

THE SORROWS OF YOUNG WERTHER

By J.W. von Goethe

Translated by R.D. Boylan

Edited by Nathen Haskell Dole

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PREFACE

I have carefully collected whatever I have been able to learn of the story of poor Werther, and here present it to you, knowing that you will thank me for it. To his spirit and character you cannot refuse your admiration and love: to his fate you will not deny your tears.

And thou, good soul, who sufferest the same distress as he endured once, draw comfort from his sorrows; and let this little book be thy friend, if, owing to fortune or through thine own fault, thou canst not find a dearer companion.

BOOK I

MAY 4.

How happy I am that I am gone! My dear friend, what a thing is the heart of man! To leave you, from whom I have been inseparable, whom I love so dearly, and yet to feel happy! I know you will forgive me. Have not other attachments been specially appointed by fate to torment a head like mine? Poor Leonora! and yet I was not to blame. Was it my fault, that, whilst the peculiar charms of her sister afforded me an agreeable entertainment, a passion for me was engendered in her feeble heart? And yet am I wholly blameless? Did I not encourage her emotions? Did I not feel charmed at those truly genuine expressions of nature, which, though but little mirthful in reality, so often amused us? Did I not—but oh! what is man, that he dares so to accuse himself? My dear friend I promise you I will improve; I will no longer, as has ever been my habit, continue to ruminate on every petty vexation which fortune may dispense; I will enjoy the present, and the past shall be for me the past. No doubt you are right, my best of friends, there would be far less suffering amongst mankind, if men—and God knows why they are so fashioned—did not employ their imaginations so assiduously in recalling the memory of past sorrow, instead of bearing their present lot with equanimity. Be kind enough to inform my mother that I shall attend to her business to the best of my ability, and shall give her the earliest information about it. I have seen my aunt, and find that she is very far from being the disagreeable person our friends allege her to be. She is a lively, cheerful woman, with the best of hearts. I explained to her my mother's wrongs with regard to that part of her portion which has been withheld from her. She told me the motives and reasons of her own conduct, and the terms on which she is willing to give up the whole, and to do more than we have asked. In short, I cannot write further upon this subject at present; only assure my mother that all will go on well. And I have again observed, my dear friend, in this trifling affair, that

misunderstandings and neglect occasion more mischief in the world than even malice and wickedness. At all events, the two latter are of less frequent occurrence.

In other respects I am very well off here. Solitude in this terrestrial paradise is a genial balm to my mind, and the young spring cheers with its bounteous promises my oftentimes misgiving heart. Every tree, every bush, is full of flowers; and one might wish himself transformed into a butterfly, to float about in this ocean of perfume, and find his whole existence in it.

The town itself is disagreeable; but then, all around, you find an inexpressible beauty of nature. This induced the late Count M to lay out a garden on one of the sloping hills which here intersect each other with the most charming variety, and form the most lovely valleys. The garden is simple; and it is easy to perceive, even upon your first entrance, that the plan was not designed by a scientific gardener, but by a man who wished to give himself up here to the enjoyment of his own sensitive heart. Many a tear have I already shed to the memory of its departed master in a summer-house which is now reduced to ruins, but was his favourite resort, and now is mine. I shall soon be master of the place. The gardener has become attached to me within the last few days, and he will lose nothing thereby.

MAY 10.

A wonderful serenity has taken possession of my entire soul, like these sweet mornings of spring which I enjoy with my whole heart. I am alone, and feel the charm of existence in this spot, which was created for the bliss of souls like mine. I am so happy, my dear friend, so absorbed in the exquisite sense of mere tranquil existence, that I neglect my talents. I should be incapable of drawing a single stroke at the present moment; and yet I feel that I never was a greater artist than now. When, while the lovely valley teems with vapour around me, and the meridian sun strikes the upper surface of the impenetrable foliage of my trees, and but a few stray gleams steal into the inner sanctuary, I throw myself down among the tall grass by the trickling stream; and, as I lie close to the earth, a thousand unknown plants are noticed by me: when I hear the buzz of the little world among the stalks, and grow familiar with the countless indescribable forms of the insects and flies, then I feel the presence of the Almighty, who formed us in his own image, and the breath of that universal love which bears and sustains us, as it floats around us in an eternity of bliss; and then, my friend, when darkness overspreads my eyes, and heaven and earth seem to dwell in my soul and absorb its power, like the form of a beloved mistress, then I often think with longing, Oh, would I could describe these conceptions, could impress upon paper all that is living so full and warm within me, that it might be the mirror of my soul, as my soul is the mirror of the infinite God! O my friend—but it is too much for my strength—I sink under the weight of the splendour of these visions!

MAY 12.

I know not whether some deceitful spirits haunt this spot, or whether it be the warm, celestial fancy in my own heart which makes everything around me seem like paradise. In front of the house is a fountain,—a fountain to which I am bound by a charm like Melusina and her sisters. Descending a gentle slope, you come to an arch, where, some twenty steps lower down, water of the clearest crystal gushes from the marble rock. The narrow wall which encloses it above, the tall trees which encircle the spot, and the coolness of the place itself,—everything imparts a pleasant but sublime impression. Not a day passes on which I do not spend an hour there. The young maidens come from the town to fetch water,—innocent and necessary employment, and formerly the occupation of the daughters of kings. As I take my rest there, the idea of the old patriarchal life is awakened around me. I see them, our old ancestors, how they formed their friendships and contracted alliances at the fountain-side; and I feel how fountains and streams were guarded by beneficent spirits. He who is a stranger to these sensations has never really enjoyed cool repose at the side of a fountain after the fatigue of a weary summer day.

MAY 13.

You ask if you shall send me books. My dear friend, I beseech you, for the love of God, relieve me from such a yoke! I need no more to be guided, agitated, heated. My heart ferments sufficiently of itself. I want strains to lull me, and I find them to perfection in my Homer. Often do I strive to allay the burning fever of my blood; and you have never witnessed anything so unsteady, so uncertain, as my heart. But need I confess this to you, my dear friend, who have so often endured the anguish of witnessing my sudden transitions from sorrow to immoderate joy, and from sweet melancholy to violent passions? I treat my poor heart like a sick child, and gratify its every fancy. Do not mention this again: there are people who would censure me for it.

MAY 15.

The common people of the place know me already, and love me, particularly the children. When at first I associated with them, and inquired in a friendly tone about their various trifles, some fancied that I wished to ridicule them, and turned from me in exceeding ill-humour. I did not allow that circumstance to grieve me: I only felt most keenly what I have often before observed. Persons who can claim a certain rank keep themselves coldly aloof from the common people, as though they feared to lose their importance by the contact; whilst wanton idlers, and such as are prone to bad joking, affect to descend to their level, only to make the poor people feel their impertinence all the more keenly.

I know very well that we are not all equal, nor can be so; but it is my opinion that he who avoids the common people, in order not to lose their respect, is as much to blame as a coward who hides himself from his enemy because he fears defeat.

The other day I went to the fountain, and found a young servant-girl, who had set her pitcher on the lowest step, and looked around to see if one of her companions was

approaching to place it on her head. I ran down, and looked at her. "Shall I help you, pretty lass?" said I. She blushed deeply. "Oh, sir!" she exclaimed. "No ceremony!" I replied. She adjusted her head-gear, and I helped her. She thanked me, and ascended the steps.

MAY 17.

I have made all sorts of acquaintances, but have as yet found no society. I know not what attraction I possess for the people, so many of them like me, and attach themselves to me; and then I feel sorry when the road we pursue together goes only a short distance. If you inquire what the people are like here, I must answer, "The same as everywhere." The human race is but a monotonous affair. Most of them labour the greater part of their time for mere subsistence; and the scanty portion of freedom which remains to them so troubles them that they use every exertion to get rid of it. Oh, the destiny of man!

But they are a right good sort of people. If I occasionally forget myself, and take part in the innocent pleasures which are not yet forbidden to the peasantry, and enjoy myself, for instance, with genuine freedom and sincerity, round a well-covered table, or arrange an excursion or a dance opportunely, and so forth, all this produces a good effect upon my disposition; only I must forget that there lie dormant within me so many other qualities which moulder uselessly, and which I am obliged to keep carefully concealed. Ah! this thought affects my spirits fearfully. And yet to be misunderstood is the fate of the like of us.

Alas, that the friend of my youth is gone! Alas, that I ever knew her! I might say to myself, "You are a dreamer to seek what is not to be found here below." But she has been mine. I have possessed that heart, that noble soul, in whose presence I seemed to be more than I really was, because I was all that I could be. Good heavens! did then a single power of my soul remain unexercised? In her presence could I not display, to its full extent, that mysterious feeling with which my heart embraces nature? Was not our intercourse a perpetual web of the finest emotions, of the keenest wit, the varieties of which, even in their very eccentricity, bore the stamp of genius? Alas! the few years by which she was my senior brought her to the grave before me. Never can I forget her firm mind or her heavenly patience.

A few days ago I met a certain young V—, a frank, open fellow, with a most pleasing countenance. He has just left the university, does not deem himself overwise, but believes he knows more than other people. He has worked hard, as I can perceive from many circumstances, and, in short, possesses a large stock of information. When he heard that I am drawing a good deal, and that I know Greek (two wonderful things for this part of the country), he came to see me, and displayed his whole store of learning, from Batteaux to Wood, from De Piles to Winkelmann: he assured me he had read through the first part of Sultzzer's theory, and also possessed a manuscript of Heyne's work on the study of the antique. I allowed it all to pass.

I have become acquainted, also, with a very worthy person, the district judge, a frank and open-hearted man. I am told it is a most delightful thing to see him in the midst of his children, of whom he has nine. His eldest daughter especially is highly spoken of. He has invited me to go and see him, and I intend to do so on the first opportunity. He lives at one of the royal hunting-lodges, which can be reached from here in an hour and a half by walking, and which he obtained leave to inhabit after the loss of his wife, as it is so painful to him to reside in town and at the court.

There have also come in my way a few other originals of a questionable sort, who are in all respects undesirable, and most intolerable in their demonstration of friendship. Good-bye. This letter will please you: it is quite historical.

MAY 22.

That the life of man is but a dream, many a man has surmised heretofore; and I, too, am everywhere pursued by this feeling. When I consider the narrow limits within which our active and inquiring faculties are confined; when I see how all our energies are wasted in providing for mere necessities, which again have no further end than to prolong a wretched existence; and then that all our satisfaction concerning certain subjects of investigation ends in nothing better than a passive resignation, whilst we amuse ourselves painting our prison-walls with bright figures and brilliant landscapes,—when I consider all this, Wilhelm, I am silent. I examine my own being, and find there a world, but a world rather of imagination and dim desires, than of distinctness and living power. Then everything swims before my senses, and I smile and dream while pursuing my way through the world.

All learned professors and doctors are agreed that children do not comprehend the cause of their desires; but that the grown-up should wander about this earth like children, without knowing whence they come, or whither they go, influenced as little by fixed motives, but guided like them by biscuits, sugar-plums, and the rod,—this is what nobody is willing to acknowledge; and yet I think it is palpable.

I know what you will say in reply; for I am ready to admit that they are happiest, who, like children, amuse themselves with their playthings, dress and undress their dolls, and attentively watch the cupboard, where mamma has locked up her sweet things, and, when at last they get a delicious morsel, eat it greedily, and exclaim, "More!" These are certainly happy beings; but others also are objects of envy, who dignify their paltry employments, and sometimes even their passions, with pompous titles, representing them to mankind as gigantic achievements performed for their welfare and glory. But the man who humbly acknowledges the vanity of all this, who observes with what pleasure the thriving citizen converts his little garden into a paradise, and how patiently even the poor man pursues his weary way under his burden, and how all wish equally to behold the light of the sun a little longer,—yes, such a man is at peace, and creates his own world within himself; and he is also happy, because he is a man. And then,

however limited his sphere, he still preserves in his bosom the sweet feeling of liberty, and knows that he can quit his prison whenever he likes.

MAY 26.

You know of old my ways of settling anywhere, of selecting a little cottage in some cosy spot, and of putting up in it with every inconvenience. Here, too, I have discovered such a snug, comfortable place, which possesses peculiar charms for me.

About a league from the town is a place called Walheim. (The reader need not take the trouble to look for the place thus designated. We have found it necessary to change the names given in the original.) It is delightfully situated on the side of a hill; and, by proceeding along one of the footpaths which lead out of the village, you can have a view of the whole valley. A good old woman lives there, who keeps a small inn. She sells wine, beer, and coffee, and is cheerful and pleasant notwithstanding her age. The chief charm of this spot consists in two linden-trees, spreading their enormous branches over the little green before the church, which is entirely surrounded by peasants' cottages, barns, and homesteads. I have seldom seen a place so retired and peaceable; and there often have my table and chair brought out from the little inn, and drink my coffee there, and read my Homer. Accident brought me to the spot one fine afternoon, and I found it perfectly deserted. Everybody was in the fields except a little boy about four years of age, who was sitting on the ground, and held between his knees a child about six months old: he pressed it to his bosom with both arms, which thus formed a sort of arm-chair; and, notwithstanding the liveliness which sparkled in its black eyes, it remained perfectly still. The sight charmed me. I sat down upon a plough opposite, and sketched with great delight this little picture of brotherly tenderness. I added the neighbouring hedge, the barn-door, and some broken cart-wheels, just as they happened to lie; and I found in about an hour that I had made a very correct and interesting drawing, without putting in the slightest thing of my own. This confirmed me in my resolution of adhering, for the future, entirely to nature. She alone is inexhaustible, and capable of forming the greatest masters. Much may be alleged in favour of rules, as much may be likewise advanced in favour of the laws of society: an artist formed upon them will never produce anything absolutely bad or disgusting; as a man who observes the laws, and obeys decorum, can never be an absolutely intolerable neighbour, nor a decided villain: but yet, say what you will of rules, they destroy the genuine feeling of nature, as well as its true expression. Do not tell me "that this is too hard, that they only restrain and prune superfluous branches, etc." My good friend, I will illustrate this by an analogy. These things resemble love. A warmhearted youth becomes strongly attached to a maiden: he spends every hour of the day in her company, wears out his health, and lavishes his fortune, to afford continual proof that he is wholly devoted to her. Then comes a man of the world, a man of place and respectability, and addresses him thus: "My good young friend, love is natural; but you must love within bounds. Divide your time: devote a portion to business, and give the hours of recreation to your mistress. Calculate your fortune; and out of the superfluity you may make her a present,

only not too often,—on her birthday, and such occasions." Pursuing this advice, he may become a useful member of society, and I should advise every prince to give him an appointment; but it is all up with his love, and with his genius if he be an artist. O my friend! why is it that the torrent of genius so seldom bursts forth, so seldom rolls in full-flowing stream, overwhelming your astounded soul? Because, on either side of this stream, cold and respectable persons have taken up their abodes, and, forsooth, their summer-houses and tulip-beds would suffer from the torrent; wherefore they dig trenches, and raise embankments betimes, in order to avert the impending danger.

MAY 27.

I find I have fallen into raptures, declamation, and similes, and have forgotten, in consequence, to tell you what became of the children. Absorbed in my artistic contemplations, which I briefly described in my letter of yesterday, I continued sitting on the plough for two hours. Toward evening a young woman, with a basket on her arm, came running toward the children, who had not moved all that time. She exclaimed from a distance, "You are a good boy, Philip!" She gave me greeting: I returned it, rose, and approached her. I inquired if she were the mother of those pretty children. "Yes," she said; and, giving the eldest a piece of bread, she took the little one in her arms and kissed it with a mother's tenderness. "I left my child in Philip's care," she said, "whilst I went into the town with my eldest boy to buy some wheaten bread, some sugar, and an earthen pot." I saw the various articles in the basket, from which the cover had fallen. "I shall make some broth to-night for my little Hans (which was the name of the youngest): that wild fellow, the big one, broke my pot yesterday, whilst he was scrambling with Philip for what remained of the contents." I inquired for the eldest; and she had scarcely time to tell me that he was driving a couple of geese home from the meadow, when he ran up, and handed Philip an osier-twigg. I talked a little longer with the woman, and found that she was the daughter of the schoolmaster, and that her husband was gone on a journey into Switzerland for some money a relation had left him. "They wanted to cheat him," she said, "and would not answer his letters; so he is gone there himself. I hope he has met with no accident, as I have heard nothing of him since his departure." I left the woman, with regret, giving each of the children a kreutzer, with an additional one for the youngest, to buy some wheaten bread for his broth when she went to town next; and so we parted. I assure you, my dear friend, when my thoughts are all in tumult, the sight of such a creature as this tranquillises my disturbed mind. She moves in a happy thoughtlessness within the confined circle of her existence; she supplies her wants from day to day; and, when she sees the leaves fall, they raise no other idea in her mind than that winter is approaching. Since that time I have gone out there frequently. The children have become quite familiar with me; and each gets a lump of sugar when I drink my coffee, and they share my milk and bread and butter in the evening. They always receive their kreutzer on Sundays, for the good woman has orders to give it to them when I do not go there after evening service. They are quite at home with me, tell me everything; and I am particularly amused with observing their

temper, and the simplicity of their behaviour, when some of the other village children are assembled with them.

It has given me a deal of trouble to satisfy the anxiety of the mother, lest (as she says) "they should inconvenience the gentleman."

MAY 30.

What I have lately said of painting is equally true with respect to poetry. It is only necessary for us to know what is really excellent, and venture to give it expression; and that is saying much in few words. To-day I have had a scene, which, if literally related, would, make the most beautiful idyl in the world. But why should I talk of poetry and scenes and idyls? Can we never take pleasure in nature without having recourse to art?

If you expect anything grand or magnificent from this introduction, you will be sadly mistaken. It relates merely to a peasant-lad, who has excited in me the warmest interest. As usual, I shall tell my story badly; and you, as usual, will think me extravagant. It is Walheim once more—always Walheim—which produces these wonderful phenomena.

A party had assembled outside the house under the linden-trees, to drink coffee. The company did not exactly please me; and, under one pretext or another, I lingered behind.

A peasant came from an adjoining house, and set to work arranging some part of the same plough which I had lately sketched. His appearance pleased me; and I spoke to him, inquired about his circumstances, made his acquaintance, and, as is my wont with persons of that class, was soon admitted into his confidence. He said he was in the service of a young widow, who set great store by him. He spoke so much of his mistress, and praised her so extravagantly, that I could soon see he was desperately in love with her. "She is no longer young," he said: "and she was treated so badly by her former husband that she does not mean to marry again." From his account it was so evident what incomparable charms she possessed for him, and how ardently he wished she would select him to extinguish the recollection of her first husband's misconduct, that I should have to repeat his own words in order to describe the depth of the poor fellow's attachment, truth, and devotion. It would, in fact, require the gifts of a great poet to convey the expression of his features, the harmony of his voice, and the heavenly fire of his eye. No words can portray the tenderness of his every movement and of every feature: no effort of mine could do justice to the scene. His alarm lest I should misconceive his position with regard to his mistress, or question the propriety of her conduct, touched me particularly. The charming manner with which he described her form and person, which, without possessing the graces of youth, won and attached him to her, is inexpressible, and must be left to the imagination. I have never in my life witnessed or fancied or conceived the possibility of such intense devotion, such ardent affections, united with so much purity. Do not blame me if I say that the recollection of this innocence and truth is deeply impressed upon my very soul; that this picture of fidelity and tenderness haunts me everywhere; and that my own heart, as though enkindled by the flame, glows and burns within me.

I mean now to try and see her as soon as I can: or perhaps, on second thoughts, I had better not; it is better I should behold her through the eyes of her lover. To my sight, perhaps, she would not appear as she now stands before me; and why should I destroy so sweet a picture?

JUNE 16.

"Why do I not write to you?" You lay claim to learning, and ask such a question. You should have guessed that I am well—that is to say—in a word, I have made an acquaintance who has won my heart: I have—I know not.

To give you a regular account of the manner in which I have become acquainted with the most amiable of women would be a difficult task. I am a happy and contented mortal, but a poor historian.

An angel! Nonsense! Everybody so describes his mistress; and yet I find it impossible to tell you how perfect she is, or why she is so perfect: suffice it to say she has captivated all my senses.

So much simplicity with so much understanding—so mild, and yet so resolute—a mind so placid, and a life so active.

But all this is ugly balderdash, which expresses not a single character nor feature. Some other time—but no, not some other time, now, this very instant, will I tell you all about it. Now or never. Well, between ourselves, since I commenced my letter, I have been three times on the point of throwing down my pen, of ordering my horse, and riding out. And yet I vowed this morning that I would not ride to-day, and yet every moment I am rushing to the window to see how high the sun is.

I could not restrain myself—go to her I must. I have just returned, Wilhelm; and whilst I am taking supper I will write to you. What a delight it was for my soul to see her in the midst of her dear, beautiful children,—eight brothers and sisters!

But, if I proceed thus, you will be no wiser at the end of my letter than you were at the beginning. Attend, then, and I will compel myself to give you the details.

I mentioned to you the other day that I had become acquainted with S—, the district judge, and that he had invited me to go and visit him in his retirement, or rather in his little kingdom. But I neglected going, and perhaps should never have gone, if chance had not discovered to me the treasure which lay concealed in that retired spot. Some of our young people had proposed giving a ball in the country, at which I consented to be present. I offered my hand for the evening to a pretty and agreeable, but rather commonplace, sort of girl from the immediate neighbourhood; and it was agreed that I should engage a carriage, and call upon Charlotte, with my partner and her aunt, to convey them to the ball. My companion informed me, as we drove along through the park to the hunting-lodge, that I should make the acquaintance of a very charming young lady. "Take care," added the aunt, "that you do not lose your heart." "Why?" said I. "Because she is already engaged to a very worthy man," she replied, "who is gone to settle his affairs upon the death of his father, and will succeed to a very considerable

inheritance." This information possessed no interest for me. When we arrived at the gate, the sun was setting behind the tops of the mountains. The atmosphere was heavy; and the ladies expressed their fears of an approaching storm, as masses of low black clouds were gathering in the horizon. I relieved their anxieties by pretending to be weather-wise, although I myself had some apprehensions lest our pleasure should be interrupted.

I alighted; and a maid came to the door, and requested us to wait a moment for her mistress. I walked across the court to a well-built house, and, ascending the flight of steps in front, opened the door, and saw before me the most charming spectacle I had ever witnessed. Six children, from eleven to two years old, were running about the hall, and surrounding a lady of middle height, with a lovely figure, dressed in a robe of simple white, trimmed with pink ribbons. She was holding a rye loaf in her hand, and was cutting slices for the little ones all around, in proportion to their age and appetite. She performed her task in a graceful and affectionate manner; each claimant awaiting his turn with outstretched hands, and boisterously shouting his thanks. Some of them ran away at once, to enjoy their evening meal; whilst others, of a gentler disposition, retired to the courtyard to see the strangers, and to survey the carriage in which their Charlotte was to drive away. "Pray forgive me for giving you the trouble to come for me, and for keeping the ladies waiting: but dressing, and arranging some household duties before I leave, had made me forget my children's supper; and they do not like to take it from any one but me." I uttered some indifferent compliment: but my whole soul was absorbed by her air, her voice, her manner; and I had scarcely recovered myself when she ran into her room to fetch her gloves and fan. The young ones threw inquiring glances at me from a distance; whilst I approached the youngest, a most delicious little creature. He drew back; and Charlotte, entering at the very moment, said, "Louis, shake hands with your cousin." The little fellow obeyed willingly; and I could not resist giving him a hearty kiss, notwithstanding his rather dirty face. "Cousin," said I to Charlotte, as I handed her down, "do you think I deserve the happiness of being related to you?" She replied, with a ready smile, "Oh! I have such a number of cousins, that I should be sorry if you were the most undeserving of them." In taking leave, she desired her next sister, Sophy, a girl about eleven years old, to take great care of the children, and to say good-bye to papa for her when he came home from his ride. She enjoined to the little ones to obey their sister Sophy as they would herself, upon which some promised that they would; but a little fair-haired girl, about six years old, looked discontented, and said, "But Sophy is not you, Charlotte; and we like you best." The two eldest boys had clambered up the carriage; and, at my request, she permitted them to accompany us a little way through the forest, upon their promising to sit very still, and hold fast.

We were hardly seated, and the ladies had scarcely exchanged compliments, making the usual remarks upon each other's dress, and upon the company they expected to meet, when Charlotte stopped the carriage, and made her brothers get down. They insisted upon kissing her hands once more; which the eldest did with all the tenderness of a

youth of fifteen, but the other in a lighter and more careless manner. She desired them again to give her love to the children, and we drove off.

The aunt inquired of Charlotte whether she had finished the book she had last sent her. "No," said Charlotte; "I did not like it: you can have it again. And the one before was not much better." I was surprised, upon asking the title, to hear that it was _____. (We feel obliged to suppress the passage in the letter, to prevent any one from feeling aggrieved; although no author need pay much attention to the opinion of a mere girl, or that of an unsteady young man.)

I found penetration and character in everything she said: every expression seemed to brighten her features with new charms,—with new rays of genius,—which unfolded by degrees, as she felt herself understood.

"When I was younger," she observed, "I loved nothing so much as romances. Nothing could equal my delight when, on some holiday, I could settle down quietly in a corner, and enter with my whole heart and soul into the joys or sorrows of some fictitious Leonora. I do not deny that they even possess some charms for me yet. But I read so seldom, that I prefer books suited exactly to my taste. And I like those authors best whose scenes describe my own situation in life,—and the friends who are about me, whose stories touch me with interest, from resembling my own homely existence,—which, without being absolutely paradise, is, on the whole, a source of indescribable happiness."

I endeavoured to conceal the emotion which these words occasioned, but it was of slight avail; for, when she had expressed so truly her opinion of "The Vicar of Wakefield," and of other works, the names of which I omit (Though the names are omitted, yet the authors mentioned deserve Charlotte's approbation, and will feel it in their hearts when they read this passage. It concerns no other person.), I could no longer contain myself, but gave full utterance to what I thought of it: and it was not until Charlotte had addressed herself to the two other ladies, that I remembered their presence, and observed them sitting mute with astonishment. The aunt looked at me several times with an air of raillery, which, however, I did not at all mind.

We talked of the pleasures of dancing. "If it is a fault to love it," said Charlotte, "I am ready to confess that I prize it above all other amusements. If anything disturbs me, I go to the piano, play an air to which I have danced, and all goes right again directly."

You, who know me, can fancy how steadfastly I gazed upon her rich dark eyes during these remarks, how my very soul gloated over her warm lips and fresh, glowing cheeks, how I became quite lost in the delightful meaning of her words, so much so, that I scarcely heard the actual expressions. In short, I alighted from the carriage like a person in a dream, and was so lost to the dim world around me, that I scarcely heard the music which resounded from the illuminated ballroom.

The two Messrs. Andran and a certain N. N. (I cannot trouble myself with the names), who were the aunt's and Charlotte's partners, received us at the carriage-door, and took possession of their ladies, whilst I followed with mine.

We commenced with a minuet. I led out one lady after another, and precisely those who were the most disagreeable could not bring themselves to leave off. Charlotte and her partner began an English country dance, and you must imagine my delight when it was their turn to dance the figure with us. You should see Charlotte dance. She dances with her whole heart and soul: her figure is all harmony, elegance, and grace, as if she were conscious of nothing else, and had no other thought or feeling; and, doubtless, for the moment, every other sensation is extinct.

She was engaged for the second country dance, but promised me the third, and assured me, with the most agreeable freedom, that she was very fond of waltzing. "It is the custom here," she said, "for the previous partners to waltz together; but my partner is an indifferent waltzer, and will feel delighted if I save him the trouble. Your partner is not allowed to waltz, and, indeed, is equally incapable: but I observed during the country dance that you waltz well; so, if you will waltz with me, I beg you would propose it to my partner, and I will propose it to yours." We agreed, and it was arranged that our partners should mutually entertain each other.

We set off, and, at first, delighted ourselves with the usual graceful motions of the arms. With what grace, with what ease, she moved! When the waltz commenced, and the dancers whirled around each other in the giddy maze, there was some confusion, owing to the incapacity of some of the dancers. We judiciously remained still, allowing the others to weary themselves; and, when the awkward dancers had withdrawn, we joined in, and kept it up famously together with one other couple,—Andran and his partner. Never did I dance more lightly. I felt myself more than mortal, holding this loveliest of creatures in my arms, flying, with her as rapidly as the wind, till I lost sight of every other object; and O Wilhelm, I vowed at that moment, that a maiden whom I loved, or for whom I felt the slightest attachment, never, never should waltz with any one else but with me, if I went to perdition for it!—you will understand this.

We took a few turns in the room to recover our breath. Charlotte sat down, and felt refreshed by partaking of some oranges which I had had secured,—the only ones that had been left; but at every slice which, from politeness, she offered to her neighbours, I felt as though a dagger went through my heart.

We were the second couple in the third country dance. As we were going down (and Heaven knows with what ecstasy I gazed at her arms and eyes, beaming with the sweetest feeling of pure and genuine enjoyment), we passed a lady whom I had noticed for her charming expression of countenance; although she was no longer young. She looked at Charlotte with a smile, then, holding up her finger in a threatening attitude, repeated twice in a very significant tone of voice the name of "Albert."

"Who is Albert," said I to Charlotte, "if it is not impertinent to ask?" She was about to answer, when we were obliged to separate, in order to execute a figure in the dance; and, as we crossed over again in front of each other, I perceived she looked somewhat pensive. "Why need I conceal it from you?" she said, as she gave me her hand for the promenade. "Albert is a worthy man, to whom I am engaged." Now, there was nothing new to me in this (for the girls had told me of it on the way); but it was so far new that I had not thought of it in connection with her whom, in so short a time, I had learned to prize so highly. Enough, I became confused, got out in the figure, and occasioned general confusion; so that it required all Charlotte's presence of mind to set me right by pulling and pushing me into my proper place.

The dance was not yet finished when the lightning which had for some time been seen in the horizon, and which I had asserted to proceed entirely from heat, grew more violent; and the thunder was heard above the music. When any distress or terror surprises us in the midst of our amusements, it naturally makes a deeper impression than at other times, either because the contrast makes us more keenly susceptible, or rather perhaps because our senses are then more open to impressions, and the shock is consequently stronger. To this cause I must ascribe the fright and shrieks of the ladies. One sagaciously sat down in a corner with her back to the window, and held her fingers to her ears; a second knelt down before her, and hid her face in her lap; a third threw herself between them, and embraced her sister with a thousand tears; some insisted on going home; others, unconscious of their actions, wanted sufficient presence of mind to repress the impertinence of their young partners, who sought to direct to themselves those sighs which the lips of our agitated beauties intended for heaven. Some of the gentlemen had gone down-stairs to smoke a quiet cigar, and the rest of the company gladly embraced a happy suggestion of the hostess to retire into another room which was provided with shutters and curtains. We had hardly got there, when Charlotte placed the chairs in a circle; and, when the company had sat down in compliance with her request, she forthwith proposed a round game.

I noticed some of the company prepare their mouths and draw themselves up at the prospect of some agreeable forfeit. "Let us play at counting," said Charlotte. "Now, pay attention: I shall go round the circle from right to left; and each person is to count, one after the other, the number that comes to him, and must count fast; whoever stops or mistakes is to have a box on the ear, and so on, till we have counted a thousand." It was delightful to see the fun. She went round the circle with upraised arm. "One," said the first; "two," the second; "three," the third; and so on, till Charlotte went faster and faster. One made a mistake, instantly a box on the ear; and, amid the laughter that ensued, came another box; and so on, faster and faster. I myself came in for two. I fancied they were harder than the rest, and felt quite delighted. A general laughter and confusion put an end to the game long before we had counted as far as a thousand. The party broke up into little separate knots: the storm had ceased, and I followed Charlotte into the ballroom. On the way she said, "The game banished their fears of the storm." I could

make no reply. "I myself," she continued, "was as much frightened as any of them; but by affecting courage, to keep up the spirits of the others, I forgot my apprehensions." We went to the window. It was still thundering at a distance: a soft rain was pouring down over the country, and filled the air around us with delicious odours. Charlotte leaned forward on her arm; her eyes wandered over the scene; she raised them to the sky, and then turned them upon me; they were moistened with tears; she placed her hand on mine and said, "Klopstock!" at once I remembered the magnificent ode which was in her thoughts: I felt oppressed with the weight of my sensations, and sank under them. It was more than I could bear. I bent over her hand, kissed it in a stream of delicious tears, and again looked up to her eyes. Divine Klopstock! why didst thou not see thy apotheosis in those eyes? And thy name so often profaned, would that I never heard it repeated!

JUNE 19.

I no longer remember where I stopped in my narrative: I only know it was two in the morning when I went to bed; and if you had been with me, that I might have talked instead of writing to you, I should, in all probability, have kept you up till daylight.

I think I have not yet related what happened as we rode home from the ball, nor have I time to tell you now. It was a most magnificent sunrise: the whole country was refreshed, and the rain fell drop by drop from the trees in the forest. Our companions were asleep. Charlotte asked me if I did not wish to sleep also, and begged of me not to make any ceremony on her account. Looking steadfastly at her, I answered, "As long as I see those eyes open, there is no fear of my falling asleep." We both continued awake till we reached her door. The maid opened it softly, and assured her, in answer to her inquiries, that her father and the children were well, and still sleeping. I left her asking permission to visit her in the course of the day. She consented, and I went, and, since that time, sun, moon, and stars may pursue their course: I know not whether it is day or night; the whole world is nothing to me.

JUNE 21.

My days are as happy as those reserved by God for his elect; and, whatever be my fate hereafter, I can never say that I have not tasted joy,—the purest joy of life. You know Walheim. I am now completely settled there. In that spot I am only half a league from Charlotte; and there I enjoy myself, and taste all the pleasure which can fall to the lot of man.

Little did I imagine, when I selected Walheim for my pedestrian excursions, that all heaven lay so near it. How often in my wanderings from the hillside or from the meadows across the river, have I beheld this hunting-lodge, which now contains within it all the joy of my heart!

I have often, my dear Wilhelm, reflected on the eagerness men feel to wander and make new discoveries, and upon that secret impulse which afterward inclines them to

return to their narrow circle, conform to the laws of custom, and embarrass themselves no longer with what passes around them.

It is so strange how, when I came here first, and gazed upon that lovely valley from the hillside, I felt charmed with the entire scene surrounding me. The little wood opposite—how delightful to sit under its shade! How fine the view from that point of rock! Then, that delightful chain of hills, and the exquisite valleys at their feet! Could I but wander and lose myself amongst them! I went, and returned without finding what I wished. Distance, my friend, is like futurity. A dim vastness is spread before our souls: the perceptions of our mind are as obscure as those of our vision; and we desire earnestly to surrender up our whole being, that it may be filled with the complete and perfect bliss of one glorious emotion. But alas! when we have attained our object, when the distant there becomes the present here, all is changed: we are as poor and circumscribed as ever, and our souls still languish for unattainable happiness.

So does the restless traveller pant for his native soil, and find in his own cottage, in the arms of his wife, in the affections of his children, and in the labour necessary for their support, that happiness which he had sought in vain through the wide world.

When, in the morning at sunrise, I go out to Walheim, and with my own hands gather in the garden the pease which are to serve for my dinner, when I sit down to shell them, and read my Homer during the intervals, and then, selecting a saucepan from the kitchen, fetch my own butter, put my mess on the fire, cover it up, and sit down to stir it as occasion requires, I figure to myself the illustrious suitors of Penelope, killing, dressing, and preparing their own oxen and swine. Nothing fills me with a more pure and genuine sense of happiness than those traits of patriarchal life which, thank Heaven! I can imitate without affectation. Happy is it, indeed, for me that my heart is capable of feeling the same simple and innocent pleasure as the peasant whose table is covered with food of his own rearing, and who not only enjoys his meal, but remembers with delight the happy days and sunny mornings when he planted it, the soft evenings when he watered it, and the pleasure he experienced in watching its daily growth.

JUNE 29.

The day before yesterday, the physician came from the town to pay a visit to the judge. He found me on the floor playing with Charlotte's children. Some of them were scrambling over me, and others romped with me; and, as I caught and tickled them, they made a great noise. The doctor is a formal sort of personage: he adjusts the plaits of his ruffles, and continually settles his frill whilst he is talking to you; and he thought my conduct beneath the dignity of a sensible man. I could perceive this by his countenance. But I did not suffer myself to be disturbed. I allowed him to continue his wise conversation, whilst I rebuilt the children's card houses for them as fast as they threw them down. He went about the town afterward, complaining that the judge's children were spoiled enough before, but that now Werther was completely ruining them.

Yes, my dear Wilhelm, nothing on this earth affects my heart so much as children. When I look on at their doings; when I mark in the little creatures the seeds of all those virtues and qualities which they will one day find so indispensable; when I behold in the obstinate all the future firmness and constancy of a noble character; in the capricious, that levity and gaiety of temper which will carry them lightly over the dangers and troubles of life, their whole nature simple and unpolluted,—then I call to mind the golden words of the Great Teacher of mankind, "Unless ye become like one of these!" And now, my friend, these children, who are our equals, whom we ought to consider as our models, we treat them as though they were our subjects. They are allowed no will of their own. And have we, then, none ourselves? Whence comes our exclusive right? Is it because we are older and more experienced? Great God! from the height of thy heaven thou beholdest great children and little children, and no others; and thy Son has long since declared which afford thee greatest pleasure. But they believe in him, and hear him not,—that, too, is an old story; and they train their children after their own image, etc.

Adieu, Wilhelm: I will not further bewilder myself with this subject.

JULY 1.

The consolation Charlotte can bring to an invalid I experience from my own heart, which suffers more from her absence than many a poor creature lingering on a bed of sickness. She is gone to spend a few days in the town with a very worthy woman, who is given over by the physicians, and wishes to have Charlotte near her in her last moments. I accompanied her last week on a visit to the Vicar of S—, a small village in the mountains, about a league hence. We arrived about four o'clock: Charlotte had taken her little sister with her. When we entered the vicarage court, we found the good old man sitting on a bench before the door, under the shade of two large walnut-trees. At the sight of Charlotte he seemed to gain new life, rose, forgot his stick, and ventured to walk toward her. She ran to him, and made him sit down again; then, placing herself by his side, she gave him a number of messages from her father, and then caught up his youngest child, a dirty, ugly little thing, the joy of his old age, and kissed it. I wish you could have witnessed her attention to this old man,—how she raised her voice on account of his deafness; how she told him of healthy young people, who had been carried off when it was least expected; praised the virtues of Carlsbad, and commended his determination to spend the ensuing summer there; and assured him that he looked better and stronger than he did when she saw him last. I, in the meantime, paid attention to his good lady. The old man seemed quite in spirits; and as I could not help admiring the beauty of the walnut-trees, which formed such an agreeable shade over our heads, he began, though with some little difficulty, to tell us their history. "As to the oldest," said he, "we do not know who planted it,—some say one clergyman, and some another: but the younger one, there behind us, is exactly the age of my wife, fifty years old next October; her father planted it in the morning, and in the evening she came into the world. My wife's father was my predecessor here, and I cannot tell you how fond he

was of that tree; and it is fully as dear to me. Under the shade of that very tree, upon a log of wood, my wife was seated knitting, when I, a poor student, came into this court for the first time, just seven and twenty years ago." Charlotte inquired for his daughter. He said she was gone with Herr Schmidt to the meadows, and was with the haymakers. The old man then resumed his story, and told us how his predecessor had taken a fancy to him, as had his daughter likewise; and how he had become first his curate, and subsequently his successor. He had scarcely finished his story when his daughter returned through the garden, accompanied by the above-mentioned Herr Schmidt. She welcomed Charlotte affectionately, and I confess I was much taken with her appearance. She was a lively-looking, good-humoured brunette, quite competent to amuse one for a short time in the country. Her lover (for such Herr Schmidt evidently appeared to be) was a polite, reserved personage, and would not join our conversation, notwithstanding all Charlotte's endeavours to draw him out. I was much annoyed at observing, by his countenance, that his silence did not arise from want of talent, but from caprice and ill-humour. This subsequently became very evident, when we set out to take a walk, and Frederica joining Charlotte, with whom I was talking, the worthy gentleman's face, which was naturally rather sombre, became so dark and angry that Charlotte was obliged to touch my arm, and remind me that I was talking too much to Frederica. Nothing distresses me more than to see men torment each other; particularly when in the flower of their age, in the very season of pleasure, they waste their few short days of sunshine in quarrels and disputes, and only perceive their error when it is too late to repair it. This thought dwelt upon my mind; and in the evening, when we returned to the vicar's, and were sitting round the table with our bread and milk, the conversation turned on the joys and sorrows of the world, I could not resist the temptation to inveigh bitterly against ill-humour. "We are apt," said I, "to complain, but—with very little cause, that our happy days are few, and our evil days many. If our hearts were always disposed to receive the benefits Heaven sends us, we should acquire strength to support evil when it comes." "But," observed the vicar's wife, "we cannot always command our tempers, so much depends upon the constitution: when the body suffers, the mind is ill at ease." "I acknowledge that," I continued; "but we must consider such a disposition in the light of a disease, and inquire whether there is no remedy for it."

"I should be glad to hear one," said Charlotte: "at least, I think very much depends upon ourselves; I know it is so with me. When anything annoys me, and disturbs my temper, I hasten into the garden, hum a couple of country dances, and it is all right with me directly." "That is what I meant," I replied; "ill-humour resembles indolence: it is natural to us; but if once we have courage to exert ourselves, we find our work run fresh from our hands, and we experience in the activity from which we shrank a real enjoyment." Frederica listened very attentively: and the young man objected, that we were not masters of ourselves, and still less so of our feelings. "The question is about a disagreeable feeling," I added, "from which every one would willingly escape, but none

know their own power without trial. Invalids are glad to consult physicians, and submit to the most scrupulous regimen, the most nauseous medicines, in order to recover their health." I observed that the good old man inclined his head, and exerted himself to hear our discourse; so I raised my voice, and addressed myself directly to him. "We preach against a great many crimes," I observed, "but I never remember a sermon delivered against ill-humour." "That may do very well for your town clergymen," said he: "country people are never ill-humoured; though, indeed, it might be useful, occasionally, to my wife for instance, and the judge." We all laughed, as did he likewise very cordially, till he fell into a fit of coughing, which interrupted our conversation for a time. Herr Schmidt resumed the subject. "You call ill humour a crime," he remarked, "but I think you use too strong a term." "Not at all," I replied, "if that deserves the name which is so pernicious to ourselves and our neighbours. Is it not enough that we want the power to make one another happy, must we deprive each other of the pleasure which we can all make for ourselves? Show me the man who has the courage to hide his ill-humour, who bears the whole burden himself, without disturbing the peace of those around him. No: ill-humour arises from an inward consciousness of our own want of merit, from a discontent which ever accompanies that envy which foolish vanity engenders. We see people happy, whom we have not made so, and cannot endure the sight." Charlotte looked at me with a smile; she observed the emotion with which I spoke: and a tear in the eyes of Frederica stimulated me to proceed. "Woe unto those," I said, "who use their power over a human heart to destroy the simple pleasures it would naturally enjoy! All the favours, all the attentions, in the world cannot compensate for the loss of that happiness which a cruel tyranny has destroyed." My heart was full as I spoke. A recollection of many things which had happened pressed upon my mind, and filled my eyes with tears. "We should daily repeat to ourselves," I exclaimed, "that we should not interfere with our friends, unless to leave them in possession of their own joys, and increase their happiness by sharing it with them! But when their souls are tormented by a violent passion, or their hearts rent with grief, is it in your power to afford them the slightest consolation?"

"And when the last fatal malady seizes the being whose untimely grave you have prepared, when she lies languid and exhausted before you, her dim eyes raised to heaven, and the damp of death upon her pallid brow, there you stand at her bedside like a condemned criminal, with the bitter feeling that your whole fortune could not save her; and the agonising thought wrings you, that all your efforts are powerless to impart even a moment's strength to the departing soul, or quicken her with a transitory consolation."

At these words the remembrance of a similar scene at which I had been once present fell with full force upon my heart. I buried my face in my handkerchief, and hastened from the room, and was only recalled to my recollection by Charlotte's voice, who reminded me that it was time to return home. With what tenderness she chid me on the

way for the too eager interest I took in everything! She declared it would do me injury, and that I ought to spare myself. Yes, my angel! I will do so for your sake.

JULY 6.

She is still with her dying friend, and is still the same bright, beautiful creature whose presence softens pain, and sheds happiness around whichever way she turns. She went out yesterday with her little sisters: I knew it, and went to meet them; and we walked together. In about an hour and a half we returned to the town. We stopped at the spring I am so fond of, and which is now a thousand times dearer to me than ever. Charlotte seated herself upon the low wall, and we gathered about her. I looked around, and recalled the time when my heart was unoccupied and free. "Dear fountain!" I said, "since that time I have no more come to enjoy cool repose by thy fresh stream: I have passed thee with careless steps, and scarcely bestowed a glance upon thee." I looked down, and observed Charlotte's little sister, Jane, coming up the steps with a glass of water. I turned toward Charlotte, and I felt her influence over me. Jane at the moment approached with the glass. Her sister, Marianne, wished to take it from her. "No!" cried the child, with the sweetest expression of face, "Charlotte must drink first."

The affection and simplicity with which this was uttered so charmed me, that I sought to express my feelings by catching up the child and kissing her heartily. She was frightened, and began to cry. "You should not do that," said Charlotte: I felt perplexed. "Come, Jane," she continued, taking her hand, and leading her down the steps again, "it is no matter: wash yourself quickly in the fresh water." I stood and watched them; and when I saw the little dear rubbing her cheeks with her wet hands, in full belief that all the impurities contracted from my ugly beard would be washed off by the miraculous water, and how, though Charlotte said it would do, she continued still to wash with all her might, as though she thought too much were better than too little, I assure you, Wilhelm, I never attended a baptism with greater reverence; and, when Charlotte came up from the well, I could have prostrated myself as before the prophet of an Eastern nation.

In the evening I would not resist telling the story to a person who, I thought, possessed some natural feeling, because he was a man of understanding. But what a mistake I made. He maintained it was very wrong of Charlotte, that we should not deceive children, that such things occasioned countless mistakes and superstitions, from which we were bound to protect the young. It occurred to me then, that this very man had been baptised only a week before; so I said nothing further, but maintained the justice of my own convictions. We should deal with children as God deals with us, we are happiest under the influence of innocent delusions.

JULY 8.

What a child is man that he should be so solicitous about a look! What a child is man! We had been to Walheim: the ladies went in a carriage; but during our walk I thought I saw in Charlotte's dark eyes—I am a fool—but forgive me! you should see them,—

those eyes.—However, to be brief (for my own eyes are weighed down with sleep), you must know, when the ladies stepped into their carriage again, young W. Seldstadt, Andran, and I were standing about the door. They are a merry set of fellows, and they were all laughing and joking together. I watched Charlotte's eyes. They wandered from one to the other; but they did not light on me, on me, who stood there motionless, and who saw nothing but her! My heart bade her a thousand times adieu, but she noticed me not. The carriage drove off; and my eyes filled with tears. I looked after her: suddenly I saw Charlotte's bonnet leaning out of the window, and she turned to look back, was it at me? My dear friend, I know not; and in this uncertainty I find consolation. Perhaps she turned to look at me. Perhaps! Good-night—what a child I am!

JULY 10.

You should see how foolish I look in company when her name is mentioned, particularly when I am asked plainly how I like her. How I like her! I detest the phrase. What sort of creature must he be who merely liked Charlotte, whose whole heart and senses were not entirely absorbed by her. Like her! Some one asked me lately how I liked Ossian.

JULY 11.

Madame M—is very ill. I pray for her recovery, because Charlotte shares my sufferings. I see her occasionally at my friend's house, and to-day she has told me the strangest circumstance. Old M—is a covetous, miserly fellow, who has long worried and annoyed the poor lady sadly; but she has borne her afflictions patiently. A few days ago, when the physician informed us that her recovery was hopeless, she sent for her husband (Charlotte was present), and addressed him thus: "I have something to confess, which, after my decease, may occasion trouble and confusion. I have hitherto conducted your household as frugally and economically as possible, but you must pardon me for having defrauded you for thirty years. At the commencement of our married life, you allowed a small sum for the wants of the kitchen, and the other household expenses. When our establishment increased and our property grew larger, I could not persuade you to increase the weekly allowance in proportion: in short, you know, that, when our wants were greatest, you required me to supply everything with seven florins a week. I took the money from you without an observation, but made up the weekly deficiency from the money-chest; as nobody would suspect your wife of robbing the household bank. But I have wasted nothing, and should have been content to meet my eternal Judge without this confession, if she, upon whom the management of your establishment will devolve after my decease, would be free from embarrassment upon your insisting that the allowance made to me, your former wife, was sufficient."

I talked with Charlotte of the inconceivable manner in which men allow themselves to be blinded; how any one could avoid suspecting some deception, when seven florins only were allowed to defray expenses twice as great. But I have myself known people

who believed, without any visible astonishment, that their house possessed the prophet's never-failing cruse of oil.

JULY 13.

No, I am not deceived. In her dark eyes I read a genuine interest in me and in my fortunes. Yes, I feel it; and I may believe my own heart which tells me—dare I say it?—dare I pronounce the divine words?—that she loves me!

That she loves me! How the idea exalts me in my own eyes! And, as you can understand my feelings, I may say to you, how I honour myself since she loves me!

Is this presumption, or is it a consciousness of the truth? I do not know a man able to supplant me in the heart of Charlotte; and yet when she speaks of her betrothed with so much warmth and affection, I feel like the soldier who has been stripped of his honours and titles, and deprived of his sword.

JULY 16.

How my heart beats when by accident I touch her finger, or my feet meet hers under the table! I draw back as if from a furnace; but a secret force impels me forward again, and my senses become disordered. Her innocent, unconscious heart never knows what agony these little familiarities inflict upon me. Sometimes when we are talking she lays her hand upon mine, and in the eagerness of conversation comes closer to me, and her balmy breath reaches my lips,—when I feel as if lightning had struck me, and that I could sink into the earth. And yet, Wilhelm, with all this heavenly confidence,—if I know myself, and should ever dare—you understand me. No, no! my heart is not so corrupt, it is weak, weak enough but is not that a degree of corruption?

She is to me a sacred being. All passion is still in her presence: I cannot express my sensations when I am near her. I feel as if my soul beat in every nerve of my body. There is a melody which she plays on the piano with angelic skill,—so simple is it, and yet so spiritual! It is her favourite air; and, when she plays the first note, all pain, care, and sorrow disappear from me in a moment.

I believe every word that is said of the magic of ancient music. How her simple song enchants me! Sometimes, when I am ready to commit suicide, she sings that air; and instantly the gloom and madness which hung over me are dispersed, and I breathe freely again.

JULY 18.

Wilhelm, what is the world to our hearts without love? What is a magic-lantern without light? You have but to kindle the flame within, and the brightest figures shine on the white wall; and, if love only show us fleeting shadows, we are yet happy, when, like mere children, we behold them, and are transported with the splendid phantoms. I have not been able to see Charlotte to-day. I was prevented by company from which I could not disengage myself. What was to be done? I sent my servant to her house, that I might at least see somebody to-day who had been near her. Oh, the impatience with

which I waited for his return! the joy with which I welcomed him! I should certainly have caught him in my arms, and kissed him, if I had not been ashamed.

It is said that the Bonona stone, when placed in the sun, attracts the rays, and for a time appears luminous in the dark. So was it with me and this servant. The idea that Charlotte's eyes had dwelt on his countenance, his cheek, his very apparel, endeared them all inestimably to me, so that at the moment I would not have parted from him for a thousand crowns. His presence made me so happy! Beware of laughing at me, Wilhelm. Can that be a delusion which makes us happy?

JULY 19.

"I shall see her today!" I exclaim with delight, when I rise in the morning, and look out with gladness of heart at the bright, beautiful sun. "I shall see her today!" And then I have no further wish to form: all, all is included in that one thought.

JULY 20.

I cannot assent to your proposal that I should accompany the ambassador to ———. I do not love subordination; and we all know that he is a rough, disagreeable person to be connected with. You say my mother wishes me to be employed. I could not help laughing at that. Am I not sufficiently employed? And is it not in reality the same, whether I shell peas or count lentils? The world runs on from one folly to another; and the man who, solely from regard to the opinion of others, and without any wish or necessity of his own, toils after gold, honour, or any other phantom, is no better than a fool.

JULY 24.

You insist so much on my not neglecting my drawing, that it would be as well for me to say nothing as to confess how little I have lately done.

I never felt happier, I never understood nature better, even down to the veriest stem or smallest blade of grass; and yet I am unable to express myself: my powers of execution are so weak, everything seems to swim and float before me, so that I cannot make a clear, bold outline. But I fancy I should succeed better if I had some clay or wax to model. I shall try, if this state of mind continues much longer, and will take to modelling, if I only knead dough.

I have commenced Charlotte's portrait three times, and have as often disgraced myself. This is the more annoying, as I was formerly very happy in taking likenesses. I have since sketched her profile, and must content myself with that.

JULY 25.

Yes, dear Charlotte! I will order and arrange everything. Only give me more commissions, the more the better. One thing, however, I must request: use no more writing-sand with the dear notes you send me. Today I raised your letter hastily to my lips, and it set my teeth on edge.

JULY 26.

I have often determined not to see her so frequently. But who could keep such a resolution? Every day I am exposed to the temptation, and promise faithfully that to-morrow I will really stay away: but, when tomorrow comes, I find some irresistible reason for seeing her; and, before I can account for it, I am with her again. Either she has said on the previous evening "You will be sure to call to-morrow,"—and who could stay away then?—or she gives me some commission, and I find it essential to take her the answer in person; or the day is fine, and I walk to Walheim; and, when I am there, it is only half a league farther to her. I am within the charmed atmosphere, and soon find myself at her side. My grandmother used to tell us a story of a mountain of loadstone. When any vessels came near it, they were instantly deprived of their ironwork: the nails flew to the mountain, and the unhappy crew perished amidst the disjointed planks.

JULY 30.

Albert is arrived, and I must take my departure. Were he the best and noblest of men, and I in every respect his inferior, I could not endure to see him in possession of such a perfect being. Possession!—enough, Wilhelm: her betrothed is here,—a fine, worthy fellow, whom one cannot help liking. Fortunately I was not present at their meeting. It would have broken my heart! And he is so considerate: he has not given Charlotte one kiss in my presence. Heaven reward him for it! I must love him for the respect with which he treats her. He shows a regard for me, but for this I suspect I am more indebted to Charlotte than to his own fancy for me. Women have a delicate tact in such matters, and it should be so. They cannot always succeed in keeping two rivals on terms with each other; but, when they do, they are the only gainers.

I cannot help esteeming Albert. The coolness of his temper contrasts strongly with the impetuosity of mine, which I cannot conceal. He has a great deal of feeling, and is fully sensible of the treasure he possesses in Charlotte. He is free from ill-humour, which you know is the fault I detest most.

He regards me as a man of sense; and my attachment to Charlotte, and the interest I take in all that concerns her, augment his triumph and his love. I shall not inquire whether he may not at times tease her with some little jealousies; as I know, that, were I in his place, I should not be entirely free from such sensations.

But, be that as it may, my pleasure with Charlotte is over. Call it folly or infatuation, what signifies a name? The thing speaks for itself. Before Albert came, I knew all that I know now. I knew I could make no pretensions to her, nor did I offer any, that is, as far as it was possible, in the presence of so much loveliness, not to pant for its enjoyment. And now, behold me like a silly fellow, staring with astonishment when another comes in, and deprives me of my love.

I bite my lips, and feel infinite scorn for those who tell me to be resigned, because there is no help for it. Let me escape from the yoke of such silly subterfuges! I ramble through the woods; and when I return to Charlotte, and find Albert sitting by her side

in the summer-house in the garden, I am unable to bear it, behave like a fool, and commit a thousand extravagances. "For Heaven's sake," said Charlotte today, "let us have no more scenes like those of last night! You terrify me when you are so violent." Between ourselves, I am always away now when he visits her: and I feel delighted when I find her alone.

AUGUST 8.

Believe me, dear Wilhelm, I did not allude to you when I spoke so severely of those who advise resignation to inevitable fate. I did not think it possible for you to indulge such a sentiment. But in fact you are right. I only suggest one objection. In this world one is seldom reduced to make a selection between two alternatives. There are as many varieties of conduct and opinion as there are turns of feature between an aquiline nose and a flat one.

You will, therefore, permit me to concede your entire argument, and yet contrive means to escape your dilemma.

Your position is this, I hear you say: "Either you have hopes of obtaining Charlotte, or you have none. Well, in the first case, pursue your course, and press on to the fulfilment of your wishes. In the second, be a man, and shake off a miserable passion, which will enervate and destroy you." My dear friend, this is well and easily said.

But would you require a wretched being, whose life is slowly wasting under a lingering disease, to despatch himself at once by the stroke of a dagger? Does not the very disorder which consumes his strength deprive him of the courage to effect his deliverance?

You may answer me, if you please, with a similar analogy, "Who would not prefer the amputation of an arm to the periling of life by doubt and procrastination!" But I know not if I am right, and let us leave these comparisons.

Enough! There are moments, Wilhelm, when I could rise up and shake it all off, and when, if I only knew where to go, I could fly from this place.

THE SAME EVENING.

My diary, which I have for some time neglected, came before me today; and I am amazed to see how deliberately I have entangled myself step by step. To have seen my position so clearly, and yet to have acted so like a child! Even still I behold the result plainly, and yet have no thought of acting with greater prudence.

AUGUST 10.

If I were not a fool, I could spend the happiest and most delightful life here. So many agreeable circumstances, and of a kind to ensure a worthy man's happiness, are seldom united. Alas! I feel it too sensibly,—the heart alone makes our happiness! To be admitted into this most charming family, to be loved by the father as a son, by the children as a father, and by Charlotte! then the noble Albert, who never disturbs my happiness by any appearance of ill-humour, receiving me with the heartiest affection,

and loving me, next to Charlotte, better than all the world! Wilhelm, you would be delighted to hear us in our rambles, and conversations about Charlotte. Nothing in the world can be more absurd than our connection, and yet the thought of it often moves me to tears.

He tells me sometimes of her excellent mother; how, upon her death-bed, she had committed her house and children to Charlotte, and had given Charlotte herself in charge to him; how, since that time, a new spirit had taken possession of her; how, in care and anxiety for their welfare, she became a real mother to them; how every moment of her time was devoted to some labour of love in their behalf,—and yet her mirth and cheerfulness had never forsaken her. I walk by his side, pluck flowers by the way, arrange them carefully into a nosegay, then fling them into the first stream I pass, and watch them as they float gently away. I forget whether I told you that Albert is to remain here. He has received a government appointment, with a very good salary; and I understand he is in high favour at court. I have met few persons so punctual and methodical in business.

AUGUST 12.

Certainly Albert is the best fellow in the world. I had a strange scene with him yesterday. I went to take leave of him; for I took it into my head to spend a few days in these mountains, from where I now write to you. As I was walking up and down his room, my eye fell upon his pistols. "Lend me those pistols," said I, "for my journey." "By all means," he replied, "if you will take the trouble to load them; for they only hang there for form." I took down one of them; and he continued, "Ever since I was near suffering for my extreme caution, I will have nothing to do with such things." I was curious to hear the story. "I was staying," said he, "some three months ago, at a friend's house in the country. I had a brace of pistols with me, unloaded; and I slept without any anxiety. One rainy afternoon I was sitting by myself, doing nothing, when it occurred to me I do not know how that the house might be attacked, that we might require the pistols, that we might in short, you know how we go on fancying, when we have nothing better to do. I gave the pistols to the servant, to clean and load. He was playing with the maid, and trying to frighten her, when the pistol went off—God knows how!—the ramrod was in the barrel; and it went straight through her right hand, and shattered the thumb. I had to endure all the lamentation, and to pay the surgeon's bill; so, since that time, I have kept all my weapons unloaded. But, my dear friend, what is the use of prudence? We can never be on our guard against all possible dangers. However,"—now, you must know I can tolerate all men till they come to "however;"—for it is self-evident that every universal rule must have its exceptions. But he is so exceedingly accurate, that, if he only fancies he has said a word too precipitate, or too general, or only half true, he never ceases to qualify, to modify, and extenuate, till at last he appears to have said nothing at all. Upon this occasion, Albert was deeply immersed in his subject: I ceased to listen to him, and became lost in reverie. With a sudden motion, I pointed the mouth of the pistol to my forehead, over the right eye. "What do you mean?"

cried Albert, turning back the pistol. "It is not loaded," said I. "And even if not," he answered with impatience, "what can you mean? I cannot comprehend how a man can be so mad as to shoot himself, and the bare idea of it shocks me."

"But why should any one," said I, "in speaking of an action, venture to pronounce it mad or wise, or good or bad? What is the meaning of all this? Have you carefully studied the secret motives of our actions? Do you understand—can you explain the causes which occasion them, and make them inevitable? If you can, you will be less hasty with your decision."

"But you will allow," said Albert; "that some actions are criminal, let them spring from whatever motives they may." I granted it, and shrugged my shoulders.

"But still, my good friend," I continued, "there are some exceptions here too. Theft is a crime; but the man who commits it from extreme poverty, with no design but to save his family from perishing, is he an object of pity, or of punishment? Who shall throw the first stone at a husband, who, in the heat of just resentment, sacrifices his faithless wife and her perfidious seducer? or at the young maiden, who, in her weak hour of rapture, forgets herself in the impetuous joys of love? Even our laws, cold and cruel as they are, relent in such cases, and withhold their punishment."

"That is quite another thing," said Albert; "because a man under the influence of violent passion loses all power of reflection, and is regarded as intoxicated or insane."

"Oh! you people of sound understandings," I replied, smiling, "are ever ready to exclaim 'Extravagance, and madness, and intoxication!' You moral men are so calm and so subdued! You abhor the drunken man, and detest the extravagant; you pass by, like the Levite, and thank God, like the Pharisee, that you are not like one of them. I have been more than once intoxicated, my passions have always bordered on extravagance: I am not ashamed to confess it; for I have learned, by my own experience, that all extraordinary men, who have accomplished great and astonishing actions, have ever been decried by the world as drunken or insane. And in private life, too, is it not intolerable that no one can undertake the execution of a noble or generous deed, without giving rise to the exclamation that the doer is intoxicated or mad? Shame upon you, ye sages!"

"This is another of your extravagant humours," said Albert: "you always exaggerate a case, and in this matter you are undoubtedly wrong; for we were speaking of suicide, which you compare with great actions, when it is impossible to regard it as anything but a weakness. It is much easier to die than to bear a life of misery with fortitude."

I was on the point of breaking off the conversation, for nothing puts me so completely out of patience as the utterance of a wretched commonplace when I am talking from my inmost heart. However, I composed myself, for I had often heard the same observation with sufficient vexation; and I answered him, therefore, with a little warmth, "You call this a weakness—beware of being led astray by appearances. When a nation, which has long groaned under the intolerable yoke of a tyrant, rises at last and throws off its chains,

do you call that weakness? The man who, to rescue his house from the flames, finds his physical strength redoubled, so that he lifts burdens with ease, which, in the absence of excitement, he could scarcely move; he who, under the rage of an insult, attacks and puts to flight half a score of his enemies, are such persons to be called weak? My good friend, if resistance be strength, how can the highest degree of resistance be a weakness?"

Albert looked steadfastly at me, and said, "Pray forgive me, but I do not see that the examples you have adduced bear any relation to the question." "Very likely," I answered; "for I have often been told that my style of illustration borders a little on the absurd. But let us see if we cannot place the matter in another point of view, by inquiring what can be a man's state of mind who resolves to free himself from the burden of life,—a burden often so pleasant to bear,—for we cannot otherwise reason fairly upon the subject.

"Human nature," I continued, "has its limits. It is able to endure a certain degree of joy, sorrow, and pain, but becomes annihilated as soon as this measure is exceeded. The question, therefore, is, not whether a man is strong or weak, but whether he is able to endure the measure of his sufferings. The suffering may be moral or physical; and in my opinion it is just as absurd to call a man a coward who destroys himself, as to call a man a coward who dies of a malignant fever."

"Paradox, all paradox!" exclaimed Albert. "Not so paradoxical as you imagine," I replied. "You allow that we designate a disease as mortal when nature is so severely attacked, and her strength so far exhausted, that she cannot possibly recover her former condition under any change that may take place.

"Now, my good friend, apply this to the mind; observe a man in his natural, isolated condition; consider how ideas work, and how impressions fasten on him, till at length a violent passion seizes him, destroying all his powers of calm reflection, and utterly ruining him.

"It is in vain that a man of sound mind and cool temper understands the condition of such a wretched being, in vain he counsels him. He can no more communicate his own wisdom to him than a healthy man can instil his strength into the invalid, by whose bedside he is seated."

Albert thought this too general. I reminded him of a girl who had drowned herself a short time previously, and I related her history.

She was a good creature, who had grown up in the narrow sphere of household industry and weekly appointed labour; one who knew no pleasure beyond indulging in a walk on Sundays, arrayed in her best attire, accompanied by her friends, or perhaps joining in the dance now and then at some festival, and chatting away her spare hours with a neighbour, discussing the scandal or the quarrels of the village, trifles sufficient to occupy her heart. At length the warmth of her nature is influenced by certain new and unknown wishes. Inflamed by the flatteries of men, her former pleasures become

by degrees insipid, till at length she meets with a youth to whom she is attracted by an indescribable feeling; upon him she now rests all her hopes; she forgets the world around her; she sees, hears, desires nothing but him, and him only. He alone occupies all her thoughts. Uncorrupted by the idle indulgence of an enervating vanity, her affection moving steadily toward its object, she hopes to become his, and to realise, in an everlasting union with him, all that happiness which she sought, all that bliss for which she longed. His repeated promises confirm her hopes: embraces and endearments, which increase the ardour of her desires, overmaster her soul. She floats in a dim, delusive anticipation of her happiness; and her feelings become excited to their utmost tension. She stretches out her arms finally to embrace the object of all her wishes and her lover forsakes her. Stunned and bewildered, she stands upon a precipice. All is darkness around her. No prospect, no hope, no consolation—forsaken by him in whom her existence was centred! She sees nothing of the wide world before her, thinks nothing of the many individuals who might supply the void in her heart; she feels herself deserted, forsaken by the world; and, blinded and impelled by the agony which wrings her soul, she plunges into the deep, to end her sufferings in the broad embrace of death. See here, Albert, the history of thousands; and tell me, is not this a case of physical infirmity? Nature has no way to escape from the labyrinth: her powers are exhausted: she can contend no longer, and the poor soul must die.

"Shame upon him who can look on calmly, and exclaim, 'The foolish girl! she should have waited; she should have allowed time to wear off the impression; her despair would have been softened, and she would have found another lover to comfort her.' One might as well say, 'The fool, to die of a fever! why did he not wait till his strength was restored, till his blood became calm? all would then have gone well, and he would have been alive now.'"

Albert, who could not see the justice of the comparison, offered some further objections, and, amongst others, urged that I had taken the case of a mere ignorant girl. But how any man of sense, of more enlarged views and experience, could be excused, he was unable to comprehend. "My friend!" I exclaimed, "man is but man; and, whatever be the extent of his reasoning powers, they are of little avail when passion rages within, and he feels himself confined by the narrow limits of nature. It were better, then—but we will talk of this some other time," I said, and caught up my hat. Alas! my heart was full; and we parted without conviction on either side. How rarely in this world do men understand each other!

AUGUST 15.

There can be no doubt that in this world nothing is so indispensable as love. I observe that Charlotte could not lose me without a pang, and the very children have but one wish; that is, that I should visit them again to-morrow. I went this afternoon to tune Charlotte's piano. But I could not do it, for the little ones insisted on my telling them a story; and Charlotte herself urged me to satisfy them. I waited upon them at tea, and

they are now as fully contented with me as with Charlotte; and I told them my very best tale of the princess who was waited upon by dwarfs. I improve myself by this exercise, and am quite surprised at the impression my stories create. If I sometimes invent an incident which I forget upon the next narration, they remind one directly that the story was different before; so that I now endeavour to relate with exactness the same anecdote in the same monotonous tone, which never changes. I find by this, how much an author injures his works by altering them, even though they be improved in a poetical point of view. The first impression is readily received. We are so constituted that we believe the most incredible things; and, once they are engraved upon the memory, woe to him who would endeavour to efface them.

AUGUST 18.

Must it ever be thus,—that the source of our happiness must also be the fountain of our misery? The full and ardent sentiment which animated my heart with the love of nature, overwhelming me with a torrent of delight, and which brought all paradise before me, has now become an insupportable torment, a demon which perpetually pursues and harasses me. When in bygone days I gazed from these rocks upon yonder mountains across the river, and upon the green, flowery valley before me, and saw all nature budding and bursting around; the hills clothed from foot to peak with tall, thick forest trees; the valleys in all their varied windings, shaded with the loveliest woods; and the soft river gliding along amongst the lispings reeds, mirroring the beautiful clouds which the soft evening breeze wafted across the sky,—when I heard the groves about me melodious with the music of birds, and saw the million swarms of insects dancing in the last golden beams of the sun, whose setting rays awoke the humming beetles from their grassy beds, whilst the subdued tumult around directed my attention to the ground, and I there observed the arid rock compelled to yield nutriment to the dry moss, whilst the heath flourished upon the barren sands below me, all this displayed to me the inner warmth which animates all nature, and filled and glowed within my heart. I felt myself exalted by this overflowing fulness to the perception of the Godhead, and the glorious forms of an infinite universe became visible to my soul! Stupendous mountains encompassed me, abysses yawned at my feet, and cataracts fell headlong down before me; impetuous rivers rolled through the plain, and rocks and mountains resounded from afar. In the depths of the earth I saw innumerable powers in motion, and multiplying to infinity; whilst upon its surface, and beneath the heavens, there teemed ten thousand varieties of living creatures. Everything around is alive with an infinite number of forms; while mankind fly for security to their petty houses, from the shelter of which they rule in their imaginations over the wide-extended universe. Poor fool! in whose petty estimation all things are little. From the inaccessible mountains, across the desert which no mortal foot has trod, far as the confines of the unknown ocean, breathes the spirit of the eternal Creator; and every atom to which he has given existence finds favour in his sight. Ah, how often at that time has the flight of a bird, soaring above my head, inspired me with the desire of being transported to the shores of the immeasurable

waters, there to quaff the pleasures of life from the foaming goblet of the Infinite, and to partake, if but for a moment even, with the confined powers of my soul, the beatitude of that Creator who accomplishes all things in himself, and through himself!

My dear friend, the bare recollection of those hours still consoles me. Even this effort to recall those ineffable sensations, and give them utterance, exalts my soul above itself, and makes me doubly feel the intensity of my present anguish.

It is as if a curtain had been drawn from before my eyes, and, instead of prospects of eternal life, the abyss of an ever open grave yawned before me. Can we say of anything that it exists when all passes away, when time, with the speed of a storm, carries all things onward,—and our transitory existence, hurried along by the torrent, is either swallowed up by the waves or dashed against the rocks? There is not a moment but preys upon you,—and upon all around you, not a moment in which you do not yourself become a destroyer. The most innocent walk deprives of life thousands of poor insects: one step destroys the fabric of the industrious ant, and converts a little world into chaos. No: it is not the great and rare calamities of the world, the floods which sweep away whole villages, the earthquakes which swallow up our towns, that affect me. My heart is wasted by the thought of that destructive power which lies concealed in every part of universal nature. Nature has formed nothing that does not consume itself, and every object near it: so that, surrounded by earth and air, and all the active powers, I wander on my way with aching heart; and the universe is to me a fearful monster, for ever devouring its own offspring.

AUGUST 21.

In vain do I stretch out my arms toward her when I awaken in the morning from my weary slumbers. In vain do I seek for her at night in my bed, when some innocent dream has happily deceived me, and placed her near me in the fields, when I have seized her hand and covered it with countless kisses. And when I feel for her in the half confusion of sleep, with the happy sense that she is near, tears flow from my oppressed heart; and, bereft of all comfort, I weep over my future woes.

AUGUST 22.

What a misfortune, Wilhelm! My active spirits have degenerated into contented indolence. I cannot be idle, and yet I am unable to set to work. I cannot think: I have no longer any feeling for the beauties of nature, and books are distasteful to me. Once we give ourselves up, we are totally lost. Many a time and oft I wish I were a common labourer; that, awakening in the morning, I might have but one prospect, one pursuit, one hope, for the day which has dawned. I often envy Albert when I see him buried in a heap of papers and parchments, and I fancy I should be happy were I in his place. Often impressed with this feeling I have been on the point of writing to you and to the minister, for the appointment at the embassy, which you think I might obtain. I believe I might procure it. The minister has long shown a regard for me, and has frequently urged me to seek employment. It is the business of an hour only. Now and then the fable

of the horse recurs to me. Weary of liberty, he suffered himself to be saddled and bridled, and was ridden to death for his pains. I know not what to determine upon. For is not this anxiety for change the consequence of that restless spirit which would pursue me equally in every situation of life?

AUGUST 28.

If my ills would admit of any cure, they would certainly be cured here. This is my birthday, and early in the morning I received a packet from Albert. Upon opening it, I found one of the pink ribbons which Charlotte wore in her dress the first time I saw her, and which I had several times asked her to give me. With it were two volumes in duodecimo of Wetstein's "Homer," a book I had often wished for, to save me the inconvenience of carrying the large Ernestine edition with me upon my walks. You see how they anticipate my wishes, how well they understand all those little attentions of friendship, so superior to the costly presents of the great, which are humiliating. I kissed the ribbon a thousand times, and in every breath inhaled the remembrance of those happy and irrevocable days which filled me with the keenest joy. Such, Wilhelm, is our fate. I do not murmur at it: the flowers of life are but visionary. How many pass away, and leave no trace behind—how few yield any fruit—and the fruit itself, how rarely does it ripen! And yet there are flowers enough! and is it not strange, my friend, that we should suffer the little that does really ripen, to rot, decay, and perish unenjoyed? Farewell! This is a glorious summer. I often climb into the trees in Charlotte's orchard, and shake down the pears that hang on the highest branches. She stands below, and catches them as they fall.

AUGUST 30.

Unhappy being that I am! Why do I thus deceive myself? What is to come of all this wild, aimless, endless passion? I cannot pray except to her. My imagination sees nothing but her: all surrounding objects are of no account, except as they relate to her. In this dreamy state I enjoy many happy hours, till at length I feel compelled to tear myself away from her. Ah, Wilhelm, to what does not my heart often compel me! When I have spent several hours in her company, till I feel completely absorbed by her figure, her grace, the divine expression of her thoughts, my mind becomes gradually excited to the highest excess, my sight grows dim, my hearing confused, my breathing oppressed as if by the hand of a murderer, and my beating heart seeks to obtain relief for my aching senses. I am sometimes unconscious whether I really exist. If in such moments I find no sympathy, and Charlotte does not allow me to enjoy the melancholy consolation of bathing her hand with my tears, I feel compelled to tear myself from her, when I either wander through the country, climb some precipitous cliff, or force a path through the trackless thicket, where I am lacerated and torn by thorns and briers; and thence I find relief. Sometimes I lie stretched on the ground, overcome with fatigue and dying with thirst; sometimes, late in the night, when the moon shines above me, I recline against an aged tree in some sequestered forest, to rest my weary limbs, when, exhausted and

worn, I sleep till break of day. O Wilhelm! the hermit's cell, his sackcloth, and girdle of thorns would be luxury and indulgence compared with what I suffer. Adieu! I see no end to this wretchedness except the grave.

SEPTEMBER 3.

I must away. Thank you, Wilhelm, for determining my wavering purpose. For a whole fortnight I have thought of leaving her. I must away. She has returned to town, and is at the house of a friend. And then, Albert—yes, I must go.

SEPTEMBER 10.

Oh, what a night, Wilhelm! I can henceforth bear anything. I shall never see her again. Oh, why cannot I fall on your neck, and, with floods of tears and raptures, give utterance to all the passions which distract my heart! Here I sit gasping for breath, and struggling to compose myself. I wait for day, and at sunrise the horses are to be at the door.

And she is sleeping calmly, little suspecting that she has seen me for the last time. I am free. I have had the courage, in an interview of two hours' duration, not to betray my intention. And O Wilhelm, what a conversation it was!

Albert had promised to come to Charlotte in the garden immediately after supper. I was upon the terrace under the tall chestnut trees, and watched the setting sun. I saw him sink for the last time beneath this delightful valley and silent stream. I had often visited the same spot with Charlotte, and witnessed that glorious sight; and now—I was walking up and down the very avenue which was so dear to me. A secret sympathy had frequently drawn me thither before I knew Charlotte; and we were delighted when, in our early acquaintance, we discovered that we each loved the same spot, which is indeed as romantic as any that ever captivated the fancy of an artist.

From beneath the chestnut trees, there is an extensive view. But I remember that I have mentioned all this in a former letter, and have described the tall mass of beech trees at the end, and how the avenue grows darker and darker as it winds its way among them, till it ends in a gloomy recess, which has all the charm of a mysterious solitude. I still remember the strange feeling of melancholy which came over me the first time I entered that dark retreat, at bright midday. I felt some secret foreboding that it would, one day, be to me the scene of some happiness or misery.

I had spent half an hour struggling between the contending thoughts of going and returning, when I heard them coming up the terrace. I ran to meet them. I trembled as I took her hand, and kissed it. As we reached the top of the terrace, the moon rose from behind the wooded hill. We conversed on many subjects, and, without perceiving it, approached the gloomy recess. Charlotte entered, and sat down. Albert seated himself beside her. I did the same, but my agitation did not suffer me to remain long seated. I got up, and stood before her, then walked backward and forward, and sat down again. I was restless and miserable. Charlotte drew our attention to the beautiful effect of the moonlight, which threw a silver hue over the terrace in front of us, beyond the beech trees. It was a glorious sight, and was rendered more striking by the darkness which

surrounded the spot where we were. We remained for some time silent, when Charlotte observed, "Whenever I walk by moonlight, it brings to my remembrance all my beloved and departed friends, and I am filled with thoughts of death and futurity. We shall live again, Werther!" she continued, with a firm but feeling voice; "but shall we know one another again what do you think? what do you say?"

"Charlotte," I said, as I took her hand in mine, and my eyes filled with tears, "we shall see each other again—here and hereafter we shall meet again." I could say no more. Why, Wilhelm, should she put this question to me, just at the moment when the fear of our cruel separation filled my heart?

"And oh! do those departed ones know how we are employed here? do they know when we are well and happy? do they know when we recall their memories with the fondest love? In the silent hour of evening the shade of my mother hovers around me; when seated in the midst of my children, I see them assembled near me, as they used to assemble near her; and then I raise my anxious eyes to heaven, and wish she could look down upon us, and witness how I fulfil the promise I made to her in her last moments, to be a mother to her children. With what emotion do I then exclaim, 'Pardon, dearest of mothers, pardon me, if I do not adequately supply your place! Alas! I do my utmost. They are clothed and fed; and, still better, they are loved and educated. Could you but see, sweet saint! the peace and harmony that dwells amongst us, you would glorify God with the warmest feelings of gratitude, to whom, in your last hour, you addressed such fervent prayers for our happiness.'" Thus did she express herself; but O Wilhelm! who can do justice to her language? how can cold and passionless words convey the heavenly expressions of the spirit? Albert interrupted her gently. "This affects you too deeply, my dear Charlotte. I know your soul dwells on such recollections with intense delight; but I implore—" "O Albert!" she continued, "I am sure you do not forget the evenings when we three used to sit at the little round table, when papa was absent, and the little ones had retired. You often had a good book with you, but seldom read it; the conversation of that noble being was preferable to everything,—that beautiful, bright, gentle, and yet ever-toiling woman. God alone knows how I have supplicated with tears on my nightly couch, that I might be like her."

I threw myself at her feet, and, seizing her hand, bedewed it with a thousand tears. "Charlotte!" I exclaimed, "God's blessing and your mother's spirit are upon you." "Oh! that you had known her," she said, with a warm pressure of the hand. "She was worthy of being known to you." I thought I should have fainted: never had I received praise so flattering. She continued, "And yet she was doomed to die in the flower of her youth, when her youngest child was scarcely six months old. Her illness was but short, but she was calm and resigned; and it was only for her children, especially the youngest, that she felt unhappy. When her end drew nigh, she bade me bring them to her. I obeyed. The younger ones knew nothing of their approaching loss, while the elder ones were quite overcome with grief. They stood around the bed; and she raised her feeble hands to heaven, and prayed over them; then, kissing them in turn, she dismissed them, and

said to me, 'Be you a mother to them.' I gave her my hand. 'You are promising much, my child,' she said: 'a mother's fondness and a mother's care! I have often witnessed, by your tears of gratitude, that you know what is a mother's tenderness: show it to your brothers and sisters, and be dutiful and faithful to your father as a wife; you will be his comfort.' She inquired for him. He had retired to conceal his intolerable anguish,—he was heartbroken, 'Albert, you were in the room.' She heard some one moving: she inquired who it was, and desired you to approach. She surveyed us both with a look of composure and satisfaction, expressive of her conviction that we should be happy,—happy with one another." Albert fell upon her neck, and kissed her, and exclaimed, "We are so, and we shall be so!" Even Albert, generally so tranquil, had quite lost his composure; and I was excited beyond expression.

"And such a being," She continued, "was to leave us, Werther! Great God, must we thus part with everything we hold dear in this world? Nobody felt this more acutely than the children: they cried and lamented for a long time afterward, complaining that men had carried away their dear mamma."

Charlotte rose. It aroused me; but I continued sitting, and held her hand. "Let us go," she said: "it grows late." She attempted to withdraw her hand: I held it still. "We shall see each other again," I exclaimed: "we shall recognise each other under every possible change! I am going," I continued, "going willingly; but, should I say for ever, perhaps I may not keep my word. Adieu, Charlotte; adieu, Albert. We shall meet again." "Yes: tomorrow, I think," she answered with a smile. Tomorrow! how I felt the word! Ah! she little thought, when she drew her hand away from mine. They walked down the avenue. I stood gazing after them in the moonlight. I threw myself upon the ground, and wept: I then sprang up, and ran out upon the terrace, and saw, under the shade of the linden-trees, her white dress disappearing near the garden-gate. I stretched out my arms, and she vanished.

BOOK II.

OCTOBER 20.

We arrived here yesterday. The ambassador is indisposed, and will not go out for some days. If he were less peevish and morose, all would be well. I see but too plainly that Heaven has destined me to severe trials; but courage! a light heart may bear anything. A light heart! I smile to find such a word proceeding from my pen. A little more lightheartedness would render me the happiest being under the sun. But must I despair of my talents and faculties, whilst others of far inferior abilities parade before me with the utmost self-satisfaction? Gracious Providence, to whom I owe all my powers, why didst thou not withhold some of those blessings I possess, and substitute in their place a feeling of self-confidence and contentment?

But patience! all will yet be well; for I assure you, my dear friend, you were right: since I have been obliged to associate continually with other people, and observe what they do, and how they employ themselves, I have become far better satisfied with myself. For we are so constituted by nature, that we are ever prone to compare ourselves with others; and our happiness or misery depends very much on the objects and persons around us. On this account, nothing is more dangerous than solitude: there our imagination, always disposed to rise, taking a new flight on the wings of fancy, pictures to us a chain of beings of whom we seem the most inferior. All things appear greater than they really are, and all seem superior to us. This operation of the mind is quite natural: we so continually feel our own imperfections, and fancy we perceive in others the qualities we do not possess, attributing to them also all that we enjoy ourselves, that by this process we form the idea of a perfect, happy man,—a man, however, who only exists in our own imagination.

But when, in spite of weakness and disappointments, we set to work in earnest, and persevere steadily, we often find, that, though obliged continually to tack, we make more way than others who have the assistance of wind and tide; and, in truth, there can be no greater satisfaction than to keep pace with others or outstrip them in the race.

November 26.

I begin to find my situation here more tolerable, considering all circumstances. I find a great advantage in being much occupied; and the number of persons I meet, and their different pursuits, create a varied entertainment for me. I have formed the acquaintance of the Count C—and I esteem him more and more every day. He is a man of strong understanding and great discernment; but, though he sees farther than other people, he is not on that account cold in his manner, but capable of inspiring and returning the warmest affection. He appeared interested in me on one occasion, when I had to transact some business with him. He perceived, at the first word, that we understood each other, and that he could converse with me in a different tone from what he used with others. I cannot sufficiently esteem his frank and open kindness to me. It is the greatest and most genuine of pleasures to observe a great mind in sympathy with our own.

DECEMBER 24.

As I anticipated, the ambassador occasions me infinite annoyance. He is the most punctilious blockhead under heaven. He does everything step by step, with the trifling minuteness of an old woman; and he is a man whom it is impossible to please, because he is never pleased with himself. I like to do business regularly and cheerfully, and, when it is finished, to leave it. But he constantly returns my papers to me, saying, "They will do," but recommending me to look over them again, as "one may always improve by using a better word or a more appropriate particle." I then lose all patience, and wish myself at the devil's. Not a conjunction, not an adverb, must be omitted: he has a deadly antipathy to all those transpositions of which I am so fond; and, if the music of our periods is not tuned to the established, official key, he cannot comprehend our meaning. It is deplorable to be connected with such a fellow.

My acquaintance with the Count C—is the only compensation for such an evil. He told me frankly, the other day, that he was much displeased with the difficulties and delays of the ambassador; that people like him are obstacles, both to themselves and to others. "But," added he, "one must submit, like a traveller who has to ascend a mountain: if the mountain was not there, the road would be both shorter and pleasanter; but there it is, and he must get over it."

The old man perceives the count's partiality for me: this annoys him, and, he seizes every opportunity to depreciate the count in my hearing. I naturally defend him, and that only makes matters worse. Yesterday he made me indignant, for he also alluded to me. "The count," he said, "is a man of the world, and a good man of business: his style is good, and he writes with facility; but, like other geniuses, he has no solid learning." He looked at me with an expression that seemed to ask if I felt the blow. But it did not produce the desired effect: I despise a man who can think and act in such a manner. However, I made a stand, and answered with not a little warmth. The count, I said, was a man entitled to respect, alike for his character and his acquirements. I had never met a person whose mind was stored with more useful and extensive knowledge,—who had, in fact, mastered such an infinite variety of subjects, and who yet retained all his activity for the details of ordinary business. This was altogether beyond his comprehension; and I took my leave, lest my anger should be too highly excited by some new absurdity of his.

And you are to blame for all this, you who persuaded me to bend my neck to this yoke by preaching a life of activity to me. If the man who plants vegetables, and carries his corn to town on market-days, is not more usefully employed than I am, then let me work ten years longer at the galleys to which I am now chained.

Oh, the brilliant wretchedness, the weariness, that one is doomed to witness among the silly people whom we meet in society here! The ambition of rank! How they watch, how they toil, to gain precedence! What poor and contemptible passions are displayed in their utter nakedness! We have a woman here, for example, who never ceases to entertain the company with accounts of her family and her estates. Any stranger would

consider her a silly being, whose head was turned by her pretensions to rank and property; but she is in reality even more ridiculous, the daughter of a mere magistrate's clerk from this neighbourhood. I cannot understand how human beings can so debase themselves.

Every day I observe more and more the folly of judging of others by ourselves; and I have so much trouble with myself, and my own heart is in such constant agitation, that I am well content to let others pursue their own course, if they only allow me the same privilege.

What provokes me most is the unhappy extent to which distinctions of rank are carried. I know perfectly well how necessary are inequalities of condition, and I am sensible of the advantages I myself derive therefrom; but I would not have these institutions prove a barrier to the small chance of happiness which I may enjoy on this earth.

I have lately become acquainted with a Miss B—, a very agreeable girl, who has retained her natural manners in the midst of artificial life. Our first conversation pleased us both equally; and, at taking leave, I requested permission to visit her. She consented in so obliging a manner, that I waited with impatience for the arrival of the happy moment. She is not a native of this place, but resides here with her aunt. The countenance of the old lady is not prepossessing. I paid her much attention, addressing the greater part of my conversation to her; and, in less than half an hour, I discovered what her niece subsequently acknowledged to me, that her aged aunt, having but a small fortune, and a still smaller share of understanding, enjoys no satisfaction except in the pedigree of her ancestors, no protection save in her noble birth, and no enjoyment but in looking from her castle over the heads of the humble citizens. She was, no doubt, handsome in her youth, and in her early years probably trifled away her time in rendering many a poor youth the sport of her caprice: in her riper years she has submitted to the yoke of a veteran officer, who, in return for her person and her small independence, has spent with her what we may designate her age of brass. He is dead; and she is now a widow, and deserted. She spends her iron age alone, and would not be approached, except for the loveliness of her niece.

JANUARY 8, 1772.

What beings are men, whose whole thoughts are occupied with form and ceremony, who for years together devote their mental and physical exertions to the task of advancing themselves but one step, and endeavouring to occupy a higher place at the table. Not that such persons would otherwise want employment: on the contrary, they give themselves much trouble by neglecting important business for such petty trifles. Last week a question of precedence arose at a sledging-party, and all our amusement was spoiled.

The silly creatures cannot see that it is not place which constitutes real greatness, since the man who occupies the first place but seldom plays the principal part. How

many kings are governed by their ministers—how many ministers by their secretaries? Who, in such cases, is really the chief? He, as it seems to me, who can see through the others, and possesses strength or skill enough to make their power or passions subservient to the execution of his own designs.

JANUARY 20.

I must write to you from this place, my dear Charlotte, from a small room in a country inn, where I have taken shelter from a severe storm. During my whole residence in that wretched place D—, where I lived amongst strangers,—strangers, indeed, to this heart,—I never at any time felt the smallest inclination to correspond with you; but in this cottage, in this retirement, in this solitude, with the snow and hail beating against my lattice-pane, you are my first thought. The instant I entered, your figure rose up before me, and the remembrance! O my Charlotte, the sacred, tender remembrance! Gracious Heaven! restore to me the happy moment of our first acquaintance.

Could you but see me, my dear Charlotte, in the whirl of dissipation,—how my senses are dried up, but my heart is at no time full. I enjoy no single moment of happiness: all is vain—nothing touches me. I stand, as it were, before the raree-show: I see the little puppets move, and I ask whether it is not an optical illusion. I am amused with these puppets, or, rather, I am myself one of them: but, when I sometimes grasp my neighbour's hand, I feel that it is not natural; and I withdraw mine with a shudder. In the evening I say I will enjoy the next morning's sunrise, and yet I remain in bed: in the day I promise to ramble by moonlight; and I, nevertheless, remain at home. I know not why I rise, nor why I go to sleep.

The leaven which animated my existence is gone: the charm which cheered me in the gloom of night, and aroused me from my morning slumbers, is for ever fled.

I have found but one being here to interest me, a Miss B—. She resembles you, my dear Charlotte, if any one can possibly resemble you. "Ah!" you will say, "he has learned how to pay fine compliments." And this is partly true. I have been very agreeable lately, as it was not in my power to be otherwise. I have, moreover, a deal of wit: and the ladies say that no one understands flattery better, or falsehoods you will add; since the one accomplishment invariably accompanies the other. But I must tell you of Miss B—. She has abundance of soul, which flashes from her deep blue eyes. Her rank is a torment to her, and satisfies no one desire of her heart. She would gladly retire from this whirl of fashion, and we often picture to ourselves a life of undisturbed happiness in distant scenes of rural retirement: and then we speak of you, my dear Charlotte; for she