

# Goethe; or, the Writer

I find a provision in the constitution of the world for the writer, or secretary, who is to report the doings of the miraculous spirit of life that everywhere throbs and works. His office is a reception of the facts into the mind, and then a selection of the eminent and characteristic experiences.

Nature will be reported. All things are engaged in writing their history. The planet, the pebble, goes attended by its shadow. The rolling rock leaves its scratches on the mountain; the river its channel in the soil; the animal its bones in the stratum; the fern and leaf their modest epitaph in the coal. The falling drop makes its sculpture in the sand or the stone. Not a foot steps into the snow or along the ground, but prints, in characters more or less lasting, a map of its march. Every act of the man inscribes itself in the memories of his fellows and in his own manners and face. The air is full of sounds; the sky, of tokens; the round is all memoranda and signatures, and every object covered over with hints which speak to the intelligent.

In nature, this self-registration is incessant, and the narrative is the print of the seal. It neither exceeds nor comes short of the fact. But nature strives upward; and, in man, the report is something more than print of the seal. It is a new and finer form of the original. The record is alive, as that which it recorded is alive. In man, the memory is a kind of looking-glass, which, having received the images of surrounding objects, is touched with life, and disposes them in a new order. The facts do not lie in it inert; but some subside and others shine; so that we soon have a new picture, composed of the eminent experiences. The man cooperates. He loves to communicate; and that which is for him to say lies as a load on his heart until it is delivered. But, besides the universal joy of conversation, some men are born with exalted powers for this second creation. Men are born to write. The gardener saves every slip and seed and peach-stone: his vocation is to be a planter of plants. Not less does the writer attend his affair. Whatever he beholds or experiences, comes to him as a model and sits for its picture. He counts it all nonsense that they say, that some things are undescribable. He believes that all that can be thought can be written, first or last; and he would report the Holy Ghost, or attempt it. Nothing so broad, so subtle, or so dear, but comes therefore commended to his pen, and he will write. In his eyes, a man is the faculty of reporting, and the universe is the possibility of being reported. In conversation, in calamity, he finds new materials; as our German poet said, "Some god gave me the power to paint what I suffer." He draws his rents from rage and pain. By acting rashly, he buys the power of talking wisely. Vexations and a tempest of passion only fill his sail; as the good Luther writes, "When I am angry, I can pray well and preach well": and, if we knew the genesis of fine strokes of eloquence, they might recall the complaisance of Sultan Amurath, who struck off some Persian heads, that his physician, Vesalius, might see the spasms in the muscles of the neck. His failures are the preparation of his victories. A new thought or a crisis of passion apprises him that all that he has yet learned and written is exoteric,- is not the fact, but some rumor of the fact. What then? Does he throw away the pen? No; he begins again to describe in the new light which has shined on him,- if, by some means, he may yet save some true word. Nature conspires. Whatever can be thought can be spoken, and still rises for utterance, though to rude and stammering organs. If they can not compass it, it waits and works, until at last it moulds them to its perfect will and is articulated.

This striving after imitative expression, which one meets every where, is significant of the aim of nature, but is mere stenography. There are higher degrees, and nature has more splendid endowments for those whom she elects to a superior office; for the class of scholars or writers, who see connection

where the multitude see fragments, and who are impelled to exhibit the facts in order, and so to supply the axis on which the frame of things turns. Nature has dearly at heart the formation of the speculative man, or scholar. It is an end never lost sight of, and is prepared in the original casting of things. He is no permissive or accidental appearance, but an organic agent, one of the estates of the realm, provided and prepared from of old and from everlasting, in the knitting and contexture of things. Presentiments, impulses, cheer him. There is a certain heat in the breast which attends the perception of a primary truth, which is the shining of the spiritual sun down into the shaft of the mine. Every thought which dawns on the mine, in the moment of its emergence announces its own rank,- whether it is some whimsy, or whether it is a power.

If he have his incitements, there is, on the other side, invitation and need enough of his gift. Society has, at all times, the same want, namely of one sane man with adequate powers of expression to hold up each object of monomania in its right relations. The ambitious and mercenary bring their last new mumbo-jumbo, whether tariff, Texas, railroad, Romanism, mesmerism, or California; and, by detaching the object from its relations, easily succeed in making it seen in a glare; and a multitude go mad about it, and they are not to be reproved or cured by the opposite multitude who are kept from this particular insanity by an equal frenzy on another crotchet. But let one man have the comprehensive eye that can replace this isolated prodigy in its right neighborhood and bearings,- the illusion vanishes, and the returning reason of the community thanks the reason of the monitor.

The scholar is the man of the ages, but he must also wish with other men to stand well with his contemporaries. But there is a certain ridicule, among superficial people, thrown on the scholars or clerisy, which is of no import unless the scholar heed it. In this country, the emphasis of conversation and of public opinion commends the practical man; and the solid portion of the community is named with significant respect in every circle. Our people are of Bonaparte's opinion concerning ideologists. Ideas are subversive of social order and comfort, and at last make a fool of the possessor. It is believed, the ordering a cargo of goods from New York to Smyrna, or the running up and down to procure a company of subscribers to set a-going five or ten thousand spindles, or the negotiations of a caucus and the practising on the prejudices and facility of country-people to secure their votes in November,- is practical and commendable.

If I were to compare action of a much higher strain with a life of contemplation, I should not venture to pronounce with much confidence in favor of the former. Mankind have such a deep stake in inward illumination, that there is much to be said by the hermit or monk in defence of his life of thought and prayer. A certain partiality, a headiness and loss of balance, is the tax which all action must pay. Act, if you like,- but you do it at your peril. Men's actions are too strong for them. Show me a man who has acted and who has not been the victim and slave of his action. What they have done commits and enforces them to do the same again. The first act, which was to be an experiment, becomes a sacrament. The fiery reformer embodies his aspiration in some rite or covenant, and he and his friends cleave to the form and lose the aspiration. The Quaker has established Quakerism, the Shaker has established his monastery and his dance; and although each prates of spirit, there is no spirit, but repetition, which is anti-spiritual. But where are his new things of to-day? In actions of enthusiasm this drawback appears, but in those lower activities, which have no higher aim than to make us more comfortable and more cowardly; in actions of cunning, actions that steal and lie, actions that divorce the speculative from the practical faculty and put a ban on reason and sentiment, there is nothing else but drawback and negation. The Hindoos write in their sacred books, "Children only, and not the learned, speak of the speculative and the practical faculties as two. They are but one, for both obtain the selfsame end, and the place which is gained by the followers of the one is gained by the followers

of the other. That man seeth, who seeth that the speculative and the practical doctrines are one." For great action must draw on the spiritual nature. The measure of action is the sentiment from which it proceeds. The greatest action may easily be one of the most private circumstance.

This disparagement will not come from the leaders, but from inferior persons. The robust gentlemen who stand at the head of the practical class, share the ideas of the time, and have too much sympathy with the speculative class. It is not from men excellent in any kind that disparagement of any other is to be looked for. With such, Talleyrand's question is ever the main one; not, is he rich? is he committed? is he well-meaning? has he this or that faculty? is he of the movement? is he of the establishment?- but, Is he anybody? does he stand for something? He must be good of his kind. That is all that Talleyrand, all that State-street, all that the common-sense of mankind asks. Be real and admirable, not as we know, but as you know. Able men do not care in what kind a man is able, so only that he is able. A master likes a master, and does not stipulate whether it be orator, artist, craftsman, or king.

Society has really no graver interest than the well-being of the literary class. And it is not to be denied that men are cordial in their recognition and welcome of intellectual accomplishments. Still the writer does not stand with us on any commanding ground. I think this to be his own fault. A pound passes for a pound. There have been times when he was a sacred person: he wrote Bibles, the first hymns, the codes, the epics, tragic songs, Sibylline verses, Chaldean oracles, Laconian sentences, inscribed on temple walls. Every word was true, and woke the nations to new life. He wrote without levity and without choice. Every word was carved before his eyes into the earth and the sky; and the sun and stars were only letters of the same purport and of no more necessity. But how can he be honored when he does not honor himself; when he loses himself in a crowd; when he is no longer the lawgiver, but the sycophant, ducking to the giddy opinion of a reckless public; when he must sustain with shameless advocacy some bad government, or must bark, all the year round, in opposition; or write conventional criticism, or profligate novels, or at any rate write without thought, and without recurrence by day and by night to the sources of inspiration?

Some reply to these questions may be furnished by looking over the list of men of literary genius in our age. Among these no more instructive name occurs than that of Goethe to represent the powers and duties of the scholar or writer.

I described Bonaparte as a representative of the popular external life and aims of the nineteenth century. Its other half, its poet, is Goethe, a man quite domesticated in the century, breathing its air, enjoying its fruits, impossible at any earlier time, and taking away, by his colossal parts, the reproach of weakness which but for him would lie on the intellectual works of the period. He appears at a time when a general culture has spread itself and has smoothed down all sharp individual traits; when, in the absence of heroic characters, a social comfort and cooperation have come in. There is no poet, but scores of poetic writers; no Columbus, but hundreds of post-captains, with transit-telescope, barometer and concentrated soup and pemmican; no Demosthenes, no Chatham, but any number of clever parliamentary and forensic debaters; no prophet or saint, but colleges of divinity; no learned man, but learned societies, a cheap press, reading-rooms and book-clubs without number. There was never such a miscellany of facts. The world extends itself like American trade. We conceive Greek or Roman life, life in the Middle Ages, to be a simple and comprehensible affair; but modern life to respect a multitude of things, which is distracting.

Goethe was the philosopher of this multiplicity; hundred-handed, Argus-eyed, able and happy to cope with this rolling miscellany of facts and sciences, and by his own versatility to dispose of them with ease; a manly mind, unembarrassed by the variety of coats of convention with which life had got encrusted, easily able by his subtlety to pierce these and to draw his strength from nature, with which he lived in full communion. What is strange too, he lived in a small town, in a petty state, in a defeated state, and in a time when Germany played no such leading part in the world's affairs as to swell the bosom of her sons with any metropolitan pride, such as might have cheered a French, or English, or once, a Roman or Attic genius. Yet there is no trace of provincial limitation in his muse. He is not a debtor to his position, but was born with a free and controlling genius.

The Helena, or the second part of Faust, is a philosophy of literature set in poetry; the work of one who found himself the master of histories, mythologies, philosophies, sciences and national literatures, in the encyclopaedical manner in which modern erudition, with its international intercourse of the whole earth's population, researches into Indian, Etruscan and all Cyclopean arts; geology, chemistry, astronomy; and every one of these kingdoms assuming a certain aerial and poetic character, by reason of the multitude. One looks at a king with reverence; but if one should chance to be at a congress of kings, the eye would take liberties with the peculiarities of each. These are not wild miraculous songs, but elaborate forms to which the poet has confided the results of eighty years of observation. This reflective and critical wisdom makes the poem more truly the flower of this time. It dates itself. Still, he is a poet,- poet of a prouder laurel than any contemporary, and, under this plague of microscopes (for he seems to see out of every pore of his skin), strikes the harp with a hero's strength and grace.

The wonder of the book is its superior intelligence. In the menstruum of this man's wit, the past and the present ages, and their religions, politics and modes of thinking, are dissolved into archetypes and ideas. What new mythologies sail through his head! The Greeks said that Alexander went as far as Chaos; Goethe went, only the other day, as far; and one step farther he hazarded, and brought himself safe back.

There is a heart-cheering freedom in his speculation. The immense horizon which journeys with us lends its majesty to trifles and to matters of convenience and necessity, as to solemn and festal performances. He was the soul of his century. If that was learned, and had become, by population, compact organization and drill of parts, one great Exploring Expedition, accumulating a glut of facts and fruits too fast for any hitherto-existing savans to classify,- this man's mind had ample chambers for the distribution of all. He had a power to unite the detached atoms again by their own law. He has clothed our modern existence with poetry. Amid littleness and detail, he detected the Genius of life, the old cunning Proteus, nestling close beside us, and showed that the dulness and prose we ascribe to the age was only another of his masks:-

“His very flight is presence in disguise”:

-that he had put off a gay uniform for a fatigue dress, and was not a whit less vivacious or rich in Liverpool or the Hague than once in Rome or Antioch. He sought him in public squares and main streets, in boulevards and hotels; and, in the solidest kingdom of routine and the senses, he showed the lurking daemonic power; that, in actions of routine, a thread of mythology and fable spins itself: and this, by tracing the pedigree of every usage and practice, every institution, utensil and means, home to

its origin in the structure of man. He had an extreme impatience of conjecture and of rhetoric. "I have guesses enough of my own; if a man write a book, let him set down only what he knows." He writes in the plainest and lowest tone, omitting a great deal more than he writes, and putting ever a thing for a word. He has explained the distinction between the antique and the modern spirit and art. He has defined art, its scope and laws. He has said the best things about nature that ever were said. He treats nature as the old philosophers, as the seven wise masters did,- and, with whatever loss of French tabulation and dissection, poetry and humanity remain to us; and they have some doctoral skill. Eyes are better on the whole than telescopes or microscopes. He has contributed a key to many parts of nature, through the rare turn for unity and simplicity in his mind. Thus Goethe suggested the leading idea of modern botany, that a leaf or the eye of a leaf is the unit of botany, and that every part of a plant is only a transformed leaf to meet a new condition; and, by varying the conditions, a leaf may be converted into any other organ, and any other organ into a leaf. In like manner, in osteology, he assumed that one vertebra of the spine might be considered as the unit of the skeleton: the head was only the uttermost vertebrae transformed. "The plant goes from knot to knot, closing at last with the flower and the seed. So the tape-worm, the caterpillar, goes from knot to knot and closes with the head. Man and the higher animals are built up through the vertebrae, the powers being concentrated in the head." In optics again he rejected the artificial theory of seven colors, and considered that every color was the mixture of light and darkness in new proportions. It is really of very little consequence what topic he writes upon. He sees at every pore, and has a certain gravitation towards truth. He will realize what you say. He hates to be trifled with and to be made to say over again some old wife's fable that has had possession of men's faith these thousand years. He may as well see if it is true as another. He sifts it. I am here, he would say, to be the measure and judge of these things. Why should I take them on trust? And therefore what he says of religion, of passion, of marriage, of manners, of property, of paper-money, of periods of belief, of omens, of luck, or whatever else, refuses to be forgotten.

Take the most remarkable example that could occur of this tendency to verify every term in popular use. The Devil had played an important part in mythology in all times. Goethe would have no word that does not cover a thing. The same measure will still serve: "I have never heard of any crime which I might not have committed." So he flies at the throat of this imp. He shall be real; he shall be modern; he shall be European; he shall dress like a gentleman, and accept the manners, and walk in the streets, and be well initiated in the life of Vienna and of Heidelberg in 1820,- or he shall not exist. Accordingly, he stripped him of mythologic gear, of horns, cloven foot, harpoon tail, brimstone and blue-fire, and instead of looking in books and pictures, looked for him in his own mind, in every shade of coldness, selfishness and unbelief that, in crowds or in solitude, darkens over the human thought,- and found that the portrait gained reality and terror by every thing he added and by every thing he took away. He found that the essence of this hobgoblin which had hovered in shadow about the habitations of men ever since there were men, was pure intellect, applied,- as always there is a tendency,- to the service of the senses: and he flung into literature, in his Mephistopheles, the first organic figure that has been added for some ages, and which will remain as long as the Prometheus.

I have no design to enter into any analysis of his numerous works. They consist of translations, criticism, dramas, lyric and every other description of poems, literary journals and portraits of distinguished men. Yet I cannot omit to specify the Wilhelm Meister.

Wilhelm Meister is a novel in every sense, the first of its kind, called by its admirers the only delineation of modern society,- as if other novels, those of Scott for example, dealt with costume and condition, this with the spirit of life. It is a book over which some veil is still drawn. It is read by very intelligent persons with wonder and delight. It is preferred by some such to Hamlet, as a work of

genius. I suppose no book of this century can compare with it in its delicious sweetness, so new, so provoking to the mind, gratifying it with so many and so solid thoughts, just insights into life and manners and characters; so many good hints for the conduct of life, so many unexpected glimpses into a higher sphere, and never a trace of rhetoric or dullness. A very provoking book to the curiosity of young men of genius, but a very unsatisfactory one. Lovers of light reading, those who look in it for the entertainment they find in a romance, are disappointed. On the other hand, those who begin it with the higher hope to read in it a worthy history of genius, and the just award of the laurel to its toils and denials, have also reason to complain. We had an English romance here, not long ago, professing to embody the hope of a new age and to unfold the political hope of the party called "Young England,"- in which the only reward of virtue is a seat in Parliament and a peerage. Goethe's romance has a conclusion as lame and immoral. George Sand, in *Consuelo* and its continuation, has sketched a truer and more dignified picture. In the progress of the story, the characters of the hero and heroine expand at a rate that shivers the porcelain chess-table of aristocratic convention: they quit the society and habits of their rank, they lose their wealth, they become the servants of great ideas and of the most generous social ends; until at last the hero, who is the centre and fountain of an association for the rendering of the noblest benefits to the human race, no longer answers to his own titled name; it sounds foreign and remote in his ear. "I am only man," he says; "I breathe and work for man"; and this in poverty and extreme sacrifices. Goethe's hero, on the contrary, has so many weaknesses and impurities and keeps such bad company, that the sober English public, when the book was translated, were disgusted. And yet it is so crammed with wisdom, with knowledge of the world and with knowledge of laws; the persons so truly and subtly drawn, and with such few strokes, and not a word too much,- the book remains ever so new and unexhausted, that we must even let it go its way and be willing to get what good from it we can, assured that it has only begun its office and has millions of readers yet to serve.

The argument is the passage of a democrat to the aristocracy, using both words in their best sense. And this passage is not made in any mean or creeping way, but through the hall door. Nature and character assist, and the rank is made real by sense and probity in the nobles. No generous youth can escape this charm of reality in the book, so that it is highly stimulating to intellect and courage.

The ardent and holy Novalis characterized the book as "thoroughly modern and prosaic; the romantic is completely levelled in it; so is the poetry of nature; the wonderful. The book treats only of the ordinary affairs of men: it is a poeticized civic and domestic story. The wonderful in it is expressly treated as fiction and enthusiastic dreaming":- and yet, what is also characteristic, Novalis soon returned to this book, and it remained his favorite reading to the end of his life.

What distinguishes Goethe for French and English readers is a property which he shares with his nation,- a habitual reference to interior truth. In England and in America there is a respect for talent; and, if it is exerted in support of any ascertained or intelligible interest or party, or in regular opposition to any, the public is satisfied. In France there is even a greater delight in intellectual brilliancy for its own sake. And in all these countries, men of talent write from talent. It is enough if the understanding is occupied, the taste propitiated,- so many columns, so many hours, filled in a lively and creditable way. The German intellect wants the French sprightliness, the fine practical understanding of the English, and the American adventure; but it has a certain probity, which never rests in a superficial performance, but asks steadily, To what end? A German public asks for a controlling sincerity. Here is activity of thought; but what is it for? What does the man mean? Whence, whence all these thoughts?

Talent alone can not make a writer. There must be a man behind the book; a personality which by birth and quality is pledged to the doctrines there set forth, and which exists to see and state things so, and not otherwise; holding things because they are things. If he can not rightly express himself to-day, the same things subsist and will open themselves to-morrow. There lies the burden on his mind,- the burden of truth to be declared,- more or less understood; and it constitutes his business and calling in the world to see those facts through, and to make them known. What signifies that he trips and stammers; that his voice is harsh or hissing; that his method or his tropes are inadequate? That message will find method and imagery, articulation and melody. Though he were dumb it would speak. If not,- if there be no such God's word in the man,- what care we how adroit, how fluent, how brilliant he is?

It makes a great difference to the force of any sentence whether there be a man behind it or no. In the learned journal, in the influential newspaper, I discern no form; only some irresponsible shadow; oftener some moneyed corporation, or some dangler who hopes, in the mask and robes of his paragraph, to pass for somebody. But through every clause and part of speech of a right book I meet the eyes of the most determined of men; his force and terror inundate every word; the commas and dashes are alive; so that the writing is athletic and nimble,- can go far and live long.

In England and America, one may be an adept in the writings of a Greek or Latin poet, without any poetic taste or fire. That a man has spent years on Plato and Proclus, does not afford a presumption that he holds heroic opinions, or under-values the fashions of his town. But the German nation have the most ridiculous good faith on these subjects: the student, out of the lecture-room, still broods on the lessons; and the professor can not divest himself of the fancy that the truths of philosophy have some application to Berlin and Munich. This earnestness enables them to outsee men of much more talent. Hence almost all the valuable distinctions which are current in higher conversation have been derived to us from Germany. But whilst men distinguished for wit and learning, in England and France, adopt their study and their side with a certain levity, and are not understood to be very deeply engaged, from grounds of character, to the topic or the part they espouse,- Goethe, the head and body of the German nation, does not speak from talent, but the truth shines through: he is very wise, though his talent often veils his wisdom. However excellent his sentence is, he has somewhat better in view. It awakens my curiosity. He has the formidable independence which converse with truth gives: hear you, or forbear, his fact abides; and your interest in the writer is not confined to his story and he dismissed from memory when he has performed his task creditably, as a baker when he has left his loaf; but his work is the least part of him. The old Eternal Genius who built the world has confided himself more to this man than to any other.

I dare not say that Goethe ascended to the highest grounds from which genius has spoken. He has not worshipped the highest unity; he is incapable of a self-surrender to the moral sentiment. There are nobler strains in poetry than any he has sounded. There are writers poorer in talent, whose tone is purer, and more touches the heart. Goethe can never be dear to men. His is not even the devotion to pure truth; but to truth for the sake of culture. He has no aims less large than the conquest of universal nature, of universal truth, to be his portion: a man not to be bribed, nor deceived, nor overawed; of a stoical self-command and self-denial, and having one test for all men,- What can you teach me? All possessions are valued by him for that only; rank, privileges, health, time, Being itself.

He is the type of culture, the amateur of all arts and sciences and events; artistic, but not artist; spiritual, but not spiritualist. There is nothing he had not right to know: there is no weapon in the armory of universal genius he did not take into his hand, but with peremptory heed that he should not be for a moment prejudiced by his instruments. He lays a ray of light under every fact, and between

himself and his dearest property. From him nothing was hid, nothing withholden. The lurking daemons sat to him, and the saint who saw the daemons; and the metaphysical elements took form. "Piety itself is no aim, but only a means whereby through purest inward peace we may attain to highest culture." And his penetration of every secret of the fine arts will make Goethe still more statuesque. His affections help him, like women employed by Cicero to worm out the secret of conspirators. Enmities he has none. Enemy of him you may be, - if so you shall teach him aught which your good-will can not, were it only what experience will accrue from your ruin. Enemy and welcome, but enemy on high terms. He can not hate anybody; his time is worth too much. Temperamental antagonisms may be suffered, but like feuds of emperors, who fight dignifiedly across kingdoms.

His autobiography, under the title of *Poetry and Truth out of my Life*, is the expression of the idea now familiar to the world through the German mind, but a novelty to England, Old and New, when that book appeared - that a man exists for culture; not for what he can accomplish, but for what can be accomplished in him. The reaction of things on the man is the only noteworthy result. An intellectual man can see himself as a third person; therefore his faults and delusions interest him equally with his successes. Though he wishes to prosper in affairs, he wishes more to know the history and destiny of man; whilst the clouds of egotists drifting about him are only interested in a low success.

This idea reigns in the *Dichtung und Wahrheit* and directs the selection of the incidents; and nowise the external importance of events, the rank of the personages, or the bulk of incomes. Of course the book affords slender materials for what would be reckoned with us a *Life of Goethe*; - few dates, no correspondence, no details of offices or employments, no light on his marriage; and a period of ten years, that should be the most active in his life, after his settlement at Weimar, is sunk in silence. Meantime certain love affairs that came to nothing, as people say, have the strangest importance: he crowds us with details: - certain whimsical opinions, cosmogonies and religions of his own invention, and especially his relations to remarkable minds and to critical epochs of thought: - these he magnifies. His *Daily and Yearly Journal*, his *Italian Travels*, his *Campaign in France* and the historical part of his *Theory of Colors*, have the same interest. In the last, he rapidly notices Kepler, Roger Bacon, Galileo, Newton, Voltaire, etc.; and the charm of this portion of the book consists in the simplest statement of the relation betwixt these grandees of European scientific history and himself; the mere drawing of the lines from Goethe to Kepler, from Goethe to Bacon, from Goethe to Newton. The drawing of the line is, for the time and person, a solution of the formidable problem, and gives pleasure when Iphigenia and Faust do not, without any cost of invention comparable to that of Iphigenia and Faust.

This lawgiver of art is not an artist. Was it that he knew too much, that his sight was microscopic and interfered with the just perspective, the seeing of the whole? He is fragmentary; a writer of occasional poems and of an encyclopaedia of sentences. When he sits down to write a drama or a tale, he collects and sorts his observations from a hundred sides, and combines them into the body as fitly as he can. A great deal refuses to incorporate: this he adds loosely as letters of the parties, leaves from their journals, or the like. A great deal still is left that will not find any place. This the bookbinder alone can give any cohesion to; and hence, notwithstanding the looseness of many of his works, we have volumes of detached paragraphs, aphorisms, Xenien, etc.

I suppose the worldly tone of his tales grew out of the calculations of self-culture. It was the infirmity of an admirable scholar, who loved the world out of gratitude; who knew where libraries, galleries, architecture, laboratories, savans and leisure were to be had, and who did not quite trust the compensations of poverty and nakedness. Socrates loved Athens; Montaigne, Paris; and Madame de Stael said she was only vulnerable on that side (namely, of Paris). It has its favorable aspect. All the



geniuses are usually so ill-assorted and sickly that one is ever wishing them somewhere else. We seldom see anybody who is not uneasy or afraid to live. There is a slight blush of shame on the cheek of good men and aspiring men, and a spice of caricature. But this man was entirely at home and happy in his century and the world. None was so fit to live, or more heartily enjoyed the game. In this aim of culture, which is the genius of his works, is their power. The idea of absolute, eternal truth, without reference to my own enlargement by it, is higher. The surrender to the torrent of poetic inspiration is higher; but compared with any motives on which books are written in England and America, this is very truth, and has the power to inspire which belongs to truth. Thus has he brought back to a book some of its ancient might and dignity.

Goethe, coming into an over-civilized time and country, when original talent was oppressed under the load of books and mechanical auxiliaries and the distracting variety of claims, taught men how to dispose of this mountainous miscellany and make it subservient. I join Napoleon with him, as being both representatives of the impatience and reaction of nature against the morgue of conventions,- two stern realists, who, with their scholars, have severally set the axe at the root of the tree of cant and seeming, for this time and for all time. This cheerful laborer, with no external popularity or provocation, drawing his motive and his plan from his own breast, tasked himself with stints for a giant, and without relaxation or rest, except by alternating his pursuits, worked on for eighty years with the steadiness of his first zeal.

It is the last lesson of modern science that the highest simplicity of structure is produced, not by few elements, but by the highest complexity. Man is the most composite of all creatures; the wheel-insect, volvox globator, is at the other extreme. We shall learn to draw rents and revenues from the immense patrimony of the old and the recent ages. Goethe teaches courage, and the equivalence of all times; that the disadvantages of any epoch exist only to the faint-hearted. Genius hovers with his sunshine and music close by the darkest and deafest eras. No mortgage, no attainder, will hold on men or hours. The world is young: the former great men call to us affectionately. We too must write Bibles, to unite again the heavens and the earthly world. The secret of genius is to suffer no fiction to exist for us; to realize all that we know; in the high refinement of modern life, in arts, in sciences, in books, in men, to exact good faith, reality and a purpose; and first, last, midst and without end, to honor every truth by use.

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