

КОЛЛЕКТИВ АВТОРОВ

THE GERMAN CLASSICS
OF THE NINETEENTH
AND TWENTIETH
CENTURIES, VOLUME 01

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*The German Classics of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, Volume 01 /
Masterpieces of German Literature Translated into English.:*

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

It is surprising how little the English-speaking world knows of German literature of the nineteenth century. Goethe and Schiller found their herald in Carlyle; Fichte's idealistic philosophy helped to mold Emerson's view of life; Amadeus Hoffmann influenced Poe; Uhland and Heine reverberate in Longfellow; Sudermann and Hauptmann appear in the repertory of London and New York theatres—these brief statements include nearly all the names which to the cultivated Englishman and American of to-day stand for German literature.

THE GERMAN CLASSICS OF THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES has been planned to correct this narrow and inadequate view. Here for the first time English readers will find a panorama of the whole of German literature from Goethe to the present day; here for the first time they will find the most representative writers of each period brought together and exhibited by their most representative works; here for the first time an opportunity will be offered to form a just conception of the truly remarkable literary achievements of Germany during the last hundred years.

For it is a grave mistake to assume, as has been assumed only too often, that, after the great epoch of Classicism and Romanticism in the early decades of the nineteenth century, Germany produced but little of universal significance, or that, after Goethe and Heine, there were but few Germans worthy to be mentioned side by side with the great writers of other European countries. True, there is no German Tolstoy, no German Ibsen, no German Zola—but then, is there a Russian Nietzsche, or a Norwegian Wagner, or a French Bismarck? Men like these, men of revolutionary genius, men who start new movements and mark new epochs, are necessarily rare and stand isolated in any people and at all times. The three names mentioned indicate that Germany, during the last fifty years, has contributed a goodly share even of such men. Quite apart, however, from such men of overshadowing genius and all-controlling power, can it be truly said that Germany, since

Goethe's time, has been lacking in writers of high aim and notable attainment?

It can be stated without reservation that, taken as a whole, the German drama of the nineteenth century has maintained a level of excellence superior to that reached by the drama of almost any other nation during the same period. Schiller's *Wallenstein* and *Tell*, Goethe's *Iphigenie* and *Faust*, Kleist's *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*, Grillparzer's *Medea*, Hebbel's *Maria Magdalene* and *Die Nibelungen*, Otto Ludwig's *Der Erbförster*, Freytag's *Die Journalisten*, Anzengruber's *Der Meineidbauer*, Wilbrandt's *Der Meister von Palmyra*, Wildenbruch's *König Heinrich*, Sudermann's *Heimat*, Hauptmann's *Die Weber* and *Der arme Heinrich*, Hofmannsthal's *Elektra*, and, in addition to all these, the great musical dramas of Richard Wagner—this is a century's record of dramatic achievement of which any nation might be proud. I doubt whether either the French or the Russian or the Scandinavian stage of the nineteenth century, as a whole, comes up to this standard. Certainly, the English stage has nothing which could in any way be compared with it.

That German lyric verse of the last hundred years should have been distinguished by beauty of structure, depth of feeling, and wealth of melody, is not to be wondered at if we remember that this was the century of the revival of folk-song, and that it produced such song-composers as Schubert and Schumann and Robert Franz and Hugo Wolf and Richard Strauss. But it seems strange that, apart from Heine, even the greatest of German

lyric poets, such as Platen, Lenau, Mörike, Annette von Droste, Geibel, Liliencron, Dehmel, Münchhausen, Rilke, should be so little known beyond the borders of the Fatherland.

The German novel of the past century was, for a long time, unquestionably inferior to both the English and the French novel of the same epoch. But in the midst of much that is tiresome and involved and artificial, there stand out, even in the middle of the century, such masterpieces of characterization as Otto Ludwig's *Zwischen Himmel und Erde* or Wilhelm Raabe's *Der Hungerpastor*, such delightful revelations of genuine humor as Fritz Reuter's *Ut mine Stromtid*, such penetrating studies of social conditions as Gustav Freytag's *Soll und Haben*. And during the last third of the century there has clearly developed a new, forcible, original style of German novel writing. Seldom has the short story been handled more skilfully and felicitously than by such men as Paul Heyse, Gottfried Keller, C. F. Meyer, Theodor Storm. Seldom has the novel of tragic import and passion been treated with greater refinement and delicacy than in such works as Fontane's *Effi Briest*, Ricarda Huch's *Ludolf Ursleu*, Wilhelm von Polenz's *Der Büttnerbauer*, or Ludwig Thoma's *Andreas Vöst*. And it may be doubted whether, at the present moment, there is any country where the novel is represented by so many gifted writers or exhibits such exuberant vitality, such sturdy truthfulness, such seriousness of purpose, or such a wide range of imagination as in contemporary Germany.

All these dramatists, lyric poets, and novelists, and with them

not a few essayists, philosophers, orators, and publicists,¹ of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries will speak in the following volumes to America and other countries of the English language. They have been arranged, in the main, chronologically. The first three volumes have been given to the mature work of Goethe and Schiller—time-tested and securely niched. Volumes IV and V contain the principal Romanticists, including Fichte and Schelling; Volume VI brings Heine, Grillparzer, and Beethoven to view;

Volume VII, Hegel and Young Germany; Volume VIII, Auerbach, Gotthelf, and Fritz Reuter; Volume IX, Hebbel and Ludwig; Volume X, Bismarck, Moltke, Lassalle. Of the second half of the collection there might be singled out: Volume XIV (Gottfried Keller and C.F. Meyer); Volume XV (Schopenhauer, Wagner, Nietzsche, Emperor William II.); Volume XVIII (Gerhart Hauptmann, Detlev von Liliencron, Richard Dehmel). The last two volumes will be devoted to the most recent of contemporary authors.

The editors have been fortunate in associating with themselves a notable number of distinguished contributors from many universities and colleges in this country and abroad. A general introduction to the whole series has been written by Professor Richard M. Meyer of the University of Berlin. The last two volumes will be in charge of Professor Julius Petersen of the University of Basel. The introductions to Goethe and Schiller

¹ For lack of space, scientists and historians have been excluded.

have been prepared by Professor Calvin Thomas, of Columbia University; that to the Romantic Philosophers by Professor Frank Thilly, of Cornell University; that to Richard Wagner by Professor W. R. Spalding, of Harvard University. And, similarly, every important author in this collection will be introduced by some authoritative and well known specialist.

The crux of the whole undertaking lies in the correctness and adequacy of the translations. How difficult, if not impossible, a really satisfactory translation is, especially in lyric poetry, no one realizes more clearly than the editors. Their only comfort is that they have succeeded in obtaining the assistance of many well trained and thoroughly equipped scholars, among them such names of poets as Hermann Hagedorn, Percy MacKaye, George Sylvester Viereck, and Martin Schütze.

Kuno Francke.

PUBLISHERS' FOREWORD

The German Classics is the first work issued by The German Publication Society in pursuance of a comprehensive plan to open to the English-speaking people of the world the treasures of German thought and achievement in Literature, Art and Science.

In the production of this monumental work the thanks and appreciation of the Publishers are especially due to Hugo Reisinger, Esq., whose loyal support and constant encouragement have made possible its publication.

General Introduction

By Richard M. Meyer, Ph.D. Professor of German Literature, University of Berlin.

Men formerly pictured the origin and development of a literature as an order less play of incalculable forces; out of a seething chaos forms more or less definite arose, and then, one day, behold! the literary earth was there, with sun and moon, water and mountains, animals and men. This conception was intimately connected with that of the origin of individual literary compositions. These likewise—since the new "theory of genius," spreading from England, had gained recognition throughout the whole of Europe, especially in those countries speaking the Germanic languages—were imagined to be a mere succession of inspirations and even of improvisations. This view of the subject can no longer be held either wholly or in

part, though in the origin and growth of literature, as in every other origin and development, much manifestly remains that is still incomprehensible and incalculable. But even as regards the individual literary work, writers themselves—as latterly Richard Dehmel—have laid almost too strong an emphasis on the element of conscious deliberation. And concerning the whole literary product of an individual, which seems to offer the most instructive analogies to the literary achievement of a people, we received a short time ago a remarkable opinion from Carl Spitteler. He asserts that he is guided in his choice of definite styles and definite forms by an absolutely clear purpose; that he has, for example, essayed every kind of metre which could possibly be suited to his "cosmic" epic, or that he has written a novelette solely in order to have once written a novelette. Although in these confessions, as well as in Edgar Allen Poe's celebrated *Poet's Art*, self-delusion and pleasure in the paradoxical may very likely be mingled, it still remains true that such dicta as these point to certain peculiarities in the development of literatures. Experiments with all kinds of forms, imitation of certain literary *genres* without intrinsic necessity, and deliberate selection of new species, play a larger part in the history of modern German literature than people for a long time wished to admit. It is true, however, that all this experimenting, imitating, and speculating, in the end serves a higher necessity, as well in the poet of genius as in a great literature.

Three kinds of forces virtually determine the general trend

of all artistic development as, indeed, of all other forms of evolution—forces which constitute the sum total of those that we comprehend under the joint name of *tradition*, a sum total of progressive tendencies which we will designate as *esthetic ideals*, and, mediating between the two, the *typical development of the individuals themselves*—above all, naturally, individuals of genius who really create literature.

These powers are present everywhere, but in very different proportion. Characteristic of Romance literatures and also of the English, is the great predominance of the conservative elements. Thus not only is the literature of the constitutional mother-country democratic, but also the literature of France, otherwise so decidedly aristocratic: a majority dictates its laws to the distinguished individual and is inclined to ostracize him, if too headstrong, and exile him from the "Republic of Letters." This, for instance, is what happened to Lord Byron among the British. On the other hand, German literature, like Germanic literatures in general, is disposed to concede, at least at times, a dictatorial leadership to the individual, even at the cost of tradition—as, for example, to a Klopstock, a Goethe, or a Richard Wagner. But, in exchange, the leader is often forced to uphold his power, no matter how much it may have been due to his achievements, by coercive measures—as, again for example, by means of a prætorian guard of partisans, such as Klopstock first created for himself in the Göttinger "Hain," but which was most effectively organized by Wagner, and such

as Victor Hugo, imitating the German model, possessed in the Young Guard which applauded *Hernani*. Another method of enforcing his mastery is the organization of a systematic reign of terror, consisting of bitter satires, such as Schiller and Goethe (after the model of Pope) founded in the *Xenien*, and the Romanticists established in many different forms—satires much more personal and much better aimed than was the general sort of mockery which the Romance or Romanized imitators of Horace flung at Bavius and Mævius. In saying all this, however, we have at the same time made it clear that the power and influence of the individual of genius receives much more positive expression in German literature than in those which produced men like Corneille, Calderon, yes, even Dante and Shakespeare. German literary history is, more than any other, occupied with the *Individual*.

If we now try rapidly to comprehend to what extent each one of the already enumerated literary forces has participated in the development of modern German literature, we must, first of all, emphasize the fact that here the question is, intrinsically, one of construction—of a really new creation.

German literature since 1700 is not simply the continuation of former literature with the addition of radical innovations, as is the case with the literature of the same period in England, but was systematically constructed on new theories—if it may be said that nature and history systematically "construct." A destruction, a suspension of tradition, had taken place, such as no other

civilized nation has ever experienced in a like degree—in which connection the lately much-disputed question as to whether the complete decay dates from the time of the Thirty Years' War or the latter merely marks the climax of a long period of decadence may be left to take care of itself. In any event, about the year 1700 the literature of Germany stood lower than that of any other nation, once in possession of a great civilization and literature, has ever stood in recent times. Everything, literally everything, had to be created *de novo*; and it is natural that a nation which had to struggle for its very existence, for which life itself had become a daily questioning of fate, could at first think of renovation only through its conservative forces. Any violent commotion in the religious or political, in the economic or social, sphere, as well as in the esthetic, might prove fatal, or at least appear to be so.

The strongest conservative factor of a literature is the language. Upon its relative immutability depends, in general, the possibility of literary compositions becoming the common possession of many generations—depends absolutely all transmission. Especially is poetic language wont to bear the stamp of constancy; convenient formulas, obvious rhymes, established epithets, favorite metaphors, do not, in periods of exhaustion, afford much choice in the matter of phraseology. On the other hand, however, a new tenor of thought, often enough a new tenor of feeling, is continually pressing forward to demand a medium of expression. This battle between the established linguistic form and the new content gives rise to charming, but at

the same time alarming, conflicts. In the seventeenth century it was felt strongly how much the store of linguistic expression had diminished, partly on account of a violent and careless "working of the mine," which made prodigal use of the existing medium, as was the case in the prose of Luther and, above all, of Johann Fischart and his contemporaries; partly on account of a narrow confinement to a small number of ideas and words, as in the church hymns.

This impoverishment of the language the century of the great war tried to remedy in two opposite ways. For the majority the easiest solution was to borrow from their richer neighbors, and thus originated that affectation of all things foreign, which, in speaking, led to the most variegated use and misuse of foreign words. Patriotically-minded men, on the contrary, endeavored to cultivate the purity of their mother tongue the while they enriched it; this, above all, was the ambition of the various "Linguistic Societies." Their activity, though soon deprived of a wide usefulness by pedantry and a clannish spirit, prepared the way for great feats of linguistic reorganization. Through Christian Wolff a philosophic terminology was systematically created; from Pietism were received new mediums of expression for intimate conditions of the soul; neither must we quite overlook the fact that to some extent a new system of German titles and official designations was associated with the new institutions of the modern state. More important, however, than these details—which might have been accomplished by men

like Johann Gottfried Herder, Immanuel Kant and Goethe; like the statesman, Heinrich Freiherr von Stein; and the warrior, General von Scharnhorst—was this fact that, in general, an esthetic interest had been again awakened in the language, which too long had served as a mere tool. Also the slowly developing study of language was of some help; even the falsest etymology taught people to look upon words as organisms; even the most superficial grammar, to observe broad relationships and parallel formations. So, then, the eighteenth century could, in the treatment of the mother tongue, enter upon a goodly heritage, of which for a long time Johann Christoph Gottsched might not unjustly be counted the guardian. It was a thoroughly conservative linguistic stewardship, which received gigantic expression in Adelung's Dictionary—with all its deficiencies, the most important German dictionary that had been compiled up to that time. Clearness, intelligibility, exactitude were insisted upon. It was demanded that there should be a distinct difference between the language of the writer and that in everyday use, and again a difference between poetic language and prose; on the other hand, great care had to be taken that the difference should never become too great, so that common intelligibility should not suffer. Thus the new poetic language of Klopstock, precisely on account of its power and richness, was obliged to submit to the bitterest mockery and the most injudicious abuse from the partisans of Gottsched. As the common ideal of the pedagogues of language, who were by no means merely

narrow-minded pedants, one may specify that which had long ago been accomplished for France—namely, a uniform choice of a stock of words best suited to the needs of a clear and luminous literature for the cultivated class, and the stylistic application of the same. Two things, above all, were neglected: they failed to realize (as did France also) the continual development of a healthy language, though the ancients had glimpses of this; and they failed (this in contrast to France) to comprehend the radical differences between the various forms of literary composition. Therefore the pre-classical period still left enough to be done by the classical.

It was Klopstock who accomplished the most; he created a new, a lofty poetic language, which was to be recognized, not by the use of conventional metaphors and swelling hyperboles, but by the direct expression of a highly exalted mood. However, the danger of a forced overstraining of the language was combated by Christoph Martin Wieland, who formed a new and elegant narrative prose on Greek, French, and English models, and also introduced the same style into poetic narrative, herein abetted by Friedrich von Hagedorn as his predecessor and co-worker. Right on the threshold, then, of the great new German literature another mixture of styles sprang up, and we see, for example, Klopstock strangely transplanting his pathos into the field of theoretical researches on grammar and metrics, and Wieland not always keeping his irony aloof from the most solemn subjects. But beside them stood Gotthold Ephraim Lessing who proved

himself to be the most thoughtful of the reformers of poetry, in that he emphasized the divisions—especially necessary for the stylistic development of German poetry—of literary categories and the arts. The most far-reaching influence, however, was exercised by Herder, when he preached that the actual foundation of all poetic treatment of language was the individual style, and exemplified the real nature of original style, i. e., inwardly-appropriate modes of expression, by referring, on the one hand, to the poetry of the people and, on the other, to Shakespeare or the Bible, the latter considered as a higher type of popular poetry.

So the weapons lay ready to the hand of the dramatist Lessing, the lyric poet Goethe, and the preacher Herder, who had helped to forge them for their own use; for drama, lyrics, and oratory separate themselves quite naturally from ordinary language, and yet in their subject matter, in the anticipation of an expectant audience, in the unavoidable connection with popular forms of speech, in singing, and the very nature of public assemblies, they have a basis that prevents them from becoming conventional. But not quite so favorable was the condition of the different varieties of narrative composition. Here a peculiarly specific style, such as the French novel especially possesses, never reached complete perfection. The style of Wieland would necessarily appear too light as soon as the subject matter of the novel became more intimate and personal; that of the imitators of Homer necessarily too heavy. Perhaps here also Lessing's sense of style might have furnished a model of permanent worth, in the same way that

he furnished one for the comedy and the didactic drama, for the polemic treatise and the work of scientific research. For is not the tale of the three rings, which forms the kernel of *Nathan the Wise*, numbered among the great standard pieces of German elocution, in spite of all the contradictions and obscurities which have of late been pointed out in it, but which only the eye of the microscopist can perceive? In general it is the "popular philosophers" who have, more than any one else, produced a fixed prose style; as a reader of good but not exclusively classical education once acknowledged to me that the German of J.J. Engel was more comprehensible to him and seemed more "modern" than that of Goethe. As a matter of fact, the narrator Goethe, in the enchanting youthful composition of *Werther*, did venture very close to the lyrical, but in his later novels his style at times dangerously approached a dry statement of facts, or a rhetorically inflated declamation; and even in *The Elective Affinities*, which stands stylistically higher than any of his other novels, he has not always avoided a certain stiltedness that forms a painful contrast to the warmth of his sympathy for the characters. On the other hand, in scientific compositions he succeeded in accomplishing what had hitherto been unattainable—just because, in this case, the new language had first to be created by him.

Seldom are even the great writers of the following period quite free from the danger of a lack-lustre style in their treatment of the language, above all in narrative composition. It is only

in the present day that Thomas Mann, Jacob Wassermann, and Ricarda Huch are trying along different lines, but with equal zeal, to form a fixed individual style for the German prose-epic. The great exceptions of the middle period, the writers of prose-epics Jeremias Gotthelf and Gottfried Keller, the novelists Paul Heyse and Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, the narrator of anecdotes Ludwig Anzengruber, with his greater predecessor Johann Peter Hebel, and his lesser contemporary Peter Rosegger, the portrayer of still-life Adalbert Stifter and a few others, have, more by a happy instinct than anything else, hit upon the style proper to their form of composition, lack of which prevents us from enjoying an endless number of prose works of the nineteenth century, which, as far as their subject matter goes, are not unimportant. In this connection I will only mention Karl Gutzkow's novels describing his own period, or, from an earlier time, Clemens Brentano's fairy tales, Friedrich Hebbel's humoresques, or even the rhetorically emotional historical compositions of Heinrich von Treitschke, found in certain parts of his work. But this lack of a fixed specific style spread likewise to other forms of composition; Schiller's drama became too rhetorical; Friedrich Rückert's lyric poetry too prosaically didactic; that of Annette von Droste-Hülshoff often too obscure and sketchy.

If, therefore, the struggle with the language was fought out successfully by modern German literature only on the battleground of the lyric (and even there, as we have seen, not

without exceptions), on the other hand a second conservative force was placed at the service of the literary development with more uniform success, namely *Metrics*. To be sure, here again this applies only to verse, for the corresponding art of prose rhythm has been as good as lost to the Germans, in contrast to the French, and almost more so to the English. In prose also a conscious and systematic attempt to make an artistic division into paragraphs, chapters, and books, has only been made in recent times, above all in and since the writings of Nietzsche. For as far as the treatment of language in itself is concerned, German literature has hardly yet fully developed an artistic form; writers still continue to treat it far too much as a mere tool. But verse is felt to be an object for artistic molding, although here too the naturalistic dogmas of the Storm and Stress writers, of the Romanticists, Young Germans and Ultra-Moderns, have often shaken the theories upon which the artistic perfection of our poetry is based.

In this regard, likewise, there was, in the seventeenth century, a great difficulty to be overcome. Changes in language, the effect of French and Italian style, the influence of music, had weakened the foundations of the German art of verse, which were already partly broken down by mechanical wear and tear. The comparatively simple regulation contrived by an ordinary, though clever, poet, Martin Opitz, proved capable of enduring for centuries; a connection was established between the accent of verse and natural accent, which at the same time, by means

of more stringent rules, created barriers against variable accent. It was merely a question of arranging the words in such fashion that, without forming too great a contradiction to the commonplace order of words, the way in which the accents were placed upon them should result in a regularly alternating rise and fall. On the whole, this principle was found to be sufficient until the enthusiasm of the new poetic generation demanded a closer connection between the poetic form and the variable conditions of the soul; they found a way out of the difficulty by carrying a rhythmical mood through a variety of metrical divisions, and thus came upon the "free rhythms." From whatever source these were derived, either from the misunderstood poems of Pindar, from the language of the Bible or of the enthusiastic mystics, or from the poetic half-prose of the pastoral poet Salomon Gessner, they were, in any case, something new and peculiar, and their nature has not been grasped in the least degree by the French in their "vers libres," or at any rate only since the half-Germanic Fleming Verhaeren. They received an interesting development through Goethe and Heinrich Heine, while most of the other poets who made use of them, even the greatest one, Novalis, often deteriorated either into a regular, if rhymeless, versification, or into a pathetic, formless prose.

Another method of procuring new metrical mediums of expression for the new wealth of emotions was to borrow. Klopstock naturalized antique metres, or rather made them familiar to the school and to cultivated poets, while on the other

hand Heine's derision of August von Platen's set form of verse was welcomed in many circles, and even the elevated poems of Friedrich Hölderlin, which approached the antique form, remained foreign to the people, like the experiments of Leconte de Lisle in France; in Italy it fared otherwise with Carducci's *Odi barbare*. Only one antique metre became German, in the same sense that Shakespeare had become a German poet; this was the hexameter, alone or in connection with the pentameter; for the ratio of its parts to one another, on which everything depends in higher metrics, corresponded, to some extent, to that of the German couplets. For the same reason the sonnet—not, however, without a long and really bitter fight—was able to win a secure place in German reflective lyric poetry; indeed it had already been once temporarily in our possession during the seventeenth century. Thus two important metres had been added to German poetry's treasure house of forms: first, the hexameter for a continuous narrative of a somewhat epic character, even though without high solemnity—which Goethe alone once aspired to in his *Achilleis*—and also for shorter epigrammatic or didactic observations in the finished manner of the distich; second, the sonnet for short mood-pictures and meditations. The era of the German hexameter seems, however, to be over at present, while, on the contrary, the sonnet, brought to still higher perfection by Platen, Moritz von Strachwitz and Paul Heyse, still exercises its old power of attraction, especially over poets with a tendency toward Romance art. However, both

hexameter or distich and sonnet have become, in Germany, pure literary forms of composition. While in Italy the sonnet is still sung, we are filled with astonishment that Brahms should have set to music a distich—*Anacreon*. Numerous other forms, taken up principally by the Romantic school and the closely related "Exotic School," have remained mere literary playthings. For a certain length of time the ghazel seemed likely to be adopted as a shell to contain scattered thoughts, wittily arranged, or (almost exclusively by Platen) also for mood-pictures; but without doubt the undeservedly great success of Friedrich von Bodenstedt's *Mirza Schaffy* has cast permanent discredit on this form. The favorite stanza of Schiller is only one of the numerous strophe forms of our narrative or reflective lyric; it has never attained an "ethos" peculiar to itself. Incidentally, the French alexandrines were the fashion for a short time after Victor Hugo's revival of them was revived by Ferdinand Freiligrath, and were recently used with variations by Carl Spitteler (which, however, he denies) as a foundation for his epic poems. So, too, the "Old German rhymed verse" after the manner of Hans Sachs, enjoyed a short popularity; and one saw virtuosos playing with the canzone or the makame. On the whole, however, German lyric poetry is rather made up of simple formations in the style of the folk-song, especially since the important rhythmic transformation of this material by Heine created new possibilities for accommodating the inner form to new subject matter without conspicuously changing the outer form. For two great simplifying factors have,

since Goethe, been predominant in protecting our lyric poetry from unfruitful artificiality; the influence of the folk-song and the connection with music have kept it more full of vital energy than the too literary lyric poetry of the French, and richer in variety than the too cultivated lyric of the English. Whoever shut the door on the influences spoken of, as did Franz Grillparzer or Hebbel, and, in a different way, Annette von Droste-Hülshoff or Heinrich Leuthold, at the same time nullified a good part of his efficiency.

The drama almost exclusively assumed a foreign, though kindred, form as a garb for the more elevated styles of composition: namely, the blank verse of the English stage, which Lessing's *Nathan the Wise* had popularized and A.W. Schlegel's Shakespeare had rendered omnipotent, and which Schiller forced upon his successors. The Romanticists, by playing unsuccessfully with different forms, as in Ludwig Tieck's *Octavianus*, or Immerman's *Alexis*, or by adopting pure antique or Spanish metres, attempted in vain to free themselves from the restraint of form, the great danger of which consisted in its similarity to common-place sentence construction, so that the verse ran the risk either of becoming prosaic, or else, in trying forcibly to avoid this, of growing bombastic. An escape was provided by inserting, in moments of emotion, a metre of a more lyrical quality into the uniform structure of the usual vehicle of dramatic dialogue, particularly when partaking of the nature of a monologue; as Goethe did, for example, in the "Song of the Fates" in *Iphigenia*,

that most metrically perfect of all German dramatic poems, and as Schiller continued to do with increased boldness in the songs introduced into *Mary Stuart*. Perhaps the greatest perfection in such use of the principle of the "free rhythm" as applied to the drama, was reached by Franz Grillparzer in the *Golden Fleece*, on the model of certain fragments by Goethe, such as the *Prometheus*. On the other hand, the interesting experiments in the *Bride of Messina* are of more importance for the development of the opera into a work of art complete in itself, than for that of the drama. In general, however, it is to be remarked as a peculiarity of modern German drama, that it seeks to escape from monotony, which the French classical theatre hardly ever succeeded in avoiding, by calling in the aid of the other arts. Plastic art is often employed for scenic arrangement, and music to produce effects on and behind the stage. Both were made use of by Schiller; and it was under his influence that they were tried by Goethe in his later period—though we find a remarkable sporadic appearance of them even as early as *Götz* and *Klavigo*. The mastery which Grillparzer also attained in this respect has been striven after by his fellow countrymen with some degree of success: as, for example, by Ferdinand Raimund, by Ludwig Anzengruber, and also by Friedrich Halm and Hugo von Hofmannsthal.

Besides blank verse, the only other garb in vogue for the serious drama was prose: this was not only used for realistic pictures of conditions of a decidedly cheerful type (since Lessing

had introduced the *bourgeois* dramas of Diderot into Germany), but also for pathetic tragedies, the vital power of which the lack of stylistic disguising of language was supposed to increase. This was the form employed in the Storm and Stress drama, and therefore in the prison scene of *Faust*, as also in Schiller's youthful dramas, and again we find it adopted by Hebbel and the Young Germans, and by the naturalistic school under the leadership of Ibsen. The Old German rhymed verse found only a temporary place between these two forms. It was glorified and made almost sacrosanct by having been used for the greatest of our dramas, Goethe's *Faust*; Wildenbruch in particular tried to gain new effects with it. Other attempts also went hand in hand with deeper-reaching efforts to reconstruct the inner form of the drama; thus the tendency to a veiled polyphony of language in the folk-scenes of Christian Dietrich Grabbe and in all the plays of Heinrich von Kleist; this in Hofmannsthal's *Oedipus* led to regular choruses, of quite a different type, however, from those of the *Bride of Messina*. Gerhart Hauptmann's *Weavers* and *Florian Geyer* may be considered the culminating points of this movement, in spite of their apparently entirely prosaic form.

Modern German drama, which in its peculiar style is still largely unappreciated because it has always been measured by its real or supposed models, is, together with the free-rhythm lyric, the greatest gift bestowed upon the treasure of forms of the world-literature by the literature of Germany which has so often played the part of recipient.

On the other hand, when speaking of the development of narrative prose, we should remember what we have already accomplished in that line. The "Novelle" alone has attained a fixed form, as a not too voluminous account of a remarkable occurrence. It is formally regulated in advance by the absolute domination of a decisive incident—as, for example, the outbreak of a concealed love in Heyse, or the moment of farewell in Theodor Storm. All previous incidents are required to assist in working up to this climax; all later ones are introduced merely to allow its echo to die away. In this austerity of concentration the German "Novelle," the one rigidly artistic form of German prose, is related to the "Short Story" which has been so eagerly heralded in recent times, especially by America. The "Novelle" differs, however, from this form of literary composition, which Maupassant cultivated with the most masterly and unrivaled success, by its subordination to a climax; whereas the Short Story, in reality, is usually a condensed novel, that is to say, the history of a development concentrated in a few incidents. Our literature also possesses such short "sketches," but the love of psychological detail in the development of the plot nearly always results in the greater diffuseness of the novel. The real "Novelle" is, however, at least as typical of the Germans as the Short Story is of the Americans, and in no other form of literary composition has Germany produced so many masters as in this—and in the lyric. For the latter is closely related to the German "Novelle" because it loves to invest the way to

and from the culminating point with the charm produced by a certain mood, as the half-German Bret Harte loves to do in similar artistic studies, but the Russian Tschechow never indulges himself in, and the Frenchman Maupassant but seldom. On this account our best writers of "Novellen" have also been, almost without exception, eminent lyric poets; such were Goethe, Tieck, Eichendorff, Mörike, Keller, Heyse, Theodor Storm and C.F. Meyer; whereas, in the case of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, who otherwise would form an exception, even what appears to be a "Nouvelle" is in reality a "small novel."

The novel, on the contrary, still enjoys in Germany the dangerous privilege of formlessness. In its language it varies from the vague lyric of romantic composition to the bureaucratic sobriety of mechanically-compiled studies of real life. In its outline, in the rhythm of its construction, in the division of its parts and the way in which they are brought into relief, it has, in spite of masterly individual performances, never attained a specific literary form, such as has long been possessed by the English and the French novels. Likewise the inclination, sanctioned by Goethe and the Romantic school, to interpolate specimens of the least formed half-literary *genres*—namely, letters and diaries—worked against the adoption of a fixed form, notwithstanding that this expedient augmented the great—often indeed too great—inner richness of the German novel. Thus the German novel, as well as the so justly favorite form of letters and diaries, is of infinitely more importance as a human or

contemporary "document" than as a direct work of art. We have, however, already drawn attention to the fact that the never-failing efforts to clothe the novel in a more esthetically pure form have, in our own day, happily increased.

The traditional *material* of literary compositions is, however, also a conservative power, just as are language and form. The stock of dominating motives naturally undergoes just as many transformations as language or metrics; but, in both cases, what already exists has a determining influence on everything new, often going so far as to suppress the latter entirely. Customary themes preferably claim the interest of the reader; as, for example, in the age of religious pictures it would have been exceedingly hard to procure an order for a purely worldly painting. The artists themselves unconsciously glide into the usual path, and what was intended to be a world-poem flows off into the convenient worn channel of the love-story. But the vivifying and deepening power of the Germanic spirit has here, more than in any other domain, destroyed the opposing force of inertia.

The oldest poetry is confined to such subjects as are of universal interest—one could also say of universal importance. War and the harvest, the festivals of the gods and the destinies of the tribe, are the subjects of song. These things retain their traditional interest even where a healthy communal life no longer exists. Epochs which are absolutely wanting in political understanding still cultivate the glory of Brutus in an epic or

dramatic form; or those ages which can scarcely lay claim to a living religious interest still join in choruses in honor of Apollo or in honor of the Christian religion. Every literature carries with it a large and respectable ballast of sensations that are no longer felt, of objects that are no longer seen, culminating in the spring-songs of poets confined to their room, and the wine-songs of the water-drinkers. A stagnating literature, as that of the seventeenth century was essentially, always has an especially large amount of such rubbish. Poems composed for certain occasions, in the worst sense—that is to say, poems of congratulation and condolence written for money, trivial reflections and mechanical devotion, occupy an alarmingly large space in the lyric of this period. Drama is entirely confined, and the novel for the greater part, to the dressing up in adopted forms of didactic subject matter of the most general type. Men of individuality are, however, not altogether lacking: such were lyric poets like Andreas Gryphius and Paul Fleming, gnomologists like Johann Scheffler, and narrators like J.J. Christoffel von Grimmelshausen; but even with them the personal note does not dare to sound openly. The first to give free expression again to intimate sensations is Christian Günther, and he arouses thereby contradiction, together with admiration. The court poets about the year 1700 work more in a negative way, i. e., by that which they did not express in their verses. The great merit of the pre-classical writers is to have created space, on the one hand, for personal sensations, and, on the other, for the great new

thoughts of the age. Hagedorn, with the elegant frivolity of the man of the world, continued the necessary sifting of antiquated material; Albrecht von Haller, with the deep seriousness of the great student of nature, once more squarely faced the eternal problems. But the entire wealth of inner experience, in its most exclusively individual sense, was first revealed, not only to the literature of Germany but to modern literature in general, by Klopstock. Along this path Goethe pressed forward gloriously, his whole poetic work presenting, according to his own testimony, a single great confession. From Haller, on the contrary, proceeds the effort to develop a poetical style that would enable individuals to share in the great thoughts of the age. Lessing strides onward from *Minna von Barnhelm*—the first drama of contemporary history since the *Persians* of Æschylus—to *Nathan the Wise*, herein following the lead of the "literature with a distinct purpose" (*Tendenz-Dichtung*) of France, and especially of Voltaire, otherwise antipathetic to Lessing. Lessing's great dramatic heir is Schiller, whose tradition is in turn carried on by Kleist, the latter allowing his personality to penetrate the subject matter far more even than either of his predecessors.

But the utmost was done by Goethe, when in *Werther* and *Götz*, in *Prometheus* or *Satyros*, but above all eventually in *Faust*, he lived through in advance—or, as he himself said, he "anticipated" (*vorfühlte*)—the peculiar experience of the age with such intensity that, in the work which resulted, the

individual experience became the direct experience of the whole generation.

Out of the "reverence for nature" (*Naturfrömmigkeit*) with which he contemplated all created things—from "the Cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop which grows on the wall," from the mighty movement of the stream in *Mahomet* to the bit of cheese that is weighed by the old woman in *Die Geschwister*—out of all comes a widening of the poetic horizon, the like of which had never before been seen in any age. The Romanticists in reality only made a watchword out of this practice of Goethe's when they demanded "progressive universal poetry," by which they meant that the poet should live through the whole experience of creation in his own person. In demanding this, they—as the aging Goethe had himself done—formed too narrow a conception of the personal, and rejected too absolutely the problems of politics and of science, so that once more a narrowing process ensued. But even in their own ranks this tendency was offset by the exigency of the times; after the wars of liberation, political and in general, poetry written with a purpose was actually in the ascendancy. The poetry of the mood, like that of a Mörike, remained for a long time almost unknown on account of its strictly intimate character. In the success of Ernst von Wildenbruch we see provisionally the last victory of this sort of literature—which directly proclaims what is worth striving for—at least in its loftier form. For the contemporary novel constantly takes for its subject the emancipation of woman, or the fight for culture, the

protection of the Ostmark, or the fight against alcohol.

On the other hand the Romantic school has also broadened the realm of poetic material in a very important manner, by adding to it the provinces of the phantastic, the visionary, the fairy-like, and by giving to the symbolical an undreamed-of expansion.

On the whole, modern German literature has probably a richer field from which to choose her material than any other literature can boast of. In fact it is perhaps too variegated, and thus, because of the richness and originality of its subject matter, allows too much latitude to genius. One field only in poetry, considered from the viewpoint of real art, is almost uncultivated. All the efforts and all the attempts on the part of both Catholics and Protestants have not succeeded in producing religious poems of any degree of importance since Annette von Droste-Hülshoff ceased to sing; whereas, on the other hand, poetry that is hostile to the church has brought to maturity some great productions, not only in Anzengruber or Karl Schoenherr, in Friedrich Theodor Vischer, in Storm, and Keller, but, above all, in Nietzsche. A turn in the tide that seems just now to be taking place is exemplified in the important epic poems of Enrica von Handel-Mazzetti.

Finally, as the last and, in a certain sense, the strongest, pillar of permanency we will name the public. It is just as much a product as a contributing factor of literature; in both respects, however, preëminently important as a conservative force. The predominant and enduring tendencies, forms, and subjects are naturally chiefly conducive to the formation of

a circle of "fixed subscribers" among the crowd of possible patrons. These subscribers, on their part, of course insist upon the preservation of those tendencies, forms, and subjects by which they are attracted. In the same way that, in general, a large "reading world," or a regular public for a theatre, or a solid community of devotees for each of the different species of song (as for example, the religious song, the folk-song, the student's song) is organized, so do important personalities call into being a special following of admirers, such as the partisans of Hebbel, the Wagnerians, and the adherents of Stefan George. But these narrow circles are often much more intolerant of every effort on the part of the master to depart from the program he has sworn to, than are outsiders. The history of the German public, unlike that of the English or French, is less a church-history than a sect-history. Schiller alone succeeded in becoming the national poet of his people—and he had his merits as well as his weaknesses to thank for it. Lessing is the one who comes next to him, whereas Goethe really reached the masses in only a few of his compositions. On the other hand, he made a stronger impression upon, and gave more happiness to, the intellectual classes than any of our poets since Klopstock. After him, only poets of a decidedly esoteric character, such as Stefan George or Friedrich Nietzsche, have had such a profound effect or one so capable of stirring the remoter depths of the soul. Even with Jean Paul the impression produced was more superficial. Latterly, however, periodicals, lecture-courses and clubs have

replaced the "*caucus*"—which was formerly held by the most influential readers and hearers of the literary fraternities. This change has gone so far that the intimacy of the relations between a poet and his admirers, which was still possible in the early days of Hauptmann, Hofmannsthal, George, and Dehmel, now actually exists only for those poets who have not attained any special renown, such as Alfred Mombert, or, perhaps, we might also include Spitteler. An amalgamation of the different groups, which in Germany are wont to prove their love for their patron by combatting his supposed or real opponents rather than by actively fostering his artistic tendencies, might have produced a strong and effective reading public. But sooner can a stenographer of the Stolze school agree with one of the Gabelsberger system than can a votary of Dehmel dare to recognize the greatness in George, an admirer of Schnitzler see the importance of Herbert Eulenberg, or a friend of Gustav Frenssen acknowledge the power of Ricarda Huch. Our public, by its separatist taste and the unduly emphasized obstinacy of its antipathies, will continue for a long time still to hinder that unity, which, rising above even a just recognition of differences, is the only element which makes a great literature possible. Of course the critics are to be reckoned among the public, whether we consider criticism by professional reviewers or the more discriminating criticism of theatre directors, composers, etc.

In all the foregoing discussion of the prevailingly conservative forces in the development of literature we have seen that none

of these forces has a completely restraining effect. Language always undergoes a certain change, even in the most benumbed periods, since it is obliged to suit itself to the new demands of trade, of society, even of literature itself. We also saw that form and material were not an inert mass, but were in continual, though often slow, movement. Finally, though the public itself always demands essentially the same thing, it has, nevertheless, new variations which are forced upon it by its avidity for new subjects; it also demands, when it has enjoyed a higher artistic education (as in the days of the Classical and Romantic writers), perfection of technique and increase in specifically artistic values. Between the abiding and the progressive, between the conservative and revolutionary tendencies, *the typical development of the individual himself* takes its place as a natural intermediary factor. No literary "generation" is composed of men actually of the same age. Beside the quite young who are merely panting to express themselves, stand the mature who exercise an esthetic discernment, even as regards their own peculiar experience; finally, there are also the older men who have already said their say. In the same way every public is made up of people of all ages. These make different demands of their poets; youth wishes to conquer, manhood to fortify, old age merely not to lose. It is self-evident that points of conformity are to be found between the most widely differing fields: as, for example, conservative tendencies are present in the camp of the destroyers, revolutionary tendencies in that of

the conservatives. In other words, in every community of men, no matter of what description, who are united by any kind of higher interest, new ideals grow up out of this very community of interest. Men who happen to be thrown together mutually cause one another's demands to increase; those who work in common try to outdo one another. Out of their midst personalities arise, who, brought up with the loftiest ideals, or often spurred on by the supineness of the public, with passionate earnestness make what merely filled up the leisure hours of others the sole purpose of their lives. Thus, in Germany above all, the new ideal has been born again and again, constituting the strongest motive power which exists, besides the personality of genius itself.

Of the greatest importance, to begin with, is the *ideal of a national literature itself*. Gottsched was the first in Germany, if not to apprehend it, at least to ponder it and to advocate it with persistent zeal. The literature of antiquity and the literature of France offered types of fixed national units. The affinity between the two as national units had been pointed out in France and England by means of the celebrated "Combat of the ancients and moderns," which also first gave living writers sufficient courage to think of comparing modern art with ancient.

Gottsched presented a program which he systematically strove to carry out, and in which one of the most important places is given to the building up of an artistic theatre, after the model of the great civilized nations. He surely had as much right to show some intolerance toward the harlequin and the popular

stage as Lessing (who supplanted him while continuing his work) had to indulge in a like prejudice against the classical theatre of the French. Lessing, however, as we have already seen, goes at the same time more deeply into the matter by proposing not only a systematic but also an organic construction of the separate *genres*, and Herder took the last step when he demanded an autochthonous growth—that is to say, a development of art out of the inner necessity of personalities on the one hand, and of nationalities on the other. To be sure, the great poets who now appeared were not included in the program, and Gottsched did not appreciate Haller, nor did Lessing form a correct estimate of Goethe, or Herder of Schiller. There is, however, a mysterious connection between the aspirations of the nation and the appearance of genius.

Klopstock probably felt most directly what was wanting in the literature of his people, as he was also the most burning patriot of all our classical writers; and at the same time, as is proved by the *Republic of Letters*, his strange treatise on the art of poetry, he was the one among them who bore the most resemblance to the literary pedant of the old days. He is, therefore, continually occupied with the comparison between German and foreign art, language, and literature, which endeavor was continued later on and with other methods by A.W. Schlegel. But Herder also, in his comparison of the native art of Germany with the art of antiquity, of the Orient and of England, produced effective results; no less did Lessing, although the latter seeks to learn from the faults

of his neighbors rather than from their excellencies. Goethe's criticism is dominated to such a degree by his absorption in the antique, and also in French and English general literature, that he has no understanding of national peculiarities when they do not conform to typical literary phenomena, as Uhland's lyric and Kleist's drama—two literary phenomena which we, nowadays, consider eminently national. The Romantic school was the first to try to place the conception of national literature as a whole on an autochthonous basis, and the scientific speculation to which Romanticism gave rise, has, since the Brothers Grimm, also resulted in serviceable rules gained from the increasingly thorough knowledge of language, of national development, and of social conditions. This new point of view reaches its climax in the attempts of Karl Müllenhoff and Wilhelm Scherer to trace the native literary development directly back to the nature and destiny of the German nation. But even as that proved scientifically unsuccessful, so likewise it was not feasible practically to establish a poetry confined to native materials, forms, and opinions. In vain did Tieck try to play off the youthful Goethe, as the only national one, against the Goethe of the Weimar period, which attempt many after him have repeated; or again, it was proposed to strike Heine out of the history of our literature as un-German—the last two literary events of European significance in Germany, according to Nietzsche. On the contrary, a comparison of German literature with those of foreign nations was not only necessary but also fruitful, as a

certain exhaustion had set in, which lent an aftermath character to the leaders of the German "intellectual poetry" (*Bildungs-Poesie*) of that time. It was necessary once again to compare our technique, our relationship between the poet and the people, our participation in all the various literary *genres* and problems, with the corresponding phenomena in the countries of Zola, Björnson, Tolstoy, Ibsen, and Strindberg.

This, now, leads up to another question, to that concerning *poetic ideals*, and not only poetry in itself; the poet also becomes the object of interest and expectation. Every age embodies a different ideal, by which in all instances the already existing type and the loftier hopes of youth are welded into one—if we maybe allowed so to express it. Antiquity asked that the poet should fill the heart with gladness; the Middle Ages desired edification with a spiritual or a worldly coloring; the first centuries of modern times applied to him for instruction. This last ideal was still in vogue at the beginning of modern German literature. But gradually the conception of "instruction" altered. The poet of the Germanic nations had now to be one who could interpret the heart. He should no longer be the medium for conveying those matters which the didactic novel and the edifying lyric had treated—things valuable where knowledge of the world and human nature, intercourse and felicity are concerned—but he must become a seer again, an announcer of mysterious wisdom. "Whatever, unknown or unminded by others, wanders by night through the labyrinth of the heart"—that he must transmit to

the hearer; he must allow the listener to share with him the gift of "being able to give expression to his suffering." Thus the chief task of the modern poet became "the reproduction of the objective world through the subjective," consequently "experience." Real events, objects, manifestations must pass through a human soul in order to gain poetic significance, and upon the significance of the receiving soul, not upon the "poetic" or "unpoetic" nature of the subject itself, depends the poetic significance.

With this new conception, however, new dangers are connected. Near at hand lies the fear of a too open declaration of the most intimate feelings. In many old-style poets of modern times, in Hölderlin, in Kleist, Grillparzer, and Annette von Droste-Hülshoff this fear assumes the character of ethical aversion to baring their feelings in public. But near, too, lies the hunt after interesting experiences—the need to "experience something" at any price—which marred the life of a romantic poet of Brentano's talents, and also affected the conduct of the realist Grabbe. A new responsibility was placed upon the shoulders of the German poet, which rested heavily on men like Otto Ludwig, and on account of which writers like Hebbel or Richard Wagner thought themselves justified in claiming the royal privileges of the favorites of the gods.

An entirely new method of poetic study began, which perhaps originated with Heinrich von Kleist: a passionate endeavor to place the whole of life at the service of observation or to spend

it in the study of technique. The consequence was not seldom a nervous derangement of the whole apparatus of the soul, just at the moment when it should have been ready for its greatest performances, as in the case of Nikolaus Lenau; however, it also frequently resulted in an endlessly increased receptivity for every experience, as in the case of Bettina von Arnim, Heine, or Annette von Droste, and the most recent writers.

The infinitely difficult task of the modern poet is made still harder by the fact that, in spite of all his efforts, he, happily, seldom succeeds in transforming himself into, one would like to say, an artistically working apparatus, such as Ibsen very nearly became; not, however, without deploring the fact at the close of his life. The German poet in particular has too strong a lyrical inheritance not to reëcho the impressions *directly* received by his heart. The struggle between the demands of a purely artistic presentation of reality, i. e., one governed exclusively by esthetic rules, and its sympathetic rendering, constitutes the poetic tragedy of most of our "naturalistic writers," and especially of the most important one among them, Gerhart Hauptmann. But from this general ideal of the poet, who only through his own experience will give to reality a true existence and the possibility of permanence, there follows a straining after technical requirements such as was formerly almost unknown. This results in an effort in Germany all the more strenuous in proportion to the former slackness regarding questions of artistic form. The peculiarities of the different literary *genres* are heeded

with a severity such as has been practised before only in antiquity or perhaps by the French. Poets like Detlev von Liliencron, who formerly had appeared as advocates of poetical frivolity, now chafed over banal aids for rhyming, as once Alfred de Musset had done. Friedrich Spielhagen, the brothers Heinrich and Thomas Mann, and Jacob Wassermann are seen to busy themselves with the technical questions pertaining to the prose-epic, no longer in a merely esthetical and easy-going fashion, but as though they were working out questions vital to existence; and truly it is bitter earnest with them where their art is concerned. Often, as in painting, technique becomes the principal object, and the young naturalism of Arno Holz and Johannes Schlaf has in all seriousness raised technique to a dogma, without, however, in the long run being able to get the upper hand of the German need of establishing intimate relations with the subject of the art.

We must, however, at this point again remind ourselves that the question is not one of abstract "poets" but one of a large number of living *men* who, happily, differ widely from one another. Above all, when considering them we must think of the typical development of the generations. Those for whom patriotic interests, at least in a direct sense, seemed to have little meaning, were always followed by generations patriotically inspired. The Germany of to-day hides, under the self-deluding appearance of a confinement to purely esthetic problems, a predominating and lively joy in the growth of the Fatherland, and naturally also in its mental broadening. To have given the strongest expression to this

joy constitutes the historical significance of Gustav Frenssen, just as solicitude for its future inspired the muse of Wilhelm von Polenz.

The preference shown to individual literary *genres* changes in an almost regular order of sequence—the Swiss Bovet has even tried recently to lay down a regular law of alternation. Especially is the theatre from time to time abused for being a destructive negation of art, in just as lively a fashion as it is declared at other times to be the sole realization of the artistic ideal. As to prevailing temperaments, a preferably pathetic tone—as, for example, in the epoch of Freytag, Geibel, Treitschke—alternates with a sceptically satiric one—as in Fontane who (like so many writers, in Germany especially) did not belong to his own generation nor even to the immediately succeeding one, but to the next after that! With these are associated preferences for verse or prose; for idealism or realism and naturalism; a falling away from philosophy or an inclination to introduce it into poetry; and numerous other disguises for those antagonistic principles, to which Kuno Francke in a general survey of our literature has sought to trace back its different phases.

We have now said about all that, in our opinion, seems necessary for a general introduction to modern German literature. For the rest, it is of course quite obvious that it is German—and that it is a literature. That it is German, is precisely why it is not exclusively German: for in every epoch has it not been proclaimed in accents of praise or of blame,

until we are almost tired of hearing it, that the inclination to take up and appropriate foreign possessions is peculiar to the German nation—and to the Germanic spirit in general? Thus we possess special presentations of German literature considered from the standpoint of its antique elements, and also from that of its Christian elements, and we could in the same way present theses which would show its development from the standpoint of the Romance or of the English influence. And yet latterly an exactly contrary attempt has been made—in a spirited, if somewhat arbitrary book by Nadler, which consists in trying to build up the history of German literature entirely upon the peculiarities of the different tribes and provinces. For the essence of the German, nay, even of the Swabian, or Bavarian, or North German, or Austrian individuality, is in the long run nourished rather than extinguished by all foreign influences. In spite of this, it is of course important in the consideration of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to observe how the French pattern that is at first followed almost with the unquestioned obedience accorded to a fixed ethical model, is confronted by the English, which brings about the celebrated—and probably overrated—struggle between Gottsched and the Swiss School. We should also notice precisely how the tendency of British literature toward originality—in which the insular peculiarities were strongly emphasized—served to increase the self-reliance of German literature; how a new movement in the style of the antique was cultivated by the classical writers; and how the

Romantic School favored medieval-Christian tendencies—much to Goethe's annoyance. It is of importance likewise to note the way in which Young Germany learned how to gain political-literary effects from the new French models; and finally, how the Northern realism of presentation, amalgamated with Tolstoy's, Björnson's, Strindberg's and also Ibsen's ethical subjectivity, educated the naturalism of the Germans. It is precisely those poets that are especially characterized by German peculiarities who have also trained themselves in the use of foreign subjects and forms: thus did Uhland, Mörike, Hebbel, and all the Romanticists. We have already had occasion many times to call attention in detail to the educational effect of foreign countries.

German literature is, in short, one that possesses the typical moments of development which mark all literatures, and which Wilhelm Scherer was the first to call to our notice: that is to say, it is a complicated organism in which the most varied tendencies cross one another, the most dissimilar generations of writers meet together, and the most remarkable events occur in the most unforeseen manner.

If we should now try to get a closer view of the last and by far the most important factor of literature, namely, the individual writers themselves, this difficulty in obtaining a general view of the whole, this working of the different parts against one another, this pulling away from one another, presents itself more clearly to us here than anywhere else. The attempt to classify the development of our literature into distinct groups according

to the personalities which compose them has been frequently made, since I, in spite of all the difficulties and dangers of such a hazardous enterprise, first undertook, in my *German Literature of the Nineteenth Century*, to give an historical and complete presentation of a literature which had as yet scarcely become historic. I can here merely refer in passing to my own efforts and to those of Bartels, Biese, Riemann, and Soergel—to name only these; for in compliance with the purpose of this introduction we must confine ourselves to giving a general comprehensive outline—although it would be easy to improve upon it if one went more into detail.

It seems to me under these conditions that the groundlines of the development of our literature from 1700-1900 would be best impressed upon us by comparing the order of its evolution with that of the most "normal" poetic genius who ever lived—namely, with that of Goethe; and thereby we should prove its development to be an essentially normal one.

Like all "natural geniuses" Goethe begins as an imitator, dependent upon others; for the poet also must first learn to speak and to walk. The earliest literary effort of his which we possess is the poem *On Christ's Descent into Hell*, which naturally seemed strange enough to Goethe when this long forgotten first printed specimen of his literary productiveness was laid before him again after he had grown old. In this poem traditional phrases are repeated without the addition of anything new and original; conventional feelings are expressed, usual methods are

employed; all this, however, not without a certain moderation of expression constituting a first sign of the otherwise still completely concealed poetic individuality.

Such is the character that the world of virtuosos also bears about the year 1700. The poems of Rudolf von Canitz and Johann von Besser are, though in entirely different spheres, just the same kind of first attempts of an imperfect art anxiously following foreign models as Goethe's first Christian poem—though truly with the tremendous difference that they represented the utmost that Frenchified courtly art could ever attain to; while Goethe's poem, on the contrary, was the immature sprig cut away before its time from the stem of a tree soon to stand in the full glory of its bloom.

When now in the Leipzig period the young student discovers the poet within him, he first does so in the customary way: he recognizes the ability on his part to handle the language of the contemporary poets, and also perhaps to imbue it with his own personal feelings. His poems inserted in letters, which make a show of the elegant pretence of improvisation, but in reality already display a great dexterity in rhyming and in the use of imagery, may be compared to Hagedorn's poetry; but at the same time Goethe is trying to attain the serious tone of the "Pindarian" odes, just as Haller's stilted scholarly poetry conquered a place beside Hagedorn's Epicurean philosophy of life. The *Book of Annette* (1767) as a whole, however, presents the first attempt on the part of Goethe to reach a certain completeness in his

treatment of the poetic theme. In all his subsequent collections of poems the same attempt is made, it is true with increasingly rigid interpretation of the idea of "completeness," and in so far one is reminded in this connection of the theoretic intentions and performances of Gottsched.

The "New Songs" (*Neue Lieder*) of 1770 give a lop-sided exhibition of the style which Leipzig and the times acts. Two great acts follow: in 1773 comes *Götz*; in 1774, *Werther*. And with *Götz* the great "subjects of humanity" seize possession of Goethe's poetry, as they had taken possession of the poetry of Germany with Lessing—as shown by his whole work up to *Nathan*: for Lessing, the strongest adversary of mere "aestheticism," really accomplished what those Anacreontic poets had merely wished to do—or seemed to wish—and brought literature into close touch with life. *The Sorrows of Werther* lays hold of the subjective problems of the age just as the drama of liberty lays hold of the objective; in them a typical character of the times is analyzed not without zealously making use of models—both innovations of Wieland! But now indeed comes the most important of all, that which in its greatness represents something completely new, although in detail Goethe had here all his teachers to teach him—Lessing who had written *Faust*-scenes, and Wieland who was so fond of placing the two souls of man side by side, and Herder who had an absolutely Faust-like nature; so that people have tried, with the exaggeration of the theorist, to hold up before us the whole *Faust* as a kind

of dramatized portrayal of Herder! And with *Faust* Goethe in German literature has reached his own time—"For his century bears his name!"

But in the period which followed the predominating position of the classical writers we once more find the same parallelism of development. Again with Goethe's dilettante beginnings we compare a school of weak imitators, which unhappily was protected by Goethe himself (and also by Schiller in his literary organs); again with the Strassburg period and its Storm and Stress we compare Romanticism, which is characterized by its German nationalism and its antique tendencies, which is sentimental and philosophical, critical and programmatical like the time of *Götz*, which latter surely must have had a strong effect on men like Tieck and Arnim. And out of the sentiment for his country, which, in Goethe's whole literary career, is peculiar only to the poetry of the Strassburg period, tendencies develop like those which manifest themselves in the literature of the Wars of Liberation, of the Swabian School, in the older poetry of political conflict—in short, like all those tendencies which we connect with Ludwig Uhland's name.

Goethe's literary satires and poems for special occasions are a prelude to the purely literary existence and the belligerent spirit of men like Platen and Immermann, who both, as it were by accident, found their way into the open of national poesy. The self-absorption in *Werther*, the delving after new poetical experiences and mediums of expression; the method of

expression hovering between form and illusory improvisation—all this we find again in the strongest individualists, in Heine, in Annette von Droste, in Lenau. The Weimar period, however, when the poet by means of a great and severe self-discipline trains himself to the point of rigidity in order to become the instrument of his art—that period is, with *Tasso*, paving the way for the school of Grillparzer, while that infinite deepening of the poetic calling is a preparation for Otto Ludwig, Richard Wagner, and Friedrich Hebbel. The contemporary novel in the style of *Wilhelm Meister* is revived by the Young Germans, above all by Gutzkow, in the same way that tendencies found in *Nathan* and in *Götz* are brought out again in Gutzkow's and in Heinrich Laube's dramas, so rich in allusions. The national spirit of which *Egmont* is full also fills the novels of Willibald Alexis and Berthold Auerbach. Finally those works, besides *Tasso*, which we are wont to consider the crowning achievements of the Weimar period, above all, *Iphigenia*, have permanently served as models of the new, and in their way classical, "antiques"—for the Munich School, for the Geibels and the Heyses. But we must also remember Mörike and Stifter, and their absorption in the fullness of the inner life, which none of them could attain to without somewhat stunting the growth of life's realities—Hebbel perceived this clearly enough not only in Stifter but in Goethe himself. Above all, however, this whole epoch of the "intellectual poets" may, in a certain sense, be called the *Italian Journey* of German literature. Like Goethe in the years 1787-1788, the

German muse in this period only feels entirely at home in Italy, or at least in the South; in her own country she feels misnamed.

Now let us consider Goethe after he had settled down in Weimar for the second time. Scientific work seems for a while to have entirely replaced poetic activity, as for a moment the scientific prose of Ranke and Helmholtz came near to being of more consequence for the German language than most of what was produced at the same time by so-called poetry. Then the *Campaign in Champagne* (1792), and the new employment of his time with political problems, constitutes for Goethe a temporary phase that may be compared with that recapturing of history by political-historical writers like Freytag and Treitschke, in the same way that *Hermann and Dorothea* (1796), in which an old historical anecdote of the time of the expulsion of the Protestants from Salzburg is transplanted to the time of the French Revolution, may be compared with the historical "Novellen" of Riehl, Scheffel, and C.F. Meyer. Goethe's ballads (1797-1798) maintain the tradition that was to be given new life by Fontane, Strachwitz, and C.F. Meyer. Goethe's later novels with their didactic tendencies, and the inclination to interpolate "Novellen" and diaries, lead up to Gottfried Keller, Wilhelm Raabe and again to Fontane. The table-songs and other convivial poetry of Goethe's old age are taken up again by Scheffel; Goethe's "Novellen" themselves were continued by all those eminent writers whom we have already named. The *Divan*, with its bent toward immutable relations, prepares the way for the

new lyric, until finally, with the second part of *Faust*, mythical world-poetry and symbolism complete the circle, just as the cycle of German literature finishes with Nietzsche, Stefan George, Spitteler and Hofmannsthal. At the same time new forces are starting to form the new cycle, or, to speak like Goethe, the newest spiral: Hauptmann, Frenssen, Ricarda Huch, Enrica von Handel, to name only these. And how many others have we not previously left unnamed!

But all this has not been merely to exercise our ingenuity. By drawing this parallel, which is naturally only to be taken approximately, we have intended to make clear the comforting probability that, in spite of all the exaggerating, narrowing down, and forcing to which it has been obliged to submit, our modern and most recent German literature is essentially a healthy literature. That, in spite of all deviation caused by influential theorists—of the Storm and Stress, of the Romantic School, of the period of Goethe's old age, of the epigonean or naturalistic criticism, or by the dazzling phenomena of foreign countries,—nevertheless in the essentials it obeys its own inner laws. That in spite of all which in the present stage of our literature may create a painful or confusing impression, *we have no cause to doubt that a new and powerful upward development will take place, and no cause either to underrate the literature of our own day!* It is richer in great, and what is perhaps more important, in serious talents than any other contemporary literature. No other can show such wealth of material, no other such abundance of

interesting and, in part, entirely new productions. We do not say this in order to disparage others who in some ways were, only a short time ago, so far superior to us—as were the French in surety of form, the Scandinavians in greatness of talents, the Russians in originality, the English in cultivation of the general public; but we are inspired to utter it by the hopeful joy which every one must feel who, in the contemplation of our modern lyric poetry, our novels, dramas, epic and didactic poetry, does not allow himself to be blinded by prejudice or offended vanity. A great literature such as we possessed about 1800 we of a certainty do not have to-day. A more hopeful chaos or one more rich in fertile seeds we have not possessed since the days of Romanticism. It is surely worth while to study this literature, and in all its twists and turns to admire the heliotropism of the German ideal and the importance which our German literature has won as a mediator, an experimenter, and a model for that world-literature, the outline of which the prophetic eye of the greatest German poet was the first to discern, and his hand, equally expert in scientific and poetic creation, the first to describe.

THE LIFE OF GOETHE

BY CALVIN THOMAS, LL.D.

Professor of Germanic Languages and Literatures, Columbia University Goethe, the illustrious poet-sage whom Matthew Arnold called the "clearest, largest, and most helpful thinker of modern times," was born August 28, 1749, at Frankfurt on the Main.² He was christened Johann Wolfgang. In his early years his familiar name was Wolfgang, or simply Wolf, never Johann. His family was of the middle class, the aristocratic *von* which sometimes appears in his name, in accordance with German custom, having come to him with a patent of nobility which he received in the year 1782.

Johann Caspar Goethe, the poet's father, was the son of a prosperous tailor, who was also a tailor's son. Having abundant means and being of an ambitious turn, Johann Caspar prepared himself for the profession of law, spent some time in Italy, and

² The chief original sources for the life of Goethe are his own autobiographic writings, his letters, his diaries, and his conversations. Of the autobiographic writings the most important are (1) *Poetry and Truth from my Life*, which ends with the year 1775; (2) *Italian Journey*, covering the period from September, 1786, to June, 1788; (3) *Campaign in France and Siege of Antwerp*, dealing with episodes of the years 1792 and 1793; (4) *Annals (Tag- und Jahreshefte)*, which are useful for his later years down to 1823. His letters, forty-nine volumes in all, and his diaries, thirteen volumes, are included in the great Weimar edition of Goethe's works. His conversations, so far as they were recorded, have been well edited by W. von Biedermann, ten volumes, Leipzig, 1889-1896.

then settled in Frankfurt in the hope of rising to distinction in the public service. Disappointed in this hope, he procured the imperial title of Councilor, which gave him a dignified social status but nothing in particular to do. He thus became virtually a gentleman of leisure, since his law practise was quite insignificant. In 1748 he married Katharina Elisabeth Textor, whose father, Johann Wolfgang Textor, was the town's chief magistrate and most eminent citizen. She was eighteen years old at the time of her marriage—twenty years younger than her husband—and well fitted to become a poet's mother. The gift on which she especially prided herself was her story-telling. Wolfgang was the first child of these parents.

The paternal strain in Goethe's blood made for level-headedness, precise and methodical ways, a serious view of life, and a desire to make the most of it. By his mother he was a poet who liked nothing else so well as to invent dream-worlds and commune with the spirits of his imagination. He also ascribes to his mother his *Frohnatur*, his joyous nature. And certain it is that his temperament was on the whole sunny. As he grew to manhood men and women alike were charmed by him. He became a virtuoso in love and had a genius for friendship. But he was not always cheerful. In his youth, particularly, he was often moody and given to brooding over indefinable woes. He suffered acutely at times from what is now called the melancholia of adolescence. This was a phase of that emotional sensitiveness and nervous instability which are nearly always a part of the

poet's dower.

Wolfgang grew up in a wholesome atmosphere of comfort and refinement. He never knew the tonic bitterness of poverty. On the other hand, he was never spoiled by his advantages; to his dying day he disliked luxury. At home under private tutors the boy studied Latin, French, and English, and picked up a little Italian by overhearing his sister's lessons. In 1758 Frankfurt was occupied by a French army, and a French playhouse was set going for the diversion of the officers. In the interest of his French Wolfgang was allowed to go to the theatre, and he made such rapid progress that he was soon studying the dramatic unities as expounded by Corneille and actually trying to write a French play. Withal he was left much to himself, so that he had time to explore Frankfurt to his heart's content.

He was much in contact with people of the humbler sort and learned to like their racy dialect. He penetrated into the ghetto and learned the jargon of the Jews. He even attacked biblical Hebrew, being led thereto by his great love of the Old Testament.

It was his boyish ambition to become a great poet. His favorite amusement was a puppet-show, for which he invented elaborate plays. From his tenth year on he wrote a great deal of verse, early acquiring technical facility and local renown and coming to regard himself as a "thunderer." He attempted a polyglot novel, also a biblical tale on the subject of Joseph, which he destroyed on observing that the hero did nothing but pray and weep. When he was ready for the university he wished to go to Göttingen to

study the old humanities, but his father was bent on making a lawyer of him. So it came about that some ten years of his early life were devoted, first as a student and then as a practitioner, to a reluctant and half-hearted grapple with the intricacies of Holy Roman law.

At the age of sixteen Goethe entered the University of Leipzig, where he remained about three years. The law lectures bored him and he soon ceased to attend them. The other studies that he took up, especially logic and philosophy, seemed to him arid and unprofitable—mere conventional verbiage without any bed-rock of real knowledge. So he presently fell into that mood of disgust with academic learning which was afterwards to form the keynote of *Faust*. Outside the university he found congenial work in Oeser's drawing-school. Oeser was an artist of no great power with the brush, but a genial man, a friend of Winckelmann, and an enthusiast for Greek art. Goethe learned to admire and love him, and from this time on, for some twenty years, his constant need of artistic expression found hardly less satisfaction in drawing from nature than in poetry.

His poetic ambition received little encouragement in university circles. Those to whom he read his ambitious verses made light of them. The venerated Gellert, himself a poet of repute, advised the lad to cultivate a good prose style and look to his handwriting. No wonder that he despaired of his talent, concluded that he could never be a poet, and burnt his effusions. A maddening love-affair with his landlady's daughter,

Anna Katharina Schönkopf, revived the dying lyric flame, and he began to write verses in the gallant erotic vein then and there fashionable—verses that tell of love-lorn shepherds and shepherdesses, give sage advice to girls about keeping their innocence, and moralize on the ways of this wicked world. They show no signs of lyric genius. His short-lived passion for Annette, as he called her, whom he tormented with his jealousy until she lost patience and broke off the intimacy, was also responsible for his first play, *Die Laune des Verliebten*, or *The Lover's Wayward Humor*. It is a pretty one-act pastoral in alexandrine verse, the theme being the punishment of an over-jealous lover. What is mainly significant in these Leipzig poetizings is the fact that they grew out of genuine experience. Goethe had resolved to drop his ambitious projects, such as *Belshazzar*, and coin his own real thoughts and feelings into verse. Thus early he was led into the way of poetic "confession."

In the summer of 1768 he was suddenly prostrated by a grave illness—an internal hemorrhage which was at first thought to portend consumption. Pale and languid he returned to his father's house, and for several months it was uncertain whether he was to live or die. During this period of seclusion he became deeply interested in magic, alchemy, astrology, cabalism, and all that sort of thing. He even set up a kind of alchemist's laboratory to search experimentally for the panacea. Out of these abstruse studies grew Faust's wonderful dream of an ecstatic spirit-life to be attained by natural magic. Of course the menace of impending

death drew his thoughts in the direction of religion. Among the intimate friends of the family was the devout Susanna von Klettenberg, one of the leading spirits in a local conventicle of the Moravian Brethren. This lady—afterwards immortalized as the "beautiful soul" of *Wilhelm Meister*—tried to have the sick youth make his peace with God in her way, that is, by accepting Christ as an ever-present personal saviour. While he never would admit a conviction of sin he envied the calm of the saintly maiden and was so far converted that he attended the meetings of the Brethren, took part in their communion service, and for a while spoke the language of a devout pietist.

This religious experience of his youth bit deep into Goethe's character. He soon drifted away from the pietists and their ways, he came to have a poor opinion of priests and priestcraft, and in time men called him a heathen. Nevertheless his nature had been so deeply stirred in his youth by religion's mystic appeal that he never afterwards lost his reverence for genuine religious feeling. To the end of his days the aspiration of the human soul for communion with God found in him a delicate and sympathetic interpreter.

During his convalescence Goethe retouched a score of his Leipzig songs and published them anonymously, with music by his friend Breitkopf, under the title of *New Songs*. He regarded them at the time as trifles that had come into being without art or effort. "Young, in love, and full of feeling," he had sung them so, while "playing the old game of youth." To-day they seem to

convey little forewarning of the matchless lyric gift that was soon to awaken, being a shade too intellectual and sententious. One hears more of the critic's comment than of the poet's cry. It was at this time also that he rewrote an earlier Leipzig play, expanding it from one act to three and giving it the title *Die Mitschuldigen*, or *The Fellow-culprits*. It is a sort of rogue's comedy in middle-class life, written in the alexandrine verse, which was soon to be discarded along with other French fashions. We have a quartet consisting of an inquisitive inn-keeper, his mismated sentimental daughter, her worthless husband, and her former lover. They tangle themselves up in a series of low intrigues and are finally unmasked as one and all poor miserable sinners. Technically it is a good play—lively, diverting, well put together. But one can not call it very edifying.

In the spring of 1770 Goethe entered the University of Strassburg, which was at that time in French territory. It was a part of his general purpose to better his French, but the actual effect of his sojourn in Alsatia was to put him out of humor with all French standards, especially with the classic French drama, and to excite in him a fervid enthusiasm for the things of the fatherland. This was due partly to the influence of Herder, with whom he now came into close personal relations. From Herder, who was six years his senior and already known by his *Fragments* and *Critical Forests* as a trenchant and original critic, he heard the gospel of a literary revolution. Rules and conventions were to be thrown overboard; the new watchwords

were nature, power, originality, genius, fulness of expression. He conceived a boundless admiration for Homer, Ossian, and Shakespeare, in each of whom he saw the mirror of an epoch and a national life. He became an enthusiastic collector of Alsatian folksongs and was fascinated by the Strassburg minster—at a time when "Gothic" was generally regarded as a synonym of barbarous. Withal his gift for song-making came to a new stage of perfection under the inspiration of his love for the village maid Friederike Brion. From this time forth he was the prince of German lyrists.

In the summer of 1771 he returned to Frankfurt once more, this time with the title of licentiate in law, and began to practise in a perfunctory way, with his heart in his literary projects. By the end of the year he had written out the first draft of a play which he afterwards revised and published anonymously (in 1773) under the title of *Götz von Berlichingen*. By its exuberant fulness of life, its bluff German heartiness, and the freshness and variety of its scenes, it took the public by storm, notwithstanding its disregard of the approved rules of play-writing.

The next year he published *The Sufferings of Young Werther*, a tragic tale of a weak-willed sentimental youth of hyperesthetic tendencies, who commits suicide because of disappointment in love. The story was the greatest literary triumph that Germany had ever known, and in point of sheer artistic power it remains to this day the best of novels in the tragic-sentimental vein. These two works carried the name of Goethe far and wide and made

him the accepted leader of the literary revolution which long afterwards came to be known, from the title of a play by Klinger, as the Storm and Stress.

The years 1773-1775 were for Goethe a time of high emotional tension, from which he sought relief in rapid, desultory, and multifarious writing. Exquisite songs, musical comedies of a sentimental tinge, humorous and satiric skits in dramatic form, prose tragedy of passionate error, and poetic tragedy of titanic revolt—all these and more welled up from a sub-conscious spring of feeling, taking little counsel of the sober intellect. Several minor productions were left unfinished and were afterwards published in fragmentary form. Such is the case with *Prometheus*, a splendid fragment, in which we get a glimpse of the Titan battling, as the friend of man, against the ever-living gods. Of the works completed and published at this time, aside from *Götz* and *Werther*, the most notable were *Clavigo* and *Stella*, prose tragedies in which a fickle lover meets with condign punishment. Another prose tragedy, *Egmont*, with its hero conceived as a "demonic" nature borne on to his doom by his own buoyancy of spirit, was nearly finished. Most important of all, a considerable portion of *Faust*, which was to be its author's great life-work, was "stormed out" during these early years at Frankfurt.

The legendary Faust is presented as a bad man who sells his soul to the devil for twenty-four years of power and pleasure, gets what he bargained for, and in the end goes to perdition.

Young Goethe conceived his hero differently: not as a bad man on the way to hell, and not—at first—as a good man on the way to heaven. He thought of him rather as a towering personality passionately athirst for transcendental knowledge and universal experience; as a man whose nature contained the very largest possibilities both for good and for evil. It is probable that, when he began to write, Goethe did not intend to anticipate the judgment of God upon Faust's career. The essence of his dramatic plan was to carry his hero through a lifetime of varied experience, letting him sin and suffer grandly, and at last to give him something to do which would seem worth having lived for. After the going down of the curtain, in all probability, he was to be left in the hands of the Eternal Pardoner. Later in life, as we shall see, Goethe decided not only to save his hero, but to make his salvation a part of the dramatic action.

The close of the year 1775 brought a momentous change in Goethe's life and prospects. On the invitation of the young duke Karl August, who had met him and taken a liking to him, he went to visit the Weimar court, not expecting to stay more than a few weeks. But the duke was so pleased with his gifted and now famous guest that he presently decided to keep him in Weimar, if possible, by making him a member of the Council of State. Goethe was the more willing to remain, since he detested his law practise, and his income from authorship was pitifully small. Moreover, he saw in the boyish, impulsive, sport-loving prince a sterling nature that might be led in the ways of wise

rulership. For the nonce this was mission enough. He took his seat in the Council in June, 1776, with the title of Councilor of Legation. At first there was not very much for him to do except to familiarize himself with the physical and economic conditions of the little duchy. This he did with a will. He set about studying mineralogy, geology, botany, and was soon observing the homologies of the vertebrate skeleton. Withal he was very attentive to routine business.

One after another important departments of administration were turned over to him, until he became, in 1782, the President of the Chambers and hence the leading statesman of the duchy.

All this produced a sobering and clarifying effect. The inner storm and stress gradually subsided, and the new Goethe—statesman, scientific investigator, man of the world, courtier, friend of princes—came to see that after all feeling was not everything, and that its untrammelled expression was not the whole of art. Form and decorum counted for more than he had supposed, and revolution was not the word of wisdom. Self-control was the only basis of character, and limitation lay at the foundation of all art. To work to make things better, even in a humble sphere, was better than to fret over the badness of the world. Nature's method was that of bit-by-bit progress, and to puzzle out her ways was a noble and fascinating employment. In this general way of thinking he was confirmed by the study of Spinoza's *Ethics*, a book which, as he said long afterwards, quieted his passions and gave him a large and free outlook over

the world. In this process of quieting the passions some influence must be ascribed to Charlotte von Stein, a woman in whom, for some twelve years of his life, he found his muse and his madonna. His letters often address her in terms of idolatrous endearment. She was a wife and a mother, but Weimar society regarded her relation to Goethe as a platonic attachment not to be condemned.

The artistic expression of the new life in Weimar is found in various short poems, notably *Wanderer's Nightsong*, *Ilmenau*, *The Divine*, and *The Mysteries*; also in a number of plays which were written for the amateur stage of the court circle. The Weimarians were very fond of play-acting, and Goethe became their purveyor of dramatic supplies. It was to meet this demand that he wrote *Brother and Sister* (*Die Geschwister*), *The Triumph of Sentimentalism*, *The Fisher-maid*, *The Birds*, and other pieces. Much more important than any of these bagatelles, which were often hastily composed for a birthday celebration or some other festive occasion, are the two fine poetic dramas, *Iphigenie* and *Tasso*. The former was first written rather rapidly in stately rhythmic prose and played by the amateurs, with Goethe himself in the rôle of Orestes, in the spring of 1779. Eight years later, the author being then in Italy, it was recast with great care in mellifluous blank verse. *Iphigenie* is essentially a drama of the soul, there being little in it of what is commonly called action. A youth who is the prey of morbid illusions, so that his life has become a burden, is cured by finding a noble-minded sister, whose whole being radiates peace and self-possession. The entire

power of Goethe's chastened art is here lavished on the figure of his heroine who, by her goodness, her candor, her sweet reasonableness, not only heals her soul-sick brother, but so works on the barbarian king Thoas, who would fain have her for his wife, that he wins a notable victory over himself.

By the end of his first decade in Weimar Goethe began to feel that he needed and had earned a vacation. His conduct of the public business had been highly successful, but he had starved his esthetic nature; for after all Weimar was only a good-sized village that could offer little to the lover of art. Overwork had so told upon him that he was unable to hold himself long to any literary project. He had begun half a dozen important works, but had completed none of them, and the public was beginning to suspect that the author of *Götz* and *Werther* was lost to literature. The effect of the whole situation—that inner conflict between the poetic dreamer and the man of affairs which is the theme of *Tasso*—was to produce a feeling of depression, as of a bird caught in a net. So acute did the trouble become that he afterwards spoke of it as a terrible disease. In the summer of 1786 he contracted with the Leipzig publisher Göschen for a new edition of his works in eight volumes; and to gain time for this enterprise he resolved to take a trip to the land upon which he had already twice looked down with longing—once in 1775 and again in 1779—from the summit of the Gotthard.

On the 3d of September, at three o'clock in the morning, he stole away from Karlsbad, where he had been taking the waters,

and hurried southward, alone and incognito, over the Alps.

In Italy, where he remained nearly two years, Goethe's mind and art underwent another notable change. He himself called it a spiritual rebirth. Freed from all oppressive engagements, he gave himself to the study of ancient sculpture and architecture, reveled in the splendors of Renaissance painting, and pursued his botanical studies in the enticing plant-world of the Italian gardens. Venice, Naples, Vesuvius, Sicily, the sea, fascinated him in their several ways and gave him the sense of being richer for the rest of his life. Sharing in the care-free existence of the German artist-colony in Rome made him very happy. It not only disciplined his judgment in matters of art and opened a vast new world of ideas and impressions, but it restored the lost balance between the intellectual and duty-bound man on the one hand and the esthetic and sensual man on the other. He resolved never again to put on the harness of an administrative drudge, but to claim the freedom of a poet, an artist, a man of science. To this desire the Duke of Weimar generously assented.

On his return to Weimar, in June, 1788, Goethe made it his first task to finish the remaining works that were called for by his contract with Göschen. *Egmont* and *Tasso* were soon disposed of, but *Faust* proved intractable. While in Rome he had taken out the old manuscript and written a scene or two, and had then somehow lost touch with the subject. So he decided to revise what he had on hand and to publish a part of the scenes as a fragment. This fragmentary *Faust* came out in 1790. It attracted

little attention, nor was any other of the new works received with much warmth by the public of that day. They expected something like *Götz* and *Werther*, and did not understand the new Goethe, who showed in many ways that his heart was still in Italy and that he found Weimar a little dull and provincial. Thus the greatest of German poets had for the time being lost touch with the German public; he saw that he must wait for the growth of the taste by which he was to be understood and enjoyed. Matters were hardly made better by his taking Christiane Vulpius into his house as his unwedded wife. This step, which shocked Weimar society—except the duke and Herder—had the effect of ending his unwholesome relation to Frau von Stein, who was getting old and peevish. The character of Christiane has often been pictured too harshly. She was certainly not her husband's intellectual peer—he would have looked long for a wife of that grade—and she became a little too fond of wine. On the other hand, she was affectionate, devoted, true, and by no means lacking in mental gifts. She and Goethe were happy together and faithful to each other.

For several years after his return from Italy Goethe wrote nothing that is of much importance in the history of his literary life. He devoted himself largely to scientific studies in plant and animal morphology and the theory of color. His discovery of the intermaxillary bone in the human skull, and his theory that the lateral organs of a plant are but successive phases of the leaf, have given him an assured if modest place in the history

of the development hypothesis. On the other hand, his long and laborious effort to refute Newton's theory of the composition of white light is now generally regarded as a misdirection of energy. In his *Roman Elegies* (1790) he struck a note of pagan sensuality. The pensive distichs, telling of the wanton doings of Amor amid the grandeur that was Rome, were a little shocking in their frank portraiture of the emancipated flesh. The outbreak of violence in France seemed to him nothing but madness and folly, since he did not see the real Revolution, but only the Paris Terror.

He wrote two or three very ordinary plays to satirize various phases of the revolutionary excitement—phases that now seem as insignificant as the plays themselves. In 1792 he accompanied the Duke of Weimar on the inglorious Austro-Prussian invasion of France, heard the cannonade at Valmy, and was an interested observer as the allies tumbled back over the Rhine. Perhaps the best literary achievement of these years is the fine hexameter version of the medieval *Reynard the Fox*.

The year 1794 marks the beginning of more intimate relations between Goethe and Schiller. Their memorable friendship lasted until Schiller's death, in 1805—the richest decade in the whole history of German letters. The two men became in a sense allies and stood together in the championship of good taste and humane idealism. Goethe's literary occupations during this period were very multifarious; a list of his writings in the various fields of poetry, drama, prose fiction, criticism, biography, art and art-history, literary scholarship, and half a dozen sciences,

would show a many-sidedness to which there is no modern parallel. Of all this mass of writing only a few works of major importance can even be mentioned here.

In 1796 appeared *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, a novel which captivated the literary class, if not the general public, and was destined to exert great influence on German fiction for a generation to come. It had been some twenty years in the making. In its earlier form it was called *Wilhelm Meister's Theatrical Mission*.³ This tells the story of a Werther-like youth who is to be saved from Werther's fate by finding a work to do. His "mission," apparently, is to become a good actor and to promote high ideals of the histrionic art. Incidentally he is ambitious to be a dramatic poet, and his childhood is simply that of Wolfgang Goethe. For reasons intimately connected with his own development Goethe finally decided to change his plan and his title, and to present Wilhelm's variegated experiences as an apprenticeship in the school of life. In the final version Wilhelm comes to the conclusion that the theatre is *not* his mission—all that was a mistaken ambition. Just what use he *will* make of his well-disciplined energy does not clearly appear at the end of the story, since Goethe bundles him off to Italy. He was already planning a continuation of the story under the title of *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman's Journey*. In this second part the hero becomes

³ This earlier version was long supposed to be lost, but in 1910 a copy of the original manuscript was discovered at Zürich and published. Its six books correspond very nearly to the first four of the final version.

interested in questions of social uplift and thinks of becoming a surgeon. Taken as a whole *Wilhelm Meister* moves with a slowness which is quite out of tune with later ideals of prose fiction. It also lacks concentration and artistic finality. But it is replete with Goethe's ripe and mellow wisdom, and it contains more of his intimate self than any other work of his except *Faust*.

During this high noon of his life Goethe again took up his long neglected *Faust*, decided to make two parts of it, completed the First Part, and thought out much that was to go into the Second Part. By this time he had become somewhat alienated from the spirit of his youth, when he had envisaged life in a mist of vague and stormy emotionalism. His present passion was for clearness. So he boldly decided to convert the old tragedy of sin and suffering into a drama of mental clearing-up. The early Faust—the pessimist, murderer, seducer—was to be presented as temporarily wandering in the dark; as a man who had gone grievously wrong in passionate error, but was essentially "good" by virtue of his aspiring nature, and hence, in the Lord's fulness of time, was to be led out into the light and saved. The First Part, ending with the heart-rending death of Margaret in her prison-cell, and leaving Faust in an agony of remorse, was published in 1808. Faust's redemption, by enlarged experience of life and especially by his symbolic union with the Greek Queen of Beauty, was reserved for the Second Part.

The other more notable works of this period are *Hermann and Dorothea*, a delightful poem in dactylic hexameters, picturing

a bit of German still life against the sinister background of the French Revolution, and the *Natural Daughter*, which was planned to body forth, in the form of a dramatic trilogy in blank verse, certain phases of Goethe's thinking about the upheaval in France. In the former he appears once more as a poet of the plain people, with an eye and a heart for their ways and their outlook upon life. Everybody likes *Hermann and Dorothea*. On the other hand, the *Natural Daughter* is disappointing, and not merely because it is a fragment. (Only the first part of the intended trilogy was written.) Goethe had now convinced himself that the function of art is to present the typical. Accordingly the characters appear as types of humanity divested of all that is accidental or peculiar to the individual. The most of them have not even a name. The consequence is that, notwithstanding the splendid verse and the abounding wisdom of the speeches, the personages do not seem to be made of genuine human stuff. As a great thinker's comment on the Revolution the *Natural Daughter* is almost negligible.

The decade that followed the death of Schiller was for Germany a time of terrible trial, during which Goethe pursued the even tenor of his way as a poet and man of science. He had little sympathy with the national uprising against Napoleon, whom he looked on as the invincible subduer of the hated Revolution. From the point of view of our modern nationalism, which was just then entering on its world-transforming career, his conduct was unpatriotic. But let him at least be rightly

understood. It was not that he lacked sympathy for the German people, but he misjudged and underestimated the new forces that were coming into play. As the son of an earlier age he could only conceive a people's welfare as the gift of a wise ruler. He thought of politics as the affair of the great. He hated war and all eruptive violence, being convinced that good would come, not by such means, but by enlightenment, self-control and attending to one's work in one's sphere. To the historian Luden he said in 1813:

"Do not believe that I am indifferent to the great ideas of freedom, people, fatherland. No! These ideas are in us, they are a part of our being, and no one can cast them from him. I too have a warm heart for Germany. I have often felt bitter pain in thinking of the German people, so worthy of respect in some ways, so miserable on the whole. A comparison of the German people with other peoples arouses painful emotions which I try in every way to surmount; and in science and art I have found the wings whereby I rise above them. But the comfort which these afford is after all a poor comfort that does not compensate for the proud consciousness of belonging to a great and strong people that is honored and feared."

In 1808 he published *The Elective Affinities*, a novel in which the tragic effects of lawless passion invading the marriage relation were set forth with telling art. Soon after this he began to write a memoir of his life. He was now a European celebrity, the dream of his youth had come true, and he purposed to show in detail how everything had happened; that is, how his

literary personality had evolved amid the environing conditions. He conceived himself as a phenomenon to be explained. That he called his memoir *Poetry and Truth* was perhaps an error of judgment, since the title has been widely misunderstood. For Goethe poetry was not the antithesis of truth, but a higher species of truth—the actuality as seen by the selecting, combining, and harmonizing imagination. In themselves, he would have said, the facts of a man's life are meaningless, chaotic, discordant: it is the poet's office to put them into the crucible of his spirit and give them forth as a significant and harmonious whole. The "poetry" of Goethe's autobiography—by far the best of autobiographies in the German language—must not be taken to imply concealment, perversion, substitution, or anything of that gross kind.

It lies in the very style of the book and is a part of its author's method of self-revelation. That he devotes so much space to the seemingly transient and unimportant love-affairs of his youth is only his way of recognizing that the poet-soul is born of love and nourished by love. He felt that these fleeting amorousities were a part of the natural history of his inner being.

And even in the serene afternoon of his life lovely woman often disturbed his soul, just as in the days of his youth. But the poetic expression of his feeling gradually became less simple and direct: he liked to embroider it with musing reflections and exotic fancies gathered from everywhere. Just as he endeavored with indefatigable eagerness of mind to keep abreast of scientific research, so he tried to assimilate the poetry of all nations. The

Greeks and Romans no longer sufficed his omnivorous appetite and his "panoramic ability." When Hammer-Purgstall's German version of the *D[=i]w[=a]n* of H[=a]f[=i]z came into his hands he at once set about making himself at home in the mental world of the Persian and Arabic poets. Thus arose his *Divan* (1819), in which he imitated the oriental costume, but not the form. His aim was to reproduce in German verse the peculiar savor of the Orientals, with their unique blend of sensuality, wit, and mystic philosophy. But the feeling—the inner experience—was all his own. The best book of the *Divan*, the one called *Suleika*, was inspired by a very real liking for Marianne Willemer, a talented lady who played the love-game with him and actually wrote some of the poems long ascribed to Goethe himself.

At last, in 1824, when he was seventy-five years old, he came back once more to his *Faust*, the completion of which had long floated before his mind as a duty that he owed to himself and to the world. There was no longer any doubt as to what his great life-work was to be. With admirable energy and with perfect clarity of vision he addressed himself to the gigantic task, the general plan of which and many of the details had been thought out long before. It was finished in the summer of 1831. About sixty years after he had penned the first words of Faust, the disgruntled pessimist at war with life, he took leave of him as a purified soul mounting upward among the saints toward the Ineffable Light, under the mystic guidance of the Eternal-Womanly.

Goethe died March 18, 1832. The story that his last words

were "more light" is probably nothing more than a happy invention.

Admirers of the great German see more in him than the author of the various works which have been all too briefly characterized in the preceding sketch. His is a case where, in very truth, the whole is more than the sum of the parts. Goethe is the representative of an epoch. He stands for certain ideals which are not those of the present hour, but which it was of inestimable value to the modern man to have thus nobly worked out and exemplified in practice. Behind and beneath his writings, informing them and giving them their value for posterity, is a wonderful personality which it is a delight and an education to study in the whole process of its evolution. By way of struggle, pain and error, like his own Faust, he arrived at a view of life, in which he found inspiration and inner peace. It is outlined in the verses which he placed before his short poems as a sort of motto:

Wide horizon, eager life,
Busy years of honest strife,
Ever seeking, ever founding,
Never ending, ever rounding,
Guarding tenderly the old,
Taking of the new glad hold,
Pure in purpose, light of heart,
Thus we gain—at least a start.

POEMS

GREETING AND DEPARTURE⁴ (1771)

My heart throbb'd high: to horse, away then!
Swift as a hero to the fight!
Earth in the arms of evening lay then,
And o'er the mountains hung the night,
Now could I see like some huge giant
The haze-envelop'd oak-tree rise,
While from the thicket stared defiant
The darkness with its hundred eyes.

The cloud-throned moon from his dominion
Peered drowsily through veils of mist.
The wind with gently-wafting pinion
Gave forth a rustling strange and whist.
With shapes of fear the night was thronging
But all the more my courage glowed;
My soul flamed up in passionate longing
And hot my heart with rapture flow'd.

I saw thee; melting rays of pleasure

⁴ Translator: Charles Wharton Stork.

Streamed o'er me from thy tender glance,
My heart beat only to thy measure,
I drew my breath as in a trance.
The radiant hue of spring caressing
Lay rosy on thy upturned face,
And love—ye gods, how rich the blessing!
I dared not hope to win such grace.

To part—alas what grief in this is!—
In every look thy heart spoke plain.
What ecstasy was in thy kisses!
What changing thrill of joy and pain!
I went. One solace yet to capture,
Thine eyes pursued in sweet distress.
But to be loved, what holy rapture!
To love, ah gods, what happiness!

THE HEATHROSE⁵ (1771)

Once a boy a Rosebud spied,
Heathrose fair and tender,
All array'd in youthful pride,—
Quickly to the spot he hied,
Ravished by her splendor.
Rosebud, rosebud, rosebud red,
Heathrose fair and tender!
Said the boy, "I'll now pick thee
Heathrose fair and tender!"
Rosebud cried "And I'll prick thee,
So thou shalt remember me,
Ne'er will I surrender!"
Rosebud, rosebud, rosebud red,
Heathrose fair and tender!
But the wanton plucked the rose,
Heathrose fair and tender;
Thorns the cruel theft oppose,
Brief the struggle and vain the woes,
She must needs surrender.
Rosebud, rosebud, rosebud red,
Heathrose fair and tender!

⁵ Adapted from E.A. Bowring.

MAHOMET'S SONG⁶ (1773)

[This song was intended to be introduced in a dramatic poem entitled *Mahomet*, the plan of which was not carried out by Goethe. He mentions that it was to have been sung by Ali toward the end of the piece, in honor of his master, Mahomet, shortly before his death, and when at the height of his glory, of which it is typical.]

See the rock-born stream!
Like the gleam
Of a star so bright!
Kindly spirits
High above the clouds
Nourished him while youthful
In the copse between the cliffs.

Young and fresh,
From the clouds he danceth
Down upon the marble rocks;
Then tow'rd heaven
Leaps exulting.

Through the mountain-passes

⁶ Translator: E.A. Bowring. (All poems in this section translated by E.A. Bowring, W.E. Aytoun and Theodore Martin appear by permission of Thomas Y. Crowell & Co.)

Chaseth he the color'd pebbles,
And, advancing like a chief,
Draws his brother streamlets with him
In his course.

In the vale below
'Neath his footsteps spring the flowers,
And the meadow
In his breath finds life.

Yet no shady vale can stay him,
Nor can flowers,
Round his knees all softly twining
With their loving eyes detain him;
To the plain his course he taketh,
Serpent-winding.

Eager streamlets
Join his waters. And now moves he
O'er the plain in silv'ry glory,
And the plain in him exults,
And the rivers from the plain,
And the streamlets from the mountain,
Shout with joy, exclaiming: "Brother,
Brother, take thy brethren with thee.
With thee to thine agèd father,
To the everlasting ocean,
Who, with arms outstretching far,
Waiteth for us;

Ah, in vain those arms lie open
To embrace his yearning children;
For the thirsty sand consumes us
In the desert waste; the sunbeams
Drink our life-blood; hills around us
Into lakes would dam us! Brother,
Take thy brethren of the plain,
Take thy brethren of the mountain
With thee, to thy father's arms!"—

Let all come, then!—
And now swells he
Lordlier still; yea, e'en a people
Bears his regal flood on high!
And in triumph onward rolling,
Names to countries gives he,—cities
Spring to light beneath his foot.

Ever, ever, on he rushes,
Leaves the towers' flame-tipp'd summits,
Marble palaces, the offspring
Of his fulness, far behind.

Cedar-houses bears the Atlas
On his giant shoulders; flutt'ring
In the breeze far, far above him
Thousand flags are gaily floating,
Bearing witness to his might.

And so beareth he his brethren,
All his treasures, all his children,
Wildly shouting, to the bosom
Of his long-expectant sire.

PROMETHEUS⁷ (1774)

Cover thy spacious heavens, Zeus,
With clouds of mist,
And, like the boy who lops
The thistles' heads,
Disport with oaks and mountain-peaks;
Yet thou must leave

My earth still standing;
My cottage too, which was not raised by thee,
Leave me my hearth,
Whose kindly glow
By thee is envied.

I know nought poorer
Under the sun, than ye gods!
Ye nourish painfully,
With sacrifices
And votive prayers,
Your majesty;
Ye would e'en starve,
If children and beggars
Were not trusting fools.
While yet a child,

⁷ Translator: E.A. Bowring.

And ignorant of life,
I turned my wandering gaze
Up tow'rd the sun, as if with him
There were an ear to hear my wailing,
A heart, like mine
To feel compassion for distress.

Who help'd me
Against the Titans' insolence?
Who rescued me from certain death,
From slavery?
Didst thou not do all this thyself,
My sacred glowing heart?
And glowedst, young and good,
Deceived with grateful thanks
To yonder slumbering one?

I honor thee! and why?
Hast thou e'er lighten'd the sorrows
Of the heavy laden?
Hast thou e'er dried up the tears

Of the anguish-stricken?
Was I not fashion'd to be a man
By omnipotent Time,
And by eternal Fate,
Masters of me and thee?

Didst thou e'er fancy

That life I should learn to hate,
And fly to deserts,
Because not all
My blossoming dreams grew ripe?

Here sit I, forming mortals
After my image;
A race resembling me,
To suffer, to weep,
To enjoy, to be glad,
And thee to scorn,
As I!

THE WANDERER'S NIGHT-SONG⁸ (1776)

Thou who comest from on high,
Who all woes and sorrows stillest,
Who, for two-fold misery,
Hearts with twofold balsam fillest,
Would this constant strife would cease!
What avails the joy and pain?
Blissful Peace,
To my bosom come again!

⁸ Adapted from E. A. Bowring.

THE SEA-VOYAGE⁹ (1776)

Many a day and night my bark stood ready laden;
Waiting fav'ring winds, I sat with true friends round me,
Pledging me to patience and to courage,
In the haven.

And they spoke thus with impatience twofold:
"Gladly pray we for thy rapid passage,
Gladly for thy happy voyage; fortune
In the distant world is waiting for thee,
In our arms thou'lt find thy prize, and love too,
When returning."

And when morning came, arose an uproar
And the sailors' joyous shouts awoke us;
All was stirring, all was living, moving,
Bent on sailing with the first kind zephyr.

And the sails soon in the breeze are swelling,
And the sun with fiery love invites us;
Fill'd the sails are, clouds on high are floating,
On the shore each friend exulting raises
Songs of hope, in giddy joy expecting
Joy the voyage through, as on the morn of sailing,

⁹ Translator: E. A. Bowring.

And the earliest starry nights so radiant.

But by God-sent changing winds ere long he's driven
Sideways from the course he had intended,
And he feigns as though he would surrender,
While he gently striveth to outwit them,
To his goal, e'en when thus press'd, still faithful.

But from out the damp gray distance rising,
Softly now the storm proclaims its advent,
Presseth down each bird upon the waters,
Presseth down the throbbing hearts of mortals.
And it cometh. At its stubborn fury,
Wisely ev'ry sail the seaman striketh;
With the anguish-laden ball are sporting
Wind and water.

And on yonder shore are gather'd standing,
Friends and lovers, trembling for the bold one:
"Why, alas, remain'd he here not with us!
Ah, the tempest I Cast away by fortune!
Must the good one perish in this fashion?
Might not he perchance * * *. Ye great immortals!"

Yet he, like a man, stands by his rudder;
With the bark are sporting wind and water,
Wind and water sport not with his bosom:
On the fierce deep looks he, as a master,—
In his gods, or shipwreck'd, or safe landed,

Trusting ever.

TO THE MOON¹⁰ (1778)

Bush and vale thou fill'st again
With thy misty ray,
And my spirit's heavy chain
Casteth far away.

Thou dost o'er my fields extend
Thy sweet soothing eye,
Watching like a gentle friend,
O'er my destiny.

Vanish'd days of bliss and woe
Haunt me with their tone,
Joy and grief in turns I know,
As I stray alone.

Stream beloved, flow on! Flow on!
Ne'er can I be gay!
Thus have sport and kisses gone,
Truth thus pass'd away.

Once I seem'd the lord to be
Of that prize so fair!
Now, to our deep sorrow, we

¹⁰ Translator: E. A. Bowring.

Can forget it ne'er.

Murmur, stream, the vale along,
Never cease thy sighs;
Murmur, whisper to my song
Answering melodies!

When thou in the winter's night
Overflow'st in wrath,
Or in spring-time sparklest bright,
As the buds shoot forth.

He who from the world retires,
Void of hate, is blest;
Who a friend's true love inspires,
Leaning on his breast!

That which heedless man ne'er knew,
Or ne'er thought aright,
Roams the bosom's labyrinth through,
Boldly into night.

THE FISHERMAN¹¹ (1778)

The waters rush'd, the waters rose,
A fisherman sat by,
While on his line in calm repose
He cast his patient eye.
And as he sat, and hearken'd there,
The flood was cleft in twain,
And, lo! a dripping mermaid fair
Sprang from the troubled main.

She sang to him, and spake the while
"Why lurest thou my brood,
With human wit and human guile
From out their native flood?
Oh, couldst thou know how gladly dart
The fish across the sea,
Thou wouldst descend, e'en as thou art,
And truly happy be!

Do not the sun and moon with grace
Their forms in ocean lave?
Shines not with twofold charms their face,
When rising from the wave?
The deep, deep heavens, then lure thee not,—

¹¹ Translator: E. A. Bowring.

The moist yet radiant blue,—
Not thine own form,—to tempt thy lot
'Midst this eternal dew?"

The waters rush'd, the waters rose,
Wetting his naked feet;
As if his true love's words were those,
His heart with longing beat.
She sang to him, to him spake she,
His doom was fix'd, I ween;
Half drew she him, and half sank he,
And ne'er again was seen.

THE WANDERER'S NIGHT-SONG¹² (1780)

[Written at night on the Kickelhahn, a hill in the forest of Ilmenau, on the walls of a little hermitage where Goethe composed the last act of his *Iphigenie*.]

Hush'd on the hill
Is the breeze;
Scarce by the zephyr
The trees
Softly are press'd;
The woodbird's asleep on the bough.
Wait, then, and thou
Soon wilt find rest.

¹² Translator: E. A. Bowring.

THE ERL-KING¹³ (1782)

Who rides there so late through the night dark and drear?
The father it is, with his infant so dear;
He holdeth the boy tightly clasp'd in his arm,
He holdeth him safely, he keepeth him warm.

"My son, wherefore seek'st thou thy face thus to hide?"
"Look, father, the Erl-King is close by our side!
Dost see not the Erl-King, with crown and with train?"
"My son, 'tis the mist rising over the plain."

"Oh come, thou dear infant! oh come thou with me!
Full many a game I will play there with thee;
On my strand, lovely flowers their blossoms unfold,
My mother shall grace thee with garments of gold."

"My father, my father, and dost thou not hear
The words that the Erl-King now breathes in mine ear?"
"Be calm, dearest child, 'tis thy fancy deceives;
'Tis the sad wind that sighs through the withering leaves."

"Wilt go, then, dear infant, wilt go with me there?
My daughters shall tend thee with sisterly care;
My daughters by night their glad festival keep,

¹³ Translator: E. A. Bowring.

They'll dance thee, and rock thee, and sing thee to sleep."

"My father, my father, and dost thou not see,
How the Erl-King his daughters has brought here for me?"

"My darling, my darling, I see it aright,
'Tis the agèd gray willows deceiving thy sight."

"I love thee, I'm charm'd by thy beauty, dear boy!
And if thou'rt unwilling, then force I'll employ."
"My father, my father, he seizes me fast,
Full sorely the Erl-King has hurt me at last."

The father now gallops, with terror half wild,
He grasps in his arms the poor shuddering child;
He reaches his court-yard with toil and with dread,—
The child in his arms finds he motionless, dead.

THE GODLIKE¹⁴ (1783)

Noble be man,
Helpful and good!
For that alone
Distinguisheth him
From all the beings
Unto us known.

Hail to the beings,
Unknown and glorious,
Whom we forebode!
From *his* example
Learn we to know them!

For unfeeling
Nature is ever
On bad and on good
The sun alike shineth;
And on the wicked,
As on the best,
The moon and stars gleam.

Tempest and torrent,
Thunder and hail,

¹⁴ Translator: E. A. Bowring.

Roar on their path,
Seizing the while,
As they haste onward,
One after another.

Even so, fortune
Gropes 'mid the throng—
Innocent boyhood's
Curly head seizing,—
Seizing the hoary
Head of the sinner.

After laws mighty,
Brazen, eternal,
Must all we mortals
Finish the circuit
Of our existence.

Man, and man only
Can do the impossible
He 'tis distinguisheth,
Chooseth and judgeth;
He to the moment
Endurance can lend.

He and he only
The good can reward,
The bad can he punish,
Can heal and can save;

All that wanders and strays
Can usefully blend.

And we pay homage
To the immortals
As though they were men,
And did in the great,
What the best, in the small,
Does or might do.

Be the man that is noble,
Both helpful and good,
Unweariedly forming
The right and the useful,
A type of those beings
Our mind hath foreshadow'd!

MIGNON¹⁵ (1785)

[This universally known poem is also to be found in *Wilhelm Meister*.]

Know'st thou the land where the fair citron blows,
Where the bright orange midst the foliage glows,
Where soft winds greet us from the azure skies,
Where silent myrtles, stately laurels rise,
Know'st thou it well?

'Tis there, 'tis there,
That I with thee, beloved one, would repair.

Know'st thou the house? On columns rests its pile,
Its halls are gleaming, and its chambers smile,
And marble statues stand and gaze on me:
"Poor child! what sorrow hath befallen thee?"
Know'st thou it well?

'Tis there, 'tis there,
That I with thee, protector, would repair!

Know'st thou the mountain, and its cloudy bridge?
The mule can scarcely find the misty ridge;

¹⁵ Translator: E. A. Bowring.

In caverns dwells the dragon's olden brood,
The frowning crag obstructs the raging flood.
Know'st thou it well?

'Tis there, 'tis there,
Our path lies—Father—thither, oh repair!

PROXIMITY OF THE BELOVED ONE¹⁶ (1795)

I think of thee, whene'er the sun his beams
O'er ocean flings;
I think of thee, whene'er the moonlight gleams
In silv'ry springs.

I see thee, when upon the distant ridge
The dust awakes;
At midnight's hour, when on the fragile bridge
The wanderer quakes.

I hear thee, when yon billows rise on high,
With murmur deep.
To tread the silent grove oft wander I,
When all's asleep.

I'm near thee, though thou far away mayst be—
Thou, too, art near!
The sun then sets, the stars soon lighten me,
Would thou wert here!

¹⁶ Translator: E. A. Bowring.

THE SHEPHERD'S LAMENT¹⁷ (1802)

Up yonder on the mountain,
I dwelt for days together;
Looked down into the valley,
This pleasant summer weather.

My sheep go feeding onward,
My dog sits watching by;
I've wandered to the valley,
And yet I know not why.

The meadow, it is pretty,
With flowers so fair to see;
I gather them, but no one
Will take the flowers from me.

The good tree gives me shadow,
And shelter from the rain;
But yonder door is silent,
It will not ope again!

I see the rainbow bending,
Above her old abode,
But she is there no longer;

¹⁷ W.E. Aytoun and Theodore Martin.

They've taken my love abroad.

They took her o'er the mountains,
They took her o'er the sea;
Move on, move on, my bonny sheep,
There is no rest for me!

NATURE AND ART¹⁸ (1802)

Nature and art asunder seem to fly,
Yet sooner than we think find common ground;
In place of strife, harmonious songs resound,
And both, at one, to my abode draw nigh.
In sooth but one endeavor I descry:
Then only, when in ordered moments' round
Wisdom and toil our lives to Art have bound,
Dare we rejoice in Nature's liberty.
Thus is achievement fashioned everywhere:
Not by ungovernable, hasty zeal
Shalt thou the height of perfect form attain.
Husband thy strength, if great emprise thou dare;
In self-restraint thy masterhood reveal,
And under law thy perfect freedom gain.

¹⁸ Translator: A.I. du P. Coleman.

COMFORT IN TEARS¹⁹ (1803)

How is it that thou art so sad
When others are so gay?
Thou hast been weeping—nay, thou hast!
Thine eyes the truth betray.

"And if I may not choose but weep
Is not my grief mine own?
No heart was heavier yet for tears—
O leave me, friend, alone!"

Come join this once the merry band,
They call aloud for thee,
And mourn no more for what is lost,
But let the past go free.

"O, little know ye in your mirth,
What wrings my heart so deep!
I have not lost the idol yet,
For which I sigh and weep."

Then rouse thee and take heart! thy blood
Is young and full of fire;
Youth should have hope and might to win,

¹⁹ Translators: W.E. Aytoun and Theodore Martin.

And wear its best desire.

"O, never may I hope to gain
What dwells from me so far;
It stands as high, it looks as bright,
As yonder burning star."

Why, who would seek to woo the stars
Down from their glorious sphere?
Enough it is to worship them,
When nights are calm and clear.

"Oh, I look up and worship too—
My star it shines by day—
Then let me weep the livelong night
The while it is away."

EPILOGUE TO SCHILLER'S "SONG OF THE BELL"²⁰

[This fine piece, written originally in 1805, on Schiller's death, was altered and recast by Goethe in 1815, on the occasion of the performance on the stage of the *Song of the Bell*. Hence the allusion in the last verse.]

To this city joy reveal it!
Peace as its first signal peal it!

(*Song of the Bell*—concluding lines).

And so it proved! The nation felt, ere long,
That peaceful signal, and, with blessings fraught,
A new-born joy appeared; in gladsome song
To hail the youthful princely pair we sought;
While in the living, ever-swelling throng
Mingled the crowds from every region brought,
And on the stage, in festal pomp arrayed,
The HOMAGE OF THE ARTS²¹ we saw displayed.

When, lo! a fearful midnight sound I hear,

²⁰ Translators: W. E. Aytoun and Theodore Martin.

²¹ The title of a lyric piece composed by Schiller in honor of the marriage of the hereditary prince of Weimar to the Princess Maria of Russia, and performed in 1804.

That with a dull and mournful echo rings.
And can it be that of our friend so dear
It tells, to whom each wish so fondly clings?
Shall death o'ercome a life that all revere?
How such a loss to all confusion brings!
How such a parting we must ever rue!
The world is weeping—shall not we weep, too?

He was our own! How social, yet how great
Seemed in the light of day his noble mind!
How was his nature, pleasing yet sedate,
Now for glad converse joyously inclined,
Then swiftly changing, spirit-fraught elate,
Life's plan with deep-felt meaning it designed,
Fruitful alike in counsel and in deed!
This have we proved, this tested, in our need.

He was our own! O may that thought so blest
O'ercome the voice of wailing and of woe!
He might have sought the Lasting, safe at rest
In harbor, when the tempest ceased to blow.
Meanwhile his mighty spirit onward pressed
Where goodness, beauty, truth, forever grow;
And in his rear, in shadowy outline, lay
The vulgar, which we all, alas, obey!

Now doth he deck the garden-turret fair
Where the stars' language first illumed his soul,
As secretly yet clearly through the air

On the eterne, the living sense it stole;
And to his own, and our great profit, there
Exchangeth to the seasons as they roll;
Thus nobly doth he vanquish, with renown,
The twilight and the night that weigh us down.

Brighter now glowed his cheek, and still more bright,
With that unchanging, ever-youthful glow,—
That courage which o'ercomes, in hard-fought fight,
Sooner or later, every earthly foe,—
That faith which, soaring to the realms of light,
Now boldly presseth on, now bendeth low,
So that the good may work, wax, thrive amain,
So that the day the noble may attain.

Yet, though so skilled, of such transcendent worth,
This boarded scaffold doth he not despise;
The fate that on its axis turns the earth
From day to night, here shows he to our eyes,
Raising, through many a work of glorious birth,
Art and the artist's fame up toward the skies.
He fills with blossoms of the noblest strife,
With life itself, this effigy of life.

His giant-step, as ye full surely know,
Measured the circle of the will and deed,
Each country's changing thoughts and morals, too,
The darksome book with clearness could he read;
Yet how he, breathless 'midst his friends so true,

Despaired in sorrow, scarce from pain was freed,—
All this have we, in sadly happy years,
For he was ours, bewailed with feeling tears.

When from the agonizing weight of grief
He raised his eyes upon the world again,
We showed him how his thoughts might find relief
From the uncertain present's heavy chain,
Gave his fresh-kindled mind a respite brief,
With kindly skill beguiling every pain,
And e'en at eve when setting was his sun,
From his wan cheeks a gentle smile we won.

Full early had he read the stern decree,
Sorrow and death to him, alas, were known;
Ofttimes recovering, now departed he,—
Dread tidings, that our hearts had feared to own!
Yet his transfigured being now can see
Itself, e'en here on earth, transfigured grown.
What his own age reproved, and deemed a crime,
Hath been ennobled now by death and time.

And many a soul that with him strove in fight,
And his great merit grudged to recognize,
Now feels the impress of his wondrous might,
And in his magic fetters gladly lies;
E'en to the highest hath he winged his flight,
In close communion linked with all we prize.
Extol him then! What mortals while they live

But half receive, posterity shall give.

Thus is he left us, who so long ago,—
Ten years, alas, already!—turned from earth;
We all, to our great joy, his precepts know,
Oh, may the world confess their priceless worth!
In swelling tide toward every region flow
The thoughts that were his own peculiar birth;
He gleams like some departing meteor bright,
Combining, with his own, eternal light.

ERGO BIBAMUS!²² (1810)

For a praiseworthy object we're now gathered here,
So, brethren, sing: ERGO BIBAMUS!
Tho' talk may be hushed, yet the glasses ring clear,
Remember then, ERGO BIBAMUS!
In truth 'tis an old, 'tis an excellent word,
With its sound befitting each bosom is stirred,
And an echo the festal hall filling is heard,
A glorious ERGO BIBAMUS!

I saw mine own love in her beauty so rare,
And bethought me of: ERGO BIBAMUS;
So I gently approached, and she let me stand there,
While I helped myself, thinking: BIBAMUS!
And when she's appeared, and will clasp you and kiss,
Or when those embraces and kisses ye miss,
Take refuge, till found is some worthier bliss,
In the comforting ERGO BIBAMUS!

I am called by my fate far away from each friend;
Ye loved ones, then: ERGO BIBAMUS!
With wallet light-laden from hence I must wend,
So double our ERGO BIBAMUS!
Whate'er to his treasure the niggard may add,

²² Translator: E. A. Bowring.

Yet regard for the joyous will ever be had,
For gladness lends ever its charms to the glad,
So, brethren, sing: ERGO BIBAMUS!

And what shall we say of to-day as it flies?
I thought but of: ERGO BIBAMUS!
'Tis one of those truly that seldom arise,
So again and again sing: BIBAMUS!
For joy through a wide-open portal it guides,
Bright glitter the clouds as the curtain divides,
And a form, a divine one, to greet us in glides,
While we thunder our: ERGO BIBAMUS.

THE WALKING BELL²³ (1813)

A child refused to go betimes
To church like other people;
He roamed abroad, when rang the chimes
On Sundays from the steeple.

His mother said: "Loud rings the bell,
Its voice ne'er think of scorning;
Unless thou wilt behave thee well,
'Twill fetch thee without warning."

The child then thought: "High over head
The bell is safe suspended—"
So to the fields he straightway sped
As if 'twas school-time ended.

The bell now ceased as bell to ring,
Roused by the mother's twaddle;
But soon ensued a dreadful thing!—
The bell begins to waddle.

It waddles fast, though strange it seem;
The child, with trembling wonder,
Runs off, and flies, as in a dream;

²³ Translator: E. A. Bowring.

The bell would draw him under.

He finds the proper time at last,
And straightway nimbly rushes
To church, to chapel, hastening fast
Through pastures, plains, and bushes.

Each Sunday and each feast as well,
His late disaster heeds he;
The moment that he hears the bell,
No other summons needs he.

FOUND²⁴ (1813)

Once through the forest
Alone I went;
To seek for nothing
My thoughts were bent.

I saw i' the shadow
A flower stand there;
As stars it glisten'd,
As eyes 'twas fair.

I sought to pluck it,—
It gently said:
"Shall I be gather'd
Only to fade?"

With all its roots
I dug it with care,
And took it home
To my garden fair.

In silent corner
Soon it was set;
There grows it ever,

²⁴ Translator: E. A. Bowring.

There blooms it yet.

HATEM²⁵ (1815)

Locks of brown, still bind your captive
In the circle of her face!
I, beloved sinuous tresses,
Naught possess that's worth your grace—

But a heart whose love enduring
Swells in youthful fervor yet:
Snow and mists envelop Etna,
Making men the fire forget.

Yonder mountain's pride so stately
Thou dost shame like dawn's red glow;
And its spell once more bids Hatem
Thrill of spring and summer know.

Once more fill the glass, the flagon!
Let me drink to my desire.
If she find a heap of ashes,
Say, "He perished in her fire!"

²⁵ Translator: A. I. du P. Coleman.

REUNION²⁶ (1815)

Can it be, O star transcendent,
That I fold thee to my breast?
Now I know, what depths of anguish
May in parting be expressed.
Yes, 'tis thou, of all my blisses
Lovely, loving partner—thou!
Mindful of my bygone sorrows,
E'en the present awes me now.

When the world in first conception
Lay in God's eternal mind,
In creative power delighting
He the primal hour designed.
When he gave command for being,
Then was heard a mighty sigh
Full of pain, as all creation
Broke into reality.

Up then sprang the light; and darkness
Doubtful stood apart to gaze;
All the elements, dividing
Swiftly, took their several ways.
In confused, disordered dreaming

²⁶ Translator: A. I. du P. Coleman.

Strove they all for freedom's range—
Each for self, no fellow-feeling;
Single each, and cold and strange.

Lo, a marvel—God was lonely!
All was still and cold and dumb.
So he framed dawn's rosy blushes
Whence should consolation come—
To refresh the troubled spirit
Harmonies of color sweet:
What had erst been forced asunder
Now at last could love and meet.

Then, ah then, of life unbounded
Sight and feeling passed the gates;
Then, ah then, with eager striving
Kindred atoms sought their mates.
Gently, roughly they may seize them,
So they catch and hold them fast:
"We," they cry, "are now creators—
Allah now may rest at last!"

So with rosy wings of morning
Towards thy lips my being moves;
Sets the starry night a thousand
Glowing seals upon our loves.
We are as we should be—parted
Ne'er on earth in joy or pain;
And no second word creative

E'er can sunder us again!

PROOEMIION²⁷ (1816)

In His blest name, who was His own creation,
Who from all time makes *making* His vocation;
The name of Him who makes our faith so bright,
Love, confidence, activity, and might;
In that One's name, who, named though oft He be,
Unknown is ever in Reality:
As far as ear can reach, or eyesight dim,
Thou findest but the known resembling Him;
How high soe'er thy fiery spirit hovers,
Its simile and type it straight discovers;
Onward thou'rt drawn, with feelings light and gay,
Where e'er thou goest, smiling is the way;
No more thou numberest, reckonest no time,
Each step is infinite, each step sublime.
What God would *outwardly* alone control,
And on His finger whirl the mighty Whole?
He loves the *inner* world to move, to view
Nature in Him, Himself in Nature, too,
So that what in Him works, and is, and lives,
The measure of His strength, His spirit gives.
Within us all a universe doth dwell;
And hence each people's usage laudable,
That every one the Best that meets his eyes

²⁷ Translator: E. A. Bowring.

As God, yea, e'en *his* God, doth recognize;
To Him both earth and heaven surrenders he,
Fears Him, and loves Him, too, if that may be.

THE ONE AND THE ALL²⁸ (1821)

Called to a new employ in boundless space,
The lonely monad quits its 'customed place
And from life's weary round contented flees.
No more of passionate striving, will perverse
And hampering obligations, long a curse:
Free self-abandonment at last gives peace.

Soul of the world, come pierce our being through!
Across the drift of things our way to hew
Is our appointed task, our noblest war.
Good spirits by our destined pathway still
Lead gently on, best masters of our will,
Toward that which made and makes all things that are.
To shape for further ends what now has breath,
Let nothing harden into ice and death,
Works endless living action everywhere.
What has not yet existed strives for birth—
Toward purer suns, more glorious-colored earth:
To rest in idle stillness naught may dare.
All must move onward, help transform the mass,
Assume a form, to yet another pass;
'Tis but in seeming aught is fixed or still.
In all things moves the eternal restless Thought;

²⁸ Translator: A. I. du P. Coleman.

For all, when comes the hour, must fall to naught
If to persist in being is its will.

LINES ON SEEING SCHILLER'S SKULL²⁹ (1826)

[This curious imitation of the ternary metre of Dante was written at the age of seventy-seven.]

Within a gloomy charnel-house one day
I viewed the countless skulls, so strangely mated,
And of old times I thought that now were gray.
Close packed they stand that once so fiercely hated,
And hardy bones that to the death contended,
Are lying crossed,—to lie forever, fated.
What held those crooked shoulder-blades suspended?
No one now asks; and limbs with vigor fired,
The hand, the foot—their use in life is ended.
Vainly ye sought the tomb for rest when tired;
Peace in the grave may not be yours; ye're driven
Back into daylight by a force inspired;
But none can love the withered husk, though even
A glorious noble kernel it contained.

To me, an adept, was the writing given
Which not to all its holy sense explained.
When 'mid the crowd, their icy shadows flinging,
I saw a form that glorious still remained,

²⁹ Translator: A. I. du P. Coleman.

And even there, where mould and damp were clinging,
Gave me a blest, a rapture-fraught emotion,
As though from death a living fount were springing.
What mystic joy I felt! What rapt devotion!
That form, how pregnant with a godlike trace!
A look, how did it whirl me toward that ocean
Whose rolling billows mightier shapes embrace!
Mysterious vessel! Oracle how dear!
Even to grasp thee is my hand too base,
Except to steal thee from thy prison here
With pious purpose, and devoutly go
Back to the air, free thoughts, and sunlight clear.
What greater gain in life can man e'er know
Than when God-Nature will to him explain
How into Spirit steadfastness may flow,
How steadfast, too, the Spirit-Born remain.

A LEGACY³⁰ (1829)

No living atom comes at last to naught!
Active in each is still the eternal Thought:
Hold fast to Being if thou wouldst be blest.
Being is without end; for changeless laws
Bind that from which the All its glory draws
Of living treasures endlessly possessed.

Unto the wise of old this truth was known,
Such wisdom knit their noble souls in one;
Then hold thou still the lore of ancient days!
To that high power thou ow'st it, son of man,
By whose decree the earth its circuit ran
And all the planets went their various ways.
Then inward turn at once thy searching eyes;

Thence shalt thou see the central truth arise
From which no lofty soul goes e'er astray;
There shalt thou miss no needful guiding sign—
For conscience lives, and still its light divine
Shall be the sun of all thy moral day.
Next shalt thou trust thy senses' evidence,
And fear from them no treacherous offence
While the mind's watchful eye thy road commands:

³⁰ Harvard Classics (Copyright P. F. Collier & Son).

With lively pleasure contemplate the scene
And roam securely, teachable, serene,
At will throughout a world of fruitful lands.
Enjoy in moderation all life gives:
Where it rejoices in each thing that lives
Let reason be thy guide and make thee see.
Then shall the distant past be present still,
The future, ere it comes, thy vision fill—
Each single moment touch eternity.
Then at the last shalt thou achieve thy quest,
And in one final, firm conviction rest:
What bears for thee true fruit alone is true.
Prove all things, watch the movement of the world
As down the various ways its tribes are whirled;
Take thou thy stand among the chosen few.
Thus hath it been of old; in solitude
The artist shaped what thing to him seemed good,
The wise man hearkened to his own soul's voice.
Thus also shalt thou find thy greatest bliss;
To lead where the elect shall follow—this
And this alone is worth a hero's choice.

INTRODUCTION TO HERMANN AND DOROTHEA

Hermann and Dorothea is universally known and prized in Germany as no other work of the classical period of German literature except Goethe's *Faust* and Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*, and, although distinctively German in subject and spirit, it early became and is still a precious possession of all the modern world. It marks the culmination of the renaissance in the literary art of Germany and perhaps of Europe.

Schiller hailed it as the pinnacle of Goethe's and of all modern art. A. W. Schlegel in 1797 judged it to be a finished work of art in the grand style, and at the same time intelligible, sympathetic, patriotic, popular, a book full of golden teachings of wisdom and virtue. Two generations later one of the leading historians of German literature declared that there is no other poem that comes so near to the father of all poetry (Homer) as this, none in which Greek form and German content are so intimately blended, and that this is perhaps the only poem which without explanation and without embarrassment all the modern centuries could offer to an ancient Greek to enjoy. In the view of the end of the nineteenth century, expressed by a distinguished philosopher-critic, this work is a unique amalgam of the artistic spirit, objectivity, and contemplative clearness of Homer with the

soil-life of the present, the heart-beat of the German people, the characteristic traits which mark the German nature.

As Longfellow's *Evangeline*, treating in the same verse-form of the dactylic hexameter and in a way partly epic and partly idyllic a story of love and domestic interests in a contrasting setting of war and exile, was modeled on *Hermann and Dorothea*, so the latter poem was suggested by J. H. Voss' idyl *Luise*, published first in parts in 1783 and 1784 and as a whole revised in 1795. Of his delight in *Luise* Goethe wrote to Schiller in February, 1798: "This proved to be much to my advantage, for this joy finally became productive in me, it drew me into this form (the epic), begot my *Hermann*, and who knows what may yet come of it." But *Luise* is not really epic; it is without action, without unity, without any large historical outlook,—a series of minutely pictured, pleasing idyllic scenes.

In contrast herewith Goethe's purpose was in his own words, "in an epic crucible to free from its dross the purely human existence of a small German town, and at the same time mirror in a small glass the great movements and changes of the world's stage." This purpose he achieved in the writing of *Hermann and Dorothea* at intervals from September, 1796, through the summer of 1797, in the autumn of which year the poem was published.

The main sources from which the poet drew his material are four. In the first place the theme was invented by him out of an anecdote of the flight of Protestant refugees from

the Archbishopric of Salzburg in 1731-1732. On the basis of this anecdote he drew the original outlines of the meeting and union of the lovers. Secondly, as a consequence of the French Revolution, Germans were forced to flee from German territory west of the Rhine. Goethe was present with Prussian troops in France in 1792, and observed the siege of Mainz in 1793. Hence his knowledge of war and exile, with their attendant cruelties and sufferings. Thirdly, the personal experiences of his own life could not but contribute to his description of the then German present. Features of Frankfurt and Ilmenau reappear. The characters show traits of Goethe's parents, and possibly something of his wife is in Dorothea. Hermann's mother bears the name of the poet's and reveals many of her qualities. But some of these are given to the landlord-father, while the elder Goethe's pedantry and petty weaknesses are shown in the apothecary. The poet's experiences in the field are realistically reproduced in many particulars of character and incident, as are doubtless also his mother's vivid reports of events in Frankfurt during July and August, 1796. We may feel sure too that it was the occurrences of this summer that led Goethe to transform the short, pure idyl of his first intention into a longer epic of his own present. The fourth source is literary tradition, which we may trace back through the verse idyl of Voss to the prose idyl of Gessner, thence through the unnatural Arcadian pastorals of the seventeenth and earlier centuries to the great Greek creators,—Theocritus, of the idyl, and Homer, of the epic.

From whatever source derived, the materials were transmuted and combined by Goethe's genius into a broad, full picture of German life, with characters typical of the truly human and of profound ethical importance, interpreting to the attentive reader the significance of life for the individual, the family, the nation.

HERMANN AND DOROTHEA (1797)³¹

TRANSLATED BY ELLEN FROTHINGHAM

³¹ Harvard Classics (Copyright P. F. Collier & Son).

CALLIOPE

FATE AND SYMPATHY

Truly, I never have seen the market and street so deserted!
How as if it were swept looks the town, or had perished! Not
fifty
Are there, methinks, of all our inhabitants in it remaining.

What will not curiosity do! here is every one running,
Hurrying to gaze on the sad procession of pitiful exiles.
Fully a league it must be to the causeway they have to pass
over,
Yet all are hurrying down in the dusty heat of the noonday.
I, in good sooth, would not stir from my place to witness the
sorrows
Borne by good, fugitive people, who now, with their rescued
possessions,
Driven, alas! from beyond the Rhine, their beautiful country,
Over to us are coming, and through the prosperous corner
Roam of this our luxuriant valley, and traverse its windings.
"Well hast thou done, good wife, our son in thus kindly
dispatching,
Laden with something to eat and to drink, and with store of
old linen,

'Mongst the poor folk to distribute; for giving belongs to the wealthy.

How the youth drives, to be sure! What control he has over the horses!

Makes not our carriage a handsome appearance,—the new one? With comfort,

Four could be seated within, with a place on the box for the coachman.

This time, he drove by himself. How lightly it rolled round the corner!"

Thus, as he sat at his ease in the porch of his house on the market,

Unto his wife was speaking mine host of the Golden Lion.

Thereupon answered and said the prudent, intelligent housewife:

"Father, I am not inclined to be giving away my old linen: Since it serves many a purpose; and cannot be purchased for money,

When we may want it. To-day, however, I gave, and with pleasure,

Many a piece that was better, indeed, in shirts and in bed-clothes;

For I was told of the aged and children who had to go naked. But wilt thou pardon me, father? thy wardrobe has also been plundered.

And, in especial, the wrapper that has the East-Indian flowers,

Made of the finest of chintz, and lined with delicate flannel,

Gave I away: it was thin and old, and quite out of the fashion."

Thereupon answered and said, with a smile, the excellent landlord:

"Faith! I am sorry to lose it, my good old calico wrapper, Real East-Indian stuff: I never shall get such another.

Well, I had given up wearing it: nowadays, custom compels us Always to go in surtout, and never appear but in jacket; Always to have on our boots; forbidden are night-cap and slippers."

"See!" interrupted the wife; "even now some are yonder returning,

Who have beheld the procession: it must, then, already be over.

Look at the dust on their shoes! and see how their faces are glowing!

Every one carries his kerchief, and with it is wiping the sweat off.

Not for a sight like that would I run so far and so suffer, Through such a heat; in sooth, enough shall I have in the telling."

Thereupon answered and said, with emphasis, thus, the good father:

"Rarely does weather like this attend such a harvest as this is. We shall be bringing our grain in dry, as the hay was before it. Not the least cloud to be seen, so perfectly clear is the heaven; And, with delicious coolness, the wind blows in from the

eastward.

That is the weather to last! over-ripe are the cornfields already;

We shall begin on the morrow to gather our copious harvest."

Constantly, while he thus spoke, the crowds of men and of women

Grew, who their homeward way were over the market-place wending;

And, with the rest, there also returned, his daughters beside him,

Back to his modernized house on the opposite side of the market,

Foremost merchant of all the town, their opulent neighbor,
Rapidly driving his open barouche,—it was builded in Landau.

Lively now grew the streets, for the city was handsomely peopled.

Many a trade was therein carried on, and large manufactures.
Under their doorway thus the affectionate couple were sitting,
Pleasing themselves with many remarks on the wandering people.

Finally broke in, however, the worthy housewife, exclaiming:
"Yonder our pastor, see! is hitherward coming, and with him
Comes our neighbor the doctor, so they shall every thing tell us;

All they have witnessed abroad, and which 'tis a sorrow to look on."

Cordially then the two men drew nigh, and saluted the couple;
Sat themselves down on the benches of wood that were placed
in the doorway,

Shaking the dust from their feet, and fanning themselves with
their kerchiefs.

Then was the doctor, as soon as exchanged were the mutual
greetings,

First to begin, and said, almost in a tone of vexation:

"Such is mankind, forsooth! and one man is just like another,
Liking to gape and to stare when ill-luck has befallen his
neighbor.

Every one hurries to look at the flames, as they soar in
destruction;

Runs to behold the poor culprit, to execution conducted:

Now all are sallying forth to gaze on the need of these exiles,
Nor is there one who considers that he, by a similar fortune,
May, in the future, if not indeed next, be likewise o'ertaken.
Levity not to be pardoned, I deem; yet it lies in man's nature."

Thereupon answered and said the noble, intelligent pastor;
Ornament he of the town, still young, in the prime of his
manhood.

He was acquainted with life,—with the needs of his hearers
acquainted;

Deeply imbued he was with the Holy Scriptures' importance,
As they reveal man's destiny to us, and man's disposition;
Thoroughly versed, besides, in best of secular writings.

"I should be loath," he replied, "to censure an innocent
instinct,

Which to mankind by good mother Nature has always been given.

What understanding and reason may sometimes fail to accomplish,

Oft will such fortunate impulse, that bears us resistlessly with it.

Did curiosity draw not man with its potent attraction,
Say, would he ever have learned how harmoniously fitted together

Worldly experiences are? For first what is novel he covets;
Then with unwearying industry follows he after the useful;
Finally longs for the good by which he is raised and ennobled.
While he is young, such lightness of mind is a joyous companion,

Traces of pain-giving evil effacing as soon as 'tis over.

He is indeed to be praised, who, out of this gladness of temper,

Has in his ripening years a sound understanding developed;
Who, in good fortune or ill, with zeal and activity labors:
Such an one bringeth to pass what is good, and repaireth the evil."

Then broke familiarly in the housewife impatient, exclaiming:

"Tell us of what ye have seen; for that I am longing to hear of!"

"Hardly," with emphasis then the village doctor made answer,
"Can I find spirits so soon after all the scenes I have

witnessed.

Oh, the manifold miseries! who shall be able to tell them?
E'en before crossing the meadows, and while we were yet at
a distance,

Saw we the dust; but still from hill to hill the procession
Passed away out of our sight, and we could distinguish but
little.

But when at last we were come to the street that crosses the
valley,

Great was the crowd and confusion of persons on foot and
of wagons.

There, alas! saw we enough of these poor unfortunates
passing,

And could from some of them learn how bitter the sorrowful
flight was,

Yet how joyful the feeling of life thus hastily rescued.

Mournful it was to behold the most miscellaneous chattels,—
All those things which are housed in every well-furnished
dwelling,

All by the house-keeper's care set up in their suitable places,
Always ready for use; for useful is each and important.—

Now these things to behold, piled up on all manner of wagons,
One on the top of another, as hurriedly they had been
rescued.

Over the chest of drawers were the sieve and wool coverlet
lying;

Thrown in the kneading-trough lay the bed, and the sheets
on the mirror.

Danger, alas! as we learned ourselves in our great

conflagration

Twenty years since, will take from a man all power of reflection,

So that he grasps things worthless and leaves what is precious behind him.

Here, too, with unconsidering care they were carrying with them

Pitiful trash, that only encumbered the horses and oxen;
Such as old barrels and boards, the pen for the goose, and the bird-cage.

Women and children, too, went toiling along with their bundles,

Panting 'neath baskets and tubs, full of things of no manner of value:

So unwilling is man to relinquish his meanest possession.

Thus on the dusty road the crowded procession moved forward,

All confused and disordered. The one whose beasts were the weaker,

Wanted more slowly to drive, while faster would hurry another.

Presently went up a scream from the closely squeezed women and children,

And with the yelping of dogs was mingled the lowing of cattle,

Cries of distress from the aged and sick, who aloft on the wagon,

Heavy and thus overpacked, upon beds were sitting and swaying.

Pressed at last from the rut and out to the edge of the highway,
Slipped the creaking wheel; the cart lost its balance, and over
Fell in the ditch. In the swing the people were flung to a
distance,

Far off into the field, with horrible screams; by good fortune
Later the boxes were thrown and fell more near to the wagon.
Verily all who had witnessed the fall, expected to see them
Crushed into pieces beneath the weight of trunks and of
presses.

So lay the cart all broken to fragments, and helpless the
people.

Keeping their onward way, the others drove hastily by them,
Each thinking only of self, and carried away by the current.
Then we ran to the spot, and found the sick and the aged,—
Those who at home and in bed could before their lingering
ailments

Scarcely endure,—lying bruised on the ground, complaining
and groaning,

Choked by the billowing dust and scorched by the heat of the
noonday."

Thereupon answered and said the kind-hearted landlord, with
feeling:

"Would that our Hermann might meet them and give them
refreshment
and clothing!

Loath should I be to behold them: the looking on suffering
pains me.

Touched by the earliest tidings of their so cruel afflictions,

Hastily sent we a mite from out of our super-abundance,
Only that some might be strengthened, and we might
ourselves be made easy.

But let us now no longer renew these sorrowful pictures
Knowing how readily fear steals into the heart of us mortals,
And anxiety, worse to me than the actual evil.

Come with me into the room behind, our cool little parlor,
Where no sunbeam e'er shines, and no sultry breath ever
enters

Through its thickness of wall. There mother will bring us a
flagon

Of our old eighty-three, with which we may banish our
fancies.

Here 'tis not cosey to drink: the flies so buzz round the
glasses."

Thither adjourned they then, and all rejoiced in the coolness.

Carefully brought forth the mother the clear and glorious
vintage,

Cased in a well-polished flask, on a waiter of glittering
pewter,

Set round with large green glasses, the drinking cups meet
for the

Rhine wine.

So sat the three together about the highly waxed table,
Gleaming and round and brown, that on mighty feet was
supported.

Joyously rang at once the glasses of landlord and pastor,
But his motionless held the third, and sat lost in reflection,

Until with words of good-humor the landlord challenged him, saying,—

"Come, sir neighbor, empty your glass, for God in His mercy Thus far has kept us from evil, and so in the future will keep us.

For who acknowledges not, that since our dread conflagration,

When He so hardly chastised us, He now is continually blessing,

Constantly shielding, as man the apple of His eye watches over,

Holding it precious and dear above all the rest of His members?

Shall He in time to come not defend us and furnish us succor?

Only when danger is nigh do we see how great is His power.

Shall He this blooming town which He once by industrious burghers

Built up afresh from its ashes, and afterward blessed with abundance,

Now demolish again, and bring all the labor to nothing?"

Cheerfully said in reply the excellent pastor, and kindly:

"Keep thyself firm in the faith, and firm abide in this temper;

For it makes steadfast and wise when fortune is fair, and when evil,

Furnishes sweet consolation and animates hopes the sublimest."

Then made answer the landlord, with thoughts judicious and

manly:

"Often the Rhine's broad stream have I with astonishment
greeted,

As I have neared it again, after travelling abroad upon
business.

Always majestic it seemed, and my mind and spirit exalted.
But I could never imagine its beautiful banks would so shortly
Be to a rampart transformed, to keep from our borders the
Frenchman,

And its wide-spreading bed be a moat all passage to hinder.
See! thus nature protects, the stout-hearted Germans protect
us,

And thus protects us the Lord, who then will be weakly
despondent?

Weary already the combatants, all indications are peaceful.
Would it might be that when that festival, ardently longed for,
Shall in our church be observed, when the sacred *Te Deum*
is rising,

Swelled by the pealing of organ and bells, and the blaring of
trumpets,—

Would it might be that that day should behold my Hermann,
sir pastor,

Standing, his choice now made, with his bride before thee at
the altar,

Making that festal day, that through every land shall be
honored,

My anniversary, too, henceforth of domestic rejoicing!

But I observe with regret, that the youth so efficient and active
Ever in household affairs, when abroad is timid and

backward.

Little enjoyment he finds in going about among others;
Nay, he will even avoid young ladies' society wholly;
Shuns the enlivening dance which all young persons delight
in."

Thus he spoke and listened; for now was heard in the distance
Clattering of horses' hoofs drawing near, and the roll of the
wagon,
Which, with furious haste, came thundering under the
gateway.

TERPSICHORE

HERMANN

Now when of comely mien the son came into the chamber,
Turned with a searching look the eyes of the preacher upon
him,

And, with the gaze of the student, who easily fathoms
expression,

Scrutinized well his face and form and his general bearing.

Then with a smile he spoke, and said in words of affection:

"Truly a different being thou comest! I never have seen thee
Cheerful as now, nor ever beheld I thy glances so beaming.

Joyous thou comest, and happy: 'tis plain that among the poor
people

Thou hast been sharing thy gifts, and receiving their blessings
upon thee."

Quietly then, and with serious words, the son made him
answer:

"If I have acted as ye will commend, I know not; but I
followed

That which my heart bade me do, as I shall exactly relate you.
Thou wert, mother, so long in rummaging 'mong thy old
pieces,

Picking and choosing, that not until late was thy bundle
together;
Then, too, the wine and the beer took care and time in the
packing.
When I came forth through the gateway at last, and out on
the high-road,
Backward the crowd of citizens streamed with women and
children,
Coming to meet me; for far was already the band of the exiles.
Quicker I kept on my way, and drove with speed to the village,
Where they were meaning to rest, as I heard, and tarry till
morning.
Thitherward up the new street as I hasted, a stout-timbered
wagon,
Drawn by two oxen, I saw, of that region the largest and
strongest;
While, with vigorous steps, a maiden was walking beside
them,
And, a long staff in her hand, the two powerful creatures was
guiding,
Urging them now, now holding them back; with skill did she
drive them.

Soon as the maiden perceived me, she calmly drew near to
the horses,
And in these words she addressed me: 'Not thus deplorable
always
Has our condition been, as to-day on this journey thou seest.
I am not yet grown used to asking gifts of a stranger,

Which he will often unwillingly give, to be rid of the beggar.
But necessity drives me to speak; for here, on the straw, lies
Newly delivered of child, a rich land-owner's wife, whom I
scarcely

Have in her pregnancy, safe brought off with the oxen and
wagon.

Naked, now in her arms the new-born infant is lying,
And but little the help our friends will be able to furnish,
If in the neighboring village, indeed, where to-day we would
rest us,

Still we shall find them; though much do I fear they already
have

passed it.

Shouldst thou have linen to spare of any description, provided
Thou of this neighborhood art, to the poor in charity give it.'

"Thus she spoke, and the pale-faced mother raised herself
feebly

Up from the straw, and toward me looked. Then said I in
answer

'Surely unto the good, a spirit from heaven oft speaketh,
Making them feel the distress that threatens a suffering
brother.

For thou must know that my mother, already presaging thy
sorrows,

Gave me a bundle to use it straightway for the need of the
naked.'

Then I untied the knots of the string, and the wrapper of
father's

Unto her gave, and gave her as well the shirts and the linen.
And she thanked me with joy, and cried: 'The happy believe
not

Miracles yet can be wrought: for only in need we
acknowledge

God's own hand and finger, that leads the good to show
goodness.

What unto us He has done through thee, may He do to thee
also!'

And I beheld with what pleasure the sick woman handled the
linens,

But with especial delight the dressing-gown's delicate flannel.
'Let us make haste,' the maid to her said, 'and come to the
village,

Where our people will halt for the night and already are
resting.

There these clothes for the children I, one and all, straightway
will portion.'

Then she saluted again, her thanks most warmly expressing,
Started the oxen; the wagon went on; but there I still lingered,
Still held the horses in check; for now my heart was divided
Whether to drive with speed to the village, and there the
provisions

Share 'mong the rest of the people, or whether I here to the
maiden

All should deliver at once, for her discreetly to portion.

And in an instant my heart had decided, and quietly driving
After the maiden, I soon overtook her, and said to her quickly:
'Hearken, good maiden;—my mother packed up not linen-

stuffs only

Into the carriage, that I should have clothes to furnish the naked;

Wine and beer she added besides, and supply of provisions:

Plenty of all these things I have in the box of the carriage.

But now I feel myself moved to deliver these offerings also

Into thy hand; for so shall I best fulfil my commission.

Thou wilt divide them with judgment, while I must by chance be directed.'

Thereupon answered the maiden: 'I will with faithfulness portion

These thy gifts, that all shall bring comfort to those who are needy.'

Thus she spoke, and quickly the bog of the carriage I opened, Brought forth thence the substantial hams, and brought out the

breadstuffs,

Bottles of wine and beer, and one and all gave to the maiden.

Willingly would I have given her more, but the carriage was empty.

All she packed at the sick woman's feet, and went on her journey.

I, with my horses and carriage, drove rapidly back to the city."

Instantly now, when Hermann had ceased, the talkative neighbor

Took up the word, and cried: "Oh happy, in days like the present,

Days of flight and confusion, who lives by himself in his

dwelling,

Having no wife nor child to be clinging about him in terror!
Happy I feel myself now, and would not for much be called
father;

Would not have wife and children to-day, for whom to be
anxious.

Oft have I thought of this flight before; and have packed up
together

All my best things already, the chains and old pieces of money
That were my sainted mother's, of which not one has been
sold yet.

Much would be left behind, it is true, not easily gotten.

Even the roots and the herbs, that were with such industry
gathered,

I should be sorry to lose, though the worth of the goods is
but trifling.

If my purveyor remained, I could go from my dwelling
contented.

When my cash I have brought away safe, and have rescued
my person,

All is safe: none find it so easy to fly as the single."

"Neighbor," unto his words young Hermann with emphasis
answered:

"I can in no wise agree with thee here, and censure thy
language.

Is he indeed a man to be prized, who, in good and in evil,
Takes no thought but for self, and gladness and sorrow with
others

Knows not how to divide, nor feels his heart so impel him?
Rather than ever to-day would I make up my mind to be
married:

Many a worthy maiden is needing a husband's protection,
And the man needs an inspiriting wife when ill is impending."

Thereupon smiling the father replied: "Thus love I to hear
thee!

That is a sensible word such as rarely I've known thee to
utter."

Straightway, however, the mother broke in with quickness,
exclaiming:

"Son, to be sure, thou art right! we parents have set the
example;

Seeing that not in our season of joy did we choose one
another;

Rather the saddest of hours it was that bound us together.

Monday morning—I mind it well; for the day that preceded
Came that terrible fire by which our city was ravaged—

Twenty years will have gone. The day was a Sunday as this is;

Hot and dry was the season; the water was almost exhausted.

All the people were strolling abroad in their holiday dresses,

'Mong the villages partly, and part in the mills and the taverns.

And at the end of the city the flames began, and went
coursing

Quickly along the streets, creating a draught in their passage.

Burned were the barns where the copious harvest already was
garnered;

Burned were the streets as far as the market; the house of my

father,

Neighbor to this, was destroyed, and this one also fell with it.
Little we managed to save. I sat, that sorrowful night through,
Outside the town on the common, to guard the beds and the
boxes.

Sleep overtook me at last, and when I again was awakened,
Feeling the chill of the morning that always descends before
sunrise,

There were the smoke and the glare, and the walls and
chimneys in ruins.

Then fell a weight on my heart; but more majestic than ever
Came up the sun again, inspiring my bosom with courage.
Then I rose hastily up, with a yearning the place to revisit
Whereon our dwelling had stood, and to see if the hens had
been rescued,

Which I especially loved, for I still was a child in my feelings.
Thus as I over the still-smoking timbers of house and of
court-yard

Picked my way, and beheld the dwelling so ruined and
wasted,

Thou camest up to examine the place, from the other
direction.

Under the ruins thy horse in his stall had been buried; the
rubbish

Lay on the spot and the glimmering beams; of the horse we
saw nothing.

Thoughtful and grieving we stood there thus, each facing the
other,

Now that the wall was fallen that once had divided our court-

yards.

Thereupon thou by the hand didst take me, and speak to me, saying,—

'Lisa, how camest thou hither? Go back! thy soles must be burning;

Hot the rubbish is here: it scorches my boots, which are stronger.'

And thou didst lift me up, and carry me out through thy courtyard.

There was the door of the house left standing yet with its archway,

Just as 'tis standing now, the one thing only remaining.

Then thou didst set me down and kiss me; to that I objected;

But thou didst answer and say with kindly significant language:

'See! my house lies in ruins: remain here and help me rebuild it;

So shall my help in return be given to building thy father's.'

Yet did I not comprehend thee until thou sentest thy mother Unto my father, and quick were the happy espousals accomplished.

E'en to this day I remember with joy those half-consumed timbers,

And I can see once more the sun coming up in such splendor; For 'twas the day that gave me my husband; and, ere the first season

Passed of that wild desolation, a son to my youth had been given.

Therefore I praise thee, Hermann, that thou, with an honest

assurance,

Shouldst, in these sorrowful days, be thinking thyself of a maiden,

And amid ruins and war shouldst thus have the courage to woo her."

Straightway, then, and with warmth, the father replied to her, saying:

"Worthy of praise is the feeling, and truthful also the story, Mother, that thou hast related; for so indeed every thing happened.

Better, however, is better. It is not the business of all men Thus their life and estate to begin from the very foundation: Every one needs not to worry himself as we and the rest did. Oh, how happy is he whose father and mother shall give him, Furnished and ready, a house which he can adorn with his increase.

Every beginning is hard; but most the beginning a household. Many are human wants, and every thing daily grows dearer, So that a man must consider the means of increasing his earnings.

This I hope therefore of thee, my Hermann, that into our dwelling

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