and feelings oppress you for want of room to unfold them.

All modes of saving time are not successful; and a single sentence may be made tedious by leaving it full of emptiness: the talent of expressing one's thoughts with brilliancy and rapidity is that which answers best in society, where there is no time to wait for any thing. No reflection, no compliance, can make people amuse themselves with what confers no amusement. The spirit of conquest and the despotism of suc-

cess must be there exerted ; for the end and aim being little, you cannot console yourself for reverses by the purity of your motives, and good intention goes for nothing in point of spirit.

The talent of narrating, one of the principal charms of conversation, is very rare in Germany ; the hearers there are too complaisant, they do not grow tired soon enough, and the narrators, relying on their patience, are too much at ease in their recitals. In France, every speaker is a usurper surrounded by jealous rivals, who must maintain his post by dint of success ; in Germany, he is a legitimate possessor, who may peacefully enjoy his acknowledged rights.

The Germans succeed better in poetical than in epigrammatic tales ; when the imagination is to be addressed, one may be pleased by details which render the picture more real ; but when a *bon mot* is to be repeated, the preamble cannot be too much shortened. Pleasantry alleviates for a moment the load of life : you like to see a man, your equal, playing with the burden which weighs you down, and, animated by his example, you soon take it up in your turn ; but, when you discover effort or languor in that which ought to be only amusement, it fatigues you more than seriousness itself, where you are at least interested in the results.

The honesty of the German character is, perhaps, an obstacle to the art of narration ; the Germans have a gayety of disposition rather than of mind ; they are gay, as they are honest, for the satisfaction of their consciences, and laugh at what they say a long while before they have even dreamed of making others laugh at it.

Nothing, on the contrary, is equal to the charm of a recital in the mouth of a Frenchman of sense and taste. He foresees every thing, he manages every thing, and yet sacrifices nothing that can possibly be productive of interest. His physiognomy, less marked than that of the Italians, indicates gayety, without losing any thing of the dignity of deportment and manners ; he stops when it is proper, and never exhausts even amusement ; though animated, he constantly holds in his hand the reins of his judgment, to conduct him with safety and dis-

patch; in a short time, also, his hearers join in the conversation; he then calls out, in his turn, those who have been just applauding him, and suffers not a single happy expression to drop, without taking it up—not an agreeable pleasantry, without perceiving it; and, for a moment at least, they delight and enjoy one another, as if all were concord, union, and sympathy in the world.

The Germans would do well to avail themselves, in essential matters, of some of the advantages of the spirit of society in France: the Germans should learn from the French to show themselves less irritable in little circumstances, that they might reserve all their strength for great ones: they should learn from the French not to confound obstinacy with energy, rudeness with firmness; they should also, since they are capable of the entire sacrifice of their lives, abstain from recovering them in detail by a sort of minute personality, which even selfishness itself would not admit; in fine, they should draw out of the very art of conversation the habit of shedding over their books that clearness which would bring them within the comprehension of a greater number—that talent of abridgment, invented by people who practise amusement much more than business—and that respect for certain proprieties which does not require any sacrifice of nature, but only the management of the imagination. They would perfect their style of writing by some of the observations to which the talent of conversation gives birth; but they would be in the wrong to pretend to that talent such as the French possess it.

A great city, that might serve as a rallying point, would be useful to Germany, in collecting together the means of study, in augmenting the resources of the arts, and exciting emulation; but if this metropolis should bring forth, in the Germans, the taste for the pleasures of society, in all their elegance, they would thus become losers in that scrupulous integrity, that labor in solitude, that hardy independence, which distinguishes their literary and philosophical career; in short, they would change their meditative habits for an external vivacity, of which they would never acquire the grace and the dexterity,

CHAPTER XII.

OF THE GERMAN LANGUAGE, IN ITS EFFECTS UPON THE SPIRIT
OF CONVERSATION.

IN studying the spirit and character of a language, we learn the philosophical history of the opinions, manners, and habits of nations; and the modifications which language undergoes must throw considerable light on the progress of thought; but such an analysis would necessarily be very metaphysical, and would require a great deal of learning that is almost always wanting to us in the understanding of foreign languages, and very frequently in that of our own. We must then confine ourselves to the general impression, produced by the idiom of a people in its existing state. The French, having been spoken more generally than any other European dialect, is at once polished by use and sharp-edged for effect. No language is more clear and rapid, none indicates more lightly or explains more clearly what you wish to say. The German accommodates itself much less easily to the precision and rapidity of conversation. By the very nature of its grammatical construction, the sense is usually not understood till the end of the sentence. Thus the pleasure of interrupting, which, in France, gives so much animation to discussion, and forces one to utter so quickly all that is of importance to be heard, this pleasure cannot exist in Germany; for the beginnings of sentences signify nothing without the end; every man must be left in possession of all the space he chooses to demand: this is better for the purpose of getting to the bottom of things; it is also more civil, but it is less animated.

The politeness of the Germans is more sincere, but less varied than that of the French; it has more consideration for rank, and more precaution in all things. In France, they flatter more than they humor, and, as they possess the art of

expressing every thing, they approach much more willingly the most delicate subjects. The German is a language very brilliant in poetry, very copious in metaphysics, but very positive in conversation. The French language, on the contrary, is truly rich only in those turns of expression which designate the most complicated relations of society. It is poor and circumscribed in all that depends on imagination and philosophy.¹ The Germans are more afraid of giving pain than desirous of pleasing. Thence it follows, that they have, as far as possible, subjected their politeness to rule; and their language, so bold in their books, is singularly enslaved in conversation, by all the forms with which it is loaded.

I remember having been present, in Saxony, at a metaphysical lecture given by a celebrated philosopher, who always quoted Baron Leibnitz, and never did he suffer himself to be led in the ardor of haranguing to suppress this title of baron, which scarcely belonged to the name of a great man, who died nearly a century ago.

The German is better adapted for poetry than prose, and its prose is better in writing than in speaking; it is an instrument which answers very well when one desires to describe or to unfold every thing; but we cannot in German, as in French, glide over the different subjects that present themselves. To endeavor to adapt German phrases to the train of French conversation, is to strip them of all grace and dignity. The great merit of the Germans is that of filling up their time well; the art of the French is to make it pass unnoticed.

Though the meaning of German periods is often not to be caught till the end, the construction does not always admit of a phrase being terminated by its most striking expression; and yet this is one of the great means of producing effect in conversation. The Germans seldom understand what we call *bons mots*; it is the substance of the thought itself, not the brilliancy communicated to it, that is to be admired.

The Germans imagine that there is a sort of quackery in a

¹ Madame de Staël could hardly have been familiar with the older writers of her own country—with Descartes, Malebranche, Pascal and Bossuet.—*Ed.*

brilliant expression, and prefer the abstract sentiment, because it is more scrupulous and approaches nearer to the very essence of truth; but conversation ought to give no trouble either in understanding or speaking. From the moment that the subject of discourse ceases to bear on the common interests of life, and we enter into the sphere of ideas, conversation in Germany becomes too metaphysical; there is not enough intermediate space between the vulgar and the sublime; and yet it is in that intermediate space that the art of conversation finds exercise.

The German language possesses a gayety peculiar to itself; society has not rendered it timid, and good morals have left it pure; yet it is a national gayety, within reach of all classes of people. The grotesque sound of the words, their antiquated *naïveté*, communicate something of the picturesque to pleantry, from which the common people can derive amusement equally with those of the higher orders. The Germans are less restricted in their choice of expressions than we are, because their language, not having been so frequently employed in the conversation of the great world, is not, like ours, composed of words which a mere accident, an application, or an allusion may render ridiculous; of words, in short, which having gone through all the adventures of society, are proscribed, unjustly perhaps, but yet so that they can never again be admitted. Anger is often expressed in German, but they have not made it the weapon of raillery, and the words which they make use of are still in all their force and all their directness of signification: this is an additional facility; but, on the other hand, one can express with the French language a thousand nice observations, a thousand turns of address, of which the German is up to the present time incapable.

We should compare ourselves with ideas in German, with persons in French; the German may assist us in exploring, the French brings us directly to the end; the one should be used in painting nature, the other in painting society. Goethe, in his romance of *Wilhelm Meister*, makes a German woman say that she perceives her lover wishes to abandon her because he writes to her in French. There are in fact many phrases

in our language by which we may speak without saying any thing, by which we may give hopes without promising, and promise without binding. The German is less flexible, and it does well to remain so; for nothing inspires greater disgust than their Teutonic tongue when it is perverted to the purposes of falsehood, of whatever nature it may be. Its prolix construction, its multiplied consonants, its learned grammar, refuse to allow it any grace in suppleness; and it may be said to rise up in voluntary resistance to the intention of him who speaks it, from the moment that he designs to employ it in betraying the interests of truth.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF NORTHERN GERMANY.

THE first impressions that are received on arriving in the north of Germany, above all in the middle of the winter, are extremely gloomy; and I am not surprised that these impressions have hindered most Frenchmen, who have been banished to this country, from observing it without prejudice. The frontier of the Rhine has something solemn in it. One fears, in crossing it, to hear this terrible sentence,—*You are out of France.* It is in vain that the understanding would pass an impartial judgment on the land that has given us birth; our affections never detach themselves from it; and when we are forced to quit it, existence seems to be torn up by the roots, and we become strangers to ourselves. The most simple habits as well as the most intimate relations, the most important interests as well as the most trifling pleasures, all once centered in our native country, and all now belong to it no more. We meet nobody who can speak to us of times past, nobody to attest to us the identity of former days with those that are present; our destiny begins again without the confidence of our

early years being renewed: we change our world without experiencing any change of heart. Thus banishment operates as a sentence of self-survival; our adieus, our separations—all seem like the moment of death itself, and yet we assist at them with all the energies of life full within us.

I was, six years ago, upon the banks of the Rhine, waiting for the vessel that was to convey me to the opposite shore; the weather was cold, the sky obscure, and all seemed to announce to me some fatal presage. When the soul is violently disturbed by sorrow, we can hardly persuade ourselves that nature herself is indifferent to it: men may be permitted to attribute some influence to their griefs; it is not pride, it is confidence in the pity of heaven. I was uneasy about my children, though they were not yet of an age to feel those emotions of the soul which cast terror upon all external objects. My French servants grew impatient at German sluggishness, and were surprised at not making themselves understood in the language, which they imagined to be the only one admitted in all civilized countries. There was an old German woman in the passage boat, sitting in a little cart, from which she would not alight even to cross the river. "You are very quiet," I said to her. "Yes," she answered, "why should I make a noise?" These simple words struck me; why, in truth, should we make a noise? But even were entire generations to pass through life in silence, still misery and death would not the less await them, or be the less able to reach them.

On reaching the opposite shore, I heard the horns of the postilions, seeming by their harsh and discordant tones to announce a sad departure for a sad abode. The earth was covered with snow; from the little windows, with which the houses were pierced, peeped the heads of some inhabitants, disturbed by the sound of carriage-wheels in the midst of their monotonous employments; a sort of contrivance, for moving the bar at the turnpike, dispenses with the necessity of the toll-gatherer's leaving his house, to receive the toll from travellers. All is calculated for immobility; and the man who

thinks, and he whose existence is merely material, are alike insensible to all external distraction.

Fields deserted, houses blackened by smoke, Gothic churches, are all so many preparatives for stories of ghosts and witches. The commercial cities of Germany are large and well built; but they afford no idea of what constitutes the glory and interest of the country—its literary and philosophical spirit. Mercantile interests are enough to unfold the understanding of the French, and in France some amusing society may still be met with in a town merely commercial; but the Germans, eminently capable of abstract studies, treat business, when they employ themselves about it, with so much method and heaviness, that they seldom collect from it any general ideas whatever. They carry into trade the honesty which distinguishes them; but they give themselves up so entirely to what they are about, that they seek in society nothing more than a jovial relaxation, and indulge themselves, now and then, in a few gross pleasantries, only to divert themselves. Such pleasantries overwhelm the French with sadness; for they resign themselves much more willingly to grave and monotonous dulness than to that witty sort of dulness which comes, slowly and familiarly, clapping its paws on your shoulder.

The Germans have great universality of spirit in literature and in philosophy, but none whatever in business. They always consider it partially, and employ themselves with it in a manner almost mechanical. It is the contrary in France; the spirit of business is there much more enlarged, and universality is admitted neither in literature nor in philosophy. If a learned man were a poet, or a poet learned, he would become suspected among us, both by learned men and poets; but it is no rare thing to meet, in the most simple merchant, with luminous perceptions on the political and military interests of his country. Thence it follows, that in France there are many men of wit, and a smaller number of thinkers. In France, they study men; in Germany, books. Ordinary faculties are sufficient to interest one in speaking of men, but it requires almost genius itself to discover a soul and an impulse in books.

Germany can interest only those who employ themselves about past events and abstract ideas. The present and the real belong to France, and, until a new order of things shall arise, she does not appear disposed to renounce them.

I think I am not endeavoring to conceal the inconveniencies of Germany. Even those small towns of the north, where we meet with men of such lofty conceptions, often present no kind of amusement—no theatre, little society; time falls drop by drop, and no sound disturbs the reflections of solitude. The smallest towns in England partake of the character of a free State, in sending their deputies to treat of the interests of the nation. The smaller towns of France bear some analogy to the capital, the centre of so many wonders. Those of Italy rejoice in the bright sky and the fine arts, which shed their rays over all the country. In the north of Germany there is no representative government, no great metropolis; and the severity of the climate, the mediocrity of fortune, and the seriousness of character, would combine to render existence very irksome, if the force of thought had not set itself free from all these insipid and narrowing circumstances. The Germans have found the means of creating to themselves a republic of letters, at once animated and independent. They have supplied the interests of events by the interest of ideas. They can do without a centre, because all tend to the same object, and their imagination multiplies the small number of beauties which art and nature are able to afford them.

The citizens of this ideal republic, disengaged for the most part from all sort of connection either with public or private business, work in the dark like miners; and, placed like them in the midst of buried treasures, they silently dig out the intellectual riches of the human race.

CHAPTER XIV.

SAXONY.

SINCE the Reformation, the princes of the house of Saxony have always granted to letters the most noble of protections,—independence. It may be said without fear, that in no country of the earth does there exist such general instruction as in Saxony, and in the north of Germany. It is there that Protestantism had its birth, and the spirit of inquiry has there maintained itself ever since in full vigor.

During the last century the electors of Saxony have been Catholics; and, though they have remained faithful to the oath, which obliged them to respect the worship of their subjects, this difference of religion between prince and people has given less of political unity to the State. The electors, kings of Poland; were more attached to the arts than to literature, to which, though they did not molest it, they were strangers. Music is generally cultivated throughout Saxony; in the gallery of Dresden are collected together *chefs-d'œuvre* for the imitation of artists. The face of nature, in the neighborhood of the capital, is extremely picturesque, but society does not afford there higher pleasures than in the rest of Germany; the elegance of a court is wanting—its ceremoniousness only finds an easy establishment.

From the quantity of works that are sold at Leipsic, we may judge of the number of readers of German publications; artisans of all classes, even stone-cutters, are often to be seen, resting from their labors, with a book in their hands. It cannot be imagined in France to what a degree knowledge is diffused over Germany. I have seen innkeepers and turnpikemen well versed in French literature. In the very villages, we meet with professors of Greek and Latin. There is not a small town

without a decent library; and almost every place boasts of some men, worthy of remark for their talents or information. If we were to set ourselves about comparing, in this respect, the French provinces with Germany, we should be apt to believe that the two nations were three centuries distant from each other. Paris, uniting in its bosom the whole flower of the empire, takes from the remainder every sort of interest.

Picard and Kotzebue have composed two very pretty pieces, both entitled *The Country Town*. Picard represents the provincials incessantly aping Parisian manners, and Kotzebue the citizens of his little community delighted with and proud of the place they inhabit, which they believe to be incomparable.¹ The different nature of the ridicule gives a good idea of the difference of manners. In Germany, every residence is an empire to its inhabitant; his imagination, his studies, or perhaps his mere good-nature, aggrandize it before his eyes; everybody knows how to make the best of himself in his little circle. The importance they attach to every thing affords matter of pleasantry; but this very importance sets a value upon small resources. In France, nobody is interested out of Paris; and with reason, for Paris is all France; and one who has lived only in the country can not have the slightest notion of that which characterizes this illustrious nation.

The distinguished men of Germany, not being brought together in the same place, seldom see each other, and communicate only by writing; each one makes his own road, and is continually discovering new districts in the vast region of antiquity, metaphysics, and science. What is called study in Germany is truly admirable: fifteen hours a day of solitude and labor, for several years in succession, appear to them a natural mode of existence; the very *ennui* of society gives animation to a life of retirement.

The most unbounded freedom of the press existed in Sax-

¹ Picard is a celebrated French, Kotzebue a celebrated German, writer of plays.—*Ed.*

ony; but the government was not in any manner endangered by it, because the minds of literary men did not turn towards the examination of political institutions; solitude tends to deliver men up to abstract speculations or to poetry: one must live in the very focus of human passions, to feel the desire of employing and directing them to one's own purposes. The German writers occupied themselves only with theoretical doctrines, with erudition, and literary and philosophical research; and the powerful of this world have nothing to apprehend from such studies. Besides, although the government of Saxony was not free by right, that is, representation, yet it was virtually free through the habits of the nation, and the moderation of its princes.

The honesty of the inhabitants was such, that a proprietor at Leipsic having fixed on an apple-tree (which he had planted on the borders of the public walk) a notice, desiring that people would not gather the fruit, not a single apple was stolen from it for ten years. I have seen this apple-tree with a feeling of respect; had it been the tree of the Hesperides, they would no more have touched its golden fruit than its blossoms.

Saxony was profoundly tranquil; they sometimes made a noise there about certain ideas, but without ever thinking of applying them. One would have said that thought and action were made to have no reference to each other, and that truth, among the Germans, resembled the statue of Hermes, without hands to seize or feet to advance. Yet is there nothing so respectable as these peaceful triumphs of reflection, which continually occupied isolated men, without fortune, without power, and connected together only by worship and thought.

In France, men never occupied themselves about abstract truths, except in their relation to practice. To perfect the art of government, to encourage population by a wise political economy—such were the objects of philosophical labor, especially in the last century. This mode of employing time is also very respectable; but, in the scale of reflection, the dignity of the human race is of greater importance than its happiness, and, still more, than its increase: to multiply human

births without ennobling the destiny of man, is only to prepare a more sumptuous banquet for death.

The literary towns of Saxony are those in which the most benevolence and simplicity predominate. Everywhere else, literature has been considered as the appendage of luxury; in Germany, it seems to exclude it. The tastes which it engenders produce a sort of candor and timidity favorable to the love of domestic life; not that the vanity of authorship is without a very marked character among the Germans, but it does not attach itself to the triumph of society. The most inconsiderable writer looks to posterity for his reward; and, unfolding himself at his ease in the space of boundless meditations, he is less in conflict with other men, and less embittered against them. Still, there is too wide a separation in Saxony between men of letters and statesmen, to allow the display of any true public spirit. From this separation it results, that among the first there is too much ignorance of affairs to permit them any ascendancy over the nation, and that the latter pride themselves in a sort of docile Machiavelism, which smiles at all generous feelings, as at the simplicity of a child, and seems to indicate to them, that they are not fit for this world.

CHAPTER XV.

WEIMAR.

OF all the German principalities, there is none that makes us feel more than Weimar the advantages of a small State, when its sovereign is a man of strong understanding, and is capable of endeavoring to please all orders of his subjects, without losing any thing in their obedience. Such a State is as a private society, where all the members are connected together by intimate relations. The Duchess Louisa of Saxe Weimar is the true model of a woman destined by nature to

the most illustrious rank; without pretension, as without weakness, she inspires, in the same degree, confidence and respect; and the heroism of the chivalrous ages has entered her soul without taking from it any thing of her sex's softness. The military talents of the duke are universally respected, and his lively and reflective conversation continually brings to our recollection, that he was formed by the great Frederick. It is by his own and his mother's reputation that the most distinguished men of learning have been attracted to Weimar. Germany, for the first time, possessed a literary metropolis; but as this metropolis was, at the same time, only an inconsiderable town, its ascendancy was merely that of superior enlightenment; for fashion, which imposes uniformity in all things, could not emanate from so narrow a circle.

Herder was just dead when I arrived at Weimar; but Wieland, Goethe, and Schiller, were still there. I shall paint each of these men separately in the following section; I shall paint them, above all, by their works; for their writings are the perfect resemblances of their character and conversation. This very rare concordance is a proof of sincerity: when the first object in writing is to produce an effect upon others, a man never displays himself to them, such as he is in reality; but when he writes to satisfy an internal inspiration, which has obtained possession of the soul, he discovers by his works, even without intending it, the very slightest shades of his manner of thinking and acting.

The residence of country towns has always appeared to me very irksome. The understanding of the men is narrowed, the heart of the women frozen, there; people live so much in each other's presence, that they are oppressed by their equals; it is no longer that distant opinion, the reverberation of which animates you from afar, like the report of glory; it is a minute inspection of all the actions of your life, an observation of every detail, which prevents the general character from being comprehended; and the more you have of independence and elevation, the less able you are to breathe amid so many little

impediments. This painful constraint did not exist at Weimar; it was rather a large palace than a little town; a select circle made its interest consist in the discussion of each new production of art. Women, the amiable disciples of some superior men, were constantly speaking of the new literary works, as of the most important public events. They called to themselves the whole universe by reading and study; they freed themselves, by the enlargement of the mind, from the restraint of circumstances; they forgot the private anecdotes of each individual, in habitually reflecting together on those great questions, which influence the destiny common to all alike. And in this society there were none of those provincial wonders, who so easily mistake contempt for grace, and affectation for elegance.¹

¹ "On a first acquaintance, Weimar seems more like a village bordering a park, than a capital with a court, and having all courtly environments. It is so quiet, so simple; and although ancient in its architecture, has none of the picturesqueness which delights the eye in most old German cities. The stone-colored, light-brown, and apple-green houses have high-peaked slanting roofs, but no quaint gables, no caprices of architectural fancy, none of the mingling of varied styles which elsewhere charm the traveller. One learns to love its quiet simple streets, and pleasant paths, fit theatre for the simple actors moving across the scene; but one must live there some time to discover its charm. The aspect it presented when Goethe arrived, was of course very different from that presented now; but by diligent inquiry we may get some rough image of the place restored. First be it noted that the city walls were still erect; gates and portcullis still spoke of days of warfare. Within these walls were six or seven hundred houses, not more; most of them very ancient. Under these roofs were about seven thousand inhabitants—for the most part not handsome. The city gates were strictly guarded. No one could pass through them in cart or carriage without leaving his name in the sentinel's book; even Goethe, minister and favorite, could not escape this tiresome formality, as we gather from one of his letters to the Frau von Stein, directing her to go out alone, and meet him beyond the gates, lest their exit together should be known. During Sunday service a chain was thrown across the streets leading to the church to bar out all passengers,—a practice to this day partially retained: the chain is fastened, but the passengers step over it without ceremony. There was little safety at night in those silent streets; for if you were in no great danger from marauders, you were in constant danger of breaking a limb in some hole or other; the idea of lighting streets not having presented itself to the Thuringian. In the year 1685, the streets of London were first lighted with lamps; and Germany, in most things a

In the same principality, in the immediate neighborhood of this first literary reunion of Germany, was Jena, one of the most remarkable centres of science. Thus, in a very narrow

century behind England, had not yet ventured on that experiment. If in this 1854, Weimar is still innocent of gas, and perplexes its inhabitants with the dim obscurity of an occasional oil-lamp slung on a cord across the streets, we may imagine that in 1775 they had not even advanced so far. And our supposition is exact. . . .

“Saxe-Weimar has no trade, no manufactures, no animation of commercial, political, or even theological activity. This part of Saxony, be it remembered, was the home and shelter of Protestantism in its birth. Only a few miles from Weimar stands the Wartburg, where Luther, in the disguise of Squire George, lived in safety, translating the Bible, and hurling his inkstand at the head of Satan, like a rough-handed disputant as he was. In the market-place of Weimar stand, to this day, two houses from the windows of which Tetzel advertised his Indulgences, and Luther, in fiery indignation, fulminated against them. These records of religious struggle still remain, but are no longer suggestions for the continuance of the strife. The fire is burnt out; and perhaps in no city of Europe is theology so placid, polemics so entirely at rest. The Wartburg still rears its picturesque eminence over the lovely Thuringian valleys, and Luther’s room is visited by thousands of pilgrims; but in this very palace of the Wartburg, besides the room where Luther struggled with Satan, the visitors are shown the Banqueting Hall of the Minnesingers, where poet challenged poet, and the *Sängerkrieg*, or Minstrels’ Contest, was celebrated. The contrast may be carried further. It may be taken as a symbol of the intellectual condition of Saxe-Weimar, that while the *relics* of Luther are simply preserved, the Minstrel Hall is now being restored in more than its pristine splendor. Lutheran theology is crumbling away, just as the famous *inkspot* has disappeared beneath the gradual scrapings of visitors’ penknives; but the Minstrelsy of which the Germans are so proud, daily receives fresh honor and adulation. Nor is this adulation a mere revival. Every year the Wartburg saw assembled the members of that numerous family (the Bachs) which, driven from Hungary in the early period of reform, had settled in Saxony, and had given, besides the great John Sebastian Bach, so many noble musicians to the world. Too numerous to gain a livelihood in one city, the Bachs agreed to meet every year at the Wartburg. This custom, which was continued till the close of the eighteenth century, not only presented the singular spectacle of one family consisting of no less than a hundred and twenty musicians, but was also the occasion of musical entertainments such as were never heard before. They began by religious hymns, sung in chorus; they then took for their theme some popular song, comic or licentious, varying it by the improvisation of four, five, or six parts; these improvisations were named *Quolibets*, and are considered by many writers to have been the origin of German opera.”—(G. H. Lewes’ *Life of Goethe*, vol. i. pp. 311-314.)—*Ed.*

space, there seemed to be collected together all the astonishing lights of the human understanding.

The imagination, constantly kept awake at Weimar by the conversation of poets, felt less need of outward distractions; these distractions serve to lighten the burden of existence, but often disperse its powers. In this country residence, called a city, they led a regular, occupied, and serious life; one might sometimes feel weary of it, but the mind was never degraded by futile and vulgar interests; and if pleasures were wanting, the decay of faculties was at least never perceived.

The only luxury of the prince is a delicious garden; and this popular enjoyment, which he shares in common with all the inhabitants of the place, is a possession on which he is congratulated by all. The stage, of which I shall speak in the second division of my work, is managed by the greatest poet in Germany, Goethe;¹ and this amusement interests all people sufficiently to preserve them from those assemblies, which answer no other end than to bring concealed *ennui* to light. Weimar was called the Athens of Germany; and it was, in

¹ "It was in 1790, that the Weimar Theatre was rebuilt and reopened. Goethe undertook the direction with powers more absolute than any director ever had; for he was independent even of success. The court paid all expenses, and the stage was left free for him to make experiments upon. He made them, and they all failed. . . . Of him Edward Devrient, in his excellent history of the German stage (*Geschichte der deutschen Schauspiel-Kunst*), says: 'He sat in the centre of the pit; his powerful glance governed and directed the circle around him, and bridled the dissatisfied or neutral. On one occasion, when the Jena students, whose arbitrary judgment was very unseasonable to him, expressed their opinion too tumultuously, he rose, commanded silence, and threatened to have the disturbers turned out by the hussars on guard. A similar scene took place in 1802, on the representation of Fr. Schlegel's *Alarcos*, which appeared to the public too daring an attempt, and the approbation given by the loyal party provoked a loud laugh of opposition. Goethe rose and called out with a voice of thunder, 'Let no one laugh!' At last he went so far as for some time to forbid any audible expression on the part of the public, whether of approval or disapproval. He would suffer no kind of disturbance in what he held to be suitable. Over criticism he kept a tight rein; hearing that Bötticher was writing an essay on his direction of the theatre, he declared, that if it appeared, he would resign his post; and Bötticher left the article unprinted.'"—(Lewes' *Biography of Goethe*, vol. ii. pp. 242-245.)—*Ed.*

reality, the only place where the fine arts inspired a national interest, which served for a bond of fraternal union among different ranks of society. A liberal court habitually sought the acquaintance of men of letters; and literature gained considerably in the influence of good taste which presided there. A judgment might be formed, from this little circle, of the good effect which might be produced throughout Germany by such a mixture, if generally adopted.

CHAPTER XVI.

PRUSSIA.

IN order to be acquainted with Prussia, you must study the character of Frederick II. A man created this empire which nature had not favored, which became a power only because a warrior was its master. In Frederick the Second there are two very distinct persons—a German by nature, and a Frenchman by education. All that the German did in a German kingdom has left durable traces; all that the Frenchman attempted has failed of producing fruit.

Frederick the Second was fashioned by the French philosophy of the eighteenth century; this philosophy does injury to nations, when it dries up in them the source of enthusiasm; but where there exists such a thing as an absolute monarch, it is to be wished that liberal principles may temper in him the action of despotism. Frederick introduced into the north of Germany the liberty of thinking; the Reformation had already introduced there the spirit of inquiry, though not of toleration; and, by a singular contradiction, inquiry was only permitted in imperiously prescribing, by anticipation, the result of that inquiry. Frederick caused to be held in honor the liberty of speaking and writing, not only by means of those poignant and witty pleasantries, which have so much effect on men when proceeding from the lips of a king; but also, still more power-

fully, by his example ; for he never punished those who libelled him, whether in speech or by publication, and he displayed in almost all his actions the philosophy whose spirit he professed. He established an order and an economy in the administration which have constituted the internal strength of Prussia, in spite of all its natural disadvantages. There was never a king who displayed so much simplicity in his private life, and even in his court : he thought himself bound to spare as much as possible the wealth of his subjects. He entertained on all subjects a feeling of justice, which the misfortunes of his youth and the severity of his father had engraved on his heart. This feeling is perhaps the most rare of all a conqueror's virtues ; for they in general would rather be esteemed generous than just, because justice supposes some sort of equal relation with others.

Frederick had rendered the courts of justice so independent, that, during his whole life, and under the reign of his successors, they have been often seen to decide in favor of the subject against the sovereign, in suits relating to political interests. It is true that it would be almost impossible to introduce injustice into a German tribunal. The Germans are well enough disposed to make themselves systems for abandoning politics to arbitrary power ; but in questions of jurisprudence or administration, you cannot get into their heads any principles but those of justice. Their very spirit of method, to say nothing of their uprightness of heart, secures equity by the establishment of order in all things. Nevertheless, Frederick deserves praise for his integrity in the internal government of his country ; and this is one of his best titles to the admiration of posterity.

Frederick did not possess a feeling heart, but he had goodness of disposition ; and qualities of a universal nature are those which are most suitable to sovereigns. Nevertheless, this goodness of Frederick's was as dangerous as that of the lion, and one felt the talon of power in the midst of the most amiable grace and coquetry of spirit. Men of independent characters could, with difficulty, submit themselves to the freedom which this master fancied he gave them, to the familiarity which he imagined that he permitted them ; and, even in their

admiration of him, they felt that they breathed more freely at a distance.

Frederick's greatest misfortune was, that he had not sufficient respect for religion or morals. His tastes were cynical. Notwithstanding the love of glory had given an elevation to his ideas, his licentious mode of expressing himself on the most sacred subjects was the cause that his very virtues failed of inspiring confidence; they were felt and approved, yet they were believed to be the virtues of calculation. Every thing in Frederick appeared necessarily to imply a political tendency; thus, the good that he did ameliorated the state of the country, but did not improve the morality of the nation. He affected unbelief, and made a mockery of female virtue; and nothing was so unsuitable to the German character as this manner of thinking. Frederick, in setting his subjects free from what he called their prejudices, extinguished in them the spirit of patriotism; for, to attach inhabitants to countries naturally gloomy and barren, they must be governed by opinions and principles of great severity. In those sandy regions, where the earth produces nothing but firs and heaths, man's strength consists in his soul; and if you take from him that which constitutes the life of this soul, his religious feelings, he will no longer feel any thing but disgust for his melancholy country.

Frederick's inclination for war may be excused by great political motives. His kingdom, such as he received it from his father, could not have held together; and it was almost for its preservation that he aggrandized it. He had two millions and a half of subjects when he ascended the throne, and left six millions at his death.

The need he had of an army prevented him from encouraging in the nation a public spirit of imposing energy and unity. The government of Frederick was founded on military strength and civil justice: he reconciled them to each other by his wisdom; but it was difficult to combine two spirits of a nature so opposite. Frederick wished his soldiers to be mere military machines, blindly actuated, and his subjects to be enlightened citizens, capable of patriotism. He did not establish

in the towns of Prussia secondary authorities, municipalities such as existed in the rest of Germany, lest the immediate action of the military service might be impeded by them; and yet he wished that there should be enough of the spirit of liberty in his empire to make obedience appear voluntary. He wished the military state to be the first of all, since it was that which was most necessary to him; but he would have desired that the civil state might support itself collaterally with the military. Frederick, in short, desired to meet everywhere with supports, and to encounter obstacles nowhere.

The wonderful amalgamation of all classes of society is hardly to be obtained but through the influence of a system of laws the same for all. A man may combine opposite elements, so as to make them proceed together in the same direction, "but at his death they are disunited."¹ The ascendancy obtained by Frederick, and supported by the wisdom of his successors, was still manifested for a time; but in Prussia there were always to be perceived two distinct nations, badly united together to form an entire one; the army, and the civil state. The prejudices of nobility subsisted at the same time with liberal opinions of the most decided stamp. In short, the figure of Prussia presented itself, like that of Janus, under a double face—the one military, the other philosophical.

One of the greatest errors committed by Frederick, was that of lending himself to the partition of Poland. Silesia had been acquired by the force of arms; Poland was a Machiavelian conquest, "and it could never be hoped that subjects, so got by slight of hand, would be faithful to the juggler who called himself their sovereign."² Besides, the Germans and Slavonians can never be united by indissoluble ties; and, when a nation admits alien enemies into its bosom, as natural subjects, she does herself almost as much injury as in receiving them for masters; for the political body then no longer retains that bond of union, which personifies the State, and constitutes patriotic sentiment.

¹ Suppressed by the censors.

² *Ibid.*

These observations respecting Prussia, all bear upon the means which she possessed of maintaining and defending herself; for there was nothing in her internal government that was prejudicial to her independence, or her security; in no country of Europe was knowledge held in higher honor, in none was liberty, at least in fact, if not by law, more scrupulously respected. I did not meet, throughout Prussia, with any individual that complained of arbitrary acts in the government, and yet there would not have been the least danger in complaining of them; but when, in a social state, happiness itself is only what may be called a fortunate accident, when it is not founded on durable institutions which secure to the human race its force and its dignity, patriotism has little perseverance, and men easily abandon to chance the advantages which are believed to be owing to chance alone. Frederick II, one of the noblest gifts of that chance which seemed to watch over the destiny of Prussia, had known how to make himself sincerely beloved in his country; and, since he is no more, they still cherish his memory as if he were still alive. The fate of Prussia, however, has but too well taught us what is the real influence even of a great man, who, during his reign, has not disinterestedly labored to make his country independent of his personal services: the entire nation confidently relied on its sovereign for its very principle of existence, and it seemed as if that nation itself must come to an end with him.

Frederick II would have wished to confine all the literature of his dominions to French literature. He set no value on that of Germany. Doubtless it was, during his time, by many degrees short of having attained its present distinction; yet a German prince ought to encourage every thing German. Frederick formed the project of rendering Berlin in some respects similar to Paris, and flattered himself with having found among the French refugees some writers sufficiently distinguished to create a French world of literature. Such a hope was necessarily to be deceived; factitious culture never prospers; some individuals may struggle against the difficulties of nature, but the mass always follows the bent she gives them.]

Frederick did a real injury to his country by proclaiming his contempt for the genius of the Germans. It has thence resulted that the Germanic body has often conceived unjust suspicions against Prussia herself.

Many German writers, of deserved celebrity, made themselves known towards the end of Frederick's reign; but the unfavorable opinion, which this great monarch had imbibed in his youth against the literature of his country, was never effaced; and, a few years before his death, he composed a little work, in which he proposed, among other changes, to add a vowel at the end of every verb, to soften the Teutonic dialect. This German, in an Italian mask, would produce the most comic effect in the world; but no monarch, even in the East, possesses so much power as to influence in this manner, not the sense, but the sound of every word that shall be pronounced throughout his dominions.

Klopstock has nobly reproached Frederick with his having neglected the German muses, who, unknown to him, essayed to proclaim his glory. Frederick did not at all divine the real character of the Germans in literature and philosophy. He did not give them credit for being inventors. He wished to discipline men of letters as he did his armies. "We must conform ourselves," said he, in bad German, in his instructions to the Academy, "to the method of Boerhaave in medicine, to that of Locke in metaphysics, and that of Thomasius in natural history." His instructions were not followed. He never doubted that, of all men, the Germans were those who were least capable of being subjected to the routine of letters and philosophy: nothing announced in them that boldness which they have since displayed in the field of abstraction.¹

¹ "Thus the two German Emperors, Fritz [Frederick the Great] and Wolfgang [Goethe], held no spiritual congress; perhaps no good result *could* have been elicited by their meeting. Yet they were, each in his own sphere, the two most potent men then reigning. Fritz did not directly assist the literature of his country, but his *indirect* influence has been indicated by Griepenkerl. He awoke the Germans from their sleep by the rolling of drums; those who least liked the clang of arms or the 'divisions

Frederick considered his subjects as strangers, and the Frenchmen of genius as his countrymen. Nothing, it must be confessed, is more natural than that he should have let himself be seduced by whatever was brilliant and solid in the French writers of this epoch ; nevertheless, Frederick would have contributed still more effectually to the glory of his country, if he had understood and developed the faculties peculiar to the nation he governed. But how resist the influence of his times ? and where is the man, whose genius itself is not, in many respects, the work of the age he lives in ?

CHAPTER XVII.

BERLIN.

BERLIN is a large city, with very broad streets, perfectly straight, the houses handsome, and the general appearance regular ; but, as it has been but lately rebuilt, it displays no traces of ancient times. Not one Gothic monument remains amid its modern habitations ; and nothing of the antique interrupts the uniformity of this newly created country. What can be better, it will be said, either for buildings or for institutions, than not to be incumbered with ruins ? I feel that, in America, I should love new cities and new laws : there, nature and liberty speak so immediately to the soul, as to leave no want of recollections ; but, in this old world of ours, the past is needful to us. Berlin, an entirely modern city, beautiful as it is, makes no serious impression ; it discovers no marks

of a battle-field.' were nevertheless awakened to the fact that something important was going on in life, and they rubbed their sleepy eyes, and tried to *see* a little into that. The roll of drums has this merit, at all events, that it draws men from their library table to the window, and so makes them look out upon the moving, living world of action, wherein the erudite may see a 'considerable sensation' made even by men unable to conjugate a Greek verb in 'μτ.'—(G. H. Lewes' *Life of Goethe*, vol. i. p. 396.)—*Ed.*

of the history of the country, or of the character of its inhabitants, and its magnificent new-built houses seem destined only for the convenient assemblage of pleasures and industry. The finest palaces in Berlin are built of brick; hardly any stone is to be found even in its triumphal arches. The capital of Prussia resembles Prussia itself; its buildings and institutions are of the age of man, and no more, because a single man was their founder.

The court, over which a beautiful and virtuous queen presides, was at once imposing and simple; the royal family, which threw itself voluntarily into society, knew how to mix with dignity among the nation at large, and became identified in all hearts with their native country. The king had found the means of fixing at Berlin, J. von Müller, Ancillon, Fichte, Humboldt, Hufeland, a multitude of men distinguished in different ways; in short, all the elements of a delightful society, and of a powerful nation, were there; but these elements were not yet combined or united together. Genius was attended with much more success, however, at Berlin than at Vienna; the hero of the nation, Frederick, having been a man of uncommon brilliancy, the reflection of his name still inspired a love for every thing that resembled him. Maria Theresa did not give a similar impulse to the people of Vienna; and whatever, in Joseph, bore the least appearance of genius, was sufficient to disgust them with it.¹

¹ "The city is situated in the midst of a dreary plain of sand, destitute of either beauty or fertility. It is surprising that the foundation of a town should ever have been laid on so uninteresting a spot, but it is far more wonderful that it should have grown up, notwithstanding, into the flourishing capital of a great empire. Previous to the reign of Frederick I, it was an unimportant town, confined to the right bank of the Spree, and to the island on which the palace and museum now stand. Since that time, in one hundred and fifty years, its population has increased tenfold, and its limits have extended until its walls are twelve miles in circumference. Frederick the Great, being ambitious to possess a capital proportionate to the rapid increase of his dominions, at once inclosed a vast space with walls, and ordered it to be filled with houses. As the population was scanty, the only mode of complying with the wishes of the sovereign was by stretching the houses over as wide a space as possible. In consequence,

No spectacle in all Germany was equal to that which Berlin presented. This town, situated in the centre of the north of Germany, may be considered as its focus of enlightenment. Sciences and letters are cultivated there; and at dinners, both ministerial and private, where the men meet together, the

some of the handsomest hotels are only two stories high, and have as many as twenty windows on a line. The streets are necessarily broad, and therefore generally appear empty. Owing to the want of stone in the neighborhood, the larger part even of the public buildings are of brick and plaster. The flatness of the ground, and the sandy soil, produce inconveniences which the stranger will not be long in detecting. There is so little declivity in the surface, that the water in the drains, instead of running off, stops and stagnates in the streets. In the Friedrichsstrasse, which is two miles long, there is not a foot of descent from one end to the other. In the summer season, the heat of the sun reflected by the sand becomes intolerable, and the noxious odors in the streets are very unwholesome as well as unpleasant. A third nuisance is, that the streets are only partially provided with trottoirs, so narrow that two persons can scarcely walk abreast; and many are infamously paved with sharp stones, upon which it is excruciating pain to tread.

“The mere passing traveller, in search of amusement, will exhaust *the sights* of Berlin perhaps in a fortnight, and afterwards find it tedious without the society of friends. The stranger coming to reside here, provided with good introductions, may find an agreeable literary society, composed of the most talented men in Germany, whom the government has the art of drawing around it in an official capacity, or as professors of the University. The names of Humboldt, the traveller; Savigny, the jurist; Ranke and Raumer, the historians; Ehrenberg, the naturalist; Von Buch, the geologist; Ritter, the geographer; Grimm, the philologist, and editor of the *Kinder and Haus-Märchen*; Schelling, the metaphysical writer; Cornelius, the painter; Tieck, the author (who spends three months of the year here, the king having granted him a pension on that condition), all residents of Berlin, enjoy a European celebrity. The society of the upper classes is on the whole not very accessible to strangers, nor is hospitality exercised to the same extent among them as in England, chiefly because their fortunes are limited. The hotels of the diplomatic corps are an exception, and in them the most agreeable *soirées* are held in the winter season.

“Notwithstanding the disadvantages of situation, Berlin is certainly one of the finest cities in Europe. Some of the most splendid buildings are concentrated in a very small space between the palace (Schloss) and the Brandenburg Gate, or very near it. Few European capitals can show so much architectural splendor as is seen in the colossal Palace, the beautiful colonnade of the Museum, the chaste Guard-house, the great Opera, and the University opposite.”—(*Murray's Hand-Book for Northern Germany*, p. 332.)—*Ed.*

separation of ranks, so prejudicial to Germany, is not rigidly enforced, but people of talent of all classes are collected. This happy mixture is not yet, however, extended to the society of women. There are among them some whose talents and accomplishments attract every thing that is distinguished to their circles; but, generally speaking, at Berlin, as well as throughout the rest of Germany, female society is not well amalgamated with that of the men. The great charm of social life, in France, consists in the art of perfectly reconciling all the advantages which the wit of the men and women united can confer upon conversation. At Berlin, the men rarely converse except with each other; the military condition gives them a sort of rudeness, which prevents them from taking any trouble about the society of women.

When there are, as in England, great political interests to be discussed, the societies of men are always animated by a noble feeling common to all; but in countries where there is no representative government, the presence of the women is necessary, to preserve all the sentiments of delicacy and purity, without which the love of the beautiful must perish. The influence of women is yet more salutary to the soldier than to the citizen; the empire of law can subsist without them much better than that of honor, for they can alone preserve the spirit of chivalry in a monarchy purely military. Ancient France owed all her splendor to this potency of public opinion, of which female ascendancy was the cause.

Society at Berlin consisted only of a very small number of men, a circumstance which almost always spoils the members of it by depriving them of the anxiety and of the necessity to please. Officers, who obtained leave of absence to pass a few months in town, sought nothing there but the dance or the gaming-table. The mixture of two languages was detrimental to conversation, and the great assemblies at Berlin afforded no higher interest than those at Vienna; or rather, in point of manners, there was more of the custom of the world at the latter than at the former of those capitals. Notwithstanding this, the liberty of the press, the assemblage of men of genius,

the knowledge of literature, and of the German language, which had been generally diffused of late, contributed to render Berlin the real metropolis of modern, of enlightened Germany. The French refugees somewhat weakened that entirely German impulse of which Berlin is susceptible; they still preserved a superstitious reverence for the age of Louis XIV; their ideas respecting literature became faded and petrified at a distance from the country which gave them birth; yet, in general, Berlin would have assumed a great ascendancy over public spirit in Germany, if there had not still continued to exist (I must repeat it) a feeling of resentment for the contempt which Frederick had evinced towards the German nation.

The philosophic writers have often indulged unjust prejudices against Prussia; they chose to see in her nothing but one vast barrack, and yet it was in this very point of view that she was least worthy of observation. The interest which this country really deserved to excite, consisted in the enlightenment, the spirit of justice, and the sentiments of independence, which are to be met with in a number of individuals of all classes; but the bond of union of these noble qualities had not yet been formed. The newly constructed State could derive no security, either from duration or from the character of the materials which composed it.

The humiliating punishments generally resorted to among the German soldiery stifled the sentiments of honor in the minds of the soldiers. Military habits have rather injured than assisted the warlike spirit of the Prussians. These habits were founded on those ancient methods which separated the army from the body of the nation, while in our days, there is no real strength except in national character. This character, in Prussia, is more noble and more exalted than late events might lead us to imagine; "and the ardent heroism of the unhappy Prince Louis ought still to shed some glory over his companions in arms."¹

¹ Suppressed by the censors. I struggled during several days to obtain

CHAPTER XVIII.

OF THE GERMAN UNIVERSITIES.

ALL the north of Germany is filled with the most learned universities in Europe. In no country, not even in England, are there so many means of instruction, and of bringing the faculties to perfection. How is it then that the nation is wanting in energy, that it appears generally dull and confined, even while it contains within itself a small number, at least, of men who are the most intellectual in all Europe? It is to the nature of its government, not to education, that this singular contrast must be attributed. Intellectual education is perfect in Germany, but every thing there passes in theory: practical education depends solely on affairs; it is by action alone that the character acquires the firmness necessary to direct in the conduct of life. Character is an instinct; it has more alliance with nature than the understanding, and yet circumstances alone give men the occasion of developing it. Governments are the real instructors of peoples; and public education itself, however good, may create men of letters, but not citizens, warriors, or statesmen.¹

the liberty of rendering this homage to Prince Louis, and I represented that it was placing the glory of the French in relief, to praise the bravery of those whom they had conquered; but it appeared more simple to the censors to permit nothing of the kind.

¹ "By Germans themselves, German universities are admitted to have been incomparably inferior to the Dutch and Italian universities, until the foundation of the University of Göttingen. Muenchhausen was for Göttingen and the German universities, what Douza was for Leyden and the Dutch. But with this difference: Leyden was the model on which the younger universities of the Republic were constructed; Göttingen, the model on which the older universities of the Empire were reformed. Both were statesmen and scholars. Both proposed a high ideal for the schools founded under their auspices; and both, as first curators, labored with paramount influence in realizing this ideal for the same long period of thirty-

In Germany, the genius of philosophy goes further than anywhere else; nothing arrests it, and even the want of a political career, so fatal to the mass, affords a freer scope to the thinking part of the nation. But there is an immense distance between the first and second orders of minds, because there is no interest, no object of exertion, for men who do not rise to the height of conceptions the most vast. In Germany, a man who is not occupied with the universe, has really nothing to do.

The German universities possess an ancient reputation of a date several centuries antecedent to the Reformation. Since that epoch, the Protestant universities have been incontestably superior to the Catholic, and the literary glory of Germany depends altogether upon these institutions.¹ The English uni-

two years. Under their patronage, Leyden and Göttingen took the highest place among the universities of Europe, and both have only lost their relative supremacy by the application in other seminaries of the same measures which had at first determined their superiority.

“From the mutual relations of the seminaries, states, and people of the Empire, the resort to a German university has in general been always mainly dependent on its comparative excellence; and as the interest of the several States was involved in the prosperity of their several universities, the improvement of one of these schools necessarily occasioned the improvement of the others. No sooner, therefore, had Göttingen risen to a decided superiority through her system of curatorial patronage, and other subordinate improvements, than the different governments found it necessary to place their seminaries, as far as possible, on an equal footing. The nuisance of professorial recommendation, under which the universities had so long pined, was generally abated; and the few schools in which it has been tolerated, subsist only through their endowments, and stand as warning monuments of its effect. Compare wealthy Greifswalde with poor Halle. The virtual patronage was in general found best confided to a *small body of curators*; though the peculiar circumstances of the country, and the peculiar organization of its machinery of government, have recently enabled at least one of the German States to concentrate, without a violation of our principles, its academical patronage in a ministry of public instruction. This, however, we cannot now explain. It is universally admitted, that since their rise through the new system of patronage, the universities of Germany have drawn into their sphere the highest talent of the nation; that the new era in its intellectual life has been wholly determined by them; as from them have emanated almost all the most remarkable products of German genius in literature, erudition, philosophy, and science.”

—(Sir Wm. Hamilton's *Discussions*, p. 381.)—*Ed.*

¹ A sketch of these institutions is presented to us in a work on the sub-

versities have singularly contributed to diffuse among the people of England that knowledge of ancient languages and literature, which gives to their orators and statesmen an information so liberal and so brilliant. It is a mark of good taste to be acquainted with other things besides matters of business, when one is thoroughly acquainted with them; and, besides, the eloquence of free nations attaches itself to the history of the Greeks and Romans, as to that of ancient fellow-countrymen. But the German universities, although founded on principles analogous to those of England, yet differ from them in many respects: the multitude of students assembled together at Göttingen, Halle, Jena, etc., formed almost a free body in the State: the rich and poor scholars were distinguished from each other only by personal merit; and the strangers, who came from all parts of the world, submitted themselves with pleasure to an equality which natural superiority alone could change.

There was independence, and even military spirit, among the students; and if, in leaving the university, they had been able to devote themselves to the interests of the public, their education had been very favorable to energy of character; but they returned to the monotonous and domestic habits which prevail in Germany, and lost by degrees the impulse and resolution, which their university life had inspired. They retained nothing of it, but a stock of valuable and very extensive information.

In every German university, several professors concurred together in each individual branch of instruction; thus, the masters themselves were emulous from the interest which they felt in attaining a superiority over each other in the number of scholars they attracted. Those who adopted such or such a particular course, medicine, law, etc., found themselves naturally impelled to require information on other subjects; and thence comes the universality of acquirements, which is to be remarked

ject, just published by M. de Villers, an author who is always found at the head of all noble and generous opinions; who seems called, by the elegance of his mind and the depth of his studies, to be the representative of France in Germany, and of Germany in France.

in almost all the educated men of Germany. The universities had a separate property¹ in their possessions like the clergy; they had a jurisdiction peculiar to themselves; and it was a noble idea of our ancestors, to render the establishment of education wholly free. Mature age can submit itself to circumstances; but at the entrance into life, at least, a young man should draw all his ideas from an uncorrupted source.

The study of languages, which, in Germany, constitutes the basis of education, is much more favorable to the evolution of the faculties, in the earlier age, than that of mathematics, or of the physical sciences. Pascal, that great geometer, whose profound thought hovered over the science which he peculiarly cultivated, as over every other, has himself acknowledged the insuperable defects of those minds which owe their first formation to the mathematics. This study, in the earlier age, exercises only the mechanism of intelligence. In boys, occupied so soon with calculations, the spring of imagination, then so fair and fruitful, is arrested; and they acquire not in its stead, any pre-eminent accuracy of thought,—for arithmetic and algebra are limited to the teaching, in a thousand forms, propositions always identical. The problems of life are more complicated; not one is positive, not one is absolute; we must conjecture, we must decide by the aid of indications and assumptions, which bear no analogy with the infallible procedure of the calculus.

Demonstrated truths do not conduct to probable truths; which alone, however, serve us for our guide in business, in the arts, and in society. There is, no doubt, a point at which the mathematics themselves require that luminous power of invention, without which it is impossible to penetrate into the secrets of nature. At the summit of thought, the imaginations of Homer and of Newton seem to unite; but how many of the young, without mathematical genius, consecrate their time to this science! There is exercised in them only a single faculty,

¹ Most of the continental universities have been stripped of their estates within the last fifty years.—*Ed.*

while the whole moral being ought to be under development at an age when it is so easy to derange the soul and the body, in attempting to strengthen only a part.

Nothing is less applicable to life than a mathematical argument. A proposition, couched in ciphers, is decidedly either true or false. In all other relations the true and the false are so intermingled, that frequently instinct alone can decide us in the strife of motives, sometimes as powerful on the one side as on the other. The study of the mathematics, habituating to certainty, irritates us against all opinions opposed to our own; while that which is the most important for the conduct of this world is to understand others,—that is, to comprehend all that leads them to think and to feel differently from ourselves. The mathematics induce us to take no account of any thing that is not proved, while primitive truths, those which are seized by feeling and genius, are not susceptible of demonstration.

In fine, mathematics, subjecting every thing to calculation, inspire too much reverence for force; and that sublime energy, which accounts obstacles as nothing, and delights in sacrifices, does not easily accord with the kind of reason that is developed by algebraic combinations.

It seems to me, then, that, for the advantage of morality as well as that of the understanding, the study of mathematics should be taken in its course as a part of complete instruction, but should not form the basis of education, and consequently the determining principle of character and the soul.

Among systems of education, there are likewise some which advise us to begin instruction with the natural sciences; in the earlier age they are only a simple diversion; they are learned rattles, which accustom to methodical amusement and superficial study. People have imagined that children should be spared trouble as much as possible, that all their studies should be turned into recreations, and that, in due time, collections of natural history should be given to them for playthings, and physical experiments for a show. It seems to me that this also is an erroneous system. Even if it were possible that a child should learn any thing well in amusing itself, I should

still regret that its faculty of attention had not been developed, —a faculty which is much more essential than an additional acquirement. I know they will tell me that the mathematics call forth, in a peculiar manner, the power of application; but they do not habituate the mind to collect, to appreciate, to concentrate; the attention they require is, so to speak, in a straight line; the human understanding acts in mathematics like a spring tending in a uniform direction.¹

Education, conducted by way of amusement, dissipates thought; pain in every thing is one of the great secrets of nature: the mind of the child should accustom itself to the efforts of study, as our soul accustoms itself to suffering. It is labor which leads to the perfection of our earlier, as grief to that of our later age: it is to be wished, no doubt, that parents, like destiny, may not too much abuse this double secret; but there is nothing important at any period of life but that which acts upon the very central point of existence, and we are too apt to consider the moral being in detail. You may teach your child a number of things with pictures and cards, but you will not teach him to learn; and the habit of amusing himself, which you direct to the acquirement of knowledge, will soon take another direction when the child is no longer under your guidance.

It is not, therefore, without reason, that the study of the ancient and modern languages has been made the basis of all the establishments of education which have formed the most able men throughout Europe. The sense of an expression in a foreign language is at once a grammatical and an intellectual problem; this problem is altogether proportioned to the intellect of the child: at first he understands only the words, then he ascends to the conception of the phrase, and soon after, the charm of the expression, its force, its harmony—all the qualities which are united in the language of man, are gradually

¹ On the study of mathematics, see Sir Wm. Hamilton's *Discussions on Philosophy and Literature, Education, and University Reform*, second London edition, pp. 263-340.—*Ed.*

perceived by the child while engaged in translating. He makes a trial of himself with the difficulties which are presented to him by two languages at a time; he introduces himself to ideas in succession, compares and combines different sorts of analogies and probabilities; and the spontaneous activity of the mind, that alone which truly develops the faculty of thinking, is in a lively manner excited by this study. The number of faculties which it awakens at the same time gives it the advantage over every other species of labor, and we are too happy in being able to employ the flexible memory of a child in retaining a kind of knowledge, without which he would be all his life confined to the circle of his own nation—a circle narrow like every thing which is exclusive.

The study of grammar requires the same sequence and the same force of attention as the mathematics, but it is much more closely connected with thought. Grammar unites ideas, as calculation combines figures; grammatical logic is equally precise with that of algebra, and still it applies itself to every thing that is alive in the mind: words are at the same time ciphers and images; they are both slaves and free, subject to the discipline of syntax and all powerful by their natural signification; thus we find in the metaphysics of grammar exactness of reasoning and independence of thought united; every thing has passed by means of words, and every thing is again found in words when we know how to examine them: languages are inexhaustible for the child as well as for the man, and every one may draw from them whatever he stands in need of.

The impartiality natural to the spirit of the Germans, leads them to take an interest in the literature of foreign countries, and we find few men a little elevated above the common class who are not familiar with several languages. On leaving school they are in general already well acquainted with Latin and even with Greek. The education of the German universities, says a French writer, begins where that of most nations in Europe ends. Not only the professors are men of astonishing information, but what especially distinguishes them is,

their extreme scrupulousness in instruction. In Germany, men have a conscience in every thing, and there is nothing that can dispense with it. If we examine the course of human destiny, we shall see that levity of disposition may lead to every thing that is bad in this world. It is only in the child that levity has a charm; it seems as if the Creator still led the child by the hand, and assisted him to tread gently over the clouds of life. But when time abandons man to himself, it is only in the seriousness of his soul that he can find thoughts, sentiments, and virtues.

CHAPTER XIX.

OF PARTICULAR INSTITUTIONS FOR EDUCATION, AND CHARITABLE ESTABLISHMENTS.

It will at first sight appear inconsistent to praise the ancient method, which made the study of languages the basis of education, and at the same time to consider the school of Pestalozzi¹ as one of the best institutions of our age; I think, however,

¹ "PESTALOZZI, JOHANN HEINRICH, was born January 12, 1746, at Zurich, in Switzerland. His father, who was a medical practitioner, died when Pestalozzi was about six years old; but his mother, with the assistance of some relatives, procured him a good education. He studied divinity and afterwards law, but instead of adopting either the clerical or legal profession, turned to farming as a means of support. At the age of twenty-three he married the daughter of a merchant of Zurich, purchased a small landed property which he named Neuhof, and went to reside upon it and cultivate it. The reading of Rousseau's 'Emile' had drawn his attention to the subject of education, and he began in 1775 to carry out his views by turning his farm into a farm-school for instructing the children of the poorer classes of the vicinity in industrial pursuits as well as in reading and writing. In this, however, he was little more successful than he had been in his agricultural operations: at the end of two years his school was broken up, and he became involved in debt. In order to relieve himself from his incumbrances, and to procure the means of subsistence, he produced his popular novel of 'Leinhardt und Gertrud,' 4 vols., Basel, 1781; in which, under guise of depicting actual peasant life, he sought to show the neg-

that both these ways of viewing the subject may be reconciled. Of all studies, that which with Pestalozzi produces the most satisfactory result, is the mathematics. But it appears to me that his method might be applied to many other branches of education, and produce certain and rapid progress. Rousseau

lected condition of the peasantry, and how by better teaching they might be improved both morally and physically. It was read with general interest, and the Agricultural Society of Berne awarded him for it a gold medal, which, however, his necessities compelled him at once to sell. It was followed by 'Christoph und Else,' Zurich, 1782. During 1782-83, he edited a periodical entitled 'Das Schweizer-Blatt für das Volk' ('Swiss-Journal for the People'), which was collected in two volumes. 'Nachforschungen über den Gang der Natur in der Entwicklung des Menschengeschlechts' ('Investigations into the Process of Nature in the Improvement of the Human Race') appeared at Zurich, in 1797; and he wrote also other works of less importance.

"In 1798, with the assistance of the Swiss Directory, he established a school for orphan children in a convent which had belonged to the Ursuline nuns at Stanz, in the canton of Unterwalden. Stanz had been sacked by a French army, and the children were such as were left without protectors to wander about the country. In the bare and deserted convent he had, without assistance and without books, to teach about eighty children of from four to ten years of age. He was driven by necessity to set the elder and better taught children to teach the younger and more ignorant; and thus struck out the monitorial or mutual-instruction system of teaching, which, just about the same time, Lancaster was under somewhat similar circumstances led to adopt in England. In less than a year, Pestalozzi's benevolent labors were suddenly interrupted by the Austrians, who converted his orphan-house into a military hospital. He then removed to Burgdorf, eleven miles northeast from Berne, where he founded another school of a higher class, and produced his educational works. 'Wie Gertrud ihre Kinder lehrt' ('How Gertrude teaches her children'), Berne, 1801; 'Buch der Mütter' ('Mothers' Book'), Berne, 1803; and some others. During this period of political excitement, he joined the popular party, and in a considerable degree incurred the disapproval of the upper class. In 1802, the people of the canton of Berne sent him as their deputy to an educational conference summoned by Bonaparte, then First Consul, at Paris. His establishment at Burgdorf was prosperous, became celebrated, and was resorted to from all parts of Europe by persons interested in education, some for instruction, and others for inspection. In 1804, he removed his establishment to München-Buchsee, near Hofwyl, in order to operate in conjunction with Fellenberg, who had a similar establishment at the latter place; but the two educational reformers disagreed, and in the same year Pestalozzi removed to Yverdon, in the canton of Vaud, where the government appropriated to his use an unoccupied castle. This establishment became even more prosperous and more cele-

was persuaded that children, before the age of twelve or thirteen, had not an understanding equal to the studies that were required of them, or rather to the method of instruction to which they were subjected. They repeated without comprehending, they labored without gaining instruction, and they frequently gathered nothing from their education but the habit of performing their task without understanding it, and of evading the power of the master by the cunning of the scholar. All that Rousseau has said against this routine education is perfectly true; but, as it often happens, the remedy which he proposes is still worse than the evil.

A child who, according to Rousseau's system, should have learned nothing till he was twelve years old, would have lost six of the most valuable years of his life; his intellectual organs would never acquire that flexibility which early infancy alone could give them. Habits of idleness would be so deeply rooted in him, that he would be rendered much more unhappy by speaking to him of industry, for the first time, at the age of twelve, than by accustoming him, from his earliest existence, to consider it as a necessary condition of life. Besides, that kind of care and attention which Rousseau requires of the tutor, in order to supply instruction and necessary to secure

brated than the one at Burgdorf, and had a still greater number of pupils and of visitors. Unfortunately, dissensions arose among the teachers, in which Pestalozzi himself became implicated, and which embittered the latter years of his life. The number of pupils rapidly diminished, the establishment became a losing concern, and Pestalozzi was again involved in debt, which the proceeds of the complete edition of his works ('Pestalozzi's Sämmtliche Werke,' 15 vols., Stuttgart and Tübingen, 1819-26) hardly sufficed to liquidate. This edition was the result of a subscription got up in 1818 for the publication of his works, the names of the Emperor of Russia, the King of Prussia, and the King of Bavaria, standing at the head of the list.

"In 1825, Pestalozzi retired from his laborious duties to Neuhof, where his grandson resided. Here he wrote his 'Schwanengesang' ('Song of the [Dying] Swan'), 1826; and 'Meine Lebensschicksale als Vorsteher meiner Erziehungsanstalten in Burgdorf und Iferten' ('My Life's Fortunes as Superintendent of my Educational Establishments at Burgdorf and Yverdun'), 1826. He died February 17, 1827, at Brüg, in the canton of Aargau."—*El.*

it, would oblige every man to devote his whole life to the education of another being, and grandfathers alone would find themselves at liberty to begin their own personal career. Such projects are chimerical; but Pestalozzi's method is real, applicable, and may have a great influence on the future progress of the human mind.

Rousseau says, with much reason, that children do not comprehend what they learn, and thence concludes that they ought to learn nothing. Pestalozzi has profoundly studied the cause of this want of comprehension in children, and by his method, ideas are simplified and graduated so as to be brought within the reach of childhood, and the mind of that age may acquire, without fatiguing itself, the results of the deepest study. In passing with exactness through all the degrees of reasoning, Pestalozzi puts the child in a state to discover himself what we wish to teach him.

There are no half measures in Pestalozzi's method: they either understand well, or not at all; for all the propositions follow each other so closely, that the second is always the immediate consequence of the first. Rousseau says, that the minds of children are fatigued by the studies which are exacted from them. Pestalozzi always lead them by a road so easy and so determinate, that it costs them no more to be initiated into the most abstract sciences than into the most simple occupations—each step in these sciences is as easy, by relation to the antecedent, as the most natural consequence drawn from the most ordinary circumstances. What wearies children is making them skip over the intermediate steps, and obliging them to get forward without their knowing what they think they have learned. Their heads are then in a state of confusion, which renders all examination formidable, and inspires them with an invincible disgust for learning. There exists no trace of this sort of inconvenience in the method of Pestalozzi. The children amuse themselves with their studies, not that they are given to them as a play, which, as I have already said, mixes *ennui* with pleasure, and frivolity with study, but because they enjoy from their infancy the pleasure of grown

men, which is that of comprehending and finishing what they are set about.

The method of Pestalozzi, like every thing that is truly good, is not entirely a new discovery, but an enlightened and persevering application of truths already known. Patience, observation, and a philosophical study of the proceedings of the human mind, have given him a knowledge of what is elementary in thoughts, and successive in their development; and he has pushed further than any other the theory and the practice of gradation, in the art of instruction. His method has been applied with success to grammar, geography, and music; but it is much to be desired that those distinguished professors, who have adopted his principles, would render them subservient to every other species of knowledge. That of history in particular is not yet well conceived. No one has observed the gradation of impressions in literature, as they have those of problems in the sciences. In short, many things remain to be done, in order to carry education to its highest point, that is, the art of going backward with what one knows, in order to make others comprehend it.

Pestalozzi makes use of geometry to teach children arithmetical calculation; this was also the method of the ancients. Geometry speaks more to the imagination than the abstract mathematics. To become completely master of the human mind, it is well to unite, as much as possible, precision of instruction with vivacity of impression, for it is not even the depth of science, but obscurity in the manner of presenting it, which alone hinders children from attaining it: they comprehend every thing by degrees, and the essential point is to measure the steps by the progress of reason in infancy; this progress, slow but sure, will lead as far as possible, if we abstain from hastening its course.

It is very singular and pleasing to see at Pestalozzi's the countenances of children, whose round, unmeaning, and delicate features naturally assume an expression of reflection: they are attentive of themselves, and consider their studies as a man of ripened age would consider his business. One remarkable

circumstance is, that punishments and rewards are never necessary to excite them to industry. It is perhaps the first time that a school of a hundred and fifty children has been conducted without the stimulus of emulation and fear. How many evil sentiments are spared to the heart of man, when we drive far from him jealousy and humiliation, when he sees no rivals in his comrades, no judges in his masters! Rousseau wished to subject the child to the law of destiny; Pestalozzi himself creates that destiny during the course of the child's education, and directs its decrees towards his happiness and his improvement. The child feels himself free, because he enjoys himself amid the general order which surrounds him, the perfect equality of which is not deranged even by the talents of the children, whether more or less distinguished. Success is not the object of pursuit, but merely progress towards a certain point, which all endeavor to reach with the same sincerity. The scholars become masters when they know more than their comrades; the masters again become scholars when they perceive any imperfections in their method, and begin their own education again, in order to become better judges of the difficulties attending the art of instruction.

It is pretty generally apprehended that Pestalozzi's method tends to stifle the imagination, and is unfavorable to originality of mind. An education for genius would indeed be a difficult matter; there is scarcely any thing but nature and government which can either inspire or excite it; but the first principles of knowledge, rendered perfectly clear and certain, cannot be an obstacle to genius; they give the mind a sort of firmness which afterwards renders the highest studies easy to it. We must view the school of Pestalozzi as hitherto confined to childhood. The education he gives should be considered as final only for the lower classes, but for that very reason it may diffuse a very salutary influence over the national character. The education of the rich ought to be divided into two different periods: in the first, the children are guided by their masters; in the second, they voluntarily instruct themselves; and this sort of education, by choice, is that which should be adopt-

ed in great universities. The instruction which is acquired at Pestalozzi's gives every man, of what class soever he may be, a foundation on which he may erect, as he chooses, either the cottage of the poor man or the palaces of kings.

We should be mistaken in France, if we thought there was nothing good to be taken from the school of Pestalozzi, except his rapid method of teaching calculation. Pestalozzi is not himself a mathematician; he is not well acquainted with the languages; he has only that sort of genius and instinct, which enables him to develop the understandings of children; he sees the direction which their thought takes in order to attain its object. That openness of character which sheds so noble a calm over the affections of the heart, Pestalozzi has judged necessary in the operations of the mind. He thinks there is a moral pleasure in completing our studies. Indeed we continually see that superficial knowledge inspires a sort of disdainful arrogance, which makes us reject as useless, dangerous, or ridiculous, all that we do not know. We also see that this kind of superficial knowledge obliges us artfully to hide what we are ignorant of. Candor suffers from all those defects of education, which we are ashamed of in spite of ourselves. To know perfectly what we do know, gives a quietness to the mind, which resembles the satisfaction of conscience. The open honesty of Pestalozzi, that honesty carried into the sphere of the understanding, and which deals with ideas as scrupulously as with men, is the principal merit of his school. It is by that means he assembles round him, men devoted to the welfare of the children, in a manner perfectly disinterested. When, in a public establishment, none of the selfish calculations of the principals are answered, we must seek the spring which sets that establishment in motion, in their love of virtue: the enjoyments which it affords are alone sufficient, without either riches or power.

We should not imitate the institution of Pestalozzi, merely by carrying his method of instruction to other places; it would be necessary also to establish with it the same perseverance in the masters, the same simplicity in the scholars, the same

regularity in their manner of life, and, above all, the religious sentiments which animate that school. The forms of worship are not followed there with more exactness than elsewhere; but every thing is transacted in the name of the Deity—in the name of that sentiment, noble, elevated, and pure, which is the habitual religion of the heart. Truth, goodness, confidence, affection, surround the children; it is in that atmosphere they live; and, for a time at least, they remain strangers to all the hateful passions, to all the proud prejudices of the world. An eloquent philosopher (Fichte) said, that he “expected the regeneration of the German nation, from the institution of Pestalozzi.” It must be owned that a revolution founded on such means would be neither violent nor rapid; for education, however excellent, is nothing in comparison with the influence of public events. Instruction penetrates the rock, drop by drop, but the torrent carries it off in a day.

We must, above all, render homage to Pestalozzi, for the care he has taken to place his institution within the reach of persons without fortune, by reducing his terms as much as possible. He is constantly occupied with the poorer classes, and wishes to secure for them the benefit of pure light and solid instruction. In this respect, the works of Pestalozzi form a very curious kind of reading. He has written tales, in which the situations in life of the common people are depicted with a degree of interest, truth, and morality, which is admirable. The sentiments which he expresses in his writings are, thus to speak, as elementary as the principles of his method. We are astonished to find ourselves shedding tears over a word, a narration so simple, even so vulgar, that the warmth of our emotions alone gives it consequence. People belonging to the lower classes of society are of an intermediate state between savages and men of civilized life; when they are virtuous, they have a kind of innocence and goodness which cannot be met with in the great world. Society weighs heavily upon them; they struggle with nature, and their confidence in God is more animated and more constant than that of the rich. Incessantly threatened with misfortunes, having constantly recourse

to prayer, anxious all the day, and preserved every night, the poor feel themselves under the immediate hand of Him who protects those who are abandoned by mankind; and their integrity, when they have any, is singularly scrupulous.

I recollect, in a tale of Pestalozzi's, the restitution of some potatoes by a child who had stolen them: his dying grandmother orders him to carry them back to the owner of the garden from whence he took them, and this scene affects us to the heart. This poor crime, if I may so call it, causing such remorse; the awfulness of death amid all the miseries of life; old age and childhood drawn together by the voice of God, which speaks equally to each of them;—all this is painful, very painful; for, in our poetic fictions, the pomp and splendor of destiny relieve us a little from the pity occasioned by its reverses; but we fancy we perceive, in these popular tales, a feeble lamp enlightening a small cottage, and goodness of soul springing forth in the midst of all the afflictions by which it is tried.

As the art of drawing is to be considered as a useful art, it may be said, that among those which are merely pleasing, the only one introduced into the school of Pestalozzi is music, and we should praise him also for the choice of it. There is a whole order of sentiments, I might say a whole order of virtues, which belong to the knowledge of, or at least to the taste for, music; and it is great barbarity to deprive a numerous portion of the human race of such impressions. The ancients pretended that nations had been civilized by music, and this allegory has a deep meaning; for we must always suppose that the bond of society was formed either by sympathy or interest, and certainly the first origin is more noble than the other.

Pestalozzi is not the only person in Germanic Switzerland who is zealously occupied in cultivating the minds of the common people: in this respect I was much struck with the establishment of M. de Felleberg. Many people came to it to acquire new light on the subject of agriculture, and it is said that, in this respect, they have had reason to be satisfied; but

what principally deserves the esteem of the friends of humanity, is the care which M. de Felleberg takes of the education of the lower classes; he causes village schoolmasters to be taught according to Pestalozzi's method, that they may in their turn teach children. The laborers, who cultivate his grounds, learn psalm tunes, and the praises of God will soon be heard in the country, sung by simple, but harmonious voices, which will celebrate at once both nature and its Author. In short, M. de Felleberg endeavors by every possible means to form, between the inferior class and our own, a liberal tie—a tie which shall not be founded merely on the pecuniary interests of the rich and the poor.

We learn from the examples of England and of America, that free institutions are found sufficient to develop the faculties and understandings of the people; but it is a step further to give them more than the instruction which is necessary to them. There is something revolting in the necessary, when it is measured out by those who possess the superfluous. It is not enough to be occupied in promoting the welfare of the lower classes with a view to usefulness only; they must also participate in the enjoyments of the imagination and the heart.

It is in this spirit that some enlightened philanthropists have taken up the subject of mendicity at Hamburg. Neither despotism nor speculative economy have any place in their charitable institutions. It was their wish that the unfortunate objects of their care should themselves desire the labor which was expected from them, as much as the benefactions which were granted them. As the welfare of the poor was not with them a means, but an end, they have not ordered them employment, but have made them desire it. We constantly see in the different accounts rendered of those charitable institutions, that the object of their founders was much more to render men better than to make them more useful;¹ and it is this

¹ “The charitable institutions of Hamburg are on a very munificent scale. The *Orphan Asylum* (Waisenhaus) provides for six hundred chil-

high, philosophical point of view, that characterizes the spirit of wisdom and liberty which reigns in this ancient Hanseatic city.

There is much real beneficence in the world, and he who is not capable of serving his fellow-creatures by the sacrifice of his time and of his inclinations, voluntarily contributes to their welfare with money: this is still something, and no virtue is to be disdained. But, in most countries, the great mass of private alms is not wisely directed; and one of the most eminent services which Baron Voght and his excellent countrymen have rendered to the cause of humanity, is that of showing, that without new sacrifices, without the intervention of the State, private beneficence is alone sufficient for the relief of the unfortunate. That which is effected by individuals is particularly suited to Germany, where every thing taken separately is better than the whole together.

Charitable institutions ought indeed to prosper in the city of Hamburg. There is so much morality among its inhabitants, that for a time they paid their taxes into a sort of trunk without any persons seeing what they brought; these taxes were to be proportioned to the fortune of each individual, and when the calculation was made, they were always found to be scrupulously paid. Might we not believe that we were relating a circumstance belonging to the golden age, if in that golden age there had been private riches and public taxes? We cannot sufficiently admire how easy all things relating to instruction as well as to administration are rendered by honesty and integrity. We ought to grant them all the honors which dex-

dren, who are received as infants, reared, educated, and bound apprentices to some useful trade. The *Great Hospital* (*Krankenhaus*), in the suburb of Saint George, is capable of containing from four thousand to five thousand sick. The yearly cost of supporting this admirable institution is nearly £17,000. Its utility is not confined to the poor alone, as even persons of the higher classes resort to the hospital to avail themselves of the advantages of the excellent medical treatment which they may here obtain. Such patients are admitted as lodgers, on payment of a sum varying from eight pence to eight shillings a day."—(*Murray's Hand-book of Northern Germany*, p. 322.)—*Ed.*

terity usually obtains; for in the end they succeed better even in the affairs of this world.¹

¹ We here add, from a competent hand, a summary of the present intellectual condition of Germany.

“In respect of mental cultivation, the German nation stands in a high rank; and according to Professor Berghaus it may be said without vanity, that Germany stands on the highest step of the ladder of civilization. In no country of Europe, he continues, are education and true enlightenment so generally spread over all classes of society, from the richest to the poorest, as in his fatherland. This result has been brought about only in recent times, and it is ascribed to the unceasing exertions of the State governments to free their people from the darkness of ignorance and superstition. There is not a village in Germany that has not its school to spread intelligence among its people.

“For the purposes of education there are, especially in Protestant Germany, numerous schools or institutions for elementary instruction in all the towns, for both the higher and the working classes. For the higher civic professions and employments, there are *real* professional and commercial schools, seminaries for the training of schoolmasters, gymnasiums and lycæums for the higher branches of education, and for the highest of all, there are twenty-three universities, to which may be added the German University of Königsberg, in East Prussia, making in all twenty-four. The institutions preparatory for the universities are the gymnasia, in which the educational course consists chiefly of classical studies, that is to say, Greek and Latin, with French, mathematics, and a considerable portion of the natural sciences. The basis of their constitution lies in remote times, and there have been but few and slight alterations in their plans of study since the beginning of the present century. Owing, however, to the smallness of the emoluments, and the consequent low estimation in which the office of teacher is held, there is not a sufficient number of qualified competitors to supply the vacancies that occur. The government has been obliged in consequence to raise their emoluments, and thereby obviate this increasing evil.

“A more recent class of institutions are the *real-schulen* (or high town-schools), in which Latin is the only ancient language taught, the other branches being modern languages, especially French and English, mathematics, and natural philosophy. These schools have for a long time enjoyed much approval as preparatory institutions for many departments of civil life. Industrial schools are of still more recent origin. They have been established by government in the larger towns of every province; the one half of the expense of maintaining them being defrayed by the government, and the other half by the municipality. Their purpose is purely industrial; drawing, mechanics, mathematics, physics, and chemistry, are the subjects taught; languages are excluded.

“The following table contains the names of the twenty-four universities; the dates of their respective foundations; the number of professors and other teachers; the number of students that attended them dur-

THE FÊTE OF INTERLACHEN.

WE must attribute to the German character a great part of the virtues of Germanic Switzerland. There is, nevertheless, more public spirit in Switzerland than in Germany, more patriotism, more energy, more harmony in opinions and senti-

ing the winter session of 1853-4, and the numbers that attended each branch:—

NAMES.	DATES OF FOUNDATION.	NUMBER OF PROFESSORS AND TEACHERS.	NUMBER OF STUDENTS.
Berlin.....	1810	173	2,204
Bonn.....	1818	87	888
Breslau	{ 1702 }	96	789
	{ 1810 }		
Erlangen	1743	48	479
Freiburg.....	1457	41	376
Giessen.....	1607	58	380
Göttingen	1737	111	699
Grätz.....	{ 1586 }	29	429
	{ 1826 }		
Greifswald.....	1456	54	222
Halle.....	1694	71	650
Heidelberg	1386	87	718
Jéna.....	1557	69	380
Innsprück.....	{ 1673 }	22	278
	{ 1826 }		
Kiel.....	1655	42	142
Königsberg.....	1553	64	326
Leipzig.....	1409	113	807
Marburg.....	1527	61	268
Munich.....	1826	98	1,810
Olmütz.....	{ 1581 }	13	203
	{ 1827 }		
Prague.....	1348	88	1,415
Rostock.....	1419	31	111
Tübingen.....	1477	81	742
Vienna.....	1365	113	2,614
Würzburg.....	1403	47	706
Totals.....		1,697	17,636

“The teachers consisted of the following classes, viz.—1. Ordinary professors; 2. Extraordinary professors; 3. Honorary professors; 4. Private

ments; but the smallness of the States, and the poverty of the country, do not in any degree excite genius; we find there much fewer learned or thinking men than in the north of Germany, where even the relaxation of political ties gives free-

teachers or tutors; 5. Language and exercise masters. The students consisted of—

1.	Students of Protestant theology	1692
2.	“ Roman Catholic theology	1606
3.	“ Law, statecraft, and forestry	6394
4.	“ Medicine, surgery, and pharmacy	3644
5.	“ Philosophy and philology	2592
6.	“ not matriculated	1708

“In the matter of education, Prussia is the ruler and guide, and whatever is established or pursued in that kingdom comes sooner or later into operation in other States. Since the beginning of the present century, education has occupied the attention and received a new impulse at the hands of the other governments; but it is only since 1848 that the school organization of Prussia has been transplanted into the Austrian territory, where, however, it still continues to experience the opposition of the nobles and clergy. The ignorance which formerly prevailed among the lower classes has almost entirely vanished in Northern Germany at least, and there is no class in which scholarly culture and scientific attainments may not be expected. The constant care, however, and determination of the government to make all partakers of a certain amount of education, has made it seem necessary to constrain all parents by fines or other punishments to send their children to school. Peculiar attention is at present being paid to educational institutions, and the governments are seeking to reform them so as to prevent the recurrence or continuance of those evils that are believed to have flowed from them, and to have occasioned, in a great degree, if not entirely, the popular outburst in 1848.

“Mental cultivation and the general diffusion of knowledge are largely promoted by means of numerous public libraries, established in the capitals, the university towns, and other places. The most celebrated public libraries are those of Vienna, Berlin, Göttingen, Munich, Dresden, Hamburg, Wolfenbüttel, Stuttgart, Frankfort-on-the-Maine, and Weimar. Besides the public ones, there are throughout Germany many private libraries of extraordinary richness in literary treasures of all kinds. There are also numerous societies and unions, among which the most distinguished are the Academies of Sciences at Berlin and Munich, and the Society of Sciences at Göttingen, which are state institutions. With scientific collections of all kinds, every place is richly provided, either at the public expense or by the favor of private persons. The observatories of Altona, Berlin, Breslau, Göttingen, Mannheim, Munich, Prague, Seeberg near Gotha, Vienna, and Königsberg in Prussia, are distinguished for the promotion of astronomy and other branches of physical science. The taste

dom to all those noble reveries, those bold systems, which are not subjected to the nature of things. The Swiss are not a poetical nation, and we are with reason astonished that the beauties of their country should not have further inflamed their

for astronomy is very great in Germany, as is evidenced by the existence of many private observatories, among which those of Olbers at Bremen, and of Beer near Berlin, are the most celebrated. In this department, Germany can boast of the names of Copernicus, Kepler, Herschel, Olbers, Bessel, and many others.

“The fine arts likewise are carefully fostered. There are academies at Berlin, Dusseldorf, Munich, and Vienna, whose object it is to spread a taste for painting, sculpture, architecture, and music, and to improve the technics of art. The taste for art has struck deep root among all the educated Germans, particularly in the north, and is directed and represented by three schools, those of Berlin, Dusseldorf, and Munich, which have produced some of the finest proofs of German genius. Besides the academies, there are numerous art-museums and collections of pictures and antiquities, particularly in Berlin, Cassel, Dresden, Munich, and Vienna. In sculpture, German genius has of late years greatly excelled, as in the works of Dannecker, Schwanthaler, and Kiss; and architecture has received the greatest encouragement in the erection of both public and private buildings of great magnificence, of which the late King of Bavaria showed the most munificent example in the embellishment of his capital Munich, and the erection of the German Valhalla, near Ratisbon, though the attempt to adapt the Grecian temple style, without regard to climate and other circumstances, to modern buildings, intended for very different purposes, has failed as completely there as it has everywhere else.

“The activity of the German mind on the wide fields of art and science has, through the effect of general intercourse and exchange of ideas, produced a liveliness of which the Germans believe there is no parallel to be found in any other country of Europe. The German book-trade, in respect of the position it has gradually acquired since the Reformation, must be considered as a prime mover in the mental culture of Germany; while, in a material point of view, it has acquired an extent and importance elsewhere unknown. Thousands of people find in it employment and maintenance, as printers, type-founders, machine-makers, paper-makers, and book-binders; and the productions of the press are spread all over Germany with the most marvellous rapidity. Leipzig is the central point of this important branch of industry. The general taste for the beautiful has had its effect on the art of printing, in requiring the use of fine, close, white paper, clear type, and elegant binding, instead of the gray-brown blotting-paper, and worn-out and broken type, that were formerly used. The periodical press is very active; but political discussion is not free. On political subjects, freedom of speech does not suit the German governments, and offences of this kind are very severely punished, as happened in 1854 with Gervinus in Baden. On religion, however, and philosophy,

imagination. A religious and free people are at all times susceptible of enthusiasm, and the daily occupations of life cannot entirely subdue it. If this could have been doubted, we might still be convinced of it by the pastoral fête, which was last year celebrated in the midst of lakes, in memory of the founder of Berne.

This city merits more than ever the respect and interest of travellers : it appears since its last misfortunes to have resumed all its virtues with new ardor ; and, while losing its treasures, has redoubled its beneficence towards the unfortunate. The charitable establishments in this place are perhaps the best attended to of any in Europe : the hospital is the finest, and indeed the only magnificent edifice in the city. On the gate is written this inscription : *CURISTO IN PAUPERIBUS*. Nothing can be more admirable. Has not the Christian religion told us, that it was for those who suffered that Christ descended on the earth ? And who among us is not in some period of his life, either in respect to his happiness or his hopes, one of those unfortunate beings who needs relief in the name of God ?

Every thing throughout the city and canton of Berne bears marks of calm, serious regularity, of a kind and paternal government. An air of probity is felt in every object which we perceive ; we may believe ourselves in our own family while in the midst of two hundred thousand men, who, whether nobles, citizens, or peasants, are all equally devoted to their country.

the utmost freedom of publication is allowed ; and the effect has been almost to root out ancestral faith and dogmatic theology from the minds of most educated people, though of late years an evangelical reaction seems to have made, or to be making, considerable progress. The publication of Kalenders, which have been of late years vastly improved, is of much importance in the instruction of the people. Almost every town in Germany has its own daily newspaper, and of these, five have acquired a European reputation, if not for the excellence, at least for the importance of their contents. These are the Austrian *Observer* and the Prussian *State Gazette*, the organs of their respective governments ; the Hamburg *Correspondent*, and the Augsburg and Leipzig *General Gazettes*. Of the number of weekly newspapers and popular instructive publications, their name, says Dr. Berghaus, is legion. The higher branches of learning and of art are equally well attended to by their respective journalists."—(*Encyclopædia Britannica*, article *Germany*.)—Ed.

In going to the fête it was necessary to embark on one of those lakes which, reflecting all the beauties of nature, seemed placed at the foot of the Alps only to multiply their enchanting forms. A stormy sky deprived us of a distinct view of the mountains; but, half enveloped in clouds, they appeared the more awfully sublime. The storm increased; and, though a feeling of terror seized my soul, I even loved the thunderbolt of heaven which confounds the pride of man. We reposed ourselves for a moment in a kind of grotto, before we ventured to cross that part of the lake of Thun which is surrounded by inaccessible rocks. It was in such a place that William Tell braved the abyss, and clung to the rocks in escaping from his tyrants. We now perceived in the distance that mountain which bears the name of the Virgin (*Jungfrau*), because no traveller has ever been able to attain its summit; it is not so high as Mount Blanc, and yet it inspires more veneration, because we know that it is inaccessible.

We arrived at Interlachen; and the sound of the Aar, which falls in cascades near this little town, disposed the soul to pensive reflection. A great number of strangers were lodged in the rustic but neat abodes of the peasants; it was striking enough to see, walking in the streets of Interlachen, young Parisians at once transported into the valleys of Switzerland. Here they heard only the torrents, they saw only the mountains, and endeavored in these solitary regions to find means of tiring themselves sufficiently to return with renewed pleasure to the world.

Much has been said of an air played on the Alpine horn, which made so lively an impression on the Swiss, that when they heard it they quitted their regiments to return to their country. We may imagine what effect this air must produce when repeated by the echoes of the mountains; but it should be heard resounding from a distance; when near, the sensation which it produces is not agreeable. If sung by Italian voices, the imagination would be perfectly intoxicated with it; but perhaps this pleasure would give birth to ideas foreign to the simplicity of the country. We should wish for the arts, for

poetry, for love, where we ought to content ourselves with the tranquillity of a country life.

On the evening preceding the fête, fires were lighted on the mountains; thus it was that the deliverers of Switzerland formerly gave the signal of their holy conspiracy. These fires, placed on the heights, resembled the moon, when, rising behind the mountains, she displays herself at once brilliant and peaceful. It might almost have been thought that new stars appeared to lend their aid to the most affecting sight which this world could offer. One of these flaming signals seemed placed in the heavens, from whence it illumined the ruins of the castle of Unspunnen, formerly possessed by Berthold [Berchtold], the founder of Berne, in remembrance of whom this festival was given. Profound darkness encircled this bright object; and the mountains, which during the night resembled vast phantoms, seemed like the gigantic shades of the dead, whose memory we were then celebrating.

On the day of the fête, the weather was mild, but cloudy; it seemed as if all nature responded to the tender emotions of every heart. The inclosure chosen for the games is surrounded by wooded hills, behind which mountains rise above each other as far as the sight can reach. All the spectators, to the number of nearly six thousand, seated themselves in rows on the declivity, and the varied colors of their dress looked at a distance like flowers scattered over the meadows. No festival could ever have worn a more smiling appearance; but when we raised our eyes, the rocks suspended above us seemed, like destiny, to threaten weak mortals in the midst of their pleasures. If there is, however, a joy of the soul so pure as to disarm even fate, it was then experienced.

When the crowd of spectators was assembled, the procession of the festival was heard approaching from a distance—a procession which was in fact a solemn one, for it was devoted to the celebration of the past. It was accompanied with pleasing music; the magistrates appeared at the head of the peasants; the young girls were clothed in the ancient and

picturesque costumes of their cantons; the halberts and the banners of each valley were carried in front by old men with white hair, and dressed in habits exactly similar to those worn five centuries ago, at the time of the conspiracy of the Rutli. The soul was filled with emotion on seeing these banners, now so peaceful, with the aged for their guardians. Days long past were represented by these men, old in comparison with ourselves, but when considered in reference to the lapse of ages, how young! There was an air of trust and reliance in all these feeble beings which was touching in the extreme, because it could only be inspired by the honesty of their souls. In the midst of our rejoicing, our eyes filled with tears, just as they are wont to do on those happy and yet melancholy days when we celebrate the convalescence of those whom we love.

At last the games began; and the men of the valley, and those of the mountains, displayed, in lifting enormous weights or in wrestling with one another, a degree of agility and strength of body which was very remarkable. This strength formerly rendered nations more military; now, in our days, when tactics and artillery determine the fate of armies, it is only to be seen in the games of husbandmen. The earth is better cultivated by men who are thus robust, but war cannot be made without the aid of discipline and of numbers; and even the emotions of the soul have less empire over human destiny, now that individuals have been sunk in communities, and that the human species seems, like inanimate nature, to be directed by mechanical laws.

After the games were ended, and the good bailiff of the place had distributed the prizes to the victors, we dined under tents, and sung songs in honor of the tranquil happiness of the Swiss. During the repast, wooden cups were handed round, on which were carved William Tell, and the three founders of Helvetic liberty. With transport they drank to peace, to order, to independence; and the patriotism of happiness was expressed with a cordiality which penetrated every soul.

“The meadows are as flowery as ever, the mountains as ver-

dant: when all nature smiles, can the heart of man alone be a mere desert?"¹

No, most undoubtedly, it was not so; the soul expanded with confidence in the midst of this fine country, in the presence of these respectable men—all animated with the purest sentiments. A country, poor in itself, and narrow in extent, without luxury, without power, without lustre, is cherished by its inhabitants as a friend who conceals his virtues in the shade, and devotes them all to the happiness of those who love him. During the five centuries of prosperity which the Swiss have enjoyed, we may reckon wise generations rather than great men. There is no room for exceptions where all are thus happy. The ancestors of this nation may still be said to reign there, ever respected, imitated, revived in their descendants. Their simplicity of manners, and attachment to ancient customs, the wisdom and uniformity of their lives, recall the past and anticipate the future; a history which is always the same seems like a single moment, lasting through ages.²

¹ These words were the refrain of a song, full of grace and talent, composed for this fête. The author is Madame Harmès, well known in Germany by her writings under the name of Madame de Berlepsch.

² We cannot help adding here the following description of Swiss scenery, —perhaps the finest of the kind ever drawn by the hand of a great artist,—from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjare*: "He succeeds in representing the cheerful repose of lake prospects, where houses in friendly approximation, imaging themselves in the clear wave, seem as if bathing in its depths; shores encircled with green hills, behind which rise forest mountains, and icy peaks of glaciers. The tone of coloring in such scenes is gay, mirthfully clear; the distances as if overflowed with softening vapor, which from watered hollows and river valleys mounts up grayer and mistier, and indicates their windings. No less is the master's art to be praised in views from valleys lying nearer the high Alpine ranges, where declivities slope down, luxuriantly overgrown, and fresh streams roll hastily along by the foot of rocks.

"With exquisite skill, in the deep shady trees of the foreground, he gives the distinctive character of the several species, satisfying us in the form of the whole, as in the structure of the branches, and the details of the leaves; no less so in the fresh green with its manifold shadings, where soft airs appear as if fanning us with benignant breath, and the lights as if thereby put in motion.

"In the middle-ground, his lively green tone grows fainter by degrees;

Life flows on, in these valleys, like the rivers which run through them; new waves indeed appear, but they follow the same course: may they never be interrupted! May the same festival be often celebrated at the foot of the same mountains! May the stranger admire them as wonders, while the Helvetic cherishes them as an asylum, where magistrates and fathers watch together over citizens and children!

and at last, on the more distant mountain-tops, passing into weak violet, weds itself with the blue of the sky. But our artist is above all happy in his paintings of high Alpine regions; in seizing the simple greatness and stillness of their character; the wide pastures on the slopes, where dark, solitary firs stand forth from the grassy carpet; and from high cliffs, foaming brooks rush down. Whether he relieves his pasturages with grazing cattle, or the narrow winding rocky path with mules and laden pack-horses, he paints all with equal truth and richness; still, introduced in the proper place, and not in too great copiousness, they decorate and enliven these scenes, without interrupting, without lessening their peaceful solitude. The execution testifies a master's hand; easy, with a few sure strokes, and yet complete. In his later pieces, he employed glittering English permanent colors, on paper: these pictures, accordingly, are of pre-eminently blooming tone; cheerful, yet, at the same time, strong and sated.

"His views of deep mountain chasms, where, round and round, nothing fronts us but dead rock, where, in the abyss, over-spanned by its bold arch, the wild stream rages, are, indeed, of less attraction than the former: yet their truth excites us; we admire the great effect of the whole, produced at so little cost, by a few expressive strokes and masses of local colors.

"With no less accuracy of character can he represent the regions of the topmost Alpine ranges, where neither tree nor shrub any more appears; but only amid the rocky teeth and snow summits, a few sunny spots clothe themselves with a soft sward. Beautiful, and balmy, and inviting as he colors these spots, he has here wisely forborne to introduce grazing herds; for these regions give food only to the chamois, and a perilous employment to the wild-hay-men." ¹—*Ed.*

¹ "The poor wild-hay-man of the Rigiberg,
Whose trade is, on the brow of the abyss,
To mow the common grass from nooks and shelves,
To which the cattle dare not climb."

PART II.

ON LITERATURE AND THE ARTS.

CHAPTER I.

WHY ARE THE FRENCH UNJUST TO GERMAN LITERATURE ?

I MIGHT answer this question in a very simple manner, by saying that very few people in France are acquainted with the German language, and that its beauties, above all in poetry, cannot be translated into French. The Teutonic languages are easily translated into each other; it is the same with the Latin languages; but these cannot give a just idea of German poetry. Music composed for one instrument is not executed with success on another of a different sort. Besides, German literature has scarcely existed in all its originality more than forty or fifty years; and the French, for the last twenty years, have been so absorbed in political events, that all their literary studies have been suspended.

It would, however, be treating the question very superficially, merely to say that the French are unjust to German literature because they are ignorant of it: they have, it is true, strong prejudices against it; but these prejudices arise from a confused sentiment of the wide difference, both in the manner of seeing and feeling, which exists between the two nations.

In Germany there is no standard of taste on any one subject; all is independent, all is individual. They judge of a work by the impression it makes, and never by any rule, because no rule is generally admitted; every author is at liberty

to form a new sphere for himself. In France, the greater number of readers will neither be affected, nor even amused, at the expense of their literary conscience: their scruple therein finds a refuge. A German author forms his own public; in France the public commands authors. As in France there are more people of cultivated minds than there are in Germany, the public exacts much more; while the German writers, eminently raised above their judges, govern instead of receiving the law from them. From thence it happens that their writers are scarcely ever improved by criticism: the impatience of the readers, or that of the spectators, never obliges them to shorten their works, and they scarcely ever stop in proper time, because an author, being seldom weary of his own conceptions, can be informed only by others when they cease to be interesting. From self-love, the French think and live in the opinions of others; and we perceive in the greater part of their works that their principal end is not the subject they treat, but the effect they produce. The French writers are always in the midst of society, even when they are composing; for they never lose sight of the opinion, raillery, and taste then in fashion, or, in other words, the literary authority under which we live at such or such a time.

The first requisite in writing is a strong and lively manner of feeling. Persons who study in others what they ought to experience themselves, and what they are permitted to say, with respect to literature have really no existence. Doubtless, our writers of genius (and what nation possesses more of these than France?) have subjected themselves only to those ties which were not prejudicial to their originality; but we must compare the two countries *en masse*, and at the present time, to know from whence arises their difficulty of understanding each other.

In France they scarcely ever read a work but to furnish matter for conversation; in Germany, where people live almost alone, the work itself must supply the place of company; and what mental society can we form with a book, which should itself be only the echo of society! In the silence of retreat,

nothing seems more melancholy than the spirit of the world. The solitary man needs an internal emotion which shall compensate for the want of exterior excitement.

Perspicuity is in France one of the first merits of a writer; for the first object of a reader is to give himself no trouble, but to catch, by running over a few pages in the morning, what will enable him to shine in conversation in the evening. The Germans, on the contrary, know that perspicuity can never have more than a relative merit: a book is clear according to the subject and according to the reader. Montesquieu cannot be so easily understood as Voltaire, and nevertheless he is as clear as the object of his meditations will permit. Without doubt, clearness should accompany depth of thought; but those who confine themselves only to the graces of wit and the play on words, are much more sure of being understood. They have nothing to do with mystery,—why then should they be obscure? The Germans, through an opposite defect, take pleasure in darkness; they often wrap in obscurity what was before clear, rather than follow the beaten road; they have such a disgust for common ideas, that when they find themselves obliged to recur to them, they surround them with abstract metaphysics, which give them an air of novelty till they are found out. German writers are under no restraint with their readers; their works being received and commented upon as oracles, they may envelop them with as many clouds as they like: patience is never wanting to draw these clouds aside; but it is necessary, at length, to discover a divinity; for what the Germans can least support, is to see their expectations deceived: their efforts and their perseverance render some great conclusion needful. If no new or strong thoughts are discovered in a book, it is soon disdained; and if all is pardoned in behalf of superior talent, they scarcely know how to appreciate the various kinds of address displayed in endeavoring to supply the want of it.

The prose of the Germans is often too much neglected. They attach more importance to style in France than in Germany; it is a natural consequence of the interest excited by

words, and the value they must acquire in a country where society is the first object. Every man with a little understanding is a judge of the justness or suitableness of such and such a phrase, while it requires much attention and study to take in the whole compass and connection of a book. Besides, pleasantries find expressions much sooner than thoughts, and in all that depends on words only, we laugh before we reflect.

It must be agreed, nevertheless, that beauty of style is not merely an external advantage, for true sentiments almost always inspire the most noble and just expressions; and if we are allowed to be indulgent to the style of a philosophical writing, we ought not to be so to that of a literary composition: in the sphere of the fine arts, the form in which a subject is presented to us is as essential to the mind as the subject itself.

The dramatic art offers a striking example of the distinct faculties of the two nations. All that relates to action, to intrigue, to the interest of events, is a thousand times better combined, a thousand times better conceived among the French; all that depends on the development of the impressions of the heart, on the secret storms of strong passion, is much better investigated among the Germans.

In order to attain the highest point of perfection in either country, it would be necessary for the Frenchman to be religious, and the German more a man of the world. Piety opposes itself to levity of mind, which is the defect and the grace of the French nation; the knowledge of men, and of society, would give to the Germans that taste and facility in literature which is at present wanting to them. The writers of the two countries are unjust to each other: the French, nevertheless, are more guilty in this respect than the Germans; they judge without knowing the subject, and examine after they have decided: the Germans are more impartial. Extensive knowledge presents to us so many different ways of beholding the same object, that it imparts to the mind the spirit of toleration which springs from universality.

The French would, however, gain more by comprehending German genius, than the Germans would in subjecting themselves to the good taste of the French. In our days, whenever a little foreign leaven has been allowed to mix itself with French regularity, the French have themselves applauded it with delight. J. J. Rousseau, Bernardin de Saint Pierre, Chateaubriand, etc., are, in some of their works, even unknown to themselves, of the German school; that is to say, they draw their talent only out of the internal sources of the soul. But if German writers were to be disciplined according to the prohibitory laws of French literature, they would not know how to steer amid the quicksands that would be pointed out to them; they would regret the open sea, and their minds would be much more disturbed than enlightened. It does not follow that they ought to hazard all, and that they would do wrong in sometimes imposing limits on themselves; but it is of consequence to them to be placed according to their own modes of perception. In order to induce them to adopt certain necessary restrictions, we must recur to the principle of those restrictions without employing the authority of ridicule, which is always highly offensive to them.

Men of genius in all countries are formed to understand and esteem each other; but the vulgar class of writers and readers, whether German or French, bring to our recollection that fable of La Fontaine, where the stork cannot eat in the dish, nor the fox in the bottle. The most complete contrast is perceived between minds developed in solitude, and those formed by society. Impressions from external objects, and the inward recollections of the soul, the knowledge of men and abstract ideas, action and theory, yield conclusions totally opposite to each other. The literature, the arts, the philosophy, the religion of these two nations, attest this difference; and the eternal boundary of the Rhine separates two intellectual regions, which, no less than the two countries, are foreign to each other.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE JUDGMENT FORMED BY THE ENGLISH ON THE SUBJECT
OF GERMAN LITERATURE.

GERMAN literature is much better known in England than in France.¹ In England, the foreign languages are more studied, and the Germans are more naturally connected with the English, than with the French ; nevertheless, prejudices exist even in England, both against the philosophy and the literature of Germany. It may be interesting to examine the cause of them.

The minds of the people of England are not formed by a taste for society, by the pleasure and interest excited by conversation. Business, parliament, the administration, fill all heads, and political interests are the principal objects of their meditations. The English wish to discover consequences immediately applicable to every subject, and from thence arises their dislike of a philosophy, which has for its object the beautiful rather than the useful.

The English, it is true, do not separate dignity from utility, and they are always ready, when it is necessary, to sacrifice the useful to the honorable ; but they are not of those, who, as it is said in Hamlet, "with the incorporal air do hold discourse"—a sort of conversation of which the Germans are very fond. The philosophy of the English is directed towards results beneficial to the cause of humanity : the Germans pursue truth for its own sake, without thinking on the advantages which men may derive from it. The nature of their different governments having offered them no great or splendid oppor-

¹ It is now much better known in both countries than when Madame de Staël wrote.—*Ed.*

tunity of attaining glory, or of serving their country, they attach themselves to contemplation of every kind ; and, to indulge it, seek in heaven that space which their limited destiny denies to them on earth. They take pleasure in the ideal, because there is nothing in the actual state of things which speaks to their imagination. The English, with reason, pride themselves in all they possess, in all they are, and in all that they may become ; they place their admiration and love on their laws, their manners, and their forms of worship. These noble sentiments give to the soul more strength and energy ; but thought, perhaps, takes a bolder flight, when it has neither limit nor determinate aim, and when incessantly connecting itself with the immense and the infinite, no interest brings it back to the affairs of this world.

Whenever an idea is consolidated, or, in other words, when it is changed into effect, nothing can be better than to examine attentively its consequences and conclusions, and then to circumscribe and fix them ; but when it is merely in theory, it should be considered in itself alone. Neither practice nor utility are the objects of inquiry ; and the pursuit of truth in philosophy, like imagination in poetry, should be free from all restraint.

The Germans are to the human mind what pioneers are to an army : they try new roads, they try unknown means : how can we avoid being curious to know what they say on their return from their excursions into the infinite ? The English, who have so much originality of character, have nevertheless generally a dread of new systems. Justness of thought has been so beneficial to them in the affairs of life, that they like to discover it even in intellectual studies ; and yet it is in these that boldness is inseparable from genius. Genius, provided it respect religion and morality, should be free to take any flight it chooses : it aggrandizes the empire of thought.

Literature, in Germany, is so impressed with the reigning philosophy, that the repugnance felt for the one will influence the judgment we form of the other. The English have, however, for some time, translated the German poets with pleasure,

and do not fail to perceive that analogy which ought to result from one common origin. There is more sensibility in the English poetry, and more imagination in that of Germany. Domestic affections holding great sway over the hearts of the English, their poetry is impressed with the delicacy and permanency of those affections : the Germans, more independent in all things, because they bear the impress of no political institution, paint sentiments as well as ideas through a cloud : it might be said that the universe vacillates before their eyes ; and even, by the uncertainty of their sight, those objects are multiplied, which their talent renders useful to its own purposes.

The principle of terror, which is employed as one of the great means in German poetry, has less ascendancy over the imagination of the English in our days. They describe nature with enthusiasm, but it no longer acts as a formidable power which incloses phantoms and presages within its breast ; and holds, in modern times, the place held by destiny among the ancients. Imagination in England is almost always inspired by sensibility ; the imaginations of the Germans is sometimes rude and wild : the religion of England is more austere, that of Germany more vague ; and the poetry of the two nations must necessarily bear the impression of their religious sentiments. In England conformity to rule does not reign in the arts, as it does in France ; nevertheless, public opinion holds a greater sway there than in Germany. National unity is the cause of it. The English wish, in all things, to make principles and actions accord with each other. Theirs is a wise and well-regulated nation, which comprises glory in wisdom, and liberty in order : the Germans, with whom these are only subjects of reverie, have examined ideas independent of their application, and have thus attained a higher elevation in theory.

It will appear strange, that the present men of literature in Germany, have shown themselves more averse than the English to the introduction of philosophical reflections in poetry. It is true, that men of the highest genius in English literature, Shakspeare, Milton, Dryden in his Odes, etc., are poets, who

do not give themselves up to a spirit of argumentation ; but Pope, and many others, must be considered as didactic poets and moralists. The Germans have renewed their youth, the English are become mature.¹ The Germans profess a doctrine which tends to revive enthusiasm in the arts as well as in philosophy, and they will merit applause if they succeed ; for this age lays restraints also on them, and there was never a period in which there existed a greater inclination to despise all that is merely beautiful ; none in which the most common of all questions, *What is it good for ?* has been more frequently repeated.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE PRINCIPAL EPOCHS OF GERMAN LITERATURE.

GERMAN literature has never had what we are accustomed to call a golden age ; that is, a period in which the progress of letters is encouraged by the protection of the sovereign power. Leo X, in Italy, Louis XIV, in France, and, in ancient times, Pericles and Augustus, have given their names to the age in which they lived. We may also consider the reign of Queen Anne as the most brilliant epoch of English literature ; but this nation, which exists by its own powers has never owed its great men to the influence of its kings. Germany was divided ; in Austria no love of literature was discovered, and in Frederick II (who was all Prussia in himself alone), no interest whatever for German writers. Literature, in Germany, has then never been concentrated to one point, and has never found support in the State. Perhaps it owes to this

¹ The English poets of our times, without entering into concert with the Germans, have adopted the same system. Didactic poetry has given place to the fictions of the middle ages, to the empurpled colors of the East ; reasoning, and eloquence itself, are not sufficient to an essentially creative art.

abandonment, as well as to the independence consequent on it, much of its originality and energy.

“We have seen poetry,” says Schiller, “despised by Frederick, the favored son of his country, fly from the powerful throne which refused to protect it; but it still dared to call itself German; it felt proud in being itself the creator of its own glory. The songs of German bards, resounded on the summits of the mountain, were precipitated as torrents into the valleys; the poet, independent, acknowledged no law, save the impressions of his own soul—no sovereign, but his own genius.”

It naturally followed from the want of encouragement given by government to men of literary talent in Germany, that their attempts were made privately and individually in different directions and that they arrived late at the truly remarkable period of their literature.

The German language, for a thousand years, was at first cultivated by monks, then by knights, and afterwards by artisans, such as Hans-Sachs, Sebastian Brand, and others, down to the period of the Reformation; and latterly, by learned men, who have rendered it a language well adapted to all the subtleties of thought.

In examining the works of which German literature is composed, we find, according to the genius of the author, traces of these different modes of culture; as we see in mountains strata of the various minerals which the revolutions of the earth have deposited in them. The style changes its nature almost entirely, according to the writer; and it is necessary for foreigners to make a new study of every new book which they wish to understand.

The Germans, like the greater part of the nations of Europe in the times of chivalry, had also their troubadours and warriors, who sung of love and of battles. An epic poem has lately been discovered, called *the Nibelungen Lied*, which was composed in the thirteenth century; we see in it the heroism and fidelity which distinguished the men of those times, when all was as true, strong, and determinate, as the primitive colors

of nature. The German, in this poem, is more clear and simple than it is at present: general ideas were not yet introduced into it, and traits of character only are narrated. The German nation might then have been considered as the most warlike of all European nations, and its ancient traditions speak only of castles and beautiful mistresses, to whom they devoted their lives. When Maximilian endeavored at a later period to revive chivalry, the human mind no longer possessed that tendency; and those religious disputes had already commenced, which direct thought towards metaphysics, and place the strength of the soul rather in opinions than in actions.¹

¹ "The unknown Singer of the *Nibelungen*, though no Shakspeare, must have had a deep poetic soul; wherein things discontinuous and inanimate shaped themselves together into life, and the Universe with its wondrous purport stood significantly imaged; over-arching, as with heavenly firmaments and eternal harmonies, the little scene where men strut and fret their hour. His Poem, unlike so many old and new pretenders to that name, has a basis and organic structure, a beginning, middle, and end; there is one great principle and idea set forth in it, round which all its multifarious parts combine in living union. remarkable it is, moreover, how long with this essence and primary condition of all poetic virtue, the minor external virtues of what we call Taste, and so forth, are, as it were, presupposed; and the living soul of Poetry being there, its body of incidents, its garment of language, come of their own accord. . . . With an instinctive art, far different from acquired artifice, this Poet of the *Nibelungen*, working in the same province with his contemporaries of the *Heldenbuch*, on the same material of tradition, has, in a wonderful degree, possessed himself of what these could only strive after; and with his 'clear feeling of fictitious truth' avoided as false the errors and monstrous perplexities in which they vainly struggled. . . . The language of the *Heldenbuch* was a feeble half-articulate child's speech, the metre nothing better than a miserable doggerel; whereas here in the old Frankish (*Oberdeutsch*) dialect of the *Nibelungen*, we have a clear decisive utterance, and in a real system of verse, not without essential regularity, great liveliness, and now and then even harmony of rhythm. Doubtless we must often call it a diffuse diluted utterance; at the same time it is genuine, with a certain antique garrulous heartiness, and has a rhythm in the thoughts as well as the words. The simplicity is never silly, even in that perpetual recurrence of epithets, sometimes of rhymes, as where two words, for instance *lib* (body, life *leib*) and *wip* (woman, wife, *weip*) are indissolubly wedded together, and the one never shows itself without the other following—there is something which reminds us not so much of poverty, as of trustfulness and childlike innocence. Indeed a strange charm lies in those old tones, where, in gay dancing melodies, the sternest tidings are sung to

Luther essentially improved his language by making it subservient to theological discussion : his translation of the Psalms and the Bible is still a fine specimen of it. The poetical truth and conciseness which he gives to his style, are, in all respects, conformable to the genius of the German language, and even the sound of the words has an indescribable sort of energetic frankness, on which we with confidence rely. The political and religious wars, which the Germans had the misfortune to wage with each other, withdrew the minds of men from literature ; and when it was again resumed, it was under the auspices of the age of Louis XIV, at the period in which the desire of imitating the French pervaded almost all the courts and writers of Europe.

The works of Hagedorn, of Gellert, of Weiss, etc., were only heavy French, nothing original, nothing conformable to the natural genius of the nation. Those authors endeavored to attain French grace without being inspired with it, either by their habits or their modes of life. They subjected themselves to rule, without having either the elegance or taste which may render even that despotism agreeable. Another school soon succeeded that of the French, and it was in Germanic Switzerland that it was erected : this school was at first

us ; and deep floods of Sadness and Strife play lightly in little curling billows, like seas in summer. It is as a meek smile, in whose still, thoughtful depths a whole infinitude of patience, and love, and heroic strength lie revealed."—(*Carlyle's Essays*, 8vo edition, p. 249.)—*Ed.*

¹ "Utz, Gellert, Cramer, Ramler, Kleist, Hagedorn, Rabener, Gleim, and a multitude of lesser men, whatever excellences they might want, certainly are not chargeable with bad taste. Nay, perhaps of all writers they are the least chargeable with it : a certain clear, light, unaffected elegance, of a higher nature than French elegance, it might be, yet to the exclusion of all very deep or genial qualities, was the excellence they strove after, and for the most part, in a fair measure attained. They resemble English writers of the same, or perhaps an earlier period, more than any other foreigners : apart from Pope, whose influence is visible enough, Beattie, Logan, Wilkie, Glover, unknown perhaps to any of them, might otherwise have almost seemed their models. Goldsmith also would rank among them ; perhaps, in regard to true poetic genius, at their head, for none of them has left us a *Vicar of Wakefield* ; though, in regard to judgment, knowledge, general talent, his place would scarcely be so high."—(*Ibid.*) p. 23.)—*Ed.*

founded on an imitation of English writers. Bodmer, supported by the example of the great Haller, endeavored to show, that English literature agreed better with the German genius than that of France. Gottsched,¹ a learned man, without taste or genius, contested this opinion, and great light sprung from the dispute between these two schools. Some men then began to strike out a new road for themselves. Klopstock held the highest place in the English school, as Wieland did in that of the French; but Klopstock opened a new career for his successors, while Wieland was at once the first and the last of the French school in the eighteenth century. The first, because no other could equal him in that kind of writing, and the last, because after him the German writers pursued a path widely different.

As there still exist in all the Teutonic nations some sparks of that sacred fire, which is again smothered by the ashes of time, Klopstock, at first imitating the English, succeeded at last in awakening the imagination and character peculiar to the Germans; and almost at the same moment, Winckelmann in the arts, Lessing in criticism, and Goethe in poetry, founded a true German school, if we may so call that which admits of as many differences as there are individuals or varieties of talent. I shall examine separately, poetry, the dramatic art, novels, and history; but every man of genius constituting, it may be said, a separate school in Germany, it appears to me necessary to begin by pointing out some of the principal traits which distinguish each writer individually, and by personally characterizing their most celebrated men of literature, before I set about analyzing their works.

¹ "Gottsched has been dead the greater part of the century; and, for the last fifty years, ranks among the Germans somewhat as Prynne or Alexander Ross does among ourselves. A man of a cold, rigid, perseverant character, who mistook himself for a poet and the perfection of critics, and had skill to pass current during the greater part of his literary life for such. On the strength of his Boileau and Batteux, he long reigned supreme; but it was like Night, in rayless majesty, and over a slumbering people. They awoke, before his death, and hurled him, perhaps too indignantly, into his native abyss."—(*Carlyle's Essays*, 8vo edition, p. 18.)—*Ed.*

CHAPTER IV.

WIELAND.

OF all the Germans who have written after the French manner, Wieland is the only one whose works have genius ; and although he has almost always imitated the literature of foreign countries, we cannot avoid acknowledging the great services he has rendered to that of his own nation, by improving its language, and giving it a versification more flowing and harmonious. There was already in Germany a crowd of writers, who endeavored to follow the traces of French literature, such as it was in the age of Louis XIV. Wieland is the first who introduced, with success, that of the eighteenth century. In his prose writings he bears some resemblance to Voltaire, and in his poetry to Ariosto ; but these resemblances, which are voluntary on his part, do not prevent him from being by nature completely German. Wieland is infinitely better informed than Voltaire ; he has studied the ancients with more erudition than has been done by any poet in France. Neither the defects, nor the powers of Wieland allow him to give to his writings any portion of the French lightness and grace.

In his philosophical novels, Agathon and Peregrinus Proteus, he begins very soon with analysis, discussion, and metaphysics. He considers it as a duty to mix with them passages which we commonly call *flowery* ; but we are sensible that his natural disposition would lead him to fathom all the depths of the subject which he endeavors to treat. In the novels of Wieland, seriousness and gayety are both too decidedly expressed ever to blend with each other ; for, in all things, though contrasts are striking, contrary extremes are wearisome.

In order to imitate Voltaire, it is necessary to possess a sar-

castic and philosophical irony, which renders us careless of every thing, except a poignant manner of expressing that irony. A German can never attain that brilliant freedom of pleasantry ; he is too much attached to truth, he wishes to know and to explain what things are, and even when he adopts reprehensible opinions, a secret repentance slackens his pace in spite of himself. The Epicurean philosophy does not suit the German mind ; they give to that philosophy a dogmatical character, while in reality it is seductive only when it presents itself under light and airy forms : as soon as you invest it with principles it is equally displeasing to all.

The poetical works of Wieland have much more grace and originality than his prose writings. Oberon and the other poems, of which I shall speak separately, are charming, and full of imagination. Wieland has, however, been reproached for having treated the subject of love with too little severity, and he is naturally thus condemned by his own countrymen, who still respect women a little after the manner of their ancestors ; but whatever may have been the wanderings of imagination which Wieland allowed himself, we cannot avoid acknowledging in him a large portion of true sensibility : he has often had a good or bad intention of jesting on the subject of love ; but his disposition, naturally serious, prevents him from giving himself boldly up to it. He resembles that prophet who found himself obliged to bless where he wished to curse, and he ends in tenderness what was begun in irony.

In our intercourse with Wieland we are charmed, precisely because his natural qualities are in opposition to his philosophy. This disagreement might be prejudicial to him as a writer, but it renders him more attractive in society ; he is animated, enthusiastic, and, like all men of genius, still young even in his old age ; yet he wishes to be skeptical, and is impatient with those who would employ his fine imagination in the establishment of his faith.

Naturally benevolent, he is nevertheless susceptible of ill-humor ; sometimes, because he is not pleased with himself, and sometimes because he is not pleased with others : he is not

pleased with himself, because he would willingly arrive at a degree of perfection in the manner of expressing his thoughts, of which neither words nor things are susceptible. He does not choose to satisfy himself with those indefinite terms, which perhaps agree better with the art of conversation than perfection itself: he is sometimes displeased with others, because his doctrine, which is a little relaxed, and his sentiments, which are highly exalted, are not always easily reconciled. He contains within himself a French poet and a German philosopher who are alternately angry with each other; but this anger is still very easy to bear; and his discourse, filled with ideas and knowledge, might supply many men of talent with a foundation for conversation of various sorts.¹

¹ "Wieland, born in 1733, early displayed the characteristics of his later years, and precluded to that fluctuating imitation which, through life, was his inspiration. He confessed that he could read nothing with delight which did not set him to work at imitating it; and all his works are imitative. He began his studies at three years of age, and at seven, read Cornelius Nepos with enthusiasm. Between his twelfth and sixteenth years he read all the Roman writers, with Voltaire, Fontenelle, and Bayle. Xenophon and Addison followed; and, in his seventeenth year, he wrote an imitation of Lucretius (1751), and played off Bayle and Leibnitz against Aristotle, to the delight of a public which had the sublime stupidity to accept him as the 'German Lucretius.' The young Realist boldly proclaimed that happiness was the aim of Creation, the greatest psalm which could be sung in the Creator's glory. He changed about, however, and passed over to the Pietists for a time; but the imitative tendency which led him thither, as readily led him away again to Xenophon, Anacreon, Lucian, and the French. He stood in terror of Lessing; and his own disposition, also, moved him towards lighter, cheerfuller views of life. Lessing had made him acquainted with Shakspeare, and his prose translation of our greatest poet, which appeared in 1762-66, was the best service he rendered his nation.

"In 1762 Wieland was brought into contact with 'good society' through Graf Stadion, and made acquaintance not only with the world, but with many English and French writers of the moral deistical school, who completed his emancipation from the Pietists, and taught him how to write for 'the world.' He became the favorite poet of good society. His tales and poems were all animated with an Epicurean morality, and written with a certain lightness and grace (German lightness and German grace—they never lost the national character) which gradually passed from lightness into voluptuousness and obscenity,—qualities not less acceptable to the mass of his readers, in spite of the indignation they roused

The new writers, who have excluded all foreign influence from German literature, have been often unjust to Wieland ; it is he, whose works, even in a translation, have excited the interested of all Europe ; it is he who has rendered the science of antiquity subservient to the charms of literature ; it is he also, who, in verse, has given a musical and graceful flexibility to his fertile but rough language. It is nevertheless true, that his country would not be benefited by possessing many imitators of his writings : national originality is a much better thing ; and we ought to wish, even when we acknowledge Wieland to be a great master, that he may have no disciples.

CHAPTER V.

KLOPSTOCK.

IN Germany, there have been many more remarkable men of the English than of the French school. Among the writers formed by English literature, we must first reckon the admirable Haller, whose poetic genius served him so effectually, as a learned man, in inspiring him with the greatest enthusiasm for the beauties of nature, and the most extensive views of its various phenomena ; Gessner, whose works are even more val-

in sterner circles. He appealed, indeed, piteously against his critics, from his lax writings to his moral life, and wished they ' could see him in his quiet domestic home ; they would then judge otherwise of him.' In truth, his life was blameless, and he might, with Martial, have thrown the blame of his writings on his readers :

' Seria cum possim, quod delectantis malim
Scribere ; tu causa es, lector amice, mihi
Qui legis et tota cantas mea carmina Roma.'

At the same time of Goethe's appearance, Wieland was in his bad odor, as we have before noted ; but he lived through it, and wrote his masterpiece, *Oberon*, when Goethe was with him in Weimar."—(G. II. Lowes' *Goethe's Life and Works*, vol. i. p. 252.)—*Ed.*

ued in France than in Germany ; Gleim, Ramler, etc., and above them all, Klopstock.

His genius was inflamed by reading Milton and Young ; but it was with him that the true German school first began. He expresses, in a very happy manner, in one of his odes, the emulation of the two Muses.

THE TWO MUSES.¹

“ I saw—oh ! saw I what the present views ?
Saw I the future ?—for, with eager soul,
I saw the German with the British Muse
Flying Impetuous to the goal.

“ Two goals before me did the prospect close,
And crown'd the race : the oaks o'ershadow'd one
With their deep verdure : round the other rose
Tall palms beneath the evening sun.

“ Used to the strife, the Muse of Albion stept
Proud to the lists : as on the burning sand
With the Mæonian once, and her who kept
The Capitol, she took her stand.

“ Her younger rival panted as she came,
Yet panted manly ; and a crimson hue
Kindled upon her cheek a noble flame ;
Her golden hair behind her flew.

“ She strove with laboring bosom to contain
Her breath, and leant her forward to the prize.
The Herald raised his trumpet, and the plain
Swam like a dream before her eyes.

“ Proud of the bold One, of herself more proud,
The Briton with her noble glance regards
Thee, Tuisconé : ‘ Ha ! in that oak-wood
I grew with thee among the Bards,

“ But the fame reach'd me, that thou wert no more !
O Muse, who livest while the ages roll,
Forgive me that I learnt it not before :
Now will I learn it at the goal !

¹ We adopt the version of Mr. Wm. Nind. *Odes of Klopstock*, London. 1848, p. 97.—*Ed.*

“ ‘It stands before us. But the farther crown
Seest thou beyond? That courage self-possess’d,
That silence proud, and fiery look cast down,
I know the meaning they confess’d.

“ ‘Yet weigh the hazard ere the herald sound!
Was I not her competitor who fills
Thermopylæ with song: and hers renown’d
Who reigns upon the Seven Hills?’

“ She spake. The moment of decision stern
Came with the herald. And with eyes of fire,
‘I love thee,’ quick Teutona did return;
‘I love thee, Briton, and admire:

“ ‘But yet not more than immortality,
And those fair palms! Reach, if thy genius lead,
Reach them before me! but when thou dost, I
Will snatch with thee the garland meed.

“ ‘And—how my heart against its barrier knocks!—
Perchance I shall be first to gain the wreath;
Shall feel behind me on my streaming locks
The fervor of thy panting breath.’

“ The herald sounds: they flew with eagle flight;
Behind them into clouds the dust was toss’d.
I looked; but when the oaks were pass’d, my sight
In dimness of the dust was lost.”

It is thus that the ode finishes, and there is a grace in not pointing out the victor.

I refer the examination of Klopstock’s works, in a literary point of view, to the chapter on German poetry, and I now confine myself to pointing them out as the actions of his life. The aim of all his works is either to awaken patriotism in his country, or to celebrate religion: if poetry had its saints, Klopstock would certainly be reckoned one of the first of them.

The greater part of his odes may be considered as Christian psalms; Klopstock is the David of the New Testament; but that which honors his character above all, without speaking of his genius, is a religious hymn, under the form of an epic poem, called the *Messias*, to which he devoted twenty years. The Christian world already possessed two poems, the *Inferno*

of Dante, and Milton's *Paradise Lost* : one was full of images and phantoms, like the external religion of the Italians. Milton, who had lived in the midst of civil wars, above all excelled in the painting of his characters ; and his Satan is a gigantic rebel, armed against the monarchy of heaven. Klopstock has conceived the Christian sentiment in all its purity ; he consecrated his soul to the divine Savior of men. The fathers of the Church inspired Dante ; the Bible inspired Milton : the greatest beauties of Klopstock's poem are derived from the New Testament ; from the divine simplicity of the Gospel, he knew how to draw a charming strain of poetry, which does not lessen its purity. In beginning this poem, it seems as if we were entering a great church, in the midst of which an organ is heard ; and that tender emotion, that devout meditation, which inspires us in our Christian temples, also pervades the soul as we read the *Messias*. Klopstock, in his youth, proposed to himself this poem as the object and end of his existence. It appears to me that men would acquit themselves worthily, with respect to this life, if a noble object, a grand idea of any sort, distinguished their passage through the world ; and it is already an honorable proof of character to be able to direct towards one enterprise all the scattered rays of our faculties, the results of our labor. In whatever manner we judge of the beauties and defects of the *Messias*, we ought frequently to read over some of its verses : the reading of the whole work may be wearisome, but every time that we return to it, we breathe a sort of perfume of the soul, which makes us feel an attraction to all things holy and celestial.

After long labors, after a great number of years, Klopstock at length concluded his poem. Horace, Ovid, etc., have expressed in various manners, the noble pride which seemed to insure to them the immortal duration of their works :

“ Exegi monumentum ære perennius ;”¹

and,

“ Nomenque erit indelibile nostrum.”²

¹ “ I have erected a monument more durable than brass.”

² “ The memory of my name shall be indelible.”

A sentiment of a very different nature penetrated the soul of Klopstock when his *Messias* was finished. He expresses it thus in his *Ode to the Redeemer*, which is at the end of his poem :¹

“I hoped it for thee! and I have sung,
O heavenly Redeemer, the new Covenant’s song!
Through the fearful course have I run;
And thou hast my stumbling forgiven!

“Begin the first harp-sound,
O warm, winged, eternal gratitude!
Begin, begin, my heart gushes forth!
And I weep with rapture!

“I implore no reward; I am already rewarded,
With angel joy, for thee have I sung!
The whole soul’s emotion
E’en to the depths of its first power!

“Commotion of the Inmost, the heaven
And earth for me vanished!
And no more were spread the wings of the Storm; with gentlest
feeling,
Like the Spring-time’s morning, breathed the zephyr of life.

¹ No approved metrical version of Klopstock’s *Hymn* being at hand, we have undertaken a literal translation. We know how unsatisfactory such a rendering must be to those who are able to enjoy the original, yet it is—or aims to be—an exact translation of the sense. The good translations of poetry, those fulfilling all the requirements of a proper standard, are very few; they might all be counted on the fingers of one hand. In a poem are many things to be rendered,—sense, rhythm, measure, rhyme, and, above all, that inner spirit, which poets alone can give, which poetic minds alone can feel,—all of which must be reproduced in another tongue in order to make a perfect translation. A sense and a measure, usually but a distorted shadow, or a faint semblance, of *the sense* and *the measure*, are usually given, and we are urged to believe that we have a faithful image of the original. Sometimes we get the measure, sometimes the sense, but rarely indeed the two combined. If we can have but one thing, let us have the sense. And often something of the melody of the original clings to a literal version, especially when the translation is made into a cognate language: when sound and sense are really wedded in a poem, one cannot be faithfully transferred, without it retaining at least a “shadowy recollection,” a platonic remembrance, of the other. In translating this piece of Klopstock, we have preserved to the eye, and in part to the ear, the lines of the original; we have followed as closely as possible the succession of words, but have interrupted the measure whenever the same required it.—*Ed.*

- “ He knows not all my gratitude,
To whom 'tis but *dimly* revealed,
That, when in its full feeling
The soul o'erflows, speech can only stammer.
- “ Rewarded am I, rewarded ! I have seen
The tears of Christ flowing,
And dare yonder in the Future
Look for tears divine !
- “ E'en through terrestrial joy : In vain conceal I from thee
My heart, of ambition full :
In youth it beat loud and high ; in manhood
Has it beaten ever, only more subdued.
- “ If there be any praise, if there be any virtue,
On these things think ! the flame divine chose I for my guide !
High waved the flame before, and showed
The ambitious a better path.
- “ This was the cause, that terrestrial joy
With its spell lulled me not to sleep ;
This round me oft to return
And seek angel-joys !
- “ These roused me also, with loud penetrating silver-tone,
With intoxicating remembrance of the hours of consecration,—
These same, these same angel-joys,
With harp and trombone, with thunder-call !
- “ I am at the goal, at the goal ! and feel, where I am,
In my whole soul a trembling ! so will it be (I speak
Humanly of heavenly things) with us, in presence of Him,
Who died ! and arose ! at the coming in heaven !
- “ Up to this goal hast thou,
My Lord ! and My God !
Over more than one grave me,
With mighty arm, safely brought !
- “ Recovery gavest thou me ! gavest courage and resolution
In the near approach of death !
And saw I things terrible and unknown,
That were to yield, since thou wast the shield ?
- “ They fled therefrom ! and I have sung,
O heavenly Redeemer, the new Covenant's song !
Through the fearful course have I run !
I hoped it for thee !”

This mixture of poetic enthusiasm and religious confidence inspires both admiration and tenderness. Men of talents formerly addressed themselves to fabulous deities. Klopstock has consecrated his talents to God himself; and, by the happy union of the Christian religion with poetry, he shows the Germans how possible it is to attain a property in the fine arts, which may belong peculiarly to themselves, without being derived, as servile imitations, from the ancients.

Those who have known Klopstock, respect as much as they admire him. Religion, liberty, love, occupied all his thoughts. His religious profession was found in the performance of all his duties; he even gave up the cause of liberty when innocent blood would have defiled it; and fidelity consecrated all the attachments of his heart. Never had he recourse to his imagination to justify an error; it exalted his soul without leading it astray.

It is said, that his conversation was full of wit and taste; that he loved the society of women, particularly of French women, and that he was a good judge of that sort of charm and grace which pedantry reproves. I readily believe it; for there is always something of universality in genius, and perhaps it is connected by secret ties to grace, at least to that grace which is bestowed by nature.

How far distant is such a man from envy, selfishness, excess of vanity, which many writers have excused in themselves in the name of the talents they possessed! If they had possessed more, none of these defects would have agitated them. We are proud, irritable, astonished at our own perfections, when a little dexterity is mixed with the mediocrity of our character; but true genius inspires gratitude and modesty; for we feel from whom we received it, and we are also sensible of the limit which he who bestowed has likewise assigned to it.

We find, in the second part of the *Messias*, a very fine passage on the death of *Mary*, the sister of *Martha* and *Lazarus*, who is pointed out to us in the Gospel as the image of contemplative virtue. *Lazarus*, who has received life a second time from *Jesus Christ*, bids his sister farewell with a mixture of

grief and of confidence which is deeply affecting. From the last moments of Mary, Klopstock has drawn a picture of the death-bed of the just. When in his turn he was also on his death-bed, he repeated his verses on Mary, with an expiring voice ; he recollected them through the shades of the sepulchre, and in feeble accents he pronounced them as exhorting himself to die well : thus, the sentiments expressed in youth were sufficiently pure to form the consolation of his closing life.

Ah ! how noble a gift is genius, when it has never been profaned, when it has been employed only in revealing to mankind, under the attractive form of the fine arts, the generous sentiments and religious hopes which have before lain dormant in the human heart.

This same passage of the death of Mary was read with the burial service at Klopstock's funeral. The poet was old when he ceased to live, but the virtuous man was already in possession of the immortal palms which renew existence and flourish beyond the grave. All the inhabitants of Hamburg' rendered to the patriarch of literature the honors which elsewhere are scarcely ever accorded, except to rank and power, and the manes of Klopstock received the reward which the excellence of his life had merited.

CHAPTER VI.

LESSING AND WINCKELMANN.

PERHAPS the literature of Germany alone derived its source from criticism : in every other place criticism has followed the great productions of art ; but in Germany it produced them. The epoch at which literature appears in its greatest splendor

¹ "The house in which Klopstock the poet lived thirty years (1774-1803), and died, is No. 27 in the Königstrasse."—(*Murray's Hand-book of Northern Germany*, p. 322.)—*Ed.*

is the cause of this difference. Various nations had for many ages become illustrious in the art of writing ; the Germans acquired it at a much later period, and thought they could do no better than follow the path already marked out ; it was necessary then that criticism should expel imitation, in order to make room for originality. Lessing wrote in prose with unexampled clearness and precision : depth of thought frequently embarrasses the style of the writers of the new school ; Lessing, not less profound, had something severe in his character, which made him discover the most concise and striking modes of expression. Lessing was always animated in his writings by an emotion hostile to the opinions he attacked, and a sarcastic humor gives strength to his ideas.

He occupied himself by turns with the theatre, with philosophy, antiquities, and theology, pursuing truth through all of them, like a huntsman, who feels more pleasure in the chase than in the attainment of his object. His style has, in some respects, the lively and brilliant conciseness of the French ; and it conduced to render the German language classical. The writers of the new school embrace a greater number of thoughts at the same time, but Lessing deserves to be more generally admired ; he possesses a new and bold genius, which meets nevertheless the common comprehensions of mankind. His modes of perception are German, his manner of expression European. Although a dialectician, at once lively and close in his arguments, enthusiasm for the beautiful filled his whole soul ; he possessed ardor without glare, and a philosophical vehemence which was always active, and which by repeated strokes produced effects the most durable.

Lessing analyzed the French drama, which was then fashionable in his country, and asserted that the English drama was more intimately connected with the genius of his countrymen. In the judgment he passes on *Mérope*, *Zaïre*, *Semiramis*, and *Rodogune*, he notices no particular improbability ; he attacks the sincerity of the sentiments and characters, and finds fault with the personages of those fictions, as if they were real beings ; his criticism is a treatise on the human heart, as much

as on theatrical poetry. To appreciate with justice the observations made by Lessing on the dramatic system in general, we must examine, as I mean to do in the following chapters, the principal differences of French and German opinion on this subject. But, in the history of literature, it is remarkable that a German should have had the courage to criticise a great French writer, and jest with wit on the very prince of jesters, Voltaire himself.

It was much for a nation, lying under the weight of an anathema which refused it both taste and grace, to become sensible that in every country there exists a national taste, a natural grace ; and that literary fame may be acquired in various ways. The writings of Lessing gave a new impulse to his countrymen : they read Shakspeare ; they dared in Germany to call themselves German ; and the rights of originality were established instead of the yoke of correction.

Lessing has composed theatrical pieces and philosophical works which deserve to be examined separately ; we should always consider German authors under various points of view.

As they are still more distinguished by the faculty of thought than by genius, they do not devote themselves exclusively to any particular species of composition ; reflection attracts them successively to different careers of literature.

Among the writings of Lessing,¹ one of the most remark-

¹ "But it is to Lessing that an Englishman would turn with the readiest affection. We cannot but wonder that more of this man is not known among us, or that the knowledge of him has not done more to remove such misconceptions. Among all the writers of the eighteenth century—we will not except even Diderot and David Hume—there is not one of a more compact and rigid intellectual structure ; who more distinctly knows what he is aiming at, or with more gracefulness, vigor, and precision, sent it forth to his readers. He thinks with the clearness and pierceness sharpness of the most expert logician ; but a genial fire pervades him, a wit, a heartiness, a general richness and fineness of nature, to which most logicians are strangers. He is a skeptic in many things, but the noblest of skeptics ; a mild, manly, half-careless enthusiasm struggles through his indignant unbelief : he stands before us like a toil-worn, but unwearied and heroic champion, earning not the conquest but the battle ; as indeed himself admits to us, that 'it is not the finding of truth, but the honest search

able is the Laocoön ; it characterizes the subjects which are suitable both to poetry and painting, with as much philosophy in the principles as sagacity in the examples : nevertheless, it was Winckelmann who in Germany brought about an entire revolution in the manner of considering the arts, and literature also, as connected with the arts. I shall speak of him elsewhere under the relation of his influence on the arts ; but his style certainly places him in the first rank of German writers.

This man, who at first knew antiquity only by books, was desirous of contemplating its noble remains ; he felt himself attracted with ardor towards the South ; we still frequently find in German imagination some traces of that love of the sun,

for it, that profits.' We confess we should be entirely at a loss for the literary creed of that man who reckoned Lessing other than a thoroughly cultivated writer,—nay, entitled to rank, in this particular, with the most distinguished writers of any existing nation. As a poet, as a critic, philosopher, or controversialist, his style will be found precisely such as we of England are accustomed to admire most : brief, nervous, vivid, yet quiet, without glitter or antithesis ; idiomatic, pure without purism, transparent, yet full of character and reflex hues of meaning. ' Every sentence,' says Horn and justly, ' is like a phalanx ;' not a word wrong placed, not a word that could be spared ; and it forms itself so calmly and lightly, and stands in its completeness, so gay, yet so impregnable ! As a poet, he contemptuously denied himself all merit ; but his readers have not taken him at his words : here, too, a similar felicity of style attends him ; his plays—his *Minna von Barnhelm*, his *Emilie Galotti*, his *Nathan der Weise*—have a genuine and graceful poetic life ; yet no works known to us in any language are purer from exaggeration, or any appearance of falsehood. They are pictures, we might say, painted not in colors, but in crayons ; yet a strange attraction lies in them, for the figures are grouped into the finest attitudes, and true and spirit-speaking in every line. It is with his style chiefly that we have to do here ; yet we must add, that the matter of his works is not less meritorious. His Criticism, and philosophic or religious Skepticism, were of a higher mood than had yet been heard in Europe, still more in Germany ; his *Dramaturgie* first exploded the pretensions of the French theatre, and, with irresistible conviction, made Shakspeare known to his countrymen, preparing the way for a brighter era in their literature, the chief men of which still thankfully look back to Lessing as their patriarch. His *Laocoön*, with its deep glances into the philosophy of Art, his *Dialogues of Freemasons*, a work of far higher import than its title indicates, may yet teach many things to most of us, which we know not, and ought to know."—(*Carlyle's Essays*, p. 22.)—*Ed.*

that weariness of the North, which formerly drew so many northern nations into the countries of the South. A fine sky awakens sentiments similar to the love we bear to our country. When Winckelmann, after a long abode in Italy, returned to Germany, the sight of snow, of the pointed roofs which it covers, and of smoky houses, filled him with melancholy. He felt as if he could no longer enjoy the arts, when he no longer breathed the air which gave them birth. What contemplative eloquence do we not discover in what he has written on the Apollo Belvedere and the Laocoön ! His style is calm and majestic as the object of his consideration. He gives to the art of writing the imposing dignity of ancient monuments, and his description produces the same sensation as the statue itself. No one before him had united such exact and profound observation with admiration so animated ; it is thus only that we can comprehend the fine arts. The attention they excite must be awakened by love ; and we must discover in the *chefs-d'œuvre* of genius, as we do in the features of a beloved object, a thousand charms, which are revealed to us by the sentiments they inspire.

Some poets before Winckelmann has studied Greek tragedies, with the purpose of adapting them to our theatres. Learned men were known, whose authority was equal to that of books ; but no one had hitherto (to use the expression) rendered himself a pagan in order to penetrate antiquity. Winckelmann possesses the defects and advantages of a Grecian amateur ; and we feel in his writings the worship of beauty, such as it existed in a nation where it so often obtained the honors of apotheosis.

Imagination and learning equally lent their different lights to Winckelmann ; before him it was thought that they mutually excluded each other. He has shown us that to understand the ancients, one was as necessary as the other. We can give life to objects of art only by an intimate acquaintance with the country and with the epoch in which they existed. We are not interested by features which are indistinct. To animate recitals and fictions, where past ages are the theatres, learning must

ever assist the imagination, and render it, if possible, a spectator of what it is to paint, and a contemporary of what it relates.

Zadig guessed, by some confused traces, some words half torn, at circumstances which he deduced from the slightest indications. It is thus that through antiquity we must take learning for our guide : the vestiges which we perceive are interrupted, effaced, difficult to lay hold of ; but by making use at once of imagination and study, we bring back time, and renew existence.

When we appeal to tribunals to decide on the truth of a fact, it is sometimes a slight circumstance which makes it clear. Imagination is in this respect like a judge ; a single word, a custom, an allusion found in the works of the ancients, serves it as a light, by which it arrives at the knowledge of perfect truth.

Winckelmann knew how to apply to his inspection of the monuments of the arts, that spirit of judgment which leads us to the knowledge of men : he studied the physiognomy of the statue as he would have done that of a human being. He seized with great justness the slightest observations, from which he knew how to draw the most striking conclusions. A certain physiognomy, and emblematical attribute, a mode of drapery, may at once cast an unexpected light on the longest researches. The locks of Ceres are thrown back with a disorder that would be unsuitable to the character of Minerva ; the loss of Proserpine has forever troubled the mind of her mother. Minos, the son and disciple of Jupiter, has in our medals the same features as his father ; nevertheless the calm majesty of the one, and the severe expression of the other, distinguish the sovereign of the gods from the judge of men. The Torso is a fragment of the statue of Hercules deified,—of him who received from Hebe the cup of immortality ; while the Farnesian Hercules yet possesses only the attributes of a mortal ; each contour of the Torso, as energetic as this, but more rounded, still characterizes the strength of the hero ; but of the hero who, placed in heaven, is thenceforth freed from the rude labors of the earth. All is symbolical in the arts, and nature shows herself under a thousand different appearances in those

pictures, in that poetry, where immobility must indicate motion, where the inmost soul must be externally displayed, and where the existence of a moment must last to eternity.

Winckelmann has banished from the fine arts in Europe the mixture of ancient and modern taste. In Germany, his Influence has been still more displayed in literature than in the arts. We shall, in what follows, be led to examine whether the scrupulous imitation of the ancients is compatible with natural originality ; or rather, whether we ought to sacrifice that originality in order to confine ourselves to the choice of subjects, in which poetry, like painting, having no model in existence, can represent only statues. But this discussion is foreign to the merit of Winckelmann : in the fine arts, he has shown us what constituted taste among the ancients ; it was for the moderns, in this respect, to feel what it suited them to adopt or to reject. When a man of genius succeeds in displaying secrets of an antique or foreign nature, he renders service by the impulse which he traces : the emotion thus received becomes part of ourselves ; and the greater the truth that accompanies it, the less servile is the imitation it inspires.

Winckelmann has developed the true principles, now admitted into the arts, of the nature of the ideal ; of that perfect nature, of which the type is in our imagination, and does not exist elsewhere. The application of these principles to literature is singularly productive.

The poetic of all the arts is united under the same point of view in the writings of Winckelmann, and all have gained by it. Poetry has been better comprehended by the aid of sculpture, and sculpture by that of poetry : and we have been led by the arts of Greece to her philosophy. Idealistic metaphysics originate with the Germans, as they did formerly with the Greeks, in the adoration of supreme beauty, which our souls alone can conceive and acknowledge. This supreme ideal beauty is a reminiscence of heaven, our original country ; the sculptures of Phidias, the tragedies of Sophocles, and the doctrines of Plato, all agree to give us the same idea of it under different forms.

CHAPTER VII.

GOETHE

THAT which was wanting to Klopstock was a creative imagination : he gave utterance to great thoughts and noble sentiments in beautiful verse ; but he was not what might be called an artist. His inventions are weak ; and the colors in which he invests them have scarcely even that plenitude of strength that we delight to meet with in poetry, and in all other arts which are expected to give to fiction the energy and originality of nature. Klopstock loses himself in the ideal. Goethe never gives up the earth, even in attaining the most sublime conceptions, his mind possesses vigor not weakened by sensibility. Goethe might be regarded as the representative of all German literature ; not that there are no writers superior to him in different kinds of composition, but that he unites in himself alone all the distinguishes German genius ; and no one besides is so remarkable for a peculiar species of imagination which neither Italians, English, nor French have ever attained.

Goethe having displayed his talents in composition of various kinds, the examination of his works will find the greatest part of the following chapters ; but a personal knowledge of the man who possesses such an influence over the literature of his country will, it appears to me, assist us the better to understand that literature.¹

¹ “ The Duchess Amalia was enchanted with her [Madame de Staël], and the duke wrote to Goethe, who was at Jena, begging him to come over, and be seen by her ; which Goethe very positively declined. He said, if she wished very much to see him, and would come to Jena, she should be very heartily welcomed ; a comfortable lodging and a bourgeois table would be offered her, and every day they could have some hours together when his business was over ; but he could not undertake to go to court, and into

Goethe possesses superior talents for conversation ; and whatever we may say, superior talents ought to enable a man to talk. We may, however, produce some examples of silent men of genius : tinidity, misfortune, disdain, or *ennui*, are often the cause of it ; but, in general, extent of ideas and warmth of soul naturally inspire the necessity of communicating our feelings to others ; and those men who will not be judged by what they say, may not deserve that we should interest ourselves in what they think. When Goethe is induced to talk, he is admirable ; his eloquence is enriched with thought ; his pleasantry is, at the same time, full of grace and of philosophy ; his imagination is impressed by external objects, as was that of the ancient artists ; nevertheless his reason possesses but too much the maturity of our own times. Nothing disturbs the strength of his mind, and even the defects of his character, ill-humor, embarrassments, constraint, pass like clouds round the foot of that mountain on the summit of which his genius is placed.

What is related of the conversation of Diderot may give some idea of that of Goethe ; but, if we may judge by the writings of Diderot, the distance between these two men must be infinite. Diderot is the slave of his genius ; Goethe ever

society ; he did not feel himself strong enough. In the beginning of 1804. however, he came to Weimar, and there he made her acquaintance, that is to say, he received her in his own house, at first *tête-à-tête*, and afterwards in small circles of friends.

“Except when she managed to animate him by her paradoxes, or wit, he was cold and formal to her, even more so than to other remarkable people ; and he has told us the reason. Rousseau had been drawn into a correspondence with two women, who addressed themselves to him as admirers ; he had shown himself in this correspondence by no means to his advantage, now (1803) that the letters appeared in print. Goethe had read or heard of this correspondence, and Madame de Staël had frankly told him she intended to print his conversation.

“This was enough to make him ill at ease in her society ; and although she said he was ‘un homme d’un esprit prodigieux en conversation . . . quand on le sait faire parler il est admirable,’ she never saw the real, but a factitious Goethe. By dint of provocation—and champagne—she managed to make him talk brilliantly ; she never got him to talk to her seriously. On the 29th of February, she left Weimar, to the great relief both of Goethe and Schiller.”—(Lewes, *Life of Goethe*, vol ii. p. 274.)

holds the powers of his mind in subjection : Diderot is affected, from the constant endeavor to produce effect ; but in Goethe we perceive disdain of success, and that to a degree that is singularly pleasing, even when we have most reason to find fault with his negligence. Diderot finds it necessary to supply by philanthropy his want of religious sentiments : Goethe is inclined to be more bitter than sweet ; but, above all, he is natural ; and, in fact, without this quality, what is there in one man that should have power to interest another ?

Goethe possesses no longer that resistless ardor which inspired him in the composition of *Werther* ; but the warmth of his imagination is still sufficient to animate every thing. It might be said, that he is himself unconnected with life, and that he describes it merely as a painter. He attaches more value, at present, to the pictures he presents to us, than to the emotions he experiences ; time has rendered him a spectator. While he still bore a part in the active scenes of the passions, while he suffered, in his own person, from the perturbations of the heart, his writings produced a more lively impression.

As we do not always best appreciate our own talents, Goethe maintains at present, that an author should be calm even when he is writing a passionate work ; and that an artist should equally be cool, in order the more powerfully to act on the imagination of his readers. Perhaps in early life, he would not have entertained this opinion ; perhaps he was then enslaved by his genius, rather than its master ; perhaps he then felt that the sublime and heavenly sentiment being of transient duration in the heart of man, the poet is inferior to the inspiration which animates him, and cannot enter into judgment on it, without losing it at once.

At first we are astonished to find coldness, and even something like stiffness, in the author of *Werther* ; but when we can prevail on him to be perfectly at his ease, the liveliness of his imagination makes the restraint which we first felt entirely disappear. He is a man of universal mind, and impartial because universal ; for there is no indifference in his impartiality : his is a double existence, a double degree of strength, a double

light, which on all subjects enlightens at once both sides of the question. When it is necessary to think, nothing arrests his course; neither the age in which he lives, nor the habits he has formed, nor his relations with social life: his eagle glance falls decidedly on the object he observes. If his career had been a political one, if his soul had developed itself by actions, his character would have been more strongly marked, more firm, more patriotic; but his mind would not have taken so wide a range over every different mode of perception; passion or interests would then have traced out to him a positive path.

Goethe delights in his writings, as well as in his conversation, to break the thread which he himself has spun, to destroy the emotions he excites, to throw down the image he has forced us to admire. When, in his fictions, he inspires us with interest for any particular character, he soon shows the inconsistencies which are calculated to detach us from it. He disposes of the poetic world, like a conqueror of the real earth; and thinks himself strong enough to introduce, as nature sometimes does, the genius of destruction into his own works. If he were not an estimable character, we should be afraid of this species of superiority which elevates itself above all things; which degrades and then again raises up; which affects us, and then laughs at our emotion; which affirms and doubts by turns, and always with the same success.

I have said that Goethe possessed in himself alone all the principal features of German genius; they are all indeed found in him to an eminent degree: a great depth of ideas, that grace which springs from imagination—a grace far more original than that which is formed by the spirit of society: in short, a sensibility sometimes bordering on the fantastic, but for that very reason the more calculated to interest readers, who seek in books something that may give variety to their monotonous existence, and in poetry, impressions which may supply the want of real events. If Goethe were a Frenchman, he would be made to talk from morning till night: all the authors, who were contemporary with Diderot, went to derive ideas from his conversation, and afforded

him, at the same time, an habitual enjoyment from the admiration he inspired. The Germans know not how to make use of their talents in conversation, and so few people, even among the most distinguished, have the habit of interrogating and answering, that society is scarcely at all esteemed among them ; but the influence of Goethe is not the less extraordinary. There are a great many people in Germany who would think genius discoverable even in the direction of a letter, if it were written by him. The admirers of Goethe form a sort of fraternity, in which the rallying words serve to discover the adepts to each other. When foreigners also profess to admire him, they are rejected with disdain, if certain restrictions leave room to suppose that they have allowed themselves to examine works which nevertheless gain much by examination. No man can kindle such fanaticism without possessing great faculties, whether good or bad ; for there is nothing but power, of whatever kind it may be, which men sufficiently dread to be excited by it to a degree of love so enthusiastic.

CHAPTER VIII.

SCHILLER.

SCHILLER was a man of uncommon genius and of perfect sincerity ; these two qualities ought to be inseparable at least in a literary character. Thought can never be compared with action, but when it awakens in us the image of truth. Falseness is still more disgusting in writing than in conduct. Actions even of the most deceitful kind still remain actions, and we know what we have to depend on, either in judging or hating them ; but writings are only a vain mass of idle words, when they do not proceed from sincere conviction.

There is not a nobler course than that of literature, when it is pursued as Schiller pursued it. It is true, that in Germany

there is so much seriousness and probity, that it is there alone we can be completely acquainted with the character and the duties of every vocation. Nevertheless Schiller was admirable among them all, both with respect to his virtues and his talents. His Muse was Conscience : she needs no invocation, for we hear her voice at all times, when we have once listened to it. He loved poetry, the dramatic art, history, and literature in general, for its own sake. If he had determined never to publish his works, he would nevertheless have taken the same pains in writing them ; and no consideration, drawn either from success, from the prevailing fashion, from prejudice, or from any thing, in short, that proceeds from others, could ever have prevailed on him to alter his writings ; for his writings were himself : they expressed his soul ; and he did not conceive the possibility of altering a single expression, if the internal sentiment which inspired it had undergone no change. Schiller, doubtless, was not exempt from self-love ; for if it be necessary, in order to animate us to glory, it is likewise so to render us capable of any active exertion whatever ; but nothing differs so much from another in its consequences as vanity and the love of fame : the one seeks successes by fraud, the other endeavors to command it openly ; this feels inward uneasiness and lies cunningly in wait for public opinion ; that trusts its own powers, and depends on natural causes alone for strength to subdue all opposition. In short, there is a sentiment even more pure than the love of glory, which is the love of truth : it is this love that renders literary men like the warlike preachers of a noble cause ; and to them should henceforth be assigned the charge of keeping the sacred fire ; for feeble women are no longer, as formerly, sufficient for its defence.

Innocence in genius, and candor in power, are both noble qualities. Our idea of goodness is sometimes debased by associating it with that of weakness ; but when it is united to the highest degree of knowledge and of energy, we comprehend in what sense the Bible has told us, that " God made man after his own image." Schiller did himself an injury, when he first entered into the world, by the wanderings of his imagination ;

but with the maturity of age, he recovered that sublime purity which gives birth to noble thought. With degrading sentiments he held no intercourse. He lived, he spoke, he acted, as if the wicked did not exist; and when he described them in his works, it was with more exaggeration and less depth of observation than if he had really known them. The wicked presented themselves to his imagination as an obstacle in nature, as a physical scourge; and perhaps, in many respects, they have no intellectual being; the habit of vice has changed their souls into a perverted instinct.

Schiller was the best of friends, the best of fathers, the best of husbands; no quality was wanting to complete that gentle and peaceful character which was animated by the fire of genius alone; the love of liberty, respect for the female sex, enthusiasm for the fine arts, adoration of the Divinity, inspired his mind; and in the analysis of his works it would be easy to point out to what particular virtue we owe the various productions of his masterly pen. It has been said that genius is all-sufficient. I believe it, where knowledge and skill preside; but when we seek to paint the storms of human nature, or fathom it in its unsearchable depths, the powers even of imagination fail; we must possess a soul that has felt the agitation of the tempest, but into which the Divine Spirit has descended to restore its serenity.¹

¹ "Of his noble sense of truth, both in speculation and in action; of his deep, genial insight into nature; and the living harmony in which he renders back what is highest and grandest in Nature, no reader of his works need be reminded. In whatever belongs to the pathetic, the heroic, the tragically elevating, Schiller is at home; a master; nay, perhaps the greatest of all late poets. To the assiduous student, moreover, much else that lay in Schiller, but was never worked into shape, will become partially visible: deep inexhaustible mines of thought and feeling; a whole world of gifts, the finest produce of which was but beginning to be realized. To his high-minded, unwearied efforts, what was impossible, had length of years been granted him! There is a tone in some of his later pieces, which here and there breathes of the very highest region of art. Nor are the natural or accidental defects we have noticed in his genius, even as it stands, such as to exclude him from the rank of great Poets. Poets whom the whole world reckons great, have, more than once, exhibited the like. Milton, for example, shares most of them with him: like Schiller, he dwells

I saw Schiller, for the first time, in the saloon of the Duke and Duchess of Weimar, in the presence of a society as enlightened as it was exalted. He read French very well, but he had never spoken it. I maintained, with some warmth, the superiority of our dramatic system over that of all others; he did not refuse to enter the lists with me, and without feeling any uneasiness from the difficulty and slowness with which he expressed himself in French, without dreading the opinion of his audience, which was all against him, his conviction of being right impelled him to speak. In order to refute him, I at first made use of French arms—vivacity and pleasantry; but in what Schiller said, I soon discovered so many ideas through the impediment of his words; I was so struck with that simplicity of character, which led a man of genius to engage himself thus in a contest where speech was wanting to express his

with full power, only in the high and earnest; in all other provinces exhibiting a certain inaptitude, an elephantine unpliance: he too has little Humor; his coarse invective has in it contemptuous emphasis enough, yet scarcely any graceful sport. Indeed, on the positive side also, these two worthies are not without a resemblance. Under far other circumstances, with less massiveness, and vehement strength of soul, there is in Schiller the same intensity; the same concentration, and towards similar objects, towards whatever is sublime in Nature and in Art, which sublimities, they both, each in his several way, worship with undivided heart. There is not in Schiller's nature the same rich complexity of rhythm, as in Milton's with its depth of linked sweetness; yet in Schiller, too, there is something of the same pure, swelling force, some tone which, like Milton's, is deep, majestic, solemn.

“It was as a dramatic author that Schiller distinguished himself to the world: yet often we feel as if chance rather than a natural tendency had led him into this province; as if his talent were essentially, in a certain style, lyrical, perhaps even epic, rather than dramatic. He dwelt within himself, and could not without effort, and then only within a certain range, body forth other forms of being. Nay, much of what is called his poetry seems to us oratorical rather than poetical; his first bias might have led him to be a speaker, rather than a singer. Nevertheless, a pure fire dwelt deep in his soul; and only in Poetry, of one or the other sort, could this find utterance. The rest of his nature, at the same time, has a certain prosaic rigor; so that not without strenuous and complex endeavors, long persisted in, could its poetic quality evolve itself. Quite pure, and as the all-sovereign element, it perhaps never did evolve itself; and among such complex endeavors, a small accident might influence large portions in its course.”—(*Carlyle's Essays*, 8vo edition, p. 238.)—*Ed.*

thoughts ; I found him so modest and so indifferent as to what concerned his own success, so proud and so animated in the defence of what appeared to him to be truth, that I vowed to him, from that moment, a friendship replete with admiration.

Attacked, while yet young, by a hopeless disease, the sufferings of his last moments were softened by the attention of his children, and of a wife who deserved his affection by a thousand endearing qualities. Madame von Wolzogen, a friend worthy of comprehending him, asked him, a few hours before his death, how he felt ? " Still more and more easy," was his reply ; and, indeed, had he not reason to place his trust in that God whose domiuiou on earth he had endeavored to promote ? Was he not approaching the abode of the just ? Is he not at this moment in the society of those who resemble him ? and has he not already rejoined the friends who are awaiting us ?

CHAPTER IX.

OF STYLE, AND OF VERSIFICATION IN THE GERMAN LANGUAGE.

In learning the prosody of a language, we enter more intimately into the spirit of the nation by which it is spoken, than by any other possible manner of study. Thence it follows that it is amusing to pronounce foreign words : we listen to ourselves as if another were speaking ; but nothing is so delicate, nothing so difficult to seize, as accent. We learn the most complicated airs of music a thousand times more readily than the pronounciation of a single syllable. A long succession of years, or the first impressions of childhood, can alone render us capable of imitating this pronounciation, which comprehends whatever is most subtle and undefinable in the imagination, and in national character.

The Germanic dialects have for their original a mother-tongue, of which they all partake. This common source re-

news and multiplies expressions in a mode always conformable to the genius of the people. The nations of Latin origin enrich themselves, as we may say, only externally; they must have recourse to dead languages, to petrified treasures, for the extension of their empire. It is therefore natural that innovations in words should be less pleasing to them, than to those nations which emit shoots from an ever-living stock. But the French writers require an animation and coloring of their style, by the boldest measures that a natural sentiment can suggest, while the Germans, on the contrary, gain by restricting themselves. Among them, reserve cannot destroy originality; they run no risk of losing it but by the very excess of abundance.

The air we breathe has much influence on the sounds we articulate: the diversity of soil and climate produces very different modes of pronouncing the same language. As we approach the sea-coast, we find the words become softer; the climate there is more temperate; perhaps also the habitual sight of this image of infinity inclines to revery, and gives to pronunciation more of effeminacy and indolence; but when we ascend towards the mountains, the accent becomes stronger, and we might say that the inhabitants of these elevated regions wish to make themselves heard by the rest of the world, from the height of their natural *rostra*. We find in the Germanic dialects the traces of the different influences I have now had occasion to point out.

The German is in itself a language as primitive, and almost as intricate in structure, as the Greek.¹ Those who have made

¹ The subject of comparative philology is suggested,—a subject that especially reminds us of German erudition. We can here only refer to those who have devoted themselves to the study of this noble branch of learning, and thus guide the student to sources whence he can obtain all the information he may desire. The leading article in the *New Englander*, for August, 1858 (by Mr. Dwight), contains a clearly written summary of the History of Modern Philology, from which we take the following:

“Behold, now, the most important of the different names that we have mentioned, grouped in classes according to their merit.

“1. Bopp, Grimm, Pott, Diefenbach, Benary, Schleicher, Curtius, Kuhn, Diez, Mommsen, and Aufrecht.

“2. Eichhoff, Ahrens, Giese, Hoefler, Heyse, Benfey, Donaldson.

researches into the great families of nations, have thought they discovered the historical reasons for this resemblance. It is certainly true, that we remark in the German a grammatical affinity with the Greek; it has all its difficulty, without its charm; for the multitude of consonants of which the words are composed, render them rather noisy than sonorous. It

“3. Kaltschmidt, Rapp, and Winning.

“These writers may also be advantageously divided, for the reader’s information, into different classes, according to the subjects that they have investigated.

I. LANGUAGE.

“1st. The Indo-European languages generally: Schleicher (*Sprachen Europa’s*): Max Müller (*Survey of Languages*, 2d edition).

“2d. Specially,

“ (1.) The Græco-Italic: Schleicher (*Sprachen, &c.*); Mommsen (*Römische Geschichte*); E. Curtius (*Griechische Gesch.*); Aufrecht and Kirchhoff (*Umbrische Sprachdenkmäler*); Diez (*Grammatik der Romanischen Sprachen*).

“ (2.) The Lettic: Schleicher (*Sprachen, &c.*).

“ (3.) The Gothic; Grimm (*Deutsche Grammatik und Geschichte*); Schleicher; Diefenbach (*Gothisches Wörterbuch*).

“ (4.) Slavonic: Schafarik; Schleicher; Miklosich.

“ (5.) Celtic: Diefenbach (*Celtica*); Pictet: Charles Meyer; Zouss (*Grammatica Celtica*); Ebel (*Zeitschrift, &c.*); Prichard (*Celtic Nations*).

II. PHONETICS.

“Benary, Hofer; Grimm (*Deutsche Grammatik und Geschichte*); Bopp (*Vergleich. Gramm.*); Diez (*Grammatik, &c.*).

III. THE PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE.

“Becker’s various works on Grammar, &c.; Heyse’s *System der Sprachwissenschaft*, Lersch’s *Sprachphilosophie*.

IV. ETYMOLOGY.

“Bopp (*Vergleich. Gramm.*); Schleicher (*Litanische Grammatik*); G. Curtius (*Griechische Gramm.*); Diez (*Lexicon Etymologicum*); Fritsch.

“In Germany, by far the greatest attention has been paid, from spontaneous impulse, to the claims of comparative philology; while in Russia, the government has as far exceeded all other governments in its patronage of this delightful study, and of those who are devoted to it. This is one of the chief legacies left by the Empress Catharine, in her own zealous example, to her successors on the throne; and in accepting it, they have not forgotten to put it to good use. The government publishes, at its own expense, the grammars, dictionaries, and treatises, prepared by the best scholars, and sustains travellers at its own expense, in making exploring tours for philosophical purposes in the East. Vienna, however, is the most prolific of all single cities in the world, in oriental publications. In

might be said, that the words themselves were more forcible than the things represented by them, and this frequently gives a sort of monotonous energy to the style. We should be careful, nevertheless, not to attempt softening the pronunciation of the German language too much ; there always results from it a certain affected gracefulness, which is altogether disagreeable : it presents to our ears sounds essentially rude, in spite of the gentility with which we seek to invest them, and this sort of affectation is singularly displeasing.

J. J. Rousseau has said, that *the southern languages were the daughters of pleasure, the northern, of necessity*. The Italian and Spanish are modulated like an harmonious song ; the French is eminently suited to conversation : their parliamentary debates, and the energy natural to the people, have given to the English something of expression, that supplies the want of prosody. The German is more philosophical by far than the Italian ; more poetical, by reason of its boldness, than the French ; more favorable to the rhythm of verses than the English ; but it still retains a certain stiffness that proceeds, possibly, from its being so sparingly made use of, either in social intercourse or in the public service.

Grammatical simplicity is one of the great advantages of modern languages. This simplicity, founded on logical principles common to all nations, renders them easy to be understood : to learn the Italian and English, a slight degree of study is sufficient ; but the German is quite a science. The period, in the German language, encompasses the thought ; and like the talons of a bird, to grasp it, opens and closes on it again. A construction of phrases, nearly similar to that which existed among the ancients, has been introduced into it with greater facility than into any other European dialect ;

France, Prussia, and Denmark also, much more zeal is shown in this captivating class of studies than in either England or America. The Sanskrit has been, indeed, as long taught in England as in Germany, and even longer ; but not for classical and philological purposes ; for commercial reasons rather, under the patronage of the East India Company, at the College of Haileybury."—(*New Englander*, August, 1858, pp. 502-3.)—*Ed.*

but inversions are rarely suitable to modern languages. The striking terminations of the Greek and Latin, clearly pointed out the words which ought to be joined together even when they were separated : the signs of the German declensions are so indistinct, that we have a good deal of difficulty to discover, under colors so uniform, the words which depends on each other.

When foreigners complain of the labor which is required to study the German language, they are told that it is very easy to write in that language with the simplicity of French grammar, while it is impossible in French to adopt the German period, and that therefore this should be considered as affording additional means of facility ; but these means mislead many writers, who are induced to make too frequent use of them. The German is, perhaps, the only language, in which verse is more easy to be understood than prose ; the poetic phrase, being necessarily interrupted even by the measure of the verse, cannot be lengthened beyond it.

Without doubt, there are more shades, more connecting ties, between the thoughts in those periods, which in themselves form a whole, and assemble in the same point of view, all the various relations belonging to the same subject ; but if we considered only the natural concatenation of different ideas, we should end by wishing to comprise them all in a single phrase. It is necessary for the human mind to divide, in order to comprehend, and we run a risk of mistaking gleams of light for truths, when even the forms of a language are obscured.

The art of translation is carried further in the German language than in any other European dialect.¹ Voss has trans-

¹ "Every literature of the world has been cultivated by the Germans ; and to every literature they have studied to give due honor. Shakspeare and Homer, no doubt, occupy alone the loftiest station in the poetical Olympus ; but there is space for all true Singers, out of every age and clime. Ferdusi and the primeval Mythologists of Hindostan, live in brotherly union with the Troubadours and ancient Story-tellers of the West. The wayward mystic gloom of Calderon, the lurid fire of Dante, the auroral light of Tasso, the clear icy glitter of Racine, all are acknowledged and revered : nay, in the celestial fore-court an abode has been

lated the Greek and Latin authors with wonderful directness ; and W. Schlegel those of England, Italy, and Spain, with a truth of coloring which before him was unexampled. When the German is employed in a translation from the English, it loses nothing of its natural character, because both those languages are of Germanic origin ; but whatever merit may be found in Voss's translation of Homer, it certainly makes, both of the Iliad and Odyssey, poems, the style of which is Greek, though the words are German. Our knowledge of antiquity gains by it ; but the originality, peculiar to the idiom of each nation, is necessarily lost in proportion. It seems like a contradiction to accuse the German language of having at once too much flexibility and too much roughness ; but what is reconcilable in character may also be reconcilable in languages ; and we often find that the quality of roughness does not exclude that of flexibility in the same person.

These defects are less frequently discovered in verse than in prose, and in original compositions than in translations. I think then we may with truth affirm, that there is at present no poetry more striking and more varied than that of the Germans.¹

appointed for the Gressets and Delilles, that no spark of inspiration, no tone of mental music, might remain unrecognized. The Germans study foreign nations in a spirit which deserves to be oftener imitated. It is their honest endeavor to understand each with its own peculiarities, in its own special manner of existing ; not that they may praise it, or censure it, or attempt to alter it, but simply that they may see this manner of existing as the nation itself sees it, and so participate in whatever worth or beauty it has brought into being. Of all literatures, accordingly, the German has the best as well as the most translations ; men like Goethe, Schiller, Wieland, Schlegel, Tieck, have not disdained this task. Of Shakspeare there are three entire versions admitted to be good ; and we know not how many partial, or considered as bad. In their criticisms of him we ourselves have long ago admitted, that no such clear judgment or hearty appreciation of his merits had ever been exhibited by any critic of our own."—(*Carlyle's Essays*, p. 24.)—Ed.

¹ "There are poets in that country who belong to a nobler class than most nations have to show in these days, a class entirely unknown to some nations ; and, for the last two centuries, rare in all. We have no hesitation in stating, that we see in certain of the best German poets, and those too of our own time, something which associates them, remotely or

Versification is a peculiar art, the investigation of which is inexhaustible: those words, which in the common relations of life serve only as signs of thought, reach our souls through the rhythm of harmonious sounds, and afford us a double enjoy-

nearly we say not, but which does associate them with the Masters of Art, the Saints of Poetry, long since departed, and, as we thought, without successors, from the earth; but canonized in the hearts of all generations, and yet living to all by the memory of what they did and were. Glances we do seem to find of that ethereal glory, which looks on us in its full brightness from the *Transfiguration* of Raffaele, from the *Tempest* of Shakspeare; and in broken, but purest and still heart-piercing beams, struggling through the gloom of long ages, from the tragedies of Sophocles and the weather-worn sculptures of the Parthenon. This is that heavenly spirit, which, best seen in the aerial embodiment of poetry, but spreading likewise over all the thoughts and actions of an age, has given us Surreys, Sydneys, Raleighs, in court and camp, Cecils in policy, Hookers in divinity, Bacons in philosophy, and Shakspeares and Spensers in song. All hearts that know this, know it to be the highest; and that, in poetry or elsewhere, it alone is true and imperishable. In affirming that any vestige, however feeble, of this divine spirit, is discernible in German poetry, we are aware that we place it above the existing poetry of any other nation.

“To prove this bold assertion, logical arguments were at all times un-availing; and, in the present circumstances of the case, more than usually so. Neither will any extract or specimen help us; for it is not in parts, but in whole poems, that the spirit of a true poet is to be seen. We can, therefore, only name such men as Tieck, Richter, Herder, Schiller, and, above all, Goethe; and ask any reader who has learned to admire wisely our own literature of Queen Elizabeth’s age, to peruse these writers also; to study them till he feels that he has understood them, and justly estimated both their light and darkness; and then to pronounce whether it is not, in some degree, as we have said. Are there not tones here of that old melody? Are there not glimpses of that serene soul, that calm harmonious strength, that smiling earnestness, that Love and Faith and Humanity of nature? Do these foreign contemporaries of ours still exhibit, in their characters as men, something of that sterling nobleness, that union of majesty with meekness, which we must ever venerate in those our spiritual fathers? And do their works, in the new form of this century, show forth that old nobleness, not consistent only with the science, the precision, the skepticism of these days, but wedded to them, incorporated with them, and shining through them like their life and soul? Might it in truth almost seem to us, in reading the prose of Goethe, as if we were reading that of Milton; and of Milton writing with the culture of this time; combining French clearness with old English depth? And of his poetry may it indeed be said that it is poetry and yet the poetry of our own generation; an ideal world, and yet the world we even now live in?—These questions we must leave candid and studious inquirers to answer for them-

ment, which arises from the union of sensation and reflection ; but, if all languages are equally proper to express what we think, they are not all equally so to impart what we feel ; and the effects of poetry depend still more on the melody of words than on the ideas which they serve to express.

The German is the only modern language which has long and short syllables, like the Greek and Latin ; all the other European dialects are either more or less accented ; but verse cannot be measured, in the manner of the ancients, according to the length of the syllables : accent gives unity to phrases, as well as to words. It is connected with the signification of what is said : we lay a stress on that which is to determine the sense ; and pronunciation, in thus marking particular words, refers them all to the principal idea. It is not thus with the musical duration of sound in language ; this is much more favorable to poetry than accent, because it has no positive object, and affords only a high but indefinite pleasure, like all other enjoyments that tend to no determinate purpose. Among the ancients, syllables were scanned according to the nature of the vowels, and the connection of their different sounds : harmony was the only criterion. In Germany, all the accessory words are short, and it is grammatical dignity alone, that is to say, the importance of the radical syllable, that determines its quantity ; there is less of charm in this species of prosody, than in that of the ancients, because it depends more on abstract combinations than on involuntary sensation ; it is nevertheless a great advantage to any language, to have in its prosody, that which may be substituted for rhyme.

Rhyme is a modern discovery ; it is connected with all our fine arts, and we should deprive ourselves of great effects by renouncing the use of it. It is the image of hope and of memory. One sound makes us desire another, corresponding to it ; and when the second is heard, it recalls that which has just

selves ; premising only, that the secret is not to be found on the surface ; that the first reply is likely to be in the negative, but with inquirers of this sort, by no means likely to be the final one."—(*Carlyle's Essays*, 8vo edition, p. 28.)—*Ed.*

escaped us. This agreeable regularity must, nevertheless, be prejudicial to nature in the dramatic art, as well as to boldness in the epic. We can scarcely do without rhyme, in idioms, where the prosody is but little marked : and yet the restraints of construction may, in certain languages, be such, that a bold and contemplative poet may find it needful to make us sensible of the harmony of versification without the subjection of rhyme. Klopstock has banished Alexandrines from German poetry ; he has substituted in their stead, hexameters, and iambic verses, without rhyme, according to the practice of the English, which give much greater liberty to the imagination. Alexandrine verses are very ill adapted to German poetry ; we may convince ourselves of this by the poems of the great Haller himself, whatever merit they may in other respects possess ; a language, the pronunciation of which is so sonorous, deafens us by the repetition and uniformity of the hemistichs. Besides, this kind of versification calls for sentence and antitheses ; and the German genius is too scrupulous and too sincere to adopt those antitheses, which never present ideas or images in their perfect truth, or in their most exact shades of distinction. The harmony of hexameters, and especially of unrhymed iambic verses, is only natural harmony inspired by sentiment ; it is a marked and distinct declamation, while the Alexandrine verse imposes a certain species and turn of expression, from which it is difficult to get free. The composition of this kind of verse is even entirely independent of poetic genius ; we may possess it without having that genius ; and on the contrary, it is possible to be a great poet, and yet feel incapable of conforming to the restrictions which this kind of verse imposes.

Our best lyrical poets, in France, are, perhaps, our great prose writers,—Bossuet, Pascal, Fénelon, Buffon, Jean-Jacques [Rousseau], etc. The despotism of Alexandrines often prevents us from putting into verse that which, notwithstanding, would be true poetry ; while in foreign nations, versification being much more easy and natural, every poetical thought inspires verse, and, in general, prose is left to reason and argument. We might defy Racine himself to translate into French verse

Pindar, Petrarch, or Klopstock, without giving a character unnatural to them. These poets have a kind of boldness which is seldom to be found, except in languages which are capable of uniting all the charms of versification with perfect originality ; and this, in the French, can only be done in prose.

One of the greatest advantages of the Germanic dialects in poetry, is the variety and beauty of their epithets. The German, in this respect also, may be compared to the Greek ; in a single word, we perceive many images, as in the principal note of a concord we have all the sounds of which it is composed, or as certain colors which revive in us the perception of those with which they are immediately connected. In French, we say only what we mean to say ; and we do not see, wandering around our words, those clouds of countless forms which surround the poetry of the northern languages, and awaken a crowd of recollections. To the liberty of forming one epithet out of two or three, is added that of animating the language by making nouns of verbs ; *living, willing, feeling*, are all expressions less abstract than life, will, and sentiment ; and whatever changes thought into action gives more animation to the style. The facility of reversing the construction of a phrase, according to inclination, is also very favorable to poetry, and gives the power of exciting, by the varied means of versification, impressions analogous to those of painting and music. In short, the general spirit of the Teutonic dialects is independence. The first object of their writers is to transmit what they feel ; they would willingly say to poetry what Heloise said to her lover : “ If there be a word more true, more tender, and more strongly expressive of what I feel, that word I would choose.” In France the recollection of what is suitable and becoming in society, pursues genius even to its most secret motions : and the dread of ridicule is like the sword of Damocles, which no banquet of the imagination can ever make us forget.

In the arts, we often speak of the merit of conquering a difficulty ; it is said, nevertheless, with reason, that *either the difficulty is not felt, and then it is no difficulty, or it is felt, and*

is then not surmounted. The fetters imposed on the mind certainly give a spring to its powers of action; but there is often in true genius a sort of awkwardness, similar in some respects to the credulity of sincere and noble souls; and we should do wrong in endeavoring to subject it to arbitrary restrictions, for it would free itself from them with much greater difficulty than talents of a second-rate order.

CHAPTER X.

OF POETRY.

THAT which is truly divine in the heart of man cannot be defined; if there be words for some of its features, there are none to express the whole together, particularly the mystery of true beauty in all its varieties. It is easy to say what poetry is not; but if we would comprehend what it is, we must call to our assistance the impressions excited by a fine country, harmonious music, the sight of a favored object, and, above all, a religious sentiment which makes us feel within ourselves the presence of the Deity. Poetry is the natural language of all worship. The Bible is full of poetry; Homer is full of religion: not that there are fictions in the Bible, or doctrines in Homer; but enthusiasm concentrates different sentiments in the same focus; enthusiasm is the incense offered by earth to heaven; it unites the one to the other.

The gift of revealing by speech the internal feelings of the heart is very rare; there is, however, a poetical spirit in all beings who are capable of strong and lively affections: expression is wanting to those who have not exerted themselves to find it. It may be said, that the poet only disengages the sentiment that was imprisoned in his soul. Poetic genius is an internal disposition, of the same nature with that which renders us capable of a generous sacrifice. The composition

of a fine ode is a heroic trance. If genius were not versatile, it would as often inspire fine actions as affecting expressions; for they both equally spring from a consciousness of the beautiful which is felt within us.

A man of superior talent said that "prose was factitious, and poetry natural;" and, in fact, nations little civilized begin always with poetry; and whenever a strong passion agitates the soul, the most common of men make use, unknown to themselves, of images and metaphors; they call exterior nature to their assistance, to express what is inexpressible within themselves. Common people are much nearer being poets, than men accustomed to good society; the rules of politeness, and delicate raillery, are fit only to impose limits, they cannot impart inspiration.

In this world there is an endless contest between poetry and prose; but pleasantry must always place itself on the side of prose, for to jest is to descend. The spirit of society is, however, very favorable to that gay and graceful poetry of which Ariosto, La Fontaine, and Voltaire are the most brilliant models. Dramatic poetry is admirable in our first writers; descriptive, and, above all, didactic poetry have been carried by the French to a very high degree of perfection; but it does not appear that they have hitherto been called on to distinguish themselves in lyric or epic poetry, such as it was formerly conceived by the ancients, and at present by foreigners.

Lyric poetry is expressed in the name of the author himself; he no longer assumes a character, but experiences in his own person, the various emotions he describes. J. B. Rousseau, in his devotional odes, and Racine, in his *Athalie*, have shown themselves lyric poets. They were imbued with a love of psalmody, and penetrated with a lively faith. Nevertheless, the difficulties of the language and of French versification are frequently obstacles to this delirium of enthusiasm. We may quote admirable strophes in some of our odes, but have we any complete ode in which the Muse has not abandoned the poet? Fine verses are not always poetry; inspiration in the arts is an inexhaustible source, which vivifies the whole, from

the first word to the last. Love, country, faith, all are divinities in an ode. It is the apotheosis of sentiment. In order to conceive the true grandeur of lyric poetry, we must wander in thought into the ethereal regions, forget the tumult of earth in listening to celestial harmony, and consider the whole universe as a symbol of the emotions of the soul.

The enigma of human destiny is nothing to the generality of men; the poet has it always present to his imagination. The idea of death, which depresses vulgar minds, gives to genius additional boldness; and the mixture of the beauties of nature with the terrors of dissolution, excites an indescribable delirium of happiness and terror, without which we can neither comprehend nor describe the spectacle of this world. Lyric poetry relates nothing, is not confined to the succession of time, or the limits of space; it spreads its wings over countries and over ages; it gives duration to the sublime moment in which man rises superior to the pains and pleasures of life. Amid the wonders of the world, he feels himself a being at once creator and created; who must die, and yet cannot cease to be, and whose heart, trembling, yet at the same time powerful, takes pride in itself, yet prostrates itself before God.

The Germans, at once uniting the powers of imagination and reflection (qualities which very rarely meet), are more capable of lyric poetry than most other nations. The moderns cannot give up a certain profundity of ideas, to which they have been habituated by a religion completely spiritual; and yet, nevertheless, if this profundity were not invested with images, it would not be poetry: nature then must be aggrandized in the eyes of men, before they can employ it as the emblem of their thoughts. Groves, flowers, and rivers were sufficient for the poets of paganism; but the solitude of forests, the boundless ocean, the starry firmament, can scarcely express the eternal and the infinite, which pervade and fill the soul of Christians.

The Germans possess no epic poem any more than ourselves: this admirable species of composition does not appear to be granted to the moderns, and perhaps the Iliad alone completely

answers our ideas of it. To form an epic poem, a particular combination of circumstances, such as occurred only among the Greeks, is requisite, together with the imagination displayed in heroic times, and the perfection of language peculiar to more civilized periods. In the middle ages, imagination was strong, but the language imperfect; in our days, language is pure, but the imagination defective. The Germans have much boldness in their ideas and style, but little invention in the plan of their subject: their essays in the epic almost always resemble the character of lyric poetry; those of the French bear a stronger affinity to the dramatic, and we discover in them more of interest than of grandeur. When the object is to please on the stage, the art of circumscribing one's self within a given space, of guessing at the taste of spectators, and bending to it with address, forms a part of the success; but in the composition of an epic poem, nothing must depend on external and transient circumstances. It exacts absolute beauties—beauties which may strike the solitary reader, even when his sentiments are most natural, and his imagination most emboldened. He who hazards too much in an epic poem would possibly incur severe censure from the good taste of the French; but he who hazards nothing would not be the less condemned.

It must be acknowledged, that in improving the taste and language of his country, Boileau has given to French genius a disposition very unfavorable to poetic composition. He has spoken only of that which ought to be avoided, he has dwelt only on precepts of reason and wisdom, which have introduced into literature a sort of pedantry, very prejudicial to the sublime energy of the arts. In French, we have masterpieces of versification; but how can we call mere versification poetry! To render into verse what should have remained in prose, to express, in lines of ten syllables, like Pope, the minutest details of a game at cards: or, as in some poems which have lately appeared among us, draughts, chess, and chemistry, is a trick of legerdemain in words: it is composing with words what we call a poem, in the same manner as, with notes of music, we compose a sonata.

A great knowledge of the poetic art is, however, necessary to enable an author thus admirably to describe objects which yield so little scope to the imagination, and we have reason to admire some detached pieces in those galleries of pictures; but the intervals by which they are separated are necessarily prosaic, like that which passes in the mind of the writer. He says to himself, "I will make verses on this subject, then on that, and afterwards on this also;" and, without perceiving it, he intrusts us with a knowledge of the manner in which he pursues his work. The true poet, it may be said, conceives his whole poem at once in his soul, and, were it not for the difficulties of language, would pour forth his extemporaneous effusions, the sacred hymns of genius, as the sibyls and prophets did in ancient times. He is agitated by his conceptions as by a real event of his life; a new world is opened to him; the sublime image of every various situation and character, of every beauty in nature, strikes his eye; and his heart pants for that celestial happiness, the idea of which, like lightning, gives a momentary splendor to the obscurity of his fate. Poetry is a momentary possession of all our soul desires; genius makes the boundaries of existence disappear, and transforms into brilliant images the uncertain hope of mortals.

It would be easier to describe the symptoms of genius than to give precepts for the attainment of it. Genius, like love, is felt by the strong emotions with which it penetrates him who is endowed with it; but if we dared to advise where nature should be the only guide, it is not merely literary counsel that we should give. We should speak of poets, as to citizens and heroes; we should say to them, Be virtuous, be faithful, be free; respect what is dear to you, seek immortality in love, and the Deity in nature; in short, sanctify your soul as a temple, and the angel of noble thoughts will not disdain to appear in it.

CHAPTER XI.

OF CLASSIC AND ROMANTIC POETRY.

THE word *romantic* has been lately introduced in Germany to designate that kind of poetry which is derived from the songs of the Troubadours; that which owes its birth to the union of chivalry and Christianity. If we do not admit that the empire of literature has been divided between paganism and Christianity, the North and the South, antiquity and the middle ages, chivalry and the institutions of Greece and Rome, we shall never succeed in forming a philosophical judgment of ancient and of modern taste.

We sometimes consider the word classic as synonymous with perfection. I use it at present in a different acceptation, considering classic poetry as that of the ancients, and romantic, as that which is generally connected with the traditions of chivalry. This division is equally suitable to the two eras of the world,—that which preceded, and that which followed the establishment of Christianity.

In various German works, ancient poetry has also been compared to sculpture, and romantic to painting; in short, the progress of the human mind has been characterized in every manner, passing from material religions to those which are spiritual, from nature to the Deity.

The French nation, certainly the most cultivated of all that are derived from Latin origin, inclines towards classic poetry imitated from the Greeks and Romans. The English, the most illustrious of the Germanic nations, is more attached to that which owes its birth to chivalry and romance; and it prides itself on the admirable compositions of this sort which it possesses. I will not, in this place, examine which of these two kinds of poetry deserves the preference; it is sufficient to

show, that the diversities of taste on this subject do not merely spring from accidental causes, but are derived also from the primitive sources of imagination and thought.

There is a kind of simplicity both in the epic poems and tragedies of the ancients; because at that time men were completely the children of nature, and believed themselves controlled by fate, as absolutely as nature herself is controlled by necessity. Man, reflecting but little, always bore the action of his soul without; even conscience was represented by external objects, and the torch of the Furies shook the horrors of remorse over the head of the guilty. In ancient times, men attended to events alone, but among the moderns, character is of greater importance; and that uneasy reflection, which, like the vulture of Prometheus, often internally devours us, would have been folly amid circumstances and relations so clear and decided, as they existed in the civil and social state of the ancients.

When the art of sculpture began in Greece, single statues alone were formed; groups were composed at a later period. It might be said with equal truth, that there were no groups in any art: objects were represented in succession, as in bas-reliefs, without combination, without complication of any kind. Man personified nature; nymphs inhabited the waters, hamadryads the forests; but nature, in turn, possessed herself of man; and, it might be said, he resembled the torrent, the thunderbolt, the volcano, so wholly did he act from involuntary impulse, and so insufficient was reflection in any respect, to alter the motives or the consequences of his actions. The ancients, thus to speak, possessed a corporeal soul, and its emotions were all strong, decided, and consistent; it is not the same with the human heart as developed by Christianity: the moderns have derived from Christian repentance a constant habit of self-reflection.

But in order to manifest this kind of internal existence, a great variety of outward facts and circumstances must display, under every form, the innumerable shades and gradations of that which is passing in the soul. If in our days the fine arts

were confined to the simplicity of the ancients, we should never attain that primitive strength which distinguishes them, and we should lose those intimate and multiplied emotions of which our souls are susceptible. Simplicity in the arts would, among the moderns, easily degenerate into coldness and abstraction, while that of the ancients was full of life and animation. Honor and love, valor and pity, were the sentiments which distinguished the Christianity of chivalrous ages; and those dispositions of the soul could only be displayed by dangers, exploits, love, misfortunes—that romantic interest, in short, by which pictures are incessantly varied. The sources from which art derives its effect are then very different in classic poetry and in that of romance; in one it is fate which reigns, in the other it is Providence. Fate counts the sentiments of men as nothing; but Providence judges of actions according to those sentiments. Poetry must necessarily create a world of a very different nature, when its object is to paint the work of destiny, which is both blind and deaf, maintaining an endless contest with mankind; and when it attempts to describe that intelligent order, over which the Supreme Being continually presides,—that Being whom our hearts supplicate, and who mercifully answers their petitions!

The poetry of the pagan world was necessarily as simple and well defined as the objects of nature; while that of Christianity requires the various colors of the rainbow to preserve it from being lost in the clouds. The poetry of the ancients is more pure as an art; that of the moderns more readily calls forth our tears. But our present object is not so much to decide between classic and romantic poetry, properly so called, as between the imitation of the one and the inspiration of the other. The literature of the ancients is, among the moderns, a transplanted literature; that of chivalry and romance is indigenous, and flourishes under the influence of our religion and our institutions. Writers, who are imitators of the ancients, have subjected themselves to the rules of strict taste alone; for, not being able to consult either their own nature or their own recollections, it is necessary for them to conform

to those laws by which the *chefs-d'œuvre* of the ancients may be adapted to our taste; though the circumstances both political and religious, which gave birth to these *chefs-d'œuvre* are all entirely changed. But the poetry written in imitation of the ancients, however perfect in its kind, is seldom popular, because, in our days, it has no connection whatever with our national feelings.¹

¹ "A few words on this much-talked of school may not be unacceptable. Like its offspring, *L'Ecole Romantique* in France, it had a critical purpose which was good, and a retrograde purpose which was bad. Both were insurgent against narrow critical canons, both proclaimed the superiority of Mediæval Art; both sought, in Catholicism and in national legends, meanings profounder than those current in the literature of the day. In other respects these schools greatly differed. The Schlegels, Tieck, Novalis, and Werner, had no enemy to combat in the shape of a severe national taste, such as opposed the tentatives of Victor Hugo, Dumas, and Alfred de Vigny. On the contrary, they were supported by a large body of the nation, for their theories only carried further certain tendencies which had become general. Thus in as far as these theories were critical, they were little more than jubilates over the victorious campaigns won by Lessing, Herder, Goethe, and Schiller. The Schlegels stood upon the battle-field, now silent, and sang a hymn of victory over the bodies of the slain. Frederick Schlegel, by many degrees the most considerable critic of this school, began his career with an Anthology from Lessing's works: *Lessing's Geist; eine Blumenlese seiner Ansichten*; he ended it with admiration for Philip the Second, and the cruel Alva, and with the proclamation that Calderon was a greater poet than Shakspeare. Frederick Schlegel thus represents the whole romantic school from its origin to its close.

"Fichte, Schelling, Schleiermacher, and Solger, are the philosophers of this school; from the two former came the once famous, now almost forgotten, principle of 'Irony,' which Hegel¹ not only disposed of as a principle, but showed that the critics themselves made no use of it. Indeed, the only serious instance of its application I remember, is the ingenious essay by Schleiermacher on the 'Irony of Sophocles,' translated for the *Classical Museum* by the present Bishop of St. David's. No one, not even Tieck, attempted to exhibit the 'irony' of Shakspeare, the god of their idolatry. Among the services rendered by Tieck and A. W. Schlegel, the translation of Shakspeare must never be forgotten, for although that translation is by no means so accurate as Germans suppose, being often miserably weak, and sometimes grossly mistaken in its interpretation of the meaning, it is nevertheless a translation which, on the whole, has perhaps no rival in literature, and has served to make Shakspeare as familiar to the Germans as to us.

¹ *Æsthetik*, i. pp. 84-90.

The French being the most classical of all modern poetry, is of all others least calculated to become familiar among the lower orders of the people. The stanzas of Tasso are sung by the gondoliers of Venice; the Spaniards and Portugese, of all

“In their crusade against the French, in their naturalization of Shakespeare, and their furtherance of Herder's efforts towards the restoration of a ballad literature, and the taste for Gothic Architecture, these Romantists were with the stream. They also flattered the national tendencies when they proclaimed ‘mythology and poetry, symbolical legend and art, to be one and indivisible,’ whereby it became clear that a new Religion, or at any rate a new Mythology, was needed, for ‘the deepest want and deficiency of all modern Art lies in the fact that the artists have no Mythology.’²

“While Fichte, Schelling, and Schleiermacher were tormented with the desire to create a new philosophy and a new religion, it soon became evident that a Mythology was not to be created by programme; and as a Mythology was indispensable, the Romantists betook themselves to Catholicism, with its saintly legends and saintly heroes; some of them, as Tieck and A. W. Schlegel, out of nothing more than a poetic enthusiasm and dilettanteism: others, as F. Schlegel and Werner, with thorough conviction, accepting Catholicism and all its consequences.

“Solger had called Irony the daughter of Mysticism; and how highly these Romantists prized Mysticism is known to all readers of Novalis. To be mystical was to be poetical as well as profound; and our critics glorified mediæval monstrosities because of ‘their deep spiritualism,’ which stood in contrast with the pagan materialism of Goethe and Schiller. Once commenced, this movement rushed rapidly onwards to the confines of nonsense. Art became the handmaid of Religion. The universal canon was laid down (and still lingers in some quarters), that only in the service of Religion had Art ever flourished,—only in that service *could* it flourish. Art became a propagande. Fra Angelico and Calderon suddenly became idols. Theory was bursting with absurdities. Werner was proclaimed a Colossus by Wackenroder, who wrote his *Herzensergiessungen eines Kunstliebenden Klosterbruders*, with Tieck's aid, to prove, said Goethe, that because some monks were artists, all artists should turn monks. Then it was, men looked to Faith for miracles in Art. Devout study of the Bible was thought to be the readiest means of rivalling Fra Angelico and Van Eyck; a hair-shirt was inspiration. The painters went over in crowds to the Roman Church. Cornelius and Overbeck lent real genius to the attempt to revive the dead forms of early Christian art, as Goethe and Schiller did to revive the dead forms of Grecian art. Overbeck, who painted in a cloister, was so thoroughly penetrated by the ascetic spirit, that he refused to draw from the living model, lest it should make his works too *naturalistic*; for to be true to Nature was tantamount to being false to the

¹ F. Schlegel: *Gespräche über Poesie*, p. 263.

² *Ibid.*, p. 274.

ranks, know by heart the verses of Calderon and Camoëns. Shakspeare is as much admired by the populace in England as by those of a higher class. The poems of Goethe and Bürger are set to music, and repeated from the banks of the Rhine to the shores of the Baltic. Our French poets are admired wherever there are cultivated minds, either in our own nation, or in the rest of Europe; but they are quite unknown to the common people, and even to the class of citizens in our towns,

higher tendencies of spiritualism. Cornelius, more of an artist, had too much of the artistic instinct to carry his principles into these exaggerations; but others less gifted, and more bigoted, carried those principles into every excess. A band of these reformers established themselves in Rome, and astonished the Catholics quite as much as the Protestants. Cesar Masini, in his work *Dei Puristi in Pittura* thus describes them: 'Several young men came to Rome from Northern Germany in 1809. They abjured Protestantism, adopted the costume of the Middle Ages, and began to preach the doctrine that painting had died out with Giotto, and to revive it, a recurrence to the old style was necessary. Under such a mask of piety they concealed their nullity. Servile admirers of the rudest periods in Art, they declared the pigmies were giants, and wanted to bring us back to the dry hard style and barbarous imperfection of a Buffalmacco, Calandrino, Paolo Uccello, when we had a Raphael, a Titian, and a Correggio.' In spite of the exaggerations of these admirers of the Trecentisti, in spite of a doctrine which was fundamentally vicious, the Romantacists made a decided revolution, and they still keep the lead in painting. Whatever may be thought of the 'German School,' it must be confessed that until Overbeck, Cornelius, Schadow, Hess, Lessing, Hübner, Sohn, and Kaulbach, the Germans had no painters at all; and they have in these men painters of very remarkable power.¹

"Such was the new school and its doctrine. Raphael is not more antagonistic to Fra Angelico, Titian is not more antagonistic to Albert Durer, than Goethe and Schiller were to the hectic Novalis and the dandy Schlegel. Nevertheless, it is certain that their culture of Reflection on the one hand, and of Imitation on the other, aided the Romantic movement more than their own works and strivings retarded it. That movement has long come to a stand-still in literature, and its judgment has been pronounced; but with much obvious mischief it brought many obvious advantages, and no student of modern literature will refuse his acknowledgment to the services rendered by Romanticism in making the Middle Ages more thoroughly understood."—(Lewes, *Goethe's Life and Works*, vol. ii. pp. 218-220.)—*Ed.*

¹ Our own Pre-Raphaelite School is a child of the Romantic School. Success is assured by the genius of Millais and Hunt, in spite of the theoretical doctrines they maintain, and by their fidelity to Nature; in this latter respect they are the opposites of the Romantacists.

because the arts, in France, are not, as elsewhere, natives of the very country in which their beauties are displayed.

Some French critics have asserted that German literature is still in its infancy. This opinion is entirely false; men who are best skilled in the knowledge of languages and the works of the ancients, are certainly not ignorant of the defects and advantages attached to the species of literature which they either adopt or reject; but their character, their habits, and their modes of reasoning, have led them to prefer that which is founded on the recollection of chivalry, on the wonders of the middle ages, to that which has for its basis the mythology of the Greeks. Romantic literature is alone capable of further improvement, because, being rooted in our own soil, that alone can continue to grow and acquire fresh life: it expresses our religion; it recalls our history; its origin is ancient, although not of classical antiquity.

Classic poetry, before it comes home to us, must pass through our recollections of paganism: that of the Germans is the Christian era of the fine arts; it employs our personal impressions to excite strong and vivid emotions; the genius by which it is inspired addresses itself immediately to our hearts, and seems to call forth the spirit of our own lives, of all phantoms at once the most powerful and the most terrible.



CHAPTER XII.

OF GERMAN POEMS.

FROM the various reflections contained in the preceding chapter, I think we must conclude that there is scarcely any classic poetry in Germany—whether we consider it as imitated from the ancients, or whether by the word classic we merely understand the highest degree of perfection. The fruitful imagination of the Germans leads them to produce, rather than

to correct; and therefore it would be very difficult to quote in their literature any writings generally acknowledged as models. Their language is not fixed; taste changes with every new production of men of genius; all is progressive, all goes on, and the stationary point of perfection is not yet attained; but is this an evil? In all those nations which have flattered themselves with having reached it, the symptoms of decay have been almost immediately perceived, and imitators have succeeded classical writers, as if for the purpose of disgusting us with their writings.

In Germany there are as many poets as in Italy; the multitude of attempts, of whatever kind they may be, indicates the natural disposition of a nation. When the love of art is universal in it, the mind naturally takes a direction towards poetry, as elsewhere towards politics or mercantile interests. Among the Greeks there was a crowd of poets; and nothing is more favorable to genius than being surrounded with a great number of men who follow the same career. Artists are indulgent when judging of faults, because the difficulties of an art are known to them; but they exact much before they bestow approbation; great beauties and new beauties must be produced, before any work of art can in their eyes equal the *chef-d'œuvre* which continually occupy their thoughts. The Germans write extempore, if we may so express it, and this great facility is the true sign of genius in the fine arts; for, like the flowers of the South, they ought to bloom without culture; labor improves them; but imagination is abundant, when a liberal nature has imparted it to man. It is impossible to mention all the German poets who would deserve a separate eulogy; I will confine myself merely to the consideration, and that in a general manner, of the three schools which I have already distinguished, when I pointed out the historical progress of German literature.

Wieland in his tales has imitated Voltaire, and often Lucian also, who, in a philosophical point of view, might be called the Voltaire of antiquity; sometimes, too, he has imitated Ariosto, and unfortunately, also Crébillon. He has rendered several

tales of chivalry into verse—namely, *Gandalin*, *Giron le Courtois*, *Oberon*, &c., in which there is more sensibility than in *Ariosto*, but always less of grace and gayety. The German does not glide over all subjects with the ease and lightness of the Italian; and the pleasantries suitable to a language so overcharged with consonants, are those connected with the art of strongly characterizing a subject, rather than of indicating it imperfectly. *Idris* and the *New Amadis* are fairy tales, in which at every page the virtue of women is the subject of those everlasting pleasantries, which cease to be immoral, because they have become tiresome. *Wieland's* tales of chivalry appear to me much superior to his poems imitated from the Greek—*Musarion*, *Endymion*, *Ganymede*, the *Judgment of Paris*, &c. Tales of chivalry are national in Germany. The natural genius of the language, and of its poets, is well adapted to the art of painting the exploits and the loves of those knights and heroines, whose sentiments were at the same time so strong and so simple, so benevolent and so determined; but in attempting to unite modern grace with Grecian subjects, *Wieland* has necessarily rendered them affected. Those who endeavor to modify ancient taste by that of the moderns, or modern taste by that of the ancients, are almost always so. To be secure from this danger, we must treat each of these subjects entirely according to its own nature.

Oberon passes in Germany almost for an epic poem. It is founded on a tale of French chivalry, *Huon de Bourdeaux*, of which *M. de Tressan* has given us an abstract; and *Oberon the Genius*, with *Titania the Fairy*, just such as *Shakspeare* has described them in the play of the "*Midsummer Night's Dream*," constitute the mythology of the poem. The subject is given by our old romantic writers; but we cannot too much admire the poetry with which *Wieland* has enriched it. Pleasantry, drawn from the marvellous, is there handled with much grace and originality. *Huon* is sent into Palestine, in consequence of various adventures, to ask the daughter of the sultan in marriage; and when the gravest personages who oppose that marriage are all set dancing, at the sound of the singular

horn which he possesses, we are never tired by the skilful repetition of the comic effect it produces; and the better the poet has described the pedantic gravity of the imams and viziers at the court of the sultan, the more his readers are amused by their involuntary dance. When Oberon carries the two lovers through the air in a winged car, the terror of that prodigy is dissipated by the security with which love inspires them. "In vain," says the poet, "earth disappears to their sight; in vain night covers the atmosphere with her dark wings; a heavenly light beams in their tender glances; their souls mutually reflect each other; night is no longer night for them; elysium surrounds them; the sun enlightens the recesses of their hearts, and love every moment shows them objects, always new and always delightful." Sensibility is not in general much connected with the marvellous: there is something so serious in the affections of the soul, that we like not to see them drawn forth with the sports of the imagination; but Wieland has the art of uniting fantastic fictions with true sentiments, in a manner peculiar to himself.

The baptism of the sultan's daughter, who becomes a Christian in order to marry Huon, is also a most beautiful passage: to change one's religion for the sake of love is a little profane; but Christianity is so truly the religion of the heart, that to love with devotion and purity is already to be a convert. Oberon has made the young people promise not to give themselves up to each other till their arrival in Rome; they are together in the same ship, and, separated from the world, love induces them to violate their vow. The tempest is then let loose, the winds blow, the billows roar, and the sails are torn; the masts are destroyed by the thunderbolt; the passengers bewail themselves, the sailors cry for help: at length the vessel splits, the waves threaten to swallow them up, and the presence of death can scarcely take from the young couple their sense of earthly happiness. They are precipitated in the ocean: an invisible power preserves and lands them on a desert island, where they find a hermit, whom religion and misfortunes have led to that retreat.

Amanda, the espoused of Huon, after many difficulties, brings a son into the world; and nothing can be more delightful than this picture of maternal tenderness in the desert: the new being who comes to animate their solitude, the uncertain look, the wandering glance of infancy, which the passionate tenderness of the mother endeavors to fix on herself, all is full of sentiment and of truth. The trials to which the married pair are subjected by Oberon and Titania, are continued; but in the conclusion their constancy is rewarded. Although this poem is diffuse, it is impossible not to consider it as a charming work, and if it were well translated into French verse, it would certainly be thought so.

There have been poets, both before and since Wieland, who have attempted to write in the French and Italian manner; but what they have done scarcely deserves to be mentioned: and if German literature had not assumed a peculiar character, it certainly would not form an epoch in the history of the fine arts. That of poetry must in Germany be fixed at the time when the *Messias* of Klopstock made its appearance.

The hero of that poem, according to our mortal language, inspires admiration and pity in the same degree, without either of these sentiments being weakened by the other. A generous poet¹ said, in speaking of Louis XVI,

“Jamais tant de respect n'admit tant de pitié.”

This verse, so affecting and so delicate, might serve to express the tender emotions we experience in reading Klopstock's *Messias*. The subject of it is, without doubt, vastly superior to all the inventions of genius; a great deal, however, is requisite to display with so much sensibility the human nature in the divine, and with so much force the divine nature in the mortal. Much talent is also required to excite interest and anxiety in the recital of an event, previously determined by an all-powerful Will. Klopstock has, with great art, at once united all that terror and that hope which the fatality of the ancients and the providence of Christians can jointly inspire.

¹ M. de Sabran.

I have already spoken of the character of Abbadona, the repentant demon, who seeks to do good to man : a devouring remorse attaches itself to his immortal nature ; his regret has heaven itself for its object—that heaven which he has known, those celestial spheres which were his habitation. What a situation is this return towards virtue, when the decree is irrevocable ! to complete the torments of Hell, nothing is wanting but to make it the abode of a soul again awakened to sensibility ! Our religion is not familiarized to us in poetry ; and, among modern poets, Klopstock has known best how to personify the spirituality of Christianity, by situations and pictures the most analogous to its nature.

There is but one episode which has love for its object in all the work ; and this love subsists between two persons who have been raised from the dead—Cidli and Semida : Jesus Christ has restored them both to life, and they love each other with an affection pure and celestial as their new existence ; they no longer consider themselves as subject to death ; they hope to pass together from earth to heaven, and that neither of them will experience the anguish of approaching separation. What an affecting conception does such a love present to us in a religious poem !—a love which could alone harmonize with the general tenor of the work. It must nevertheless be owned, that from a subject so continually and so highly exalted there results a little monotony ; the soul is fatigued by too much contemplation, and the author seems sometimes to require readers already risen from the grave, like Cidli and Semida.

This defect might, it seems to me, have been avoided, without introducing any thing profane in the *Messias* : it would perhaps have been better to have taken the whole life of Jesus Christ for the subject of the poem, than to begin at the moment when his enemies demand his death. The colors of the East might with more art have been employed to paint Syria, and to characterize, in a strong manner, the state of the human race under the empire of Rome. There is too much discourse, and too many long conversations in the *Messias* ; eloquence

itself is less striking to the imagination than a situation, a character, a picture, which leaves us something to guess at. The Logos, or the Divine Word, existed before the creation of the world; but with poets the creation ought to precede the Word.

Klopstock has also been reproached with not having sufficiently varied the portraits of his angels. It is true, that in perfection it is difficult to point out variety, and that in general men are characterized by defects alone: some distinguishing traits, however, might have been given to this great picture; but, above all, as it appears to me, ten cantos should not have been added to that which terminates the principal action, which is the death of our Saviour. These ten cantos undoubtedly contain much lyrical beauty; but when a work, of whatever kind, excites dramatic interest, it ought to conclude whenever that interest ceases. Reflections and sentiments, which we should read elsewhere with the greatest pleasure, are most frequently tiresome when a more lively emotion has preceded them. We consider books, nearly as we would consider men; and we always exact from them what they have accustomed us to expect.

Throughout all Klopstock's work we perceive a mind highly elevated and sensitive; nevertheless, the impressions which it excites are too uniform, and funeral ideas are too numerous. Life goes on, only because we forget death; and it is for that reason, without doubt, that we shudder whenever the idea of death recurs to us. In the *Messias*, as well as in Young's *Night Thoughts*, we are too often brought back to the tomb: the arts would be entirely at an end, if we were always absorbed in that species of meditation; for we require a very energetic sentiment of existence, to enable us to look on the world with the animation of poetry. The Pagans, in their poems, as well as on the bas-reliefs of their sepulchres, always represented varied pictures, and thus made even of death an action of life; but the vague and uncertain thoughts which accompany the Christian in his last moments, are more connected with the emotions of the heart than with the lively colors of the imagination.

Klopstock has composed religious and patriotic odes, with many other elegant productions on various subjects.¹ In his religious odes, he knows how to invest unbounded ideas with visible imagery; but sometimes this sort of poetry is lost in the immeasurable which it would embrace.

It is difficult to quote any particular verses in his religious odes which may be repeated as detached sentences. The beauty of his poetry consists in the general impression which it produces. Should we ask the man who contemplates the sea—that immensity which is always in motion, yet always inexhaustible, which seems to give an idea of all periods of time at once, of all its successions become simultaneous;—should we ask him, while wave follows wave, to count the pleasures he experiences while ruminating on their progress? It is the same with religious meditations embellished by poetry; they are worthy of admiration if they inspire new zeal to attain higher degrees of perfection, if we feel ourselves the better for having indulged in them: and this is the criterion by which we should form our judgment of this species of composition.

Among the odes of Klopstock, those written on the French Revolution scarcely deserve to be mentioned; the present moment has no inspiration for the poet; he must place himself at a distance from the age in which he lives, in order either to judge or to describe it well: but the efforts made by Klopstock to revive patriotism among the Germans are highly honorable to him. From the poetry composed with this laudable intention, I will endeavor to give his song of the Bards after the death of Hermann, called by the Romans Arminius: he was assassinated by the Princes of Germany, who were jealous of his success and of his power.

¹ "No one," says the German critic Gervinus, "had attained to the true tone of bardic inspiration, to the simple sublimity of Hebrew poetry, and to the genuine spirit of classical antiquity, in the same degree as Klopstock in his earlier Odes; where we seem to listen in turn to Horace, to David, and, what is more extraordinary, to Ossian, before the world knew any thing about him. Such gifts were not possessed by even Lessing and Wieland. They first rekindled in Herder, but only to imitation, and afterwards in Goethe to original production."—*Ed.*

“ HERMANN.¹

“ THE BARDS WERDOMAR, KERDING, AND DARMOND.

“ WERDOMAR.

“ Upon this stone with ancient moss o'erlaid
Rest we, O Bards, and be our song begun.
Let none advance to gaze beneath the shade
That shrouds in death Teutonia's noblest son.

“ For there he lies in blood, whose life
Was erst the Romans' secret dread,
When they in triumph to the jocund fife
His own Thusnelda² led.

“ Cast not a glance! for ye would weep
To see him lying in his gore.
And not to tears the Telyn's string we sweep.
We sing of those who die no more!

“ KERDING.

“ Bright are my locks of youthful hair,
And first to-day I girded on the sword.
Arm'd for the first time with the lyre and spear,
Must I too sing the warrior-lord?

“ Ask not too much, O sires, of one so young,
For I must dry up with my locks of gold
These burning tears, before the harp be strung
To sing the first of Mana's³ offspring bold.

“ DARMOND.

“ I weep for frantic ire!
Nor would my tears assuage!
Flow, flow adown my cheek of fire,
Ye tears of rage!

¹ We have adopted the version of Mr. Wm. Nind, *Odes of Klopstock*, p. 258.—*Ed.*

² She was taken prisoner by Germanicus in his first battle with Hermann, and afterwards figured in his triumph.

³ Mana, son of Tuisco, mythological ancestor of the Germans

“ They are not dumb, not mute they flow !
 Hear, Hela,¹ hear their curse of might.
 No traitor of the land that laid him low
 Die in the fields of fight.

“ WERDOMAR.

“ See ye the torrent dash
 Down through the rock-defile ?
 And the torn fir-trees headlong crash
 For Hermann's funeral pile ?

“ Soon is he dust, and laid
 In clay-marl of the tomb :
 And with the dust the hallow'd blade,
 On which he swore the conqueror's doom.

“ Thou spirit that hast left his form,
 Upon thy flight to Sigmar² stay !
 And hear thy people's heart how warm
 It beats for thee to-day !

“ KERDING.

“ Tell not Thusnelda, tell her not,
 Here lies in blood her pride, her joy
 A wife, a hapless mother, tell her not
 Here lies the father of her beauteous boy !

“ Fetters already has she borne
 The triumph of the foe to swell.
 Thou hast a Roman heart, if, thus forlorn,
 To her thou canst the tidings tell.

“ DARMOND.

“ What sire begat thee, hapless one !
 Segestes,³ with revengeful thirst
 His sword did redden in his bleeding son !
 Him curse not !—Hela has already cursed !

¹ Hela reigned over the dreary region whither the shades of the dead were taken who had not died in fight. The latter were admitted into Odin's hall.

² Sigmar, Hermann's father.

³ Segestes, Thusnelda's father, quarrelled with his son-in-law, and conspired with those who slew him.

" WERDOMAR.

- " Name not Segestes, ye that sing !
 His name to mute oblivion doom ;
 That, where he lies, her heavy wing
 May darken o'er his tomb !
- " The string that sounds the name
 Of Hermann bears disgrace,
 If but one note of scorn and shame
 Denounce the traitor base.
- " For Hermann, Hermann to the mountain call,
 To the deep grove, the favorite of the brave,
 The bards in chorus sing. In chorus all
 'Sing the bold chief, who did his country save.
- " Sister of Cannæ, Winfeld's fight,
 I saw thee with thy bloody-waving hair,
 With flame-glance of avenging might
 Wave through Walhalla, 'mid the minstrels there !
- " The son of Drusus¹ fain
 Would hide thy mouldering monument,—
 The blanch'd bones of the fallen slain
 Together in the death-vale blent.
- " We suffer'd not, but strew'd in dust the mound,
 For these are vouchers of the mighty rout ;
 And they shall hear, when flowers are on the ground,
 The war-dance and the victor's shout.
- " Sisters to Cannæ would he yet have given,
 With Varus many a Roman would have laid ;
 Had not the rival chiefs for envy striven,
 Cæcina had sought Varus' shade !
- " In Hermann's soul of fire
 Slumber'd a thought of mighty will.
 At midnight, by Thor's altar, to the lyre
 He form'd his vow, impetuous to fulfil.
- " He thought thereon, when at the high repast
 The warriors danced amid the lances gay ;
 And round about the daring dance he cast
 The blood-rings—to the boys a play.

¹ Germanicus, the son of Drusus, upon arriving at the spot of Varus's defeat, found the bones of his fellow-citizens, and buried them.

“The storm-toss’d mariner his tale resolves :
 ‘Far in the North there lies a rocky isle,
 Where fiery vapor, like the clouds, revolves,
 Then flames, and flings forth rock for many a mile !’

“So Hermann kindled at the fight ;
 Resolved, like floods of fiery foam,
 Over the ice-crown’d Alps to roll his might
 Down on the plains of Rome !—

“To die there !—or the Capitol invade,
 And hard by Jove’s high fane, demand
 Of mad Tiberius, and his father’s shade,
 Right for his plunder’d Fatherland.

“Therefore he claim’d the chieftain’s rule
 Among the princes : and they slew him then !
 He lies in blood, who cherish’d in his soul
 His country more than other men !

“DARMOND.

“O Hela, hast thou heard
 My tears, that burning fall ?
 ’Tis thine to give a just award :
 O Hela, hear their call !

“KERDING.

“In Walhalla Sigmar rests beneath the golden ash ;¹
 In his hand the victor’s branch ; the lances round him clash.
 By Tuisco beckon’d, and by Mana’s hand led on,
 There the youthful hero-sire receives his youthful son.

“WERDOMAR.

“But Sigmar there in silent woe
 His Hermann greets again.
 Not now Tiberius, and the shades below,
 He challenges at Jove’s high fane.”

¹ *The Golden Ash.*—“Where,” asked Gangler, “is the chief or holiest seat of the gods ?” “It is under the ash, Yggdrasil,” replied Har, “where the gods assemble every day in council. . . . That ash is the greatest and best of all trees. Its branches spread over the whole world, and even reach above heaven.”—*Prose Edda.*

There are several other poems of Klopstock in which, as well as in this, he recalls to the Germans the noble deeds of their ancestors; but those recollections have scarcely any connection with the present state of their nation. We perceive in these poems a vague sort of enthusiasm, a desire which cannot obtain its object; and the slightest national song of a free people causes a truer emotion. Scarcely any traces of the ancient history of the Germans are now remaining, and that of modern times is too much divided, and too confused, to be capable of producing popular sentiments; it is in their hearts alone that the Germans must discover the source of truly patriotic poetry.

Klopstock frequently treats subjects of a less serious nature in a very graceful manner; and this grace is derived from imagination and sensibility; for in his poetry there is not much of what we call wit, which indeed would not suit the lyric character. In his *Ode to the Nightingale* he has given novelty to a worn-out subject, by imparting to the bird sentiments so tender yet so animated, both on nature and on man, that it seems like a winged mediator, carrying from one to the other the tribute of its love and praise. An *Ode on Rhenish Wine* is very original: the banks of the Rhine form a truly national image for the Germans; they have nothing in all their country superior to it. Vines grow in the same places that have given birth to so many warlike actions; and wine, a hundred years old, the contemporary of more glorious days, seems still to retain the generous warmth of former times.

Klopstock has not only drawn from Christianity the greatest beauties of his religious works, but as it was his wish that the literature of his country should be entirely independent of that of the ancients, he has endeavored to give to German poetry a perfectly new mythology borrowed from the Scandinavians. Sometimes he uses it in rather too learned a manner, but at others he applied it very happily; and his imagination has felt the relations which subsist between the gods of the North and the aspect of nature over which they preside.

There is a very charming ode of his, entitled *The Art of*

Tialf, in other words, *The Art of Skating*,¹ invented it is said by the Giant Tialf. He describes a young and beautiful female clothed in furs, and placed on a sledge formed like a car; the young people who surround it, by a slight push, drive it forwards with the rapidity of lightning. They choose for its path the frozen torrent, which during the winter offers the safest road. The locks of the young men are strewed over with shining particles of frost; the girls who follow the sledge fasten to their feet little wings of steel, which in a moment carry them to a considerable distance; the song of the bards accompanies this northern dance; the gay procession passes under elms covered with flowers of snow; the ice cracks under their feet, a momentary terror disturbs their enjoyment; but

¹ "This joyous exercise," says Goethe, "we owed also to Klopstock. I well remember springing out of bed one clear, frosty morning, and declaiming to myself ('*Schon von dem Gefühle,*' etc.)—

Already with the glow of health elate,
 Descending swift the frozen shore along,
 The crystal I have whiten'd with my skate,
 In mazes as to Braga's song.'

My lingering and doubtful resolution was at once decided. I flew forthwith to the spot where so late a beginner could discreetly practise his first attempts. And in truth this exertion of strength well merited Klopstock's commendation. It brings us in contact with the freshness of childhood, calls the youth to the full enjoyment of his suppleness and activity, and is fitted to avert a stagnating old age. Hence we followed this sport immoderately. We were not satisfied with thus spending upon the ice a glorious day of sunshine, but we continued our motion late into the night; for while other modes of exertion weary the body, this seems constantly to lend it new strength. The full moon emerging from the clouds over the white meadows frozen into fields of ice, the night air whistling to our onward motion, the solemn thunder of the ice falling in upon the receding water, the strange distinct echoes of our own movements, brought before us Ossianic scenes in all their perfection. Now one friend, and now another, sounded out in half-singing declamation one of Klopstock's Odes; and when we found ourselves together in the dim light, we were loud in sincere praises of the author of our joys.

'For should he not immortal live,
 Whose art can health and joy enhance,
 Such as no mettled steed can give,
 Such, e'en, as pants not in the dance?'"

(*Aus meinem Leben.*)—Ed.

soon shouts of joy, and the violence of the exercise preserving that heat in the blood of which the cold air would otherwise deprive it, in short, the contest with the climate revives their spirits; and at the end of their course they reach a large illuminated hall, where a good fire, with a feast and ball, offer to their acceptance easy pleasures, instead of those which they had gained from their struggle with the rigors of nature.¹

¹ "In Klopstock, born 1724, we see Idealism once more victoriously asserting itself: Fatherland and Christianity were the two sources of his inspiration. But he was too much of a poet not to have a large admixture of Realism, and too much of a German not to have a strong imitative tendency. Very remarkable it is in the history of German culture, to notice how, in the dull stagnant periods, Imitation of foreigners is the ruling motive, and how also revolutions are made by the substitution of one imitation for another. Like premature republicans, they cut off the head of their king, to place another on the throne. The shout of freedom rouses them to revolt; no sooner are they free, than the cry is, 'Whom shall we obey?' Gervinus has remarked that the *dictum* of the Klopstock school was 'originality,' by which they opposed Winckelmann, who declared the only way to produce inimitable works was to imitate the ancients; and yet even this cry of originality was an imitation, borrowed from the English poet, Young. 'Curiously enough, even this notion of original genius is not original with us; and the great English drama, which was so far from being a copy, was copied in every way by our "original" poets!' Not only in the instance mentioned by Gervinus, but in the two great epochs of German literature which preceded, we notice a similar fact. The middle age culture is everywhere far more receptive and imitative than original, and the famous knightly-poetry is drawn from Arabia, through France, not from the German-Christian soil. Again, when with Opitz (1624) a new era begins, we see him drawing from French, Spanish, and Italian models the rules for his *Buch von der teutschen Poeterey*, declaring it impossible for Germans to surpass them.

"In Klopstock we see the three elements of Imitation, Christianity, and Nature, all working towards Idealism. The poetry of Homer, Pindar, and Ossian lured him almost as much as the psalms of David, and the bards of his fatherland. His Odes are inspired by this triple love; some of them are religious, some bardic, and some antique. His influence was instantaneous, immense, because it moved with the spirit of the time; if succeeding years have left him somewhat stranded on the shore, a wreck of the past, and not a living influence, we must not forget the services he performed in an age when he stood out as a giant. The very enthusiasm he excited, the high and priestly office which he gave the poet, as a real Vates, the services he rendered to the rebellious German language, will

¹ Gervinus, iv. 419.

The *Ode on Departed Friends*, addressed to Ebert, also deserves to be mentioned. Klopstock is less happy when he writes on the subject of love; like Dorat, he addressed verses to "his future mistress," and his Muse was not inspired by so

secure for him a grateful recognition even among those wearied by his odes and epic.

"Klopstock went back to Nature, as well as to the early Singers. He vindicated Realism by his free and joyous habits, by gymnastic exercises, by skating, of which he was passionately fond, and for which he wrote laws with something of Solonic gravity; by horsemanship, by bathing, and by admiration of pretty women. His Idealism was no asceticism. Like Milton, he was an accomplished cavalier, and, like Milton, passionately fond of music. Remembering Coleridge's sarcasm, I will hasten to add that the resemblance to Milton must not be pushed much further; if he is a German Milton, he is indeed *very* German. All such parallels have necessarily an imperfect side, but if one must be made, I would call Klopstock a German Wordsworth rather than a German Milton; not so much in reference to the quality of his poetry, as to his life and his position in national literature. The first three cantos of the *Messias*, published in 1748, a year before Goethe's birth, produced a wonderful impression. The rest of the poem was delayed till 1773, much to the regret of his admirers, who were tempted to curse the generous patron whose pension enabled the poet to be thus idle. But in truth a change had come over him. He grew melancholy, was troubled with desires for death, and only cared to live that he might finish his religious poem; and, as Lessing said, he began to correct his verses more with a view to orthodoxy than to art.

"If in Klopstock we have the representative of German Idealism, in Wieland we have the representative of German Realism. They are contrasts in all essentials. Wieland is sensuous where Klopstock is supersensuous, rational where Klopstock is sentimental; philosophy and history rule his muse, as religion and music ruled that of Klopstock; and he is eminently didactic where Klopstock is eminently lyrical. Wieland had a marked preference for the later classics, and the French and Italian poets, as Klopstock had for the northern and English. Voltaire was to Wieland what Young was to Klopstock. Even on English ground the same contrast is observable. Wieland takes up Shaftesbury and Shakspeare; Klopstock,—Young, Richardson, and Milton. Klopstock was 'terribly in earnest,' as Kemble said of Kean; Wieland was a gay, light, wandering nature, incapable of any profound earnestness. If we have called one the German Wordsworth, we may call the other, in the same loose way, the German Moore. It was the fashion to call Wieland a Greek, because he wrote pleasant tales, of a Frenchified Hellenic cast; but although in *Agathon*, for example, a certain reflex of Grecian culture and Grecian light is visible; yet, as in an old Palimpsest you may still trace the rugged, ineffaceable writing of some monkish homily, which has been made to cede the place to a pleasant legend, so under this surface-polish of culture the

far-fetched a subject; to sport with sentiment we should not have suffered from it, and when the attempt is made by a serious person, a secret constraint always prevents him from appearing natural. We must reckon as belonging to the school of Klopstock, not as his disciples but as members of his poetical fraternity, the great Haller, who cannot be mentioned without respect, Gessner, and several others, who approached the English character with respect to truth of sentiment, and yet did not bear the truly characteristic stamp of German literature.

Klopstock himself did not entirely succeed in presenting to Germany an epic poem at once sublime and popular, as a work of that sort ought to be. Voss's translation of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* made Homer as much known as a sketched copy can render a finished original; every epithet is preserved, every word is in its proper place, and the impression made by the whole is forcible, although we do not find in the German all the charms of Greek, which was the finest language of the South. The men of literature in Germany, who seize with avidity every new kind of writing, endeavored to compose poems with the Homeric color; and the *Odyssey*, containing in itself many details of private life, appeared more easy to imitate than the *Iliad*.

The first essay of this kind was an idyl in three cantos by Voss himself, entitled *Luise*: it is written in hexameters, which are generally acknowledged to be admirable; but the pomp of hexameters seems seldom to accord with the extreme naïveté of the subject. Were it not for the pure and religious emotions which animate the poem, we should interest ourselves but little in the very quiet marriage of the venerable pastor of *Grünau's* daughter. Homer, always just in the application of his epithets, constantly says, in speaking of *Minerva*, "the blue-eyed daughter of *Jupiter*;" in the same manner Voss incessantly repeats, "the venerable pastor of *Grünau*" (*der*

German Wieland is unmistakably legible."—(G. H. Lewes, *Goethe's Life and Works*, vol. i. p. 249.)—*Ed.*

ehrwürdige Pfarrer von Grünau). But the simplicity of Homer produces so great an effect, merely because it forms a noble contrast with the dignified grandeur of his hero and of the fate which pursues him; but when the subject treated of is merely a country pastor, and a notable woman, his wife, who marry their daughter to the man she loves, its simplicity has less merit. In Germany, descriptions are greatly admired like those in Voss's *Luise*, on the manner of making coffee, of lighting a pipe, etc., and those details are given with much skill and exactness; it is a well-painted Flemish picture; but it appears to me that the common customs of life cannot well be introduced into our poems, as they were in those of the ancients; for those customs among us are not poetical, and our civilization has something citizen like in it. The ancients lived almost always in the open air, preserving their relations with nature, and their manner of existence was rural, but never vulgar.

The Germans consider the subject of a poem as of little consequence, and believe that every thing consists in the manner of treating it. Now this manner can scarcely ever be transfused into a foreign language, and yet the general reputation of Europe is not to be despised; besides, the remembrance of the most interesting details is soon effaced, when it is not connected with some fiction which the imagination can lay hold of. That affecting purity which constitutes the principal charm of Voss's poem is most conspicuous, as it appears to me, in the nuptial benediction of the pastor, at the marriage of his daughter; addressing himself to her with a flattering voice, he says:¹

“My daughter, may the blessing of God be with thee: amiable and virtuous child, may the blessing of God accompany thee, both on earth and in heaven. I have been young, and now am old; and in this uncertain life the Almighty has sent me much joy and much sorrow. May his holy name be blessed for both! I shall soon, without regret, lay my aged

¹ We are obliged to content ourselves with a simple literal version.—*Ed.*

head in the tomb of my fathers, for my daughter is happy ; she is so because she knows that our souls are equally the care of our Heavenly Father in sorrow as in joy. What can be more affecting than the sight of this young and beautiful bride ! In the simplicity of her heart, she leans on the arm of the friend who is to conduct her through the path of life ; it is with him that in a holy union she will partake of happiness and of misfortune ; it is she who, if it be the will of God, will wipe the last cold sweat from the forehead of her dying husband. My soul was also filled with presentiments when, on my wedding day, I brought my timid companion to this place ; happy, but serious, I showed her at a distance the extent of our fields, the tower of the church, and the pastor's house, in which we have experienced so much good and so much evil. My only child ! for thou alone remainest, the others whom God had given to me, sleep below under the church-yard turf ; my only child, thou goest, following the path which led me hither. The chamber of my daughter will be deserted, her place at our table will be no longer occupied ; in vain shall I listen to hear her footsteps, the sound of her voice. Yes, when thy husband takes thee far from me, sobs will escape me, and my eyes, bathed in tears, will long follow thee ; for I am a man and a father, and I love with tenderness this daughter who also loves me sincerely. But soon restraining my tears, I shall lift to heaven my supplicating hands, and prostrate myself before the divine will, which has commanded the wife to leave her father and mother and follow her husband. Depart then in peace, my child ; forsake thy family and thy father's house ; follow the young man who henceforth must supply to thee the place of those who gave thee birth ; be in thy house like a fruitful vine, surround thy table with noble branches. A religious marriage is the purest of all earthly felicity ; but if the Lord found not the edifice, how vain are the labors of man !"

This is true simplicity, that of the soul ; that which is equally suitable to the monarch and to his people, to the poor and to the rich, in short, to all the creatures of God. We are soon tired of descriptive poetry when it is applied to objects which

have nothing great in themselves; but sentiments descend to us from heaven, and however humble be the abode which is penetrated with their rays, those rays lose nothing of their original beauty.

From the extensive admiration which Goethe has acquired in Germany, his *Hermann and Dorothea* has obtained the name of an epic poem; and one of the most intelligent men of that or any other country, M. de Humboldt, the brother of the celebrated traveller, has composed a work on this subject, which contains several very philosophical and striking observations. *Hermann and Dorothea* is translated both into French and English, but we cannot in a translation have any idea of the charming effect produced by the original. From the first verse to the last, it excites a tender emotion, and there is also, in its minutest details, a natural dignity which would not be unsuitable to the heroes of Homer. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged, that the personages and events are of too little importance; the subject is sufficient to keep up the interest when we read it in the original, but in a translation that interest is destroyed. With respect to epic poems, it appears to me allowable to establish a certain literary aristocracy: dignity, both of personages and of the historical recollections connected with them, can alone raise the imagination to a height equal to the composition of that species of poetry.

An ancient poem of the thirteenth century, the *Nibelungen Lied*,¹ of which I have already spoken, seems in its time to have possessed all the characters of the true epic. The great actions of the hero of northern Germany, Siegfried, assassinated by a king of Burgundy, and the vengeance inflicted on that

¹ "To the Germans, this *Nibelungen Song* is naturally an object of no common love; neither if they sometimes overvalue it, and vague antiquarian wonder is more common than just criticism, should the fault be too heavily visited. After long ages of concealment, they have found it in the remote wilderness, still standing like the trunk of some almost antediluvian oak—nay, with boughs on it still green, after all the wind and weather of twelve hundred years. To many a patriotic feeling, which lingers fondly in solitary places of the Past, it may well be a rallying-point and 'Lovers' *Trysting-Tree*.'"—*C. Ryle's Essays*, p. 262.—*Ed.*

king in the camp of Attila by the followers of Siegfried, which put an end to the first kingdom of Burgundy, are the subject of the work. An epic poem is scarcely ever the work of one man; ages, if we may be allowed the expression, must labor to perfect it; patriotism, religion, in short, the whole existence of a nation, cannot be brought into action but by some of those singularly great events, which are not created by the poet, but which appear to him in greater magnitude seen through the obscurity of time. The personages of an epic poem ought to represent the primitive character of their nation. We should discover in them that indestructible mould from which all history derives its origin.

The pride and boast of Germany were its ancient chivalry, its strength, its loyalty, the union of goodness and simplicity for which it was famed, and that northern roughness, which was, however, connected with the most exalted sensibility. We also admire that Christianity which is grafted on the Scandinavian mythology; that untamed honor, rendered pure and sacred by faith; that respect for women, which became still more striking from the protection it afforded to the weak; that undaunted contempt of death, that warlike paradise which has now given place to the most humane of all religions. Such are the elements of an epic poem in Germany. Genius should avail itself of this, and, with the art of Medea, reanimate with new blood ancient recollections.



CHAPTER XIII.

OF GERMAN POETRY.

THE detached pieces of poetry among the Germans are, it appears to me, still more remarkable than their poems, and it is particularly on that species of writing that the stamp of originality is impressed; it is also true that the authors who have written most in this manner, Goethe, Schiller, Bürger,

etc., are of the modern school, which alone bears a truly national character. Goethe has most imagination, and Schiller most sensibility; but Bürger is more popular than either. By successively examining some poetical pieces of each of these authors, we shall the better be able to form an idea of the qualities which distinguish them. The productions of Schiller bear some analogy to the French taste, yet we do not find in his detached poems any thing that resembles the fugitive pieces of Voltaire; that elegance of conversation, and almost of manners, transfused into French poetry, belongs to France alone; and Voltaire, in point of gracefulness, was the first of French writers. It would be interesting to compare Schiller's stanzas on the loss of youth, entitled the *Ideal*, with those of Voltaire, beginning,

"Si vous voulez que j'aime encore,
Rendez moi l'age des amours, etc."

We see in the French poet the expression of pleasing regret, which has for its object the pleasures of love and the joys of life; the German poet laments the loss of that enthusiasm and innocent purity of thought peculiar to early age, and flatters himself that his decline of life will still be embellished by the charms of poetry and of reflection. The stanzas of Schiller do not possess that easy and brilliant clearness which is generally so striking and attractive; but we may draw from them consolations which intimately affect the soul. Schiller never presents to us a serious or profound reflection without investing it with noble images; he speaks to man as nature herself would speak to him, for nature is also contemplative and poetical. To paint the idea of time, she brings before us an ever-flowing stream; and lest, through her eternal youth, we should forget our own transient existence, she adorns herself with flowers which quickly fade, and strips the trees in autumn of those leaves which spring beheld in all their beauty. Poetry should be the terrestrial mirror of this divinity, and by colors, sounds, and rhythm, reflect all the beauties of the universe.

The poem entitled *The Song of the Bell*, consists of two

distinct parts: the alternate stanzas express the labor which is performed at a forge, and between each of these there are charming verses on the solemn circumstances and extraordinary events commonly announced by the ringing of bells, such as birth, marriage, death, fire, insurrection, etc. We may translate into French the fine and affecting images which Schiller derives from those great epochs of human life; but it is impossible properly to imitate the strophes in short verse, and composed of words whose rough and quick sound almost conveys to our ears the repeated blows and rapid steps of the workmen who direct the boiling metal. Can a prose translation give any just idea of a poem of this sort? It is reading music instead of hearing it; and yet it is easier to conceive the effect of instruments which are known to us, than of the concords and contrasts of a rhythm and a language we are ignorant of. Sometimes the regular shortness of the metre gives us an idea of the activity of the workmen, the limited but regular force which they exert in their principal operations; and sometimes, immediately after this harsh and strong sound, we hear the aerial strains of enthusiasm and melancholy.

The originality of this poem is lost, if we separate it from the effect of a versification skilfully chosen, where the rhymes answer each other like intelligent echoes modified by thought; and nevertheless, these picturesque effects of sound would be bold and hazardous in French. The vulgarity in point of style continually threatens us: we have not, like almost every other nation, two languages, that of prose and that of verse; and it is with words as with persons—wherever ranks are confounded familiarity is dangerous.

Cassandra, another piece of Schiller's, might more easily be translated into French, although its poetical language is extremely bold. At the moment when the festival to celebrate the marriage of Polyxena and Achilles is beginning, Cassandra is seized with a presentiment of the misfortunes which will result from it; she walks sad and melancholy in the grove of Apollo, and laments that knowledge of futurity which troubles all her enjoyments. We see in this ode what a misfortune it

would be to a human being, could he possess the prescience of a divinity. Is not the sorrow of the prophetess experienced by all persons of strong passions and superior minds? Schiller has given us a fine moral idea under a very poetical form, namely, that true genius, that of sentiment, even if it escape suffering from its commerce with the world, is frequently the victim of its own feelings. Cassandra never marries, not that she is either insensible or rejected; but her penetrating soul in a moment passes the boundaries of life and death, and finds repose only in heaven.

I should never end if I were to mention all the poetical pieces of Schiller which contain new thoughts and new beauties.¹ He has composed a hymn on the departure of the Greeks after the siege of Troy, which might be supposed the production of a poet then living, so faithfully has he adhered to the complexion of those times. I shall examine, under the subject of dramatic art, the admirable skill with which the Germans transport themselves into ages, countries, and characters, different from their own,—a superior faculty, without which the personages produced on the stage would resemble puppets moved by the same wire, and made to speak in the same voice, namely, that of the author. Schiller deserves particularly to be admired as a dramatic poet: Goethe stands unrivalled in the art of composing elegies, ballads, stanzas, etc.; his detached pieces have a very different merit from those of Voltaire. The French poet has transfused into his verse the spirit of the most brilliant society; the German, by a few slight touches, awakens in the soul profound and contemplative impressions.²

Goethe is to the highest degree natural in this species of composition; and not only so when he speaks from his own impressions, but even when he transports himself to new cli-

¹ The lyrical pieces of Schiller have been very well translated by Sir Bulwer Lytton. They may be obtained, together with Bulwer's *Life of Schiller*, for a very small sum, in the Tauchnitz reprint.—*Ed.*

² Goethe's *Poems and Ballads* have been translated by Professor Aytoun and Mr. Theodore Martin of Edinburgh, and reprinted in New York by Delisser & Procter.—*Ed.*

mates, customs, and situations, his poetry easily assimilates itself with foreign countries; he seizes, with a talent perfectly unique, all that pleases in the national songs of each nation; he becomes, when he chooses it, a Greek, an Indian, or a Morlachian. We have often mentioned that melancholy and meditation which characterizes the poets of the North: Goethe, like all other men of genius, unites in himself most astonishing contrasts; we find in his works many traces of character peculiar to the inhabitants of the South; they are more awakened to the pleasures of existence, and have at once a more lively and tranquil enjoyment of nature than those of the North; their minds have not less depth, but their genius has more vivacity; we find in it a certain sort of *naïveté*, which awakens at once the remembrance of ancient simplicity with that of the middle ages: it is not the *naïveté* of innocence, but that of strength. We perceive in Goethe's poetical compositions, that he disdains the crowd of obstacles, criticisms, and observations, which may be opposed to him. He follows his imagination wherever it leads him, and a certain predominant pride frees him from the scruples of self-love.¹ Goethe is in poetry an absolute master

¹ "In Goethe's mind, the first aspect that strikes us is its calmness, then its beauty; a deeper inspection reveals to us its vastness and unmeasured strength. This man rules, and is not ruled. The stern and fiery energies of a most passionate soul lie silent in the centre of its being; a trembling sensibility has been inured to stand, without flinching or murmur, the sharpest trials. Nothing outward, nothing inward, shall agitate or control him. The brightest and most capricious fancy, the most piercing and inquisitive intellect, the wildest and deepest imagination; the highest thrills of joy, the bitterest pangs of sorrow: all these are his, he is not theirs. While he moves every heart from its steadfastness, his own is firm and still: the words that search into the inmost recesses of our nature, he pronounces with a tone of coldness and equanimity: in the deepest pathos he weeps not, or his tears are like water trickling from a rock of adamant. He is a king of himself and of this world; now does he rule it like a vulgar great man, like Napoleon or Charles the Twelfth, by the mere brute exertion of his will, grounded on no principle, or on a false one: his faculties and feelings are not fettered or prostrated under the iron sway of Passion, but led and guided in kindly union under the mild sway of Reason; as the fierce primeval elements of Chaos were stilled at the coming of Light, and bound together, under its soft vesture, into a glorious and beneficent Creation."—(*Carlyle's Essays*, p. 90.)—*Ed.*

of nature, and most admirable when he does not finish his pictures; for all his sketches contain the germ of a fine fiction, but his finished fictions do not always equally convey the idea of a good sketch.

In his elegies, composed at Rome, we must not look for descriptions of Italy: Goethe scarcely does whatever is expected from him, and when there is any thing pompous in an idea it displeases him; he wishes to produce effect by an untrodden path hitherto unknown both to himself and to the reader. His elegies describe the effect of Italy on his whole existence, that delirium of happiness resulting from the influence of a serene and beautiful sky. He relates his pleasures, even of the most common kind, in the manner of Propertius; and from time to time some fine recollections of that city, which was once the mistress of the world, give an impulse to the imagination, the more lively because it was not prepared for it.

He relates, that he once met in the Campagna of Rome a young woman suckling her child and seated on the remains of an ancient column; he wished to question her on the subject of the ruins with which her hut was surrounded; but she was ignorant of every thing concerning them, wholly devoted to the affections which filled her soul; she loved, and to her the present moment was the whole of existence.

We read in a Greek author, that a young girl, skilful in the art of making nosegays of flowers, entered into a contest with her lover, Pausias, who knew how to paint them. Goethe has composed a charming idyl on that subject. The author of that idyl is also the author of *Werther*. Goethe has run through all the shades and gradations of love, from the sentiment which confers grace and tenderness, to that despair which harrows up the soul, but exalts genius.

After having made himself a Greek in Pausias, Goethe conducts us to Asia in a most charming ballad, called *the God and the Bayaderé*.¹ An Indian deity (Mahadoeh) clothes him-

¹ *Bayadera* is a Portuguese word signifying a dancing woman.—*Ed.*

self in a mortal form, in order to judge of the pleasures and pains of men from his own experience. He travels through Asia, observes both the great and the lower classes of people; and as one evening, on leaving a town, he was walking on the banks of the Ganges, he is stopped by a Bayadere, who persuades him to rest himself in her habitation. There is so much poetry, colors so truly oriental in his manner of painting the dances of this Bayadere, the perfumes and flowers with which she is surrounded, that we cannot, from our own manners, judge of a picture so perfectly foreign to them. The Indian deity inspires this erring female with true love, and touched with that return towards virtue which sincere affection should always inspire, he resolves to purify the soul of the Bayadere by the trials of misfortune.

When she awakes, she finds her lover dead by her side. The priests of Brahma carry off the lifeless body to consume it on the funeral pile. The Bayadere endeavors to throw herself on it with him she loves, but is repulsed by the priests, because, not being his wife, she has no right to die with him. After having felt all the anguish of love and of shame, she throws herself on the pile, in spite of the Brahmins. The god receives her in his arms; he darts through the flames, and carries the object of his tenderness, now rendered worthy of his choice, with him to heaven.

Zelter, an original musician, has set this romance to an air, by turns voluptuous and solemn, which suits the words extremely well. When we hear it, we think ourselves in India, surrounded with all its wonders; and let it not be said, that a ballad is too short a poem to produce such an effect. The first notes of an air, the first verse of a poem, transports the imagination to any distant age or country; but, if a few words are thus powerful, a few words can also destroy the enchantment. Magicians formerly could perform or prevent prodigies by the help of a few magical words. It is the same with the poet; he may call up the past, or make the present appear again, according as the expressions he makes use of are, or are not, conformable to the time or country which is

the subject of his verse, according as he observes or neglects local coloring, and those little circumstances so ingeniously invented, which, both in fiction and reality, exercise the mind in the endeavor to discover truth where it is not specifically pointed out to us.

Another ballad of Goethe's produces a delightful effect by the most simple means; it is *the Fisherman*. A poor man, on a summer's evening, seats himself on the bank of a river, and, as he throws in his line, contemplates the clear and limpid tide, which gently flows and bathes his naked feet. The nymph of the stream invites him to plunge himself into it; she describes to him the delightful freshness of the water during the heat of summer, the pleasure which the sun takes in cooling itself at night in the sea, the calmness of the moon when its rays repose and sleep on the bosom of the stream. At length, the fisherman, attracted, seduced, drawn on, advances near the nymph, and forever disappears. The story on which this ballad is founded is trifling; but what is delightful in it, is the art of making us feel the mysterious power which may proceed from the phenomena of nature. It is said there are persons who discover springs, hidden under the earth, by the nervous agitation which they cause in them: in German poetry, we often think we discover this miraculous sympathy between man and the elements. The German poet comprehends nature not only as a poet, but as a brother; and we might almost say, that the bonds of family union connect him with the air, the water, flowers, trees, in short, with all the primary beauties of the creation.

There is no one who has not felt the undefinable attraction which we experience when looking on the waves of the sea, whether from the charm of their freshness, or from the ascendancy which a uniform and perpetual motion insensibly acquires over our transient and perishable existence. This ballad of Goethe's admirably expresses the increasing pleasure we derive from contemplating the pure waters of a flowing stream: the measure of the rhythm and harmony is made to imitate the motion of the waves, and produces an analogous effect on the

imagination. The soul of nature discovers itself to us in every place, and under a thousand different forms. The fruitful country and the unpeopled desert, the sea as well as the stars, are all subjected to the same laws; and man contains within himself sensations and occult powers, which correspond with the day, with the night, and with the storm; it is this secret alliance of our being with the wonders of the universe, which gives to poetry its true grandeur. The poet knows how to restore the union between the natural and the moral world: his imagination forms a connecting tie between the one and the other.¹

There is much gayety in several of Goethe's pieces; but we seldom find in them that sort of pleasantry to which we have been accustomed: he is sooner struck by the imagery of nature, than by ridiculous circumstances; with a singular instinct, he points out the originality of animals, always new, yet never varying. *Lili's Park* and *the Wedding song in the Old Castle*, describe animals, not like men, in La Fontaine's manner, but, like fantastic creatures, the sports of Nature. Goethe also finds in the marvellous a source of pleasantry, the more gratifying, because we discover in it no serious aim.

A song, entitled *the Magician's Apprentice*, also deserves to be mentioned. The apprentice of a magician having heard his master mutter some magical words, by the help of which he gets a broomstick to tend on him, recollects those words, and commands the broomstick to go and fetch him water from the river, to wash his house. The broomstick sets off and returns, brings one bucket, then another, and then another, and so on without ceasing. The apprentice wants to stop it, but he has forgot the words necessary for that purpose: the broomstick, faithful to its office, still goes to the river, and still draws up water, which is thrown on the house at the risk of inundating it. The apprentice, in his fury, takes an axe and cuts the broomstick in two; the two parts of the stick

¹ Mr. Lewes' Life of Goethe contains no passage at all approaching this in truth and delicacy of poetic criticism. Gervinus himself has nothing better.—*Ed.*

then become two servants instead of one, and go for water, which they throw into the apartments, as in emulation of each other, with more zeal than ever. In vain the apprentice scolds these stupid sticks; they continue their business without ceasing, and the house would have been lost, had not the master arrived in time to assist his apprentice, at the same time laughing heartily at his ridiculous presumption. An awkward imitation of the great secrets of art is very well depicted in this little scene.

We have not yet spoken of an inexhaustible source of poetical effect in Germany, which is terror; stories of apparitions and sorcerers are equally well received by the populace and by men of more enlightened minds: it is a relic of the northern mythology—a disposition naturally inspired by the long nights of a northern climate; and besides, though Christianity opposes all groundless fears, yet popular superstitions have always some sort of analogy to the prevailing religion. Almost every true opinion has its attendant error, which, like a shadow, places itself in the imagination at the side of the reality; it is a luxuriance or excess of belief, which is commonly attached both to religion and to history, and I know not why we should disdain to avail ourselves of it. Shakspeare has produced wonderful effects from the introduction of spectres and magic; and poetry cannot be popular when it despises that which exercises a spontaneous empire over the imagination. Genius and taste may preside over the arrangement of these tales, and in proportion to the commonness of the subject, the more skill is required in the manner of treating it: perhaps it is in this union alone that the great force of a poem consists. It is probable that the great events recorded in the Iliad and Odyssey were sung by nurses, before Homer rendered them the *chefs-d'œuvre* of the poetical art.¹

¹ "The poetry of Goethe we reckon to be Poetry, sometimes in the very highest sense of that word; yet it is no reminiscence, but something actually present and before us; no looking back into an antique Fairy-land, divided by impassable abysses from the real world as it lies about us and within us; but a looking round upon that real world itself, now rendered

Of all German writers, Bürger has made the best use of this vein of superstition which carries us so far into the recesses of the heart. His romances are therefore well known throughout Germany. *Lenore*, which is most generally admired, is not, I believe, translated into French, or, at least, it would be very difficult to relate it circumstantially either in our prose or verse. A young girl is alarmed at not hearing from her lover

holier to our eyes, and once more become a solemn temple, where the spirit of Beauty still dwells, and, under new emblems, to be worshipped as of old. With Goethe, the mythologies of bygone days pass only for what they are; we have no witchcraft or magic, in the common acceptation, and spirits no longer bring with them airs from heaven or blasts from hell; for Pandemonium and the steadfast Empyrean have faded away, since the opinions which they symbolized no longer are. Neither does he bring his heroes from remote Oriental climates, or periods of Chivalry, or any section either of Atlantis or the Age of Gold, feeling that the reflex of these things is cold and faint, and only hangs like a cloud-picture in the distance, beautiful but delusive, and which even the simplest know to be delusion. The end of Poetry is higher; she must dwell in Reality, and become manifest to men in the forms among which they live and move. And this is what we prize in Goethe, and more or less in Schiller and the rest, all of whom, each in his own way, are writers of a similar aim. The coldest skeptic, the most callous worldling, sees not the actual aspects of life more sharply than they are here delineated: the nineteenth century stands before us in all its contradiction and perplexity,—barren, mean, and baneful, as we have all known it; yet here no longer mean or barren, but enamelled into beauty in the poet's spirit; for its secret significance is laid open, and thus, as it were, the life-giving fire that slumbers in it is called forth, and flowers and foliage, as of old, are springing on its bleakest wildernesses and overmantling its sternest cliffs. For these men have not only the clear eye, but the loving heart. They have penetrated into the mystery of Nature; after long trial, they have been initiated; and, to unwearied endeavor, Art has at last yielded her secret; and thus can the Spirit of our Age, embodied in fair imaginations, look forth on us, earnest and full of meaning, from their works. As the first and indispensable condition of good poets, they are wise and good men: much they have seen and suffered, and they have conquered all this and made it all their own; they have known life in its heights and depths, and mastered it in both, and can teach others what it is, and how to lead it rightly. Their minds are as a mirror to us, where the perplexed image of our own being is reflected back in soft and clear interpretation. Here mirth and gravity are blended together; wit rests on deep, devout wisdom, as the greensward with its flowers must rest on the rock, whose foundations reach downward to the centre. In a word, they are believers; but their faith is no sallow plant of darkness; it is green and flowery, for it grows in the sunlight.

who is gone to the army; peace is made, and the soldiers return to their habitations. Mothers again meet their sons, sisters their brothers, and husbands their wives; the warlike trumpet accompanies the songs of peace, and joy reigns in every heart. Lenore in vain surveys the ranks of the soldiers; she sees not her lover, and no one can tell her what has become of him. She is in despair; her mother attempts to calm her; but the youthful heart of Lenore revolts against the stroke of affliction, and in its frenzy she accuses Providence. From the moment in which the blasphemy is uttered, we are sensible that the story is to have something fatal in it, and this idea keeps the mind in constant agitation.

At midnight, a knight stops at the door of Lenore's house; she hears the neighing of the horse and the clinking of the spurs; the knight knocks, she goes down and beholds her lover. He tells her to follow him instantly, having not a moment to lose, he says, before he returns to the army. She presses forward; he places her behind him on his horse, and sets off with the quickness of lightning. During the night he gallops through barren and desert countries; his youthful companion is filled with terror, and continually asks him why he goes so fast; the knight still presses on his horse by his hoarse and hollow cries, and in a low voice says, "The dead ride quick, the dead ride quick!" Lenore answers, "Ah! leave the dead

And this faith is the doctrine they have to teach us,—the sense which, under every noble and graceful form, it is their endeavor to set forth:

'As all nature's thousand changes
But one changeless God proclaim,
So in Art's wide kingdoms ranges
One sole meaning, still the same;
This is Truth, eternal Reason,
Which from Beauty takes its dress,
And, serene through time and season,
Stands for aye in loveliness.'

Such indeed is the end of Poetry at all times; yet in no recent literature known to us, except the German, has it been so far attained—nay, perhaps, so much as consciously and steadfastly attempted."—(*Carlyle's Essays*, p. 28.)—*Ed.*

in peace!" but whenever she addresses to him any anxious question, he repeats the same appalling words.

In approaching the church, where he says he is carrying her to complete their union, the frosts of winter seem to change nature herself into a frightful omen: priests carry a coffin in great pomp, and their black robes train slowly on the snow, the winding-sheet of the earth; Lenore's terror increases, and her lover cheers her with a mixture of irony and carelessness which makes one shudder. All that he says is pronounced with a monotonous precipitation, as if already, in his language, the accents of life were no longer heard; he promises to bring her to that narrow and silent abode where their union was to be accomplished. We see, at a distance, the church-yard by the side of the church: the knight knocks, and the door opens; he pushes forward with his horse, making him pass between the tombstones; he then, by degrees, loses the appearance of a living being, is changed to a skeleton, and the earth opens to swallow up both him and his mistress.

I certainly do not flatter myself that I have been able, in this abridged recital, to give a just idea of the astonishing merit of this romance;¹ all the imagery, all the sounds connected with the situation of the soul, are wonderfully expressed by the poetry; the syllables, the rhymes, all the art of language is employed to excite terror. The rapidity of the horse's pace seems more solemn and more appalling than even the slowness of a funeral procession. The energy with which the knight quickens his course, that petulance of death, causes an inexpressible emotion; and we feel ourselves carried off by the phantom, as well as the poor girl whom he drags with him into the abyss.

There are four² English translations of this tale of Lenore, but the best beyond comparison is that of Wm. Spencer,³ who of all English poets is best acquainted with the true spirit of

¹ His romances are in verse.—*Ed.*

² There are now many more. We know of nine, and there are doubtless many that we are ignorant of.—*Ed.*

³ Mr. Spencer's volume is more famous for the illustrations of Lady Diana Beauclerc, than for any thing of his own.—*Ed.*

foreign languages. The analogy between the English and German, allows a complete transfusion of the originality of style and versification of Bürger; and we not only find in the translation, the same ideas as in the original, but also the same sensations; and nothing is more necessary than this to convey the true knowledge of a literary production. It would be difficult to obtain the same result in French, where nothing strange or odd seems natural.

Bürger has written another romance, less celebrated, but also extremely original, entitled *the Wild Huntsman*. Followed by his servants and a large pack of hounds, he set out for the chase on a Sunday, just as the village bell announces divine service. A knight in white armor presents himself, and conjures him not to profane the Lord's day; another knight, arrayed in black armor, makes him ashamed of subjecting himself to prejudices, which are suitable only to old men and children: the huntsman yields to these evil suggestions; he sets off, and reaches the field of a poor widow; she throws herself at his feet, imploring him not to destroy her harvest by trampling down her corn with his attendants; the knight in white armor entreats the huntsman to listen to the voice of pity; the black knight laughs at a sentiment so puerile; the huntsman mistakes ferocity for energy, and his horses trample on the hope of the poor and the orphan. At length the stag, pursued, seeks refuge in the hut of an old hermit; the huntsman wishes to set it on fire in order to drive out his prey; the hermit embraces his knees, and endeavors to soften the ferocious being who thus threatens his humble abode: for the last time, the good genius, under the form of the white knight, again speaks to him; the evil genius, under that of the black knight triumphs; the huntsman kills the hermit, and is at once changed into a phantom, pursued by his own dogs, who seek to devour him. This story is derived from a popular superstition: it is said, that at midnight, in certain seasons of the year, a huntsman is seen in the clouds, just over the forest where this event is supposed to have passed, and that he is pursued by a furious pack of hounds till daybreak.

What is truly fine in this poem of Bürger's, is his description of the ardent will of the huntsman; it was at first innocent, as are all the faculties of the soul; but it becomes more and more depraved, as often as he resists the voice of conscience and yields to his passions. His headstrong purpose was at first only the intoxication of power; it soon becomes that of guilt, and the earth can no longer sustain him. The good and evil inclinations of men are well characterized by the white and black knights; the words, always the same, which are pronounced by the white knight to stop the career of the huntsman, are also very ingeniously combined. The ancients, and the poets of the middle ages, were well acquainted with the kind of terror caused in certain circumstances by the repetition of the same words; it seems to awaken the sentiment of inflexible necessity. Apparitions, oracles—all supernatural powers, must be monotonous; what is immutable is uniform; and in certain fictions it is a great art to imitate by words that solemn fixedness which imagination assigns to the empire of darkness and of death.

We also remark in Bürger a certain familiarity of expression, which does not lessen the dignity of the poetry, but, on the contrary, singularly increases its effect. When we succeed in exciting both terror and admiration without weakening either, each of those sentiments is necessarily strengthened by the union: it is mixing, in the art of painting, what we see continually with what we never see; and from what we know, we are led to believe what astonishes us.

Goethe has also made trial of his talents in those subjects which are at the same time terrifying both to children and men; but he has treated them with a depth of thought that leaves us also a wide field for reflection. I will endeavor to give an account of one of his poems on apparitions which is the most admired in Germany; it is called *the Bride of Corinth*. I certainly do not mean in any respect to defend this fiction, either as considered in itself, or in its tendency; but it seems to me scarcely possible not to be struck with the warmth of imagination which it indicates.

Two friends, one of Athens and the other of Corinth, had resolved to unite their son and daughter to each other. The young man sets out for Corinth to see her who had been promised to him, and whom he had never yet beheld: it was at the time when Christianity was first established. The family of the Athenian adhered to the old religion, but that of the Corinthian had adopted the new faith; and the mother, during a lingering illness, had devoted her daughter to the altar. The youngest sister is destined to fill the place of the eldest, who is thus consecrated to religion.

The young man arrives late at the house; all the family had retired to rest; the servants bring some supper to his apartment, and leave him alone; but he is soon afterwards joined by a very singular guest: he sees, advancing to the middle of the room, a young girl clothed in a veil and a white robe, her forehead bound with a black and gold ribbon; and when she perceives the young man she draws back with timidity, and, lifting her white hands to heaven, cries out:¹

“ Is a stanger here, and nothing told me?
Am I then forgotten even in name?
Ah! 'tis thus within my cell they hold me,
And I now am cover'd o'er with shame!”

She attempts to retire, but the young man holds her back; he learns that she is the person who was destined to be his wife. Their fathers had sworn to unite them, and therefore every other vow appeared to him without effect.

“ Maiden—darling! Stay, O stay!” and, leaping
From the couch, before her stands the boy:
‘ Ceres—Bacchus, here their gifts are heaping,
And thou bringest Amor’s gentle joy!
Why with terror pale?
Sweet one, let us hail
These bright gods—their festive gifts employ.’ ”

The young man conjures his youthful companion to yield herself to his wishes.

¹ We use the translation of Professor Aytoun and Theoloze Martin.—*Ed.*

“ Oh, no—no! Young stranger, come not nigh me ;
 Joy is not for me, nor festive cheer.
 Ah! such bliss may ne'er be tasted by me,
 Since my mother, in fantastic fear,
 By long sickness bow'd,
 To Heaven's service vow'd
 Me, and all the hopes that warm'd me here.

“ They have left our hearth, and left it lonely—
 The old gods, that bright and jocund train.
 One, unseen, in heaven, is worshipp'd only,
 And upon the cross a Saviour slain ;
 Sacrifice is here,
 Not of lamb nor steer,
 But of human woe and human pain.

.

“ But, alas! these limbs of mine would chill thee :
 Love! they mantle not with passion's glow ;
 Thou wouldst be afraid,
 Didst thou find the maid
 Thou hast chosen, cold as ice or snow.”

At midnight, which is called the hour of spectres, the young girl seems more unconstrained ; she eagerly drinks wine of the color of blood, like that which is taken by the ghosts in the *Odyssey* to renew their lost memory ; but she obstinately refuses to taste a bit of bread : she gives a chain of gold to him whom she was to have married, and asks in return a lock of his hair : the young man, charmed with the beauty of his companion, presses her with transport in his arms, but he feels no heart beat responsive against his bosom ; her limbs are frozen.

‘ Round her waist his eager arms he bended,
 With the strength that youth and love inspire ;
 ‘ Wert thou even from the grave ascended,
 I could warm thee well with my desire!’ ”

And then begins a scene as extraordinary as the frenzied imagination can possibly conceive,—a mixture of love and terror, a formidable union of life and death. There is, as it were, a funereal voluptuousness in this picture where love

forms an alliance with the grave, where beauty itself seems only a terrifying apparition.¹

At length the mother arrives, and convinced that one of her slaves has been introduced to the stranger, she gives way to her just indignation; but immediately the young girl increases in size, till like a shadow she reaches the vaulted ceiling,² and then reproaches her mother with having caused her death by obliging her to take the veil:

“Mother! mother! wherefore thus deprive me
Of such joy as I this night have known?
Wherefore from these warm embraces drive me?
Was I waken’d up to meet thy frown?
Did it not suffice
That, in virgin guise,
To an early grave you brought me down?”

“Fearful is the weird that forced me hither,
From the dark-heap’d chamber where I lay;
Powerless are your drowsy anthems, neither
Can your priests prevail, howe’er they pray.
Salt nor lymph can cool,
Where the pulse is full;
Love must still burn on, though wrapp’d in clay.

“To this youth my early troth was plighted,
While yet Venus ruled within the land;
Mother! and that vow ye falsely slighted,
At your new and gloomy faith’s command.
But no god will hear,
If a mother swear
Pure from love to keep her daughter’s hand.

“Nightly from my narrow chamber driven,
Come I to fulfil my destined part,
Him to seek to whom my troth was given,
And to draw the life-blood from his heart.

¹ “An awful and undefined horror,” says Mrs. Austin, “breathes throughout this poem. In the slow and measured rhythm of the verse, and the pathetic simplicity of the diction, there is a solemnity and stirring spell which chains the feelings like a deep mysterious strain of music.”—*Ed.*

² “And her form upright,
As with ghostly might,
Long and slowly rises from the bed.”—*Ed.*

He hath served my will ;
 More I yet must kill,
 For another prey I now depart.

“Fair young man ! thy thread of life is broken,
 Human skill can bring no aid to thee.
 There thou hast my chain—a ghastly token—
 And this lock of thine I take with me.
 Soon must thou decay,
 Soon wilt thou be gray,
 Dark although to-night thy tresses be !

“Mother ! hear, oh hear my last entreaty !
 Let the funeral-pile arise once more ;
 Open up my wretched tomb for pity,
 And in flames our souls to peace restore.
 When the ashes glow,
 When the fire-sparks flow,
 To the ancient gods aloft we soar.”

Without doubt, a pure and chastened taste will find many things to blame in this piece ; but when it is read in the original, it is impossible not to admire the art with which every word is made to produce an increasing degree of terror ; every word indicates, without explaining, the astonishing horror of this situation. A history, of which nothing in nature could have given the idea, is related in striking and natural details, as if the subject of it had really taken place ; and curiosity is constantly excited, without our being willing to sacrifice a single circumstance, in order to satisfy it the sooner.¹

¹ We are happy to borrow from Professor Aytoun and Mr. Martin the following account of the legend on which “The Bride of Corinth” is founded :

“The legend on which this poem is based is to be found in the treatise *Περὶ θαυμασιῶν*, by Phlegon of Tralles, a freedman of the Emperor Adrian, where it forms the first of the series of marvels recorded by that singular writer. The opening of the story is lost, but its nature is made sufficiently obvious by what remains.

“She passed,” writes Phlegon, ‘to the door of the stranger’s room, and there, by the shimmer of the lamp, beheld the damsel seated by the side of Machates. At this marvellous phenomenon she was unable to command herself, and, hastening to the damsel’s mother, called with a loud voice to Charito and Demostratus to arise and go with her to their daughter ; for that she had come back to life, and was even now closeted with

This piece, nevertheless, is the only one among the detached poems of celebrated German authors against which French taste can find any thing to object: in all the others the two nations appear to agree. In the verses of Jacobi we almost

the stranger in his room. Hearing this strange announcement, Charito, between fright at the intelligence and the bewilderment of the nurse, was at first distracted; then, remembering the daughter she had lost, she began to weep; and in the end, thinking the old woman crazed, she commanded her to betake herself to rest. To this the nurse rejoined by reproaches, insisting that she herself was in her right mind, but that the mother was unwilling from pure fear to behold her own daughter; and so at last Charito, partly constrained by the nurse, partly impelled by curiosity, repaired to the door of the stranger's apartment. But as a second message had been required to persuade her, a considerable space of time had in the mean while elapsed, so that by the time she reached the chamber they were both in bed. Looking in at the doorway, she thought she recognized the dress and features of her daughter; but being unable to satisfy herself of the truth, she conceived it best to make no disturbance. Moreover, she hoped, by rising in the morning betimes, to take the damsel by surprise; or, even if she should fail in this, then she thought to put Machates to question as to the matter, when of a surety, seeing how momentous it was, he would not speak that which was untrue. And so she withdrew noiselessly from the door. By daybreak, however, she found the damsel already gone, peradventure through chance, peradventure according to the will of some god. Disconcerted by her so sudden withdrawal, the mother narrated to her young guest all that she had seen, and, embracing his knees, besought him to tell her the truth, and to conceal nothing. Upon this the youth was at first smitten with consternation and sore confusion; at length, however, with difficulty he mentioned her name, Philinnion—recounted how she had come to him on the first occasion—with what fondness she had encountered him, and how she had said that her visit was made without the knowledge of her parents. Furthermore, to confirm his tale, he opened a chest and showed a certain gift presented to him by the damsel—to wit, a golden ring, and also a scarf from her bosom, which she had left behind her on the previous night. On seeing these proofs Charito shrieked, rent her robes in twain, tore the veil from her head, and, throwing herself upon the ground, kissed the well-known tokens, and broke forth anew into lamentations. When now the guest had reflected on what had transpired, and beheld them all weeping and wailing immoderately, as though they were now about for the first time to lay the damsel in the tomb, he began, all confounded though he was, to speak words of comfort to them, and vowed to give them intimation if she should return. Tranquillized by these assurances, Charito returned to her chamber, after conjuring the youth to deal truly with his promise. When night closed in, and the hour had come at which Philinnion was wont to visit him, the others held themselves in readiness for the tidings of her

discover the brilliancy and lightness of Gresset. Matthisson has given to descriptive poetry (the features of which are frequently too vague) the character of a picture as striking in its coloring as in its resemblance. The charm which pervades

arrival. And truly come she did; and when she had entered at the accustomed time and seated herself upon the bed, Machates unconcernedly took his place beside her, longing nevertheless with all his heart to come at the bottom of the business; for he could not bring himself to think that it was a dead maiden with whom he had holden intercourse, seeing that she returned so punctually always at the same time, and ate and drank with him. Therefore did he mistrust the assurances of the nurse and of the parents, holding rather to the opinion that thieves had broken into and plundered the tomb, and sold the garments and the ornament of gold to the father of the damsel, who had in this wise made resort unto him. Wishing to be assured of the truth, therefore, he privily called his servants and sent them to the parents. Demonstratus and Charito hastened with all speed to the apartment, and beholding the damsel there, they were for a time struck dumb with amazement at the wondrous apparition; but, recovering themselves, they ran forward with a great cry, and fell upon their daughter's neck. Then spoke Philinnion to them in this wise: "Oh, mother and father, unjust and ungentle are ye, in that you grant me not to tarry unmolested with this stranger but for three days at my father's house. Now, therefore, because of your busy curiosity, shall ye once again be made to mourn. But for me, I return unto my appointed place; for hither have I come not without the intervention of the gods." When she had so spoken, she fell back dead once more, and lay there stretched out upon the bed.

"The utmost excitement, says the chronicler, was occasioned in the household and the city by this singular event. The family-vault was searched, when all the bodies were found in their places, with the exception of Philinnion's; and where that had lain, a steel ring belonging to the guest was discovered, and a parcel-gilt goblet, both of which she had received from her companion on the occasion of her first visit. By the advice of an angur of great reputation, the body was burnt outside the city walls—an expiatory sacrifice was made to Hernes and the Eumenides—lustrations were performed in the temples—sacrifices offered up for the emperor and the public weal; and, as an appropriate consummation to the whole, the youth Machates laid violent hands upon himself.

"It is interesting to observe how dexterously Goethe has availed himself of the incidents narrated with so much circumstantiality in this striking legend, and what additional interest he has given it, by marking so distinctly the period when the old mythological faith was passing away under the influence of the Christian creed. With all reverence for the genius of Goethe, it is impossible to deny that he had strong Pagan tendencies, and these were never so forcibly exhibited as in the composition of this wonderful poem. It is said that it cost him only two days' labor, and, when

the poetry of Salis makes us love its author as if he were our friend. Tiedge is a moral poet, whose writings lead the soul to the purest devotional feelings. We should still, in short, have to mention a crowd of other poets, if it were possible to point out every name deserving of applause, in a country where poetry is so natural to all cultivated minds.

A. W. Schlegel, whose literary opinions have made so much noise in Germany, has not, in any of his poems, allowed himself the slightest expression which can attract censure from the most severe taste. His elegies on the death of a young person; his stanzas on the union of the church with the fine arts; his elegy on Rome, are written throughout with delicacy and dignity. The two specimens I am about to give of his poetry will convey but a very imperfect idea of it; but they will serve, at least, to render the character of the poet better known. The sonnet, entitled *Attachment to the World*, appears to me charming.¹

“Oft will the soul her wings unfold,
Invigorated by contemplation of purer things;
To her seems, in the narrow circle she traverses,
Her doing vain, and her knowing illusive.

“She feels deeply an irresistible longing
For higher worlds, for freer spheres of action,
And believes, at the close of her earthly career,
First lifted is the curtain revealing brighter scenes.

“Yet let death touch her body, so that she must leave it,
Then she shudders, and looks back with longing
On earthly pleasures and mortal companions:

“As once Proserpine, from Enna’s meads —
In Pluto’s arms borne off, childish in her complaints,
For the flowers wept, which from her bosom fell.”

completed, required no corrections—an effort which deserves to be recorded, for few poems in any language have been so complete and absolutely perfect in their structure as ‘The Bride of Corinth.’”—*Ed.*

¹ Again we give a literal translation from the German, not being able to content ourselves with a second-hand version through the French.—*Ed.*

The following piece of verses must lose even more by a translation than the sonnet; it is called *the Melodies of Life*: the swan is placed in opposition to the eagle,—the former as the emblem of contemplative existence, the latter as the image of active existence; the rhythm of the verse changes when the swan speaks, and when the eagle answers her; and the strains of both are nevertheless comprised in the same stanza united by the rhyme; the true beauties of harmony are also found in this piece, not imitative harmony, but the internal music of the soul. Our emotion discovers it without having recourse to reflection; and reflecting genius converts it into poetry.

THE SWAN.

“In the waters is pass'd my tranquil life,
It traces only a slight furrow that vanishes,
And never fail me in the watery mirror
The curving neck and rounded form.

THE EAGLE.

“I dwell in the rocky cliffs,
I sail in the stormy air,
Trusting to the beating wings,
In chase and battle and peril.

THE SWAN.

“Me delights the blue of the sky serene,
Me sweetly intoxicates the spicewort's perfume,
When I, in the glow of the evening-red,
Rock my feather'd breast.

THE EAGLE.

“I triumph in tempests,
When they root up the forests,
I ask the lightning, whether it kills,
With glad annihilating pleasure.

THE SWAN.

“By a glance from Apollo invited,
Dare I bathe in harmony's tide,
At his feet reposing, when the songs
Resound in Tempé's vale.

THE EAGLE.

“ I enthrone myself by Jupiter’s seat ;
 He winks and I bring him the lightning,
 Then drop I in sleep my wings
 Over his ruling sceptre.

THE SWAN.

“ With the blessed power of the gods penetrated,
 Have I myself in Leda’s bosom entwined ;
 Flatteringly caress’d me her tender hands,
 As she her sense in rapture lost.

THE EAGLE.

“ I came out of the clouds like an arrow,
 Tore him from his feeble companions :
 I bore in my talons the youthful
 Ganymede to Olympus on high.

THE SWAN.

“ So bore she friendly natures,
 Helena and you, ye Dioscuri,
 Wild stars, whose brother-virtue,
 Changing, shadow-world and heaven share.

THE EAGLE.

“ Now hands the nectar-becker
 The youth to drinkers immortal ;
 Never brown’d is the fair young cheek,
 As endlessly time hurries on.

THE SWAN.

“ Prophetically contemplate I oft the stars,
 In the water-mirror the deep-arch’d immensity,
 And me draws an inner tender longing
 Towards my home in a heavenly land.

THE EAGLE.

“ I spread my wings with joy,
 In my youth, towards the deathless sun,
 Can never to the dust myself accustom,
 I am akin to the gods.

THE SWAN.

“Willingly yields to death a peaceful life ;
 When the web of existence is unwoven,
 Loos'd is the tongue : melodiously celebrates
 Each breath the holy moment.

THE EAGLE.

“The torch of the dead makes young again :¹
 A blooming phoenix, rises
 The soul free and unveil'd,
 And greets its god-like fortune.²

It is a circumstance worthy of observation, that national taste in general differs much more in the dramatic art than in any other branch of literature. We will analyze the cause of this difference in the following chapters ; but before we enter on the examination of the German theatre, some general observations on taste appear to me necessary. I shall not consider it abstractedly as an intellectual faculty ; several writers, and Montesquieu in particular, have exhausted this subject. I will only point out why literary taste is understood in so different a manner by the French and the nations of Germany.

¹ Among the ancients, an eagle rising from the funeral pile was an emblem of the immortality of the soul, and not unfrequently also that of deification.

² We have again been obliged to give a literal, line-by-line version, in order to avoid the shadow of a shadow in a retranslation from a French rendering.—*Ed.*

CHAPTER XIV.

OF TASTE.

THOSE who think themselves in possession of taste are more proud of it than those who believe that they possess genius. Taste is in literature what *bon ton* is in society; we consider it as a proof of fortune and of birth, or at least of the habits which are found in connection with them; while genius may spring from the head of an artisan, who has never had any intercourse with good company. In every country where there is vanity, taste will be placed in the highest rank of qualifications, because it separates different classes, and serves as a rallying-point to all the individuals of the first class. In every country where the power of ridicule is felt, taste will be reckoned as one of the first advantages; for, above all things, it teaches us what we ought to avoid. A sense of the fitness of things, and of propriety, peculiarly belongs to taste; and it is an excellent armor to ward off the blows of the various contending kinds of self-love, which we have to deal with; in short, it may so happen, that a whole nation shall, with respect to other nations, form itself into an aristocracy of good taste; and this may be applied to France, where the spirit of society reigned in so eminent a manner, that it had some excuse for such a pretension.

But taste, in its application to the fine arts, differs extremely from taste as applied to the relations of social life; when the object is to force men to grant us a reputation, ephemeral as our own lives, what we omit doing is at least as necessary as what we do; for the higher orders of society are naturally so hostile to all pretension, that very extraordinary advantages are requisite to compensate that of not giving occasion to the

world to speak about us. Taste in poetry depends on nature, and, like nature, should be creative; the principles of this taste are therefore quite different from those which depend on our social relations.

It is by confounding these two kinds of taste that we find such opposite judgments formed on subjects of literature; the French judge of the fine arts by the rules of social fitness and propriety, and the Germans judge of these as they would of the fine arts: in the relations of society we must study how to defend ourselves, but in those of poetry, we should yield ourselves up without reserve. If you consider surrounding objects as a man of the world, you will not be sensible to the charms of nature; if you survey them as an artist, you will lose that tact which society alone can give. If we are to subject the arts to the regulations of good company, the French alone are truly capable of it; but greater latitude of composition is necessary, in order strongly to affect the imagination and the soul. I know it may be objected to me, and with reason, that our three best dramatic authors are elevated to the most sublime height, without offending any established rule. Some men of genius, reaping a field before uncultivated, have indeed rendered themselves illustrious in spite of the difficulties they had to conquer; but is not the cessation of all progress in the art, since that time, a strong proof that there are too many obstacles in the road which they followed?

“Good taste in literature is in some respects like order under despotism; it is of consequence that we should know at what price we purchase it.”¹ In a political point of view, M. Necker said: The utmost degree of liberty should be granted which is consistent with order. I would change the maxim, by saying, that in literature, we should have all the taste which is consistent with genius; for if in a state of society the chief object be order and quietness, that which is of most importance in literature is, on the contrary, interest, curiosity, and

¹ Suppressed by authority.

that sort of emotion which taste alone would frequently disapprove.¹

A treaty of peace might be proposed between the different modes of judgment adopted by artists and men of the world,

¹ "Taste, if it mean any thing but a paltry connoisseurship, must mean a general susceptibility to truth and nobleness; a sense to discern, and a heart to love and reverence all beauty, order, goodness, wheresoever, or in whatsoever forms and accompaniments they are to be seen. This surely implies, as its chief condition, not any given external rank or situation, but a finely gifted mind, purified into harmony with itself, into keenness and justness of vision; above all, kindled into love and generous admiration."

"We venture to deny that the Germans are defective in taste; even as a nation, as a public, taking one thing with another, we imagine they may stand comparison with any of their neighbors; as writers, as critics, they may decidedly court it. True, there is a mass of dulness, awkwardness, and false susceptibility in the lower regions of their literature; but is not bad taste endemic in such regions of every literature under the sun? Pure Stupidity, indeed, is of a quiet nature, and content to be merely stupid. But seldom do we find it pure; seldom unadulterated with some tincture of ambition, which drives it into new and strange metamorphoses. Here it has assumed a contemptuous, trenchant air, intended to represent superior tact and a sort of all-wisdom; there a truculent atrabilious scowl, which is to stand for passionate strength; now we have an outpouring of tumid fervor; now a fruitless, asthmatic hunting after wit and humor. Grave or gay, enthusiastic or derisive, admiring or despising, the dull man would be something which he is not and cannot be. Shall we confess, that, of these too common extremes, we reckon the German error considerably the more harmless, and, in our day, by far the more curable? Of unwise admiration much may be hoped, for much good is really in it: but unwise contempt is itself a negation; nothing comes of it, for it is nothing.

"To judge of a national taste, however, we must raise our view from its transitory modes to its perennial models; from the mass of vulgar writers, who blaze out and are extinguished with the popular delusion which they flatter, to those few who are admitted to shine with a pure and lasting lustre; to whom, by common consent, the eyes of the people are turned, as to its lodestar and celestial luminaries. Among German writers of this stamp, we would ask any candid reader of them, let him be of what country or what creed he might, whether bad taste struck him as a prevailing characteristic. Was Wieland's taste uncultivated? Taste, we should say, and taste of the very species which a disciple of the Negative School would call the highest, formed the great object of his life, the perfection he unweariedly endeavored after, and, more than any other perfection, has attained. The most fastidious Frenchman might read him with admiration of his merely French qualities. And is not Klopstock, with his clear enthusiasm, his azure purity, and heavenly, if still somewhat cold and

by Germans and Frenchmen. The French ought to abstain from condemning even a violation of rule, if an energetic thought or a true sentiment can be pleaded in its excuse. The Germans ought to prohibit all that is offensive to natural taste,

lunar light, a man of taste? His *Messias* reminds us oftener of no other poets than of Virgil and Racine. But it is to Lessing that an Englishman would turn with the readiest affection. . . . With Lessing and Klopstock might be joined, in this respect, nearly every one, we do not say of their distinguished, but even of their tolerated contemporaries. The two Jacobis, known more or less in all countries, are little known here, if they are accused of wanting literary taste. These are men, whether as thinkers or poets, to be regarded and admired for their mild and lofty wisdom, the devoutness, the benignity and calm grandeur of their philosophical views. In such, it were strange if among so many high merits, this lower one of a just and elegant style, which is indeed their natural and even necessary product, had been wanting. We recommend the elder Jacobi no less for his clearness than for his depth; of the younger, it may be enough in this point of view to say, that the chief praisers of his earlier poetry were the French. Neither are Hamann and Mendelsohn, who could meditate deep thoughts, defective in the power of uttering them with propriety. The *Phædon* of the latter, in its chaste precision and simplicity of style, may almost remind us of Xenophon. Socrates, to our mind, has spoken in no modern language so like Socrates, as here, by the lips of this wise and cultivated Jew.

“Among the poets and more popular writers of the time, the case is the same: Utz, Gellert, Cramer, Ramler, Kleist, Hagedorn, Rabener, Gleim, and a multitude of lesser men, whatever excellencies they might want, certainly are not chargeable with bad taste. . . . The same thing holds, in general, and with fewer drawbacks, of the somewhat later and more energetic race, denominated the *Göttingen School*, in contradistinction from the *Saxon*, to which Rabener, Cramer, and Gellert directly belonged, and most of those others indirectly. Hölty, Bürger, the two Stolbergs, are men whom Bossu might measure with his scale and compasses as strictly as he pleased. Of Herder, Schiller, Goethe, we speak not here; they are men of another stature and form of movement, whom Bossu's scale and compasses could not measure without difficulty, or rather not at all. To say that such men wrote with taste of this sort, were saying little; for this forms not the apex, but the basis, in their conception of style,—a quality not to be paraded as an excellence, but to be understood as indispensable, as there by necessity, and like a thing of course.

“In truth, for it must be spoken out, our opponents are so widely astray in this matter, that their views of it are not only dim and perplexed, but altogether imaginary and delusive. It is proposed to School the Germans in the Alphabet of taste; and the Germans are already busied with their *Accidence*. Far from being behind other nations in the practice or science of Criticism, it is a fact, for which we fearlessly refer to all competent

all that retraces images repulsive to our feelings : no philosophical theory, however ingenious it may be, can compensate for this defect ; as, on the contrary, no established rule in literature can prevent the effect of involuntary emotions. In vain do the most intelligent German writers contend, that, in order to understand the conduct of Lear's daughters towards their father, it is necessary to show the barbarity of the times in which they lived, and therefore tolerate the action of the Duke of Cornwall, who, excited by Regan, treads out the eye of Gloucester with his heel on the stage : our imaginations will always revolt at such a sight, and will demand other means of attaining the great beauties of composition. But, were the French to direct the utmost force of their literary criticisms against the prediction of the witches in Macbeth, the ghost of Banquo, etc., we should not the less feel, with the most lively emotion, the terrific effect which it is their endeavor to proscriber.

We cannot teach good taste in the arts as we can *bon ton* in society ; for the knowledge of *bon ton* assists us to hide the points in which we fail, while in the arts it is above all things necessary to possess a creative spirit. Good taste cannot supply the place of genius in literature, for the best proof of taste, when there is no genius, would be, not to write at all. If we dared to speak our opinion on this subject, perhaps we should say, that in France there are too many curbs for coursers that have so little mettle, and that in Germany, great literary independence has not yet produced effects proportionably striking and brilliant.

judges, that they are distinctly, and even considerably, in advance. We state what is already known to a great part of Europe to be true. Criticism has assumed a new form in Germany ; it proceeds on other principles, and proposes to itself a higher aim."—(*Carlyle's Essays*, p. 20 *et seq.*)—*Ed.*

CHAPTER XV.

OF THE DRAMATIC ART.

THE theatre exercises a powerful influence over men; a tragedy which exalts the soul, a comedy which paints manners and characters, acts upon the mind of the people almost like a real event; but in order to obtain any considerable success upon the stage, it is necessary for the poet to have studied the public which he addresses, and the motives, of every description, on which its opinion is founded. The knowledge of mankind is even equally essential to the dramatic author with imagination itself; he must touch sentiments of general interest without losing sight of the particular relations which influence his spectators; a theatrical performance is literature in action, and the genius which it demands is so rare only because it exhibits the astonishing combination of the perfect knowledge of circumstances with poetical inspiration. Nothing then would be more absurd than an attempt to impose on all nations the same dramatic system; when the object is to adapt a universal art to the taste of each particular country, an immortal art to the manners of the passing moment, most important modifications are unavoidable; and from thence proceeds such a diversity of opinions as to what constitutes dramatic talent: in all other branches of literature men agree more easily.

It cannot, I think, be denied, that the French are the most expert nation in the world in the combination of theatrical effects; they bear away the prize from all others, likewise, in the dignity of situations and of tragic style. But, even while we acknowledge this double superiority, we may experience more powerful emotions from less regular works; the conception is often more bold and striking in the foreign drama, and

often comprehends I know not what power within itself which speaks more intimately to our heart, and touches more nearly those sentiments by which we have been personally affected.

As the French are easily tired, so they avoid prolixity in every thing. When the German attends the theatre, he, in general, sacrifices only a dull game at cards, the monotonous chances of which hardly serve to fill the vacant hour; he asks then nothing more than to seat himself peaceably at the play, and grants the author all the time that he wants to prepare his events, and develop his characters; the impatience of the Frenchman would never tolerate such delay.

The German dramas usually resemble the works of the ancient painters: their physiognomies are fine, expressive, meditative; but all the figures are on the same plane, sometimes confused, sometimes placed, the one by the side of the other, as in bas-reliefs, without being grouped together before the eyes of the spectator. The French think, and with reason, that the theatre, like painting, ought to be subjected to the laws of perspective. If the Germans were expert in the dramatic art, they would be equally so in all the rest; but they are in every thing incapable of address, even innocent; their understanding is penetrating in a straight line; the fine and impressive of a positive kind are subject to their dominion; but relative beauties, those which depend on the knowledge of cause and effect, and the rapidity of expedients, are, generally speaking, beyond the reach of their faculties.

It is singular, that, of the two people, the French are those who exact the most sustained gravity in the tone of tragedy; but it is precisely because the French are more accessible to pleasantry, that they refuse to admit it, while nothing deranges the imperturbable seriousness of the Germans: it is always by its general effect that they judge of a theatrical piece, and they wait till it is finished before they either condemn or applaud it. The impressions of the French are more ready; and they would in vain be forewarned that a comic scene is designed to set off a tragic situation,—they would turn the first into ridicule without waiting for the other; every detail must

for them be of equal interest with the whole : they will not allow credit for an instant to the pleasure which they demand from the fine arts.

The difference between the French and the German theatre may be explained by reference to the national characters ; but to these natural diversities must be added some points of systematic opposition, of which it is important to ascertain the cause. What I have said already on the subjects of classical and romantic poetry, is also applicable to the theatre. The tragedies of mythological foundation are of a distinct nature from the historical ; subjects drawn from fable were so well known, the interest which they inspired so universal, that it was enough to announce them, to strike the imagination at once. That which is eminently poetical in the Greek tragedies, the intervention of the gods and the action of fatality, renders their progress more easy ; the detail of motives, the development of characters, the diversity of facts, become less necessary when the event is explained by supernatural power ; every thing is cut short by a miracle. The action too of the Greek tragedy is astonishingly simple ; the greater part of the events are foreseen and even announced at the first opening ; a Greek tragedy is, in short, no other than a religious ceremony. The spectacle was presented in honor of the gods ; and in hymns, interrupted by dialogue and recitation, were painted sometimes merciful, sometimes avenging, deities, but always Destiny hovering over the life of man. When these same subjects were transferred to the French theatre, our great poets bestowed upon them more of variety ; they multiplied incidents, contrived surprises, and drew closer the knot. It was necessary in some sort to supply the want of that national and religious interest which the Greeks felt and we cannot experience ; yet, not content with adding circumstances to the simplicity of the Greek action, we have lent to their personages our own manners and sentiments, our modern conduct, and modern gallantry ; and it is on that account, that so great a number of foreigners are unable to conceive the admiration with which our *chefs-d'œuvre* inspire us. In fact, when they

are heard in another language, stripped of the magic beauty of style, one is surprised at the little emotion they produce, and the inconsistencies they display; for that which accords neither with the age nor with the national manners of the personages represented, what is it but inconsistency? Is nothing ridiculous but that which is unlike ourselves?

Those pieces of which the subjects are derived from Greece, lose nothing by the severity of our dramatic rules; but, would we taste, like the English, the pleasure of possessing an historical theatre, of being interested by our recollections, or touched by our religious feelings, how would it be possible rigidly to conform at once to the three unities, and to that sort of pomp which is become a law of our tragic poetry?

The question of the three unities is one which has been so often agitated, that one hardly dares at present to talk of it; but, of all the three, there is but one of importance, the unity of action, and the others can never be considered but as subordinate to that. Now if the truth of the action is resigned to the puerile necessity of keeping the scene unchanged, and confining it to the space of twenty-four hours, to impose such necessity, is to subject the Genius of the Drama to a torture similar to that of acrostics—a torture which sacrifices the substance to the form.

Of all our great tragic poets, Voltaire has most frequently treated modern subjects. To excite emotion, he has drawn his resources from religion and chivalry, and whoever is sincere, must, I think, allow that *Alzire*, *Zaïre*, and *Tancredè*, cause more tears to flow than all the Greek and Roman *chefs-d'œuvre* of our stage. Dubelloy, with a talent very inferior, has nevertheless attained to the art of awakening French recollections in a French theatre; and, even though he could not write, his pieces make one feel an interest similar to that which the Greeks must have experienced when they saw their own historical deeds represented before their eyes. What an advantage may not genius derive from such a disposition? And yet there are hardly any events of our era, of which the action can be comprised in one day, or in the same place; the diver-

sity of facts which is superinduced by a more complicated social order, the delicacies of sentiment which are inspired by a more tender religion; in short, the truth of manner which must be observed in pictures more nearly resembling ourselves, require a greater latitude in dramatic composition.

A recent example may be cited of the difficulty of conforming, in subjects drawn from modern history, to our dramatic orthodoxy. The *Templiers* of M. Raynouard is certainly one of the pieces most deserving of praise that have appeared for a great length of time; yet what is more strange than the necessity which the author has imagined himself under of representing the whole order of Templars as accused, judged, condemned, and burned, in the space of twenty-four hours! The revolutionary tribunals were expeditious; but whatever might have been their atrocious inclination, they never were able to proceed so rapidly as a French tragedy. I might point out the inconvenience attending the unity of time not less demonstrably in almost all our tragedies taken from modern history; but I have chosen the most remarkable only, in order to make these inconveniences the more conspicuous.

One of the most sublime expressions ever heard on the stage occurs in this noble tragedy. In the last scene it is related that the Templars are singing psalms at the stake; a messenger is sent to convey to them the pardon which the king had resolved to bestow—

“ Mais il n'était plus temps, les chants avaient cessé.”

“ It was too late—the holy song had ceased.”

It is thus the poet gives us to understand that these generous martyrs have just perished in the flames. In what pagan tragedy can be found the expression of such a sentiment? And why should the French be deprived at their theatre of all that is truly in harmony with themselves, their ancestors, and their belief?

The French consider the unity of time and place as an indispensable condition of theatrical illusion; foreigners make this illusion consist in the delineation of characters, in the truth

of language, and the exact observation of the manners of the age and country which they design to paint. We must properly understand the meaning of this expression, Illusion, when applied to the arts. Since we consent to believe that actors separated from ourselves by a few boards are Greek heroes dead three thousand years ago, it is very certain that what we call illusion is not the imagination, that what we behold really exists; a tragedy can only appear to us with the form of truth by means of the emotion which it inspires. Now if, according to the nature of the circumstances represented, the change of place and the supposed prolongation of time add to this emotion, the illusion thereby becomes the more lively.

It is complained that the finest tragedies of Voltaire, *Zaïre* and *Tancredè*, are founded on misunderstandings; but how do otherwise than have resource to the means of intrigue, when the developments are considered as taking effect in so short a space? The dramatic art then becomes a difficulty worth vanquishing; and to make the greatest events pass naturally through so many obstacles, requires a dexterity similar to that of jugglers, who cause the objects which they present to the spectator to vanish from his sight.

Historical subjects accommodate themselves still less than those of invention to the conditions imposed upon our writers; that tragic etiquette which is thought necessary on our theatre is frequently opposed to the new beauties of which pieces taken from modern history would be susceptible.

There is in the manners of chivalry a simplicity of language, a *naïveté* of sentiment, full of charms; but neither those charms, nor that pathos which results from the contrast of common circumstances with strong impressions, can be admitted into our tragedies: they require, throughout, dignified situations; and yet the picturesque interest of the middle ages is entirely owing to that diversity of scenes and characters, from which the romances of the Troubadours have drawn effects so touching.

The pomp of Alexandrines is a still greater obstacle than even the routine of good taste, to any change in the form and

substance of the French tragedies : it cannot be said in an Alexandrine verse that one comes in or goes out, that one sleeps or wakes, without seeking some poetical turn by which to express it ; and numberless sentiments and effects are banished from the theatre, not by the rules of tragedy, but by the very exigencies of the verse. Racine is the only French writer who, in the scene between Joas and Athalie, has once ventured to sport with these difficulties ; he has managed to give a simplicity equally noble and natural to the language of a child : but this admirable effort of an unparalleled genius does not prevent the multiplication of artificial difficulties from being too frequently an obstacle to the most happy inventions. *

M. Benj. Constant, in the so justly admired preface to his tragedy of *Walstein*, has remarked that the Germans painted characters, the French only passions, in their dramatic pieces. To delineate characters, it is necessary to abandon the majestic tone which is exclusively admitted into French tragedy ; for it is impossible to make known the faults and qualities of a man, but by presenting him under different aspects : in nature, the vulgar often mixes with the sublime, and sometimes relieves its effect : in short, the true action of a character cannot be represented but in a space of time somewhat considerable, and in twenty-four hours there is no room for any thing but a catastrophe. It will perhaps be contended, that catastrophes are more suitable to the theatre than the minute shades of character ; the emotion excited by lively passions pleases the greater part of the spectators more than the attention required for the observation of the human heart. The national taste alone can decide upon these different dramatic systems ; but it is justice to acknowledge, that if foreigners have a different conception of the theatrical art from ourselves, it is neither through ignorance nor barbarism, but in consequence of profound reflections which are worthy of being examined.

Shakspeare, whom they choose to call a barbarian, has, perhaps, too philosophical a spirit, too subtle a penetration, for the instantaneous perception of the theatre ; he judges characters with the impartiality of a superior being, and sometimes

represents them with an irony almost Machiavelian; his compositions have so much depth, that the rapidity of theatrical action makes us lose a great part of the ideas which they contain: in this respect, his pieces deserve more to be read than to be seen. By the very force of his imagination, Shakspeare often suffers his action to grow cool, and the French understand much better how to paint their characters as well as their decorations with those striking colors which produce effect at a distance. What! will they say, can Shakspeare be reproached with having too much nicety in his perceptions, he who has indulged himself in situations so terrible? Shakspeare often reunites qualities, and even faults, that are contrary to each other; he is sometimes within, sometimes without the sphere of art; but he possesses the knowledge of the human heart even more than that of the theatre.

In their dramas, their comic operas, and their comedies, the French evince a sagacity and a grace which only themselves possess in the same degree; and, from one end of Europe to the other, they perform scarcely any thing but translations of French pieces; but it is not the same with their tragedies. As the severe rules to which they are subjected, occasion their being all more or less confined within the same circle, the perfection of style is indispensable to the admiration which they are calculated to inspire. If any innovation on the rules of tragedy were risked in France, all the world would immediately cry out, a melodrama! But is it a matter of no importance whatever, to ascertain what it is that causes so many people to be pleased with melodramas? In England, all classes are equally attracted by the pieces of Shakspeare. Our finest tragedies in France do not interest the people; under the presence of a taste too pure and a sentiment too refined to support certain emotions, the art is divided into two branches; the worst plays contain the most touching situations ill expressed, and the finest paint with admirable skill situations often cold, because they are dignified: we possess few tragedies capable of exciting at the same time the imaginations of all ranks of society.

These observations are not intended to convey the slightest blame against our great masters. In the foreign dramas there are scenes which produce more lively impressions, but nothing to be compared to the imposing and well-combined general effect of our dramatic *chefs-d'œuvre*: the point is only to know whether, in being confined, as at present, to the imitation of these *chefs-d'œuvre*, we shall ever produce any new ones. Nothing in life ought to be stationary; and art is petrified when it refuses to change. Twenty years of revolution have given to the imagination other wants than those which it experienced when the romances of Crébillon painted the love and the manners of the age. Greek subjects are exhausted; one man only, Le Mercier, has been able to reap new glory from an ancient subject, Agamemnon; but the taste of the age naturally inclines to historical tragedy.

Every thing is tragic in the events by which nations are interested; and this immense drama, which the human race has for these six thousand years past been performing, would furnish innumerable subjects for the theatre, if more freedom were allowed to the dramatic art. Rules are but the itinerary of genius; they only teach us that Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire, have passed that way; but provided we arrive at the same end, why cavil about the road? And is not the end that of moving, at the same time that we ennoble, the soul?

Curiosity is one of the great excitements of the theatre; but the only inexhaustible interest is that which is inspired by deep affection. We love that species of poetry which discovers man to man; we love to see how a creature like ourselves combats with suffering, sinks under it, triumphs over it, is rendered subject, or rises superior, to the power of fate. In some of our tragedies we find situations equally violent with those of the English and German; but these situations are not represented in all their force; and their effect is sometimes softened, or even altogether effaced, by affectation. Our authors seldom depart from a sort of conventional nature which clothes in its own colors ancient manners with the resemblance of those of modern times, vice with that of virtue, assassination with that

of gallantry. This nature is beautiful and adorned with care, but she fatigues us in the end; and the desire of plunging into deeper mysteries must obtain invincible possession of genius.

It is much to be desired, then, that we could overleap the barriers with which this art is surrounded by the law of rhymes and hemistichs; we should allow greater boldness, and exact a more intimate acquaintance with history; for, if we confine ourselves exclusively to these every-day fainter impressions of the same great productions of genius, we shall at last see upon the stage nothing but so many heroic puppets, sacrificing love to duty, preferring death to slavery, inspired by antithesis in actions as in words, but without any resemblance to that astonishing creature which is called man, or any relation to that fearful destiny which by turns impels and pursues him.

The defects of the German theatre are obvious: every thing that looks like want of acquaintance with the world, whether in art or in society, immediately strikes the most superficial observer; but, to feel the beauties which come from the soul, it is necessary to appreciate the works that are presented to us with a sort of candor which is altogether consistent with the highest superiority of mind. Ridicule is often only a vulgar sentiment translated into impertinence. The faculty of perceiving and admiring real greatness through all the faults of bad taste in literature, as through all the inconsistencies with which it is sometimes surrounded in the conduct of life, is the only faculty that does honor to the critic.

In making my readers acquainted with a theatre founded on principles so different from our own, I certainly do not pretend that these principles are better, still less that they ought to be adopted in France: but foreign combinations may excite new ideas; and when we see with what sterility our literature is threatened, it seems to me difficult not to desire that our writers may enlarge a little the limits of the course: would they not do well to become conquerors, in their turn, in the empire of the imagination? It would cost the French but little to follow such advice.

CHAPTER XVI.

OF THE DRAMAS OF LESSING.

THE German theatre did not exist before Lessing; they performed only translations and imitations of foreign dramas. The theatre requires, even more than any other branch of literature, a capital, a centre of union for the resources of wealth and of the arts; in Germany every thing is scattered abroad. In one town they have actors, in another, authors, in a third, spectators; and nowhere a focus in which to collect them together. Lessing exerted the natural activity of his character in giving a national theatre to his countrymen, and he wrote a journal entitled *Dramaturgie*, in which he examined most of the pieces translated from the French, which were then acted in Germany: the correctness of thought which he displays in his criticisms, evinces even more of a philosophical spirit than knowledge of the art. Lessing generally thought like Diderot on the subject of dramatic poetry. He believed that the strict regularity of the French tragedies was an obstacle to the adoption of a great many simple and affecting subjects, and that it was necessary to invent new dramas to supply the want of them. But Diderot, in his dramas, substituted the affectation of simplicity in the room of a more usual affectation, while the genius of Lessing is really simple and sincere. He was the first to give to the Germans the honorable impulse of following their own genius in their theatrical works. The originality of his character shows itself in his dramas: yet are they subjected to the same principles as ours; their form has nothing in it peculiar, and though he troubled himself little about the unity of time and place, he did not rise, like Goethe and Schiller, to the conception of a new system. *Minna von*

Barnhelm, *Emilia Galotti*, and *Nathan the Sage*,¹ are the most worthy to be cited of all the works of Lessing.

An officer of nobler character, after having received many wounds in the army, finds his honor on a sudden threatened by an unjust prosecution: he will not discover to the woman he loves, and by whom he is loved, the attachment he has for her, being determined not to make her a partaker in his misfortune by marrying her. This is the whole subject of *Minna von Barnhelm*. With means so simple, Lessing has known how to produce a great interest; the dialogue is full of spirit and attraction, the style very pure, and every character so well displayed, that the slightest shades of their several impressions create that sort of interest that is inspired by the confidence of a friend. The character of an old serjeant, devoted with his whole soul to a young officer who is the object of persecution, affords a happy mixture of gayety and sentiment; this sort of character always succeeds on the stage; gayety is the more pleasing when we know that it does not proceed from insensibility, and sentiment more natural when it displays itself only at intervals. In the same piece we have the part of a French adventurer, in which the author has altogether failed; one should have a light hand to touch the ridiculous part of a Frenchman's character; and most foreigners have daubed it with coarse colors, which present nothing that is either delicate or striking.

Emilia Galotti is only the story of Virginia invested with modern circumstances, and thrown into private life; its sentiments are too strong for the situation, its action too important to be attributed to an unknown character. Lessing felt, no doubt, a republican spleen against courtiers, which he has gratified in drawing the portrait of one who assists his master in dishonoring a young and innocent girl; this courtier, Martinelli, is almost too vile for probability, and the traits of his baseness are destitute of originality: we perceive that Lessing has represented him thus with a hostile intent, and nothing

¹ *Nathan der Weise*.—*Ed.*

injures the beauty of a fiction so much, as the appearance of any design which has not that beauty for its object. The character of the prince is treated with greater nicety; that union of tumultuous passions with inconstancy of mind, so fatal in a person invested with power, is perceivable in all his conduct: an aged minister brings him papers, among which is a death-sentence; in his impatience to visit the object of his affections, the prince is about to sign, without having looked at it; the minister avails himself of a pretext to withdraw it, shuddering as he perceives the exercise of such power combined with such want of reflection. The part of the Countess Orsina, a young mistress of the prince, whom he abandons for Emilia, is drawn with the greatest genius,—a mixture of frivolity and violence, which we may well expect to find in a young Italian attached to a court. This woman shows us what society has produced, and what that same society has not been able to destroy,—the natural character of the South, combined with all that is most factitious in the manners of the great world, and the singular assemblage of haughtiness in vice and vanity in sentiment. Such a picture cannot present itself in our rules of verse, or in our established laws of dramatic poetry, yet is it not the less essentially tragic.

The scene in which the Countess Orsina excites Emilia's father to kill the prince, in order to save his daughter from the disgrace which threatens her, is one of the greatest beauty; there we see virtue armed by vice, and passion suggesting all that the most rigorous austerity could dictate to inflame the jealous honor of an old man; it is the human heart presented in a new situation, and it is in this that true dramatic genius consists. The old man takes the poniard, and being prevented from assassinating the prince, he uses it for the sacrifice of his daughter. Orsina is the ignorant author of this terrible action; it was she who engraved her transitory fury on a mind of deep sensibility; and the senseless ravings of her guilty passion proved the cause of shedding innocent blood.

One remarks in the principal characters of Lessing a certain family likeness, which leads one to imagine that he has painted

himself in several of his personages; Major Tellheim in Minna, Odoard, the father of Emilia, and the Templar in Nathan, all three are endued with a proud sensibility of a misanthropic cast.

The finest of the works of Lessing is *Nathan the Sage*. There is no dramatic piece in which we see the principles of religious toleration brought into action with more nature and dignity. A Turk, a Templar, and a Jew are the principal characters of this play; the idea is taken from the story of the three rings in Boccaccio, but the conduct of the piece is entirely Lessing's own. The Turk is Sultan Saladin, who is represented, according to history, as a man of a truly great mind; the young Templar has in his character all the severity of the religious state to which he has consecrated himself; and the Jew is an old man, who has acquired a large fortune by trade, but whose liberal habits are the result of his extensive knowledge and natural benevolence. He comprehends in one sentiment all the modes of sincere belief, and sees the Divinity itself in the heart of every virtuous man.

This is a character of admirable simplicity. One is astonished at the emotion which it excites, although not agitated by lively passions or powerful circumstances. Once, nevertheless, they attempt to tear away from Nathan a young girl to whom he had acted the part of a father, and whom he had carefully watched from the hour of her birth: the pain of separating himself from her would be bitter to him; and to defend himself against the injustice which would ravish her from him, he relates in what manner she had fallen into his hands.

The Christians immolated all the Jews at Gaza, and Nathan beheld his wife and seven children perish in a single night; he passed three days prostrate in the dust, swearing implacable hatred to the Christian name; by little and little his reason returned, and he cried: "Yet there is a God, his will be done!" At this moment a priest came to beg him to take care of a Christian infant, an orphan from the cradle, and the old Jew adopted it. The emotion of Nathan in making this

recital is the more pathetic, as he endeavors to restrain it, and the shame of old age makes him wish to hide what he feels. His sublime patience does not fail, though attacked in his belief and in his pride, by their accusing him, as a crime, of having educated Reza in the Jewish religion; and his justification has no other end than to procure him the right of continuing to do good to the child whom chance bestowed upon him.

The play of Nathan is yet more attractive by the delineation of character than by its situations. The Templar has something of the ferocious in his disposition, which arises from the fear of being susceptible of tenderness. The oriental prodigality of Saladin is opposed to the generous economy of Nathan. The sultan's treasurer, an old, austere dervise, informs him that his revenues are exhausted by his bounties. "I am sorry for it," says Saladin, "because I shall be forced to retrench my donations: for myself, I shall still retain that which has always constituted the whole of my fortune—a horse, a sword, and one only God." Nathan is a philanthropist; but the disgrace which the Jewish name has attached to him in society, mixes a sort of contempt for human nature with the expression of his benevolence. Every scene adds some lively and striking features to the development of these several personages; but their relations to each other are not close enough to excite any very powerful emotion.

At the conclusion of the piece it is discovered that the Templar and the girl adopted by the Jew are brother and sister, and that the sultan is their uncle. The author's intention has evidently been to give an example, in his dramatic family, of the most extended religious fraternity. The philosophical end to which the whole piece is made to contribute, diminishes its theatrical interest; it is almost impossible to avoid a certain degree of coldness in a drama, of which the object is to develop a general idea, however fine it may be: it resembles a mere moral apologue; and one is apt to say that the persons of the drama are there, not on their own account, but to contribute to the advancement of knowledge. It is true that

there is no fictitious, nor even real event, from which some reflection may not be derived; but the event ought to lead the reflection, and not the reflection give birth to the event. Imagination, in the fine arts, ought always to be the first in action.

Since Lessing, there have appeared an infinite number of German dramas; at last people begin to get tired of them. The mixed species of drama was introduced only by reason of the constraint which is imposed by tragedy; it is a sort of contraband in art; but when entire freedom is allowed, one no longer feels the necessity of having recourse to the drama for the use of simple and natural circumstances. The drama, then, would preserve only one advantage, that of painting, in the manner of romances, the situations of our own lives, the manners of the times in which we live; yet, when we hear only unknown names pronounced on the stage, we lose one of the greatest pleasures that tragedy can confer, the historical recollections which it traces. We expect to find more interest in the piece, because it represents to us what we are in the habit of seeing daily, forgetting that an imitation too near the truth is not what one looks for in the fine arts. The drama is to tragedy what waxen images are to statues; there is too much truth, and not enough of the ideal; too much, if we consider it in the light of art, yet not enough to render it nature.

Lessing can never be reckoned a dramatic author of the first order; he attended to too many different objects to acquire great skill in any department whatever. Genius is universal; but a natural aptitude to one of the fine arts is necessarily exclusive. Lessing was, above all, a dialectician of the first eminence, which is an obstacle to dramatic eloquence, for sentiment disdains transitions, gradations, and motives; it is a continual and spontaneous inspiration which cannot render any account of itself. Lessing was, no doubt, far from the dryness of philosophy, yet he had more of vivacity than of sensibility in his character; dramatic genius is of a more capricious, a more sombre, a more unpremeditated cast, than suits a man who has devoted the greatest part of his life to the art of reasoning.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ROBBERS AND DON CARLOS OF SCHILLER.

SCHILLER, in his earliest youth, possessed a fervor of genius, a kind of intoxication of mind, which misguided him. The *Conspiracy of Fiesco*, *Intrigue and Love*, and, lastly, *the Robbers*, all of which have been performed in the French theatre, are works which the principles of art, as well as those of morality, may condemn; but, from the age of five-and-twenty, his writings were pure and severe. The education of life depraves the frivolous, but perfects the reflecting mind.

The Robbers has been translated into French, but greatly altered; at first they omitted to take advantage of the date, which affixes an historical interest to the piece. The scene is placed in the fifteenth century, at the moment when the edict of perpetual peace, by which all private challenges were forbidden, was published in the empire. This edict was no doubt productive of great advantage to the repose of Germany; but the young men of birth, accustomed to live in the midst of dangers, and rely upon their personal strength, fancied that they fell into a sort of shameful inertness when they subjected themselves to the authority of the laws. Nothing was more absurd than this conception; yet, as men are generally governed by custom, it is natural to be repugnant even to the best of changes, only because it is a change. Schiller's Captain of the Robbers is less odious than if he were placed in the present times, for there was little difference between the feudal anarchy under which he lived and the bandit life which he adopted; but it is precisely the kind of excuse which the author affords him that renders his piece the more dangerous. It has produced, it must be allowed, a bad effect in Germany. Young men, enthusiastic admirers of the character and mode

of living of the Captain of the Robbers, have tried to imitate him.

Their taste for a licentious life they honored with the name of the love of liberty, and fancied themselves to be indignant against the abuses of social order, when they were only tired of their own private condition. Their essays in rebellion were merely ridiculous, yet have tragedies and romances more importance in Germany than in any other country. Every thing there is done seriously; and the lot of life is influenced by the reading such a work, or the seeing such a performance. What is admired as art, must be introduced into real existence. *Werther* has occasioned more suicides than the finest woman in the world; and poetry, philosophy, in short, the ideal have often more command over the Germans, than nature and the passions themselves.

The subject of *the Robbers* is the same with that of so many other fictions, all founded originally on the parable of the Prodigal. There is a hypocritical son, who conducts himself well in outward appearance, and a culpable son, who possesses good feelings among all his faults. This contrast is very fine in a religious point of view, because it bears witness to us that God reads our hearts; but is nevertheless objectionable in inspiring too much interest in favor of a son who has deserted his father's house. It teaches young people with bad heads, universally to boast of the goodness of their hearts, although nothing is more absurd than for men to attribute to themselves virtues, only because they have defects; this negative pledge is very uncertain, since it never can follow from their wanting reason, that they are possessed of sensibility: madness is often only an impetuous egotism.

The character of the hypocritical son, such as Schiller has represented him, is much too odious. It is one of the faults of very young writers, to sketch with too hasty a pencil; the gradual shades in painting are taken for timidity of character, when, in fact, they constitute a proof of the maturity of talent. If the personages of the second rank are not painted with sufficient exactness, the passions of the chief of the robbers are

admirably expressed. The energy of this character manifests itself by turns in incredulity, religion, love, and cruelty; having been unable to find a place where to fix himself in his proper rank, he makes to himself an opening through the commission of crime; existence is for him a sort of delirium, heightened sometimes by rage, and sometimes by remorse.

The love scenes between the young girl and the chief of the robbers, who was to have been her husband, are admirable in point of enthusiasm and sensibility; there are few situations more pathetic than that of this perfectly virtuous woman, always attached from the bottom of her soul to him whom she loved before he became criminal. The respect which a woman is accustomed to feel for the man she loves, is changed into a sort of terror and of pity; and one would say that the unfortunate female flatters herself with the thought of becoming the guardian angel of her guilty lover in heaven, now, when she can never more hope to be the happy companion of his pilgrimage on earth.

Schiller's play cannot be fairly appreciated by the French translation. In this, they have preserved only what may be called the pantomime of action; the originality of the characters has vanished, and it is that alone which can give life to fiction; the finest tragedies would degenerate into melodramas, when stripped of the animated coloring of sentiments and passions. The force of events is not enough to unite the spectator with the persons represented; let them love, or let them kill one another, it is all the same to us, if the author has failed of exciting our sympathies in their favor.

Don Carlos is also a work of Schiller's youth, and yet it is considered as a composition of the highest rank. The subject of this play is one of the most dramatic that history presents to us. A young princess, daughter of Henry the Second, takes leave of France and of the brilliant and chivalrous court of her father, to unite herself to an old tyrant, so gloomy and so severe, that even the Spanish character itself was altered by his government, and the whole nation for a long time afterwards bore the impress of its master. Don Carlos, at first betrothed to

Elizabeth, continues to love her though she has become his stepmother. Those great political events, the Reformation, and the Revolt of the Low Countries, are intermingled with the tragic catastrophe of the condemnation of the son by the father: the interests of individuals and of the public, in their highest possible degrees, are united in this tragedy. Many writers have treated this subject in France, but under the ancient *régime* its representation on the stage was prohibited; it was thought deficient in respect to the Spanish nation to represent this fact in their history. M. d'Aranda, that Spanish ambassador remarkable by so many features which prove the strength of his character and the narrowness of his intellect, was asked permission for the performance of the tragedy of Don Carlos, just finished by its author, who expected great glory from its representation:—"Why does he not take another subject?" answered M. d'Aranda. "M. l'Ambassadeur," said they to him, "consider that the piece is finished, and that the author has devoted to it three years of his life." "But, good heavens!" returned the ambassador, "is there no other event in all history but this? Let him choose another." They never could drive him out of this ingenious mode of reasoning, which was supported by a firm resolution.

Historical subjects exercise the genius in an entirely different manner from that in which it is exercised by subjects of invention; yet it requires, perhaps, even more imagination to represent historical fact in a tragedy, than to create situations and personages at will. To alter facts essentially in transferring them to the theatre, is always sure to produce a disagreeable impression; we expect truth; and we are painfully surprised when the author substitutes in the room of it any fiction which it may have pleased him to adopt: nevertheless, history requires to be combined in an artistic manner, in order to produce its effect on the stage, and we must have at once united in tragedy, the talent of painting the truth, and that of rendering it poetical. Difficulties of another nature present themselves when the dramatic art embraces the wide field of invention; it may be said to be then more at liberty, yet nothing

is more rare than the power of characterizing unknown personages in such a manner as to give them the consistency of names already illustrious. Lear, Othello, Orosmene, Tancred, have received immortality at the hands of Shakspeare and Voltaire, without having ever existed; still, however, subjects of invention are, generally speaking, dangerous to the poet, through that very independence which they confer upon him. Historical subjects seem to impose restraint; but when the writer avails himself properly of that support which may be derived from certain fixed limits, the career which they prescribe, and the flights which they permit, even these very limits are favorable to genius. The fidelity of poetry gives a relief to truth, as the sun's rays to colors, and restores to events which it graces the lustre which antiquity had obscured.

The preference is given in Germany to those historical tragedies in which art displays itself, like *the prophet of the past*.¹ The author who means to compose such a work as this, must transport himself altogether to the age and manners of the personages represented, and an anachronism in sentiments and ideas is more justly obnoxious to the severity of criticism than in dates.

It is upon these principles that some persons have blamed Schiller for having invented the character of the Marquis de Posa, a noble Spaniard, a partisan of liberty and of toleration, passionately zealous in favor of all the new ideas which then began to ferment in Europe. I imagine that Schiller may be justly reproached with having made the Marquis de Posa the channel for the communication of his own private opinions; but it is not, as is pretended, the philosophical spirit of the eighteenth century that is attributed to him. The Marquis de Posa, such as Schiller has painted him, is a German enthusiast; and this character is so foreign to our own times, that we may as well conceive him a personage of the sixteenth century, as

¹ An expression of Frederick Schlegel, on the penetration of a great historian.

of that in which we live. It is, perhaps, a greater error to suppose that Philip the Second could long listen with pleasure to such a man, or that he could have granted him his confidence even for an instant. Posa, speaking of Philip the Second, says with reason, "I have been vainly endeavoring to elevate his soul, for in this cold and thankless soil, the flowers of my imagination could never prosper." But Philip the Second would never, in reality, have conversed at all with such a young man as the Marquis de Posa. The aged son of Charles the Fifth could never have seen, in youth and enthusiasm, any thing but the error of nature and the guilt of the Reformation; had he at any time bestowed his confidence on a generous being, he would have belied his character, and deserved the world's forgiveness.

There are inconsistencies in every human character, even in that of a tyrant; yet do those very inconsistencies connect themselves by invisible ties to their nature. In the tragedy of Schiller, one of these peculiarities is seized with singular dexterity. The Duke of Medina-Sidonia, a general advanced in years, who had commanded the Invincible Armada, dispersed by the English fleet and the tempests, returns to Spain, and all are persuaded that he is about to be sacrificed to the resentment of Philip the Second. The courtiers retire to a distance; no man dares draw near him; he throws himself at the feet of Philip, and says to him, "Sire, you behold in me all that remains of that fleet, and of that valiant army, which you intrusted to my charge." "God is above me," replies Philip; "I sent you forth against man, not against the storms of heaven; be still considered as my faithful servant!" This is magnanimity: yet from whence does it proceed? From a certain respect for age, in a monarch who is surprised that nature has permitted him to grow old; from pride, which will not suffer Philip to attribute to himself his misfortunes, in acknowledging he has made a bad choice; from the indulgence he feels in favor of a man dejected by fortune, because he desires that every species of pride may be humbled, excepting his own; from the very character, in short, of a despot, whom

natural obstacles revolt less than the most feeble voluntary resistance. This scene casts a strong light on the character of Philip the Second.

No doubt the character of the Marquis de Posa may be considered as the work of a young poet, who has sought to engraft his own sentiments upon his favorite personage; yet is this character very fine in itself also, pure and exalted in the midst of a court where the silence of terror is disturbed only by the subterraneous voice of intrigue. Don Carlos can never be a great man: his father must necessarily have repressed his genius in infancy; the Marquis de Posa appears to be indispensably placed as an intermediate personage between Philip and his son. Don Carlos has all the enthusiasm of the affections of the heart, Posa, that of the public virtues; one should be the king, the other the friend; and even this change of situation in the characters is an ingenious idea; for how could the son of a gloomy and cruel despot become a patriotic hero? Where could he have learned to respect mankind? From his father, who despised them, or from his father's courtiers, who deserved that he should despise them? Don Carlos must be weak in order to be good; and the very space which love occupies in his existence, excludes from his soul all political reflections. I repeat, then, that the invention of this character, of the Marquis de Posa, appears to me necessary, in order to bring forward in the drama the great interests of nations, and that chivalrous elevation which was suddenly changed, by the increasing knowledge of the times, into the love of liberty. These sentiments, however modified, could never have been made suitable to the prince royal; in him they would have taken the form of generosity, and liberty must never be represented as the boon of power.

The ceremonious gravity of the court of Philip II, is characterized in a very striking manner in the scene between Elizabeth and the ladies of honor. She asks one of them which she likes best, the residence at Aranjuez, or at Madrid? the lady answers that, from time immemorial, the queens of Spain have been accustomed to remain three months at

Madrid, and three months at Aranjuez. She does not allow herself the least mark of preference, thinking herself born to have no feeling, except as she is commanded to feel. Elizabeth asks for her daughter, and is told that the hour appointed for seeing her is not yet come. At last the king appears, and he banishes this same devoted lady for ten years, because she has left the queen to herself for a single half hour.

Philip is reconciled for a moment to Don Carlos, and, by one speech of kindness, regains all his paternal authority over him. "Behold," says Carlos, "the heavens bow down to assist at the reconciliation of a father to a son!"

It is a striking moment, that in which the Marquis de Posa, hopeless of escaping the vengeance of Philip, entreats Elizabeth to recommend to Don Carlos the accomplishment of the projects they have formed together for the glory and happiness of the Spanish nation. "Remind him," he says, "when he shall be of riper years,—remind him that he ought to have respect for the dreams of his youth." In fact, as we advance in life, prudence gains too much upon all our other virtues; it seems as if all warmth of soul were merely folly; and yet, if man could still retain it when enlightened by experience, if he could inherit the benefits of age without bending under its weight, he would not insult those elevated virtues, whose first counsel is always the sacrifice of self.

The Marquis de Posa, by a too complicated succession of circumstances has been led to imagine himself able to serve the interests of Don Carlos with his father, in appearing to sacrifice him to his fury. He fails of success in these projects; the prince is sent to prison, the marquis visits him there, explains to him the motives of his conduct, and while he is employed in justifying himself, is shot by an assassin commissioned by Philip, and falls dead at the feet of his friend. The grief of Don Carlos is admirable; he demands of his father to restore to him the companion of his youth, who has been slain by him, as if the assassin retained the power of giving back life to his victim. With his eyes fixed on this motionless corpse, but lately animated by so many noble thoughts, Don

Carlos, himself condemned to die, learns what death is in the frozen features of his friend.

In this tragedy there are two monks, whose characters and modes of life are finely contrasted: the one is Domingo, the king's confessor; the other a priest living in the retreat of a solitary convent at the gate of Madrid. Domingo is nothing but an intriguing perfidious monk, and a courtier, the confidant of the Duke of Alva, whose character necessarily vanishes by the side of that of Philip, since Philip appropriates to himself all that is grand in the terrible. The solitary monk receives, without knowing them, Don Carlos and Posa, who had appointed a rendezvous at this convent in the midst of their greatest agitations. The calm resignation of the prior, who gives them reception, produces a pathetic effect. "At these walls," says the pious recluse, "ends the bustle of the world."

But there is nothing in the whole piece that equals the originality of the last scene but one of the fifth act, between the king and the grand inquisitor. Philip, pursued by the jealous hatred he has conceived against his own son, and by the terror of the crime he is going to commit—even Philip envies his pages who are sleeping peacefully at his bed's foot, while the hell in his own mind robs him of repose. He sends for the grand inquisitor to consult him on the condemnation of Don Carlos. This cardinal monk is ninety years old; more advanced in years than Charles the Fifth, if alive, would then have been; and who has formerly been that monarch's preceptor; he is blind, and lives in a perfect solitude; the spies of the Inquisition bring him the news of what is passing in the world: he only informs himself whether there are any crimes, or faults, or ideas, to punish. To him, Philip the Second, in his sixtieth year, is still young. The most gloomy, the most cautious of despots, still appears to him an unthinking monarch, whose tolerating spirit will introduce the Reformation into Spain; he is a man of sincerity, but so wasted by time, that he looks like a living spectre, whom Death has forgotten to strike, because he believed him long since in his grave.

He calls Philip to account for the death of Posa; and re-

proaches him with it, because it was for the Inquisition to have condemned him, regretting the victim only as he had been deprived of the right of immolating it himself. Philip interrogates him as to the condemnation of his son: "Would you," he says, "inspire me with a belief which strips the murder of a child of its horror?" The grand inquisitor answers him, "To appease eternal justice, the son of God died on the cross." What an expression! What a sanguinary application of the most affecting doctrine!

This blind old man represents an entire century in his own person. The profound terror with which the Inquisition and the very fanaticism of this period afflicted Spain, is painted to the life in this laconic and rapid scene: no eloquence is capable of so well expressing such a crowd of reflections ably brought into action.

I know that many improprieties may be detected in the play of *Don Carlos*; but I have not taken upon myself this office, for which there are many competitors. The most ordinary men may discover defects of taste in Shakspeare, Schiller, Goethe, etc.; but when in works of art, we think only of undervaluing their merits, there is no difficulty in the operation. A soul, and genius, are what no criticism can bestow: these must be revered wherever they are seen, with whatever cloud these rays of celestial light may be surrounded. Far from rejoicing in the errors of genius, they ought to be felt as diminishing the patrimony of the human race, and the titles of honor in which it glories. The tutelary angel, so gracefully painted by Sterne, might he not have dropped one tear on the faults of a noble work, as on the errors of a noble life, in order to efface its remembrance?

I shall not dwell any longer on the productions of Schiller's youth; first, because they are translated into French; and, secondly, because in them he has not yet displayed that historical genius which has rendered him so justly the object of admiration in the tragedies of his maturer age. *Don Carlos* itself, although founded on an historical fact, is little else than a work of the imagination. Its plot is too complicated; a char-

acter of mere invention, that of the Marquis de Posa, occupies a too prominent part; the tragedy itself may be classed as something between history and poetry, without entirely satisfying the rules of either: it is certainly otherwise with those of which I am now about to attempt giving an idea.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WALLENSTEIN AND MARY STUART.

WALLENSTEIN is the most national tragedy that has ever been represented on the German stage; the beauty of the verses, and the grandeur of the subject, transported with enthusiasm all the spectators at Weimar, where it was first performed, and Germany flattered herself with possessing a new Shakspeare. Lessing, in censuring the French taste, and joining with Diderot in the manner of conceiving dramatic art, had banished poetry from the theatre, and left nothing there but romances in dialogue, which were but a continuation of ordinary life, only crowding together in representation events which are of less frequent occurrence in reality.

Schiller thought of bringing on the stage a remarkable circumstance of the Thirty Years' War, that civil and religious struggle, which, for more than a century, fixed in Germany the equilibrium of the two parties, Protestant and Catholic. The German nation is so divided, that it is never known whether the exploits of the one half are a misfortune or a glory for the other; nevertheless, the *Wallenstein* of Schiller has excited an equal enthusiasm in all. The same subject is divided into three distinct plays; *the Camp of Wallenstein*, which is the first of the three, represents the effects of war on the mass of the people, and of the army; the second, *the Piccolomini*, displays the political causes which led to the dissensions between the chiefs; and the third, *the Death of Wallen-*

stein, is the result of the enthusiasm and envy which the reputation of Wallenstein had excited.

I have seen them perform the prologue, entitled *the Camp of Wallenstein*. It seemed as if we were in the midst of an army, and of an army of partisans much more ardent and much worse disciplined than regular troops. The peasants, the recruits, the victualling women, the soldiers, all contributed to the effect of this spectacle; the impression it produces is so warlike, that when it was performed on the stage at Berlin, before the officers who were about to depart for the army, shouts of enthusiasm were heard on every side. A man of letters must be possessed of a very powerful imagination to figure to himself so completely the life of a camp, the spirit of independence, the turbulent joy excited by danger itself. Man, disengaged from all his ties, without regret and without foresight, makes of years a single day, and of days a single instant; he plays for all he possesses, obeys chance under the form of his general: death, ever present, delivers him with gayety from the cares of life. Nothing, in *the Camp of Wallenstein*, is more original than the arrival of a Capuchin in the midst of the tumultuous band of soldiers who think they are defending the Catholic cause. The Capuchin preaches to them moderation and justice in a language full of quibbles and puns, which differs from that of camps no otherwise than by its affectation and the use of a few Latin phrases: the grotesque and soldier-like eloquence of the priest, the rude and gross language of those who listen to him—all this presents a most remarkable picture of confusion. The social state in fermentation exhibits man under a singular aspect: all his savage nature reappears, and the remnants of civilization float like a wreck upon the troubled waves.

The Camp of Wallenstein forms an ingenious introduction to the two other pieces; it penetrates us with admiration for the general, of whom the soldiers are continually talking, in their games as well as in their dangers; and when the tragedy begins, we feel, from the impressions left by the prologue which has preceded it, as if we had witnessed the history which poetry is about to embellish.

The second of the pieces, called *the Piccolomini*, contains the discords which arise between the emperor and his general, the general and his companion in arms, when the chief of the army wishes to substitute his personal ambition in the place of the authority he represents, as well as of the cause he supports. Wallenstein was fighting, in the name of Austria, against the nations who were attempting to introduce the Reformation into Germany ; but, seduced by the hope of forming to himself an independent power, he seeks to appropriate all the means which he ought to have employed in the public service. The generals who oppose his views, thwart them not out of virtue, but out of jealousy ; and in these cruel struggles everybody is concerned except those who are devoted to their opinions, and fighting for their conscience's sake. People will say, what is there in all this to excite interest ! The picture of truth. Perhaps art demands the modification of this picture by the rules of theatrical effect ; yet the representation of history on the stage is always delightful.

Nevertheless, Schiller has known how to create personages formed to excite a romantic interest. He has painted Maximilian, Piccolomini; and Thecla, as heavenly beings, who pass through all the storms of political passion, preserving love and truth in their souls. Thecla is the daughter of Wallenstein ; Maximilian, the son of the perfidious friend who betrays him. The two lovers, in spite of their parents, in spite of fate, and of every thing except their own hearts, love, seek each other, and are united in life and death. These two beings appear, in the midst of the tumults of ambition, as if predestined ; they are the interesting victims which heaven has elected to itself, and nothing is so beautiful as the contrast between the purest self-devotion and the passions of men, as furiously eager for this earth as if it were their only inheritance.

There is no winding up of the tragedy of *the Piccolomini* ; it ends like a conversation broken off. The French would find it difficult to support these two prologues, the one burlesque and the other serious, which lead to the real tragedy, which is *the Death of Wallenstein*.

A writer of great genius has reduced the *Trilogy* of Schiller into a single tragedy, according to French form and method. The eulogies and criticisms of which this work has been the object, will give us a natural opportunity of concluding our estimate of the differences which characterize the dramatic system of the French and Germans. The French writer has been censured for not having been sufficiently poetical in his verses. Mythological subjects allow all the brilliancy of images and of lyrical inspiration; but how is it possible to admit, in a subject drawn from modern history, the poetry of the recital of Theramenes? All this ancient pomp is suitable to the family of Minos or Agamemnon, but would be only ridiculous affectation in pieces of another sort. There are moments in historical tragedies, at which the elevation of the soul naturally inspires a more elevated tone of poetry: such is, for example, the vision of Wallenstein,¹ his harangue after the

-
- ¹ “ Il est, pour les mortels, de jours mystérieux,
 Où, des liens du corps notre ame dégagée,
 Au sein de l'avenir est tout à coup plongée,
 Et saisit, je ne sais par quel heureux effort,
 Le droit inattendu d'interroger le sort.
 La nuit qui précéda la sanglante journée
 Qui du héros du nord trancha la destinée,
 Je veillois au milieu des guerriers endormis.
 Un trouble involontaire agitoit mes esprits.
 Je parcourus le camp. On voyoit dans la plaine
 Briller des feux lointains la lumière incertaine.
 Les appels de la garde et les pas des chevaux
 Troubloient seuls, d'un bruit sourd, l'universel repos.
 Le vent qui gémissoit à travers les vallées
 Agitoit lentement nos tentes ébranlées.
 Les astres, à regret perçant l'obscurité,
 Versoient sur nos drapeaux une pâle clarté.
 Que de mortels, me dis-je, à ma voix obéissent !
 Qu'avec empressement sous mon ordre ils fléchissent !
 Ils ont, sur mes succès, placé tout leur espoir,
 Mais, si le sort jaloux m'arrachoit le pouvoir,
 Que bientôt je verrois s'évanouir leur zèle !
 En est-il un du moins qui me restât fidèle !
 Ah ! s'il en est un seul, je t'invoque. O destin !
 Daigne me l'indiquer par un signe certain.”

Walstein, par M. Benjamin-Constant de Rebecque, Acte II. sc. 1, p. 48.

mutiny, his monologue before his death, etc. Still, the con- texture and development of the piece, in German as well as in French, requires a simplicity of style, in which one perceives only the purity of language, and seldom its magnificence. In France we require an effect to be given, not only to every scene, but to every verse, and this is what cannot be made to agree with reality. Nothing is so easy as to compose what are called brilliant verses; there are moulds ready made for the purpose; but what is very difficult, is to render every detail subordinate to the whole, and to find every part united in the whole, as well as the reflection of the whole in every part. French vivacity has given to the conduct of their theatrical pieces a very agreeable rapidity of motion; but it is injurious to the beauty of the art to demand the succession of effect every instant, at the expense of the general impression.

This impatience, which brooks no delay, is attended by a singular patience in enduring all that the established laws of propriety enjoin; and when any sort of *ennui* is required by the etiquette of art, these same Frenchmen, who are irritated by the least prolixity, tolerate every thing out of respect to custom. For example, explanations by way of recital are indispensable in French tragedy, and yet certainly they are much less interesting than when conducted by means of action. It is said that some Italian spectators once called out, during the recital of a battle, "Let them raise the curtain, that we may see the battle itself." One often experiences this desire at the representation of our tragedies, the wish of being present at the scene which is related. The author of the French *Wallenstein* was obliged to throw into the substance of his play the exposition which is produced in so original a manner by the prologue of *the Camp*. The dignity of the first scenes perfectly agrees with the imposing tone of French tragedy; but there is a sort of motion in the irregularity of the German, the want of which can never be supplied.

The French author has also been censured for the double interest inspired by the love of Alfred (Piccolomini) for Thecla, and the conspiracy of Wallenstein. In France, they require

that a piece be entirely of love or entirely of politics: the mixture of subjects is not relished: and for a considerable time past, especially when the subject is an affair of state, they have been unable to comprehend how the soul should admit a thought of any thing else. Nevertheless, the great picture of the conspiracy of Wallenstein is only completed by the misfortunes which it brings upon his family: we are to be reminded how cruelly public events may rend the private affections; and this manner of representing politics as a world, apart from which sentiments are banished, is prejudicial to morality, harsh, and destitute of dramatic effect.

A circumstance of detail has been much censured in the French tragedy. Nobody has denied that the farewell of Alfred (Max. Piccolomini), in leaving Wallenstein and Thecla, is extremely beautiful; but people have been scandalized at the circumstance of music being, on this occasion, introduced into a tragedy: it is, to be sure, very easy to suppress it, but why refuse to participate in the effect which it produces? When we hear this military music, the prelude to the battle, the spectator partakes of the emotion which it is calculated to excite in lovers, whom it threatens with an eternal separation: the music gives relief to the situation; a new art redoubles the impression which another has prepared; the tones and the words by turns awaken our imagination and our hearts.

Two scenes, also, entirely new to our stage, have excited the astonishment of French readers: after Alfred has killed himself, Thecla asks a Saxon officer, who brings the news, all the details of this horrible catastrophe; and when her soul has been satiated with grief, she announces the resolution she has taken to live and die by the tomb of her lover. Every expression, every word, in these two scenes, is marked by the deepest sensibility; but it has been pretended that dramatic interest can no longer exist when there is no longer any uncertainty. In France, they always hasten to conclude with what is irreparable. The Germans, on the contrary, are more curious about what their personages feel than about what happens to them;

they are not afraid to dwell upon a situation terminated in respect of its being an event, but which still exists in the capacity of suffering. More of poetry, more of sensibility, more of nicety in the expressions, are necessary to create emotion during the repose of action, than while it excites an always increasing anxiety: words are hardly remarked when facts keep us in suspense; but when all is silent, excepting grief, when there is no more change from without, and the interest attaches itself solely to what passes in the mind, a shade of affectation, a word out of place, would strike like a false note in a simple and melancholy tune. Nothing then escapes by the sound, and all speaks directly to the heart.

The censure which has been most frequently repeated against the French *Wallenstein* is, that the character of *Wallenstein* himself is superstitious, uncertain, irresolute, and that it does not agree with the heroic model admitted for this class of character. The French lose an infinite source of effects and emotions in reducing their tragic characters, like the notes of music, or the colors of the prism, to some striking features always the same; every personage must be conformable with some one of the principal acknowledged types. Logic may be said to be with us the foundation of the arts, and this *undulating* (*ondoyante*) nature of which Montaigne speaks, is banished from our tragedies; nothing is there admitted but sentiments, entirely good or bad, and yet there is nothing that is not mixed together in the human mind.

In France, a character in tragedy is as much canvassed as that of a minister of state, and they censure him for what he does or for what he omits to do, as if they were judging his actions with the Gazette in their hands. The inconsistencies of the passions are admitted into the French theatre, but not the inconsistencies of characters. Passion being more or less understood by every heart, we can follow its wanderings, and anticipate in some degree its very contradictions; but character has always something unforeseen in it, that can be subjected to no fixed rules. Sometimes it directs itself towards its end, sometimes strays from it. When it is said of a per-

son in France, that he knows not what he wants, nobody is any longer interested about him ; while it is precisely the man who knows not what he wants in whom nature displays herself with a strength and an independence truly proper for tragedy.

The characters of Shakspeare frequently excite very different impressions in the spectators during the course of the same play. Richard II, in the three first acts of the tragedy which bears his name, inspires us with contempt and aversion, but when overtaken by misfortune and forced to resign the throne to his enemy in full parliament, his situation and his courage move us to tears. We love that royal nobleness of character which reappears in adversity, and the crown still seems to hover over the head of him whom they have stripped of it. A few words are enough for Shakspeare to dispose of the souls of his audience and make them pass from hatred to pity. The innumerable varieties of the human heart incessantly renew the springs of genius.

It may be said that men are really inconsistent and whimsical, and that the noblest virtues are often united with miserable defects ; but such characters are hardly suitable to the theatre ; dramatic art demanding rapidity of action, men cannot be painted on this canvas, but by strong touches and striking circumstances. But does it thence follow that it is necessary to confine ourselves to characters decidedly good and evil, which appear to be the invariable elements of the greater number of our tragedies ? What influence could the theatre exercise over the morality of the spectators, if it displayed to them only a conventional nature ? It is true that on this factitious soil virtue still triumphs, and vice is always punished ; but how can this ever apply itself to what passes in life, since the persons that are presented to us on the stage are not men such as really exist ?

It would be curious to see the play of *Wallenstein* performed on our stage ; and if the French author had not so rigorously subjected himself to the rules of the French drama, it would be still more curious ; but, to judge rightly of the spirit

of these innovations, we should carry with us to the contemplations of art a youth of the soul eager after the pleasures of novelty. To adhere to the masterpieces of the ancients is an excellent rule of taste, but not for the exercise of genius; unexpected impressions are necessary to excite it; the works which from our infancy, we have known by heart, become habitual to us, and no longer produce any striking effect upon the imagination.

Mary Stuart appears to me the most pathetic and best conceived of all the German tragedies. The fate of this queen, who began her life in such prosperity, who lost her happiness through so many errors, and who was led, after nineteen years of imprisonment, to the scaffold, causes as much of terror and of pity as *Œdipus*, *Orestes*, or *Niobe*; but the very beauty of this story, so favorable to genius, would crush mediocrity.

The scene is at Fotheringay Castle, where *Mary Stuart* is confined. Her nineteen years of captivity are already passed, and the tribunal appointed by *Elizabeth* is on the point of deciding the fate of the unfortunate Queen of Scotland. *Mary's* nurse complains to the governor of the castle, of the treatment which he makes his prisoner suffer. The governor, strongly attached to *Queen Elizabeth*, speaks of *Mary* with harsh severity. We perceive that he is a worthy man; but one who judges *Mary* as her enemies have judged her. He announces her approaching death; and this death appears to him to be just, because he believes that she has conspired against *Elizabeth*.

In speaking of *Wallenstein*, I have already had occasion to notice the great advantage of exposition in action. Prologues, choruses, confidants, all possible methods to explain without fatiguing, have been resorted to, and it seems to me that the best of all is to enter immediately upon the action, and make known the principal character by the effect which it produces upon all around. It is to teach the spectator in what point of view he is to regard what is about to pass before him; it is to teach without telling it him; for a single word which ap-

pears to be addressed to the public, destroys the illusion of the drama. Our curiosity and our emotions are already excited, when Mary Stuart enters; we recognize her, not by a portrait, but by her influence both on friends and enemies. It is no longer a narrative to which we are listening, but an event which seems to pass immediately before our eyes.

The character of Mary Stuart is admirably supported, and never ceases to interest during the whole performance. Weak, passionate, vain of her person, and repentant of her life, we at once love and censure her. Her remorse and her errors excite compassion; we perceive, throughout, the dominion of that admirable beauty so celebrated in her time. A man, who forms the design of saving her, dares to avow, that he devotes himself for her only from the enthusiasm which her charms have inspired. Elizabeth is jealous of those charms, and even Leicester, the favorite of Elizabeth, has become the lover of Mary, and has secretly promised her his support. The attraction and envy which are produced by the enchanting graces of this unfortunate woman, render her fate a thousand times more affecting. She loves Leicester: this unhappy woman experiences against that sentiment, which has already more than once dashed her cup with so much bitterness. Her almost supernatural beauty appears to be the cause and excuse of that habitual intoxication of the heart, which is the fatality of her existence.

The character of Elizabeth excites attention in a very different manner: a female tyrant is a new subject for painting. The littlenesses of women in general, their vanity, their desire of pleasing, in short, all that results to them from servitude, tends to despotism in Elizabeth, and that dissimulation, which is born of weakness, forms one of the instruments of her absolute power. Doubtless all tyrants are dissemblers. Men must be deceived, that they may be enslaved. In this case, they may require at least the politeness of falsehood. But what distinguishes the character of Elizabeth, is the desire of pleasing united to the utmost despotism of will, and all that is most refined in the self-love of a woman, manifested by the most

violent acts of sovereign authority. The courtiers, also, of the queen evince a sort of baseness which partakes of gallantry. They wish to persuade themselves that they love her, in order to yield to her a more noble obedience, and to conceal the slavish fear of a subject, under the semblance of knightly subjection.

Elizabeth was a woman of great genius. The lustre of her reign evinces it. Yet, in a tragedy which represents the death of Mary, Elizabeth can appear only as the rival who causes her prisoner to be assassinated; and the crime which she commits is too atrocious not to efface all the good we might be disposed to say of her political genius. It might, perhaps, be considered as a still further perfection in Schiller, to have had the art of rendering Elizabeth less odious, without diminishing our interest for Mary Stuart; for there is more real talent in the shades of contrast than in the extremes of opposition, and the principal figure itself gains by none of the figures on the dramatic canvas being sacrificed to it.

Leicester entreats Elizabeth to see Mary; he proposes to her to stop in the middle of a hunting party, in the garden of Fotheringay Castle, and to permit Mary to walk there. Elizabeth consents, and the third act opens with the affecting joy of Mary in again breathing the free air, after nineteen years' imprisonment. All the risks she runs have vanished from her eyes; her nurse endeavors in vain to recall them to her, to moderate her transports. Mary has forgotten all, in recovering the sight of the sun, and of nature. She feels again the happiness of childhood, at the view, new to her, of the flowers, the trees, and the birds; and the ineffable impression of those external wonders on one who has been long separated from them, is painted in the intoxicating emotion of the unfortunate captive. The remembrance of France awakens her to delight, she charges the clouds which the north wind seems to impel towards that happy native land of her affection,—she charges them to bear to her friends her regrets and desires. "Go," she says to them, "go, you, my only messengers! the free air is your inheritance—you are not the sub-

jects of Elizabeth.”¹ She perceives in the distance a fisherman guiding a crazy boat, and already flatters herself with the idea of escaping. At the sight of the heavens, all things seem to reanimate her with hope.

She is not yet informed that they have permitted her to leave her prison, for the purpose of Elizabeth’s meeting her. She hears the music of the hunt, and the pleasures of her youth are retraced to her imagination as she listens to it. She would herself mount the fiery steed, and fly with the rapidity of lightning over vale and hill. The feeling of happiness is revived in her, without reason or motive, only because it is necessary that the heart should breathe again, and be sometimes reanimated on a sudden, at the approach of the greatest calamities, even as there is almost always a momentary interval of amendment before the agony of death.

They come to inform Mary that Elizabeth is approaching. She had wished for this interview, but as the moment draws near a shuddering runs through all her frame. Leicester accompanies Elizabeth: thus all the passions of Mary are at once excited: she commands herself for a time; but the arrogant Elizabeth provokes her by her disdain, and the two rival queens end by alike abandoning themselves to the mutual hatred which they experience. Elizabeth reproaches Mary with her faults; Mary recalls to her mind the suspicions of Henry the Eighth against her mother, and what had been said of her illegitimate birth. This scene is singularly fine, on this very account—that their mutual rage makes the two queens transgress the bounds of their natural dignity. They are no

¹ The passage is as follows:

“Fast fleeting clouds! ye meteors that fly!
 Could I but with you sail through the sky!
 Tenderly greet the dear land of my youth!
 Here I am captive! oppress’d by my foes,
 No other than you may carry my woes!
 Free through the ether your pathway is seen,
 Ye own not the power of this tyrant queen!”

We adopt the version of Joseph Mellish, Esq., which has been revised for Mr. Bohn’s Standard Library.—*Ed.*

longer any other than two women, rivals in respect of beauty even more than of power; they are no longer the one a sovereign, and the other a prisoner; and even though the one possesses the power of sending the other to the scaffold, the most beautiful of the two, she who feels that she is most made to please, enjoys even yet the pleasure of humbling the all-powerful Elizabeth in the eyes of Leicester, in the eyes of the lover, who is so dear to them both.

Another circumstance that adds greatly to the effect of this situation, is the fear that we experience for Mary at every resentful phrase that escapes her; and when she abandons herself to all her fury, her injurious speeches, the consequences of which we know to be irreparable, make us tremble, as if we already witnessed her death.

The emissaries of the Catholic party form the design of assassinating Elizabeth on her return to London. Talbot, the most virtuous of the queen's friends, disarms the assassin who attempts to stab her, and the people cry out aloud for the blood of Mary. It is an admirable scene, in which the Chancellor Burleigh presses Elizabeth to sign the death-warrant of Mary, while Talbot, who has just saved the life of his sovereign, throws himself at her feet to implore her to pardon her enemy:

“That God, whose potent hand hath thrice preserved thee,
 Who lent my aged, feeble arm the strength
 To overcome the madman:—he deserves
 Thy confidence. I will not raise the voice
 Of justice now, for now is not the time;
 Thou canst not hear it in this storm of passion.
 Yet listen but to this! Thou tremblest now
 Before this living Mary—tremble rather
 Before the murder'd, the beheaded Mary.
 She will arise, and quit her grave, will range
 A fiend of discord, an avenging ghost,
 Around thy realm, and turn thy people's hearts
 From their allegiance. For as yet the Britons
 Hate her, because they fear her; but most surely
 Will they avenge her, when she is no more.
 They will no more behold the enemy
 Of their belief, they will but see in her

The much-lamented issue of their kings
 A sacrifice to jealousy and hate.
 Then quickly shalt thou see the sudden change
 When thou hast done the bloody deed ; then go
 Through London, seek thy people, which till now
 Around thee swarm'd delighted ; thou shalt see
 Another England, and another people ;
 For then no more the godlike dignity
 Of Justice, which subdn'd thy subjects' hearts,
 Will beam around thee. Fear, the dread ally
 Of tyranny, will shudd'ring march before thee,
 And make a wilderness in every street—
 The last, extremest crime thou hast committed.
 What head is safe, if the anointed fall ?”

The answer of Elizabeth to this discourse is a speech of remarkable address ; a man in a similar situation would certainly have employed falsehood to palliate injustice ; but Elizabeth does more, she wishes to excite interest, even in abandoning herself to her revenge ; she would even, if possible, inspire compassion in perpetrating the most barbarous action. She has the spirit of a sanguinary coquetry, if we may be allowed the expression, and the character of the woman discovers itself through that of the tyrant :

“ Ah ! Shrewsbury, you saved my life, you turn'd
 The murd'rous steel aside ; why let you not
 The dagger take its course ? then all these broils
 Would have been ended ; then, released from doubt,
 And free from blame, I should be now at rest
 In my still, peaceful grave. In very sooth,
 I'm weary of my life, and of my crown.
 If Heav'n decree that one of us two queens
 Must perish, to secure the other's life—
 And sure it must be so—why should not I
 Be she who yields ? My people must decide ;
 I give them back the sovereignty they gave.
 God is my witness, that I have not lived
 For my own sake, but for my people's welfare.
 If they expect from this false, fawning Stuart,
 The younger sovereign, more happy days,
 I will descend with pleasure from the throne,
 Again repair to Woodstock's quiet bowers,

Where once I spent my unambitious youth ;
 Where, far removed from all the vanities
 Of earthly power, I found within myself
 True majesty. I am not made to rule—
 A ruler should be made of sterner stuff :
 My heart is soft and tender. I have govern'd,
 These many years, this kingdom happily,
 But then I only needed to make happy :
 Now comes my first important regal duty,
 And now I feel how weak a thing I am."

At this sentence, Burleigh interrupts Elizabeth, and reproaches her for all that she desires to be reproached with,—her meekness, her indulgence, her compassion ; he assumes the appearance of courage, in demanding of his sovereign with vehemence, that which she secretly desires more than himself. Rough flattery generally succeeds better than obsequious flattery ; and it is well for courtiers when they are able to give themselves the appearance of being hurried on, at the moment when they most deeply reflect upon what they are saying. Elizabeth signs the warrant ; and, left alone with her private secretary, the woman's timidity, which mixes itself with the perseverance of despotism, makes her desire this inferior personage to take upon himself the responsibility of the action which she is committing. He requires a positive order for sending the warrant, which she refuses, repeating that he must do his duty. She leaves this unfortunate man in a frightful state of uncertainty, out of which he is delivered by the chancellor snatching from him the paper, which Elizabeth has left in his hands.

Leicester finds himself entangled by the friends of the Queen of Scotland, who have been imploring his assistance to save her. He discovers that he has been accused to Elizabeth, and takes on a sudden the shocking resolution of abandoning Mary, and betraying to the Queen of England, with impudent artifice, a part of the secrets which he owes to the confidence of his unfortunate friend. Notwithstanding all these unworthy sacrifices, he only half succeeds in satisfying Elizabeth : she requires him to lead Mary to the scaffold himself, in order to

prove that he does not love her. The woman's jealousy, that discovers itself in the punishment which Elizabeth commands as a monarch, ought to inspire Leicester with the most profound hatred for her. The queen causes him to tremble, who, by the laws of nature, should have been her master; and this singular contrast is productive of a very original situation. But nothing is equal to the fifth act. It was at Weimar that I was present at the representation of *Mary Stuart*, and I cannot even yet remember, without deep emotion, the effect of the concluding scenes.

At first, we see enter Mary's female attendants, dressed in mourning, and in profound sorrow. The old nurse, the most afflicted of all, brings in her royal jewels, which she has ordered her to collect together, that she may distribute them among her women. The governor of the prison, followed by many of his servants, dressed in black also, as well as himself, fill the stage with mourning. Melvil, formerly a gentleman in Mary's court, arrives from Rome at this moment. Anne, the queen's nurse, receives him with joy. She paints to him the courage of Mary, who, all at once resigned to her fate, is no longer occupied by the concerns of her soul, and is only afflicted at not having been able to obtain a priest of her own religion, to receive from him the absolution of her sins, and the holy communion.

The nurse relates how, during the night, the queen and she had heard the sound of reiterated blows; and both hoped that it arose from their friends endeavoring to effect her deliverance; but that at last they had discovered the noise to proceed from the workmen, who were erecting the scaffold in the hall underneath. Melvil inquires how Mary supported this terrible discovery; and Anne informs him, that her severest trial was that of learning the treason of the Earl of Leicester; but that, after undergoing this shock, she had recovered the composure and the dignity of a queen. Mary's women come in and go out, to execute their mistress's orders. One of them brings a cup of wine, which Mary has called for, to enable her to walk with a firmer step to the scaffold. Another comes tottering upon

the stage, having seen, through the door of the hall, where the execution is to take place, the walls hung with black, the scaffold, the block, and the axe. The fear of the spectator, always increasing, is already near its height, when Mary appears in all the magnificence of royal ornament, alone clad in white in the midst of her mourning attendants, with a crucifix in her hand, a crown on her head, and already irradiated with the celestial pardon which her misfortunes have obtained for her. Mary comforts her women, whose sobs affect her with lively emotion :

“ Why these complaints ? Why weep ye ? Ye should rather
 Rejoice with me, that now at length, the end
 Of my long woe approaches ; that my shackles
 Fall off, my prison opens, and my soul
 Delighted, mounts on seraph's wings, and seeks
 The land of everlasting liberty.
 When I was offer'd up to the oppression
 Of my proud enemy, was forced to suffer
 Ignoble taunts, and insults most unfitting
 A free and sov'reign queen, then was the time
 To weep for me ; but, as an earnest friend,
 Beneficent and healing Death approaches.
 All the indignities which I have suffer'd
 On earth, are cover'd by his sable wings.
 The most degraded criminal's ennobled
 By his last suff'rings, by his final exit ;
 I feel again the crown upon my brows,
 And dignity possess my swelling soul.”

Mary perceives Melvil, and rejoices at seeing him in this solemn moment : she questions him about her kindred in France, about her ancient servants, and charges him with her last adieu to all that was dear to her :

“ Bear then, sir, my blessing
 To the most Christian king, my royal brother,
 And the whole royal family of France.
 I bless the Cardinal, my honor'd uncle,
 And also Henry Guise, my noble cousin.
 I bless the holy father, the vicegerent
 Of Christ on earth, who will, I trust, bless me.
 I bless the King of Spain, who nobly offer'd

Himself as my deliv'rer, my avenger.
 They are remember'd in my will : I hope
 That they will not despise, how poor soe'er
 They be, the presents of a heart which loves them."

Mary then turns aside to her servants and says to them :

"I have bequeathed you to my royal brother
 Of France ; he will protect you, he will give you
 Another country, and a better home ;
 And if my last desire have any weight,
 Stay not in England ; let no haughty Briton
 Glut his proud heart with your calamities,
 Nor see those in the dust, who once were mine.
 Swear by this image of our suffering Lord,
 To leave this fatal land when I'm no more.

MELVIL (*touching the crucifix*).

"I swear obedience, in the name of all."

The queen distributes her jewels among her women ; and nothing can be more affecting than the details into which she enters respecting the characters of each of them, and the advice which she gives them for their future conduct. She particularly displays her generosity towards one, whose husband had been a traitor, in formerly accusing Mary herself before Elizabeth. She tries to console her for this calamity, and to prove to her that she retains no resentment on account of it.

"The worth of gold, my Anna, charms not thee ;
 Nor the magnificence of precious stones :
 My memory, I know, will be to thee
 The dearest jewel ; take this handkerchief,
 I work'd it for thee, in the hours of sorrow,
 With my own hands, and my hot scalding tears
 Are woven in the texture : you will bind
 My eyes with this, when it is time : this last
 Sad service I would wish but from my Anna.
 Come all, and now receive my last farewell.

[*She stretches forth her hands, the WOMEN, violently weeping, fall successively at her feet, and kiss her outstretched hand.*

Marg'ret, farewell—my Alice, fare thee well ;
 Thanks, Burgoyne, for thy honest faithful service—
 Thy lips are hot, my Gertrude : I have been
 Much hated, yet have been as much beloved.

May a deserving husband bless my Gertrude,
 For this warm glowing heart is form'd for love.
 Bertha, thy choice is better, thou hadst rather
 Become the chaste and pious bride of Heav'n ;—
 Oh ! haste thee to fulfil thy vows ; the goods
 Of earth are all deceitful ;—thou mayst learn
 This lesson from thy queen. No more ; farewell,
 Farewell, farewell, my friends, farewell forever."

Mary remains alone with Melvil, and then begins a scene, the effect of which is very grand, however it may be open to censure in many respects. The only grief that remains to Mary, after she had provided for all her worldly cares, arises from her not being able to obtain a priest of her own religion to assist at her last moments. Melvil, after receiving the secret of her pious sorrows, informs her that he has been at Rome, that he has there taken orders that he might acquire the right of absolving and comforting her : he uncovers his head, to show her the holy tonsure, and takes out of his bosom a wafer, which the Pope himself had blessed for her :

"Is then a heav'nly happiness prepared
 To cheer me on the very verge of death ?
 As an immortal one on golden clouds
 Descends, as once the angel from on high,
 Deliver'd the Apostle from his fetters :—
 He scorns all bars, he scorns the soldier's sword,
 He steps undaunted through the bolted portals,
 And fills the dungeon with his native glory ;
 Thus here the messenger of Heav'n appears,
 When ev'ry earthly champion had deceived me.
 And you, my servant once, are now the servant
 Of the Most High, and his immortal ward !
 As before *me* your knees were wont to bend,
 Before you humbled, now I kiss the dust."

The beautiful, the royal Mary, throws herself at Melvil's feet ; and her subject, invested with all the dignity of the Church, suffers her to remain in that situation, while he examines her.

(It must not be forgotten, that Melvil himself believed Mary guilty of the last plot against the life of Elizabeth. I

should add, that the following scene should only be read; and that, on most of the German stages, they suppress the act of communion in the representation of this tragedy.)

MELVIL (*making over her the sign of the cross.*)

“Hear, Mary Queen of Scotland :—in the name
Of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Hast thou examined carefully thy heart,
Swear'st thou, art thou prepared in thy confession
To speak the truth before the God of truth ?

MARY.

“Before my God and thee, my heart lies open.

MELVIL.

“What calls thee to the presence of the Highest ?

MARY.

‘I humbly do acknowledge to have err'd
Most grievously. I tremble to approach,
Sullied with sin, the God of purity.

MELVIL.

“Declare the sin which weighs so heavily
Upon thy conscience, since thy last confession.

MARY.

“My heart was fill'd with thoughts of envious hate,
And vengeance took possession of my bosom.
I hope forgiveness of my sins from God,
Yet could I not forgive my enemy.

MELVIL.

“Repent'st thou of the sin ? Art thou, in sooth,
Resolved to leave this world at peace with all ?

MARY.

“As surely as I wish the joys of heav'n.

MELVIL.

“What other sin hath arm'd thy heart against thee ?

MARY.

“ Ah ! not alone through hate ; through lawless love
Have I still more abused the sovereign good.
My heart was vainly turn'd towards the man,
Who left me in misfortune, who deceived me.

MELVIL.

“ Repent'st thou of the sin ? And hast thou turn'd
Thy heart, from this idolatry, to God ?

MARY.

“ It was the hardest trial I have pass'd ;
This last of earthly bonds is torn asunder.

MELVIL.

“ What other sin disturbs thy guilty conscience ?

MARY.

“ A bloody crime, indeed of ancient date,
And long ago confess'd ; yet with new terrors
It now attacks me, black and grisly steps
Across my path, and shuts the gates of heav'n :
By my connivance fell the king, my husband—
I gave my hand and heart to a seducer—
By rigid penance I have made atonement ;
Yet in my soul the worm is gnawing still.

MELVIL.

“ Has then thy heart no other accusation,
Which hath not been confess'd and wash'd away ?

MARY.

“ All you have heard, with which my heart is charged

MELVIL.

“ Think on the presence of Omniscience ;
Think on the punishments, with which the Church
Threatens imperfect and reserved confession !
This is the sin to everlasting death,
For this is sinning 'gainst his Holy Spirit.

MARY.

“ So may eternal grace with victory
Crown my last contest, as I wittingly
Have nothing hid—

MELVIL.

“How? Wilt thou then conceal
The crime from God, for which thou art condemn'd?
Thou tell'st me nothing of the share thou hadst
In Babington and Parry's bloody treason:
Thou diest for this a temporal death; for this
Wilt thou too die the everlasting death?

MARY.

“I am prepared to meet eternity;
Within the narrow limits of an hour,
I shall appear before my Judge's throne;
But, I repeat it, my confession's ended.

MELVIL.

“Consider well—the heart is a deceiver.
Thou hast perhaps, with sly equivocation,
The *word* avoided which would make thee guilty,
Although thy will was party to the crime.
Remember, that no juggler's tricks can blind
The eye of fire which darts through ev'ry breast.

MARY.

“'Tis true, that I have call'd upon all princes
To free me from unworthy chains; yet 'tis
As true, that neither by intent or deed,
Have I attempted my oppressor's life.

MELVIL.

“Your secretaries then have witness'd falsely.

MARY.

“It is, as I have said;—what they have witness'd
The Lord will judge.

MELVIL.

“Thou mount'st then, satisfied
Of thy own innocence, the fatal scaffold?

MARY.

“God suffers me in mercy to atone,
By undeserved death, my youth's transgressions.

MELVIL (*making over her the sign of the cross*).

“Go, then, and expiate them all by death ;
Sink a devoted victim on the altar,
Thus shall thy blood atone the blood thou’st spilt.
From female frailty were derived thy faults,
Free from the weakness of mortality,
The spotless spirit seeks the blest abodes.
Now then, by the authority which God
Hath unto me committed, I absolve thee
From all thy sins—be as thy faith thy welfare !

[*He gives her the host.*]

Receive the body which for thee was offer’d—

[*He takes the cup which stands upon the table, consecrates it with silent prayer, then presents it to her ; she hesitates to take it, and makes signs to him to withdraw it.*]

Receive the blood, which for thy sins was shed—
Receive it—’tis allow’d thee by the Pope,
To exercise in death the highest office
Of kings, the holy office of the priesthood.

[*She takes the cup.*]

And as thou now in this his earthly body
Hast held with God mysterious communion,
So mayst thou henceforth, in his realm of joy,
Where sin no more exists, nor tears of woe,
A fair transfigured spirit, join thyself
Forever with the Godhead, and forever.

[*He sets down the cup ; hearing a noise, he covers his head, and goes to the door ; Mary remains in silent devotion, on her knees.*]

MELVIL (*returning*).

“A painful conflict is in store for thee ;
Feel’st thou within thee strength enough to smother
Each impulse of malignity and hate ?

MARY.

“I fear not a relapse. I have to God
Devoted both my hatred, and my love.

MELVIL.

“Well, then, prepare thee to receive my Lords
Of Leicester and of Burleigh. They are here.

SCENE VIII.

Enter BURLEIGH, LEICESTER, and PAULET.

[LEICESTER remains in the background, without raising his eyes ; BURLEIGH, who remarks his confusion, steps between him and the QUEEN.]

BURLEIGH.

“ I come, my Lady Stuart, to receive
Your last commands and wishes.

MARY.

“ Thanks, my lord.

BURLEIGH.

“ It is the pleasure of my royal mistress,
That nothing reasonable be denied you.

MARY.

“ My will, my lord, declares my last desires ;
I've placed it in the hand of Sir Amias,
And humbly beg, that it may be fulfill'd.

PAULET.

“ You may rely on this.

MARY.

“ I beg that all
My servants unmolested may return
To France, or Scotland, as their wishes lead.

BURLEIGH.

“ It shall be as you wish.

MARY.

“ And since my body
Is not to rest in consecrated ground,
I pray you suffer this my faithful servant
To bear my heart to France, to my relations—
Alas ! 'twas ever there.

BURLEIGH.

“ It shall be done.

What wishes else ?

MARY.

“ Unto her Majesty
Of England bear a sister's salutation ;

Tell her, that from the bottom of my heart
 I pardon her my death : most humbly too
 I crave her to forgive me for the passion
 With which I spoke to her. May God preserve her,
 And bless her with a long and prosp'rous reign !

BURLEIGH.

"Say, do you still adhere to your resolve,
 And still refuse assistance from the Dean ?

MARY.

"My lord, I've made my peace with God.
 [To PAULET. Good sir,
 I have unwittingly caused you much sorrow,—
 Bereft you of your age's only stay.
 Oh, let me hope you do not hate my name.

PAULET (*giving her his hand*).

"The Lord be with you ! go your way in peace.

SCENE IX.

[ANNA KENNEDY, and the other women of the QUEEN, crowd
 into the room, with marks of horror. The SHERIFF follows
 them, a white staff in his hand ; behind are seen, through the
 open doors, men under arms.

MARY.

"What ails thee, Anna ? Yes—my hour is come—
 The Sheriff comes to lead me to my fate,
 And part we must—farewell !

KENNEDY.

"We will not leave thee,
 We will not part from thee.

MARY (*to MELVIL*).

"You, worthy sir,
 And my dear faithful Anna, shall attend me
 In my last moments. I am sure, my lord
 Will not refuse my heart this consolation.

BURLEIGH.

"For this I have no warrant.

MARY.

"How, my lord ;
 Can you deny me then this small petition ?

Respect my sex ; who shall attend me else,
 And yield me the last service ?—sure it never
 Can be my sister's pleasure, that in me
 My sex should be insulted ; that these men,
 With their rude hands, should touch my royal person.

BURLEIGH.

“ 'Tis order'd that no woman shall ascend
 The scaffold steps with you ; their tears and moans—

MARY.

“ She shall not weep, my lord, she shall not moan ;
 I answer for my Anna's resolution ;
 Be merciful ; divide me not so soon
 From my true foster-mother, from my friend.
 She bore me on her arms into this life,
 Let her then gently lead me to my death.

PAULET (*to BURLEIGH*).

“ Yield to her wishes.

BURLEIGH.

“ Be it so.

MARY.

“ I now

Have nothing in this world to wish for more.

[She takes the crucifix, and kisses it.

My God ! my Comforter ! my blest Redeemer !
 As once thy arms were stretch'd upon the cross,
 Let them be now extended to receive me !

*[She turns round to go, at the same moment her eyes fall upon
 LEICESTER, who, on her going, starts involuntary and turns
 his eyes towards her : at this sight MARY trembles, her knees
 fail her, she is about to fall, when LEICESTER catches at her,
 and receives her in his arms ; she regards him for some time
 earnestly, and in silence ; he cannot support her looks ; at
 length she speaks.*

You keep your word, my Lord of Leicester : for
 You promised me your arm to lead me forth
 From prison, and you lend it to me now.
 At length the wish'd for day is come, and what
 Was oft the object of my fondest dreams
 Is now accomplish'd : and the Earl of Leicester,
 The long-expected, the long-wish'd for friend,
 Appears at length in Fotheringay Castle.

I see him standing in my prison ; all
 Is ready for the journey ; all the gates
 Stand open, and at length I cross the threshold,
 Conducted by his hand ; and now I leave
 These dismal walls behind me, and forever.
 All is fulfill'd, and you have saved your honor.

[He stands as if annihilated ; she continues, with a gentle voice.]

Yes, Leicester ; not for liberty alone
 I wish'd to be indebted to your hands.
 You should have made me bless that liberty.
 Led by your hand, and happy in your love,
 I hoped once more to taste the joys of life.
 Yes : now that I'm prepared from all the world
 To part, and to become a happy spirit,
 Whom earthly inclinations tempt no more,
 Now, Leicester, I may venture to confess
 Without a blush, the frailty I have conquer'd—
 Farewell, my lord ; and, if you can, be happy !
 To woo two queens has been your daring aim ;
 You have disdain'd a tender, loving heart ;
 Betray'd it, in the hope to win a proud one :
 Kneel at the feet of Queen Elizabeth !
 May your reward not prove your punishment.
 Farewell ! I now have nothing more on earth."

Leicester remains alone after the departure of Mary, the feeling of despair and shame that overwhelms him can hardly be expressed ; he listens, he hears all that is passing in the hall of execution, and, when the business is ended, he falls senseless on the ground. We are afterwards told that he is gone to France, and the grief of Elizabeth at the loss of her lover is the beginning of her punishment.

I shall make some observations on this imperfect analysis of a piece, in which the charm of the verse adds greatly to its other merits. I hardly know if they would permit, in France, an entire act on one decisive situation ; but that repose of grief, which springs from the very privation of hope, produces the truest and the most profound emotions. This solemn repose permits the spectator, as well as the victim, to descend into himself, and feel all that misery reveals to him.

The scene of the confession, and above all, that of the communion, would be condemned altogether, and with reason ;

but it is certainly not for want of effect that it would be censured: the pathetic never touches the heart more nearly than when founded on the national religion. The most Catholic country in Europe, Spain, and its most religious poet, Calderon, who had himself entered into the ecclesiastical order, have admitted as subjects for the stage, the ceremonies of Christianity.

It seems to me that, without being at all wanting in the reverence which we owe to the Christian religion, we may suffer it to enter into poetry and the fine arts, into all that elevates the soul, and embellishes life. To exclude it from these, is to imitate children who think they can do nothing but what is sad and solemn in their father's house. There is a religion in every thing that occasions a disinterested emotion of the mind; poetry, love, nature, and the Divinity itself, are connected together in the heart, whatever efforts we may make to separate them; and, if genius is prohibited from sounding all these strings at once, the full harmony of the soul will never be heard.

This very Mary whom France beheld so brilliant, and England so unhappy, has been the subject of a thousand different poems, celebrating her charms and her misfortunes. History has painted her as sufficiently light; Schiller has thrown more of the serious into her character, and the period at which he brings her forward may well account for the change. Twenty years of imprisonment, even twenty years of existence, in whatever manner they have been spent, are generally a severe lesson.

The adieu of Mary to the Earl of Leicester appears to me to be one of the finest situations to be met with on the stage. There is some sweetness for her in that trying moment. She has a compassion for Leicester, all guilty as he is; she feels what a remembrance she bequeathes to him, and this vengeance of the heart is not prohibited. In short, at the moment of death, of a death, the consequence of his refusal to save her, she again says to him that she loves him; and if any thing can console the mind under the terrible separation to which we are doomed by death, it is the solemnity which it gives to our parting words: no end, no hope, can mingle with them, and the purest truth is exhaled from our bosoms with life.

CHAPTER XIX.

JOAN OF ARC¹ AND THE BRIDE OF MESSINA.

SCHILLER, in a copy of verses full of grace, reproaches the French with ingratitude towards Joan of Arc. One of the noblest epochs of history, that in which France, and her king, Charles the Seventh, were rescued from the yoke of foreigners, has never yet been celebrated by any writer worthy of effacing the remembrance of Voltaire's poem; and it is a stranger that has attempted to re-establish the glory of a French heroine, of a heroine whose unhappy fate might interest us in her favor, even though her exploits did not excite our just enthusiasm. Shakspeare could not judge of Joan of Arc but with the partiality of an Englishman; yet even he represents her, in his historical play of Henry the Sixth, as having been at first inspired by heaven, and subsequently corrupted by the demon of ambition. Thus, the French only have suffered her memory to be dishonored. It is a great fault of our nation, to be incapable of resisting the ridiculous, when presented to us under a striking form. Yet, is there so much room in the world for the serious and the gay together, that we might impose it upon ourselves as a law, never to trifle with what is worthy of our veneration, and yet lose nothing, by doing so, of the freedom of pleasantry.

The subject of Joan of Arc partaking at once of the historical and the marvellous, Schiller has intermingled in his play, pieces of lyrical poetry, and the mixture produces a fine effect, even in representation. We have hardly any thing in the French language, except the Monologue of Polyucte, and the Choruses of Athalie and Esther, that can give us any idea

¹ The play of Schiller is entitled the *Maid of Orleans*.—*Ed.*

of it. Dramatic poetry is inseparable from the situation which it is required to paint; it is recitation in action, the conflict of man with fate. Lyrical poetry is almost always suited to religious subjects; it raises the soul towards heaven; it expresses I know not what of sublime resignation, which often seizes on us in the midst of the most tumultuous passions, and delivers us from our personal disquietudes, to give us for an instant the taste of divine peace.

No doubt we must take care that the progressive advance of the interest shall not suffer by it; but the end of dramatic art is not simply to inform us whether the hero is killed, or whether he marries: the principal object of the events represented, is to serve to develop sentiments and characters. The poet is in the right, therefore, sometimes to suspend the action of the theatre, to make us listen to the heavenly music of the soul. We may abstract ourselves in art, as in life, and soar for a moment above all that passes within us and around us.

The historical epoch at which Joan of Arc existed, is peculiarly proper to display the French character in all its beauty, when an unalterable faith, an unbounded reverence for women, an almost imprudent generosity in war, signalized this nation throughout Europe.

We must picture to ourselves a young girl of sixteen, of a majestic form, but with still infantine features, a delicate exterior, and without any strength but that which comes to her from on high; inspired by religion, poetical in her actions, poetical also in her speech, when animated by the divine spirit; showing in her discourses, sometimes an admirable genius, at others an absolute ignorance of all that heaven has not revealed to her. It is thus that Schiller has conceived the part of Joan of Arc. He first shows her at Vaucouleurs, in the rustic habitation of her father, where she hears of the misfortunes of France, and is inflamed by the recital. Her aged father blames her sadness, her thoughtfulness, her enthusiasm. Unaccustomed to penetrate the secret of what is extraordinary, he thinks that there is evil in all that is not habitual to him. A countryman brings in a helmet, which a gipsy had put into

his hands in a very mysterious manner. Joan of Arc snatches it from him, and places it on her own head, while her family contemplate with astonishment the expression of her eyes.

She prophecies the triumph of France, and the defeat of her enemies. A peasant, an *esprit fort*, tells her that there are no longer any miracles in the world. She exclaims :

“ Yes, there shall yet be one : a snow-white dove
 Shall fly, and, with the eagle's boldness, tear
 The birds of prey which rend her fatherland.
 She shall o'erthrow this haughty Burgundy,
 Betrayer of the kingdom ; Talbot, too,
 The hundred-handed, heaven-defying scourge ;
 This Sal'sbury, who violates our fanes,
 And all these island robbers shall she drive
 Before her like a flock of timid lambs.
 The Lord will be with her, the God of battle ;
 A weak and trembling creature he will choose,
 And through a tender maid proclaim his power,
 For He is the Almighty !”¹

The sisters of Joan of Arc retire to a distance, and her father orders her to busy herself in her rural labors, and remain a stranger to those great events with which poor shepherds have nothing to do. He goes out, Joan of Arc remains alone : about to depart forever from the abode of her infancy, a feeling of regret seizes her, and she says :

“ Farewell, ye mountains, ye beloved glades,
 Ye lone and peaceful valleys, fare ye well !
 Through you Johanna never more may stray !
 For aye, Johanna bids you now farewell.
 Ye meads which I have water'd, and ye trees
 Which I have planted, still in beauty bloom !
 Farewell, ye grottoes, and ye crystal springs !
 Sweet echo, vocal spirit of the vale,
 Who sang'st responsive to my simple strain,
 Johanna goes, and ne'er returns again.

“ Ye scenes where all my tranquil joys I knew,
 Forever now I leave you far behind !

¹ This, and other quotations from the *Maid of Orleans*, we give in the translation of Miss Anna Swanwick, from Bohn's Standard Library.—*Ed.*

Poor foldless lambs, no shepherd now have you !
 O'er the wide heath stray henceforth unconfined ;
 For I to danger's field, of crimson hue,
 Am summon'd hence, another flock to find.
 Such is to me the Spirit's high behest ;
 No earthly vain ambition fires my breast.

“ For who in glory did on Horeb's height
 Descend to Moses in the bush of flame,
 And bade him go and stand in Pharaoh's sight,—
 Who once to Israel's pious shepherd came,
 And sent him forth, his champion in the fight,—
 Who aye hath loved the lowly shepherd train,—
 He, from these leafy boughs, thus spake to me :
 ‘ Go forth ! Thou shalt on earth my witness be.

“ ‘ Thou in rude armor must thy limbs invest,
 A plate of steel upon thy bosom wear ;
 Vain earthly love may never stir thy breast,
 Nor passion's sinful glow be kindled there.
 Ne'er with the bride-wreath shall thy locks be dress'd,
 Nor on thy bosom bloom an infant fair ;
 But war's triumphant glory shall be thine ;
 Thy martial fame all women's shall outshine.

“ ‘ For when in fight the stoutest hearts despair,
 When direful ruin threatens France, forlorn,
 Then thou aloft my oriflamme shalt bear,
 And swiftly as the reaper mows the corn,
 Thou shalt lay low the haughty conqueror ;
 His fortune's wheel thou rapidly shalt turn,
 To Gaul's heroic sons deliv'rance bring,
 Relieve beleaguer'd Rheims, and crown thy king !’

“ The heavenly Spirit promised me a sign ;
 He sends the helmet, it hath come from him.
 Its iron filleth me with strength divine,
 I feel the courage of the cherubim ;
 As with the rushing of a mighty wind
 It drives me forth to join the battle's din ;
 The clanging trumpets sound, the chargers rear,
 And the loud war-cry thunders in mine ear.”

This first scene is a prologue, but it is inseparable from the piece ; it was necessary to put in action the instant at which Joan of Arc embraces her solemn resolution : had the poet

contented himself with the bare recital, he would have deprived it of the movement and impulse which transport the spectator into that frame of mind which is demanded by the wonders he is obliged to believe.

The play of Joan of Arc proceeds uniformly, according to the history, to the period of the coronation at Rheims. The character of Agnes Sorel is painted with elevation and delicacy, and adds effect to the purity of Joan of Arc; for all the endowments of this world vanish by the side of virtues truly religious. There is a third female character, that of Isabel of Bavaria, which it might be well to suppress altogether; it is gross, and the contrast is much too strong to produce any effect. Joan of Arc is rightly opposed to Agnes Sorel, a heavenly love to that which is earthly; but hatred and perversity in a woman are beneath the dignity of art, which degrades itself in painting them.

Shakspeare gave the idea of the scene in which Joan of Arc brings back the Duke of Burgundy to the fealty he owes his king; but Schiller has executed it in an admirable manner. The Maid of Orleans wishes to revive in the duke's soul that attachment to France which was then so powerful in the minds of all the generous inhabitants of that noble country.

“What wouldst thou, Burgundy? Who is the foe
Whom eagerly thy murderous glances seek?
This prince is, like thyself, a son of France,—
This hero is thy countryman, thy friend;
I am a daughter of thy fatherland.
We all, whom thou art eager to destroy,
Are of thy friends; our longing arms prepare
To clasp, our bending knees to honor thee.
Our sword 'gainst thee is pointless, and that face
E'en in a hostile helm is dear to us,
For there we trace the features of our king.”

The Duke of Burgundy rejects the supplications of Joan of Arc, fearing her supernatural seduction. She says:

“'Tis not imperious necessity
Which throws us at thy feet. We do not come

As suppliants before thee. Look around !
 The English tents are level with the ground,
 And all the field is cover'd with your slain.
 Hark ! the war-trumpets of the French resound :
 God hath decided—ours the victory !
 Our new-cull'd laurel garland with our friend
 We fain would share. Come, noble fugitive !
 Oh come where justice and where victory dwell !
 Even I, the messenger of Heaven, extend
 A sister's hand to thee. I fain would save
 And draw thee over to our righteous cause !
 Heaven hath declared for France ! Angelic powers,
 Unseen by thee, do battle for our king ;
 With lilies are the holy ones adorn'd.
 Pure as this radiant banner is our cause ;
 Its blessed symbol is the Queen of Heaven.

BURGUNDY.

“ Falsehood's fallacious words are full of guile,
 But hers are pure and simple as a child's.
 If evil spirits borrow this disguise,
 They copy innocence triumphantly.
 I'll hear no more. To arms, Dunols ! to arms !
 Mine ear, I feel, is weaker than mine arm.

JOHANNA.

“ You call me an enchantress, and accuse
 Of hellish arts. Is it the work of Hell
 To heal dissension, and to foster peace ?
 Comes holy concord from the depths below ?
 Say, what is holy, innocent, and good,
 If not to combat for our fatherland ?
 Since when hath nature been so self-opposed,
 That Heaven forsakes the just and righteous cause,
 While Hell protects it ? If my words are true,
 Whence could I draw them but from Heaven above ?
 Who ever sought me in my shepherd-walks,
 To teach the humble maid affairs of state ?
 I ne'er have stood with princes, to these lips
 Unknown the arts of eloquence. Yet now,
 When I have need of it to touch thy heart,
 Insight and varied knowledge I possess ;
 The fate of empires and the doom of kings

Lie clearly spread before my childish mind,
And words of thunder issue from my mouth."

At these words, the Duke of Burgundy is moved, is troubled. Joan of Arc perceives it, and exclaims :

"He weeps—he's conquer'd, he is ours once more!"

The French bend their swords and colors before him. Charles the Seventh appears, and the Duke of Burgundy throws himself at his feet.

I regret, for our national honor, that this scene was not conceived by a Frenchman ; but how much genius, and, above all, how much nature is necessary to become thus identified with all that is great and true in all countries and in all ages !

Talbot, whom Schiller represents as an atheist-warrior, intrepid against heaven itself, despising death, even though he thinks it full of horror—Talbot, wounded by Joan of Arc, dies on the stage blaspheming. Perhaps it would have been better to follow the tradition, which says that Joan of Arc never shed human blood, and triumphed without killing. A critic, of a refined and severe judgment, has also reproached Schiller with having made Joan of Arc susceptible of love, instead of making her die a martyr, without having ever experienced any sentiment foreign to the object of her divine mission : it is thus that she should be painted in a poem ; but I know not whether a soul of such unspotted holiness would not produce, in a piece designed for the stage, the same effect as marvellous or allegorical beings, whose actions are all foreseen, and who, not being agitated by human passions, present to us no dramatic conflict or interest.

Among the noble knights of the court of France, the brave Dunois presses forward the first to ask Joan of Arc to become his wife ; and, constant to her vows, she refuses him. A young Montgomery, in the midst of a battle, implores her to spare him, and represents to her the grief which his death will occasion to his aged father ; Joan of Arc rejects his prayer, and displays, upon this occasion, more inflexibility than her duty demands ; but at the instant when she is about to strike a

young Englishman, Lionel, she feels herself at once softened by his beauty, and love finds entrance into her heart. Then all her power is destroyed. A knight, black as fate, appears to her in the battle, and counsels her not to go to Rheims. She goes there, notwithstanding; the solemn pomp of the coronation passes on the stage; Joan of Arc walks in the first rank, but her steps are unsteady; she bears in a trembling hand the consecrated standard, and the holy spirit is perceived to protect her no longer.

Before she enters the church, she stops short, and remains alone on the stage. From afar are heard the festive instruments that accompany the ceremony of the consecration; and Joan of Arc utters harmonious complaints, while the sound of flutes and hautboys floats gently in the air.

“Hush'd in the din of arms, war's storms subside,
 Glad song and dance succeed the bloody fray,
 Through all the streets joy echoes far and wide,
 Altar and church are deck'd in rich array,
 Triumphal arches rise in vernal pride,
 Wreathes round the columns wind their flowery way,
 Wide Rheims cannot contain the mighty throng,
 Which to the joyous pageant rolls along.

“One thought alone doth every heart possess,
 One rapt'rous feeling o'er each breast preside,
 And those to-day are link'd in happiness
 Whom bloody hatred did erewhile divide.
 All who themselves of Gallic race confess
 The name of Frenchman own with conscious pride,
 France sees the splendor of her ancient crown,
 And to her monarch's son bows humbly down.

“Yet I, the author of this wide delight,
 The joy, myself created, cannot share;
 My heart is changed, in sad and dreary plight
 It flies the festive pageant in despair;
 Still to the British camp it taketh flight,
 Against my will my gaze still wanders there,
 And from the throng I steal, with grief oppress'd,
 To hide the guilt which weighs upon my breast.

“What? I permit a human form
 To haunt my bosom's sacred cell?
 And there, where heavenly radiance shone
 Doth earthly love presume to dwell?
 The saviour of my country, I,
 The warrior of God most high,
 Burn for my country's foeman? Dare I name
 Heaven's holy light, nor feel o'erwhelm'd with shame?

[The music behind the scene passes into a soft and moving melody.]

“Woe is me! those melting tones!
 They distract my 'wilder'd brain!
 Every note his voice recalling,
 Conjures up his form again!

“Would that spears were whizzing round!
 Would that battle's thunder roar'd!
 'Midst the wild tumultuous sound
 My former strength were then restored.

“These sweet tones, these melting voices,
 With seductive power are fraught!
 They dissolve, in gentle longing,
 Every feeling, every thought,
 Waking tears of plaintive sadness!

[After a pause, with more energy.]

“Should I have kill'd him? Could I, when I gazed
 Upon his face? Kill'd him! Oh, rather far
 Would I have turn'd my weapon 'gainst myself!
 And am I culpable because humane?
 Is pity sinful?—Pity! Didst thou hear
 The voice of pity and humanity,
 When others fell the victims of thy sword?
 Why was she silent when the gentle youth
 From Wales entreated thee to spare his life?
 O cunning heart! Thou liest before high Heaven;
 It is not pity's voice impels thee now!
 —Why was I doom'd to look into his eyes!
 To mark his noble features! With that glance,
 Thy crime, thy woe commenced. Unhappy one!
 A sightless instrument thy God demands,
 Blindly thou must accomplish his behest!
 When thou didst see, God's shield abandon'd thee,
 And the dire snares of Hell around thee press'd!

[Flutes are again heard, and she subsides into a quiet melancholy.]

“Harmless staff! Oh, that I ne'er
 Had for the sword abandon'd thee!
 Had voices never reach'd mine ear,
 From thy branches' sacred tree!
 High Queen of Heaven! Oh would that thou
 Hadst ne'er reveal'd thyself to me!
 Take back—I dare not claim it now—
 Take back thy crown, 'tis not for me!

“I saw the heavens open wide,
 I gazed upon that face of love!
 Yet here on earth my hopes abide,
 They do not dwell in heaven above!
 Why, Holy One, on me impose
 This dread vocation? Could I steel,
 And to each soft emotion close
 This heart, by nature form'd to feel?

“Wouldst thou proclaim thy high command,
 Make choice of those who, free from sin,
 In thy eternal mansions stand;
 Send forth thy flaming cherubim!
 Immortal ones, thy law they keep,
 They do not feel, they do not weep!
 Choose not a tender woman's aid,
 Not the frail soul of shepherd maid!

“Was I concern'd with warlike things,
 With battles or the strife of kings?
 In innocence I led my sheep
 Adown the mountain's silent steep.
 But thou didst send me into life,
 'Midst princely halls and scenes of strife,
 To lose my spirit's tender bloom:
 Alas, I did not seek my doom!”

This soliloquy is a grand achievement of poetry; one pervading sentiment naturally brings us back to the same expressions; and it is in this very respect that the verse agrees so well with the affections of the soul; for it transforms into denuncious harmony what might appear monotonous in the simple language of prose. The distraction of Joan of Arc goes on always increasing. The honors they render her, the gratitude they testify for her, nothing is capable of reassuring her, now

that she feels herself abandoned by the all-powerful hand which had raised her up. At last her fatal presentiments are accomplished, and in what manner!

In order to conceive the terrible effect of an accusation of witchcraft, we must transport ourselves to those ages in which the suspicion of this mysterious crime was ever ready to fix upon all extraordinary events. The belief of a principle of evil, such as it then existed, supposed the possibility of a frightful worship paid to the powers of hell; the terrifying objects of nature were the symbol, and grotesque signs and characters the language of this worship. All worldly prosperity, of which the cause was unknown, was attributed to this demoniacal contract. The word magic designated the unbounded empire of evil, as providence was applied to the dominion of infinite happiness. This imprecation, *she is a witch, he is a sorcerer*, become ridiculous in our days, made men shudder with horror a few centuries ago; all the most sacred ties were broken when these words were uttered; no courage could brave them, and the disorder with which they affected all spirits was such, that it might have been said, the demons of hell appeared in reality, when they fancied they saw them appear.

The unhappy fanatic, Joan of Arc's father, is seized by this prevailing superstition; and far from being proud of his daughter's glory, he presents himself voluntarily amid the knights and lords of the court, to accuse her of witchcraft. Immediately every heart is frozen with fear; the knights, companions in arms of the heroine, press her to justify herself, and she remains silent. The king questions her, and still she remains silent. The archbishop conjures her to swear her innocence on the crucifix, and she remains silent. She will not defend herself against the crime of which she is falsely accused, while she feels herself guilty of another crime, which her heart cannot forgive itself. Thunder is heard, the people are overwhelmed with terror, and Joan of Arc is banished from the empire she has just preserved. No man dares come near her. The crowd disperses; the unhappy victim quits the town, and wanders about in the fields; overcome by fatigue, she accepts

a refreshing beverage: the child who presents it, recollects her, and snatches from her hands this feeble consolation. It is as if the blasts of hell, with which she is thought to be surrounded, had been capable of defiling whatever she touched, and of plunging headlong into the eternal gulf whatever person dared to assist her. At last, pursued from one place of refuge to another, she who delivered France falls into the power of its enemies.

Up to this point, this *romantic tragedy*—it is so that Schiller has styled it—is filled with beauties of the highest order: some tedious details may be found in it (this is a fault from which the German writers are never exempt); but events of such remarkable importance are made to pass before our eyes, that the imagination exalts itself to their elevation, and, judging of this piece no longer as a work of art, we are brought to consider the marvellous picture which it presents to us as a new reflection of the holy inspiration of the heroine. The only serious defect with which this lyrical drama is to be reproached, is the *dénoûment*: instead of adopting that with which history furnished him, Schiller supposes that Joan of Arc, put in chains by the English, miraculously bursts her fetters, rejoins the French camp, decides the victory in their favor, and receives a mortal wound. The marvellous in invention, placed by the side of the marvellous transmitted to us by history, robs the subject of a great part of its seriousness. Besides, what could be more noble than the conduct and the very answers of Joan of Arc, when condemned at Rouen by the great English barons, and the Norman bishops?

History records that this young girl united the most immovable courage to the most touching sorrow; she wept like a woman, but conducted herself like a hero. She was accused of having abandoned herself to superstitious practices, and she repelled this charge with arguments such as an enlightened person of our days might make use of; but she constantly persisted in declaring that she had had secret revelations, which decided her in the choice of her career. Overcome by horror of the punishment which threatened her, she gave constant

testimony, before the English, to the energy of the French, to the virtues of the King of France, even though he had abandoned her. Her death was neither that of a warrior, nor that of a martyr; but, through the softness and timidity of her sex, she displayed in her last moments a force of inspiration almost equally astonishing with that, the supposition of which had brought down upon her the charge of witchcraft. However this might be, the simple recital of her end causes a much stronger emotion than the catastrophe imagined by Schiller. When poetry takes upon herself to add to the lustre of an historical personage, she is bound at least carefully to preserve the physiognomy which characterizes it; for greatness is really striking only when it is known how to give it a natural air. Now, in the subject of Joan of Arc, the real history not only has more of nature, but more of grandeur in it than the fictitious.

The Bride of Messina was composed according to a dramatic system altogether different from that which Schiller had till then followed, and to which he happily returned. It was in order to admit choruses on the stage, that he chose a subject in which there is nothing of novelty but the names; for it is, fundamentally, the same thing as the *Frères Ennemis*. Schiller has merely added to it a sister, whom her two brothers fall in love with, ignorant that she is their sister, and one kills the other from jealousy. This situation, terrible in itself, is intermingled with choruses, which make a part of the piece. These are the the servants of the two brothers, who interrupt and congeal the interest by their mutual discussions. The lyric poetry, which they recite, all at the same time, is superb; yet are they not the less, whatever may be said of it, choruses of chamberlains. The assembled people alone possesses that independent dignity which constitutes it an impartial spectator. The chorus ought to represent posterity. If it were animated by personal affections, it would necessarily become ridiculous; for it would be inconceivable how several different persons should say the same thing, at the same time, if their voices were not supposed to be the unerring interpreters of eternal truths.

Schiller, in the preface to his *Bride of Messina*, complains, with reason, that our modern usages no longer possess those popular forms which rendered them so poetical among the ancients :

“The palaces of kings are in these days closed ; courts of justice have been transferred from the gates of cities to the interior of buildings ; writing has narrowed the province of speech ; the people itself—the sensibly living mass—when it does not operate as brute force, has become a part of the civil polity, and thereby an abstract idea in our minds ; the deities have returned within the bosoms of mankind. The poet must reopen the palaces—he must place courts of justice beneath the canopy of heaven—restore the gods, reproduce every extreme which the artificial frame of actual life has abolished—throw aside every factitious influence on the mind or condition of man which impedes the manifestation of his inward nature and primitive character, as the statuary rejects modern costume :—and of all external circumstances adopts nothing but what is palpable in the highest of forms—that of humanity.”¹

This desire of another time, another country, is a poetical sentiment. The religious man has need of heaven, and the poet of another earth ; but it is difficult to say what religion, or what epoch, is represented to us by *the Bride of Messina* : it departs from modern manners, without placing us in the times of antiquity. The poet has confounded all religions together, and this confusion destroys the high unity of tragedy—that of an all-directing destiny. The events are atrocious, and yet the horror they inspire is of a tranquil cast. The dialogue is as long, as diffuse, as if it were the business of all to speak fine verses, and as if one loved, and were jealous, and hated one’s brother, and killed him, without ever departing from the sphere of general reflections and philosophical sentiments.

The Bride of Messina displays, nevertheless, some admirable traces of the fine genius of Schiller. When one of the brothers has been killed by the other, who is jealous of him, the dead

¹ We use the version made for Mr. Bohn.—*Ed.*

body is brought into the mother's palace ; she is yet ignorant that she has lost a son, and it is announced to her by the chorus which walks before the bier, in the following words :

“ With Sorrow in his train,
From street to street the King of Terror glides ;
With stealthy foot and slow,
He creeps where'er the fleeting race
Of man abides !
In turn, at every gate
Is heard the dreaded knock of Fate,
The message of unutterable woe !

“ When in the sere
And Autumn leaves decay'd,
The mournful forest tells how quickly fade
The glories of the year !
When in the silent tomb opprest,
Frail man, with weight of days,
Sinks to his tranquil rest,
Contented nature but obeys
Her everlasting law—
The general doom awakes no shuddering awe !
But, mortals, oh ! prepare
For mightier ills : with ruthless hand,
Fell murder cuts the holy band—
The kindred tie : insatiate Death,
With unrelenting rage,
Bears to his bark the flower of blooming age !

“ When clouds athwart the lowering sky
Are driven—when bursts with hollow moan
The thunder's peal—our trembling bosoms own
The might of awful destiny !
Yet oft the lightning's glare
Darts sudden through the cloudless air :—
Then in thy short delusive day
Of bliss, oh ! dread the treacherous snare ;
Nor prize the fleeting goods and vain,
The flowers that bloom but to decay !
Nor wealth, nor joy, nor aught but pain,
Was e'er to mortal's lot secure :—
Our first best lesson—to endure !”¹

¹ We use the fine version of A. Lodge, Esq., A. M., which has been much praised by English critics —*Ed.*

When the brother learns that the object of his love, for which he had slain his brother, is his sister, his despair knows no bounds, and he resolves to die. His mother offers to pardon him, his sister entreats him to live; but a sentiment of envy mixes with his remorse, and renders him still jealous of him that is no more. He says:

“When one common tomb
The murderer and his victim closes round—
When o'er our dust one monumental stone
Is roll'd—the curse shall cease—thy love no more
Unequal bless thy sons; the precious tears
Thine eyes of beauty weep, shall sanctify
Alike our memories. Yes! In death are quench'd
The fires of rage; and Hatred owns subdued,
The mighty reconciler. Pity bends
An angel form above the funeral urn,
With weeping, dear embrace.”

His mother again conjures him not to abandon her. “No,” he says—

“I would not live the victim of despair;
No! I must meet with beaming eye the smile
Of happy ones, and breathe erect the air
Of liberty and joy. While yet alike
We shared thy love, then o'er my days of youth
Pale Envy cast his withering shade; and now,
Think'st thou my heart could brook the dearer ties
That bind thee in thy sorrow to the dead?
Death, in his undecaying palace throned,
To the pure diamond of perfect virtue
Sublimes the mortal, and with chastening fire
Each gather'd stain of frail humanity
Purges and burns away: high as the stars
Tower o'er this earthly sphere, he soars above me;
And as by ancient hate dissever'd long,
Brethren and equal denizens we lived,
So now my restless soul with envy pines,
That he has won from me the glorious prize
Of Immortality, and like a god
In memory marches on to times unborn!”

The jealousy inspired by the dead is a sentiment full of

refinement and truth. Who, in short, can triumph over regret? Will the living ever equal the beauty of that celestial image, which the friend who is no more has left engraven on our heart? Has he not said to us: "Forget me not?" Is he not defenceless? Where does he exist upon this earth, if not in the sanctuary of our soul? And who, among the happy of this world, can ever unite himself to us so intimately as his memory?

CHAPTER XX.

WILHELM TELL.

SCHILLER'S *Wilhelm Tell* is clothed with those lively and brilliant colors which transport the imagination into the picturesque regions that gave birth to the venerable confederacy of the Rutli. In the very first verses we fancy ourselves to hear the horns of the Alps resound. The clouds which intersect the mountains and hide the lower earth from that which is nearer heaven; the chamois hunters pursuing their active prey from precipice to precipice; the life, at once pastoral and military, which contends with nature and remains at peace with men—every thing inspires an animated interest for Switzerland; and the unity of action, in this tragedy, consists in the art of making of the nation itself a dramatic character.

The boldness of Tell is brilliantly displayed in the first act of the piece. An unhappy outlaw, devoted to death by one of the subaltern tyrants of Switzerland, endeavors to save himself on the opposite side of the lake, where he thinks he may find an asylum. The storm is so violent that no boatman dares risk the passage to conduct him to it. Tell sees his distress, exposes himself with him to the danger of the waves, and succeeds in landing him safely on the shore. Tell is a stranger to the conspiracy which the insolence of Gessler has excited. Stauffacher, Walter Furst, and Arnold of Melchthal lay the foundation of the revolt. Tell is its hero, but not its

author; he does not think about politics, and dreams of tyranny only when it disturbs his tranquil existence; he repels it with the force of his arm when he feels its aggression; he judges, he condemns it before his own tribunal; but he does not conspire.

Arnold of Melchthal, one of the conspirators, has retreated to Walter's house, having been obliged to quit his father that he might escape the satellites of Gessler; he is troubled at the reflection that he has left him alone; he asks anxiously for news of him, when, on a sudden, he learns that, to punish the old man for his son's having withdrawn himself from the judgment pronounced against him, the barbarians have deprived him of sight with a red-hot iron. What despair, what rage can equal that which he feels! It becomes necessary that he should revenge himself. If he delivers his country, it is to put to death the tyrants who have blinded his father; and when the three conspirators bind themselves by a solemn oath to die or to set free their fellow-citizens from the frightful yoke of Gessler, Arnold exclaims:

“ Alas, my old blind father!
 Thou canst no more behold the day of freedom;
 But thou shalt hear it. When from Alp to Alp
 The beacon fires throw up their flaming signs,
 And the proud castles of the tyrants fall,
 Into thy cottage shall the Switzer burst,
 Bear the glad tidings to thine ear, and o'er
 Thy darken'd way shall Freedom's radiance pour.”¹

The third act is filled by the principal action, both of the real history, and of the drama. Gessler has had a hat raised on a spear's head in the middle of the public square, with an order that all the country people shall pay it salutation. Tell passes before this hat without conforming to the will of the Austrian governor; but it is only from inadvertence that he has not submitted to it, for it was not in the character of Tell,

¹ For this and other quotations from *Wilhelm Tell*, we are indebted to the fine version of Mr. Theodore Martin. (Bohn's *Standard Library*).—Ed.

at least in that which Schiller has assigned him, to manifest any political opinion: wild and independent as the deer of the mountains, he lived free, but did not inquire into the right by which he did so. At the moment of Tell's being charged with his neglect of the salutation, Gessler arrives, bearing a hawk on his wrist: this single circumstance stamps the picture, and transports us into the middle ages. The terrible power of Gessler forms a striking contrast to the simple manners of the Swiss, and one is astonished at this tyranny exercised in the open air, with the hills and valleys for its solitary witnesses.

Tell's disobedience is related to Gessler, and Tell excuses himself by affirming that it was unintentionally and through ignorance that he did not perform the enjoined act of salutation. Gessler, still irritated, says to him, after some moments of silence:

“I hear, Tell, you're a master with the bow,—
And bear the palm away from every rival.”

The son of Tell, twelve years of age, proud of his father's skill, exclaims:

“That must be true, sir! At a hundred yards
He'll shoot an apple for you off the tree.

GESSLER.

“Is that boy thine, Tell?”

TELL.

“Yes, my gracious lord.

GESSLER.

“Hast any more of them?”

TELL.

“Two boys, my lord.

GESSLER.

“And, of the two, which dost thou love the most?”

TELL.

“Sir, both the boys are dear to me alike.

GESSLER.

Then, Tell, since at a hundred yards thou canst
 Bring down the apple from the tree, thou shalt
 Approve thy skill before me. Take thy bow—
 Thou hast it there at hand—and make thee ready
 To shoot an apple from the stripling's head!
 But take this counsel,—look well to thine aim,
 See, that thou hitt'st the apple at the first,
 For, shouldst thou miss, thy head shall pay the forfeit.

[*All give signs of horror.*]

TELL.

“What monstrous thing, my lord, is this you ask?
 That I, from the head of mine own child!—No, no!
 It cannot be, kind sir, you meant not that—
 God, in his grace, forbid! You could not ask
 A father seriously to do that thing!

GESSLER.

“Thou art to shoot an apple from his head!
 I do desire—command it so.

TELL.

“What I!
 Level my crossbow at the darling head
 Of mine own child? No—rather let me die!

GESSLER.

“Or thou must shoot, or with thee dies the boy.

TELL.

“Shall I become the murd'rer of my child!
 You have no children, sir—you do not know
 The tender throbbings of a father's heart.

GESSLER.

“How now, Tell, so discreet upon a sudden?
 I had been told thou wert a visionary,—
 A wanderer from the paths of common men.
 Thou lov'st the marvellous. So have I now
 Cull'd out for thee a task of special daring.
 Another man might pause and hesitate;—
 Thou dashest at it, heart and soul, at once.”

All who surround Gessler have compassion on Tell, and endeavor to soften the barbarian who has thus condemned him to the most frightful of punishments; the old man, the child's grandfather, throws himself at Gessler's feet; the child who is to have the apple placed on his head, raises him and says:

“Grandfather, do not kneel to that bad man!
Say, where am I to stand? I do not fear;
My father strikes the bird upon the wing,
And will not miss now when 'twould harm his boy!

STAUFFACHER.

“Does the child's innocence not touch your heart?

RÖSSELMANN.

“Bethink you, sir, there is a God in heaven,
To whom you must account for all your deeds.

GESSLER (*pointing to the boy*).

“Bind him to yonder lime-tree straight!

WALTER.

“Bind me?

No, I will not be bound! I will be still,
Still as a lamb—nor even draw my breath!
But if you bind me, I cannot be still.
Then I shall writhe and struggle with my bonds.

HARRAS.

“But let your eyes at least be bandaged, boy!

WALTER.

“And why my eyes? No! Do you think I fear
An arrow from my father's hand? Not I!
I'll wait it firmly, nor so much as wink!
Quick, father, show them that thou art an archer!
He doubts thy skill—he thinks to ruin us.
Shoot then, and hit, though but to spite the tyrant!

The child places himself beneath the lime-tree, and the apple is put upon his head; then the Swiss again press around Gessler, to obtain the pardon of Tell. Gessler, addressing himself to Tell, says:

“Now, to thy task! Men bear not arms for naught.
 ’Tis dangerous to carry deadly weapons,
 And on the archer oft his shaft recoils.
 This right, these haughty peasant churls assume,
 Trenches upon their master’s privilege.
 None should be armed, but those who bear command.
 It pleases you to wear the bow and bolt;—
 Well,—be it so. I will provide the mark.

TELL (*bends the bow, and fixes the arrow*).

“A lane there! Room!”

All the spectators shudder. He tries to bend his bow, his strength fails him; a mist overshadows his eyes; he entreats Gessler to grant him death. Gessler is inflexible. Tell hesitates yet for a considerable time in a state of frightful anxiety, sometimes looking at Gessler, sometimes towards Heaven; then, on a sudden, he draws a second arrow out of his quiver, and places it in his girdle. He bends forward, as if to follow the arrow which he sends forth; it flies—the people cry, “May the child live!” The child darts into his father’s arms, and says: “My father, here is the apple which thine arrow hath cleft; I well knew that it would not hurt me.”¹ The father falls senseless to the earth with the child in his arms. His

¹ The whole scene is as follows:

STAUFFAHER.

“What, Tell? You would—no, no!
 You shake—your hand’s unsteady—your knees tremble.

TELL (*letting the bow sink down*).

“There’s something swims before mine eyes!

WOMEN.

“Great Heaven!

TELL.

“Release me from this shot! Here is my heart!
 [*Tears open his breast.*]
 Summon your troopers—let them strike me down!

companions raise and congratulate him. Gessler draws near, and asks him with what design he had prepared a second shaft. Tell refuses to inform him. Gessler insists. Tell asks a protection for his life if he shall answer truly; Gessler grants

GESSLER.

“I do not want thy life, Tell, but the shot.
Thy talent's universal! Nothing daunts thee!
Thou canst direct the rudder like the bow!
Storms fright not thee, when there's a life at stake:
Now, saviour, help thyself,—thou savest all!

[TELL stands fearfully agitated by contending emotions, his hands moving convulsively, and his eyes turning alternately to the governor and Heaven. Suddenly he takes a second arrow from his quiver, and sticks it in his belt. The governor watches all these motions.

WALTER (*beneath the lime-tree*).

“Come, father, shoot! I'm not afraid!

TELL.

“It must be!

[Collects himself and levels the bow.

RUDENZ (*who all the while has been standing in a state of violent excitement, and has with difficulty restrained himself, advances*).

“My lord, you will not urge this matter further.
You will not. It was surely but a test.
You've gain'd your object. Rigor push'd too far
Is sure to miss its aim, however good,
As snaps the bow that's all too straitly bent.

GESSLER.

“Peace, till your counsel's ask'd for!

RUDENZ.

“I will speak!

Ay, and I dare! I reverence my king;
But acts like these must make his name abhorr'd.
He sanctions not this cruelty. I dare
Avouch the fact. And you outstep your powers
In handling thus an unoffending people.

GESSLER.

“Ha! thou grow'st bold, methinks!

it. Tell then, looking at him with the eye of vengeance, says to him :

“ Well, my lord,
Since you have promised not to take my life,

RUDENZ.

“ I have been dumb
To all the oppressions I was doom'd to see.
I've closed mine eyes, that they might not behold them,
Bade my rebellious, swelling heart be still,
And pent its struggles down within my breast.
But to be silent longer, were to be
A traitor to my king and country both.

BERTHA (*casting herself between him and the governor*).

“ O Heavens! you but exasperate his rage!

RUDENZ.

“ My people I forsook—renounced my kindred—
Broke all the ties of nature, that I might
Attach myself to you. I madly thought,
That I should best advance the general weal,
By adding sinews to the Emperor's power.
The scales have fallen from mine eyes—I see
The fearful precipice on which I stand.
You've led my youthful judgment far astray,—
Deceived my honest heart. With best intent,
I had well-nigh achieved my country's ruin.

GESSLER.

“ Andacious boy, this language to thy lord?

RUDENZ.

“ The Emperor is my lord, not you! I'm free
As you by birth, and I can cope with you
In every virtue that beseems a knight.
And if you stood not here in that king's name,
Which I respect e'en where 'tis most abused,
I'd throw my gauntlet down, and you should give
An answer to my gage in knightly fashion.
Ay, beekon to your troopers! Here I stand;
But not like these [*Pointing to the people.*]
—unarm'd. I have a sword,
And he that stirs one step—

I will, without reserve, declare the truth.

[He draws the arrow from his belt, and fixes his eyes sternly upon the governor.]

If that my hand had struck my darling child,

This second arrow I had aim'd at you,

And, be assured, I should not then have miss'd."

Gessler, furious at these words, orders Tell to be thrown into prison.

This scene possesses, as may be seen, all the simplicity of an historical event related in an ancient chronicle. Wilhelm Tell is not represented as a tragic hero; he did not think of braving Gessler: he resembles, in all things, what the peasants of Switzerland generally are found to be, calm in their habits, lovers of repose, but terrible whenever those feelings are excited in their souls, which slumber in the retirement of a country life. We are still shown, near Altorf, in the Canton of Uri, a stone statue of coarse workmanship, representing Tell and his son after the apple has been pierced. The father holds his son by

STAUFFACHER (*exclaims*).

"The apple's down!

[While the attention of the crowd has been directed to the spot where BERTHA had cast herself between RUDENZ and GESSLER, TELL has shot.]

ROSSELMANN.

"The boy's alive!

MANY VOICES.

"The apple has been struck!

[WALTER FURST staggers, and is about to fall. BERTHA supports him.]

GESSLER (*astonished*).

"How? Has he shot? The madman!

BERTHA.

"Worthy father!

Pray you, compose yourself. The boy's alive.

WALTER (*runs in with the apple*).

"Here is the apple, father! Well I knew,
You would not harm your boy."—*Ed.*

one hand, and with the other presses the bow to his heart, as if to thank it for having served him so well.

Tell is put in chains into the same boat in which Gessler passes the Lake of Lucerne; the storm bursts during the passage; the barbarian is struck with fear, and asks his victim to succor him: Tell's chains are unbound; he guides the bark himself in the midst of the storm, and as he draws near the rocks, leaps swiftly on the craggy shore. The recital of this event begins the fourth act. Hardly has he reached his home, when Tell is informed that he must not expect to live there in peace with his wife and children, and he then takes the resolution of putting Gessler to death. His end is not to free his country from a foreign yoke; he scarcely knows whether Austria ought, or ought not, to govern Switzerland: he knows, however, that man has been unjust to man; he knows that a father has been compelled to shoot an arrow near the heart of his child, and he thinks that the author of such a crime deserves to die.

His soliloquy is extremely fine: he shudders at the murder, and yet has no doubt of the lawfulness of his resolution. He compares the innocent purposes for which he has hitherto employed his arrow at the chase and in sport, with the terrible action that he is about to commit: he sits¹ on a stone bench to wait at the turn of a road for Gessler, who is about to pass by:

“I'll sit me down upon this bench of stone,
Hewn for the way-worn traveller's brief repose—
For here there is no home.—Each hurries by
The other, with quick step and careless look,
Nor stays to question of his grief.—Here goes
The merchant, full of care,—the pilgrim, next,
With slender scrip,—and then the pious monk,
The scowling robber, and the jovial player,
The carrier with his heavy-laden horse,
That comes to us from the far haunts of men;
For every road conducts to the world's end.

¹ Or, rather, is about to seat himself.—*Ed.*

They all push onwards—every man intent
On his own several business—mine is murder.

[Sits down.]

“Time was, my dearest children, when with joy
You hail'd your father's safe return to home
From his long mountain toils; for, when he came,
He ever brought some little present with him.
A lovely Alpine flower—a curious bird—
Or elf-boat, found by wanderer on the hills.—
But now he goes in quest of other game:
In the wild pass he sits, and broods on murder;
And watches for the life-blood of his foe.—
But still his thoughts are fix'd on you alone,
Dear children.—'Tis to guard your innocence,
To shield you from the tyrant's fell revenge,
He bends his bow to do a deed of blood!”

[Rises.]

Shortly afterwards, Gessler is perceived from a distance descending the mountain. An unhappy woman whose husband is languishing in one of his prisons, throws herself at his feet, and conjures him to grant her his liberation; he contemns and repulses her; she still insists; she seizes his horse's bridle, and demands of him either to trample her under foot, or to restore to her him she loves. Gessler, indignant at her complaints, reproaches himself for having yet indulged the people of Switzerland with too great a portion of liberty:

“I will subdue this stubborn mood of theirs,
And crush the soul of liberty within them.
I'll publish a new law throughout the land;
I will—”

As he pronounces this word, the mortal shaft reaches him; he falls, exclaiming, “That shot was Tell's.”

“Thou know'st the archer, seek no other hand,”

cries Tell, from the top of the rock. The acclamations of the people are soon heard, and the deliverers of Switzerland accomplish the vow they had made, to rid themselves of the yoke of Austria.

It seems that the piece should naturally end here, as that of Mary Stuart at her death; but, in each, Schiller has added a

sort of appendix or explanation, which can be no more listened to after the principal catastrophe is terminated. Elizabeth reappears after Mary's execution; we are made to witness her grief and vexation at hearing that Leicester has taken his departure for France. This poetical justice ought to have been supposed, and not represented; the spectator cannot bear the sight of Elizabeth, after witnessing the last moments of Mary. In the fifth act of *Wilhelm Tell*, John the Parricide, who assassinated his uncle Albert, because he refused him his birth-right, comes disguised as a monk, to demand an asylum of Tell; he persuades himself that their acts are similar, and Tell repulses him with horror, showing him how different were their motives. The putting these two characters in opposition to each other, is a just and ingenious idea; yet this contrast, so pleasing in the closet, does not answer on the stage. Genius is of very little importance in dramatic effects; it is necessary for the purpose of preparing them, but if it were also required for the purpose of feeling them, this is a task to which even the most refined audience would be found unequal.

On the stage, the additional act of John the Parricide is suppressed, and the curtain falls at the moment when Gessler's heart is pierced by the arrow. A short time after the first representation of *Wilhelm Tell*, the fatal shaft struck also the worthy author of this noble performance. Gessler perished at the moment when he was occupied by the most barbarous intentions. The soul of Schiller was filled with generous ideas. These two states of mind, so contrary to each other, were equally interrupted by death, the common enemy of all human projects.

CHAPTER XXI.

GOETZ VON BERLICHINGEN AND THE COUNT OF EGMONT.

THE dramatic career of Goethe may be considered in two different lights. The pieces he designed for representation have much grace and facility, but nothing more. In those of his dramatic works, on the contrary, which it is very difficult to perform, we discover extraordinary talent. The genius of Goethe cannot confine itself within the limits of the theatre; and, endeavoring to subject itself to them, it loses a portion of originality, and does not entirely recover it till again at liberty to mix all styles together as it chooses. No art, whatever it be, can exist without certain limits; painting, sculpture, architecture, are subject to their own peculiar laws, and in like manner the dramatic art produces its effect only under certain conditions—conditions which sometimes restrain both thought and feeling; and yet the influence of the theatre is so great upon the assembled audience, that one is not justified in refusing to employ the power it possesses, by the pretext that it exacts sacrifices which the imagination left to itself would not require. As there is no metropolis in Germany to collect together all that is necessary to form a good theatre, dramatic works are much oftener read than performed; and thence it follows that authors compose their dramas with a view to the effect in reading, not in acting.

Goethe is almost always making new experiments in literature. When the German taste appears to him to lean towards an excess in any respect, he immediately endeavors to give it an opposite direction. He may be said to govern the understandings of his contemporaries as an empire of his own, and his works may be called decrees, by turns authorizing or banishing the abuses of art.

Goethe was tired of the imitation of French pieces in Germany, and with reason; for even a Frenchman might be equally tired of it. He therefore composed an historical tragedy, in the manner of Shakspeare, *Goetz von Berlichingen*. This piece was not destined for the stage; but it is nevertheless capable of representation, as are all those of Shakspeare of the same description. Goethe has chosen the same historical epoch as Schiller in his play of *the Robbers*; but instead of presenting a man who has set himself free from all the ties of moral and social order, he has painted an old knight, under the reign of Maximilian, still defending the chivalrous manners and the feudal condition of the nobility, which gave so high an ascendancy to their personal valor.

Goetz von Berlichingen was surnamed *the Iron-handed*, because having lost his right hand in war, he had one made for him with springs, by the aid of which he held and managed his lance with dexterity: he was a knight renowned in his time for courage and loyalty. This model is happily chosen to represent what was the independence of the nobles before the authority of the government became coercive on all men. In the middle ages every castle was a fortress, every noble a sovereign. The establishment of standing armies, and the invention of artillery, effected a total change in social order; a sort of abstract power was introduced under the name of the state or the nation; but individuals lost, by degrees, all their importance. A character like that of *Goetz* must have suffered from this change, whenever it took place.

The military spirit has always been of a ruder cast in Germany than anywhere else, and it is there that we might figure to ourselves, as real, those men of iron whose images are still to be seen in the arsenals of the empire. Yet the simplicity of chivalrous manners is painted in *Goethe's* tragedy with many charms. This aged *Goetz*, living in the midst of battles, sleeping in his armor, continually on horseback, never resting except when besieged, employing all his resources for war, contemplating nothing besides—this aged *Goetz*, I say, gives us the highest idea of the interest and activity which human life

possessed in those ages. His virtues, as well as his defects, are strongly marked ; nothing is more generous than his regard for Weislingen, once his friend, then his adversary, and often engaged even in acts of treason against him. The sensibility shown by an intrepid warrior, awakens the soul in an entirely new manner ; we have time to love in our inactive state of existence ; but these lightnings of passion which enable us to read in the bottom of the heart, through the medium of a stormy existence, cause a sentiment of profound emotion. We are so afraid of meeting with affectation in the noblest gift of heaven, sensibility, that we sometimes prefer in the expression of it even rudeness itself as the pledge of sincerity.

The wife of Goetz presents herself to the imagination like an old portrait of the Flemish school, in which the dress, the look, the very tranquillity of the attitude, announce a woman submitted to the will of her husband, knowing him only, admiring him only, and believing herself destined to serve him, as he is to defend her. By way of contrast to this most excellent woman, we have a creature altogether perverse, Adelaide, who seduces Weislingen, and makes him fail in the promise he had given to his friend ; she marries, and soon after proves faithless to him. She renders herself passionately beloved by her page, and bewilders the imagination of this unhappy young man to such a degree as to prevail upon him to give a poisoned cup to his master. These features are strong, but perhaps it is true that when the manners of a nation are generally very pure, the woman who estranges herself from them soon becomes entirely corrupted ; the desire of pleasing is in our days no more than a tie of affection and kindness, but in the strict domestic life of a former age, it was an error capable of involving all others in its consequences. This guilty Adelaide gives occasion to one of the finest scenes in the play, the sitting of the secret tribunal.

Mysterious judges, unknown to one another, always masked, and meeting at night, punished in silence, and only engraved on the poinard which they plunged into the bosom of the culprit this terrible motto : THE SECRET TRIBUNAL. They

acquainted the condemned person with his sentence by having it cried three times under his window, *Woe, woe, woe!* Thus was the unfortunate man given to know that, everywhere, in the stranger, in the fellow-citizen, in the kinsman even, he might find his murderer. In the crowd and in solitude, in the city and in the country, all places were filled by the invisible presence of that armed conscience which persecuted the guilty. One may conceive how necessary this terrible institution might have been, at a time when every man was powerful against all men, instead of all being invested with the power which they ought to possess over each individual. It was necessary that justice should surprise the criminal before he was able to defend himself; but this punishment which hovered in the air like an avenging shade, this mortal sentence which might be harbored even in the bosom of a friend, inspired an invincible terror.

There is another fine situation,—that in which Goetz, in order to defend himself in his castle, commands the lead to be stripped from the windows to melt into balls. There is in this character a contempt of futurity, and an intenseness of strength at the present moment, that are altogether admirable. At last Goetz beholds all his companions in arms perish; he remains wounded, a prisoner, and having only his wife and sister left by his side. He is surrounded by women alone—he who desired to live among men, among men of unconquerable spirits—that he might exert with them the force of his character and the strength of his arm. He thinks on the name that he must leave behind him; he reflects, now that he is about to die. He asks to behold the sun once more, he thinks on God, who never before occupied his thoughts, but of whose existence he never doubted, and dies with gloomy courage, regretting his warlike pleasures more than life itself.

This play is much liked in Germany; the national manners and customs of times of old, are faithfully represented by it, and whatever touches on ancient chivalry moves the hearts of the Germans. Goethe, the most careless of all men, because he is sure of leading the taste of his audience, did not give

himself the trouble even of putting his play into verse; it is the sketch of a great picture, but hardly enough finished even as a sketch. One perceives in the writer so great an impatience of all that can be thought to bear a resemblance to affectation, that he disdains even the art that is necessary to give a durable form to his compositions. There are marks of genius scattered here and there through his drama, like the touches of Michael Angelo's pencil; but it is a work defective, or rather which makes us feel the want of many things. The reign of Maximilian, during which the principal event is supposed to pass, is not sufficiently marked. In short, we may venture to censure the author for not having enough exercised his imagination in the form and language of the piece. It is true that he has intentionally and systematically abstained from indulging it; he wished the drama to be the action itself; forgetting that the charm of the ideal is that which ought to preside over all things in dramatic works. The characters of tragedies are always in danger of being either common or factitious, and it is incumbent on genius to preserve them equally from each extreme. Shakspeare, in his historical pieces, never ceases to be a poet, nor Racine to observe with exactness the manners of the Hebrews in his lyrical tragedy of *Athalie*. The dramatic talent can dispense neither with nature nor with art; art is totally distinct from artifice, it is a perfectly true and spontaneous inspiration, which spreads a universal harmony over particular circumstances, and the dignity of lasting remembrances over fleeting moments.

*The Count of Egmont*¹ appears to me the finest of Goethe's tragedies; he wrote it, I believe, at the same time, when he composed *Werther*; the same warmth of soul is alike perceptible in both. The play begins at the moment when Philip II, weary of the mild government of Margaret of Parma, in the Low Countries, sends the Duke of Alva to supply her place.

¹ Goethe's own title of the piece is simply *Egmont*.—*Ed.*

The king is troubled by the popularity which the Prince of Orange and the Count of Egmont have acquired ; he suspects them of secretly favoring the partisans of the Reformation. Every thing is brought together that can furnish the most attractive idea of the Count of Egmont. He is seen adored by the soldiers at the head of whom he has borne away so many victories. The Spanish princess trusts his fidelity, even though she knows how much he censures the severity that has been employed against the Protestants. The citizens of Brussels look on him as the defender of their liberties before the throne ; and, to complete the picture, the Prince of Orange, whose profound policy and silent wisdom are so well known in history, sets off still more the generous imprudence of Egmont, in vainly entreating him to depart with himself before the arrival of the Duke of Alva. The Prince of Orange is a wise and noble character ; an heroic but inconsiderate self-devotion can alone resist his counsels. The Count of Egmont resolves not to abandon the inhabitants of Brussels ; he trusts himself to his fate, because his victories have taught him to reckon upon the favors of fortune, and he always preserves in public business the same qualities that have thrown so much brilliancy over his military character. These noble and dangerous qualities interest us in his destiny ; we feel on his account, fears which his intrepid soul never allowed him to experience for himself ; the general effect of his character is displayed with great art in the impression which it is made to produce on all the different persons by whom he is surrounded. It is easy to trace a lively portrait of the hero of a piece ; it requires more talent to make him act and speak conformably to this portrait, and more still to make him known by the admiration that he inspires in the soldiers, the people, the great nobility, in all that bear any relation to him.

The Count of Egmont is in love with a young girl, Clara, born in the class of citizens at Brussels ; he goes to visit her in her obscure retreat. This love has a larger place in the heart of the young girl than in his own ; the imagination of Clara is entirely subdued by the lustre of the Count of Eg-

mont, by the dazzling impression of his heroic valor and brilliant reputation. There are goodness and gentleness in the love of Egmont; in the society of this young person he finds repose from trouble and solicitude. "They speak to you," he says, "of this Egmont, silent, severe, authoritative; who is made to struggle with events and with mankind; but he who is simple, loving, confiding, happy—that Egmont, Clara, is thine."¹ The love of Egmont for Clara would not be sufficient for the interest of the piece; but when misfortune is joined to it, this sentiment which before appeared only in the distance, acquires an admirable strength.

The arrival of the Spaniards with the Duke of Alva at their head being made known, the terror spread by that gloomy nation among the joyous people of Brussels is described in a superior manner. At the approach of a violent storm, men retire to their houses, animals tremble, birds take a low flight, and seem to seek an asylum in the earth; all nature seems to prepare itself to meet the scourge which threatens it: thus terror possessed the minds of the unfortunate inhabitants of Flanders. The Duke of Alva is not willing to have the Count of Egmont arrested in the streets of Brussels; he fears an insurrection of the people, and wishes if possible to draw his victim to his own palace, which commands the city, and adjoins the citadel. He employs his own son, young Ferdinand, to prevail on the man

¹ The following is the entire passage in the version of Miss Anna Swanwick:

"Seest thou, Clara? Let me sit down! (*He seats himself, she kneels on a footstool before him, rests her arms on his knees, and looks up in his face.*) That Egmont is a morose, cold, unbending Egmont, obliged to be upon his guard, to assume now this appearance and now that: harassed, misapprehended, and perplexed, when the crowd esteem him light-hearted and gay; beloved by a people who do not know their own minds; honored and extolled by the intractable multitude; surrounded by friends in whom he dares not confide; observed by men who are on the watch to supplant him; toiling and striving, often without an object, generally without a reward. Oh, let me conceal how it fares with him, let me not speak of his feelings! But this Egmont, Clara, is calm, unreserved, happy, beloved by the best of hearts, which is also thoroughly known to him, and which he presses to his own with unbounded confidence and love. (*He embraces her.*) This is thy Egmont."—*Ed.*

he wishes to ruin, to enter his abode. Ferdinand is an enthusiastic admirer of the hero of Flanders; he has no suspicion of the horrid designs of his father, and displays a warmth and ardor of character which persuades the Count of Egmont that the father of *such* a son cannot be his enemy. Egmont consents to accompany him to the Duke of Alva; that perfidious and faithful representative of Philip II expects him with an impatience which makes one shudder; he places himself at the window, and perceives him at a distance, mounted on a superb horse, which he had taken in one of his victorious battles. The Duke of Alva feels a cruel and increasing joy at every step which Egmont makes towards his palace; when the horse stops, he is agitated; his guilty heart pants to effect his criminal purpose; and when Egmont enters the court he cries: "One foot is in the tomb, another step! the grated entrance closes on him, he is mine!"¹

The Count of Egmont having entered, the duke discourses with him for some time on the government of the Low Countries, and on the necessity of employing rigor to restrain the progress of the new opinions; he has no longer any interest in deceiving Egmont, and yet he feels a pleasure in his craftiness, and wishes still to enjoy it a few moments; at length he rouses the generous soul of Egmont, and irritates him by disputation in order to draw from him some violent expressions. He affects to be provoked by them, and performs, as by a sudden impulse, what he had calculated on and determined to do long before. Why so many precautions with a man who is already in his power, and whom he has determined to deprive, in a few hours, of existence? It is because the political assassin always retains a confused desire of justifying himself, even in the eyes of his victim; he wishes to say something in his

¹ Alva soliloquizes thus:—" 'Tis he! Egmont! Did thy steed bear thee hither so lightly, and started not at the scent of blood, at the spirit with the naked sword who received thee at the gate? Dismount! Lo, now thou hast one foot in the grave! And now both! Ay, caress him, and for the last time stroke his neck for the gallant service he has rendered thee. And for me no choice is left. The delusion, in which Egmont ventures here to-day, cannot a second time deliver him into my hands!"—*Ed.*

excuse even when all he can allege persuades neither himself nor any other person. Perhaps no man is capable of entering on a criminal act without some subterfuge, and therefore the true morality of dramatic works consists not in poetical justice which the author dispenses as he thinks fit. and of which history so often shows us the fallacy, but in the art of painting vice and virtue in such colors as to inspire us with hatred for the one and love for the other.

The report of the Count of Egmont's arrest was scarcely spread through Brussels before it is known that he must perish. No one expects justice, his terrified adherents venture not a word in his defence, and suspicion soon separates those whom the same interest had before united. An apparent submission arises from the terror which every individual feels and inspires in his turn, and the panic which pervades them all, that popular cowardice which so quickly succeeds a state of unusual exaltation, is in this part of the work most admirably described.

Clara alone, that timid girl who scarcely ever ventured to leave her own abode, appears in the public square at Brussels, reassembles by her cries the citizens who had dispersed, recalls to their recollection the enthusiasm which the name of Egmont had inspired, the oath they had taken to die for him: all who hear her shudder.

JETER,

“Speak not the name, 'tis deadly.

CLARA.

“Not speak his name? Not Egmont's name? Is it not on every tongue? Does it not appear everywhere legibly inscribed? I read it emblazoned in golden letters among the stars. Not utter it? What mean ye? Friends! good, kind neighbors! ye are dreaming; collect yourselves. Gaze not upon me with those fixed and anxious looks! Cast not such timid glances on every side! I but give utterance to the wish of all. Is not my voice the voice of your own hearts? Who, in this fearful night, ere he seeks his restless couch, but on bended knee, will in earnest prayer seek to wrest his life as a cherished boon from heaven? Ask each other! Let each ask his own heart! And who but exclaims with me—‘Egmont's liberty, or death!’

JETTER.

“ God help us ! This is a sad business.

CLARA.

“ Stay ! stay ! Shrink not away at the sound of his name, to meet whom ye were wont to press forward so joyously !—When rumor announced his approach, when the cry arose, ‘ Egmont comes ! He comes from Ghent ! ’—then happy indeed were those citizens who dwelt in the streets through which he was to pass. And when the neighing of his steed was heard, did not every one throw aside his work, while a ray of hope and joy, like a sunbeam from his countenance, stole over the toilworn faces that peered from every window ? Then, as ye stood in the doorways, ye would lift up your children in your arms and pointing to him, exclaim : ‘ See, that is Egmont, he who towers above the rest ! ’Tis from him that ye must look for better times than those your poor fathers have known.’ Let not your children inquire at some future day, ‘ Where is he ? Where are the better times you promised us ? ’—Thus we waste the time in idle words ! do nothing,—betray him.

SOEST.

“ Shame on thee, Brackenburg ! Let her not run on thus ; prevent the mischief.

BRACKENBURG.

“ Dear Clara !—Let us go ! What will your mother say ? Perchance—

CLARA.

“ Think you I am a child, a lunatic ? What avails perchance ?—With no vain hope can you hide from me this dreadful certainty. Ye shall hear me and ye will ; for I see it, ye are overwhelmed, ye cannot hearken to the voice of your own hearts. Through the present peril cast but one glance into the past,—the recent past. Send your thoughts forward into the future. Could ye live, would ye live, were he to perish ? With him expires the last breath of freedom. What was he not to you ? For whose sake did he expose himself to the direst perils ? His blood flowed, his wounds were healed for you alone. A dungeon now confines that mighty spirit that upheld you all, while around him hover the terrors of secret assassination. Perhaps, he thinks of you,—perhaps he hopes in you,—he who has been accustomed only to grant favors to others and to fulfil their prayers.

CARPENTER.

“ Come, gossip.

CLARA.

"I have neither the arms, nor the strength of a man ; but I have that which ye all lack—courage and contempt of danger. Oh, that my breath could kindle your souls ! That, pressing you to this bosom, I could arouse and animate you ! Come ! I will march in your midst ! As a waving banner, though weaponless, leads on a gallant army of warriors, so shall my spirit hover, like a flame, over your ranks, while love and courage shall unite the dispersed and wavering multitude into a terrible host."

Brackenburg informs Clara that they perceive, not far from them, some Spanish soldiers, who may possibly listen to them.

BRACKENBURG.

"Clara ? See you not where we are ?

CLARA.

"Where ? Under the dome of heaven, which has so often seemed to arch itself more gloriously as the noble Egmont passed beneath it. From these windows I have seen them look forth, four or five heads one above the other ; at these doors the cowards have stood, bowing and scraping, if the hero but chanced to look down upon them ! Oh ! how dear they were to me, when they honored him ! Had he been a tyrant, they might have turned with indifference from his fall ; but they loved him ! O ye hands, so prompt to wave caps in his honor, can ye not grasp a sword ? And yet, Brackenburg, is it for us to chide them ? These arms that have so often embraced him, what do they for him now ? Stratagem has accomplished so much in the world. You know the ancient castle, every passage, every secret way."

Brackenburg draws Clara to her own habitation, and goes out again to inquire the fate of the Count of Egmont. He returns, and Clara, whose last resolution is already taken, insists on his relating to her all that he has heard :

"Speak to me of him ! Is it true ? Is he condemned ?

BRACKENBURG.

"He is ! I know it.

CLARA.

"And still lives ?

BRACKENBURG.

"Yes, he still lives.

CLARA.

“How can you be sure of that? Tyranny murders its victim in the night! His blood flows concealed from every eye. The people, stunned and bewildered, lie buried in sleep, dream of deliverance, dream of the fulfilment of their impotent wishes, while, indignant at our supineness, his spirit abandons the world. He is no more! Deceive me not; deceive not thyself!

BRACKENBURG.

“No,—he lives! and the Spaniards, alas! are preparing for the people, on whom they are about to trample, a terrible spectacle, in order to crush, by a violent blow, each heart that yet pants for freedom.

CLARA.

“Proceed! Calmly pronounce my death-warrant also! Near and more near I approach that blessed land, and already from those realms of peace, I feel the breath of consolation. Say on.

BRACKENBURG.

“From casual words, dropped here and there by the guards, I learned that secretly, in the market-place, they were preparing some terrible spectacle. Through by-ways and familiar lanes I stole to my cousin's house, and from a back window looked out upon the market-place. Torches waved to and fro, in the hands of a wide circle of Spanish soldiers. I strained my unaccustomed sight, and out of the darkness there arose before me a scaffold, dark, spacious, and lofty! The sight filled me with horror. Several persons were employed in covering with black cloth such portions of the woodwork as yet remain exposed. The steps were covered last, also with black;—I saw it all. They seemed preparing for the celebration of some horrible sacrifice. A white crucifix, that shone like silver through the night, was raised on one side. As I gazed, the terrible conviction strengthened in my mind. Scattered torches still gleamed here and there; gradually they flickered and went out. Suddenly, the hideous birth of night returned into its mother's womb.”

The son of the Duke of Alva discovers that he has been made the instrument of Egmont's destruction, and he determines, at all hazards, to save him; Egmont demands of him only one service, which is to protect Clara when he shall be no more; but we learn that, resolved not to survive the man

she loved, she has destroyed herself. Egmont is executed; and the bitter resentment which Ferdinand feels against his father, is the punishment of the Duke of Alva, who, it is said, never loved any thing on earth except that son.

It seems to me that, with a few variations, it would be possible to adapt this play to the French model. I have passed over in silence some scenes which could not be introduced on our stage. In the first place, that with which the tragedy begins: some of Egmont's soldiers, and some citizens of Brussels, are conversing together on the subject of his exploits. In a dialogue, very lively and natural, they relate the principal actions of his life, and in their language and narratives show the high confidence with which he had inspired them. 'Tis thus that Shakspeare prepares the entrance of Julius Cæsar; and the *Camp of Wallenstein* is composed with the same intention. But in France we should not endure a mixture of the language of the people with that of tragic dignity; and this frequently gives monotony to our second-rate tragedies. Pompous expressions, and situations always heroic, are necessarily few in number; besides, tender emotions rarely penetrate to the bottom of the soul, when the imagination is not previously captivated by those simple but true details which give life to the smallest circumstances.

The family to which Clara belongs is represented as completely that of a citizen; her mother is extremely vulgar; he who is to marry her is indeed passionately attached to her, but one does not like to consider Egmont as the rival of such an inferior man; every thing that surrounds Clara serves, it is true, to set off the purity of her soul; nevertheless, in France we should not allow in the dramatic art one of the first principles in that of painting—the shade which renders the light more striking. As we see both of these at once in a picture, we receive, at the same time, the effect of both: it is not the same in a theatrical performance, where the action follows in succession; the scene which hurts our feelings is not tolerated, in consideration of the advantageous light it is to throw on the following scene; and we expect that the contrast shall

consist in beauties, different, indeed, but which shall nevertheless be beauties.¹

The conclusion of Goethe's tragedy does not harmonize with the former part; the Count of Egmont falls asleep a few min-

¹ "In Schiller's critique upon the tragedy of Egmont, Goethe is censured for departing from the truth of history, in the delineation of his hero's character, and also for misrepresenting the circumstances of his domestic life. The Egmont of history left behind him a numerous family, anxiety for whose welfare detained him in Brussels, when most of his friends sought safety in flight. His withdrawal would have entailed the confiscation of his property, and he shrank from exposing to privation those whose happiness was dearer to him than life;—a consideration which he repeatedly urged in his conferences with the Prince of Orange, when the latter insisted upon the necessity of escape. We see here, not the victim of a blind and foolhardy confidence, as portrayed in Goethe's drama, but the husband and father, regardless of his personal safety, in anxiety for the interests of his family. I shall not inquire which conception is best suited for the purposes of art, but merely subjoin a few extracts from the same critique, in which Schiller does ample justice to Goethe's admirable delineation of the age and country in which the drama is cast, and which are peculiarly valuable from the pen of so competent an authority as the historian of the Fall of the Netherlands.

"Egmont's tragical death resulted from the relation in which he stood to the nation and the government; hence, the action of the drama is intimately connected with the political life of the period—an exhibition of which forms its indispensable groundwork. But, if we consider what an infinite number of minute circumstances must concur, in order to exhibit the spirit of an age, and the political condition of a people, and the art required to combine so many isolated features into an intelligible and organic whole; and if we contemplate, moreover, the peculiar character of the Netherlands, consisting not of one nation, but of an aggregate of many smaller States, separated from each other by the sharpest contrasts, we shall not cease to wonder at the creative genius, which, triumphing over all these difficulties, conjures up before us, as with an enchanter's wand, the Netherlands of the sixteenth century.

"Not only do we behold these men living and working before us, we dwell among them as their familiar associates; we see, on the one hand, the joyous sociability, the hospitality, the loquacity, the somewhat boastful temper of the people, their republican spirits, ready to boil up at the slightest innovation, and often subsiding again as rapidly, on the most trivial grounds; and on the other hand, we are made acquainted with the burdens under which they groaned, from the new mitres of the bishops, to the French psalms which they were forbidden to sing: nothing is omitted, no feature introduced, which does not bear the stamp of nature and of truth. Such delineation is not the result of premeditated effort, nor can it be commanded by art; it can only be achieved by the poet whose mind is

utes before he ascends the scaffold. Clara, who is dead, appears to him during his sleep, surrounded with celestial brilliancy, and informs him that the cause of liberty, which he had served so well, will one day triumph. This wonderful *dénoûment* cannot accord with an historical performance. The Germans are, in general, embarrassed about the conclusion of their pieces; and the Chinese proverb is particularly applicable to them, which says, "When we have ten steps to take, the ninth brings us half way." The talent necessary to finish a composition of any kind, demands a sort of skill and measure which scarcely agrees with the vague and indefinite imagination displayed by the Germans in all their works. Besides, it requires art, and a great deal of art, to find a proper *dénoûment*, for there are seldom any in real life: facts are linked one to the other, and their consequences are lost in the lapse of time. The knowledge of the theatre alone teaches us to circumscribe the principal event, and make all the accessory ones concur to the same purpose. But to combine effects

thoroughly imbued with his subject; from him, such traits escape unconsciously, and without design, as they do from the individuals whose characters they serve to portray.

"The few scenes in which the citizens of Brussels are introduced, appear to us to be the result of profound study, and it would be difficult to find, in so few words, a more admirable historical monument of the Netherlands of that period.

"Equally graphic is that portion of the picture which portrays the spirit of the Government, though it must be confessed that the artist has here somewhat softened down the harsher features of the original. This is especially true in reference to the character of the Duchess of Parma. Before his Duke of Alva we tremble, without, however, turning from him with aversion; he is a firm, rigid, inaccessible character: "a brazen tower without gates, the garrison of which must be furnished with wings." The prudent forecast with which he makes his arrangements for Egmont's arrest, excites our admiration, while it removes him from our sympathy. The remaining characters of the drama are delineated with a few masterly strokes. The subtle, taciturn Orange, with his timid, yet comprehensiv and all-combining mind, is depicted in a single scene. Both Alva and Egmont are mirrored in the men by whom they are surrounded. This mode of delineation is admirable. The poet, in order to concentrate the interest upon Egmont, has isolated his hero, and omitted all mention of Count Horn, who shared the same melancholy fate."—(Miss Swanwick, *Dramatic Works of Goethe*, pp. xv. xvi. London, 1851.)—*Ed.*

seems to the Germans almost like hypocrisy ; and the spirit of calculation appears to them irreconcilable with inspiration.

Of all their writers, however, Goethe is certainly best able to unite the skill of genius with its boldness ; but he does not vouchsafe to give himself the trouble of arranging dramatic situations so as to render them properly theatrical. If they are fine in themselves, he cares for nothing more. His German audience at Weimar ask no better than to wait the development of his plans, and to guess at his intention ; as patient, as intelligent as the ancient Greek chorus, they do not expect merely to be amused, as sovereigns commonly do ; whether they are people or kings, they contribute to their own pleasure, by analyzing and explaining what did not at first strike them : such a public is truly like an artist in its judgments.

CHAPTER XXII.

IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS, TORQUATO TASSO, ETC., ETC.

IN Germany were represented familiar comedies, melodramas, and grand spectacles, filled with horses and knights. Goethe wished to bring back literature to the severity of ancient times, and he composed his *Iphigenia in Tauris*, which is the *chef-d'œuvre* of classical poetry among the Germans. This tragedy recalls the sort of impression which we receive in contemplating Grecian statues ; the action of it is so commanding, and yet so tranquil, that even when the situation of the personages is changed, there is always in them a sort of dignity which fixes the recollection of every moment on the memory.

The subject of *Iphigenia in Tauris* is so well known, that it was difficult to treat it in a new manner. Goethe has, nevertheless, succeeded in giving a character truly admirable to his heroine. The Antigone of Sophocles is a saint, such as a

religion more pure than that of the ancients might have represented to us. The Iphigenia of Goethe has not less respect to truth than Antigone; but she unites the calmness of a philosopher with the fervor of a priestess: the chaste worship of Diana, and the asylum of a temple, satisfy that contemplative existence which the regret of being exiled from Greece imparts to her. She wishes to soften the manners of the barbarous country which she inhabits; and though her name is unknown, she sheds benefactions around her befitting a daughter of the King of Kings. Nevertheless, she ceases not to regret the beautiful country in which her infancy was passed, and her soul is filled with a firm yet gentle resignation, which it may be said holds the middle space between Stoicism and Christianity. Iphigenia somewhat resembles the divinity she serves; and imagination represents her as surrounded with a cloud, which conceals from her her country. In reality, could exile, and exile far from Greece, allow any enjoyment except that which is found in the internal resources of the mind? Ovid also, when condemned to spend his days not far from Tauris, in vain uttered his harmonious language to the inhabitants of those desolate shores: in vain he sought the arts, a favoring sky, and that sympathy of thought which makes us taste some of the pleasures of friendship, even in the society of those who have no responsive feeling, and would be otherwise indifferent to us. His genius recoiled on itself, and his suspended lyre breathed none but plaintive sounds, a mournful accompaniment to the northern blast.

It appears to me that no modern work surpasses the *Iphigenia* of Goethe in depicting the destiny which hung so heavily on the race of Tantalus, and the dignity of the misfortunes caused by an invincible fatality. A religious dread is felt through the whole narration, and the personages themselves seem to speak prophetically, and to act under the immediate influence of the gods.

Goethe has made Thoas the deliverer of Iphigenia. A ferocious character, such as many authors have represented him, would not have accorded with the general color of the piece;

he would have destroyed its harmony. In many tragedies a tyrant is exhibited as a sort of machine on which the business of the piece depends; but the reflecting mind of Goethe would never have brought such a personage into action without developing his character. Now a criminal character is always too complicated to enter properly into a subject treated in so simple a manner as this is. Thoas loves Iphigenia; he cannot resolve to separate himself from her by suffering her to return into Greece with her brother Orestes. Iphigenia might indeed depart unknown to Thoas: she debates with her brother and with herself, whether she ought to allow herself to act in so deceitful a manner, and this forms the plot or the intrigue of the last part of the piece. At length Iphigenia avows her whole design to Thoas, combats his opposition to it, and obtains from him the word adieu, after which the curtain drops.

Certainly the subject thus conceived is pure and noble, and it would be desirable that an audience might be interested and affected merely by a scruple of delicacy; but in the present state of the theatre this is not sufficient, and we are therefore interested more in reading this piece than in seeing it represented. Such a tragedy excites admiration rather than sympathy; we listen to it as to a canto of an epic poem; and the calm which pervades the whole reaches almost to Orestes himself. The scene in which Iphigenia and Orestes recognize each other is not the most animated, though it is perhaps the most poetical part of the piece. The family of Agamemnon is recalled to remembrance in a manner so admirably skilful, that the pictures with which both history and fable have enriched antiquity seem all to pass before our eyes. We are interested also by the finest language and most elevated sentiments. Poetry so sublime raises the soul to noble contemplation, which renders dramatic variety and action almost unnecessary.

Among the great number of passages worthy of quotation in this piece, there is one which seems perfectly new. Iphigenia, in her affliction, recollects a song formerly known in her family, and taught her by her nurse in her infancy: 'tis

the song which the Parcæ address to Tantalus in the infernal regions. They recall to his recollection his former glory, when he was the guest of the gods at the golden table; they describe the terrible moment when he was hurled from his throne, the punishment inflicted on him by the gods, the tranquillity of those deities who preside over the universe—a tranquillity not to be shaken even by the torments and lamentations of hell. These menacing Parcæ inform the descendants of Tantalus that the gods will forsake them, because their features recall the remembrance of their father. The aged Tantalus, plunged in eternal night, hears this sad song, thinks on his children, and bows down his guilty head. Images the most striking, and a rhythm peculiarly adapted to the sentiment, give to this poetry the air and energy of a national song. It is the greatest effort of talent thus to familiarize us with antiquity, and to seize at the same time what would have been popular among the Greeks, and what produces also, at the distance of so many ages, an impression equally solemn.

The admiration of Goethe's *Iphigenia in Tauris*, which it is impossible for us not to feel, does not contradict what I have said on the more lively interest and warmer degree of feeling which we may experience from modern subjects. Those manners and that religion, the traces of which are almost effaced through the lapse of ages, present man to us almost as an ideal being, who scarcely touches the earth on which he moves; but in the epochs and events of history which still influence the present moment, we feel the warmth of our own existence, and we expect affections similar to those by which we are agitated.

It appears to me then that Goethe ought not to have placed in his piece of *Torquato Tasso*, the same simplicity of action and calm dignity of dialogue which was suitable to his *Iphigenia*. That calmness and simplicity appears cold and unnatural in a subject so modern in every respect as that of the personal character of Tasso and the intrigues of the court of Ferrara.

Goethe wished to display in this piece the opposition which exists between poetry and the relations of social life; between

the character of a poet and that of a man of the world. He has shown the injurious effect produced by the patronage of a prinée on the delicate imagination of an author, even when that prince thinks himself a lover of literature, or at least takes a pride in appearing to be so. This contrast between nature highly exalted and cultivated by poetry, and nature chilled but guided by the narrow views of policy, is an idea which becomes the parent of a thousand others.

A literary character in the court of a prince at first naturally thinks himself happy in being so situated; but in time it is impossible for him to avoid feeling some of the troubles which rendered the life of Tasso so miserable. Talents which are not perfectly free from restraint cease to be talents; and nevertheless it is very seldom that princes acknowledge the rights and privileges of the imagination, and know at once how to consider and guide it properly. It was scarcely possible to choose a happier subject than that of Tasso at Ferrara to display the different characters of a poet, a courtier, a princess, and a prince, acting in a little circle with a degree of selfish harshness sufficient to set the world in motion. The morbid sensibility of Tasso is well known, as well as the polished rudeness of his protector Alphonso, who, professing the highest admiration for his writings, shut him up in a mad-house, as if that genius which springs from the soul were to be treated like the production of a mechanical talent, by valuing the work while we despise the workman.

Goethe has described Leonora d'Este, the sister of the Duke of Ferrara, who was in secret beloved by the poet, as enthusiastic in her desires, but weak from motives of prudence. He has introduced into his piece a courtier, wise according to the world, who treats Tasso with that superiority, which the man of business conceives he possesses over the poet, and who irritates him by the calmness and dexterity with which he wounds without precisely giving him any specific cause of offence. This cold-blooded man preserves his advantage, and provokes his enemy by dry and ceremonious manners which continually offend without affording ground of complaint. This is the

great evil arising from a certain sort of knowledge of the world; and in this sense eloquence and the art of speaking differ extremely, for to become eloquent it is necessary to free truth from all its restraints, and penetrate to the bottom of the soul, which is the seat of conviction; but dexterity of speech consists, on the contrary, in the talent of evading and parrying adroitly phrases which one does not choose to understand, making use of the same arms to indicate every thing offensive without its being in the power of your opponent to prove that you have said any thing which ought to give offence.

This species of fencing inflicts much suffering on a mind imbued with truth and sensibility. The man who makes use of it seems your superior, because he knows how to awaken your feeling while he himself remains undisturbed; but we should not suffer ourselves to be imposed on by this sort of negative strength. Calmness of mind is excellent when it is the result of that energy which makes us support our own troubles, but when it arises from indifference to those of others, this calmness is nothing more than a disdainful selfishness. A year's abode in a court or a capital is sufficient to teach us with ease how to mix address and grace with this sort of selfishness: but to be truly worthy of distinguished esteem, it is necessary, in one's own character, as in a fine literary composition, to unite opposite qualities—the knowledge of affairs with a love of the beautiful, and that wisdom which results from our intercourse with mankind, with the flights of imagination inspired by feeling for the arts. It is true that such an individual would contain in himself two distinct characters. Thus Goethe in this very piece says that the two personages which he contrasts with each other, the courtier and the poet, *are the two halves of one man*. But sympathy cannot exist between these two halves, because there is no prudence in the character of Tasso and no sensibility in that of his opponent.

The painful susceptibility of literary men was obviously displayed in Rousseau and Tasso, and is still more commonly manifested in the works of German authors. French writers have been more rarely affected by it; by living in confinement and

solitude, we find it difficult to support the external air. Society is in many respects painful to those who have not been early accustomed to it, and the irony of the world is more fatal to men of talent than to all others: good sense alone would support them better. Goethe might have chosen the life of Rousseau as an example of that struggle between society such as it is, and society such as a poetical imagination sees or wishes it to be; but the situation of Rousseau afforded much less scope for imagination than that of Tasso. Jean Jacques dragged a great genius into very subaltern situations. Tasso, brave as the knights he sung, in love, beloved, persecuted, crowned with laurel, and still young, dying with grief on the very eve of his triumph, is a striking example of the splendor and the misfortunes attendant on distinguished talents.

It appears to me that in this composition the warm coloring of the South is not sufficiently expressed, and perhaps it would be difficult to transfuse into the German language that sensation which is produced by the Italian. It is nevertheless above all in the characters that the traits of Germanic rather than of Italian nature, are discoverable. Leonora d'Este is a German princess. The analysis of her own character and sentiments with which she is continually occupied, is not at all in the spirit of the South. There the imagination recoils not on itself; it advances without a retrospective glance. It traces not an event to its source; it resists or yields to it without examining its cause.

Tasso is also a German poet. That impossibility of getting rid of the difficulties which arise from the usual circumstances of common life, which Goethe attributes to Tasso, is a trait of the contemplative and confined life peculiar to northern writers. The poets of the South have generally no such incapacity, they live more commonly in the open air, in public streets and squares, and above all things, men are more familiar to them.

The language of Tasso, in this piece of Goethe, is often too metaphysical. The madness of the author of *the Jerusalem* did not arise from an abuse of philosophical reflections, nor from a deep examination of what passes in the bottom of the

heart; it was occasioned rather by a too lively impression of external objects, by the intoxication of pride and of love: he scarcely made use of words but as harmonious sounds; the secret of his soul was neither in his discourse nor in his writings: having never observed himself, how could he reveal himself to others? besides, he considered poetry as a very brilliant art, and not as a confidential disclosure of the sentiments of the heart. It is clear to me both by his Italian constitution, his *Life* and his *Letters*, and even by the poems he composed during his imprisonment, that the impetuosity of his passions rather than the depth of his thoughts occasioned his melancholy; there was not in his character, as in that of the German poets, that continual mixture of reflection and activity, of analysis and enthusiasm, by which existence is so singularly disturbed.

There is an incomparable elegance and dignity in the poetic style of *Tasso*, by which Goethe shows himself the Racine of Germany. But if Racine is reproached for the little interest inspired by *Bérénice*, we may with much more reason blame the dramatic coldness of Goethe's *Tasso*; the design of the author was to penetrate into characters, merely by sketching their situations; but is this possible? From what sort of nature do we extract those long conversations, full of wit and imagination, which are held by all the different personages in turn? Who speaks thus of himself and of every thing? who would thus exhaust all that can possibly be said without thinking it necessary to act? Whenever the smallest action is perceivable in this piece, we feel ourselves relieved by it from the continual attention we have been paying to ideas alone. The scene of the duel between the poet and the courtier is extremely interesting; the rage of the one and the dexterity of the other, develop their situation in a very striking manner. It is exacting too much either from readers or spectators to expect them to renounce all interest in the circumstance of the performance, merely to attach themselves to the imagery and thoughts which it contains. In that case it would be needless to pronounce proper names, to suppose scenes, acts, a beginning or an end, or any thing, in short, which renders action

necessary. In the quietness of repose we love contemplation, but when we are in motion whatever is dilatory is fatiguing.

By a singular vicissitude in taste, the Germans first attacked our dramatic writers as transforming all their heroes into Frenchmen. They with reason appealed to historical truth, to animate their colors and vivify their poetry; then all at once they grew tired of their own success in this species of composition, and they composed abstract pieces, if we may be allowed so to call them, in which the social relations of men to each other are indicated in a general manner, independent of time, place, or individuality. It is thus, for instance, that in *the Natural Daughter*,¹ another piece of Goethe, the author calls his personages, the duke, the king, the father, the daughter, etc., without any other designation,—considering the epoch in which the action of the play passes, the names of the personages, and the country in which they live, as so many vulgar concerns, too low for the dignity of poetry.

Such a tragedy is indeed fit to be acted in the palace of Odin, where the dead are accustomed to continue the occupations which employed them during their lives; there, the huntsman, himself a shadow, pursues with ardor the shadow of a stag, and phantoms of warriors combat on a groundwork of clouds. It appears that for a time Goethe was quite disgusted with the interest taken in theatrical performances: that interest was sometimes found in bad compositions; he therefore thought it should be banished from the good. A superior writer ought not, however, to disdain what is universally pleasing; he ought not to abjure his resemblance to our common nature, if he wishes to be valued for that which distinguishes him. The point which was sought for by Archimedes, to enable him to lift up the world, is exactly that by which an extraordinary genius approaches the common class of mankind. This point of contact enables him to raise himself above others; he must set out from what he experiences in common with us all, to make us feel what he alone perceives. Besides, if it

¹ *Natürliche Tochter*.—Ed.

be true that the despotism of our rules of propriety mixes often something factitious with our finest French tragedies, we do not find more truth in the extravagant theories of a systematic mind : and if there be a want of nature in exaggeration, a certain sort of calmness is also an affectation. It is a self-assumed superiority over the emotions of the soul which may suit philosophy, but which will not at all accord with the dramatic art.

We may without fear address these criticisms to Goethe, for almost all his works are composed on different systems. Sometimes he abandons himself wholly to passion, as in *Werther* and *Count Egmont* ; at other times his fugitive poetry sets all the chords of imagination in vibration ; again, he gives us historical facts with the most scrupulous truth, as in *Goetz von Berlichingen* ; at another time he has all the simplicity of ancient times, as in *Herman and Dorothea*. In fine, he plunges himself with *Faust* into the stormy whirlwinds of life ; then, all at once, in *Tasso*, *the Natural Daughter*, and even in *Iphigenia*, he considers the dramatic art as a monument erected among tombs. His works have then the fine forms, the splendor and dazzling whiteness of marble, but, like it, they are also cold and inanimate. We cannot criticise Goethe as a good author in one species of writing, while he is bad in another. He rather resembles nature, which produces every thing, and from every thing ; and we may like his southern climate better than that of the north, without denying to him those talents which are suitable to all the various regions of the soul.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FAUST.

AMONG the pieces written for the performance of puppets, there is one entitled *Dr. Faust, or Fatal Science*, which has always had great success in Germany. Lessing took up this subject before Goethe. This wonderful history is a tradition very generally known. Several English authors have written the life of this same Dr. Faust, and some of them have even attributed to him the art of printing. His profound knowledge did not preserve him from being weary of life; in order to escape from it, he tried to enter into a compact with the devil, who concludes the whole by carrying him off. From these slender materials Goethe has furnished the astonishing work, of which I will now try to give the idea.

Certainly, we must not expect to find in it either taste, or measure, or the art that selects and terminates; but if the imagination could figure to itself an intellectual chaos, such as the material chaos has often been painted, the *Faust* of Goethe should have been composed at that epoch. It cannot be exceeded in boldness of conception, and the recollection of this production is always attended with a sensation of giddiness. The devil is the hero of the piece; the author has not conceived him like a hideous phantom, such as he is usually represented to children; he has made him, if we may so express ourselves, the Evil Being *par excellence*, before whom all others, that of Gresset in particular, are only novices, scarcely worthy to be the servants of Mephistopheles (this is the name of the demon who has made himself the friend of Faust). Goethe wished to display in this character, at once real and fanciful, the bitterest pleasantry that contempt can inspire, and at the same time an audacious gayety that amuses. There is an in-

fernal irony in the discourses of Mephistopheles, which extends itself to the whole creation, and criticises the universe like a bad book of which the devil has made himself the censor.

Mephistopheles makes sport with genius itself, as with the most ridiculous of all absurdities, when it leads men to take a serious interest in any thing that exists in the world, and above all when it gives them confidence in their own individual strength. It is singular that supreme wickedness and divine wisdom coincide in this respect,—that they equally recognize the vanity and weakness of all earthly things: but the one proclaims this truth only to disgust men with what is good, the other only to elevate them above what is evil.

If the play of *Faust* contained only a lively and philosophical pleasantry, an analogous spirit might be found in many of Voltaire's writings; but we perceive in this piece an imagination of a very different nature. It is not only that it displays to us the moral world, such as it is, annihilated, but that hell itself is substituted in the place of it. There is a potency of sorcery, a poetry belonging to the principle of evil, a delirium of wickedness, a distraction of thought, which make us shudder, laugh, and cry in a breath. It seems as if the government of the world were, for a moment, entrusted to the hands of the demon. You tremble, because he is pitiless; you laugh, because he humbles the satisfaction of self-love; you weep, because human nature, thus contemplated from the depths of hell, inspires a painful compassion.

Milton has drawn his Satan larger than man; Michael Angelo and Dante have given him the hideous figure of the brute combined with the human shape. The Mephistopheles of Goethe is a civilized devil. He handles with dexterity that ridicule, so trifling in appearance, which is nevertheless often found to consist with a profundity of malice; he treats all sensibility as silliness or affectation; his figure is ugly, low, and crooked; he is awkward without timidity, disdainful without pride; he affects something of tenderness with the women, because it is only in their company that he needs to deceive, in order to seduce: and what he understands by seduction, is

to minister to the passions of others, for he cannot even imitate love. This is the only dissimulation that is impossible to him.

The character of Mephistopheles supposes an inexhaustible knowledge of social life, of nature, and of the marvellous. This play of *Faust* is the nightmare of the imagination, but it is a nightmare that redoubles its strength. It discovers the diabolical revelation of incredulity, of that incredulity which attaches itself to every thing that can ever exist of good in this world; and perhaps this might be a dangerous revelation, if the circumstances produced by the perfidious intentions of Mephistopheles did not inspire a horror of his arrogant language, and make known the wickedness which it covers.

In the character of Faust all the weaknesses of humanity are concentrated: desire of knowledge, and fatigue of labor; wish of success and satiety of pleasure. It presents a perfect model of the changeful and versatile being whose sentiments are yet more ephemeral than the short existence of which he complains. Faust has more ambition than strength; and this inward agitation produces his revolt against nature, and makes him have recourse to all manner of sorceries, in order to escape from the hard but necessary conditions imposed upon mortality. He is discovered, in the first scene, surrounded by his books, and by an infinite number of mathematical instruments and chemical phials. His father had also devoted himself to science, and transmitted to him the same taste and habits. A solitary lamp enlightens this gloomy retreat, and Faust pursues without intermission his studies of nature, and particularly of magic, many secrets of which are already in his possession.

He invokes one of the creating Genii of the second order; the spirit appears, and counsels him not to elevate himself above the sphere of the human understanding.¹

¹ We gladly avail ourselves of the very fine version of *Faust*, by Mr. Charles T. Brooks. His elegant and faithful rendering of this marvellous poem, is a triumph of translation and a new glory of American literature.—*Ed.*

FAUST.

“ Away, intolerable sprite!

SPIRIT.

“ Thou breath'st a panting supplication
 To hear my voice, my face to see ;
 Thy mighty prayer prevails on me,
 I come !—what miserable agitation
 Seizes this demigod ! Where is the cry of thought ?
 Where is the breast ? that in itself a world begot,
 And bore and cherish'd, that with joy did tremble
 And fondly dream us spirits to resemble.
 Where art thou, Faust ? whose voice rang through my ear,
 Whose mighty yearning drew me from my sphere ?
 Is this thing thou ? that, blasted by my breath,
 Through all life's windings shuddereth,
 A shrinking, cringing, writhing worm !

FAUST.

“ Thee, flame-born creature, shall I fear ?
 'Tis I, 'tis Faust, behold thy peer !

SPIRIT.

“ In life's tide-currents, in action's storm,
 Up and down, like a wave,
 Like the wind I sweep !
 Cradle and grave—
 A limitless deep—
 An endless weaving
 To and fro,
 A restless heaving
 Of life and glow,—
 So shape I, on Destiny's thundering loom,
 The Godhead's live garment, eternal in bloom.

FAUST.

“ Spirit that sweep'st the world from end to end,
 How near, this hour, I feel myself to thee !

SPIRIT.

“ Thou'rt like the spirit thou canst comprehend,
 Not me ! [*Vanishes.*

FAUST (*collapsing*).

“Not thee?

Whom then?

I, image of the Godhead,

And no peer for thee!”

When the Genius has disappeared, a deep despair seizes on Faust, and he forms the design of poisoning himself.

“I, godlike, who in fancy saw but now
Eternal truth's fair glass in wondrous nearness,
Rejoiced in heavenly radiance and clearness,
Leaving the earthly man below ;
I, more than cherub, whose free force
Dream'd, through the veins of nature penetrating,
To taste the life of gods, like them creating,
Behold me this presumption expiating !
A word of thunder sweeps me from my course.

“Myself with thee no longer dare I measure ;
Had I the power to draw thee down at pleasure ;
To hold thee here I still had not the force.
Oh, in that blest, ecstatic hour,
I felt myself so small, so great ;
Thou drovest me with cruel power
Back upon man's uncertain fate.
What shall I do? what shun, thus lonely?
That impulse must I, then, obey?
Alas ! our very deeds, and not our sufferings only,
How do they hem and choke life's way !

“To all the mind conceives of great and glorious
A strange and baser mixture still adheres ;
Striving for earthly good are we victorious?
A dream and cheat the better part appears.
The feelings that could once such noble life inspire
Are quench'd and trampled out in passion's mire.

“Where Fantasy, erewhile, with daring flight
Out to the infinite her wings expanded,
A little space can now suffice her quite,
When hope on hope time's gulf has wreck'd and stranded.
Care builds her nest far down the heart's recesses,
There broods o'er dark, untold distresses ;
Restless she sits, and scares thy joy and peace away ;
She puts on some new mask with each new day,
Herself as house and home, as wife and child presenting,
As fire and water, bane and blade ;

What never hits makes thee afraid,
 And what is never lost she keeps thee still lamenting.
 "Not like the gods am I! Too deep that truth is thrust!
 But like the worm, that wriggles through the dust;
 Who, as along the dust for food he feels,
 Is crush'd and buried by the traveller's heels.
 "Is it not dust that makes this lofty wall
 Groan with its hundred shelves and cases;
 The rubbish and the thousand trifles all
 That crowd these dark, moth-peopled places?
 Here shall my craving heart find rest?
 Must I perchance a thousand books turn over,
 To find that men are everywhere distress'd,
 And here and there one happy one discover?
 Why grin'st thou down upon me, hollow skull?
 But that thy brain, like mine, once trembling, hoping,
 Sought the light day, yet ever sorrowful,
 Burn'd for the truth in vain, in twilight groping?
 Ye, instruments, of course, are mocking me;
 Its wheels, cogs, bands, and barrels each one praises.
 I waited at the door; you were the key;
 Your ward is nicely turn'd, and yet no bolt it raises.
 Unlifted in the broadest day,
 Doth Nature's veil from prying eyes defend her,
 And what she chooses not before thee to display,
 Not all thy screws and levers can force her to surrender.
 Old trumpery! not that I e'er used thee, but
 Because my father used thee, hang'st thou o'er me,
 Old scroll! thou hast been stain'd with smoke and smut
 Since on this desk, the lamp first dimly gleam'd before me.
 Better have squander'd, far, I now can clearly see,
 My little all, than melt beneath it, in this Tophet!
 That which thy fathers have bequeathed to thee,
 Earn and become possessor of it!
 What profits not a weary load will be;
 What it brings forth alone can yield the moment profit.
 "Why do I gaze as if a spell had bound me
 Up yonder? Is that flask a magnet to the eyes?
 What lovely light, so sudden, blooms around me?
 As when in nightly woods we hail the full-moon-rise.
 "I greet thee, rarest phial, precious potion!
 As now I take thee down with deep devotion,
 In thee I venerate men's wit and art.
 Quintessence of all soporific flowers,
 Extract of all the finest deadly powers,

Thy favor to thy master now impart!
 I look on thee, the sight my pain appeases,
 I handle thee, the strife of longing ceases,
 The flood-tide of the spirit ebbs away.
 Far out to sea I'm drawn, sweet voices listening,
 The glassy waters at my feet are glistening,
 To new shores beckons me a new-born day.
 "A fiery chariot floats, on airy pinions,
 To where I sit! Willing, it beareth me,
 On a new path, through ether's blue dominions,
 To untried spheres of pure activity.
 This lofty life, this bliss elysian,
 Worm that thou wast erewhile, deservest thou?
 Ay, on this earthly sun, this charming vision,
 Turn thy back resolutely now!
 Boldly draw near and rend the gates asunder,
 By which each cowering mortal gladly steals.
 Now is the time to show by deeds of wonder
 That manly greatness not to godlike glory yields;
 Before that gloomy pit to stand, unfearing,
 Where Fantasy self-damn'd in its own torment lies,
 Still onward to that pass-way steering,
 Around whose narrow mouth hell-flames forever rise;
 Calmly to dare the step, serene, unshrinking,
 Though into nothingness the hour should see thee sinking,
 "Now, then, come down from thy old case, I bid thee,
 Where thou, forgotten, many a year hast hid thee,
 Into thy master's hand, pure, crystal glass!
 The joy-feasts of the fathers thou hast brighten'd,
 The hearts of gravest guests were lighten'd,
 When, pledged, from hand to hand they saw thee pass.
 Thy sides, with many a curious type bedight,
 Which each, as with one draught he quaff'd the liquor,
 Must read in rhyme from off the wondrous beaker,
 Remind me, ah! of many a youthful night.
 I shall not hand thee now to any neighbor,
 Not now to show my wit upon thy carvings labor;
 Here is a juice of quick-intoxicating might.
 The rich brown flood adown thy sides is streaming,
 With my own choice ingredients teeming;
 Be this last draught, as morning now is gleaming,
 Drain'd as a lofty pledge to greet the festal light!"

[He puts the goblet to his lips.]

At the moment when he is about to swallow the poison, Faust

hears the town bells ringing in honor of Easter-day, and the choirs of the neighboring church celebrating that holy feast.

CHORUS OF ANGELS.

“Christ hath arisen!
 Joy to humanity!
 No more shall vanity,
 Death and inanity
 Hold thee in prison!

FAUST.

“What hum of music, what a radiant tone,
 Thrills through me, from my lips the goblet stealing!
 Ye murmuring bells, already make ye known
 The Easter morn's first hour, with solemn pealing?
 Sing you, ye choirs, e'en now, the glad, consoling song,
 That once, from angel-lips, through gloom sepulchral rung,
 A new immortal covenant sealing?

CHORUS OF WOMEN.

“Spices we carried,
 Laid them upon his breast;
 Tenderly buried
 Him whom we loved the best;
 Cleanly to bind him
 Took we the fondest care,
 Ah! and we find him
 Now no more there.

CHORUS OF ANGELS.

“Christ hath ascended!
 Reign in benignity!
 Pain and indignity,
 Scorn and malignity,
Their work have ended.

FAUST.

“Why seek ye me in dust, forlorn,
 Ye heavenly tones, with soft enchanting?
 Go, greet pure-hearted men this holy morn!
 Your message well I hear, but faith to me is wanting;
 Wonder, its dearest child, of Faith is born.
 To yonder spheres I dare no more aspire,
 Whence the sweet tidings downward float;

And yet, from childhood heard, the old, familiar note
 Calls back e'en now to life my warm desire.
 Ah! once how sweetly fell on me the kiss
 Of heavenly love in the still Sabbath stealing!
 Prophetically rang the bells with solemn pealing;
 A prayer was then the ecstasy of bliss;
 A blessed and mysterious yearning
 Drew me to roam through meadows, woods, and skies;
 And, midst a thousand tear-drops burning,
 I felt a world within me rise.
 That strain, oh, how it speaks youth's gleesome plays and
 feelings,
 Joys of spring-festivals long past;
 Remembrance holds me now, with childhood's fond appeal-
 ings,
 Back from the fatal step, the last.
 Sound on, ye heavenly strains, that bliss restore me!
 Tears gush, once more the spell of earth is o'er me!"

This moment of enthusiasm does not continue; Faust is an inconstant character, the passions of the world recover their hold upon him. He seeks to satisfy them, he wishes to abandon himself to them; and the devil, under the name of Mephistopheles, comes and promises to put him in possession of all the pleasures of the earth; but at the same time, he is able to render him disgusted with them all, for real wickedness so entirely dries up the soul, that it ends by inspiring a profound indifference for pleasures as well as for virtues.

Mephistopheles conducts Faust to a witch, who keeps under her orders a number of animals, half monkeys and half cats (*Meerkatzen*). This scene may, in some respects, be considered as a parody of that of the witches in *Macbeth*. The witches in *Macbeth* sing mysterious words, of which the extraordinary sounds produce at once the effect of magic; Goethe's witches also pronounce strange syllables, of which the rhymes are curiously multiplied; these syllables excite the imagination to gayety, by the very singularity of their construction; and the dialogue of this scene, which would be merely burlesque in prose, receives a more elevated character from the charm of poetry.

In listening to the comical language of these cat-monkeys, we think we discover what would be the ideas of animals, if

they were able to express them, what a coarse and ridiculous image they would represent to themselves, of nature, and of mankind.

The French stage has scarcely any specimens of these pleasantries founded on the marvellous, on prodigies, witchcrafts, transformations, etc. : this is to make sport with nature, as in comedies we make sport with men. But, to derive pleasure from this sort of comedy, reason must be set aside, and the pleasures of the imagination must be considered as a licensed game, without any object. Yet, is this game not the more easy on that account, for restrictions are often supports ; and when, in the career of literature, men give scope to boundless invention, nothing but the excess, the very extravagance of genius, can confer any merit on these productions ; the union of wildness with mediocrity would be intolerable.

Mephistopheles conducts Faust into the company of young persons of all classes, and subdues, by different means, the different minds with which he engages. He effects his conquests over them, not by admiration, but by astonishment. He always captivates by something unexpected and contemptuous in his words and actions ; for vulgar spirits, for the most part, take so much the more account of a superior intellect, as that intellect appears to be indifferent about them. A secret instinct tells them that he who despises them sees justly.

A Leipsic student, who has just left his mother's house, as simple as one can be at that age in the good country of Germany, comes to consult Faust about his studies ; Faust begs Mephistopheles to take on himself the charge of answering him. He puts on a doctor's gown, and, while waiting for the scholar, expresses, in a soliloquy, his contempt for Faust. "This man," says he, "will never be more than half wicked, and it is in vain that he flatters himself with the hope of becoming completely so."¹ It is so in fact ; whenever people

¹ The following is the soliloquy :

MEPHISTOPHELES (*in FAUST's long gown*).

"Only despise all human wit and lore,
The highest flights that thought can soar—

naturally well-principled turn aside from the plain road, they find themselves shackled by a sort of awkwardness that proceeds from uncontrollable remorse, while men who are radically bad make a mock of those candidates for vice who, with the best intention to do evil, are without talent to accomplish it.

At last the scholar presents himself, and nothing can be more *naïf* than the awkward, and yet presumptuous eagerness of this young German, on his entrance for the first time in his life into a great city, disposed to all things, knowing nothing; afraid of every thing he sees, yet impatient to possess it; desirous of information, eagerly wishing for amusement, and advancing with an artless smile towards Mephistopheles, who receives him with a cold and contemptuous air: the contrast between the unaffected good-humor of the one, and the disdainful influence of the other, is admirably lively.

There is not a single branch of knowledge which the scholar desires not to become acquainted with; and what he desires to learn, he says, is science and nature. Mephistopheles congratulates him on the precision with which he has marked out his plan of study. He amuses himself by describing the four faculties, law, medicine, philosophy, and theology, in such a manner as to confound the poor scholar's head forever. Mephistopheles makes a thousand different arguments for him,

Let but the lying spirit blind thee,
 And with his spells of witchcraft bind thee,
 Into my snare the victim creeps.
 To him has destiny a spirit given,
 That unrestrainedly still onward sweeps,
 To scale the skies long since hath striven,
 And all earth's pleasures overleaps.
 He shall through life's wild scenes be driven,
 And through its flat unmeaningness,
 I'll make him writhe, and stare, and stiffen,
 And midst all sensual excess,
 His fever'd lips, with thirst all parch'd and riven,
 Insatiably shall haunt refreshment's brink;
 And had he not, himself, his soul to Satan given,
 Still must he to perdition sink!"—*Ed.*

all which the scholar approves one after the other, but the conclusion of which astonishes him, because he looks for serious discourse, while the devil is only laughing at every subject. The scholar comes prepared for general admiration, and the result of all he hears is only universal contempt. Mephistopheles agrees with him, that doubt proceeds from hell, and that the devils are *those who deny*; but he expresses doubt itself with a tone of decision, which, mixing arrogance of character with uncertainty of reasoning, leaves no consistence in any thing but evil inclinations. No belief, no opinion remains fixed in the head, after having listened to Mephistopheles; and we feel disposed to examine ourselves, in order to know whether there is any truth in the world, or whether we think only to make a mock of those who fancy that they think.

SCHOLAR.

“Yet in the word a thought must surely be.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

“All right! But one must not perplex himself about it;
 For just where one must go without it,
 The word comes in, a friend in need, to thee.
 With words can one dispute most featly,
 With words build up a system neatly,
 In words thy faith may stand unshaken,
 From words there can be no iota taken.”

Sometimes the scholar cannot comprehend Mephistopheles, but he has only so much the more respect for his genius. Before he takes leave of him, he begs him to inscribe a few lines in his *Album*, the book in which, according to the good-natured customs of Germany, every one makes his friends furnish him with a mark of their remembrance. Mephistopheles writes the words that Satan spoke to Eve, to induce her to eat the fruit of the tree of life.

SCHOLAR (*reads*).

“Eritis sicut Deus, scientes bonum et malum.

[*Shuts it reverently, and bows himself out.*

MEPHISTOPHELES.

“Let but the brave old saw and my aunt, the serpent, guide thee,
And, with thy likeness to God, shall woe one day betide thee !”

The scholar takes back his book, and goes away perfectly satisfied.

Faust grows tired, and Mephistopheles advises him to fall in love. He becomes actually so with a young girl of the lower class, extremely innocent and simple, who lives in poverty with her aged mother. Mephistopheles, for the purpose of introducing Faust to her, takes it into his head to form an acquaintance with one of her neighbors, named Martha, whom the young Margaret sometimes goes to visit. This woman's husband is abroad, and she is distracted at receiving no news of him; she would be greatly afflicted at his death, yet at least she would wish not to be left in doubt of it; and Mephistopheles greatly softens her grief, by promising her an obituary account of her husband, in regular form, for her to publish in the gazette according to custom.

Poor Margaret is delivered up to the power of evil; the infernal spirit lets loose all his malice upon her, and renders her culpable, without depriving her of that rectitude of heart which can find repose only in virtue. A dexterous villain takes care not wholly to pervert those honest people whom he designs to govern; for his ascendancy over them depends upon the alternate agitations of crime and remorse. Faust, by the assistance of Mephistopheles, seduces this young girl, who is remarkably simple both in mind and soul. She is pious though culpable; and when alone with Faust, asks him whether he has any religion.

FAUST.

“Leave that, my child! Enough, thou hast my heart;
For those I love with life I'd freely part;
I would not harm a soul, nor of its faith bereave it.

MARGARET.

“That's wrong, there's one true faith—one must believe it !

FAUST.

“Must one ?

MARGARET.

“ Ah, could I influence thee, dearest !
The holy sacraments thou scarce reverest.

FAUST.

“ I honor them.

MARGARET.

“ But yet without desire.
Of mass and confession both thou'st long begun to tire.
Believest thou in God ?

FAUST.

“ My darling, who engages
To say, I do believe in God ?
The question put to priests or sages :
Their answer seems as if it sought
To mock the asker.

MARGARET.

“ Then believ'st thou not ?

FAUST.

“ Sweet face, do not misunderstand my thought !
Who dares express him ?
And who confess him,
Saying, I do believe ?
A man's heart bearing,
What man has the daring
To say : I acknowledge him not ?
The All-enfolder,
The All-upholder,
Enfolds, upholds He not
Thee, me, Himself ?
Upsprings not heaven's blue arch high o'er thee ?
Underneath thee does not earth stand fast ?
See'st thou not, nightly climbing,
Tenderly glancing eternal stars ?
Am I not gazing eye to eye on thee ?
Through brain and bosom
Throngs not all life to thee,
Weaving in everlasting mystery
Obscurely, clearly, on all sides of thee ?
Fill with it, to its utmost stretch, thy breast,

And in the consciousness when thou art wholly blest,
 Then call it what thou wilt,
 Joy! Heart! Love! God!
 I have no name to give it!
 All comes at last to feeling;
 Name is but sound and smoke,
 Beclouding Heaven's warm glow."

This morsel of inspired eloquence would not suit the character of Faust, if at this moment he were not better, because he loves, and if the intention of the author had not, doubtless, been to show the necessity of a firm and positive belief, since even those whom Nature has created good and kind, are not the less capable of the most fatal aberrations when this support is wanting to them.

Faust grows tired of the love of Margaret, as of all the enjoyments of life; nothing is finer, in the original, than the verses in which he expresses at once the enthusiasm of science, and the satiety of happiness.

FAUST (*alone*).

"Spirit sublime, thou gav'st me, gav'st me all
 For which I pray'd. Thou didst not lift in vain
 Thy face upon me in a flame of fire.
 Gav'st me majestic nature for a realm,
 The power to feel, enjoy her. Not alone
 A freezing, formal visit didst thou grant;
 Deep down into her breast invitedst me
 To look, as if she were a bosom friend.
 The series of animated things
 Thou bidst pass by me, teaching me to know
 My brothers in the waters, woods, and air.
 And when the storm-swept forest creaks and groans,
 The giant pine-tree crashes, rending off—
 The neighboring boughs and limbs, and with deep roar
 The thundering mountain echoes to its fall,
 To a safe cavern then thou' leadest me,
 Show'st me myself; and my own bosom's deep
 Mysterious wonders open on my view.
 And when before my sight the moon comes up
 With soft effulgence; from the walls of rock,
 From the damp thicket, slowly float around

The silvery shadows of a world gone by,
And temper meditation's sterner joy.

“ Oh ! nothing perfect is vouchsafed to man :
I feel it now ! Attendant on this bliss,
Which brings me ever nearer to the gods,
Thou gav'st me the companion, whom I now
No more can spare, though cold and insolent ;
He makes me hate, despise myself, and turns
Thy gifts to nothing with a word—a breath.
He kindles up a wild-fire in my breast,
Of restless longing for that lovely form.
Thus from desire I hurry to enjoyment,
And in enjoyment languish for desire.”

The history of Margaret is oppressively painful to the heart. Her low condition, her confined intellect, all that renders her subject to misfortune, without giving her the power of resisting it, inspires us with the greater compassion for her. Goethe, in his novels and in his plays, has scarcely ever bestowed any superior excellence upon his female personages, but he describes with wonderful exactness that character of weakness which renders protection so necessary to them. Margaret is about to receive Faust in her house without her mother's knowledge, and gives this poor woman, by the advice of Mephistopheles, a sleeping draught, which she is unable to support, and which causes her death. The guilty Margaret becomes pregnant, her shame is made public, all her neighbors point the finger at her. Disgrace seems to have greater hold upon persons of an elevated rank, and yet it is, perhaps, more formidable among the lower class. Every thing is so plain, so positive, so irreparable, among men who never, upon any occasion, make use of shades of expression. Goethe admirably catches those manners, at once so near and so distant from us ; he possesses, in a supreme degree, the art of being perfectly natural in a thousand different natures.

Valentine, a soldier, the brother of Margaret, returns from the wars to visit her ; and when he learns her shame, the suffering which he feels, and for which he blushes, betrays itself in language at once harsh and pathetic. A man severe

in appearance, yet inwardly endowed with sensibility, causes an unexpected and poignant emotion. Goethe has painted with admirable truth the courage which a soldier is capable of exerting against moral pain, that new enemy which he perceives within himself, and which he cannot combat with his usual weapons. At last, the necessity of revenge takes possession of him, and brings into action all the feelings by which he was inwardly devoured. He meets Mephistopheles and Faust at the moment when they are going to give a serenade under his sister's window. Valentine provokes Faust, fights with him, and receives a mortal wound. His adversaries fly, to avoid the fury of the populace.

Margaret arrives, and asks who lies bleeding upon the earth. The people answer : *The son of thy mother*. And her brother, dying, addresses to her reproaches more terrible, and more harrowing, than more polished language could ever express. The dignity of tragedy could never permit us to dig so deeply into the human heart for the traits of nature.

Mephistopheles obliges Faust to leave the town, and the despair excited in him by the fate of Margaret, creates a new interest in his favor.

FAUST.

“What are the joys of heaven while her fond arms enfold me?
 Oh let her kindling bosom hold me !
 Feel I not always her distress ?
 The houseless am I not ? the unbefriended ?
 The monster without aim or rest ?
 That, like a cataract, from rock to rock descended
 To the abyss, with maddening greed possess'd :
 She, on its brink, with childlike thoughts and lowly,—
 Perch'd on the little Alpine field her cot,—
 This narrow world, so still and holy,
 Enspiring, like a heaven, her lot.
 And I, God's hatred daring,
 Could not be content
 The rocks all headlong bearing,
 By me to ruins rent,—
 Her, yea, her peace, must I o'erwhelm and bury !
 This victim, hell, to thee was necessary !

Help me, thou fiend, the pang soon ending!
 What must be, let it quickly be!
 And let her fate upon my head descending,
 Crush, at one blow, both her and me."

The bitterness and *sang-froid* of the answer of Mephistopheles are truly diabolical:

MEPHISTOPHELES.

"Ha! how it seethes again and glows!
 Go in and comfort her, thou dunce!
 Where such a dolt no outlet sees or knows,
 He thinks he's reach'd the end at once.
 None but the brave deserve the fair!
 Thou *hast* had devil enough to make a decent show of.
 For all the world, a devil in despair
 Is just the insipidest thing I know of."

Margaret goes alone to the church, the only asylum that remains to her; an immense crowd fills the aisles, and the burial-service is being performed in this solemn place. Margaret is covered with a veil; she prays fervently, and when she begins to flatter herself with hopes of divine mercy, the evil spirit speaks to her in a low voice, saying:

EVIL SPIRIT.

"How different was it with thee, Margy,
 When, innocent and artless,
 Thou cam'st here to the altar,
 From the well-thumb'd little prayer-book,
 Petitions lisping,
 Half full of child's play,
 Half full of Heaven!
 Margy!
 Where are thy thoughts?
 What crine is buried
 Deep within thy heart?
 Prayest thou haply for thy mother, who
 Slept over into long, long pain, on thy account?
 Whose blood upon thy threshold lies?
 —And stirs there not already
 Beneath thy heart a life,
 Tormenting itself and thee
 With bodings of its coming hour?"

MARGERY.

“Woe! woe!
 Could I rid me of the thoughts,
 Still through my brain backward and forward flitting,
 Against my will!

CHORUS.

“Dies iræ, dies illa
 Solvet sæclum in favillâ.¹

[*Organ plays.*]

EVIL SPIRIT.

“Wrath smites thee!
 Hark! the trumpet sounds!
 The graves are trembling!
 And thy heart,
 Made o'er again
 For fiery torments,
 Waking from its ashes,
 Starts up!

MARGERY.

“Would I were hence!
 I feel as if the organ's peal
 My breath were stifling,
 The choral chant
 My heart were melting.

CHORUS.

“Judex ergo cum sedebit,
 Quidquid latet apparebit;
 Nil inultum remanebit.²

MARGERY.

“How cramp'd it feels!
 The walls and pillars
 Imprison me!
 And the arches
 Crush me!—Air!

¹ The day of wrath will come, and the universe will be reduced to ashes.

² When the Supreme Judge appears, he will discover all that is hidden, and nothing shall remain unpunished.

EVIL SPIRIT.

“What! hide thee! sin and shame
Will not be hidden!
Air? Light?
Woe's thee!

CHORUS.

“Quid sum miser tunc dicturus?
Quem patronum rogaturus?
Cum vix justus sit securus.¹

EVIL SPIRIT.

“They turn their faces,
The glorified, from thee.
To take thy hand, the pure ones
Shudder with horror.
Woe!

CHORUS.

“Quid sum miser tunc dicturus?

MARGERY.

“Neighbor! your phial!”

[*She swears.*]

What a scene! This unfortunate creature, who, in the asylum of consolation, finds despair; this assembled multitude praying to God with confidence, while the unhappy woman, in the very temple of the Lord, meets the spirit of hell! The severe expressions of the sacred hymn are interpreted by the inflexible malice of the evil genius. What distraction in the heart! what ills accumulated on one poor feeble head! And what a talent his, who knew how to represent to the imagination those moments in which life is lighted up within us like a funeral fire, and throws over our fleeting days the terrible reflection of an eternity of torments!

Mephistopheles conceives the idea of transporting Faust to the Sabbath of Witches, in order to dissipate his melancholy; and this leads us to a scene of which it is impossible to give

¹ Miserable wretch! what then shall I say?—to what protector shall I address myself, when even the just can scarcely believe themselves saved?

the idea, though it contains many thoughts, which we shall endeavor to recollect : this festival of the Sabbath represents truly the saturnalia of genius. The progress of the piece is suspended by its introduction, and the stronger the situation, the greater we find the difficulty of submitting even to the inventions of genius when they so effectually disturb the interest. Amid the whirlwind of all that can be thought or said, when images and ideas rush headlong, confound themselves, and seem to fall back into the abysses from which reason has called them, there comes a scene which reunites us to the circumstances of the performance in a terrible manner. The conjurations of magic cause several different pictures to appear, and all at once Faust approaches Mephistopheles, and says to him :

“ Mephisto, seest thou not
 Yon pale, fair child afar, who stands so sad and lonely,
 And moves so slowly from the spot,
 Her feet seem lock'd, and she drags them only.
 I must confess, she seems to me
 To look like my own good Margery.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

“ Leave that alone ! The sight no health can bring,
 It is a magic shape, an idol, no live thing.
 To meet it never can be good !
 Its haggard look congeals a mortal's blood,
 And almost turns him into stone ;
 The story of Medusa thou hast known.

FAUST.

“ Yes, 'tis a dead one's eyes that stare upon me,
 Eyes that no loving hand e'er closed ;
 That is the angel form of her who won me,
 'Tis the dear breast on which I once reposed.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

“ 'Tis sorcery all, thou fool, misled by passion's dreams !
 For she to every one his own love seems.

FAUST.

“ What bliss ! what woe ! Methinks I never
 My sight from that sweet form can sever.

Seest thou, not thicker than a knife-blade's back,
A small red ribbon, fitting sweetly
The lovely neck it clasps so neatly?

MEPHISTOPHELES.

"I see the streak around her neck.
Her head beneath her arm, you'll next behold her;
Perseus has lopp'd it from her shoulder.
But let thy crazy passion rest!
Come!"

Faust learns that Margaret has murdered the child to which she had given birth, hoping thus to avoid shame. Her crime has been discovered; she has been thrown into prison, and is doomed to perish the next morning on the scaffold. Faust curses Mephistopheles in the bitterness of rage; Mephistopheles reproaches Faust in cold blood, and proves to him that it is himself who has desired evil, and that he has assisted him only because called upon by himself to do so. Sentence of death is pronounced against Faust for having slain Margaret's brother. He nevertheless enters the city in secret, obtains from Mephistopheles the means of delivering Margaret, and penetrates at night into her dungeon, of which he has stolen the keys.

He hears from afar off the imperfect notes of a song, which sufficiently proves the derangement of her mind; the words of this song are very coarse, and Margaret was naturally pure and delicate. Mad women are generally painted as if madness accommodated itself to the rules of propriety, and only gave the right of breaking off sentences abruptly, and interrupting, at convenient times, the chain of ideas; but it is not so: real disorder of the mind almost always displays itself in shapes foreign even to the cause of the disorder, and the gayety of its unhappy victims is more harrowing to the soul than even their misery.

Faust enters the prison: Margaret believes that they are come to lead her to death.

MARGARET (*burying herself in the bed*).

"Woe! woe! They come! O death of bitterness!

FAUST (*softly*).

“Hush! hush! I come to free thee; thou art dreaming.

MARGARET (*prostrating herself before him*).

“Art thou a man, then feel for my distress.

FAUST.

“Thou’lt wake the guards with thy loud screaming!

[*He seizes the chains to unlock them.*]

MARGARET (*on her knees*).

“Headsman, who’s given thee this right
O’er me, this power?
Thou com’st for me at dead of night;
In pity spare me, one short hour!
Wilt ’t not be time when Matin-bell has rung?

[*She stands up.*]

Ah! I am yet so young, so young!
And death pursuing!
Fair was I too, and that was my undoing.
My love was near; far is he now!
Torn is the wreath, the scatter’d flowers lie low.
Take not such violent hold of me!
Spare me! what harm have I done to thee?
Let me not in vain implore thee.
Thou ne’er till now saw’st her who lies before thee!

FAUST.

“Oh, sorrow worse than death is o’er me!

MARGARET.

“Now I am wholly in thy power.
But first I’d nurse my child—do not prevent me.
I hugg’d it through the black night hour;
They took it from me to torment me,
And now they say I kill’d the pretty flower.
I shall never be happy again, I know.
They sing vile songs at me! ’Tis bad in them to do it!
’There’s an old tale that ends just so—
Who gave that meaning to it?

FAUST (*prostrates himself*).

“A lover at thy feet is bending,
Thy bonds of misery would be rending.

MARGARET (*flings herself beside him*).

“ Oh let us kneel, the saints for aid invoking !
See ! 'neath the threshold smoking,
Fire-breathing,
Hell is seething !
There prowling,
And grim under cover,
Satan is howling !

FAUST (*aloud*).

“ Margery ! Margery !

MARGARET (*listening*).

“ That was the voice of my lover !

[*She springs up. The chains fall off.*]

Where is he ? Where ? He calls ! I hear him.
I'm free ! Who hinders ? I will be near him.
I'll fly to his neck ! I'll hold him !
To my bosom I'll enfold him !
He stood on the threshold—call'd Margery plainly !
Hell's howling and clattering to drown it sought vainly,—
Through the devilish, grim scoffs, that might turn one to
stone,
I caught the sweet, loving, enrapturing tone.

FAUST.

“ 'Tis I !

MARGARET.

“ 'Tis thou ! Oh say it once again !

[*Clasping again.*]

'Tis he ! 'tis he ! Where now is all my pain ?
And where the dungeon's anguish ? Joy-giver !
'Tis thou ! And come to deliver !
I am deliver'd !
Again before me lies the street,
Where, for the first time, thou and I did meet.
And the garden-bower,
Where we spent that evening hour.

FAUST (*trying to draw her away*)

“ Come ! Come with me !

MARGARET.

"O tarry!

I tarry so gladly where thou tarriest.

[Caressing him.]

FAUST.

"Hurry!

Unless thou hurriest,

Bitterly we both must rue it.

MARGARET.

"Kiss me! Canst no more do it?

So short an absence, love, as this,

And forgot how to kiss?

What saddens me so as I hang about thy neck?

When once, in thy words, thy looks, such a heaven of blisses

Came o'er me, I thought my heart would break,

And it seem'd as if thou wouldst smother me with kisses.

Kiss thou me!

Else I kiss thee!

[She embraces him.]

Woe! woe! thy lips are cold,

Stone-dumb.

Where's thy love left?

Oh! I'm bereft!

Who robb'd me?

[She turns from him.]

FAUST.

"O come!

Take courage, my darling! Let us go;

I clasp thee with unutterable glow;

But follow me! For this alone I plead!

MARGARET (*turning to him*).

"Is it, then, thou? And is it thou indeed?"

FAUST.

"'Tis I! Come, follow me!

MARGARET.

"Thou break'st my chain,

And tak'st me to thy breast again!

How comes it, then, that thou art not afraid of me?

And dost thou know, my friend, who 'tis thou sett'st free?"

FAUST.

“Come! come! The night is on the wane.

MARGARET.

“Woe! woe! My mother I've slain!
 Have drown'd the babe of mine!
 Was it not sent to be mine and thine?
 Thine, too—'tis thou! Scarce true doth it seem.
 Give me thy hand! 'Tis not a dream!
 Thy blessed hand!—But ah! there's dampness here!
 Go, wipe it off! I fear
 There's blood thereon.
 Ah God! what hast thou done!
 Put up thy sword again;
 I pray thee, do!

FAUST.

“The past is past: there leave it, then.
 Thou kill'st me too!

MARGARET.

“No, thou must longer tarry!
 I'll tell thee how each thou shalt bury:
 The places of sorrow
 Make ready to-morrow;
 Must give the best place to my mother,
 The very next to my brother,
 Me a little aside,
 But make not the space too wide!
 And on my right breast let the little one lie.
 No one else will be sleeping by me.
 Once, to feel *thy* heart beat nigh me,
 Oh, 'twas a precious, a tender joy!
 But I shall have it no more—no, never;
 I seem to be forcing myself on thee ever,
 And thou repelling me freezingly;
 And 'tis thou, the same good soul, I see.

FAUST.

“If thou feelest 'tis I, then come with me!

MARGARET.

“Out yonder?

FAUST.

“Into the open air.

MARGARET.

“ If the grave is there,
 If death is lurking ; then come !
 From here to the endless resting-place,
 And not another pace—
 Thou goest e'en now ? O Henry, might I, too !

FAUST.

“ Thou canst ! 'Tis but to will ! The door stands open.

MARGARET.

“ I dare not go ; for me there's no more hoping.
 What use to fly ? They lie in wait for me.
 So wretched the lot to go round begging,
 With an evil conscience thy spirit plaguing !
 So wretched the lot, an exile roaming—
 And then on my heels they are ever coming !

FAUST.

“ I shall be with thee.

MARGARET.

“ Make haste ! make haste !
 No time to waste !
 Save thy poor child !
 Quick ! follow the edge
 Of the rushing rill,
 Over the bridge,
 And by the mill,
 Then into the woods beyond,
 On the left where lies the plank
 Over the pond.
 Seize hold of it quick !
 To rise 'tis trying ;
 It struggles still !
 Rescue ! rescue !

FAUST.

“ Bethink thyself, pray !
 A single step, and thou art free !

MARGARET.

“ Would we were by the mountain ! See !
 There sits my mother on a stone,
 The sight on my brain is preying !

There sits my mother on a stone,
 And her head is constantly swaying ;
 She beckons not, nods not, her head falls o'er,
 So long she's been sleeping, she'll wake no more.
 She slept that we might take pleasure.
 Oh, that was bliss without measure !

FAUST.

“ Since neither reason nor prayer thou hearest,
 I must venture by force to take thee, dearest.

MARGARET.

“ Let go ! No violence will I bear !
 Take not such a murderous hold of me !
 I once did all I could to gratify thee.

FAUST.

“ The day is breaking ! Dearest ! dearest !

MARGARET.

“ Day ! Ay, it is day ! the last great day breaks in !
 My wedding-day it should have been !
 Tell no one thou hast been with Margery !
 Alas for my garland ! The hour's advancing !
 Retreat is in vain !
 We meet again,
 But not at the dancing.
 The multitude presses, no word is spoke.
 Square, streets, all places—
 A sea of faces—
 The bell is tolling, the staff is broke,
 How they seize me and bind me !
 They hurry me off to the bloody block.
 The blade that quivers behind me,
 Quivers at every neck with convulsive shock ;
 Dumb lies the world as the grave !

FAUST.

“ Oh, had I ne'er been born !

MEPHISTOPHELES (*appears without*).

“ Up ! or thou'rt lost ! The morn
 Flushes the sky.
 Idle delaying ! Praying and playing !
 My horses are neighing ;
 They shudder and snort for the bound.

MARGARET.

“What’s that comes up from the ground?
He! He! Avaunt! that face!
What will he in the sacred place?
He seeks me!

FAUST.

“Thou shalt live!

MARGARET.

“Great God in heaven!
Unto thy judgment my soul have I given!

MEPHISTOPHELES (*to FAUST*).

“Come! come! or in the lurch I leave both her and thee!

MARGARET.

“Thine am I, Father! Rescue me!
Ye angels, holy bands, attend me!
And camp around me to defend me!
Henry! I dread to look on thee.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

“She’s judged!

VOICE (*from above*).

“She’s saved!

MEPHISTOPHELES (*to FAUST*).

“Come thou to me! [*Vanishes with FAUST.*]

VOICE (*from within, dying away*).

“Henry! Henry!”

After these words the piece is broken off. The intention of the author doubtless is that Margaret should perish, and that God should pardon her; that the life of Faust should be preserved, but that his soul should be lost.

The imagination must supply the charm which a most exquisite poetry adds to the scenes I have attempted to translate; in the art of versification there is a peculiar merit acknowledged by all the world, and yet independent of the subject to which it is applied. In the play of Faust, the rhythm changes with the situation, and the brilliant variety that results from the change is admirable. The German language presents a

greater number of combinations than ours, and Goethe seems to have employed them all to express by sounds as well as images, the singular elevation of irony and enthusiasm, of sadness and mirth, which impelled him to the composition of this work. It would indeed be too childish to suppose that such a man was not perfectly aware of all the defects of taste with which his piece was liable to be reproached; but it is curious to know the motives that determined him to leave those defects, or rather intentionally to insert them.

Goethe has submitted himself to rules of no description whatever in this composition; it is neither tragedy nor romance. Its author abjured every sober method of thinking and writing; one might find in it some analogies with Aristophanes, if the traits of Shakspeare's pathos were not mingled with beauties of a very different nature. *Faust* astonishes, moves, and melts us; but it does not leave a tender impression on the soul. Though presumption and vice are cruelly punished, the hand of beneficence is not perceived in the administration of the punishment; it would rather be said that the evil principle directed the thunderbolt of vengeance against crimes of which it had itself occasioned the commission; and remorse, such as it is painted in this drama, seems to proceed from hell, in company with guilt.

The belief in evil spirits is to be met with in many pieces of German poetry; the nature of the North agrees very well with this description of terror; it is therefore much less ridiculous in Germany, than it would be in France, to make use of the devil in works of fiction. To consider all these ideas only in a literary point of view, it is certain that our imagination figures to itself something that answers to the conception of an evil genius, whether in the human heart, or in the dispensations of nature: man sometimes does evil, as we may say, in a disinterested manner, without end, and even against his end, merely to satisfy a certain inward asperity that urges him to do hurt to others. The deities of paganism were accompanied by a different sort of divinities of the race of the Titans, who represented the revolted forces of nature; and, in Christianity,

the evil inclinations of the soul may be said to be personified under the figure of devils.

It is impossible to read *Faust* without being excited to reflection in a thousand different manners: we quarrel with the author, we condemn him; we justify him; but he obliges us to think upon every thing, and, to borrow the language of a simple sage of former times, *upon something more than every thing* (de omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis). The criticisms to which such a production is obnoxious may easily be foreseen, or rather it is the very nature of the work that provokes censure still more than the manner in which it was treated; for such a composition ought to be judged like a dream; and if good taste were always watching at the ivory gate, to oblige our visions to take the regulated form, they would seldom strike the imagination.

Nevertheless, the drama of *Faust* is certainly not composed upon a good model. Whether it be considered as an offspring of the delirium of the mind, or of the satiety of reason, it is to be wished that such productions may not be multiplied; but when such a genius as that of Goethe sets itself free from all restrictions, the crowd of thoughts is so great, that on every side they break through and trample down the barriers of art.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LUTHER, ATILA, THE SONS OF THE VALLEY, THE CROSS ON THE
BALTIC, THE TWENTY-FOURTH OF FEBRUARY, BY WERNER.

SINCE Schiller is no more, and Goethe has ceased to write for the stage, the first dramatic author of Germany is Werner: nobody has known better than he how to throw over tragedy the charm and the dignity of lyric poetry; nevertheless, that which renders him so admirable as a poet, is prejudicial to his success in the representation. His pieces, which are of a rare

beauty, if we look only at the songs, the odes, the religious and philosophical sentiments that abound in them, are extremely open to attack, when considered as dramas for action. It is not that Werner is deficient in theatrical talent, or even that he is not much better acquainted with its effects than the generality of German writers; but it seems as if he wished to propagate a mystical system of love and religion by the help of the dramatic art, and that his tragedies are the means he makes use of, rather than the end he proposes to himself.¹

¹ "What the new Creed specially was, which Werner felt so eager to plant and propagate, we nowhere learn with any distinctness. Probably, he might himself have been rather at a loss to explain it in brief compass. His theogony, we suspect, was still very much *in posse*; and perhaps only the moral part of this system could stand before him with some degree of clearness. On this latter point, indeed, he is determined enough; well assured of his dogmas, and apparently waiting but for some proper vehicle in which to convey them to the minds of men. His fundamental principle of morals does not exclusively or primarily belong to himself; being little more than that high tenet of entire Self-forgetfulness, that 'merging of the *Me* in the *Idea*;' a principle which reigns both in Stoical and Christian ethics, and is at this day common, in theory, among all German philosophers, especially of the Transcendental class. Werner has adopted this principle with his whole heart and his whole soul as the indispensable condition of all Virtue. He believes it, we should say, intensely, and without compromise, exaggerating rather than softening or concealing its peculiarities. He will not have Happiness, under any form, to be the real or chief end of man; this is but love of enjoyment, disguise it as we like; a more complex and sometimes more respectable species of hunger, he would say, to be admitted as an indestructible element in human nature, but nowise to be recognized as the highest; on the contrary, to be resisted and incessantly warred with, till it become obedient to love of God, which is only, in the truest sense, love of Goodness, and the germ of which lies deep in the inmost nature of man; of authority superior to all sensitive impulses; forming, in fact, the grand law of his being, as subjection to it forms the first and last condition of spiritual health. He thinks that to propose a reward for virtue is to render virtue impossible. He warmly seconds Schleiermacher in declaring that even the hope of Immortality is a consideration unfit to be introduced into religion, and tending only to pervert it, and impair its sacredness. . . .

"Such was the spirit of that new Faith, which, symbolized under mythuses of Baffometus and Phosphoros, and 'Saviours from the Waters,' and 'Trinities of Art, Religion, and Love,' and to be preached abroad by the aid of Schleiermacher, and what was then called the *New Poetical School*, Werner seriously purposed, like another Luther, to cast forth, as good seed, among the ruins of decayed and down-trodden Protestantism! Whether

Luther, though entirely composed with this secret intention, has met with the greatest success on the stage of Berlin. The Reformation is an event of high importance for the world, and particularly for Germany, which was its cradle. The hardihood and reflective heroism of Luther's character make a lively impression, especially in a country where thought fills up by itself alone all the measure of existence: no subject, then, is capable of more strongly exciting the attention of Germans.

Whatever regards the effect of the new opinions on the minds of men, is extremely well painted in this play of Werner's. The scene opens in the mines of Saxony, not far from Wittenberg, the dwelling-place of Luther: the song of the miners captivates the imagination; the burden of this song is always an address to the upper earth, the free air, and the sun. These uneducated men, already laid hold of by Luther's doctrine, discourse together about him and about the Reformation: and, in the obscurity of their subterraneous abodes, employ their minds about liberty of conscience, the inquiry after truth, this new day, in short, this new light, that is to penetrate the darkness of ignorance.

In the second act, the agents of the Elector of Saxony come to throw open to the nuns the doors of their convents. This scene, which might be rendered comic, is treated with an affecting solemnity. Werner intimately comprehends all the diversities of Christian worship; and if he rightly conceives the noble simplicity of Protestantism, he also knows the severe

Hitzig was still young enough to attempt executing his commission, and applying to Schlegel and Tieck for help; and if so, in what gestures of speechless astonishment, or what peals of inextinguishable laughter they answered him, we are not informed. One thing, however, is clear: that a man with so unbridled an imagination, joined to so weak an understanding, and so broken a volition, who had plunged so deep into Theosophy, and still hovered so near the surface in all practical knowledge of men and their affairs; who, shattered and degraded in his own private character, could meditate such apostolic enterprises, was a man likely, if he lived long, to play fantastic tricks in abundance; and, at least, in his religious history, to set the world a-wondering. Conversion, not to Popery, but, if it so chanced, to Braminism, was a thing nowise to be thought impossible."—(*Carlyle's Essays*, p. 45.)—*Ed.*

anctity of vows made at the foot of the cross. The abbess of the convent, in casting off the veil which had covered the dark ringlets of her youth, and now conceals her whitened locks, experiences a sentiment of alarm at once pathetic and natural; and expresses her sorrow in verses harmonious and pure as the solitude of her religious retirement. Among these female recluses is she who is afterwards to be united to Luther, and she is at that moment the most adverse of all to his influence.

Among the beauties of this act, must be reckoned the portrait of Charles the Fifth, of that sovereign whose soul is weary of the empire of the world. A Saxon gentleman attached to his service thus expresses himself concerning him: "This gigantic man has no heart inclosed within his frightful breast. The thunderbolt of the Almighty is in his hand; but he knows not how to join with it the apotheosis of love. He is like the young eagle that grasps the entire globe of earth in one of his talons, and is about to devour it for his food." These few words worthily announce Charles the Fifth; but it is more easy to paint such a character, than to make it speak for itself.

Luther trusts to the word of Charles the Fifth, although a hundred years before, at the Council of Constance, John Huss and Jerome of Prague had been burnt alive, notwithstanding the safe conduct of the Emperor Sigismund. On the eve of repairing to Worms, where the Diet of the Empire is held, Luther's courage fails him for a few moments; he feels himself seized with terror and misgiving. His young disciple brings him the flute on which he was accustomed to play to restore his depressed spirits; he takes it, and its harmonious concords reproduce in his heart all that confidence in God which is the wonder of spiritual existence. It is said that this moment excited great sensation on the Berlin stage, and it is easy to conceive it. Words, however beautiful, cannot effect so sudden a change of our inward disposition as music; Luther considered it as an art appertaining to theology, and powerfully conducive to the development of religious sentiment in the human heart.

The part of Charles the Fifth, in the Diet of Worms, is not exempt from affectation, and is consequently wanting in gran-

deur. The author has attempted to put in opposition the pride of the Spaniards and the rude simplicity of the Germans; but besides that Charles the Fifth was endowed with too vast a genius to belong either to this or that nation exclusively, it seems to me that Werner should have taken care not to represent a man of an arbitrary will, as openly, and above all uselessly, proclaiming that will. It loses itself, as it were, by being expressed; and despotic sovereigns have always excited more fear by what they concealed than by what they displayed to sight.

Werner, with all the wildness of his imagination, possesses a very acute and a very observing mind; but it seems to me that, in the part of Charles the Fifth, he has made use of colors that are not varied like those of nature.

One of the fine situations of this play, is the procession to the Diet of the bishops, the cardinals, and all the pomp of the Catholic religion on one side; and of Luther, Melancthon, and some of their disciples of the reformed faith, clothed in black, and singing in their national tongue the canticle beginning, *Our God is our place of strength*,¹ on the other. External magnificence has often been boasted as a means of acting upon the imagination; but when Christianity displays itself in its pure and genuine simplicity, that poetry which speaks from the bottom of the soul bears the palm from all others.

The act in which Luther pleads in presence of Charles the Fifth, the princes of the empire, and the diet, opens with the discourse of Luther: but only its peroration is heard, because he is judged to have already said all that concerns his doctrine. After he has spoken, the opinions of the princes and deputies are collected respecting his suit. The different interests by which men are agitated, fear, fanaticism, ambition, are all perfectly characterized in these opinions. One of the voters, among others, says much in favor of Luther and of his doctrine; but he adds, at the same time, "that, since all the world affirms that the empire is troubled by it, he is of opinion, though much against his inclination, that Luther ought to be

¹ *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott.*—Ed.

burnt." One cannot help admiring, in the works of Werner, the perfect knowledge of mankind that he possesses, and it were to be wished that he would descend from his reveries a little oftener, and place his foot on the earth to develop in his dramatic writings that observing spirit. Luther is dismissed by Charles the Fifth, and shut up for some time in the fortress of Wurtzburg, because his friends, with the Elector of Saxony at their head, believed him to be more secure there. He reappears at last in Wittenberg, where he has established his doctrine, as well as throughout the north of Germany.

Towards the conclusion of the fifth act, Luther preaches in the middle of the night in the church against ancient errors. He announces their speedy disappearance, and the new day of reason that is about to dawn. At this instant, on the stage of Berlin, the tapers are seen to go out one after another, and the first break of morning appears through the windows of the Gothic cathedral.

The drama of *Luther* is so animated, so varied, that it is easy to conceive how it must have ravished all the spectators; nevertheless we are often distracted from the principal idea by singularities and allegories, which are ill-suited to an historical subject, and particularly so to theatrical representation.

Catharine on beholding Luther, whom she detested, exclaims, "Behold my ideal!" and immediately the most violent love takes possession of her soul. Werner believes that there is predestination in love, and that beings who are made for each other, recognize at first sight. This is a very agreeable doctrine of metaphysics, and admirably well fitted for madrigals, but which would hardly be comprehended on the stage; besides, nothing can be more strange than this exclamation of idealism as addressed to Martin Luther; for he is represented to us as a fat monk, learned and scholastic, very ill suited to have applied to him the most romantic expression that can be borrowed from the modern theory of the fine arts.

Two angels, under the form of a young man, the disciple of Luther, and a young girl, the friend of Catharine, seem to pass through the whole performance with hyacinths and palms, as

symbols of purity and of faith. These two angels disappear at the end, and the imagination follows them into the air; but the pathetic is less strongly felt when fanciful pictures are made use of to embellish the situation; it is a new sort of pleasure, no longer that to which the emotions of the soul give birth; for compassion cannot exist without sympathy. We wish to judge of characters on the stage as of really existing persons; to censure or approve their actions, to guess them, to comprehend them, to transport ourselves into their places, so as to experience all the interest of real life, without dreading its dangers.¹

¹ *Martin Luther, oder die Weihe der Kraft* (Martin Luther, or the Consecration of Strength), "cannot," says Carlyle, "be named among the best dramas: it is not even the best of Werner's. There is, indeed, much scenic exhibition—many a 'fervid sentiment,' as the newspapers have it; nay, with all its mixture of coarseness, here and there a glimpse of genuine dramatic inspiration; but, as a whole, the work sorely disappoints us; it is of so loose and mixed a structure, and falls asunder in our thoughts like the iron and clay in the Chaldean's Dream. There is an interest, perhaps of no trivial sort, awakened in the first act; but, unhappily, it goes on declining, till, in the fifth, an ill-natured critic might almost say, it expires. The story is too wide for Werner's dramatic lens to gather into a focus; besides, the reader brings with him an image of it, too fixed for being so boldly metamorphosed, and too high and august for being ornamented with tinsel and gilt pasteboard. Accordingly, the Diet of Worms, plentifully furnished as it is with sceptres and armorial shields, continues a much grander scene in History than it is here in Fiction. Neither, with regard to the persons of the play, excepting those of Luther and Catharine, the nun whom he weds, can we find much scope for praise. Nay, our praise even of these two must have many limitations. Catharine, though carefully enough depicted, is, in fact, little more than a common tragedy queen, with the storminess, the love, and other stage heroism, which belong prescriptively to that class of dignitaries. With regard to Luther himself, it is evident that Werner has put forth his whole strength in this delineation; and, trying him by common standards, we are far from saying that he has failed. Doubtless it is, in some respects, a significant and even sublime delineation; yet must we ask whether it is Luther, the Luther of History, or even the Luther proper for this drama, and not rather some ideal portraiture of Zacharias Werner himself? Is not this Luther, with his too assiduous flute-playing, his trances of three days, his visions of the Devil (at whom, to the sorrow of the housemaid, he resolutely throws his huge ink-bottle), by much too spasmodic and brainsick a personage? We cannot but question the dramatic beauty, whatever it may be in history, of that three days' trance; the hero must before this have been in want of mere victuals; and there, as he sits deaf and dumb,

The opinions of Werner, in respect to love and religion, ought not to be slightly examined. What he feels is assuredly true for him; but since, in these respects particularly, every individual has a different point of view and different impres-

with his eyes sightless, yet fixed and staring, are we not tempted less to admire, than to send in all haste for some officer of the Humane Society? Seriously, we cannot but regret that these and other such blemishes had not been avoided, and the character, worked into chasteness and purity, been presented to us in the simple grandeur which essentially belongs to it. For, censure as we may, it were blindness to deny that this figure of Luther has in it features of an austere loveliness, a mild, yet awful beauty: undoubtedly a figure rising from the depths of the poet's soul; and, marred as it is with such adhesions, piercing at times into the depths of ours! Among so many poetical sins, it forms the chief redeeming virtue, and truly were almost in itself a sort of atonement.

“As for the other characters, they need not detain us long. Of Charles the Fifth, by far the most ambitious,—meant, indeed, as the counterpoise of Luther,—we may say, without hesitation, that he is a failure. An empty Gascon this; bragging of his power, and honor, and the like, in a style which Charles, even in his nineteenth year, could never have used. ‘One God, one Charles,’ is no speech for an emperor; and, besides, is borrowed from some panegyrist of a Spanish opera-singer. Neither can we fall in with Charles, when he tells us that ‘he fears nothing—not ever God.’ We humbly think he must be mistaken. With the old Miners, again,—with Hans Luther and his wife, the Reformer's parents, there is more reason to be satisfied; yet in Werner's hands simplicity is always apt, in such cases, to become too simple, and these honest peasants, like the honest Hugo in the ‘Sons of the Valley,’ are *very* garrulous.

“This drama of ‘Martin Luther’ is named likewise the ‘Consecration of Strength;’ that is, we suppose, the purifying of this great theologian from all remnants of earthly passion, into a clear, heavenly zeal; an operation which is brought about, strangely enough, by two half-ghosts and one whole ghost,—a little fairy girl, Catharine's servant, who impersonates Faith; a little fairy youth, Luther's servant, who represents Art; and the ‘Spirit of Cotta's wife,’ an honest housekeeper, but defunct many years before, who stands for Purity. These three supernaturals hover about in very whimsical wise, cultivating flowers, playing on flutes, and singing dirge-like epithalamiums over unsound sleepers: we cannot see how aught of this is to ‘consecrate strength;’ or, indeed, what such jack-o'-lantern personages have in the least to do with so grave a business. If the author intended by such machinery to elevate his subject from the Common, and unite it with the higher region of the Infinite and the Invisible, we cannot think that his contrivance has succeeded, or was worthy to succeed. These half-allegorical, half-corporeal beings, yield no contentment anywhere: Abstract Ideas, however they may put on fleshly garments, are a class of characters whom we cannot sympathize with or delight in. Besides, how

sions, it is not right that an author should make an art, which is essentially universal and popular, conduce to the propagation of his own personal opinion.

Another very fine and very original production of Werner's is his *Attila*. The author takes up the history of this *scourge of God* at the moment of his appearance before the gates of Rome. The first act opens with the lamentations of women and children who have just escaped from the ashes of Aquileia; and this exposition into action not only excites interest from the first, but gives a terrible idea of the power of Attila. It is a necessary art for the stage to make known the principal characters, rather by the effect they produce on those about them, than by a portrait, how striking soever. A single man, multiplied by those who obey him, fills Asia and Europe with consternation. What a gigantic image of despotic will does this spectacle afford us!

Next to the character of Attila is that of a princess of Burgundy, Hildegonde, who is about to be united to him, and by whom he imagines himself beloved. This princess harbors a

can this mere embodiment of an allegory be supposed to act on the rugged materials of life, and elevate into ideal grandeur the doings of real men, that live and move amid the actual pressure of worldly things? At best, it can stand but like a *hand in the margin*: it is not *performing* the task proposed, but only telling us that it was meant to be performed. To our feelings, this entire episode runs like straggling bindweed through the whole growth of the piece, not so much uniting as encumbering and choking up what it meets with; in itself, perhaps, a green and rather pretty weed; yet here superfluous, and, like any other weed, deserving only to be altogether cut away.

"Our general opinion of 'Martin Luther,' it would seem, therefore, corresponds ill with that of the 'overflowing and delighted audiences' over all Germany. We believe, however, that now, in its twentieth year, the work may be somewhat more calmly judged of even there. As a classical drama it could never pass with any critic; nor, on the other hand, shall we ourselves deny that, in the lower sphere of a popular spectacle, its attractions are manifold. We find it, what, more or less, we find all Werner's pieces to be, a splendid, sparkling mass; yet not of pure metal, but of many-colored scoria, not unmingled with metal; and must regret, as ever, that it had not been refined in a stronger furnace, and kept in the crucible till the true *silver-gleam*, glancing from it, had shown that the process was complete."—(*Essays*, pp. 48, 49.)—*Ed.*

deep feeling of vengeance against him for the deaths of her father and lover. She is resolved to marry, only that she may assassinate him; and, by a singular refinement of hatred, she nurses him when wounded, that he may not die the honorable death of a soldier. This woman is painted like the goddess of war; her fair hair and her scarlet vest seem to unite in her person the images of weakness and fury. It is a mysterious character, which at first takes strong hold on the imagination; but, when this mystery goes on continually increasing, when the poet gives us to suppose that an infernal power has obtained possession of her, and that not only, at the end of the piece, she immolates Attila on the wedding night, but stabs his son, of the age of fourteen years, by his side, this creature loses all the features of womanhood, and the aversion she inspires gains the ascendancy over the terror she is otherwise calculated to excite. Nevertheless, this whole part of Hildegonde is an original invention; and, in an epic poem, which might admit of allegorical personages, this Fury in the disguise of gentleness, attached to the steps of a tyrant, like perfidious Flattery, might doubtless produce a grand effect.

At last this terrible Attila appears in the midst of the flames that have consumed the city of Aquileia; he seats himself on the ruins of the palace he has just destroyed, and seems charged with the task of accomplishing alone, in a single day, the work of ages. He has a sort of superstition, as it were, that centres in his own person,—is himself the object of his own worship, believes in himself, regards himself as the instrument of the decrees of heaven, and this conviction mingles a certain system of equity with his crimes. He reproaches his enemies with their faults, as if he had not committed more than all of them; he is a ferocious, and yet a generous barbarian,—he is despotic, and yet shows himself faithful to his word; to conclude, in the midst of all the riches of the world he lives a soldier, and asks nothing of earth but the enjoyment of subduing her.

Attila performs the functions of a judge in the public square, and there pronounces sentence on the crimes that are brought

before his tribunal, with a natural instinct that penetrates deeper into the principles of action than abstract laws, which decide alike upon cases materially different. He condemns his friend who is guilty of perjury, embraces him in tears, but orders that he shall be instantly torn to pieces by horses; he is guided by the notion of an inflexible necessity, and his own will appears to him to constitute that necessity. The emotions of his soul have a sort of rapidity and decision which excludes all shades of distinction; it seems as if that soul bore itself altogether, with the irresistible impulse of physical strength, in the direction it follows. At last they bring before his tribunal a man who has slain his brother: having himself been guilty of the same crime, he is strongly agitated, and refuses to be the judge of the culprit. Attila, with all his transgressions, believed himself charged with the accomplishment of the divine justice on earth, and, when called upon to condemn another for an outrage similar to that by which his own life has been soiled, something in the nature of remorse takes possession of him to the very bottom of his soul.

The second act is a truly admirable representation of the court of Valentinian at Rome. The author brings on the stage, with equal sagacity and justice, the frivolity of the young Emperor who is not turned aside by the impending ruin of his empire from his accustomed range of amusements; the insolence of the Empress-mother, who knows not how to sacrifice the least portion of her animosities to the safety of the state, and who abandons herself to the most abject baseness, the moment any personal danger threatens her. The courtiers, indefatigable in intrigue, still seek each other's ruin on the eve of the ruin of all; and ancient Rome is punished by a barbarian for the tyranny she exercised over the rest of the world: this picture is worthy of a poetical historian like Tacitus.

In the midst of characters so true, appears Pope Leo, a sublime personage furnished by history, and the Princess Honoria, whose inheritance is claimed by Attila for the purpose of restoring it to her. Honoria secretly imbibes a passionate love for the proud conqueror whom she has never beheld, but whose

glory has inflamed her imagination. We see that the author's intention has been to make Hildegonde and Honoria the good and evil genius of Attila; and from the moment we perceive the allegory which we fancy to be wrapped up in these personages, the dramatic interest which they are otherwise calculated to inspire grows cold. This interest, nevertheless, is admirably revived in many scenes of the play, particularly when Attila, after having defeated the armies of the Emperor Valentinian, marches to Rome, and meets on his road Pope Leo, borne in a litter, and preceded by all the pomp of the priesthood. Leo calls upon him, in the name of God, to abstain from entering the eternal city. Attila immediately experiences a religious terror, till that moment a stranger to his soul. He fancies that he beholds St. Peter in heaven, standing with a drawn sword to prohibit his advance. This scene is the subject of an admirable picture of Raphael's. On one side, a calm dignity reigns in the figure of the defenceless old man, surrounded by other men, who all, like himself, repose with confidence in the protection of God; and on the other, consternation is painted on the formidable countenance of the king of the Huns; his very horse rears with affright at the blaze of celestial radiance, and the soldiers of the invincible cast down their eyes before the white hairs of the holy man, who passes without fear through the midst of them.

The words of the poet finely express the sublime design of the painter; the discourse of Leo is an inspired hymn; and the manner in which the conversion of the warrior of the North is indicated seems to me also truly admirable. Attila, his eyes turned towards heaven, and contemplating the apparition which he thinks he beholds, calls Edecon, one of the chiefs of his army, and says to him :

"Edecon, dost thou not perceive there on high a terrible giant? Dost thou not behold him even above the place where the old man is made conspicuous by the refulgence of heaven?"

EDECON.

"I see only the ravens descending in troops over the dead bodies on which they are going to feed."

ATTILA.

“No ; it is not a phantom : perhaps it is the image of him who is alone able to absolve or condemn. Did not the old man predict it ? Behold the giant whose head is in heaven, and whose feet touch the earth ; he menaces with his flames the spot upon which we are standing ; he is there, before us, motionless ; he points his flaming sword against me, like my judge.

EDECON.

“These flames are the light of heaven, which at this moment gilds the domes of the Roman temples.

ATTILA.

“Yes, it is a temple of gold, studded with pearls, that he bears upon his whitened head ; in one hand he holds his flaming sword, in the other two brazen keys, encircled with flowers and rays of light ; two keys that the giant has doubtless received from the hands of Odin, to open or shut the gates of Valhalla.”¹

From this moment, the Christian religion operates on the soul of Attila, in spite of the belief of his ancestors, and he commands his army to retreat to a distance from Rome.

The tragedy should have ended here, and it already contains a sufficient number of beauties to furnish out many regular pieces ; but a fifth act is added, in which Leo, who, for a pope, is much too deeply initiated in the mystic theory of love, conducts the Princess Honoria to Attila's camp on the very night in which Hildegonde marries and assassinates him. The Pope, who has a foreknowledge of this event, predicts, without preventing it, because it is necessary that the fate of Attila should be accomplished. Honoria and Pope Leo offer up prayers for him on the stage. The piece ends with a *Hallelujah*, and rising towards heaven like a poetic incense, evaporates instead of being concluded.

Werner's versification is full of admirable secrets of harmony, but we cannot give in a translation any idea of its merit in this respect. I remember, among other things, in one of his tragedies, the subject of which is taken from Polish his-

¹ No German copy of Werner is at hand, and we have been obliged to take this passage from Madame de Staël's French version.—*Ed.*

tory, the wonderful effect of a chorus of young phantoms appearing in the air; the poet knows how to change the German into a soft and tender language, which these wearied and uninterested shades articulate with half-formed tones; all the words they pronounce, all the rhymes of the verses, seem like vapor. The sense of the words, also, is admirably adapted to the situation; they paint a state of frigid repose, of dull indifference; they reverberate the distant echoes of life, and the pale reflection of faded impressions casts a veil of clouds over universal nature.

If Werner admits into his tragedies the shades of the departed, we sometimes also find in them fantastic personages that seem not yet to have received any earthly existence. In the prologue to the *Tartare* of Beaumarchais, a Genius questions these imaginary beings whether they wish to have birth, and one among them answers: "I do not feel myself at all eager about it." This lively answer may be applied to most of those allegorical personages which they take pleasure in bringing forward on the German stage.

Werner has composed, on the subject of the Templars, a piece in two volumes, called *the Sons of the Valley*;¹ a piece

¹ "The *Söhne des Thals* is a drama, or, rather, two dramas, unrivalled at least in one particular, in length: each part being a play of six acts, and the whole amounting to somewhat more than eight hundred small octavo pages! To attempt any analysis of such a work would but fatigue our readers to little purpose: it is, as might be anticipated, of a most loose and formless structure; expanding on all sides into vague boundlessness, and, on the whole, resembling not so much a poem, as the rude materials of one. The subject is the destruction of the Templar order; an event which has been dramatized more than once, but on which, notwithstanding, Werner, we suppose, may boast of being entirely original. The fate of Jacques Molay and his brethren act here but like a little leaven; and lucky were we, could it leaven the lump; but it lies buried under such a mass of Mystical theology, Masonic mummery, Cabalistic tradition, and Rosierucian philosophy, as no power could work into dramatic union. The incidents are few, and of little interest; interrupted continually by flaring shows, and long-winded speculations; for Werner's besetting sin, that of loquacity, is here in decided action; and so we wander, in aimless windings, through scene after scene of gorgeousness or gloom, till at last the whole rises before us like a wild phantasmagoria: cloud heaped on cloud, painted

which possesses great interest for those who are initiated into the doctrine of secret orders ; for it is rather the spirit of these orders, than the historical color, that is principally remarkable in them. The poet seeks to connect the Free-Masons with the Templars, and applies himself to the task of showing that the same traditions, and the same spirit have been always preserved among both. The imagination of Werner singularly delights itself in these associations, which have the air of something supernatural, because they multiply, in an extraordinary degree, the force of each, by giving a like tendency to all. This play, or this poem, of *the Sons of the Valley*, has caused a great sensation in Germany ; I doubt whether it would obtain an equal degree of success among ourselves.

Another composition of Werner's well worthy of notice, is that which has for its subject the introduction of Christianity into Prussia and Livonia. This dramatic romance is entitled *the Cross on the Baltic*. There reigns throughout a very lively sentiment of all that characterizes the North, the amber-fishery, mountains rough with ice, the asperity of the climate, the rapid influence of spring, the hostility of nature, the rudeness which this warfare instils into man ; and we recognize in

indeed here and there with prismatic hues, but representing nothing, or at least not the subject, but the author.

"In this last point of view, however, as a picture of himself, independently of other considerations, this play of Werner's may still have a certain value for us. The strange, chaotic nature of the man is displayed in it : his skepticism and theosity ; his audacity, yet intrinsic weakness of character ; his baffled longings, but still ardent endeavors after Truth and Good ; his search for them in far journeyings, not on the beaten highways, but through the pathless infinitude of Thought. To call it a work of art would be a misapplication of names : it is little more than a rhapsodic effusion ; the outpouring of a passionate and mystic soul, only half knowing what it utters, and not ruling its own movements, but ruled by them. It is fair to add, that such also, in a great measure, was Werner's own view of the matter ; most likely the utterance of these things gave him such relief, that crude as they were, he could not suppress them. For it ought to be remembered, that in this performance one condition, at least, of genuine inspiration is not wanting : Werner evidently thinks that in these, his ultramundane excursions, he has found truth ; he has something positive to set forth, and he feels himself as if bound on a high and holy mission, in preaching it to his fellow-men."—(*Carlyle's Essays*, p. 38).—*Ed.*

these pictures a poet who has had recourse to sensations he has himself experienced for all that he describes and expresses.¹

I have seen acted, at a private theatre, a piece of Werner's composition, entitled *the Twenty-fourth of February*, a piece on which opinions would be greatly divided. The author supposes that, in the solitudes of Switzerland, there dwelt a family of peasants, which had rendered itself guilty of the most atrocious crimes, and was pursued by a paternal malediction from father to son. The third of these accursed generations presents the spectacle of a man who, by an outrage, has caused the death of his father; the son of this unhappy wretch has, in his childhood, killed his own sister in a cruel sport, but without knowing what he was about. After this frightful event, he has disappeared. The labors of the parricidal father have been ever since visited by continual bad fortune; his fields have become barren, his cattle have perished; the most frightful poverty overwhelms him; his creditors threaten to seize his cottage, and throw him into prison; his wife wanders alone in the midst of the Alpine snows. All at once the son arrives, after an absence of twenty years. He is animated by tender and religious sentiments, and inspired with true repentance, though he had been guilty of no criminal intention. He returns to his father's house, and as he is too much altered to be recognized by him, forms the resolution of concealing from him

¹ "Of this *Kreuz an der Ostsee*, our limits will permit us to say but little. It is still a fragment; the Second Part, which was often promised, and, we believe, partly written, having never yet been published. In some respects, it appears to us the best of Werner's dramas: there is a decisive coherence in the plot, such as we seldom find with him; and a firmness, a rugged nervous brevity in the dialogue, which is equally rare. Here, too, the mystic, dreamy agencies, which, as in most of his pieces, he has interwoven with the action, harmonize more than usually with the spirit of the whole. It is a wild subject, and this helps to give it a corresponding wildness of locality. The first planting of Christianity among the Prussians, by the Teutonic Knights, leads us back of itself into dim ages of antiquity, of superstitious barbarism, and stern, apostolic zeal; it is a scene hanging, as it were, in half-ghastly *chiaroscuro*, on a ground of primeval Night: where the Cross and St. Adalbert come in contact with the Sacred Oak, and the Idols of Romova, we are not surprised that spectral shapes peer forth on us from the gloom."—(*Carlyle's Essays*, p. 48).—*Ed.*

his name at first, in order to gain his affection, before he confesses himself to be his son ; but the father, in his misery, becomes greedy and covetous of the money that is carried about him by his guest, whom he believes to be a vagabond foreigner, of suspicious character ; and when the hour of midnight strikes, on the twenty-fourth of February, the anniversary of the paternal malediction, by which the whole family is visited, he plunges a knife into his son's bosom. The latter, in his last moments, reveals his secret to this double criminal, the assassin of his father and of his child ; and the miserable wretch goes to deliver himself up to the tribunal that must condemn him.

These situations are appalling ; it cannot be denied that they produce a great effect ; nevertheless, the poetical color of the piece, and the gradation of motives derived from the passions, are more to be admired than the subject on which it is founded.¹

To transfer the fatal destiny of the house of Atreus to people of the lower ranks of society, is to bring the contemplation of crimes too familiarly before the eyes of the spectators. The splendor of rank, and the distance of ages, give to wickedness itself a species of grandeur which agrees better with the ideal in art ; but when the knife is presented to you instead of the poniard, when the situation, the manners, the characters are such as you may meet with every day, you are frightened, like children in a dark room, but it is not the noble horror that tragedy ought to awaken.

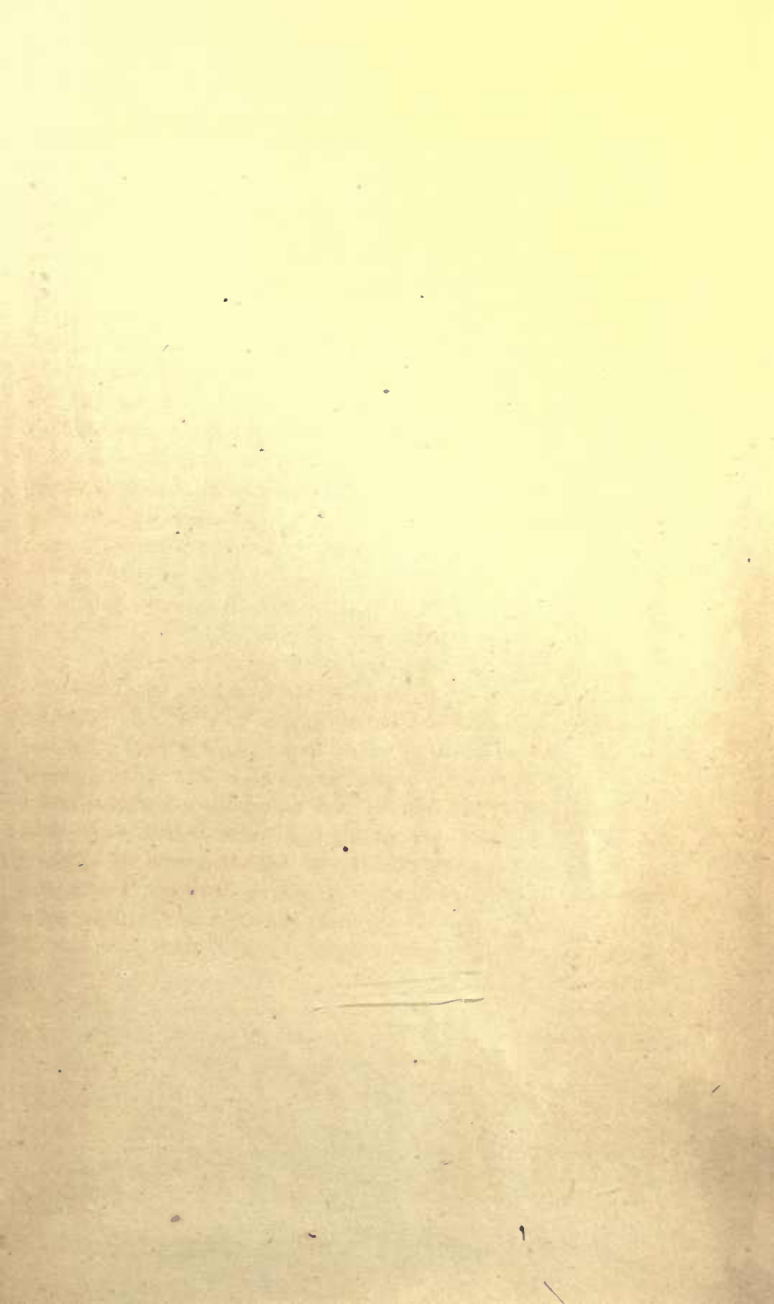
Still, however, this potency of the paternal curse, which seems to represent a providence upon earth, agitates the soul very forcibly. The fatality of the ancients is the sport of destiny ; but fatality, in the Christian doctrine, is a moral truth under a terrifying form. When man does not yield to remorse, the very agitation which that remorse makes him experience, drives him headlong to the commission of new crimes ; conscience, repulsed, changes itself into a phantom that disturbs the reason.

¹ "Of his *Attila* (1808), his *Vier-und-zwanzigste Februar* (1809), his *Cunegunde* (1814), and various other pieces written in his wanderings, we have not room to speak. It is the less necessary, as the *Attila* and *Twenty-fourth of February*, by much the best of these, have already been forcibly, and, on the whole, fairly characterized by Madame de Staël."—(*Carl. Ess.*, p. 52.)—*Ed.*

The wife of this guilty peasant is haunted by the remembrance of a ballad containing the recital of a parricide; and alone, in her sleep, she cannot help muttering it in an under voice, like those confused and involuntary fancies, of which the dismal recurrence seems an inward presentiment of fate.

The description of the Alps, and of their vast solitude, is extremely beautiful; the abode of the culprit, the hovel in which the scene passes, is far from any other habitation; no church bell is heard there, and the hour is announced only by a rustic clock, the last piece of furniture that poverty has not yet resolved to part with: the monotonous noise of this clock, in the deep recesses of mountains where the sounds of human existence never reach, produces a strange shuddering. We ask, what has time to do in a place like this; to what purpose the division of hours that no interest varies? And when that dreadful hour of crime is heard to strike, it recalls to us the fine idea of the missionary who imagined that in hell the damned spirits are incessantly asking,—“What’s o’clock?” and that they are answered,—“Eternity.”

Werner has been reproached for admitting into his tragedies situations that are better adapted for the beauties of lyrical poetry than for the development of theatrical passions. He may be accused of a contrary fault in *the Twenty-fourth of February*. The subject of this piece, the manners it represents, bear too strong a resemblance to truth, and to truth of a description too atrocious to be admitted into the circle of the fine arts. The fine arts are placed between heaven and earth, and the genius of Werner sometimes rises above, sometimes sinks beneath, this native region of fiction.



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