

# ТОМАС КАРЛЕЙЛЬ

THE LIFE OF  
FRIEDRICH  
SCHILLER

**Томас Карлейль**  
**The Life of Friedrich Schiller**

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*The Life of Friedrich Schiller / Comprehending an Examination of His  
Works:*

# Содержание

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.	4
PART I.	6
PART FIRST.	6
PART II.	59
PART SECOND.	59
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	123

# **Thomas Carlyle**

## **The Life of Friedrich Schiller / Comprehending an Examination of His Works**

**PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.**  
**[1845.]**

The excuse for reprinting this somewhat insignificant Book is, that certain parties, of the pirate species, were preparing to reprint it for me. There are books, as there are horses, which a judicious owner, on fair survey of them, might prefer to adjust by at once shooting through the head: but in the case of books, owing to the pirate species, that is not possible. Remains therefore that at least dirty paper and errors of the press be guarded against; that a poor Book, which has still to walk this world, do walk in clean linen, so to speak, and pass its few and evil days with no blotches but its own adhering to it.

There have been various new *Lives* of Schiller since this one first saw the light;—great changes in our notions, informations, in our relations to the Life of Schiller, and to other things connected therewith, during that long time! Into which I could

not in the least enter on the present occasion. Such errors, one or two, as lay corrigible on the surface, I have pointed out by here and there a Note as I read; but of errors that lay deeper there could no charge be taken: to break the surface, to tear-up the old substance, and model *it* anew, was a task that lay far from me,—that would have been frightful to me. What was written remains written; and the Reader, by way of constant commentary, when needed, has to say to himself, "It was written Twenty years ago." For newer instruction on Schiller's Biography he can consult the *Schillers Leben* of Madame von Wolzogen, which Goethe once called a *Schiller Redivivus*; the *Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe*;—or, as a summary of the whole, and the readiest inlet to the general subject for an English reader, Sir Edward Bulwer's *Sketch of Schiller's Life*, a vigorous and lively piece of writing, prefixed to his *Translations from Schiller*.

The present little Book is very imperfect:—but it pretends also to be very harmless; it can innocently instruct those who are more ignorant than itself! To which ingenuous class, according to their wants and tastes, let it, with all good wishes, and hopes to meet afterwards in fruitfuler provinces, be heartily commended.

*T. Carlyle.*

*London, 7th May 1845.*

# **PART I.**

## **SCHILLER'S YOUTH (1759-1784)**

### **PART FIRST.**

#### **[1759-1784.]**

Among the writers of the concluding part of the last century there is none more deserving of our notice than Friedrich Schiller. Distinguished alike for the splendour of his intellectual faculties, and the elevation of his tastes and feelings, he has left behind him in his works a noble emblem of these great qualities: and the reputation which he thus enjoys, and has merited, excites our attention the more, on considering the circumstances under which it was acquired. Schiller had peculiar difficulties to strive with, and his success has likewise been peculiar. Much of his life was deformed by inquietude and disease, and it terminated at middle age; he composed in a language then scarcely settled into form, or admitted to a rank among the cultivated languages of Europe: yet his writings are remarkable for their extent and variety as well as their intrinsic excellence; and his own countrymen are not his only, or perhaps his principal admirers. It is difficult to collect or interpret the general voice; but the World, no less than Germany, seems already to have dignified him with

the reputation of a classic; to have enrolled him among that select number whose works belong not wholly to any age or nation, but who, having instructed their own contemporaries, are claimed as instructors by the great family of mankind, and set apart for many centuries from the common oblivion which soon overtakes the mass of authors, as it does the mass of other men.

Such has been the high destiny of Schiller. His history and character deserve our study for more than one reason. A natural and harmless feeling attracts us towards such a subject; we are anxious to know how so great a man passed through the world, how he lived, and moved, and had his being; and the question, if properly investigated, might yield advantage as well as pleasure. It would be interesting to discover by what gifts and what employment of them he reached the eminence on which we now see him; to follow the steps of his intellectual and moral culture; to gather from his life and works some picture of himself. It is worth inquiring, whether he, who could represent noble actions so well, did himself act nobly; how those powers of intellect, which in philosophy and art achieved so much, applied themselves to the every-day emergencies of life; how the generous ardour, which delights us in his poetry, displayed itself in the common intercourse between man and man. It would at once instruct and gratify us if we could understand him thoroughly, could transport ourselves into his circumstances outward and inward, could see as he saw, and feel as he felt.

But if the various utility of such a task is palpable enough,

its difficulties are not less so. We should not lightly think of comprehending the very simplest character, in all its bearings; and it might argue vanity to boast of even a common acquaintance with one like Schiller's. Such men as he are misunderstood by their daily companions, much more by the distant observer, who gleans his information from scanty records, and casual notices of characteristic events, which biographers are often too indolent or injudicious to collect, and which the peaceful life of a man of letters usually supplies in little abundance. The published details of Schiller's history are meagre and insufficient; and his writings, like those of every author, can afford but a dim and dubious copy of his mind. Nor is it easy to decipher even this, with moderate accuracy. The haze of a foreign language, of foreign manners, and modes of thinking strange to us, confuses and obscures the sight, often magnifying what is trivial, softening what is rude, and sometimes hiding or distorting what is beautiful. To take the dimensions of Schiller's mind were a hard enterprise, in any case; harder still with these impediments.

Accordingly we do not, in this place, pretend to attempt it: we have no finished portrait of his character to offer, no formal estimate of his works. It will be enough for us if, in glancing over his life, we can satisfy a simple curiosity, about the fortunes and chief peculiarities of a man connected with us by a bond so kindly as that of the teacher to the taught, the giver to the receiver of mental delight; if, in wandering through his intellectual creation,



we can enjoy once more the magnificent and fragrant beauty of that fairy land, and express our feelings, where we do not aim at judging and deciding.

Johann Christoph Friedrich Schiller was a native of Marbach, a small town of Würtemberg, situated on the banks of the Neckar. He was born on the 10th of November 1759,—a few months later than our own Robert Burns. Schiller's early culture was favoured by the dispositions, but obstructed by the outward circumstances of his parents. Though removed above the pressure of poverty, their station was dependent and fluctuating; it involved a frequent change of place and plan. Johann Caspar Schiller, the father, had been a surgeon in the Bavarian army; he served in the Netherlands during the Succession War. After his return home to Würtemberg, he laid aside the medical profession, having obtained a commission of ensign and adjutant under his native Prince. This post he held successively in two regiments; he had changed into the second, and was absent on active duty when Friedrich was born. The Peace of Paris put an end to his military employment; but Caspar had shown himself an intelligent, unassuming and useful man, and the Duke of Würtemberg was willing to retain him in his service. The laying-out of various nurseries and plantations in the pleasure-grounds of Ludwigsburg and Solitude was intrusted to the retired soldier, now advanced to the rank of captain: he removed from one establishment to another, from time to time; and continued in the Duke's pay till death. In his latter years he

resided chiefly at Ludwigsburg.

This mode of life was not the most propitious for educating such a boy as Friedrich; but the native worth of his parents did more than compensate for the disadvantages of their worldly condition and their limited acquirements in knowledge. The benevolence, the modest and prudent integrity, the true devoutness of these good people shone forth at an after period, expanded and beautified in the character of their son; his heart was nourished by a constant exposure to such influences, and thus the better part of his education prospered well. The mother was a woman of many household virtues; to a warm affection for her children and husband, she joined a degree of taste and intelligence which is of much rarer occurrence. She is said to have been a lover of poetry; in particular an admiring reader of Utz and Gellert, writers whom it is creditable for one in her situation to have relished.<sup>1</sup> Her kindness and tenderness of heart peculiarly endeared her to Friedrich. Her husband appears to have been a person of great probity and meekness of temper, sincerely desirous to approve himself a useful member of society, and to do his duty conscientiously to all men. The seeds of many valuable qualities had been sown in him by nature; and though his early life had been unfavourable for their cultivation, he at a late period laboured, not without success, to remedy this disadvantage. Such branches of science and philosophy as lay within his reach, he studied with diligence, whenever

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<sup>1</sup> She was of humble descent and little education, the daughter of a baker in Kodweis.

his professional employments left him leisure; on a subject connected with the latter he became an author.<sup>2</sup> But what chiefly distinguished him was the practice of a sincere piety, which seems to have diffused itself over all his feelings, and given to his clear and honest character that calm elevation which, in such a case, is its natural result. As his religion mingled itself with every motive and action of his life, the wish which in all his wanderings lay nearest his heart, the wish for the education of his son, was likely to be deeply tinged with it. There is yet preserved, in his handwriting, a prayer composed in advanced age, wherein he mentions how, at the child's birth, he had entreated the great Father of all, "to supply in strength of spirit what must needs be wanting in outward instruction." The gray-haired man, who had lived to see the maturity of his boy, could now express his solemn thankfulness, that "God had heard the prayer of a mortal."

Friedrich followed the movements of his parents for some time; and had to gather the elements of learning from various masters. Perhaps it was in part owing to this circumstance, that his progress, though respectable, or more, was so little commensurate with what he afterwards became, or with the capacities of which even his earliest years gave symptoms. Thoughtless and gay, as a boy is wont to be, he would now and then dissipate his time in childish sports, forgetful that the stolen charms of ball and leapfrog must be dearly bought by

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<sup>2</sup> His book is entitled *Die Baumzucht im Grossen* (the Cultivation of Trees on the Grand Scale): it came to a second edition in 1806.

reproaches: but occasionally he was overtaken with feelings of deeper import, and used to express the agitations of his little mind in words and actions, which were first rightly interpreted when they were called to mind long afterwards. His schoolfellows can *now* recollect that even his freaks had sometimes a poetic character; that a certain earnestness of temper, a frank integrity, an appetite for things grand or moving, was discernible across all the caprices of his boyhood. Once, it is said, during a tremendous thunderstorm, his father missed him in the young group within doors; none of the sisters could tell what was become of Fritz, and the old man grew at length so anxious that he was forced to go out in quest of him. Fritz was scarcely past the age of infancy, and knew not the dangers of a scene so awful. His father found him at last, in a solitary place of the neighbourhood, perched on the branch of a tree, gazing at the tempestuous face of the sky, and watching the flashes as in succession they spread their lurid gleam over it. To the reprimands of his parent, the whimpering truant pleaded in extenuation, "that the lightning was very beautiful, and that he wished to see where it was coming from!"—Such anecdotes, we have long known, are in themselves of small value: the present one has the additional defect of being somewhat dubious in respect of authenticity. We have ventured to give it, as it came to us, notwithstanding. The picture of the boy Schiller, contemplating the thunder, is not without a certain interest, for such as know the man.

Schiller's first teacher was Moser, pastor and schoolmaster in

the village of Lorch, where the parents resided from the sixth to the ninth year of their son. This person deserves mention for the influence he exerted on the early history of his pupil: he seems to have given his name to the Priest 'Moser' in the *Robbers*; his spiritual calling, and the conversation of his son, himself afterwards a preacher, are supposed to have suggested to Schiller the idea of consecrating himself to the clerical profession. This idea, which laid hold of and cherished some predominant though vague propensities of the boy's disposition, suited well with the religious sentiments of his parents, and was soon formed into a settled purpose. In the public school at Ludwigsburg, whither the family had now removed, his studies were regulated with this view; and he underwent, in four successive years, the annual examination before the Stuttgard Commission, to which young men destined for the Church are subjected in that country. Schiller's temper was naturally devout; with a delicacy of feeling which tended towards bashfulness and timidity, there was mingled in him a fervid impetuosity, which was ever struggling through its concealment, and indicating that he felt deeply and strongly, as well as delicately. Such a turn of mind easily took the form of religion, prescribed to it by early example and early affections, as well as nature. Schiller looked forward to the sacred profession with alacrity: it was the serious daydream of all his boyhood, and much of his youth. As yet, however, the project hovered before him at a great distance, and the path to its fulfilment offered him but little entertainment. His studies did

not seize his attention firmly; he followed them from a sense of duty, not of pleasure. Virgil and Horace he learned to construe accurately; but is said to have taken no deep interest in their poetry. The tenderness and meek beauty of the first, the humour and sagacity and capricious pathos of the last, the matchless elegance of both, would of course escape his inexperienced perception; while the matter of their writings must have appeared frigid and shallow to a mind so susceptible. He loved rather to meditate on the splendour of the Ludwigsburg theatre, which had inflamed his imagination when he first saw it in his ninth year, and given shape and materials to many of his subsequent reveries.<sup>3</sup> Under these circumstances, his progress, with all his

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<sup>3</sup> The first display of his poetic gifts occurred also in his ninth year, but took its rise in a much humbler and less common source than the inspiration of the stage. His biographers have recorded this small event with a conscientious accuracy, second only to that of Boswell and Hawkins in regard to the Lichfield *duck*. 'The little tale,' says one of them, 'is worth relating; the rather that, after an interval of more than twenty years, Schiller himself, on meeting with his early comrade (the late Dr. Elwert of Kantstadt) for the first time since their boyhood, reminded him of the adventure, recounting the circumstances with great minuteness and glee. It is as follows: Once in 1768, Elwert and he had to repeat their catechism together on a certain day publicly in the church. Their teacher, an ill-conditioned, narrow-minded pietist, had previously threatened them with a thorough flogging if they missed even a single word. To make the matter worse, this very teacher chanced to be the person whose turn it was to catechise on the appointed day. Both the boys began their answers with dismayed hearts and faltering tongues; yet they succeeded in accomplishing the task; and were in consequence rewarded by the mollified pedagogue with two kreutzers apiece. Four kreutzers of ready cash was a sum of no common magnitude; how it should be disposed of formed a serious question for the parties interested. Schiller moved that they should go to Harteneck, a hamlet in the neighbourhood, and have a dish

natural ability, could not be very striking; the teachers did not fail now and then to visit him with their severities; yet still there was a negligent success in his attempts, which, joined to his honest and vivid temper, made men augur well of him. The Stuttgart Examinators have marked him in their records with the customary formula of approval, or, at worst, of toleration. They usually designate him as 'a boy of good hope,' *puer bonæ spei*.

This good hope was not, however, destined to be realised in the way they expected: accidents occurred which changed the direction of Schiller's exertions, and threatened for a time to prevent the success of them altogether. The Duke of Würtemberg had lately founded a Free Seminary for certain branches of professional education: it was first set up at Solitude, one of his country residences; and had now been transferred to Stuttgart, where, under an improved form, and with the name

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of curds-and-cream: his partner assented; but alas! in Harteneck no particle of curds or cream was to be had. Schiller then made offer for a quarter-cake of cheese; but for this four entire kreutzers were demanded, leaving nothing whatever in reserve for bread! Twice baffled, the little gastronomes, unsatisfied in stomach, wandered on to Neckarweiingen; where, at length, though not till after much inquiry, they did obtain a comfortable mess of curds-and-cream, served up in a gay platter, and silver spoons to eat it with. For all this, moreover, they were charged but three kreutzers; so that there was still one left to provide them with a bunch of St. John grapes. Exhilarated by such liberal cheer, Schiller rose into a glow of inspiration: having left the village, he mounted with his comrade to the adjacent height, which overlooks both Harteneck and Neckarweiingen; and there in a truly poetic effusion he pronounced his malediction on the creamless region, bestowing with the same solemnity his blessing on the one which had afforded him that savoury refreshment.' *Friedrich von Schillers Leben* (Heidelberg. 1817), p. 11.

of *Karls-schule*, we believe it still exists. The Duke proposed to give the sons of his military officers a preferable claim to the benefits of this institution; and having formed a good opinion both of Schiller and his father, he invited the former to profit by this opportunity. The offer occasioned great embarrassment: the young man and his parents were alike determined in favour of the Church, a project with which this new one was inconsistent. Their embarrassment was but increased, when the Duke, on learning the nature of their scruples, desired them to think well before they decided. It was out of fear, and with reluctance that his proposal was accepted. Schiller enrolled himself in 1773; and turned, with a heavy heart, from freedom and cherished hopes, to Greek, and seclusion, and Law.

His anticipations proved to be but too just: the six years which he spent in this establishment were the most harassing and comfortless of his life. The Stuttgard system of education seems to have been formed on the principle, not of cherishing and correcting nature, but of rooting it out, and supplying its place with something better. The process of teaching and living was conducted with the stiff formality of military drilling; every thing went on by statute and ordinance, there was no scope for the exercise of free-will, no allowance for the varieties of original structure. A scholar might possess what instincts or capacities he pleased; the 'regulations of the school' took no account of this; he must fit himself into the common mould, which, like the old Giant's bed, stood there, appointed by superior authority,



to be filled alike by the great and the little. The same strict and narrow course of reading and composition was marked out for each beforehand, and it was by stealth if he read or wrote any thing beside. Their domestic economy was regulated in the same spirit as their preceptorial: it consisted of the same sedulous exclusion of all that could border on pleasure, or give any exercise to choice. The pupils were kept apart from the conversation or sight of any person but their teachers; none ever got beyond the precincts of despotism to snatch even a fearful joy; their very amusements proceeded by the word of command.

How grievous all this must have been, it is easy to conceive. To Schiller it was more grievous than to any other. Of an ardent and impetuous yet delicate nature, whilst his discontentment devoured him internally, he was too modest and timid to give it the relief of utterance by deeds or words. Locked up within himself, he suffered deeply, but without complaining. Some of his letters written during this period have been preserved: they exhibit the ineffectual struggles of a fervid and busy mind veiling its many chagrins under a certain dreary patience, which only shows them more painfully. He pored over his lexicons and grammars, and insipid tasks, with an artificial composure; but his spirit pined within him like a captive's, when he looked forth into the cheerful world, or recollected the affection of parents, the hopes and frolicsome enjoyments of past years. The misery he endured in this severe and lonely mode of existence strengthened or produced in him a habit of constraint and shyness, which clung

to his character through life.

The study of Law, for which he had never felt any predilection, naturally grew in his mind to be the representative of all these evils, and his distaste for it went on increasing. On this point he made no secret of his feelings. One of the exercises, yearly prescribed to every scholar, was a written delineation of his own character, according to his own views of it, to be delivered publicly at an appointed time: Schiller, on the first of these exhibitions, ventured to state his persuasion, that he was not made to be a jurist, but called rather by his inclinations and faculties to the clerical profession. This statement, of course, produced no effect; he was forced to continue the accustomed course, and his dislike for Law kept fast approaching to absolute disgust. In 1775, he was fortunate enough to get it relinquished, though at the expense of adopting another employment, for which, in different circumstances, he would hardly have declared himself. The study of Medicine, for which a new institution was about this time added to the Stuttgart school, had no attractions for Schiller: he accepted it only as a galling servitude in exchange for one more galling. His mind was bent on higher objects; and he still felt all his present vexations aggravated by the thought, that his fairest expectations from the future had been sacrificed to worldly convenience, and the humblest necessities of life.

Meanwhile the youth was waxing into manhood, and the fetters of discipline lay heavier on him, as his powers grew stronger, and his eyes became open to the stirring and variegated

interests of the world, now unfolding itself to him under new and more glowing colours. As yet he contemplated the scene only from afar, and it seemed but the more gorgeous on that account. He longed to mingle in its busy current, and delighted to view the image of its movements in his favourite poets and historians. Plutarch and Shakspeare;<sup>4</sup> the writings of Klopstock, Lessing, Garve, Herder, Gerstenberg, Goethe, and a multitude of others, which marked the dawning literature of Germany, he had studied with a secret avidity: they gave him vague ideas of men and life, or awakened in him splendid visions of literary glory. Klopstock's *Messias*, combined with his own religious tendencies, had early turned him to sacred poetry: before the end of his fourteenth year, he had finished what he called an 'epic poem,' entitled *Moses*. The extraordinary popularity of Gerstenberg's *Ugolino*, and Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*, next directed his attention to the drama; and as admiration in a mind like his, full of blind activity and nameless aspirings, naturally issues in imitation, he plunged with equal ardour into this new

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<sup>4</sup> The feeling produced in him by Shakspeare he described long afterwards: it throws light on the general state of his temper and tastes. 'When I first, at a very early age,' he says, 'became acquainted with this poet, I felt indignant at his coldness, his hardness of heart, which permitted him in the most melting pathos to utter jests,—to mar, by the introduction of a fool, the soul-searching scenes of *Hamlet*, *Lear*, and other pieces; which now kept him still where my sensibilities hastened forward, now drove him carelessly, onward where I would so gladly have lingered \* \* He was the object of my reverence and zealous study for years before I could love himself. I was not yet capable of comprehending Nature at first-hand: I had but learned to admire her image, reflected in the understanding, and put in order by rules.' *Werke*, Bd. viii 2, p. 77.

subject, and produced his first tragedy, *Cosmo von Medicis*, some fragments of which he retained and inserted in his *Robbers*. A mass of minor performances, preserved among his papers, or published in the Magazines of the time, serve sufficiently to show that his mind had already dimly discovered its destination, and was striving with a restless vehemence to reach it, in spite of every obstacle.

Such obstacles were in his case neither few nor small. Schiller felt the mortifying truth, that to arrive at the ideal world, he must first gain a footing in the real; that he might entertain high thoughts and longings, might reverence the beauties of nature and grandeur of mind, but was born to toil for his daily bread. Poetry he loved with the passionateness of a first affection; but he could not live by it; he honoured it too highly to wish to live by it. His prudence told him that he must yield to stern necessity, must 'forsake the balmy climate of Pindus for the Greenland of a barren and dreary science of terms;' and he did not hesitate to obey. His professional studies were followed with a rigid though reluctant fidelity; it was only in leisure gained by superior diligence that he could yield himself to more favourite pursuits. Genius was to serve as the ornament of his inferior qualities, not as an excuse for the want of them.

But if, when such sacrifices were required, it was painful to comply with the dictates of his own reason, it was still more so to endure the harsh and superfluous restrictions of his teachers. He felt it hard enough to be driven from the enchantments of poetry

by the dull realities of duty; but it was intolerable and degrading to be hemmed-in still farther by the caprices of severe and formal pedagogues. Schiller brooded gloomily over the constraints and hardships of his situation. Many plans he formed for deliverance. Sometimes he would escape in secret to catch a glimpse of the free and busy world to him forbidden: sometimes he laid schemes for utterly abandoning a place which he abhorred, and trusting to fortune for the rest. Often the sight of his class-books and school-apparatus became irksome beyond endurance; he would feign sickness, that he might be left in his own chamber to write poetry and pursue his darling studies without hindrance. Such artifices did not long avail him; the masters noticed the regularity of his sickness, and sent him tasks to be done while it lasted. Even Schiller's patience could not brook this; his natural timidity gave place to indignation; he threw the paper of exercises at the feet of the messenger, and said sternly that "*here* he would choose his own studies."

Under such corroding and continual vexations an ordinary spirit would have sunk at length, would have gradually given up its loftier aspirations, and sought refuge in vicious indulgence, or at best have sullenly harnessed itself into the yoke, and plodded through existence, weary, discontented, and broken, ever casting back a hankering look upon the dreams of youth, and ever without power to realise them. But Schiller was no ordinary character, and did not act like one. Beneath a cold and simple exterior, dignified with no artificial attractions, and marred in its

native amiableness by the incessant obstruction, the isolation and painful destitutions under which he lived, there was concealed a burning energy of soul, which no obstruction could extinguish. The hard circumstances of his fortune had prevented the natural development of his mind; his faculties had been cramped and misdirected; but they had gathered strength by opposition and the habit of self-dependence which it encouraged. His thoughts, unguided by a teacher, had sounded into the depths of his own nature and the mysteries of his own fate; his feelings and passions, unshared by any other heart, had been driven back upon his own, where, like the volcanic fire that smoulders and fuses in secret, they accumulated till their force grew irresistible.

Hitherto Schiller had passed for an unprofitable, a discontented and a disobedient Boy: but the time was now come when the gyves of school-discipline could no longer cripple and distort the giant might of his nature: he stood forth as a Man, and wrenched asunder his fetters with a force that was felt at the extremities of Europe. The publication of the *Robbers* forms an era not only in Schiller's history, but in the Literature of the World; and there seems no doubt that, but for so mean a cause as the perverted discipline of the Stuttgart school, we had never seen this tragedy. Schiller commenced it in his nineteenth year; and the circumstances under which it was composed are to be traced in all its parts. It is the production of a strong untutored spirit, consumed by an activity for which there is no outlet, indignant at the barriers which restrain it, and grappling

darkly with the phantoms to which its own energy thus painfully imprisoned gives being. A rude simplicity, combined with a gloomy and overpowering force, are its chief characteristics; they remind us of the defective cultivation, as well as of the fervid and harassed feelings of its author. Above all, the latter quality is visible; the tragic interest of the *Robbers* is deep throughout, so deep that frequently it borders upon horror. A grim inexorable Fate is made the ruling principle: it envelops and overshadows the whole; and under its luring influence, the fiercest efforts of human will appear but like flashes that illuminate the wild scene with a brief and terrible splendour, and are lost forever in the darkness. The unsearchable abysses of man's destiny are laid open before us, black and profound and appalling, as they seem to the young mind when it first attempts to explore them: the obstacles that thwart our faculties and wishes, the deceitfulness of hope, the nothingness of existence, are sketched in the sable colours so natural to the enthusiast when he first ventures upon life, and compares the world that is without him to the anticipations that were within.

Karl von Moor is a character such as young poets always delight to contemplate or delineate; to Schiller the analogy of their situations must have peculiarly recommended him. Moor is animated into action by feelings similar to those under which his author was then suffering and longing to act. Gifted with every noble quality of manhood in overflowing abundance, Moor's first expectations of life, and of the part he was to play in it, had

been glorious as a poet's dream. But the minor dexterities of management were not among his endowments; in his eagerness to reach the goal, he had forgotten that the course is a labyrinthic maze, beset with difficulties, of which some may be surmounted, some can only be evaded, many can be neither. Hurried on by the headlong impetuosity of his temper, he entangles himself in these perplexities; and thinks to penetrate them, not by skill and patience, but by open force. He is baffled, deceived, and still more deeply involved; but injury and disappointment exasperate rather than instruct him. He had expected heroes, and he finds mean men; friends, and he finds smiling traitors to tempt him aside, to profit by his aberrations, and lead him onward to destruction: he had dreamed of magnanimity and every generous principle, he finds that prudence is the only virtue sure of its reward. Too fiery by nature, the intensity of his sufferings has now maddened him still farther: he is himself incapable of calm reflection, and there is no counsellor at hand to assist him; none, whose sympathy might assuage his miseries, whose wisdom might teach him to remedy or to endure them. He is stung by fury into action, and his activity is at once blind and tremendous. Since the world is not the abode of unmixed integrity, he looks upon it as a den of thieves; since its institutions may obstruct the advancement of worth, and screen delinquency from punishment, he regards the social union as a pestilent nuisance, the mischiefs of which it is fitting that he in his degree should do his best to repair, by means however violent. Revenge



is the mainspring of his conduct; but he ennobles it in his own eyes, by giving it the colour of a disinterested concern for the maintenance of justice,—the abasement of vice from its high places, and the exaltation of suffering virtue. Single against the universe, to appeal to the primary law of the stronger, to 'grasp the scales of Providence in a mortal's hand,' is frantic and wicked; but Moor has a force of soul which makes it likewise awful. The interest lies in the conflict of this gigantic soul against the fearful odds which at length overwhelm it, and hurry it down to the darkest depths of ruin.

The original conception of such a work as this betrays the inexperience no less than the vigour of youth: its execution gives a similar testimony. The characters of the piece, though traced in glowing colours, are outlines more than pictures: the few features we discover in them are drawn with elaborate minuteness; but the rest are wanting. Every thing indicates the condition of a keen and powerful intellect, which had studied men in books only; had, by self-examination and the perusal of history, detected and strongly seized some of the leading peculiarities of human nature; but was yet ignorant of all the minute and more complex principles which regulate men's conduct in actual life, and which only a knowledge of living men can unfold. If the hero of the play forms something like an exception to this remark, he is the sole exception, and for reasons alluded to above: his character resembles the author's own. Even with Karl, the success is incomplete: with the other personages it is far more so. Franz

von Moor, the villain of the Piece, is an amplified copy of Iago and Richard; but the copy is distorted as well as amplified. There is no air of reality in Franz: he is a villain of theory, who studies to accomplish his object by the most diabolical expedients, and soothes his conscience by arguing with the priest in favour of atheism and materialism; not the genuine villain of Shakspeare and Nature, who employs his reasoning powers in creating new schemes and devising new means, and conquers remorse by avoiding it,—by fixing his hopes and fears on the more pressing emergencies of worldly business. So reflective a miscreant as Franz could not exist: his calculations would lead him to honesty, if merely because it was the best policy.

Amelia, the only female in the piece, is a beautiful creation; but as imaginary as her persecutor Franz. Still and exalted in her warm enthusiasm, devoted in her love to Moor, she moves before us as the inhabitant of a higher and simpler world than ours. "*He sails on troubled seas,*" she exclaims, with a confusion of metaphors, which it is easy to pardon, "*he sails on troubled seas, Amelia's love sails with him; he wanders in pathless deserts, Amelia's love makes the burning sand grow green beneath him, and the stunted shrubs to blossom; the south scorches his bare head, his feet are pinched by the northern snow, stormy hail beats round his temples—Amelia's love rocks him to sleep in the storm. Seas, and hills, and horizons, are between us; but souls escape from their clay prisons, and meet in the paradise of love!*" She is a fair vision, the *beau idéal* of a poet's first mistress; but

has few mortal lineaments.

Similar defects are visible in almost all the other characters. Moor, the father, is a weak and fond old man, who could have arrived at gray hairs in such a state of ignorance nowhere but in a work of fiction. The inferior banditti are painted with greater vigour, yet still in rugged and ill-shapen forms; their individuality is kept up by an extravagant exaggeration of their several peculiarities. Schiller himself pronounced a severe but not unfounded censure, when he said of this work, in a maturer age, that his *chief* fault was in 'presuming to delineate men two years before he had met one.'

His skill in the art of composition surpassed his knowledge of the world; but that too was far from perfection. Schiller's style in the *Robbers* is partly of a kind with the incidents and feelings which it represents; strong and astonishing, and sometimes wildly grand; but likewise inartificial, coarse, and grotesque. His sentences, in their rude emphasis, come down like the club of Hercules; the stroke is often of a crushing force, but its sweep is irregular and awkward. When Moor is involved in the deepest intricacies of the old question, necessity and free will, and has convinced himself that he is but an engine in the hands of some dark and irresistible power, he cries out: "Why has my Perillus made of me a brazen bull to roast men in my glowing belly?" The stage-direction says, 'shaken with horror:' no wonder that he shook!

Schiller has admitted these faults, and explained their origin,

in strong and sincere language, in a passage of which we have already quoted the conclusion. 'A singular miscalculation of nature,' he says, 'had combined my poetical tendencies with the place of my birth. Any disposition to poetry did violence to the laws of the institution where I was educated, and contradicted the plan of its founder. For eight years my enthusiasm struggled with military discipline; but the passion for poetry is vehement and fiery as a first love. What discipline was meant to extinguish, it blew into a flame. To escape from arrangements that tortured me, my heart sought refuge in the world of ideas, when as yet I was unacquainted with the world of realities, from which iron bars excluded me. I was unacquainted with men; for the four hundred that lived with me were but repetitions of the same creature, true casts of one single mould, and of that very mould which plastic nature solemnly disclaimed. \* \* \*

Thus circumstanced, a stranger to human characters and human fortunes, to hit the medium line between angels and devils was an enterprise in which I necessarily failed. In attempting it, my pencil necessarily brought out a monster, for which by good fortune the world had no original, and which I would not wish to be immortal, except to perpetuate an example of the offspring which Genius in its unnatural union with Thralldom may give to the world. I allude to the *Robbers*.'<sup>5</sup>

Yet with all these excrescences and defects, the unbounded popularity of the *Robbers* is not difficult to account for. To every

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<sup>5</sup> *Deutsches Museum v. Jahr 1784*, cited by Doering.

reader, the excitement of emotion must be a chief consideration; to the mass of readers it is the sole one: and the grand secret of moving others is, that the poet be himself moved. We have seen how well Schiller's temper and circumstances qualified him to fulfil this condition: treatment, not of his choosing, had raised his own mind into something like a Pythian frenzy; and his genius, untrained as it was, sufficed to communicate abundance of the feeling to others. Perhaps more than abundance: to judge from our individual impression, the perusal of the *Robbers* produces an effect powerful even to pain; we are absolutely wounded by the catastrophe; our minds are darkened and distressed, as if we had witnessed the execution of a criminal. It is in vain that we rebel against the inconsistencies and crudities of the work: its faults are redeemed by the living energy that pervades it. We may exclaim against the blind madness of the hero; but there is a towering grandeur about him, a whirlwind force of passion and of will, which catches our hearts, and puts the scruples of criticism to silence. The most delirious of enterprises is that of Moor, but the vastness of his mind renders even that interesting. We see him leagued with desperadoes directing their savage strength to actions more and more audacious; he is in arms against the conventions of men and the everlasting laws of Fate: yet we follow him with anxiety through the forests and desert places, where he wanders, encompassed with peril, inspired with lofty daring, and torn by unceasing remorse; and we wait with awe for the doom which he has merited and cannot avoid. Nor amid

all his frightful aberrations do we ever cease to love him: he is an 'archangel though in ruins;' and the strong agony with which he feels the present, the certainty of that stern future which awaits him, which his own eye never loses sight of, makes us lenient to his crimes. When he pours forth his wild recollections, or still wilder forebodings, there is a terrible vehemence in his expressions, which overpowers us, in spite both of his and their extravagance. The scene on the hills beside the Danube, where he looks at the setting sun, and thinks of old hopes, and times 'when he could not sleep if his evening prayer had been forgotten,' is one, with all its improprieties, that ever clings to the memory. "See," he passionately continues, "all things are gone forth to bask in the peaceful beam of the spring: why must I alone inhale the torments of hell out of the joys of heaven? That all should be so happy, all so married together by the spirit of peace! The whole world one family, its Father above; that Father not *mine*! I alone the castaway, I alone struck out from the company of the just; not for me the sweet name of child, never for me the languishing look of one whom I love; never, never, the embracing of a bosom friend! Encircled with murderers; serpents hissing around me; riveted to vice with iron bonds; leaning on the bending reed of vice over the gulf of perdition; amid the flowers of the glad world, a howling Abaddon! Oh, that I might return into my mother's womb;—that I might be born a beggar! I would never more—O Heaven, that I could be as one of these day-labourers! Oh, I would toil till the blood ran down from my

temples, to buy myself the pleasure of one noontide sleep, the blessing of a single tear. There *was* a time too, when I could weep—O ye days of peace, thou castle of my father, ye green lovely valleys!—O all ye Elysian scenes of my childhood! will ye never come again, never with your balmy sighing cool my burning bosom? Mourn with me, Nature! They will never come again, never cool my burning bosom with their balmy sighing. They are gone! gone! and may not return!"

No less strange is the soliloquy where Moor, with the instrument of self-destruction in his hands, the 'dread key that is to shut behind him the prison of life, and to unbolt before him the dwelling of eternal night,'—meditates on the gloomy enigmas of his future destiny. Soliloquies on this subject are numerous,—from the time of Hamlet, of Cato, and downwards. Perhaps the worst of them has more ingenuity, perhaps the best of them has less awfulness than the present. St. Dominick himself might shudder at such a question, with such an answer as this: "What if thou shouldst send me companionless to some burnt and blasted circle of the universe; which thou hast banished from thy sight; where the lone darkness and the motionless desert were my prospects—forever? I would people the silent wilderness with my fantasies; I should have Eternity for leisure to examine the perplexed image of the universal woe."

Strength, wild impassioned strength, is the distinguishing quality of Moor. All his history shows it; and his death is of a piece with the fierce splendour of his life. Having finished the

bloody work of crime, and magnanimity, and horror, he thinks that, for himself, suicide would be too easy an exit. He has noticed a poor man toiling by the wayside, for eleven children; a great reward has been promised for the head of the Robber; the gold will nourish that poor drudge and his boys, and Moor goes forth to give it them. We part with him in pity and sorrow; looking less at his misdeeds than at their frightful expiation.

The subordinate personages, though diminished in extent and varied in their forms, are of a similar quality with the hero; a strange mixture of extravagance and true energy. In perusing the work which represents their characters and fates, we are alternately shocked and inspired; there is a perpetual conflict between our understanding and our feelings. Yet the latter on the whole come off victorious. The *Robbers* is a tragedy that will long find readers to astonish, and, with all its faults, to move. It stands, in our imagination, like some ancient rugged pile of a barbarous age; irregular, fantastic, useless; but grand in its height and massiveness and black frowning strength. It will long remain a singular monument of the early genius and early fortune of its author.

The publication of such a work as this naturally produced an extraordinary feeling in the literary world. Translations of the *Robbers* soon appeared in almost all the languages of Europe, and were read in all of them with a deep interest, compounded of admiration and aversion, according to the relative proportions of sensibility and judgment in the various minds which



contemplated the subject. In Germany, the enthusiasm which the *Robbers* excited was extreme. The young author had burst upon the world like a meteor; and surprise, for a time, suspended the power of cool and rational criticism. In the ferment produced by the universal discussion of this single topic, the poet was magnified above his natural dimensions, great as they were: and though the general sentence was loudly in his favour, yet he found detractors as well as praisers, and both equally beyond the limits of moderation.

One charge brought against him must have damped the joy of literary glory, and stung Schiller's pure and virtuous mind more deeply than any other. He was accused of having injured the cause of morality by his work; of having set up to the impetuous and fiery temperament of youth a model of imitation which the young were too likely to pursue with eagerness, and which could only lead them from the safe and beaten tracks of duty into error and destruction. It has even been stated, and often been repeated since, that a practical exemplification of this doctrine occurred, about this time, in Germany. A young nobleman, it was said, of the fairest gifts and prospects, had cast away all these advantages; betaken himself to the forests, and, copying Moor, had begun a course of active operations,—which, also copying Moor, but less willingly, he had ended by a shameful death.

It can now be hardly necessary to contradict these theories; or to show that none but a candidate for Bedlam as well as Tyburn could be seduced from the substantial comforts of

existence, to seek destruction and disgrace, for the sake of such imaginary grandeur. The German nobleman of the fairest gifts and prospects turns out, on investigation, to have been a German blackguard, whom debauchery and riotous extravagance had reduced to want; who took to the highway, when he could take to nothing else,—not allured by an ebullient enthusiasm, or any heroical and misdirected appetite for sublime actions, but driven by the more palpable stimulus of importunate duns, an empty purse, and five craving senses. Perhaps in his later days, this philosopher *may* have referred to Schiller's tragedy, as the source from which he drew his theory of life: but if so, we believe he was mistaken. For characters like him, the great attraction was the charms of revelry, and the great restraint, the gallows,—before the period of Karl von Moor, just as they have been since, and will be to the end of time. Among motives like these, the influence of even the most malignant book could scarcely be discernible, and would be little detrimental, if it were.

Nothing, at any rate, could be farther from Schiller's intention than such a consummation. In his preface, he speaks of the moral effects of the *Robbers* in terms which do honour to his heart, while they show the inexperience of his head. Ridicule, he signifies, has long been tried against the wickedness of the times, whole cargoes of hellebore have been expended,—in vain; and now, he thinks, recourse must be had to more pungent medicines. We may smile at the simplicity of this idea; and safely conclude that, like other specifics, the present one would

fail to produce a perceptible effect: but Schiller's vindication rests on higher grounds than these. His work has on the whole furnished nourishment to the more exalted powers of our nature; the sentiments and images which he has shaped and uttered, tend, in spite of their alloy, to elevate the soul to a nobler pitch, and this is a sufficient defence. As to the danger of misapplying the inspiration he communicates, of forgetting the dictates of prudence in our zeal for the dictates of poetry, we have no great cause to fear it. Hitherto, at least, there has always been enough of dull reality, on every side of us, to abate such fervours in good time, and bring us back to the most sober level of prose, if not to sink us below it. We should thank the poet who performs such a service; and forbear to inquire too rigidly whether there is any 'moral' in his piece or not. The writer of a work, which interests and excites the spiritual feelings of men, has as little need to justify himself by showing how it exemplifies some wise saw or modern instance, as the doer of a generous action has to demonstrate its merit, by deducing it from the system of Shaftesbury, or Smith, or Paley, or whichever happens to be the favourite system for the age and place. The instructiveness of the one, and the virtue of the other, exist independently of all systems or saws, and in spite of all.

But the tragedy of the *Robbers* produced some inconveniences of a kind much more sensible than these its theoretical mischiefs. We have called it the signal of Schiller's deliverance from school tyranny and military constraint; but its operation in this

respect was not immediate; at first it seemed to involve him more deeply and dangerously than before. He had finished the original sketch of it in 1778; but for fear of offence, he kept it secret till his medical studies were completed.<sup>6</sup> These, in the mean time, he had pursued with sufficient assiduity to merit the usual honours;<sup>7</sup> in 1780, he had, in consequence, obtained the post of surgeon to the regiment *Augé*, in the Würtemberg army. This advancement enabled him to complete his project, to print the *Robbers* at his own expense, not being able to find any bookseller that would undertake it. The nature of the work, and the universal interest it awakened, drew attention to the private circumstances of the author, whom the *Robbers*, as well as other pieces of his writing, that had found their way into the periodical publications of the time, sufficiently showed

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<sup>6</sup> On this subject Doering gives an anecdote, which may perhaps be worth translating. 'One of Schiller's teachers surprised him on one occasion reciting a scene from the *Robbers*, before some of his intimate companions. At the words, which Franz von Moor addresses to Moser: *Ha, what! thou knowest none greater? Think again! Death, heaven, eternity, damnation, hovers in the sound of thy voice! Not one greater?*—the door opened, and the master saw Schiller stamping in desperation up and down the room. "For shame," said he, "for shame to get into such a passion, and curse so!" The other scholars tittered covertly at the worthy inspector; and Schiller called after him with a bitter smile, "A noodle" (ein confiscirter Kerl)!"

<sup>7</sup> His Latin Essay on the *Philosophy of Physiology* was written in 1778, and never printed. His concluding *thesis* was published according to custom: the subject is arduous enough, "the connection between the animal and spiritual nature of man,"—which Dr. Cabanis has since treated in so offensive a fashion. Schiller's tract we have never seen. Doering says it was long 'out of print,' till Nasse reproduced it in his Medical Journal (Leipzig, 1820): he is silent respecting its merits.

to be no common man. Many grave persons were offended at the vehement sentiments expressed in the *Robbers*; and the unquestioned ability with which these extravagances were expressed, but made the matter worse. To Schiller's superiors, above all, such things were inconceivable: he might perhaps be a very great genius, but was certainly a dangerous servant for his Highness the Grand Duke of Würtemberg. Officious people mingled themselves in the affair: nay, the graziers of the Alps were brought to bear upon it. The Grisons magistrates, it appeared, had seen the book: and were mortally huffed at being there spoken of, according to a Swabian adage, as *common highwaymen*.<sup>8</sup> They complained in the *Hamburg Correspondent*; and a sort of Jackal, at Ludwigsburg, one Walter, whose name deserves to be thus kept in mind, volunteered to plead their cause before the Grand Duke.

Informed of all these circumstances, the Grand Duke expressed his disapprobation of Schiller's poetical labours in the most unequivocal terms. Schiller was at length summoned to appear before him; and it then turned out, that his Highness was not only dissatisfied with the moral or political errors of

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<sup>8</sup> The obnoxious passage has been carefully expunged from subsequent editions. It was in the third scene of the second act; Spiegelberg discoursing with Razmann, observes, "An honest man you may form of windle-straws; but to make a rascal you must have grist: besides, there is a national genius in it, a certain rascal-climate, so to speak." In the first edition, there was added: "*Go to the Grisons, for instance: that is what I call the thief's Athens.*" The patriot who stood forth on this occasion for the honour of the Grisons, to deny this weighty charge, and denounce the crime of making it, was not Dogberry or Verges, but 'one of the noble family of Salis.'

the work, but scandalised moreover at its want of literary merit. In this latter respect, he was kind enough to proffer his own services. But Schiller seems to have received the proposal with no sufficient gratitude; and the interview passed without advantage to either party. It terminated in the Duke's commanding Schiller to abide by medical subjects: or at least to beware of writing any more poetry, without submitting it to *his* inspection.

We need not comment on this portion of the Grand Duke's history: his treatment of Schiller has already been sufficiently avenged. By the great body of mankind, his name will be recollected, chiefly, if at all, for the sake of the unfriended youth whom he now schooled so sharply, and afterwards afflicted so cruelly: it will be recollected also with the angry triumph which we feel against a shallow and despotic 'noble of convention,' who strains himself to oppress 'one of nature's nobility,' submitted by blind chance to his dominion, and—finds that he cannot! All this is far more than the Prince of Würtemberg deserves. Of limited faculties, and educated in the French principles of taste, then common to persons of his rank in Germany, he had perused the *Robbers* with unfeigned disgust; he could see in the author only a misguided enthusiast, with talents barely enough to make him dangerous. And though he never fully or formally retracted this injustice, he did not follow it up; when Schiller became known to the world at large, the Duke ceased to persecute him. The father he still kept in his service, and nowise molested.

In the mean time, however, various mortifications awaited

Schiller. It was in vain that he discharged the humble duties of his station with the most strict fidelity, and even, it is said, with superior skill: he was a suspected person, and his most innocent actions were misconstrued, his slightest faults were visited with the full measure of official severity. His busy imagination aggravated the evil. He had seen poor Schubart<sup>9</sup> wearing out his tedious eight years of durance in the fortress of Asperg, because he had been 'a rock of offence to the powers that were.' The fate of this unfortunate author appeared to Schiller a type of his own. His free spirit shrank at the prospect of wasting its strength in strife against the pitiful constraints, the minute and endless persecutions of men who knew him not, yet had his fortune in their hands; the idea of dungeons and jailors haunted and tortured his mind; and the means of escaping them, the renunciation of poetry, the source of all his joy, if likewise of many woes, the radiant guiding-star of his turbid and obscure existence, seemed a sentence of death to all that was dignified, and delightful, and worth retaining, in his character. Totally ignorant of what is called the world; conscious too of the might that slumbered in his soul, and proud of it, as kings are of their sceptres; impetuous when roused, and spurning unjust restraint; yet wavering and timid from the delicacy of his nature, and still more restricted in the freedom of his movements by the circumstances of his father, whose all depended on the pleasure of the court, Schiller felt himself embarrassed, and agitated, and

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<sup>9</sup> See [Appendix I., No. 1.](#)

tormented in no common degree. Urged this way and that by the most powerful and conflicting impulses; driven to despair by the paltry shackles that chained him, yet forbidden by the most sacred considerations to break them, he knew not on what he should resolve; he reckoned himself 'the most unfortunate of men.'

Time at length gave him the solution; circumstances occurred which forced him to decide. The popularity of the *Robbers* had brought him into correspondence with several friends of literature, who wished to patronise the author, or engage him in new undertakings. Among this number was the Freiherr von Dalberg, superintendent of the theatre at Mannheim, under whose encouragement and countenance Schiller remodelled the *Robbers*, altered it in some parts, and had it brought upon the stage in 1781. The correspondence with Dalberg began in literary discussions, but gradually elevated itself into the expression of more interesting sentiments. Dalberg loved and sympathised with the generous enthusiast, involved in troubles and perplexities which his inexperience was so little adequate to thread: he gave him advice and assistance; and Schiller repaid this favour with the gratitude due to his kind, his first, and then almost his only benefactor. His letters to this gentleman have been preserved, and lately published; they exhibit a lively picture of Schiller's painful situation at Stuttgard, and of his unskilful as well as eager anxiety to be delivered from it.<sup>10</sup> His darling project

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<sup>10</sup> See [Appendix I., No. 2.](#)



was that Dalberg should bring him to Mannheim, as theatrical poet, by permission of the Duke: at one time he even thought of turning player.

Neither of these projects could take immediate effect, and Schiller's embarrassments became more pressing than ever. With the natural feeling of a young author, he had ventured to go in secret, and witness the first representation of his tragedy, at Mannheim. His incognito did not conceal him; he was put under arrest during a week, for this offence: and as the punishment did not deter him from again transgressing in a similar manner, he learned that it was in contemplation to try more rigorous measures with him. Dark hints were given to him of some exemplary as well as imminent severity: and Dalberg's aid, the sole hope of averting it by quiet means, was distant and dubious. Schiller saw himself reduced to extremities. Beleaguered with present distresses, and the most horrible forebodings, on every side; roused to the highest pitch of indignation, yet forced to keep silence, and wear the face of patience, he could endure this maddening constraint no longer. He resolved to be free, at whatever risk; to abandon advantages which he could not buy at such a price; to quit his step-dame home, and go forth, though friendless and alone, to seek his fortune in the great market of life. Some foreign Duke or Prince was arriving at Stuttgart; and all the people were in movement, occupied with seeing the spectacle of his entrance: Schiller seized this opportunity of retiring from the city, careless whither he went, so he got beyond

the reach of turnkeys, and Grand Dukes, and commanding officers. It was in the month of October 1782.

This last step forms the catastrophe of the publication of the *Robbers*: it completed the deliverance of Schiller from the grating thralldom under which his youth had been passed, and decided his destiny for life. Schiller was in his twenty-third year when he left Stuttgart. He says 'he went empty away,—empty in purse and hope.' The future was indeed sufficiently dark before him. Without patrons, connexions, or country, he had ventured forth to the warfare on his own charges; without means, experience, or settled purpose, it was greatly to be feared that the fight would go against him. Yet his situation, though gloomy enough, was not entirely without its brighter side. He was now a free man, free, however poor; and his strong soul quickened as its fetters dropped off, and gloried within him in the dim anticipation of great and far-extending enterprises. If, cast too rudely among the hardships and bitter disquietudes of the world, his past nursing had not been delicate, he was already taught to look upon privation and discomfort as his daily companions. If he knew not how to bend his course among the perplexed vicissitudes of society, there was a force within him which would triumph over many difficulties; and a 'light from Heaven' was about his path, which, if it failed to conduct him to wealth and preferment, would keep him far from baseness and degrading vices. Literature, and every great and noble thing which the right pursuit of it implies, he loved with all his heart and all his soul: to this inspiring object he

was henceforth exclusively devoted; advancing towards this, and possessed of common necessities on the humblest scale, there was little else to tempt him. His life might be unhappy, but would hardly be disgraceful.

Schiller gradually felt all this, and gathered comfort, while better days began to dawn upon him. Fearful of trusting himself so near Stuttgart as at Mannheim, he had passed into Franconia, and was living painfully at Oggersheim, under the name of Schmidt: but Dalberg, who knew all his distresses, supplied him with money for immediate wants; and a generous lady made him the offer of a home. Madam von Wolzogen lived on her estate of Bauerbach, in the neighbourhood of Meinungen; she knew Schiller from his works, and his intimacy with her sons, who had been his fellow-students at Stuttgart. She invited him to her house; and there treated him with an affection which helped him to forget the past, and look cheerfully forward to the future.

Under this hospitable roof, Schiller had leisure to examine calmly the perplexed and dubious aspect of his affairs. Happily his character belonged not to the whining or sentimental sort: he was not of those, in whom the pressure of misfortune produces nothing but unprofitable pain; who spend, in cherishing and investigating and deploring their miseries, the time which should be spent in providing a relief for them. With him, strong feeling was constantly a call to vigorous action: he possessed in a high degree the faculty of conquering his afflictions, by directing his thoughts, not to maxims for enduring them, or modes of

expressing them with interest, but to plans for getting rid of them; and to this disposition or habit,—too rare among men of genius, men of a much higher class than mere sentimentalists, but whose sensibility is out of proportion with their inventiveness or activity,—we are to attribute no small influence in the fortunate conduct of his subsequent life. With such a turn of mind, Schiller, now that he was at length master of his own movements, could not long be at a loss for plans or tasks. Once settled at Bauerbach, he immediately resumed his poetical employments; and forgot, in the regions of fancy, the vague uncertainties of his real condition, or saw prospects of amending it in a life of literature. By many safe and sagacious persons, the prudence of his late proceedings might be more than questioned; it was natural for many to forbode that one who left the port so rashly, and sailed with such precipitation, was likely to make shipwreck ere the voyage had extended far: but the lapse of a few months put a stop to such predictions. A year had not passed since his departure, when Schiller sent forth his *Verschwörung des Fiesco* and *Kabale und Liebe*; tragedies which testified that, dangerous and arduous as the life he had selected might be, he possessed resources more than adequate to its emergencies. *Fiesco* he had commenced during the period of his arrest at Stuttgard; it was published, with the other play, in 1783; and soon after brought upon the Mannheim theatre, with universal approbation.

It was now about three years since the composition of the *Robbers* had been finished; five since the first sketch of it had

been formed. With what zeal and success Schiller had, in that interval, pursued the work of his mental culture, these two dramas are a striking proof. The first ardour of youth is still to be discerned in them; but it is now chastened by the dictates of a maturer reason, and made to animate the products of a much happier and more skilful invention. Schiller's ideas of art had expanded and grown clearer, his knowledge of life had enlarged. He exhibits more acquaintance with the fundamental principles of human nature, as well as with the circumstances under which it usually displays itself; and far higher and juster views of the manner in which its manifestations should be represented.

In the *Conspiracy of Fiesco* we have to admire not only the energetic animation which the author has infused into all his characters, but the distinctness with which he has discriminated, without aggravating them; and the vividness with which he has contrived to depict the scene where they act and move. The political and personal relations of the Genoese nobility; the luxurious splendour, the intrigues, the feuds, and jarring interests, which occupy them, are made visible before us: we understand and may appreciate the complexities of the conspiracy; we mingle, as among realities, in the pompous and imposing movements which lead to the catastrophe. The catastrophe itself is displayed with peculiar effect. The midnight silence of the sleeping city, interrupted only by the distant sounds of watchmen, by the low hoarse murmur of the sea, or the stealthy footsteps and disguised voice of Fiesco, is conveyed to

our imagination by some brief but graphic touches; we seem to stand in the solitude and deep stillness of Genoa, awaiting the signal which is to burst so fearfully upon its slumber. At length the gun is fired; and the wild uproar which ensues is no less strikingly exhibited. The deeds and sounds of violence, astonishment and terror; the volleying cannon, the heavy toll of the alarm-bells, the acclamation of assembled thousands, 'the voice of Genoa speaking with Fiesco,'—all is made present to us with a force and clearness, which of itself were enough to show no ordinary power of close and comprehensive conception, no ordinary skill in arranging and expressing its results.

But it is not this felicitous delineation of circumstances and visible scenes that constitutes our principal enjoyment. The faculty of penetrating through obscurity and confusion, to seize the characteristic features of an object, abstract or material; of producing a lively description in the latter case, an accurate and keen scrutiny in the former, is the essential property of intellect, and occupies in its best form a high rank in the scale of mental gifts: but the creative faculty of the poet, and especially of the dramatic poet, is something superadded to this; it is far rarer, and occupies a rank far higher. In this particular, *Fiesco*, without approaching the limits of perfection, yet stands in an elevated range of excellence. The characters, on the whole, are imagined and portrayed with great impressiveness and vigour. Traces of old faults are indeed still to be discovered: there still seems a want of pliancy about the genius of the author; a stiffness and

heaviness in his motions. His sublimity is not to be questioned; but it does not always disdain the aid of rude contrasts and mere theatrical effect. He paints in colours deep and glowing, but without sufficient skill to blend them delicately: he amplifies nature more than purifies it; he omits, but does not well conceal the omission. *Fiesco* has not the complete charm of a true though embellished resemblance to reality; its attraction rather lies in a kind of colossal magnitude, which requires it, if seen to advantage, to be viewed from a distance. Yet the prevailing qualities of the piece do more than make us pardon such defects. If the dramatic imitation is not always entirely successful, it is never very distant from success; and a constant flow of powerful thought and sentiment counteracts, or prevents us from noticing, the failure. We find evidence of great philosophic penetration, great resources of invention, directed by a skilful study of history and men; and everywhere a bold grandeur of feeling and imagery gives life to what study has combined. The chief incidents have a dazzling magnificence; the chief characters, an aspect of majesty and force which corresponds to it. Fervour of heart, capaciousness of intellect and imagination, present themselves on all sides: the general effect is powerful and exalting.

*Fiesco* himself is a personage at once probable and tragically interesting. The luxurious dissipation, in which he veils his daring projects, softens the rudeness of that strength which it half conceals. His immeasurable pride expands itself not only into a disdain of subjection, but also into the most lofty acts

of magnanimity: his blind confidence in fortune seems almost warranted by the resources which he finds in his own fearlessness and imperturbable presence of mind. His ambition participates in the nobleness of his other qualities; he is less anxious that his rivals should yield to him in power than in generosity and greatness of character, attributes of which power is with him but the symbol and the fit employment. Ambition in Fiesco is indeed the common wish of every mind to diffuse its individual influence, to see its own activity reflected back from the united minds of millions: but it is the common wish acting on no common man. He does not long to rule, that he may sway other wills, as it were, by the physical exertion of his own: he would lead us captive by the superior grandeur of his qualities, once fairly manifested; and he aims at dominion, chiefly as it will enable him to manifest these. 'It is not the arena that he values, but what lies in that arena:' the sovereignty is enviable, not for its adventitious splendour, not because it is the object of coarse and universal wonder; but as it offers, in the collected force of a nation, something which the loftiest mortal may find scope for all his powers in guiding. "Spread out the thunder," Fiesco exclaims, "into its single tones, and it becomes a lullaby for children: pour it forth together in *one* quick peal, and the royal sound shall move the heavens." His affections are not less vehement than his other passions: his heart can be melted into powerlessness and tenderness by the mild persuasions of his Leonora; the idea of exalting this amiable being mingles largely with the other



motives to his enterprise. He is, in fact, a great, and might have been a virtuous man; and though in the pursuit of grandeur he swerves from absolute rectitude, we still respect his splendid qualities, and admit the force of the allurements which have led him astray. It is but faintly that we condemn his sentiments, when, after a night spent in struggles between a rigid and a more accommodating patriotism, he looks out of his chamber, as the sun is rising in its calm beauty, and gilding the waves and mountains, and all the innumerable palaces and domes and spires of Genoa, and exclaims with rapture: "This majestic city—mine! To flame over it like the kingly Day; to brood over it with a monarch's power; all these sleepless longings, all these never satiated wishes to be drowned in that unfathomable ocean!" We admire Fiesco, we disapprove of him, and sympathise with him: he is crushed in the ponderous machinery which himself put in motion and thought to control: we lament his fate, but confess that it was not undeserved. He is a fit 'offering of individual free-will to the force of social conventions.'

Fiesco is not the only striking character in the play which bears his name. The narrow fanatical republican virtue of Verrina, the mild and venerable wisdom of the old Doria, the unbridled profligacy of his Nephew, even the cold, contented, irreclaimable perversity of the cutthroat Moor, all dwell in our recollections: but what, next to Fiesco, chiefly attracts us, is the character of Leonora his wife. Leonora is of kindred to Amelia in the *Robbers*, but involved in more complicated relations, and brought

nearer to the actual condition of humanity. She is such a heroine as Schiller most delights to draw. Meek and retiring by the softness of her nature, yet glowing with an ethereal ardour for all that is illustrious and lovely, she clings about her husband, as if her being were one with his. She dreams of remote and peaceful scenes, where Fiesco should be all to her, she all to Fiesco: her idea of love is, that '*her* name should lie in secret behind every one of his thoughts, should speak to him from every object of Nature; that for him, this bright majestic universe itself were but as the shining jewel, on which her image, only *hers*, stood engraved.' Her character seems a reflection of Fiesco's, but refined from his grosser strength, and transfigured into a celestial form of purity, and tenderness, and touching grace. Jealousy cannot move her into anger; she languishes in concealed sorrow, when she thinks herself forgotten. It is affection alone that can rouse her into passion; but under the influence of this, she forgets all weakness and fear. She cannot stay in her palace, on the night when Fiesco's destiny is deciding; she rushes forth, as if inspired, to share in her husband's dangers and sublime deeds, and perishes at last in the tumult.

The death of Leonora, so brought about, and at such a time, is reckoned among the blemishes of the work: that of Fiesco, in which Schiller has ventured to depart from history, is to be more favourably judged of. Fiesco is not here accidentally drowned; but plunged into the waves by the indignant Verrina, who forgets or stifles the feelings of friendship, in his rage at

political apostasy. 'The nature of the Drama,' we are justly told, 'will not suffer the operation of Chance, or of an immediate Providence. Higher spirits can discern the minute fibres of an event stretching through the whole expanse of the system of the world, and hanging, it may be, on the remotest limits of the future and the past, where man discerns nothing save the action itself, hovering unconnected in space. But the artist has to paint for the short view of man, whom he wishes to instruct; not for the piercing eye of superior powers, from whom he learns.'

In the composition of *Fiesco*, Schiller derived the main part of his original materials from history; he could increase the effect by gorgeous representations, and ideas preëxisting in the mind of his reader. Enormity of incident and strangeness of situation lent him a similar assistance in the *Robbers*. *Kabale und Liebe* is destitute of these advantages; it is a tragedy of domestic life; its means of interesting are comprised within itself, and rest on very simple feelings, dignified by no very singular action. The name, *Court-Intriguing and Love*, correctly designates its nature; it aims at exhibiting the conflict, the victorious conflict, of political manœuvring, of cold worldly wisdom, with the pure impassioned movements of the young heart, as yet unsullied by the tarnish of every-day life, inexperienced in its calculations, sick of its empty formalities, and indignantly determined to cast-off the mean restrictions it imposes, which bind so firmly by their number, though singly so contemptible. The idea is far from original: this is a conflict which most men have figured to

themselves, which many men of ardent mind are in some degree constantly waging. To make it, in this simple form, the subject of a drama, seems to be a thought of Schiller's own; but the praise, though not the merit of his undertaking, considerable rather as performed than projected, has been lessened by a multitude of worthless or noxious imitations. The same primary conception has been tortured into a thousand shapes, and tricked out with a thousand tawdry devices and meretricious ornaments, by the Kotzebues, and other 'intellectual Jacobins,' whose productions have brought what we falsely call the 'German Theatre' into such deserved contempt in England. Some portion of the gall, due only to these inflated, flimsy, and fantastic persons, appears to have acted on certain critics in estimating this play of Schiller's. August Wilhelm Schlegel speaks slightly of the work: he says, 'it will hardly move us by its tone of overstrained sensibility, but may well afflict us by the painful impressions which it leaves.' Our own experience has been different from that of Schlegel. In the characters of Louisa and Ferdinand Walter we discovered little overstraining; their sensibility we did not reckon very criminal; seeing it united with a clearness of judgment, chastened by a purity of heart, and controlled by a force of virtuous resolution, in full proportion with itself. We rather admired the genius of the poet, which could elevate a poor music-master's daughter to the dignity of a heroine; could represent, without wounding our sense of propriety, the affection of two noble beings, created for each other by nature, and divided by

rank; we sympathised in their sentiments enough to feel a proper interest in their fate, and see in them, what the author meant we should see, two pure and lofty minds involved in the meshes of vulgar cunning, and borne to destruction by the excess of their own good qualities and the crimes of others.

Ferdinand is a nobleman, but not convinced that 'his patent of nobility is more ancient or of more authority than the primeval scheme of the universe:' he speaks and acts like a young man entertaining such persuasions: disposed to yield everything to reason and true honour, but scarcely anything to mere use and wont. His passion for Louisa is the sign and the nourishment rather than the cause of such a temper: he loves her without limit, as the only creature he has ever met with of a like mind with himself; and this feeling exalts into inspiration what was already the dictate of his nature. We accompany him on his straight and plain path; we rejoice to see him fling aside with a strong arm the artifices and allurements with which a worthless father and more worthless associates assail him at first in vain: there is something attractive in the spectacle of native integrity, fearless though inexperienced, at war with selfishness and craft; something mournful, because the victory will seldom go as we would have it.

Louisa is a meet partner for the generous Ferdinand: the poet has done justice to her character. She is timid and humble; a feeling and richly gifted soul is hid in her by the unkindness of her earthly lot; she is without counsellors except the innate

holiness of her heart, and the dictates of her keen though untutored understanding; yet when the hour of trial comes, she can obey the commands of both, and draw from herself a genuine nobleness of conduct, which secondhand prudence, and wealth, and titles, would but render less touching. Her filial affection, her angelic attachment to her lover, her sublime and artless piety, are beautifully contrasted with the bleakness of her external circumstances: she appears before us like the '*one* rose of the wilderness left on its stalk,' and we grieve to see it crushed and trodden down so rudely.

The innocence, the enthusiasm, the exalted life and stern fate of Louisa and Ferdinand give a powerful charm to this tragedy: it is everywhere interspersed with pieces of fine eloquence, and scenes which move us by their dignity or pathos. We recollect few passages of a more overpowering nature than the conclusion, where Ferdinand, beguiled by the most diabolical machinations to disbelieve the virtue of his mistress, puts himself and her to death by poison. There is a gloomy and solemn might in his despair; though overwhelmed, he seems invincible: his enemies have blinded and imprisoned him in their deceptions; but only that, like Samson, he may overturn his prison-house, and bury himself, and all that have wronged him, in its ruins.

The other characters of the play, though in general properly sustained, are not sufficiently remarkable to claim much of our attention. Wurm, the chief counsellor and agent of the unprincipled, calculating Father, is wicked enough; but there is

no great singularity in his wickedness. He is little more than the dry, cool, and now somewhat vulgar miscreant, the villanous Attorney of modern novels. Kalb also is but a worthless subject, and what is worse, but indifferently handled. He is meant for the feather-brained thing of tags and laces, which frequently inhabits courts; but he wants the grace and agility proper to the species; he is less a fool than a blockhead, less perverted than totally inane. Schiller's strength lay not in comedy, but in something far higher. The great merit of the present work consists in the characters of the hero and heroine; and in this respect it ranks at the very head of its class. As a tragedy of common life, we know of few rivals to it, certainly of no superior.

The production of three such pieces as the *Robbers*, *Fiesco*, and *Kabale und Liebe*, already announced to the world that another great and original mind had appeared, from whose maturity, when such was the promise of its youth, the highest expectations might be formed. These three plays stand related to each other in regard to their nature and form, as well as date: they exhibit the progressive state of Schiller's education; show us the fiery enthusiasm of youth, exasperated into wildness, astonishing in its movements rather than sublime; and the same enthusiasm gradually yielding to the sway of reason, gradually using itself to the constraints prescribed by sound judgment and more extensive knowledge. Of the three, the *Robbers* is doubtless the most singular, and likely perhaps to be the most widely popular: but the latter two are of more real worth in the eye of taste, and will

better bear a careful and rigorous study.

With the appearance of *Fiesco* and its companion, the first period of Schiller's literary history may conclude. The stormy confusions of his youth were now subsiding; after all his aberrations, repulses, and perplexed wanderings, he was at length about to reach his true destination, and times of more serenity began to open for him. Two such tragedies as he had lately offered to the world made it easier for his friend Dalberg to second his pretensions. Schiller was at last gratified by the fulfilment of his favourite scheme; in September 1783, he went to Mannheim, as poet to the theatre, a post of respectability and reasonable profit, to the duties of which he forthwith addressed himself with all his heart. He was not long afterwards elected a member of the German Society established for literary objects in Mannheim; and he valued the honour, not only as a testimony of respect from a highly estimable quarter, but also as a means of uniting him more closely with men of kindred pursuits and tempers: and what was more than all, of quieting forever his apprehensions from the government at Stuttgard. Since his arrival at Mannheim, one or two suspicious incidents had again alarmed him on this head; but being now acknowledged as a subject of the Elector Palatine, naturalised by law in his new country, he had nothing more to fear from the Duke of Würtemberg.

Satisfied with his moderate income, safe, free, and surrounded by friends that loved and honoured him, Schiller now looked confidently forward to what all his efforts had been a search and



hitherto a fruitless search for, an undisturbed life of intellectual labour. What effect this happy aspect of his circumstances must have produced upon him may be easily conjectured. Through many years he had been inured to agitation and distress; now peace and liberty and hope, sweet in themselves, were sweeter for their novelty. For the first time in his life, he saw himself allowed to obey without reluctance the ruling bias of his nature; for the first time inclination and duty went hand in hand. His activity awoke with renovated force in this favourable scene; long-thwarted, half-forgotten projects again kindled into brightness, as the possibility of their accomplishment became apparent: Schiller glowed with a generous pride when he felt his faculties at his own disposal, and thought of the use he meant to make of them. 'All my connexions,' he said, 'are now dissolved. The public is now all to me, my study, my sovereign, my confidant. To the public alone I henceforth belong; before this and no other tribunal will I place myself; this alone do I reverence and fear. Something majestic hovers before me, as I determine now to wear no other fetters but the sentence of the world, to appeal to no other throne but the soul of man.'

These expressions are extracted from the preface to his *Thalia*, a periodical work which he undertook in 1784, devoted to subjects connected with poetry, and chiefly with the drama. In such sentiments we leave him, commencing the arduous and perilous, but also glorious and sublime duties of a life consecrated to the discovery of truth, and the creation of

intellectual beauty. He was now exclusively what is called a *Man of Letters*, for the rest of his days.

**PART II.**  
**FROM SCHILLER'S SETTLEMENT**  
**AT MANNHEIM TO HIS**  
**SETTLEMENT AT**  
**JENA. (1783-1790.)**

**PART SECOND.**  
**[1783-1790.]**

If to know wisdom were to practise it; if fame brought true dignity and peace of mind; or happiness consisted in nourishing the intellect with its appropriate food and surrounding the imagination with ideal beauty, a literary life would be the most enviable which the lot of this world affords. But the truth is far otherwise. The Man of Letters has no immutable, all-conquering volition, more than other men; to understand and to perform are two very different things with him as with every one. His fame rarely exerts a favourable influence on his dignity of character, and never on his peace of mind: its glitter is external, for the eyes of others; within, it is but the aliment of unrest, the oil cast upon the ever-gnawing fire of ambition, quickening into fresh

vehemence the blaze which it stills for a moment. Moreover, this Man of Letters is not wholly made of spirit, but of clay and spirit mixed: his thinking faculties may be nobly trained and exercised, but he must have affections as well as thoughts to make him happy, and food and raiment must be given him or he dies. Far from being the most enviable, his way of life is perhaps, among the many modes by which an ardent mind endeavours to express its activity, the most thickly beset with suffering and degradation. Look at the biography of authors! Except the Newgate Calendar, it is the most sickening chapter in the history of man. The calamities of these people are a fertile topic; and too often their faults and vices have kept pace with their calamities. Nor is it difficult to see how this has happened. Talent of any sort is generally accompanied with a peculiar fineness of sensibility; of genius this is the most essential constituent; and life in any shape has sorrows enough for hearts so formed. The employments of literature sharpen this natural tendency; the vexations that accompany them frequently exasperate it into morbid soreness. The cares and toils of literature are the business of life; its delights are too ethereal and too transient to furnish that perennial flow of satisfaction, coarse but plenteous and substantial, of which happiness in this world of ours is made. The most finished efforts of the mind give it little pleasure, frequently they give it pain; for men's aims are ever far beyond their strength. And the outward recompense of these undertakings, the distinction they confer, is of still smaller value: the desire for

it is insatiable even when successful; and when baffled, it issues in jealousy and envy, and every pitiful and painful feeling. So keen a temperament with so little to restrain or satisfy, so much to distress or tempt it, produces contradictions which few are adequate to reconcile. Hence the unhappiness of literary men, hence their faults and follies.

Thus literature is apt to form a dangerous and discontenting occupation even for the amateur. But for him whose rank and worldly comforts depend on it, who does not live to write, but writes to live, its difficulties and perils are fearfully increased. Few spectacles are more afflicting than that of such a man, so gifted and so fated, so jostled and tossed to and fro in the rude bustle of life, the buffetings of which he is so little fitted to endure. Cherishing, it may be, the loftiest thoughts, and clogged with the meanest wants; of pure and holy purposes, yet ever driven from the straight path by the pressure of necessity, or the impulse of passion; thirsting for glory, and frequently in want of daily bread; hovering between the empyrean of his fancy and the squalid desert of reality; cramped and foiled in his most strenuous exertions; dissatisfied with his best performances, disgusted with his fortune, this Man of Letters too often spends his weary days in conflicts with obscure misery: harassed, chagrined, debased, or maddened; the victim at once of tragedy and farce; the last forlorn outpost in the war of Mind against Matter. Many are the noble souls that have perished bitterly, with their tasks unfinished, under these corroding woes! Some

in utter famine, like Otway; some in dark insanity, like Cowper and Collins; some, like Chatterton, have sought out a more stern quietus, and turning their indignant steps away from a world which refused them welcome, have taken refuge in that strong Fortress, where poverty and cold neglect, and the thousand natural shocks which flesh is heir to, could not reach them any more.

Yet among these men are to be found the brightest specimens and the chief benefactors of mankind! It is they that keep awake the finer parts of our souls; that give us better aims than power or pleasure, and withstand the total sovereignty of Mammon in this earth. They are the vanguard in the march of mind; the intellectual Backwoodsmen, reclaiming from the idle wilderness new territories for the thought and the activity of their happier brethren. Pity that from all their conquests, so rich in benefit to others, themselves should reap so little! But it is vain to murmur. They are volunteers in this cause; they weighed the charms of it against the perils: and they must abide the results of their decision, as all must. The hardships of the course they follow are formidable, but not all inevitable; and to such as pursue it rightly, it is not without its great rewards. If an author's life is more agitated and more painful than that of others, it may also be made more spirit-stirring and exalted: fortune may render him unhappy; it is only himself that can make him despicable. The history of genius has, in fact, its bright side as well as its dark. And if it is distressing to survey the misery, and what is worse,

the debasement of so many gifted men, it is doubly cheering on the other hand to reflect on the few, who, amid the temptations and sorrows to which life in all its provinces and most in theirs is liable, have travelled through it in calm and virtuous majesty, and are now hallowed in our memories, not less for their conduct than their writings. Such men are the flower of this lower world: to such alone can the epithet of great be applied with its true emphasis. There is a congruity in their proceedings which one loves to contemplate: 'he who would write heroic poems, should make his whole life a heroic poem.'

So thought our Milton; and, what was more difficult, he acted so. To Milton, the moral king of authors, a heroic multitude, out of many ages and countries, might be joined; a 'cloud of witnesses,' that encompass the true literary man throughout his pilgrimage, inspiring him to lofty emulation, cheering his solitary thoughts with hope, teaching him to struggle, to endure, to conquer difficulties, or, in failure and heavy sufferings, to

'arm th' obdured breast

With stubborn patience as with triple steel.'

To this august series, in his own degree, the name of Schiller may be added.

Schiller lived in more peaceful times than Milton; his history is less distinguished by obstacles surmounted, or sacrifices made to principle; yet he had his share of trials to encounter; and the

admirers of his writings need not feel ashamed of the way in which he bore it. One virtue, the parent of many others, and the most essential of any, in his circumstances, he possessed in a supreme degree; he was devoted with entire and unchanging ardour to the cause he had embarked in. The extent of his natural endowments might have served, with a less eager character, as an excuse for long periods of indolence, broken only by fits of casual exertion: with him it was but a new incitement to improve and develop them. The Ideal Man that lay within him, the image of himself as he *should* be, was formed upon a strict and curious standard; and to reach this constantly approached and constantly receding emblem of perfection, was the unwearied effort of his life. This crowning principle of conduct, never ceasing to inspire his energetic mind, introduced a consistency into his actions, a firm coherence into his character, which the changeful condition of his history rendered of peculiar importance. His resources, his place of residence, his associates, his worldly prospects, might vary as they pleased; this purpose did not vary; it was ever present with him to nerve every better faculty of his head and heart, to invest the chequered vicissitudes of his fortune with a dignity derived from himself. The zeal of his nature overcame the temptations to that loitering and indecision, that fluctuation between sloth and consuming toil, that infirmity of resolution, with all its tormenting and enfeebling consequences, to which a literary man, working as he does at a solitary task, uncalled for by any pressing tangible demand, and to be



recompensed by distant and dubious advantage, is especially exposed. Unity of aim, aided by ordinary vigour of character, will generally insure perseverance; a quality not ranked among the cardinal virtues, but as essential as any of them to the proper conduct of life. Nine-tenths of the miseries and vices of mankind proceed from idleness: with men of quick minds, to whom it is especially pernicious, this habit is commonly the fruit of many disappointments and schemes oft baffled; and men fail in their schemes not so much from the want of strength as from the ill-direction of it. The weakest living creature, by concentrating his powers on a single object, can accomplish something: the strongest, by dispersing his over many, may fail to accomplish anything. The drop, by continual falling, bores its passage through the hardest rock; the hasty torrent rushes over it with hideous uproar, and leaves no trace behind. Few men have applied more steadfastly to the business of their life, or been more resolutely diligent than Schiller.

The profession of theatrical poet was, in his present circumstances, particularly favourable to the maintenance of this wholesome state of mind. In the fulfilment of its duties, while he gratified his own dearest predilections, he was likewise warmly seconded by the prevailing taste of the public. The interest excited by the stage, and the importance attached to everything connected with it, are greater in Germany than in any other part of Europe, not excepting France, or even Paris. Nor, as in Paris, is the stage in German towns considered merely as a mental

recreation, an elegant and pleasant mode of filling up the vacancy of tedious evenings: in Germany, it has the advantage of being comparatively new; and its exhibitions are directed to a class of minds attuned to a far higher pitch of feeling. The Germans are accused of a proneness to amplify and systematise, to admire with excess, and to find, in whatever calls forth their applause, an epitome of a thousand excellencies, which no one else can discover in it. Their discussions on the theatre do certainly give colour to this charge. Nothing, at least to an English reader, can appear more disproportionate than the influence they impute to the stage, and the quantity of anxious investigation they devote to its concerns.

With us, the question about the moral tendency of theatrical amusements is now very generally consigned to the meditation of debating clubs, and speculative societies of young men under age; with our neighbours it is a weighty subject of inquiry for minds of almost the highest order. With us, the stage is considered as a harmless pastime, wholesome because it occupies the man by occupying his mental, not his sensual faculties; one of the many departments of fictitious representation; perhaps the most exciting, but also the most transitory; sometimes hurtful, generally beneficial, just as the rest are; entitled to no peculiar regard, and far inferior in its effect to many others which have no special apparatus for their application. The Germans, on the contrary, talk of it as of some new organ for refining the hearts and minds of men; a sort of lay pulpit, the worthy ally of the

sacred one, and perhaps even better fitted to exalt some of our nobler feelings; because its objects are much more varied, and because it speaks to us through many avenues, addressing the eye by its pomp and decorations, the ear by its harmonies, and the heart and imagination by its poetical embellishments, and heroic acts and sentiments. Influences still more mysterious are hinted at, if not directly announced. An idea seems to lurk obscurely at the bottom of certain of their abstruse and elaborate speculations, as if the stage were destined to replace some of those sublime illusions which the progress of reason is fast driving from the earth; as if its pageantry, and allegories, and figurative shadowing-forth of things, might supply men's nature with much of that quickening nourishment which we once derived from the superstitions and mythologies of darker ages. Viewing the matter in this light, they proceed in the management of it with all due earnestness. Hence their minute and painful investigations of the origin of dramatic emotion, of its various kinds and degrees; their subdivisions of romantic and heroic and romantico-heroic, and the other endless jargon that encumbers their critical writings. The zeal of the people corresponds with that of their instructors. The want of more important public interests naturally contributes still farther to the prominence of this, the discussion of which is not forbidden, or sure to be without effect. Literature attracts nearly all the powerful thought that circulates in Germany; and the theatre is the great nucleus of German literature.

It was to be expected that Schiller would participate in a feeling so universal, and so accordant with his own wishes and prospects. The theatre of Mannheim was at that period one of the best in Germany; he felt proud of the share which he had in conducting it, and exerted himself with his usual alacrity in promoting its various objects. Connected with the duties of his office, was the more personal duty of improving his own faculties, and extending his knowledge of the art which he had engaged to cultivate. He read much, and studied more. The perusal of Corneille, Racine, Voltaire, and the other French classics, could not be without advantage to one whose exuberance of power, and defect of taste, were the only faults he had ever been reproached with; and the sounder ideas thus acquired, he was constantly busy in exemplifying by attempts of his own. His projected translations from Shakspeare and the French were postponed for the present: indeed, except in the instance of *Macbeth*, they were never finished: his *Conradin von Schwaben*, and a second part of the *Robbers*, were likewise abandoned: but a number of minor undertakings sufficiently evinced his diligence: and *Don Carlos*, which he had now seriously commenced, was occupying all his poetical faculties.

Another matter he had much at heart was the setting forth of a periodical work, devoted to the concerns of the stage. In this enterprise, Schiller had expected the patronage and coöperation of the German Society, of which he was a member. It did not strike him that any other motive than a genuine love of art, and

zeal for its advancement, could have induced men to join such a body. But the zeal of the German Society was more according to knowledge than that of their new associate: they listened with approving ear to his vivid representations, and wide-spreading projects, but declined taking any part in the execution of them. Dalberg alone seemed willing to support him. Mortified, but not disheartened by their coldness, Schiller reckoned up his means of succeeding without them. The plan of his work was contracted within narrower limits; he determined to commence it on his own resources. After much delay, the first number of the *Rheinische Thalia*, enriched by three acts of *Don Carlos*, appeared in 1785. It was continued, with one short interruption, till 1794. The main purpose of the work being the furtherance of dramatic art, and the extension and improvement of the public taste for such entertainments, its chief contents are easy to be guessed at; theatrical criticisms, essays on the nature of the stage, its history in various countries, its moral and intellectual effects, and the best methods of producing them. A part of the publication was open to poetry and miscellaneous discussion.

Meditating so many subjects so assiduously, Schiller knew not what it was to be unemployed. Yet the task of composing dramatic varieties, of training players, and deliberating in the theatrical senate, or even of expressing philosophically his opinions on these points, could not wholly occupy such a mind as his. There were times when, notwithstanding his own prior habits, and all the vaunting of dramaturgists, he felt that their

scenic glories were but an empty show, a lying refuge, where there was no abiding rest for the soul. His eager spirit turned away from their paltry world of pasteboard, to dwell among the deep and serious interests of the living world of men. The *Thalia*, besides its dramatic speculations and performances, contains several of his poems, which indicate that his attention, though officially directed elsewhere, was alive to all the common concerns of humanity; that he looked on life not more as a writer than as a man. The *Laura*, whom he celebrates, was not a vision of the mind; but a living fair one, whom he saw daily, and loved in the secrecy of his heart. His *Gruppe aus dem Tartarus* (Group from Tartarus), his *Kindesmörderinn* (Infanticide), are products of a mind brooding over dark and mysterious things. While improving in the art of poetry, in the capability of uttering his thoughts in the form best adapted to express them, he was likewise improving in the more valuable art of thought itself; and applying it not only to the business of the imagination, but also to those profound and solemn inquiries, which every reasonable mortal is called to engage with.

In particular, the *Philosophische Briefe*, written about this period, exhibits Schiller in a new, and to us more interesting point of view. Julius and Raphael are the emblems of his own fears and his own hopes; their *Philosophic Letters* unfold to us many a gloomy conflict that had passed in the secret chambers of their author's soul. Sceptical doubts on the most important of all subjects were natural to such an understanding as Schiller's;

but his heart was not of a temper to rest satisfied with doubts; or to draw a sorry compensation for them from the pride of superior acuteness, or the vulgar pleasure of producing an effect on others by assailing their dearest and holiest persuasions. With him the question about the essence of our being was not a subject for shallow speculation, charitably named scientific; still less for vain jangling and polemical victories: it was a fearful mystery, which it concerned all the deepest sympathies and most sublime anticipations of his mind to have explained. It is no idle curiosity, but the shuddering voice of nature that asks: 'If our happiness depend on the harmonious play of the sensorium; if our conviction may waver with the beating of the pulse?' What Schiller's ultimate opinions on these points were, we are nowhere specially informed. That his heart was orthodox, that the whole universe was for him a temple, in which he offered up the continual sacrifice of devout adoration, his works and life bear noble testimony; yet, here and there, his fairest visions seem as if suddenly sicklied over with a pale cast of doubt; a withering shadow seems to flit across his soul, and chill it in his loftiest moods. The dark condition of the man who longs to believe and longs in vain, he can represent with a verisimilitude and touching beauty, which shows it to have been familiar to himself. Apart from their ingenuity, there is a certain severe pathos in some of these passages, which affects us with a peculiar emotion. The hero of another work is made to express himself in these terms: 'What went before and what will follow me, I regard as

two black impenetrable curtains, which hang down at the two extremities of human life, and which no living man has yet drawn aside. Many hundreds of generations have already stood before them with their torches, guessing anxiously what lies behind. On the curtain of Futurity, many see their own shadows, the forms of their passions enlarged and put in motion; they shrink in terror at this image of themselves. Poets, philosophers, and founders of states, have painted this curtain with their dreams, more smiling or more dark, as the sky above them was cheerful or gloomy; and their pictures deceive the eye when viewed from a distance. Many jugglers too make profit of this our universal curiosity: by their strange mummeries, they have set the outstretched fancy in amazement. A deep silence reigns behind this curtain; no one once within it will answer those he has left without; all you can hear is a hollow echo of your question, as if you shouted into a chasm. To the other side of this curtain we are all bound: men grasp hold of it as they pass, trembling, uncertain who may stand within it to receive them, *quid sit id quod tantum morituri vident*. Some unbelieving people there have been, who have asserted that this curtain did but make a mockery of men, and that nothing could be seen because nothing *was* behind it: but to convince these people, the rest have seized them, and hastily pushed them in.<sup>11</sup>

The *Philosophic Letters* paint the struggles of an ardent, enthusiastic, inquisitive spirit to deliver itself from the harassing

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<sup>11</sup> *Der Geisterseher*, Schillers Werke, B. iv. p 350.



uncertainties, to penetrate the dread obscurity, which overhangs the lot of man. The first faint scruples of the Doubter are settled by the maxim: 'Believe nothing but thy own reason; there is nothing holier than truth.' But Reason, employed in such an inquiry, can do but half the work: she is like the Conjuror that has pronounced the spell of invocation, but has forgot the counter-word; spectres and shadowy forms come crowding at his summons; in endless multitudes they press and hover round his magic circle, and the terror-struck Black-artist cannot lay them. Julius finds that on rejecting the primary dictates of feeling, the system of dogmatical belief, he is driven to the system of materialism. Recoiling in horror from this dead and cheerless creed, he toils and wanders in the labyrinths of pantheism, seeking comfort and rest, but finding none; till, baffled and tired, and sick at heart, he seems inclined, as far as we can judge, to renounce the dreary problem altogether, to shut the eyes of his too keen understanding, and take refuge under the shade of Revelation. The anxieties and errors of Julius are described in glowing terms; his intellectual subtleties are mingled with the eloquence of intense feeling. The answers of his friend are in a similar style; intended not more to convince than to persuade. The whole work is full of passion as well as acuteness; the impress of a philosophic and poetic mind striving with all its vast energies to make its poetry and its philosophy agree. Considered as exhibiting the state of Schiller's thoughts at this period, it possesses a peculiar interest. In other respects there is little in it

to allure us. It is short and incomplete; there is little originality in the opinions it expresses, and none in the form of its composition. As an argument on either side, it is too rhetorical to be of much weight; it abandons the inquiry when its difficulties and its value are becoming greatest, and breaks off abruptly without arriving at any conclusion. Schiller has surveyed the dark Serbonian bog of Infidelity: but he has, made no causeway through it: the *Philosophic Letters* are a fragment.

Amid employments so varied, with health, and freedom from the coarser hardships of life, Schiller's feelings might be earnest, but could scarcely be unhappy. His mild and amiable manners, united to such goodness of heart, and such height of accomplishment, endeared him to all classes of society in Mannheim; Dalberg was still his warm friend; Schwann and Laura he conversed with daily. His genius was fast enlarging its empire, and fast acquiring more complete command of it; he was loved and admired, rich in the enjoyment of present activity and fame, and richer in the hope of what was coming. Yet in proportion as his faculties and his prospects expanded, he began to view his actual situation with less and less contentment. For a season after his arrival, it was natural that Mannheim should appear to him as land does to the shipwrecked mariner, full of gladness and beauty, merely because it is land. It was equally natural that, after a time, this sentiment should abate and pass away; that his place of refuge should appear but as other places, only with its difficulties and discomforts aggravated by their

nearness. His revenue was inconsiderable here, and dependent upon accidents for its continuance; a share in directing the concerns of a provincial theatre, a task not without its irritations, was little adequate to satisfy the wishes of a mind like his. Schiller longed for a wider sphere of action; the world was all before him; he lamented that he should still be lingering on the mere outskirts of its business; that he should waste so much time and effort in contending with the irascible vanity of players, or watching the ebbs and flows of public taste; in resisting small grievances, and realising a small result. He determined upon leaving Mannheim. If destitute of other holds, his prudence might still have taught him to smother this unrest, the never-failing inmate of every human breast, and patiently continue where he was: but various resources remained to him, and various hopes invited him from other quarters. The produce of his works, or even the exercise of his profession, would insure him a competence anywhere; the former had already gained him distinction and goodwill in every part of Germany. The first number of his *Thalia* had arrived at the court of Hessen-Darmstadt while the Duke of Sachsen-Weimar happened to be there: the perusal of the first acts of *Don Carlos* had introduced the author to that enlightened prince, who expressed his satisfaction and respect by transmitting him the title of Counsellor. A less splendid but not less truthful or pleasing testimonial had lately reached him from Leipzig.

'Some days ago,' he writes, 'I met with a very flattering

and agreeable surprise. There came to me, out of Leipzig, from unknown hands, four parcels, and as many letters, written with the highest enthusiasm towards me, and overflowing with poetical devotion. They were accompanied by four miniature portraits, two of which are of very beautiful young ladies, and by a pocket-book sewed in the finest taste. Such a present, from people who can have no interest in it, but to let me know that they wish me well, and thank me for some cheerful hours, I prize extremely; the loudest applause of the world could scarcely have flattered me so agreeably.'

Perhaps this incident, trifling as it was, might not be without effect in deciding the choice of his future residence. Leipzig had the more substantial charm of being a centre of activity and commerce of all sorts, that of literature not excepted; and it contained some more effectual friends of Schiller than these his unseen admirers. He resolved on going thither. His wishes and intentions are minutely detailed to Huber, his chief intimate at Leipzig, in a letter written shortly before his removal. We translate it for the hints it gives us of Schiller's tastes and habits at that period of his history.

'This, then, is probably the last letter I shall write to you from Mannheim. The time from the fifteenth of March has hung upon my hands, like a trial for life; and, thank Heaven! I am now ten whole days nearer you. And now, my good friend, as you have already consented to take my entire confidence upon your shoulders, allow me the pleasure of leading you into the interior

of my domestic wishes.

'In my new establishment at Leipzig, I purpose to avoid one error, which has plagued me a great deal here in Mannheim. It is this: No longer to conduct my own housekeeping, and also no longer to live alone. The former is not by any means a business I excel in. It costs me less to execute a whole conspiracy, in five acts, than to settle my domestic arrangements for a week; and poetry, you yourself know, is but a dangerous assistant in calculations of economy. My mind is drawn different ways; I fall headlong out of my ideal world, if a holed stocking remind me of the real world.

'As to the other point, I require for my private happiness to have a true warm friend that would be ever at my hand, like my better angel; to whom I could communicate my nascent ideas in the very act of conceiving them, not needing to transmit them, as at present, by letters or long visits. Nay, when this friend of mine lives beyond the four corners of my house, the trifling circumstance, that in order to reach him I must cross the street, dress myself, and so forth, will of itself destroy the enjoyment of the moment, and the train of my thoughts is torn in pieces before I see him.

'Observe you, my good fellow, these are petty matters; but petty matters often bear the weightiest result in the management of life. I know myself better than perhaps a thousand mothers' sons know themselves; I understand how much, and frequently how little, I require to be completely happy. The question

therefore is: Can I get this wish of my heart fulfilled in Leipzig?

'If it were possible that I could make a lodgment with you, all my cares on that head would be removed. I am no bad neighbour, as perhaps you imagine; I have pliancy enough to suit myself to another, and here and there withal a certain knack, as Yorick says, at helping to make him merrier and better. Failing this, if you could find me any person that would undertake my small economy, everything would still be well.

'I want nothing but a bedroom, which might also be my working room; and another chamber for receiving visits. The house-gear necessary for me are a good chest of drawers, a desk, a bed and sofa, a table, and a few chairs. With these conveniences, my accommodation were sufficiently provided for.

'I cannot live on the ground-floor, nor close by the ridge-tile; also my windows positively must not look into the churchyard. I love men, and therefore like their bustle. If I cannot so arrange it that we (meaning the *quintuple alliance*<sup>12</sup>) shall mess together, I would engage at the *table d'hôte* of the inn; for I had rather fast than eat without company, large, or else particularly good.

'I write all this to you, my dearest friend, to forewarn you of my silly tastes; and, at all events, that I may put it in your power to take some preparatory steps, in one place or another, for my settlement. My demands are, in truth, confoundedly naïve, but your goodness has spoiled me.

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<sup>12</sup> Who the other three were is nowhere particularly mentioned.

'The first part of the *Thalia* must already be in your possession; the doom of *Carlos* will ere now be pronounced. Yet I will take it from you orally. Had we five not been acquainted, who knows but we might have become so on occasion of this very *Carlos*?'

Schiller went accordingly to Leipzig; though whether Huber received him, or he found his humble necessities elsewhere, we have not learned. He arrived in the end of March 1785, after eighteen months' residence at Mannheim. The reception he met with, his amusements, occupations, and prospects are described in a letter to the Kammerrath Schwann, a bookseller at Mannheim, alluded to above. Except Dalberg, Schwann had been his earliest friend; he was now endeared to him by subsequent familiarity, not of letters and writing, but of daily intercourse; and what was more than all, by the circumstance that *Laura* was his daughter. The letter, it will be seen, was written with a weightier object than the pleasure of describing Leipzig: it is dated 24th April 1785.

'You have an indubitable right to be angry at my long silence; yet I know your goodness too well to be in doubt that you will pardon me.

'When a man, unskilled as I am in the busy world, visits Leipzig for the first time, during the Fair, it is, if not excusable, at least intelligible, that among the multitude of strange things running through his head, he should for a few days lose recollection of himself. Such, my dearest friend, has till today

been nearly my case; and even now I have to steal from many avocations the pleasing moments which, in idea, I mean to spend with you at Mannheim.

'Our journey hither, of which Herr Götz will give you a circumstantial description, was the most dismal you can well imagine; Bog, Snow and Rain were the three wicked foes that by turns assailed us; and though we used an additional pair of horses all the way from Vach, yet our travelling, which should have ended on Friday, was spun-out till Sunday. It is universally maintained that the Fair has visibly suffered by the shocking state of the roads; at all events, even in my eyes, the crowd of sellers and buyers is far *beneath* the description I used to get of it in the Empire.

'In the very first week of my residence here, I made innumerable new acquaintances; among whom, Weisse, Oeser, Hiller, Zollikofer, Professor Huber, Jünger, the famous actor Reinike, a few merchants' families of the place, and some Berlin people, are the most interesting. During Fair-time, as you know well, a person cannot get the *full* enjoyment of any one; our attention to the individual is dissipated in the noisy multitude.

'My most pleasant recreation hitherto has been to visit Richter's coffee-house, where I constantly find half the *world* of Leipzig assembled, and extend my acquaintance with foreigners and natives.

'From various quarters I have had some alluring invitations to Berlin and Dresden; which it will be difficult for me to withstand.



It is quite a peculiar case, my friend, to have a literary name. The few men of worth and consideration who offer you their intimacy on that score, and whose regard is really worth coveting, are too disagreeably counterweighed by the baleful swarm of creatures who keep humming round you, like so many flesh-flies; gape at you as if you were a monster, and condescend moreover, on the strength of one or two blotted sheets, to present themselves as colleagues. Many people cannot understand how a man that wrote the *Robbers* should look like another son of Adam. Close-cut hair, at the very least, and postillion's boots, and a hunter's whip, were expected.

'Many families are in the habit here of spending the summer in some of the adjacent villages, and so enjoying the pleasures of the country. I mean to pass a few months in Gohlis, which lies only a quarter of a league from Leipzig, with a very pleasant walk leading to it, through the Rosenthal. Here I purpose being very diligent, working at *Carlos* and the *Thalia*; that so, which perhaps will please you more than anything, I may gradually and silently return to my medical profession. I long impatiently for that epoch of my life, when my prospects may be settled and determined, when I may follow my darling pursuits merely for my own pleasure. At one time I studied medicine *con amore*; could I not do it now with still greater keenness?

'This, my best friend, might of itself convince you of the truth and firmness of my purpose; but what should offer you the most complete security on that point, what must banish all your doubts

about my steadfastness, I have yet kept secret. *Now or never* I must speak it out. Distance alone gives me courage to express the wish of my heart. Frequently enough, when I used to have the happiness of being near you, has this confession hovered on my tongue; but my confidence always forsook me, when I tried to utter it. My best friend! Your goodness, your affection, your generosity of heart, have encouraged me in a hope which I can justify by nothing but the friendship and respect you have always shown me. My free, unconstrained access to your house afforded me the opportunity of intimate acquaintance with your amiable daughter; and the frank, kind treatment with which both you and she honoured me, tempted my heart to entertain the bold wish of becoming your son. My prospects have hitherto been dim and vague; they now begin to alter in my favour. I will strive with more continuous vigour when the goal is clear; do you decide whether I can reach it, when the dearest wish of my heart supports my zeal.

'Yet two short years and my whole fortune will be determined. I feel how *much* I ask, how boldly, and with how little right I ask it. A year is past since this thought took possession of my soul; but my esteem for you and your excellent daughter was too high to allow room for a wish, which at that time I could found on no solid basis. I made it a duty with myself to visit your house less frequently, and to dissipate such feelings by absence; but this poor artifice did not avail me.

'The Duke of Weimar was the first person to whom I disclosed

myself. His anticipating goodness, and the declaration that he took an interest in my happiness, induced me to confess that this happiness depended on a union with your noble daughter; and he expressed his satisfaction at my choice. I have reason to hope that he will do more, should it come to the point of completing my happiness by this union.

'I shall add nothing farther: I know well that hundreds of others might afford your daughter a more splendid fate than I at this moment can promise her; but that any other *heart* can be more worthy of her, I venture to deny. Your decision, which I look for with impatience and fearful expectation, will determine whether I may venture to write in person to your daughter. Fare you well, forever loved by—Your—

*'Friedrich Schiller.'*

Concerning this proposal, we have no farther information to communicate; except that the parties did not marry, and did not cease being friends. That Schiller obtained the permission he concludes with requesting, appears from other sources. Three years afterwards, in writing to the same person, he alludes emphatically to his eldest daughter; and what is more ominous, *apologises* for his silence to her. Schiller's situation at this period was such as to preclude the idea of present marriage; perhaps, in the prospect of it, *Laura* and he commenced corresponding; and before the wished-for change of fortune had arrived, both of them, attracted to other objects, had lost one another in the vortex of life, and ceased to regard their finding one another as

desirable.

Schiller's medical project, like many which he formed, never came to any issue. In moments of anxiety, amid the fluctuations of his lot, the thought of this profession floated through his mind, as of a distant stronghold, to which, in time of need, he might retire. But literature was too intimately interwoven with his dispositions and his habits to be seriously interfered with; it was only at brief intervals that the pleasure of pursuing it exclusively seemed overbalanced by its inconveniences. He needed a more certain income than poetry could yield him; but he wished to derive it from some pursuit less alien to his darling study. Medicine he never practised after leaving Stuttgart.

In the mean time, whatever he might afterwards resolve on, he determined to complete his *Carlos*, the half of which, composed a considerable time before, had lately been running the gauntlet of criticism in the *Thalia*.<sup>13</sup> With this for his chief occupation, Gohlis or Leipzig for his residence, and a circle of chosen friends for his entertainment, Schiller's days went happily along. His *Lied an die Freude* (Song to Joy), one of his most spirited and beautiful lyrical productions, was composed here: it bespeaks a mind impetuous even in its gladness, and overflowing with warm and earnest emotions.

But the love of change is grounded on the difference between anticipation and reality, and dwells with man till the age when

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<sup>13</sup> Wieland's rather harsh and not too judicious sentence on it may be seen at large in Gruber's *Wieland Geschildert*, B. ii. S. 571.

habit becomes stronger than desire, or anticipation ceases to be hope. Schiller did not find that his establishment at Leipzig, though pleasant while it lasted, would realise his ulterior views: he yielded to some of his 'alluring invitations,' and went to Dresden in the end of summer. Dresden contained many persons who admired him, more who admired his fame, and a few who loved himself. Among the latter, the Appellationsrath Körner deserves especial mention.<sup>14</sup> Schiller found a true friend in Körner, and made his house a home. He parted his time between Dresden and Löschwitz, near it, where that gentleman resided: it was here that *Don Carlos*, the printing of which was meanwhile proceeding at Leipzig, received its completion and last corrections.<sup>15</sup> It was published in 1786.

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<sup>14</sup> The well-written life, prefixed to the Stuttgart and Tübingen edition of Schiller's works, is by this Körner. The Theodor Körner, whose *Lyre and Sword* became afterwards famous, was his son.

<sup>15</sup> In vol. x. of the Vienna edition of Schiller are some ludicrous verses, almost his sole attempt in the way of drollery, bearing a title equivalent to this: 'To the Right Honourable the Board of Washers, the most humble Memorial of a downcast Tragic Poet, at Löschwitz;' of which Doering gives the following account. 'The first part of *Don Carlos* being already printed, by Göschen, in Leipzig, the poet, pressed for the remainder, felt himself obliged to stay behind from an excursion which the Körner family were making, in a fine autumn day. Unluckily, the lady of the house, thinking Schiller was to go along with them, had locked all her cupboards and the cellar. Schiller found himself without meat or drink, or even wood for fuel; still farther exasperated by the dabbling of some washer-maids beneath his window, he produced these lines.' The poem is of the kind which cannot be translated; the first three stanzas are as follows: "Die Wäsche klatscht vor meiner Thür, Es plarrt die Küchenzofe, Und mich, mich fuhr't das Flügelthier Zu König Philips Hofe. Ich eile durch die Gallerie Mit schnellem Schritt, belausche Dort die Prinzessin Ebo! Im süßen Liebesrausche. Schon

The story of Don Carlos seems peculiarly adapted for dramatists. The spectacle of a royal youth condemned to death by his father, of which happily our European annals furnish but another example, is among the most tragical that can be figured; the character of that youth, the intermixture of bigotry and jealousy, and love, with the other strong passions, which brought on his fate, afford a combination of circumstances, affecting in themselves, and well calculated for the basis of deeply interesting fiction. Accordingly they have not been neglected: Carlos has often been the theme of poets; particularly since the time when his history, recorded by the Abbé St. Réal, was exposed in more brilliant colours to the inspection of every writer, and almost of every reader.

The Abbé St. Réal was a dexterous artist in that half-illicit species of composition, the historic novel: in the course of his operations, he lighted on these incidents; and, by filling-up according to his fancy, what historians had only sketched to him, by amplifying, beautifying, suppressing, and arranging, he worked the whole into a striking little narrative, distinguished by all the symmetry, the sparkling graces, the vigorous description, and keen thought, which characterise his other writings. This French Sallust, as his countrymen have named him, has been of use to many dramatists. His *Conjuration contre Venise* furnished Otway with the outline of his best tragedy; *Epicaris* has more

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ruft das schöne Weib: Triumph! Schon hör' ich—Tod und Hölle! Was hör' ich—einen nassen StrumpfGeworfen in die Welle."

than once appeared upon the stage; and *Don Carlos* has been dramatised in almost all the languages of Europe. Besides Otway's *Carlos* so famous at its first appearance, many tragedies on this subject have been written: most of them are gathered to their final rest; some are fast going thither; two bid fair to last for ages. Schiller and Alfieri have both drawn their plot from St. Réal; the former has expanded and added; the latter has compressed and abbreviated.

Schiller's *Carlos* is the first of his plays that bears the stamp of anything like full maturity. The opportunities he had enjoyed for extending his knowledge of men and things, the sedulous practice of the art of composition, the study of purer models, had not been without their full effect. Increase of years had done something for him; diligence had done much more. The ebullience of youth is now chastened into the steadfast energy of manhood; the wild enthusiast, that spurned at the errors of the world, has now become the enlightened moralist, that laments their necessity, or endeavours to find out their remedy. A corresponding alteration is visible in the external form of the work, in its plot and diction. The plot is contrived with great ingenuity, embodying the result of much study, both dramatic and historical. The language is blank verse, not prose, as in the former works; it is more careful and regular, less ambitious in its object, but more certain of attaining it. Schiller's mind had now reached its full stature: he felt and thought more justly; he could better express what he felt and thought.

The merit we noticed in *Fiesco*, the fidelity with which the scene of action is brought before us, is observable to a still greater degree in *Don Carlos*. The Spanish court in the end of the sixteenth century; its rigid, cold formalities; its cruel, bigoted, but proud-spirited grandees; its inquisitors and priests, and Philip, its head, the epitome at once of its good and its bad qualities, in all his complex interests, are exhibited with wonderful distinctness and address. Nor is it at the surface or the outward movements alone that we look; we are taught the mechanism of their characters, as well as shown it in action. The stony-hearted Despot himself must have been an object of peculiar study to the author. Narrow in his understanding, dead in his affections, from his birth the lord of Europe, Philip has existed all his days above men, not among them. Locked up within himself, a stranger to every generous and kindly emotion, his gloomy spirit has had no employment but to strengthen or increase its own elevation, no pleasure but to gratify its own self-will. Superstition, harmonising with these native tendencies, has added to their force, but scarcely to their hatefulness: it lends them a sort of sacredness in his own eyes, and even a sort of horrid dignity in ours. Philip is not without a certain greatness, the greatness of unlimited external power, and of a will relentless in its dictates, guided by principles, false, but consistent and unalterable. The scene of his existence is haggard, stern and desolate; but it is all his own, and he seems fitted for it. We hate him and fear him; but the poet has taken care to secure him from



contempt.

The contrast both of his father's fortune and character are those of Carlos. Few situations of a more affecting kind can be imagined, than the situation of this young, generous and ill-fated prince. From boyhood his heart had been bent on mighty things; he had looked upon the royal grandeur that awaited his maturer years, only as the means of realising those projects for the good of men, which his beneficent soul was ever busied with. His father's dispositions, and the temper of the court, which admitted no development of such ideas, had given the charm of concealment to his feelings; his life had been in prospect; and we are the more attached to him, that deserving to be glorious and happy, he had but expected to be either. Bright days, however, seemed approaching; shut out from the communion of the Albas and Domingos, among whom he lived a stranger, the communion of another and far dearer object was to be granted him; Elizabeth's love seemed to make him independent even of the future, which it painted with still richer hues. But in a moment she is taken from him by the most terrible of all visitations; his bride becomes his mother; and the stroke that deprives him of her, while it ruins him forever, is more deadly, because it cannot be complained of without sacrilege, and cannot be altered by the power of Fate itself. Carlos, as the poet represents him, calls forth our tenderest sympathies. His soul seems once to have been rich and glorious, like the garden of Eden; but the desert-wind has passed over it, and smitten it with perpetual blight. Despair has overshadowed

all the fair visions of his youth; or if he hopes, it is but the gleam of delirium, which something sterner than even duty extinguishes in the cold darkness of death. His energy survives but to vent itself in wild gusts of reckless passion, or aimless indignation. There is a touching poignancy in his expression of the bitter melancholy that oppresses him, in the fixedness of misery with which he looks upon the faded dreams of former years, or the fierce ebullitions and dreary pauses of resolution, which now prompts him to retrieve what he has lost, now withers into powerlessness, as nature and reason tell him that it cannot, must not be retrieved.

Elizabeth, no less moving and attractive, is also depicted with masterly skill. If she returns the passion of her amiable and once betrothed lover, we but guess at the fact; for so horrible a thought has never once been whispered to her own gentle and spotless mind. Yet her heart bleeds for Carlos; and we see that did not the most sacred feelings of humanity forbid her, there is no sacrifice she would not make to restore his peace of mind. By her soothing influence she strives to calm the agony of his spirit; by her mild winning eloquence she would persuade him that for Don Carlos other objects must remain, when his hopes of personal felicity have been cut off; she would change his love for her into love for the millions of human beings whose destiny depends on his. A meek vestal, yet with the prudence of a queen, and the courage of a matron, with every graceful and generous quality of womanhood harmoniously blended in her nature, she

lives in a scene that is foreign to her; the happiness she should have had is beside her, the misery she must endure is around her; yet she utters no regret, gives way to no complaint, but seeks to draw from duty itself a compensation for the cureless evil which duty has inflicted. Many tragic queens are more imposing and majestic than this Elizabeth of Schiller; but there is none who rules over us with a sway so soft and feminine, none whom we feel so much disposed to love as well as reverence.

The virtues of Elizabeth are heightened by comparison with the principles and actions of her attendant, the Princess Eboli. The character of Eboli is full of pomp and profession; magnanimity and devotedness are on her tongue, some shadow of them even floats in her imagination; but they are not rooted in her heart; pride, selfishness, unlawful passion are the only inmates there. Her lofty boastings of generosity are soon forgotten when the success of her attachment to Carlos becomes hopeless; the fervour of a selfish love once extinguished in her bosom, she regards the object of it with none but vulgar feelings. Virtue no longer according with interest, she ceases to be virtuous; from a rejected mistress the transition to a jealous spy is with her natural and easy. Yet we do not hate the Princess: there is a seductive warmth and grace about her character, which makes us lament her vices rather than condemn them. The poet has drawn her at once false and fair.

In delineating Eboli and Philip, Schiller seems as if struggling against the current of his nature; our feelings towards them are

hardly so severe as he intended; their words and deeds, at least those of the latter, are wicked and repulsive enough; but we still have a kind of latent persuasion that they meant better than they spoke or acted. With the Marquis of Posa, he had a more genial task. This Posa, we can easily perceive, is the representative of Schiller himself. The ardent love of men, which forms his ruling passion, was likewise the constant feeling of his author; the glowing eloquence with which he advocates the cause of truth, and justice, and humanity, was such as Schiller too would have employed in similar circumstances. In some respects, Posa is the chief character of the piece; there is a preëminent magnificence in his object, and in the faculties and feelings with which he follows it. Of a splendid intellect, and a daring devoted heart, his powers are all combined upon a single purpose. Even his friendship for Carlos, grounded on the likeness of their minds, and faithful as it is, yet seems to merge in this paramount emotion, zeal for the universal interests of man. Aiming, with all his force of thought and action, to advance the happiness and best rights of his fellow-creatures; pursuing this noble aim with the skill and dignity which it deserves, his mind is at once unwearied, earnest and serene. He is another Carlos, but somewhat older, more experienced, and never crossed in hopeless love. There is a calm strength in Posa, which no accident of fortune can shake. Whether cheering the forlorn Carlos into new activity; whether lifting up his voice in the ear of tyrants and inquisitors, or taking leave of life amid his vast unexecuted schemes, there is the same

sedate magnanimity, the same fearless composure: when the fatal bullet strikes him, he dies with the concerns of others, not his own, upon his lips. He is a reformer, the perfection of reformers; not a revolutionist, but a prudent though determined improver. His enthusiasm does not burst forth in violence, but in manly and enlightened energy; his eloquence is not more moving to the heart than his lofty philosophy is convincing to the head. There is a majestic vastness of thought in his precepts, which recommends them to the mind independently of the beauty of their dress. Few passages of poetry are more spirit-stirring than his last message to Carlos, through the Queen. The certainty of death seems to surround his spirit with a kind of martyr glory; he is kindled into transport, and speaks with a commanding power. The pathetic wisdom of the line, 'Tell him, that when he is a man, he must reverence the dreams of his youth,' has often been admired: that scene has many such.

The interview with Philip is not less excellent. There is something so striking in the idea of confronting the cold solitary tyrant with 'the only man in all his states that does not need him;' of raising the voice of true manhood for once within the gloomy chambers of thralldom and priestcraft, that we can forgive the stretch of poetic license by which it is effected. Philip and Posa are antipodes in all respects. Philip thinks his new instructor is 'a Protestant;' a charge which Posa rebuts with calm dignity, his object not being separation and contention, but union and peaceful gradual improvement. Posa seems to understand the

character of Philip better; not attempting to awaken in his sterile heart any feeling for real glory, or the interests of his fellow-men, he attacks his selfishness and pride, represents to him the intrinsic meanness and misery of a throne, however decked with adventitious pomp, if built on servitude, and isolated from the sympathies and interests of others.

We translate the entire scene; though not by any means the best, it is among the fittest for extraction of any in the piece. Posa has been sent for by the King, and is waiting in a chamber of the palace to know what is required of him; the King enters, unperceived by Posa, whose attention is directed to a picture on the wall:

## **Act III. Scene X**

### **The King and Marquis de Posa**

[The latter, on noticing the King, advances towards him, and kneels, then rises, and waits without any symptom of embarrassment.]

*King.* [*looks at him with surprise*].

We have met before, then?

*Mar.* No.

*King.* You did my crown

Some service: wherefore have you shunn'd my thanks?

Our memory is besieged by crowds of suitors;

Omniscient is none but He in Heaven.

You should have sought my looks: why did you not?

*Mar.* 'Tis scarcely yet two days, your Majesty,

Since I returned to Spain.

*King.* I am not used

To be my servants' debtor; ask of me

Some favour.

*Mar.* I enjoy the laws.

*King.* That right

The very murd'rer has.

*Mar.* And how much more

The honest citizen!—Sire, I'm content.

*King* [*aside*]. Much self-respect indeed, and lofty daring!

But this was to be looked for: I would have

My Spaniards haughty; better that the cup

Should overflow than not be full.—I hear

You left my service, Marquis.

*Mar.* Making way

For men more worthy, I withdrew.

*King.* 'Tis wrong:

When spirits such as yours play truant,  
My state must suffer. You conceive, perhaps,  
Some post unworthy of your merits  
Might be offer'd you?

*Mar.* No, Sire, I cannot doubt

But that a judge so skilful, and experienced  
In the gifts of men, has at a glance discover'd  
Wherein I might do him service, wherein not.  
I feel with humble gratitude the favour,  
With which your Majesty is loading me  
By thoughts so lofty: yet I can—[*He stops.*]

*King.* You pause?

*Mar.* Sire, at the moment I am scarce prepar'd  
To speak, in phrases of a Spanish subject,  
What as a citizen o' th' world I've thought.  
Truth is, in parting from the Court forever,  
I held myself discharged from all necessity  
Of troubling it with reasons for my absence.

*King.* Are your reasons bad, then? Dare you not risk  
Disclosing them?

*Mar.* My life, and joyfully,



Were scope allow'd me to disclose them *all*.  
'Tis not myself but Truth that I endanger,  
Should the King refuse me a full hearing.  
Your anger or contempt I fain would shun;  
But forced to choose between them, I had rather  
Seem to you a man deserving punishment  
Than pity.

*King [with a look of expectation].* Well?

*Mar.* The servant of a prince  
I cannot be. [*The King looks at him with astonishment.*]  
I will not cheat my merchant:  
If you deign to take me as your servant,  
You expect, you wish, my actions only;  
You wish my arm in fight, my thought in counsel;  
Nothing more you will accept of: not my actions,  
Th' approval they might find at Court becomes  
The object of my acting. Now for me  
Right conduct has a value of its own:  
The happiness my king might cause me plant  
I would myself produce; and conscious joy,  
And free selection, not the force of duty,  
Should impel me. Is it thus your Majesty  
Requires it? Could you suffer new creators  
In your own creation? Or could I  
Consent with patience to become the chisel,  
When I hoped to be the statuary?  
I love mankind; and in a monarchy,

Myself is all that I can love.

*King.* This fire

Is laudable. You would do good to others;  
How you do it, patriots, wise men think  
Of little moment, so it be but done.  
Seek for yourself the office in my kingdoms  
That will give you scope to gratify  
This noble zeal.

*Mar.* There is not such an office.

*King.* How?

*Mar.* What the king desires to spread abroad  
Through these weak hands, is it the good of men?  
That good which my unfetter'd love would wish them?  
Pale majesty would tremble to behold it!  
No! Policy has fashioned in her courts  
Another sort of human good; a sort  
Which *she* is rich enough to give away,  
Awakening with it in the hearts of men  
New cravings, such as *it* can satisfy.  
Truth she keeps coining in her mints, such truth  
As she can tolerate; and every die  
Except her own she breaks and casts away.  
But is the royal bounty wide enough  
For me to wish and work in? Must the love  
I hear my brother pledge itself to be

My brother's jailor? Can I call him happy  
When he dare not think? Sire, choose some other  
To dispense the good which *you* have stamped for us.  
With me it tallies not; a prince's servant  
I cannot be.

*King [rather quickly].*  
You are a Protestant.

*Mar. [after some reflection]*  
Sire, your creed is also mine.[*After a pause.*  
I find  
I am misunderstood: 'tis as I feared.  
You see me draw the veil from majesty,  
And view its mysteries with steadfast eye:  
How should you know if I regard as holy  
What I no more regard as terrible?  
Dangerous I seem, for bearing thoughts too high:  
My King, I am not dangerous: my wishes  
Lie buried here.[*Laying his hand on his breast.*  
The poor and purblind rage  
Of innovation, that but aggravates  
The weight o' th' fetters which it cannot break,  
Will never heat *my* blood. The century  
Admits not my ideas: I live a citizen  
Of those that are to come. Sire, can a picture  
Break your rest? Your breath obliterates it.

*King.* No other knows you harbour such ideas?

*Mar.* Such, no one.

*King [rises, walks a few steps, then stops opposite the Marquis.*

*—Aside].* New at least, this dialect!

Flattery exhausts itself: a man of parts

Disdains to imitate. For once let's have

A trial of the opposite! Why not?

The strange is oft the lucky.—If so be

This is your principle, why let it pass!

I will conform; the crown shall have a servant

New in Spain,—a liberal!

*Mar.* Sire, I see

How very meanly you conceive of men;

How, in the language of the frank true spirit

You find but another deeper artifice

Of a more practis'd coz'ner: I can also

Partly see what causes this. 'Tis men;

'Tis men that force you to it: they themselves

Have cast away their own nobility,

Themselves have crouch'd to this degraded posture.

Man's innate greatness, like a spectre, frights them;

Their poverty seems safety; with base skill

They ornament their chains, and call it virtue

To wear them with an air of grace. Twas thus

You found the world; thus from your royal father

Came it to you: how in this distorted,

Mutilated image could you honour man?

*King.* Some truth there is in this.

*Mar.* Pity, however,  
That in taking man from the Creator,  
And changing him into *your* handiwork,  
And setting up yourself to be the god  
Of this new-moulded creature, you should have  
Forgotten one essential; you yourself  
Remained a man, a very child of Adam!  
You are still a suffering, longing mortal,  
You call for sympathy, and to a god  
We can but sacrifice, and pray, and tremble!  
O unwise exchange! unblest'd perversion!  
When you have sunk your brothers to be play'd  
As harp-strings, who will join in harmony  
With you the player?

*King* [*aside*]. By Heaven, he touches me!

*Mar.* For you, however, this is unimportant;  
It but makes you separate, peculiar;  
'Tis the price you pay for being a god.  
And frightful were it if you failed in this!  
If for the desolated good of millions,  
You the Desolator should gain—nothing!  
If the very freedom you have blighted  
And kill'd were that alone which could exalt  
Yourself!—Sire, pardon me, I must not stay:

The matter makes me rash: my heart is full,  
Too strong the charm of looking on the one  
Of living men to whom I might unfold it.

[The Count de Lerma enters, and whispers a few words to the King. The latter beckons to him to withdraw, and continues sitting in his former posture.]

*King* [*to the Marquis, after Lerma is gone*].  
Speak on!

*Mar.* [*after a pause*] I feel, Sire, all the worth—

*King.* Speak on!  
Y' had something more to say.

*Mar.* Not long since, Sire,  
I chanced to pass through Flanders and Brabant.  
So many rich and flourishing provinces;  
A great, a mighty people, and still more,  
An honest people!—And this people's Father!  
That, thought I, must be divine: so thinking,  
I stumbled on a heap of human bones.

[He pauses; his eyes rest on the King, who endeavours to return his glance, but with an air of embarrassment is forced to look upon the ground.]

You are in the right, you *must* proceed so.  
That you *could* do, what you saw you *must* do,  
Fills me with a shuddering admiration.  
Pity that the victim welt'ring in its blood  
Should speak so feeble an eulogium  
On the spirit of the priest! That mere men,  
Not beings of a calmer essence, write  
The annals of the world! Serener ages  
Will displace the age of Philip; these will bring  
A milder wisdom; the subject's good will then  
Be reconcil'd to th' prince's greatness;  
The thrifty State will learn to prize its children,  
And necessity no more will be inhuman.

*King.* And when, think you, would those blessed ages  
Have come round, had I recoil'd before  
The curse of this? Behold my Spain! Here blooms  
The subject's good, in never-clouded peace:  
*Such* peace will I bestow on Flanders.

*Mar.* Peace of a churchyard! And you hope to end  
What you have entered on? Hope to withstand  
The timeful change of Christendom; to stop  
The universal Spring that shall make young  
The countenance o' th' Earth? *You* purpose, single  
In all Europe, alone, to fling yourself  
Against the wheel of Destiny that rolls  
For ever its appointed course; to clutch  
Its spokes with mortal arm? You may not, Sire!

Already thousands have forsook your kingdoms,  
Escaping glad though poor: the citizen  
You lost for conscience' sake, he was your noblest.  
With mother's arms Elizabeth receives  
The fugitives, and rich by foreign skill,  
In fertile strength her England blooms. Forsaken  
Of its toilsome people, lies Grenada  
Desolate; and Europe sees with glad surprise  
Its enemy faint with self-inflicted wounds.

[The King seems moved: the Marquis observes it, and  
advances some steps nearer.

Plant for Eternity and death the seed?  
Your harvest will be nothingness. The work  
Will not survive the spirit of its former;  
It will be in vain that you have labour'd;  
That you have fought the fight with Nature;  
And to plans of Ruin consecrated  
A high and royal lifetime. Man is greater  
Than you thought. The bondage of long slumber  
He will break; his sacred rights he will reclaim.  
With Nero and Busiris will he rank  
The name of Philip, and—that grieves me, for  
You once were good.

*King.* How know you that?



*Mar.* [*with warm energy*] You were;  
Yes, by th' All-Merciful! Yes, I repeat it.  
Restore to us what you have taken from us.  
Generous as strong, let human happiness  
Stream from your horn of plenty, let souls ripen  
Round you. Restore us what you took from us.  
Amid a thousand kings become a king.

[He approaches him boldly, fixing on him firm and glowing looks.

Oh, could the eloquence of all the millions,  
Who participate in this great moment,  
Hover on my lips, and raise into a flame  
That gleam that kindles in your eyes!  
Give up this false idolatry of self,  
Which makes your brothers nothing! Be to us  
A pattern of the Everlasting and the True!  
Never, never, did a mortal hold so much,  
To use it so divinely. All the kings  
Of Europe reverence the name of Spain:  
Go on in front of all the kings of Europe!  
One movement of your pen, and new-created  
Is the Earth. Say but, Let there be freedom!  
[*Throwing himself at his feet.*

*King* [*surprised, turning his face away, then again towards Posa*].

Singular enthusiast! Yet—rise—I—

*Mar.* Look round and view God's lordly universe:  
On Freedom it is founded, and how rich  
Is it with Freedom! He, the great Creator,  
Has giv'n the very worm its sev'ral dewdrop;  
Ev'n in the mouldering spaces of Decay,  
He leaves Free-will the pleasures of a choice.  
This world of *yours*! how narrow and how poor!  
The rustling of a leaf alarms the lord  
Of Christendom. You quake at every virtue;  
He, not to mar the glorious form of Freedom,  
Suffers that the hideous hosts of Evil  
Should run riot in his fair Creation.  
Him the maker we behold not; calm  
He veils himself in everlasting laws,  
Which and not Him the sceptic seeing exclaims,  
'Wherefore a God? The World itself is God.'  
And never did a Christian's adoration  
So praise him as this sceptic's blasphemy.

*King.* And such a model you would undertake,  
On Earth, in my domains to imitate?

*Mar.* You, you can: who else? To th' people's good  
Devote the kingly power, which far too long  
Has struggled for the greatness of the throne.  
Restore the lost nobility of man.  
Once more make of the subject what he was,

The purpose of the Crown; let no tie bind him,  
Except his brethren's right, as sacred as  
His own. And when, given back to self-dependence,  
Man awakens to the feeling of his worth,  
And freedom's proud and lofty virtues blossom,  
Then, Sire, having made *your* realms the happiest  
In the Earth, it may become your duty  
To subdue the realms of others.

*King [after a long pause].*

I have heard you to an end.

Not as in common heads, the world is painted  
In that head of yours: nor will I mete you  
By the common standard. I am the first  
To whom your heart has been disclosed:  
I know this, so believe it. For the sake  
Of such forbearance; for your having kept  
Ideas, embraced with such devotion, secret  
Up to this present moment, for the sake  
Of that reserve, young man, I will forget  
That I have learned them, and how I learned them.  
Arise. The headlong youth I will set right,  
Not as his sovereign, but as his senior.  
I will, because I will. So! bane itself,  
I find, in generous natures may become  
Ennobled into something better. But  
Beware my Inquisition! It would grieve me  
If you—

*Mar.* Would it? would it?

*King* [*gazing at him, and lost in surprise*].

Such a mortal

Till this hour I never saw. No, Marquis!

No! You do me wrong. To you I will not

Be a Nero, not to you. *All* happiness

Shall not be blighted by me: you yourself

Shall be permitted to remain a man

Beside me.

*Mar.* [*quickly*] And my fellow-subjects, Sire?

Oh, not for *me*, not *my* cause was I pleading.

And your subjects, Sire?

*King.* You see so clearly

How posterity will judge of me; yourself

Shall teach it how I treated men so soon

As I had found one.

*Mar.* O Sire! in being

The most just of kings, at the same instant

Be not the most unjust! In your Flanders

Are many thousands worthier than I.

'Tis but yourself,—shall I confess it, Sire?—

That under this mild form first truly see

What freedom is.

*King* [*with softened earnestness*].

Young man, no more of this.  
Far differently will you think of men,  
When you have seen and studied them as I have.  
Yet our first meeting must not be our last;  
How shall I try to make you mine?

*Mar.* Sire, let me  
Continue as I am. What good were it  
To you, if I like others were corrupted?  
*King.* This pride I will not suffer. From this moment  
You are in my service. No remonstrance!  
I will have it so. \* \* \* \* \*

Had the character of Posa been drawn ten years later, it would have been imputed, as all things are, to the 'French Revolution;' and Schiller himself perhaps might have been called a Jacobin. Happily, as matters stand, there is room for no such imputation. It is pleasing to behold in Posa the deliberate expression of a great and good man's sentiments on these ever-agitated subjects: a noble monument, embodying the liberal ideas of his age, in a form beautified by his own genius, and lasting as its other products.<sup>16</sup>

Connected with the superior excellence of Posa, critics have remarked a dramatic error, which the author himself was the first to acknowledge and account for. The magnitude of Posa throws

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<sup>16</sup> Jean Paul nevertheless, not without some show of reason, has compared this Posa to the tower of a lighthouse: 'high, far-shining,—empty!' (*Note of 1845.*)

Carlos into the shade; the hero of the first three acts is no longer the hero of the other two. The cause of this, we are informed, was that Schiller kept the work too long upon his own hands:

'In composing the piece,' he observes, 'many interruptions occurred; so that a considerable time elapsed between beginning and concluding it; and, in the mean while, much within myself had changed. The various alterations which, during this period, my way of thinking and feeling underwent, naturally told upon the work I was engaged with. What parts of it had at first attracted me, began to produce this effect in a weaker degree, and, in the end, scarcely at all. New ideas, springing up in the interim, displaced the former ones; Carlos himself had lost my favour, perhaps for no other reason than because I had become his senior; and, from the opposite cause, Posa had occupied his place. Thus I commenced the fourth and fifth acts with quite an altered heart. But the first three were already in the hands of the public; the plan of the whole could not now be re-formed; nothing therefore remained but to suppress the piece entirely, or to fit the second half to the first the best way I could.'

The imperfection alluded to is one of which the general reader will make no great account; the second half is fitted to the first with address enough for his purposes. Intent not upon applying the dramatic gauge, but on being moved and exalted, we may peruse the tragedy without noticing that any such defect exists in it. The pity and love we are first taught to feel for Carlos abide with us to the last; and though Posa rises in importance as the

piece proceeds, our admiration of his transcendent virtues does not obstruct the gentler feelings with which we look upon the fate of his friend. A certain confusion and crowding together of events, about the end of the play, is the only fault in its plan that strikes us with any force. Even this is scarcely prominent enough to be offensive.

An intrinsic and weightier defect is the want of ease and lightness in the general composition of the piece; a defect which, all its other excellencies will not prevent us from observing. There is action enough in the plot, energy enough in the dialogue, and abundance of individual beauties in both; but there is throughout a certain air of stiffness and effort, which abstracts from the theatrical illusion. The language, in general impressive and magnificent, is now and then inflated into bombast. The characters do not, as it were, verify their human nature, by those thousand little touches and nameless turns, which distinguish the genius essentially dramatic from the genius merely poetical; the Proteus of the stage from the philosophic observer and trained imitator of life. We have not those careless felicities, those varyings from high to low, that air of living freedom which Shakspeare has accustomed us, like spoiled children, to look for in every perfect work of this species. Schiller is too elevated, too regular and sustained in his elevation, to be altogether natural.

Yet with all this, *Carlos* is a noble tragedy. There is a stately massiveness about the structure of it; the incidents are grand and affecting; the characters powerful, vividly conceived, and

impressively if not completely delineated. Of wit and its kindred graces Schiller has but a slender share: nor among great poets is he much distinguished for depth or fineness of pathos. But what gives him a place of his own, and the loftiest of its kind, is the vastness and intense vigour of his mind; the splendour of his thoughts and imagery, and the bold vehemence of his passion for the true and the sublime, under all their various forms. He does not thrill, but he exalts us. His genius is impetuous, exuberant, majestic; and a heavenly fire gleams through all his creations. He transports us into a holier and higher world than our own; everything around us breathes of force and solemn beauty. The looks of his heroes may be more staid than those of men, the movements of their minds may be slower and more calculated; but we yield to the potency of their endowments, and the loveliness of the scene which they animate. The enchantments of the poet are strong enough to silence our scepticism; we forbear to inquire whether it is true or false.

The celebrity of Alfieri generally invites the reader of *Don Carlos* to compare it with *Filippo*. Both writers treat the same subject; both borrow their materials from the same source, the *nouvelle historique* of St. Réal: but it is impossible that two powerful minds could have handled one given idea in more diverse manners. Their excellencies are, in fact, so opposite, that they scarcely come in competition. Alfieri's play is short, and the characters are few. He describes no scene: his personages are not the King of Spain and his courtiers, but merely men;



their place of action is not the Escorial or Madrid, but a vacant, objectless platform anywhere in space. In all this, Schiller has a manifest advantage. He paints manners and opinions, he sets before us a striking pageant, which interests us of itself, and gives a new interest to whatever is combined with it. The principles of the antique, or perhaps rather of the French drama, upon which Alfieri worked, permitted no such delineation. In the style there is the same diversity. A severe simplicity uniformly marks Alfieri's style; in his whole tragedy there is not a single figure. A hard emphatic brevity is all that distinguishes his language from that of prose. Schiller, we have seen, abounds with noble metaphors, and all the warm exciting eloquence of poetry. It is only in expressing the character of Philip that Alfieri has a clear superiority. Without the aid of superstition, which his rival, especially in the catastrophe, employs to such advantage, Alfieri has exhibited in his Filippo a picture of unequalled power. Obscurity is justly said to be essential to terror and sublimity; and Schiller has enfeebled the effect of his Tyrant, by letting us behold the most secret recesses of his spirit: we understand him better, but we fear him less. Alfieri does not show us the internal combination of Filippo: it is from its workings alone that we judge of his nature. Mystery, and the shadow of horrid cruelty, brood over his Filippo: it is only a transient word or act that gives us here and there a glimpse of his fierce, implacable, tremendous soul; a short and dubious glimmer that reveals to us the abysses of his being, dark, lurid, and terrific, 'as the throat of

the infernal Pool.' Alfieri's Filippo is perhaps the most wicked man that human imagination has conceived.

Alfieri and Schiller were again unconscious competitors in the history of Mary Stuart. But the works before us give a truer specimen of their comparative merits. Schiller seems to have the greater genius; Alfieri the more commanding character. Alfieri's greatness rests on the stern concentration of fiery passion, under the dominion of an adamantine will: this was his own make of mind; and he represents it, with strokes in themselves devoid of charm, but in their union terrible as a prophetic scroll. Schiller's moral force is commensurate with his intellectual gifts, and nothing more. The mind of the one is like the ocean, beautiful in its strength, smiling in the radiance of summer, and washing luxuriant and romantic shores: that of the other is like some black unfathomable lake placed far amid the melancholy mountains; bleak, solitary, desolate; but girdled with grim sky-piercing cliffs, overshadowed with storms, and illuminated only by the red glare of the lightning. Schiller is magnificent in his expansion, Alfieri is overpowering in his condensed energy; the first inspires us with greater admiration, the last with greater awe.

This tragedy of *Carlos* was received with immediate and universal approbation. In the closet and on the stage, it excited the warmest applauses equally among the learned and unlearned. Schiller's expectations had not been so high: he knew both the excellencies and the faults of his work; but he had not anticipated that the former would be recognised so instantaneously. The

pleasure of this new celebrity came upon him, therefore, heightened by surprise. Had dramatic eminence been his sole object, he might now have slackened his exertions; the public had already ranked him as the first of their writers in that favourite department. But this limited ambition was not his moving principle; nor was his mind of that sort for which rest is provided in this world. The primary disposition of his nature urged him to perpetual toil: the great aim of his life, the unfolding of his mental powers, was one of those which admit but a relative not an absolute progress. New ideas of perfection arise as the former have been reached; the student is always attaining, never has attained.

Schiller's worldly circumstances, too, were of a kind well calculated to prevent excess of quietism. He was still drifting at large on the tide of life; he was crowned with laurels, but without a home. His heart, warm and affectionate, fitted to enjoy the domestic blessings which it longed for, was allowed to form no permanent attachment: he felt that he was unconnected, solitary in the world; cut off from the exercise of his kindlier sympathies; or if tasting such pleasures, it was 'snatching them rather than partaking of them calmly.' The vulgar desire of wealth and station never entered his mind for an instant: but as years were added to his age, the delights of peace and continuous comfort were fast becoming more acceptable than any other; and he looked with anxiety to have a resting-place amid his wanderings, to be a man among his fellow-men.

For all these wishes, Schiller saw that the only chance of fulfilment depended on unwearied perseverance in his literary occupations. Yet though his activity was unabated, and the calls on it were increasing rather than diminished, its direction was gradually changing. The Drama had long been stationary, and of late been falling in his estimation: the difficulties of the art, as he viewed it at present, had been overcome, and new conquests invited him in other quarters. The latter part of *Carlos* he had written as a task rather than a pleasure; he contemplated no farther undertaking connected with the Stage. For a time, indeed, he seems to have wavered among a multiplicity of enterprises; now solicited to this, and now to that, without being able to fix decidedly on any. The restless ardour of his mind is evinced by the number and variety of his attempts; its fluctuation by the circumstance that all of them are either short in extent, or left in the state of fragments. Of the former kind are his lyrical productions, many of which were composed about this period, during intervals from more serious labours. The character of these performances is such as his former writings gave us reason to expect. With a deep insight into life, and a keen and comprehensive sympathy with its sorrows and enjoyments, there is combined that impetuosity of feeling, that pomp of thought and imagery which belong peculiarly to Schiller. If he had now left the Drama, it was clear that his mind was still overflowing with the elements of poetry; dwelling among the grandest conceptions, and the boldest or finest emotions;

thinking intensely and profoundly, but decorating its thoughts with those graces, which other faculties than the understanding are required to afford them. With these smaller pieces, Schiller occupied himself at intervals of leisure throughout the remainder of his life. Some of them are to be classed among the most finished efforts of his genius. The *Walk*, the *Song of the Bell*, contain exquisite delineations of the fortunes and history of man; his *Ritter Toggenburg*, his *Cranes of Ibycus*, his *Hero and Leander*, are among the most poetical and moving ballads to be found in any language.

Of these poems, the most noted written about this time, the *Freethinking of Passion* (*Freigeisterei der Leidenschaft*), is said to have originated in a real attachment. The lady, whom some biographers of Schiller introduce to us by the mysterious designation of the 'Fräulein A \* \* \*', one of the first beauties in Dresden,' seems to have made a deep impression on the heart of the poet. They tell us that she sat for the picture of the princess Eboli, in his *Don Carlos*; that he paid his court to her with the most impassioned fervour, and the extreme of generosity. They add one or two anecdotes of dubious authenticity; which, as they illustrate nothing, but show us only that love could make Schiller crazy, as it is said to make all gods and men, we shall use the freedom to omit.

This enchanting and not inexorable spinster perhaps displaced the Mannheim *Laura* from her throne; but the gallant assiduities, which she required or allowed, seem not to have abated the

zeal of her admirer in his more profitable undertakings. Her reign, we suppose, was brief and without abiding influence. Schiller never wrote or thought with greater diligence than while at Dresden. Partially occupied with conducting his *Thalia*, or with those more slight poetical performances, his mind was hovering among a multitude of weightier plans, and seizing with avidity any hint that might assist in directing its attempts. To this state of feeling we are probably indebted for the *Geisterseher*, a novel, naturalised in our circulating libraries by the title of the *Ghostseer*, two volumes of which were published about this time. The king of quacks, the renowned Cagliostro, was now playing his dextrous game at Paris; harrowing-up the souls of the curious and gullible of all ranks in that capital, by various thaumaturgic feats; raising the dead from their graves; and, what was more to the purpose, raising himself from the station of a poor Sicilian lacquey to that of a sumptuous and extravagant count. The noise of his exploits appears to have given rise to this work of Schiller's. It is an attempt to exemplify the process of hoodwinking an acute but too sensitive man; of working on the latent germ of superstition, which exists beneath his outward scepticism; harassing his mind by the terrors of magic,—the magic of chemistry and natural philosophy and natural cunning; till, racked by doubts and agonising fears, and plunging from one depth of dark uncertainty into another, he is driven at length to still his scruples in the bosom of the Infallible Church. The incidents are contrived with considerable address, displaying a

familiar acquaintance, not only with several branches of science, but also with some curious forms of life and human nature. One or two characters are forcibly drawn; particularly that of the amiable but feeble Count, the victim of the operation. The strange Foreigner, with the visage of stone, who conducts the business of mystification, strikes us also, though we see but little of him. The work contains some vivid description, some passages of deep tragical effect: it has a vein of keen observation; in general, a certain rugged power, which might excite regret that it was never finished. But Schiller found that his views had been mistaken: it was thought that he meant only to electrify his readers, by an accumulation of surprising horrors, in a novel of the Mrs. Radcliffe fashion. He felt, in consequence, discouraged to proceed; and finally abandoned it.

Schiller was, in fact, growing tired of fictitious writing. Imagination was with him a strong, not an exclusive, perhaps not even a predominating faculty: in the sublimest flights of his genius, intellect is a quality as conspicuous as any other; we are frequently not more delighted with the grandeur of the drapery in which he clothes his thoughts, than with the grandeur of the thoughts themselves. To a mind so restless, the cultivation of all its powers was a peremptory want; in one so earnest, the love of truth was sure to be among its strongest passions. Even while revelling, with unworn ardour, in the dreamy scenes of the Imagination, he had often cast a longing look, and sometimes made a hurried inroad, into the calmer provinces of reason: but

the first effervescence of youth was past, and now more than ever, the love of contemplating or painting things as they should be, began to yield to the love of knowing things as they are. The tendency of his mind was gradually changing; he was about to enter on a new field of enterprise, where new triumphs awaited him.

For a time he had hesitated what to choose; at length he began to think of History. As a leading object of pursuit, this promised him peculiar advantages. It was new to him; and fitted to employ some of his most valuable gifts. It was grounded on reality, for which, as we have said, his taste was now becoming stronger; its mighty revolutions and events, and the commanding characters that figure in it, would likewise present him with things great and moving, for which his taste had always been strong. As recording the past transactions, and indicating the prospects of nations, it could not fail to be delightful to one, for whom not only human nature was a matter of most fascinating speculation, but who looked on all mankind with the sentiments of a brother, feeling truly what he often said, that 'he had no dearer wish than to see every living mortal happy and contented with his lot.' To all these advantages another of a humbler sort was added, but which the nature of his situation forbade him to lose sight of. The study of History, while it afforded him a subject of continuous and regular exertion, would also afford him, what was even more essential, the necessary competence of income for which he felt reluctant any longer to depend on the resources of poetry, but which the



produce of his pen was now the only means he had of realising.

For these reasons, he decided on commencing the business of historian. The composition of *Don Carlos* had already led him to investigate the state of Spain under Philip II.; and, being little satisfied with Watson's clear but shallow Work on that reign, he had turned to the original sources of information, the writings of Grotius, Strada, De Thou, and many others. Investigating these with his usual fidelity and eagerness, the Revolt of the Netherlands had, by degrees, become familiar to his thoughts; distinct in many parts where it was previously obscure; and attractive, as it naturally must be to a temper such as his. He now determined that his first historical performance should be a narrative of that event. He resolved to explore the minutest circumstance of its rise and progress; to arrange the materials he might collect, in a more philosophical order; to interweave with them the general opinions he had formed, or was forming, on many points of polity, and national or individual character; and, if possible, to animate the whole with that warm sympathy, which, in a lover of Freedom, this most glorious of her triumphs naturally called forth.

In the filling-up of such an outline, there was scope enough for diligence. But it was not in Schiller's nature to content himself with ordinary efforts; no sooner did a project take hold of his mind, than, rallying round it all his accomplishments and capabilities, he stretched it out into something so magnificent and comprehensive, that little less than a lifetime would have

been sufficient to effect it. This History of the Revolt of the Netherlands, which formed his chief study, he looked upon but as one branch of the great subject he was yet destined to engage with. History at large, in all its bearings, was now his final aim; and his mind was continually occupied with plans for acquiring, improving, and diffusing the knowledge of it.

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