

JOHANN WOLFGANG GOETHE

WILHELM MEISTER'S
APPRENTICESHIP AND
TRAVELS, VOL. 1 (OF 2)

Иоганн Вольфганг Гёте

**Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship
and Travels, Vol. I (of 2)**

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Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship and Travels, Vol. I (of 2)

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

The play was late in breaking up: old Barbara went more than once to the window, and listened for the sound of carriages. She was waiting for Mariana, her pretty mistress, who had that night, in the afterpiece, been acting the part of a young officer, to the no small delight of the public. Barbara's impatience was greater than it used to be, when she had nothing but a frugal supper to present: on this occasion Mariana was to be surprised with a packet, which Norberg, a young and wealthy merchant, had sent by the post, to show that in absence he still thought of his love.

As an old servant, as confidant, counsellor, manager, and housekeeper, Barbara assumed the privilege of opening seals; and this evening she had the less been able to restrain her curiosity, as the favor of the open-handed gallant was more a matter of anxiety with herself than with her mistress. On breaking up the packet, she had found, with unfeigned satisfaction, that it held a piece of fine muslin and some ribbons of the newest fashion, for Mariana; with a quantity of calico, two or three neckerchiefs, and a moderate *rouleau* of money, for herself. Her esteem for the absent Norberg was of course unbounded: she meditated only how she might best present him to the mind of Mariana, best bring to her recollection what she owed him, and what he had a right to expect from her fidelity and thankfulness.

The muslin, with the ribbons half unrolled, to set it off by their colors, lay like a Christmas present on the small table; the position of the lights increased the glitter of the gilt; all was in order, when the old woman heard Mariana's step on the stairs, and hastened to meet her. But what was her disappointment, when the little female officer, without deigning to regard her caresses, rushed past her with unusual speed and agitation, threw her hat and sword upon the table, and walked hastily up and down, bestowing not a look on the lights, or any portion of the apparatus.

"What ails thee, my darling?" exclaimed the astonished Barbara. "For Heaven's sake, what is the matter? Look here, my pretty child! See what a present! And who could have sent it but thy kindest of friends? Norberg has given thee the muslin to make a night-gown of; he will soon be here himself; he seems to be fonder and more generous than ever."

Barbara went to the table, that she might exhibit the memorials with which Norberg had likewise honored *her*, when Mariana, turning away from the presents, exclaimed with vehemence, "Off! off! Not a word of all this to-night. I have yielded to thee; thou hast willed it; be it so! When Norberg comes, I am his, am thine, am any one's; make of me what thou pleasest; but till then I will be my own; and, if thou hadst a thousand tongues, thou shouldst never talk me from my purpose. All, all that *is* my own will I give up to him who loves me, whom I love. No sour faces! I will abandon myself to this affection, as if it were to last forever."

The old damsel had abundance of objections and serious considerations to allege: in the progress of the dialogue, she was growing bitter and keen, when Mariana sprang at her, and seized her by the breast. The old damsel laughed aloud. "I must have a care," she cried, "that you don't get into pantaloons again, if I mean to be sure of my life. Come, doff you! The girl will beg my pardon for

the foolish things the boy is doing to me. Off with the frock. Off with them all. The dress beseems you not; it is dangerous for you, I observe; the epaulets make you too bold."

Thus speaking, she laid hands upon her mistress: Mariana pushed her off, exclaiming, "Not so fast! I expect a visit to-night."

"Visit!" rejoined Barbara: "you surely do not look for Meister, the young, soft-hearted, callow merchant's son?"

"Just for him," replied Mariana.

"Generosity appears to be growing your ruling passion," said the old woman with a grin: "you connect yourself with minors and moneyless people, as if they were the chosen of the earth. Doubtless it is charming to be worshipped as a benefactress."

"Jeer as thou pleasest. I love him! I love him! With what rapture do I now, for the first time, speak the word! *This* is the passion I have mimicked so often, when I knew not what it meant. Yes! I will throw myself about his neck: I will clasp him as if I could hold him forever. I will show him all my love, will enjoy all his in its whole extent."

"Moderate yourself," said the old dame coolly, "moderate yourself. A single word will interrupt your rapture: Norberg is coming! Coming in a fortnight! Here is the letter that arrived with the packet."

"And, though the morrow were to rob me of my friend, I would conceal it from myself and him. A fortnight! An age! Within a fortnight, what may not happen, what may not alter?"

Here Wilhelm entered. We need not say how fast she flew to meet him, with what rapture he clasped the red uniform, and pressed the beautiful wearer of it to his bosom. It is not for us to describe the blessedness of two lovers. Old Barbara went grumbling away: we shall retire with her, and leave the happy two alone.

CHAPTER II

When Wilhelm saluted his mother next morning, she informed him that his father was very greatly discontented with him, and meant to forbid him these daily visits to the playhouse. "Though I myself often go with pleasure to the theatre," she continued, "I could almost detest it entirely, when I think that our fireside-peace is broken by your excessive passion for that amusement. Your father is ever repeating, 'What is the use of it? How can any one waste his time so?'"

"He has told me this already," said Wilhelm, "and perhaps I answered him too hastily; but, for Heaven's sake, mother, is nothing, then, of use but what immediately puts money in our purse? but what procures us some property that we can lay our hands on? Had we not, for instance, room enough in the old house? and was it indispensable to build a new one? Does not my father every year expend a large part of his profit in ornamenting his chambers? Are these silk carpets, this English furniture, likewise of no use? Might we not content ourselves with worse? For my own part, I confess, these striped walls, these hundred times repeated flowers and knots and baskets and figures, produce a really disagreeable effect upon me. At best, they but remind me of the front curtain of our theatre. But what a different thing it is to sit and look at that! There, if you must wait for a while, you are always sure that it will rise at last, and disclose to you a thousand curious objects to entertain, to instruct, and to exalt you."

"But you go to excess with it," said the mother. "Your father wishes to be entertained in the evenings as well as you: besides, he thinks it diverts your attention; and, when he grows ill-humored on the subject, it is I that must bear the blame. How often have I been upbraided with that miserable puppet-show, which I was unlucky enough to provide for you at Christmas, twelve years ago! It was the first thing that put these plays into your head."

"Oh, do not blame the poor puppets! do not repent of your love and motherly care! It was the only happy hour I had enjoyed in the new empty house. I never can forget that hour; I see it still before me; I recollect how surprised I was, when, after we had got our customary presents, you made us seat ourselves before the door that leads to the other room. The door opened, but not, as formerly, to let us pass and repass: the entrance was occupied by an unexpected show. Within it rose a porch, concealed by a mysterious curtain. All of us were standing at a distance: our eagerness to see what glittering or jingling article lay hid behind the half-transparent veil was mounting higher and higher, when you bade us each sit down upon his stool, and wait with patience.

"At length all of us were seated and silent: a whistle gave the signal; the curtain rolled aloft, and showed us the interior of the temple, painted in deep-red colors. The high-priest Samuel appeared with Jonathan, and their strange alternating voices seemed to me the most striking thing on earth. Shortly after entered Saul, overwhelmed with confusion at the impertinence of that heavy-limbed warrior, who had defied him and all his people. But how glad was I when the little dapper son of Jesse, with his crook and shepherd's pouch and sling, came hopping forth, and said, 'Dread king and sovereign lord, let no one's heart sink down because of this: if your Majesty will grant me leave, I will go out to battle with this blustering giant!' Here ended the first act, leaving the spectators more curious than ever to see what further would happen; each praying that the music might soon be done. At last the curtain rose again. David devoted the flesh of the monster to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field: the Philistine scorned and bullied him, stamped mightily with both his feet, and at length fell like a mass of clay, affording a splendid termination to the piece. And then the virgins sang, 'Saul hath slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands!' The giant's head was borne before his little victor, who received the king's beautiful daughter to wife. Yet withal, I remember, I was vexed at the dwarfish stature of this lucky prince; for the great Goliath and the small David had both been formed, according to the common notion, with a due regard to their figures and proportions.

I pray you, mother, tell me what has now become of those puppets? I promised to show them to a friend, whom I was lately entertaining with a history of all this child's work."

"I can easily conceive," said the mother, "how these things should stick so firmly in your mind: I well remember what an interest you took in them, – how you stole the little book from me, and learned the whole piece by heart. I first noticed it one evening when you had made a Goliath and a David of wax: you set them both to declaim against each other, and at length gave a deadly stab to the giant, fixing his shapeless head, stuck upon a large pin with a wax handle, in little David's hand. I then felt such a motherly contentment at your fine recitation and good memory, that I resolved to give you up the whole wooden troop to your own disposal. I did not then foresee that it would cause me so many heavy hours."

"Do not repent of it," said Wilhelm: "this little sport has often made us happy." So saying, he got the keys, made haste to find the puppets, and, for a moment, was transported back into those times when they almost seemed to him alive, when he felt as if he himself could give them life by the cunning of his voice and the movements of his hands. He took them to his room, and locked them up with care.

CHAPTER III

If the first love is indeed, as I hear it everywhere maintained to be, the most delicious feeling which the heart of man, before it or after, can experience, then our hero must be reckoned doubly happy, as permitted to enjoy the pleasure of this chosen period in all its fulness. Few men are so peculiarly favored: by far the greater part are led by the feelings of their youth into nothing but a school of hardship, where, after a stinted and checkered season of enjoyment, they are at length constrained to renounce their dearest wishes, and to learn forever to dispense with what once hovered before them as the highest happiness of existence.

Wilhelm's passion for that charming girl now soared aloft on the wings of imagination. After a short acquaintance, he had gained her affections: he found himself in possession of a being, whom, with all his heart, he not only loved, but honored; for she had first appeared before him in the flattering light of theatric pomp, and his passion for the stage combined itself with his earliest love for woman. His youth allowed him to enjoy rich pleasures, which the activity of his fancy exalted and maintained. The situation of his mistress, too, gave a turn to her conduct which greatly enlivened his emotions. The fear lest her lover might, before the time, detect the real state in which she stood, diffused over all her conduct an interesting tinge of anxiety and bashfulness; her attachment to the youth was deep; her very inquietude appeared but to augment her tenderness; she was the loveliest of creatures while beside him.

When the first tumult of joy had passed, and our friend began to look back upon his life and its concerns, every thing appeared new to him: his duties seemed holier, his inclinations keener, his knowledge clearer, his talents stronger, his purposes more decided. Accordingly, he soon fell upon a plan to avoid the reproaches of his father, to still the cares of his mother, and, at the same time, to enjoy Mariana's love without disturbance. Through the day he punctually transacted his business, commonly forbore attending the theatre, strove to be entertaining at table in the evening; and, when all were asleep, he glided softly out into the garden, and hastened, wrapped up in his mantle, with all the feelings of Leander in his bosom, to meet his mistress without delay.

"What is this you bring?" inquired Mariana, as he entered one evening, with a bundle, which Barbara, in hopes it might turn out to be some valuable present, fixed her eyes upon with great attention. "You will never guess," said Wilhelm.

Great was the surprise of Mariana, great the scorn of Barbara, when the napkin, being loosened, gave to view a perplexed multitude of span-long puppets. Mariana laughed aloud, as Wilhelm set himself to disentangle the confusion of the wires, and show her each figure by itself. Barbara glided sulkily out of the room.

A very little thing will entertain two lovers; and accordingly our friends, this evening, were as happy as they wished to be. The little troop was mustered: each figure was minutely examined, and laughed at, in its turn. King Saul, with his golden crown and his black velvet robe, Mariana did not like: he looked, she said, too stiff and pedantic. She was far better pleased with Jonathan, his sleek chin, his turban, his cloak of red and yellow. She soon got the art of turning him deftly on his wire: she made him bow, and repeat declarations of love. On the other hand, she refused to give the least attention to the prophet Samuel; though Wilhelm commended the pontifical breastplate, and told her that the taffeta of the cassock had been taken from a gown of his own grandmother's. David she thought too small; Goliath was too big; she held by Jonathan. She grew to manage him so featly, and at last to extend her caresses from the puppet to its owner, that, on this occasion, as on others, a silly sport became the introduction to happy hours.

Their soft, sweet dreams were broken in upon by a noise which arose on the street. Mariana called for the old dame, who, as usual, was occupied in furbishing the changeful materials of the playhouse wardrobe for the service of the play next to be acted. Barbara said the disturbance arose

from a set of jolly companions, who were just then sallying out of the Italian tavern hard by, where they had been busy discussing fresh oysters, a cargo of which had just arrived, and by no means sparing their champagne.

"Pity," Mariana said, "that we did not think of it in time: we might have had some entertainment to ourselves."

"It is not yet too late," said Wilhelm, giving Barbara a *louis-d'or*: "get us what we want, then come and take a share with us."

The old dame made speedy work: ere long a trimly covered table, with a neat collation, stood before the lovers. They made Barbara sit with them: they ate and drank, and enjoyed themselves.

On such occasions, there is never want of enough to say. Mariana soon took up little Jonathan again, and the old dame turned the conversation upon Wilhelm's favorite topic. "You were once telling us," she said, "about the first exhibition of a puppet-show on Christmas Eve: I remember you were interrupted just as the ballet was going to begin. We have now the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with the honorable company by whom those wonderful effects were brought about."

"Oh, yes!" cried Mariana: "do tell us how it all went on, and how you felt then."

"It is a fine emotion, Mariana," said the youth, "when we bethink ourselves of old times, and old, harmless errors, especially if this is at a period when we have happily gained some elevation, from which we can look around us, and survey the path we have left behind. It is so pleasant to think, with composure and satisfaction, of many obstacles, which often with painful feelings we may have regarded as invincible, – pleasant to compare what we now are with what we then were struggling to become. But I am happy above others in this matter, that I speak to you about the past, at a moment when I can also look forth into the blooming country, which we are yet to wander through together, hand in hand."

"But how was it with the ballet?" said Barbara. "I fear it did not quite go off as it should have done."

"I assure you," said Wilhelm, "it went off quite well. And certainly the strange caperings of these Moors and Moresses, these shepherds and shepherdesses, these dwarfs and dwarfesses, will never altogether leave my recollection while I live. When the curtain dropped, and the door closed, our little party skipped away, frolicking as if they had been tipsy, to their beds. For myself, however, I remember that I could not go to sleep: still wanting to have something told me on the subject, I continued putting questions to every one, and would hardly let the maid away who had brought me up to bed.

"Next morning, alas! the magic apparatus had altogether vanished; the mysterious veil was carried off; the door permitted us again to go and come through it without obstruction; the manifold adventures of the evening had passed away, and left no trace behind. My brothers and sisters were running up and down with their playthings; I alone kept gliding to and fro: it seemed to me impossible that two bare door-posts could be all that now remained, where the night before so much enchantment had been displayed. Alas! the man that seeks a lost love can hardly be unhappier than I then thought myself."

A rapturous look, which he cast on Mariana, convinced her that he was not afraid of such ever being his case.

CHAPTER IV

"My sole wish now," continued Wilhelm, "was to witness a second exhibition of the play. For this purpose I had recourse, by constant entreaties, to my mother; and she attempted in a favorable hour to persuade my father. Her labor, however, was in vain. My father's principle was, that none but enjoyments of rare occurrence were adequately prized; that neither young nor old could set a proper value on pleasures which they tasted every day.

"We might have waited long, perhaps till Christmas returned, had not the contriver and secret director of the spectacle himself felt a pleasure in repeating the display of it, partly incited, I suppose, by the wish to produce a brand-new harlequin expressly prepared for the afterpiece.

"A young officer of the artillery, a person of great gifts in all sorts of mechanical contrivance, had served my father in many essential particulars during the building of the house; for which, having been handsomely rewarded, he felt desirous of expressing his thankfulness to the family of his patron, and so made us young ones a present of this complete theatre, which, in hours of leisure, he had already carved and painted, and strung together. It was this young man, who, with the help of a servant, had himself managed the puppets, disguising his voice to pronounce their various speeches. He had no great difficulty in persuading my father, who granted, out of complaisance to a friend, what he had denied from conviction to his children. In short, our theatre was again set up, some little ones of the neighborhood were invited, and the play was again represented.

"If I had formerly experienced the delights of surprise and astonishment, I enjoyed on this second occasion the pleasure of examining and scrutinizing. *How* all this happened was my present concern. That the puppets themselves did not speak, I had already decided; that of themselves they did not move, I also conjectured; but, then, how came it all to be so pretty, and to look just as if they both spoke and moved of themselves? and where were the lights, and the people that managed the deception? These enigmas perplexed me the more, as I wished to be at the same time among the enchanters and the enchanted, at the same time to have a secret hand in the play, and to enjoy, as a looker-on, the pleasure of illusion.

"The play being finished, preparations were making for the farce: the spectators had risen, and were all busy talking together. I squeezed myself closer to the door, and heard, by the rattling within, that the people were packing up some articles. I lifted the lowest screen, and poked in my head between the posts. As our mother noticed it, she drew me back: but I had seen well enough that here friends and foes, Saul and Goliath, and whatever else their names might be, were lying quietly down together in a drawer; and thus my half-contented curiosity received a fresh excitement. To my great surprise, moreover, I had noticed the lieutenant very diligently occupied in the interior of the shrine. Henceforth, Jack-pudding, however he might clatter with his heels, could not any longer entertain me. I sank into deep meditation: my discovery made me both more satisfied, and less so, than before. After a little, it first struck me that I yet comprehended nothing; and here I was right; for the connection of the parts with each other was entirely unknown to me, and every thing depends on that."

CHAPTER V

"In well adjusted and regulated houses," continued Wilhelm, "children have a feeling not unlike what I conceive rats and mice to have: they keep a sharp eye on all crevices and holes, where they may come at any forbidden dainty; they enjoy it also with a fearful, stolen satisfaction, which forms no small part of the happiness of childhood.

"More than any other of the young ones, I was in the habit of looking out attentively, to see if I could notice any cupboard left open, or key standing in its lock. The more reverence I bore in my heart for those closed doors, on the outside of which I had to pass by for weeks and months, catching only a furtive glance when our mother now and then opened the consecrated place to take something from it, the quicker was I to make use of any opportunities which the forgetfulness of our housekeepers at times afforded me.

"Among all the doors, that of the storeroom was, of course, the one I watched most narrowly. Few of the joyful anticipations in life can equal the feeling which I used to have when my mother happened to call me, that I might help her to carry out something, whereupon I might pick up a few dried plums, either with her kind permission, or by help of my own dexterity. The accumulated treasures of this chamber took hold of my imagination by their magnitude: the very fragrance exhaled by so multifarious a collection of sweet-smelling spices produced such a craving effect on me, that I never failed, when passing near, to linger for a little, and regale myself at least on the unbolted atmosphere. At length, one Sunday morning, my mother, being hurried by the ringing of the church-bells, forgot to take this precious key with her on shutting the door, and went away, leaving all the house in a deep Sabbath stillness. No sooner had I marked this oversight than, gliding softly once or twice to and from the place, I at last approached very gingerly, opened the door, and felt myself, after a single step, in immediate contact with these manifold and long-wished-for means of happiness. I glanced over glasses, chests, and bags, and drawers and boxes, with a quick and doubtful eye, considering what I ought to choose and take; turned finally to my dear withered plums, provided myself also with a few dried apples, and completed the forage with an orange-chip. I was quietly retreating with my plunder, when some little chests, lying piled over one another, caught my attention, – the more so as I noticed a wire, with hooks at the end of it, sticking through the joint of the lid in one of them. Full of eager hopes, I opened this singular package; and judge of my emotions, when I found my glad world of heroes all sleeping safe within! I meant to pick out the topmost, and, having examined them, to pull up those below; but in this attempt the wires got very soon entangled: and I fell into a fright and flutter, more particularly as the cook just then began making some stir in the kitchen, which was close by; so that I had nothing for it but to squeeze the whole together the best way I could, and to shut the chest, having stolen from it nothing but a little written book, which happened to be lying above, and contained the whole drama of Goliath and David. With this booty I made good my retreat into the garret.

"Henceforth all my stolen hours of solitude were devoted to perusing the play, to learning it by heart, and picturing in thought how glorious it would be, could I but get the figures, to make them move along with it. In idea I myself became David and Goliath by turns. In every corner of the court-yard, of the stables, of the garden, under all kinds of circumstances, I labored to stamp the whole piece upon my mind; laid hold of all the characters, and learned their speeches by heart, most commonly, however, taking up the parts of the chief personages, and allowing all the rest to move along with them, but as satellites, across my memory. Thus day and night the heroic words of David, wherewith he challenged the braggart giant, Goliath of Gath, kept their place in my thoughts. I often muttered them to myself; while no one gave heed to me, except my father, who, frequently observing some such detached exclamation, would in secret praise the excellent memory of his boy, that had retained so much from only two recitations.

"By this means growing bolder and bolder, I one evening repeated almost the entire piece before my mother, whilst I was busied in fashioning some bits of wax into players. She observed it, questioned me hard; and I confessed.

"By good fortune, this detection happened at a time when the lieutenant had himself been expressing a wish to initiate me in the mysteries of the art. My mother forthwith gave him notice of these unexpected talents; and he now contrived to make my parents offer him a couple of chambers in the top story, which commonly stood empty, that he might accommodate the spectators in the one, while the other held his actors, the proscenium again filling up the opening of the door: my father had allowed his friend to arrange all this; himself, in the mean time, seeming only to look at the transaction, as it were, through his fingers; for his maxim was, that children should not be allowed to see the kindness which is felt towards them, lest their pretensions come to extend too far. He was of opinion, that, in the enjoyments of the young, one should assume a serious air; often interrupting the course of their festivities, to prevent their satisfaction from degenerating into excess and presumption."

CHAPTER VI

"The lieutenant now set up his theatre, and managed all the rest. During the week I readily observed that he often came into the house at unusual hours, and I soon guessed the cause. My eagerness increased immensely; for I well understood, that, till Sunday evening, I could have no share in what was going on. At last the wished-for day arrived. At five in the evening my conductor came, and took me up with him. Quivering with joy, I entered, and descried, on both sides of the framework, the puppets all hanging in order as they were to advance to view. I considered them narrowly, and mounted on the steps, which raised them above the scene, and allowed me to hover aloft over all that little world. Not without reverence did I look down between the pieces of board, and recollect what a glorious effect the whole would produce, and feel into what mighty secrets I was now admitted. We made a trial, which succeeded well.

"Next day a party of children were invited: we performed rarely; except that once, in the fire of action, I let poor Jonathan fall, and was obliged to reach down with my hand, and pick him up, – an accident which sadly marred the illusion, produced a peal of laughter, and vexed me unspeakably. My father, however, seemed to relish this misfortune not a little. Prudently shrouding up the contentment he felt at the expertness of his little boy, after the play was finished, he dwelt on the mistakes we had committed, saying it would all have been very pretty had not this or that gone wrong with us.

"I was vexed to the heart at these things, and sad for all the evening. By next morning, however, I had quite slept off my sorrow, and was blessed in the persuasion, that, but for this one fault, I had acted delightfully. The spectators also flattered me with their unanimous approval: they all maintained, that though the lieutenant, in regard to the coarse and the fine voices, had done great things, yet his declamation was in general too stiff and affected; whereas the new aspirant spoke his Jonathan and David with exquisite grace. My mother in particular commended the gallant tone in which I had challenged Goliath, and acted the modest victor before the king.

"From this time, to my extreme delight, the theatre continued open; and as the spring advanced, so that fires could be dispensed with, I passed all my hours of recreation lying in the garret, and making the puppets caper and play together. Often I invited up my comrades, or my brothers and sisters; but, when they would not come, I staid by myself not the less. My imagination brooded over that tiny world, which soon afterwards acquired another form.

"Scarcely had I once or twice exhibited the first play, for which my scenery and actors had been formed and decorated, when it ceased to give me any pleasure. On the other hand, among some of my grandfather's books, I had happened to fall in with 'The German Theatre,' and a few translations of Italian operas; in which works I soon got very deeply immersed, on each occasion first reckoning up the characters, and then, without further ceremony, proceeding to exhibit the play. King Saul, with his black velvet cloak, was therefore now obliged to personate Darius or Cato, or some other pagan hero; in which cases, it may be observed, the plays were never wholly represented, – for most part, only the fifth acts, where the cutting and stabbing lay.

"It was natural that the operas, with their manifold adventures and vicissitudes, should attract me more than any thing beside. In these compositions I found stormy seas, gods descending in chariots of cloud, and, what most of all delighted me, abundance of thunder and lightning. I did my best with pasteboard, paint, and paper: I could make night very prettily; my lightning was fearful to behold; only my thunder did not always prosper, which, however, was of less importance. In operas, moreover, I found frequent opportunities of introducing my David and Goliath, – persons whom the regular drama would hardly admit. Daily I felt more attachment for the hampered spot where I enjoyed so many pleasures; and, I must confess, the fragrance which the puppets had acquired from the storeroom added not a little to my satisfaction.

"The decorations of my theatre were now in a tolerable state of completeness. I had always had the knack of drawing with compasses, and clipping pasteboard, and coloring figures; and here it served me in good stead. But the more sorry was I, on the other hand, when, as frequently happened, my stock of actors would not suffice for representing great affairs.

"My sisters, dressing and undressing their dolls, awoke in me the project of furnishing my heroes by and by with garments which might also be put off and on. Accordingly, I slit the scraps of cloth from off their bodies, tacked the fragments together as well as possible, saved a particle of money to buy new ribbons and lace, begged many a rag of taffeta, and so formed, by degrees, a full theatrical wardrobe, in which hoop-petticoats for the ladies were especially remembered.

"My troop was now fairly provided with dresses for the most important play, and you might have expected that henceforth one exhibition would follow close upon the heels of another; but it happened with me, as it often happens with children, – they embrace wide plans, make mighty preparations, then a few trials, and the whole undertaking is abandoned. I was guilty of this fault. My greatest pleasure lay in the inventive part, and the employment of my fancy. This or that piece inspired me with interest for a few scenes of it, and immediately I set about providing new apparel suitable for the occasion. In such fluctuating operations, many parts of the primary dresses of my heroes had fallen into disorder, or totally gone out of sight; so that now the first great play could no longer be exhibited. I surrendered myself to my imagination; I rehearsed and prepared forever; built a thousand castles in the air, and failed to see that I was at the same time undermining the foundations of these little edifices."

During this recital, Mariana had called up and put in action all her courtesy for Wilhelm, that she might conceal her sleepiness. Diverting as the matter seemed on one side, it was too simple for her taste, and her lover's view of it too serious. She softly pressed her foot on his, however, and gave him all visible signs of attention and approval. She drank out of his glass: Wilhelm was convinced that no word of his history had fallen to the ground. After a short pause, he said, "It is now your turn, Mariana, to tell me what were your first childish joys. Till now we have always been too busy with the present to trouble ourselves, on either side, about our previous way of life. Let me hear, Mariana, under what circumstances you were reared: what are the first lively impressions which you still remember?"

These questions would have very much embarrassed Mariana, had not Barbara made haste to help her. "Think you," said the cunning old woman, "we have been so mindful of what happened to us long ago, that we have merry things like these to talk about, and, though we had, that we could give them such an air in talking of them?"

"As if they needed it!" cried Wilhelm. "I love this soft, good, amiable creature so much, that I regret every instant of my life which has not been spent beside her. Allow me, at least in fancy, to have a share in thy by-gone life; tell me every thing; I will tell every thing to thee! If possible, we will deceive ourselves, and win back those days that have been lost to love."

"If you require it so eagerly," replied the old dame, "we can easily content you. Only, in the first place, let us hear how your taste for the theatre gradually reached a head; how you practised, how you improved so happily, that now you can pass for a superior actor. No doubt you must have met with droll adventures in your progress. It is not worth while to go to bed now: I have still one flask in reserve; and who knows whether we shall soon all sit together so quiet and cheery again?"

Mariana cast upon her a mournful look, not noticed by Wilhelm, who proceeded with his narrative.

CHAPTER VII

"The recreations of youth, as my companions began to increase in number, interfered with this solitary, still enjoyment. I was by turns a hunter, a soldier, a knight, as our games required; and constantly I had this small advantage above the rest, that I was qualified to furnish them suitably with the necessary equipments. The swords, for example, were generally of my manufacture; I gilded and decorated the scabbards; and a secret instinct allowed me not to stop till our militia was accoutred according to the antique model. Helmets, with plumes of paper, were got ready; shields, even coats of mail, were provided; undertakings in which such of the servants as had aught of the tailor in them, and the seamstresses of the house, broke many a needle.

"A part of my comrades I had now got well equipped; by degrees, the rest were likewise furnished up, though on a thriftier plan; and so a very seemly corps at length was mustered. We marched about the court-yards and gardens, smote fearfully upon each other's shields and heads: many flaws of discord rose among us, but none that lasted.

"This diversion greatly entertained my fellows; but scarcely had it been twice or thrice repeated, when it ceased to content me. The aspect of so many harnessed figures naturally stimulated in my mind those ideas of chivalry, which for some time, since I had commenced the reading of old romances, were filling my imagination.

"Koppen's translation of 'Jerusalem Delivered' at length fell into my hands, and gave these wandering thoughts a settled direction. The whole poem, it is true, I could not read; but there were passages which I learned by heart, and the images expressed in these hovered round me. Particularly was I captivated with Clorinda, and all her deeds and bearing. The masculine womanhood, the peaceful completeness of her being, had a greater influence upon my mind, just beginning to unfold itself, than the factitious charms of Armida; though the garden of that enchantress was by no means an object of my contempt.

"But a hundred and a hundred times, while walking in the evenings on the balcony which stretches along the front of the house, and looking over the neighborhood, as the quivering splendor streamed up at the horizon from the departed sun, and the stars came forth, and night pressed forward from every cleft and hollow, and the small, shrill tone of the cricket tinkled through the solemn stillness, – a hundred and a hundred times have I repeated to myself the history of the mournful duel between Tancred and Clorinda.

"However strongly I inclined by nature to the party of the Christians, I could not help declaring for the Paynim heroine with all my heart when she engaged to set on fire the great tower of the besiegers. And when Tancred in the darkness met the supposed knight, and the strife began between them under that veil of gloom, and the two battled fiercely, I could never pronounce the words, —

"But now the sure and fated hour is nigh:
Clorinda's course is ended, – she must die;" —

without tears rushing into my eyes, which flowed plentifully when the hapless lover, plunging his sword into her breast, opened the departing warrior's helmet, recognized the lady of his heart, and, shuddering, brought water to baptize her.

"How my heart ran over when Tancred struck with his sword that tree in the enchanted wood; when blood flowed from the gash, and a voice sounded in his ears, that now again he was wounding Clorinda; that Destiny had marked him out ever unwittingly to injure what he loved beyond all else.

"The recital took such hold of my imagination, that what I had read of the poem began dimly, in my mind, to conglomerate into a whole; wherewith I was so taken that I could not but propose to have it some way represented. I meant to have Tancred and Rinaldo acted; and, for this purpose, two

coats of mail, which I had before manufactured, seemed expressly suitable. The one, formed of dark-gray paper with scales, was to serve for the solemn Tancred; the other, of silver and gilt paper, for the magnificent Rinaldo. In the vivacity of my anticipations, I told the whole project to my comrades, who felt quite charmed with it, except that they could not well comprehend how so glorious a thing could be exhibited, and, above all, exhibited by them.

"Such scruples I easily set aside. Without hesitation, I took upon me, in idea, the management of two rooms in the house of a neighboring playmate; not calculating that his venerable aunt would never give them up, or considering how a theatre could be made of them, whereof I had no settled notion, except that it was to be fixed on beams, to have side-scenes made of parted folding-screens, and on the floor a large piece of cloth. From what quarter these materials and furnishings were to come, I had not determined.

"So far as concerned the forest, we fell upon a good expedient. We betook ourselves to an old servant of one of our families, who had now become a woodman, with many entreaties that he would get us a few young firs and birches; which actually arrived more speedily than we had reason to expect. But, in the next place, great was our embarrassment as to how the piece should be got up before the trees were withered. Now was the time for prudent counsel. We had no house, no scenery, no curtain: the folding-screens were all we had.

"In this forlorn condition we again applied to the lieutenant, giving him a copious description of all the glorious things we meant to do. Little as he understood us, he was very helpful: he piled all the tables he could get in the house or neighborhood, one above the other, in a little room: to these he fixed our folding-screens, and made a back-view with green curtains, sticking up our trees along with it.

"At length the appointed evening came: the candles were lit, the maids and children were sitting in their places, the piece was to go forward, the whole corps of heroes was equipped and dressed, – when each for the first time discovered that he knew not what he was to say. In the heat of invention, being quite immersed in present difficulties, I had forgotten the necessity of each understanding what and where he was to speak; nor, in the midst of our bustling preparations, had it once occurred to the rest; each believing he could easily enact a hero, easily so speak and bear himself, as became the personage into whose world I had transplanted him. They all stood wonder-struck, asking, What was to come first? I alone, having previously got ready Tancred's part, entered *solus* on the scene, and began reciting some verses of the epic. But as the passage soon changed into narrative, and I, while speaking, was at once transformed into a third party, and the bold Godfredo, when his turn came, would not venture forth, I was at last obliged to take leave of my spectators under peals of laughter, – a disaster which cut me to the heart. Thus had our undertaking proved abortive; but the company still kept their places, still wishing to see something. All of us were dressed: I screwed my courage up, and determined, foul or fair, to give them David and Goliath. Some of my companions had before this helped me to exhibit the puppet-play; all of them had often seen it; we shared the characters among us; each promised to do his best; and one small, grinning urchin painted a black beard upon his chin, and undertook, if any *lacuna* should occur, to fill it with drollery as harlequin, – an arrangement to which, as contradicting the solemnity of the piece, I did not consent without extreme reluctance; and I vowed within myself, that, if once delivered out of this perplexity, I would think long and well before risking the exhibition of another play."

CHAPTER VIII

Mariana, overpowered with sleep, leaned upon her lover, who clasped her close to him, and proceeded in his narrative; while the old damsel prudently sipped up the remainder of the wine.

"The embarrassment," he said, "into which, along with my companions, I had fallen, by attempting to act a play that did not anywhere exist, was soon forgotten. My passion for representing each romance I read, each story that was told me, would not yield before the most unmanageable materials. I felt convinced that whatever gave delight in narrative must produce a far deeper impression when exhibited: I wanted to have every thing before my eyes, every thing brought forth upon the stage. At school, when the elements of general history were related to us, I carefully marked the passages where any person had been slain or poisoned in a singular way; and my imagination, glancing rapidly along the exposition and intrigue, hastened to the interesting fifth act. Indeed, I actually began to write some plays from the end backwards, without, however, in any of them reaching the beginning.

"At the same time, partly by inclination, partly by the counsel of my good friends, who had caught the fancy of acting plays, I read a whole wilderness of theatrical productions, as chance put them into my hands. I was still in those happy years when all things please us, when number and variety yield us abundant satisfaction. Unfortunately, too, my taste was corrupted by another circumstance. Any piece delighted me especially, in which I could hope to give delight; there were few which I did not peruse in this agreeable delusion: and my lively conceptive power enabling me to transfer myself into all the characters, seduced me to believe that I might likewise represent them all. Hence, in the distribution of the parts, I commonly selected such as did not fit me, and always more than one part, if I could by any means accomplish more.

"In their games, children can make all things out of any: a staff becomes a musket, a splinter of wood a sword, any bunch of cloth a puppet, any crevice a chamber. Upon this principle was our private theatre got up. Totally unacquainted with the measure of our strength, we undertook all: we stuck at no *quid pro quo*, and felt convinced that every one would take us for what we gave ourselves out to be. Now, however, our affairs went on so soberly and smoothly, that I have not even a curious insipidity to tell you of. We first acted all the few plays in which only males are requisite, next we travestied some of ourselves, and at last took our sisters into the concern along with us. In one or two houses, our amusement was looked upon as profitable; and company was invited to see it. Nor did our lieutenant of artillery now turn his back upon us. He showed us how we ought to make our exits and our entrances; how we should declaim, and with what attitudes and gestures. Yet generally he earned small thanks for his toil, we conceiving ourselves to be much deeper in the secrets of theatrical art than he himself was.

"We very soon began to grow tired of tragedy; for all of us believed, as we had often heard, that it was easier to write or represent a tragedy than to attain proficiency in comedy. In our first attempts, accordingly, we had felt as if exactly in our element: dignity of rank, elevation of character, we studied to approach by stiffness and affectation, and imagined that we succeeded rarely; but our happiness was not complete, except we might rave outright, might stamp with our feet, and, full of fury and despair, cast ourselves upon the ground.

"Boys and girls had not long carried on these amusements in concert, till Nature began to take her course; and our society branched itself off into sundry little love-associations, as generally more than one sort of comedy is acted in the playhouse. Behind the scenes, each happy pair pressed hands in the most tender style; they floated in blessedness, appearing to one another quite ideal persons, when so transformed and decorated; whilst, on the other hand, unlucky rivals consumed themselves with envy, and out of malice and spite worked every species of mischief.

"Our amusements, though undertaken without judgment, and carried on without instruction, were not without their use to us. We trained our memories and persons, and acquired more dexterity in speech and gesture than is usually met with at so early an age. But, for me in particular, this time was in truth an epoch: my mind turned all its faculties exclusively to the theatre; and my highest happiness was in reading, in writing, or in acting, plays.

"Meanwhile the labors of my regular teachers continued: I had been set apart for the mercantile life, and placed under the guidance of our neighbor in the counting-house; yet my spirit at this very time recoiled more forcibly than ever from all that was to bind me to a low profession. It was to the stage that I aimed at consecrating all my powers, – on the stage that I meant to seek all my happiness and satisfaction.

"I recollect a poem, which must be among my papers, where the Muse of tragic art and another female form, by which I personified Commerce, were made to strive very bravely for my most important self. The idea is common, nor do I recollect that the verses were of any worth; but you shall see it, for the sake of the fear, the abhorrence, the love and passion, which are prominent in it. How repulsively did I paint the old housewife, with the distaff in her girdle, the bunch of keys by her side, the spectacles on her nose, ever toiling, ever restless, quarrelsome, and penurious, pitiful and dissatisfied! How feelingly did I describe the condition of that poor man who has to cringe beneath her rod, and earn his slavish day's wages by the sweat of his brow!

"And how differently advanced the other! What an apparition for the overclouded mind! Formed as a queen, in her thoughts and looks she announced herself the child of freedom. The feeling of her own worth gave her dignity without pride: her apparel became her, it veiled her form without constraining it; and the rich folds repeated, like a thousand-voiced echo, the graceful movements of the goddess. What a contrast! How easy for me to decide! Nor had I forgotten the more peculiar characteristics of my Muse. Crowns and daggers, chains and masks, as my predecessors had delivered them, were here produced once more. The contention was keen: the speeches of both were palpably enough contrasted, for at fourteen years of age one usually paints the black lines and the white pretty near each other. The old lady spoke as beseemed a person that would pick up a pin from her path; the other, like one that could give away kingdoms. The warning threats of the housewife were disregarded; I turned my back upon her promised riches: disinherited and naked, I gave myself up to the Muse; she threw her golden veil over me, and called me hers.

"Could I have thought, my dearest," he exclaimed, pressing Mariana close to him, "that another, a more lovely goddess would come to encourage me in my purpose, to travel with me on my journey, the poem might have had a finer turn, a far more interesting end. Yet it is no poetry, it is truth and life that I feel in thy arms: let us prize the sweet happiness, and consciously enjoy it."

The pressure of his arms, the emotion of his elevated voice, awoke Mariana, who hastened by caresses to conceal her embarrassment; for no word of the last part of his story had reached her. It is to be wished, that in future, our hero, when recounting his favorite histories, may find more attentive hearers.

CHAPTER IX

Thus Wilhelm passed his nights in the enjoyment of confiding love, his days in the expectation of new happy hours. When desire and hope had first attracted him to Mariana, he already felt as if inspired with new life; felt as if he were beginning to be another man: he was now united to her; the contentment of his wishes had become a delicious habitude. His heart strove to ennoble the object of his passion; his spirit, to exalt with it the young creature whom he loved. In the shortest absence, thoughts of her arose within him. If she had once been necessary to him, she was now grown indispensable, now that he was bound to her by all the ties of nature. His pure soul felt that she was the half, more than the half, of himself. He was grateful and devoted without limit.

Mariana, too, succeeded in deceiving herself for a season: she shared with him the feeling of his liveliest blessedness. Alas! if but the cold hand of self-reproach had not often come across her heart! She was not secure from it, even in Wilhelm's bosom, even under the wings of his love. And when she was again left alone, again left to sink from the clouds, to which passion had exalted her, into the consciousness of her real condition, then she was indeed to be pitied. So long as she had lived among degrading perplexities, disguising from herself her real situation, or rather never thinking of it, frivolity had helped her through; the incidents she was exposed to had come upon her each by itself; satisfaction and vexation had cancelled one another; humiliation had been compensated by vanity; want by frequent, though momentary, superfluity; she could plead necessity and custom as a law or an excuse; and hitherto all painful emotions from hour to hour, and from day to day, had by these means been shaken off. But now, for some instants, the poor girl had felt herself transported to a better world; aloft, as it were, in the midst of light and joy, she had looked down upon the abject desert of her life, had felt what a miserable creature is the woman, who, inspiring desire, does not also inspire reverence and love: she regretted and repented, but found herself outwardly or inwardly no better for regret. She had nothing that she could accomplish or resolve upon. When she looked into and searched herself, all was waste and void within her soul: her heart had no place of strength or refuge. But the more sorrowful her state was, the more vehemently did her feelings cling to the man she loved: her passion for him even waxed stronger daily, as the danger of losing him came daily nearer.

Wilhelm, on the other hand, soared serenely happy in higher regions: to him also a new world had been disclosed, but a world rich in the most glorious prospects. Scarcely had the first excess of joy subsided, when all that had long been gliding dimly through his soul stood up in bright distinctness before it. She is mine! She has given herself up to me! She, the loved, the wished for, the adored, has given herself up to me in trust and faith: she shall not find me ungrateful for the gift. Standing or walking, he talked to himself; his heart constantly overflowed; with a copiousness of splendid words, he uttered to himself the loftiest emotions. He imagined that he understood the visible beckoning of Fate, reaching out its hand by Mariana to save him from the stagnant, weary, drudging life, out of which he had so often wished for deliverance. To leave his father's house and people, now appeared a light matter. He was young, and had not tried the world: his eagerness to range over its expanses, seeking fortune and contentment, was stimulated by his love. His vocation for the theatre was now clear to him: the high goal, which he saw raised before him, seemed nearer whilst he was advancing to it with Mariana's hand in his; and, in his comfortable prudence, he beheld in himself the embryo of a great actor, – the future founder of that national theatre, for which he heard so much and various sighing on every side. All that till now had slumbered in the innermost corners of his soul, at length awoke. He painted for himself a picture of his manifold ideas, in the colors of love, upon a canvas of cloud: the figures of it, indeed, ran sadly into one another; yet the whole had an air but the more brilliant on that account.

CHAPTER X

He was now in his chamber at home, ransacking his papers, making ready for departure. Whatever savored of his previous employment he threw aside, meaning at his entrance upon life to be free, even from recollections that could pain him. Works of taste alone, poets and critics, were, as acknowledged friends, placed among the chosen few. Heretofore he had given little heed to the critical authors: his desire for instruction now revived, when, again looking through his books, he found the theoretical part of them lying generally still uncut. In the full persuasion that such works were absolutely necessary, he had bought a number of them; but, with the best disposition in the world, he had not reached midway in any.

The more steadfastly, on the other hand, he had dwelt upon examples, and, in every kind that was known to him, had made attempts himself.

Werner entered the room; and, seeing his friend busied with the well-known sheets, he exclaimed, "Again among your papers? And without intending, I dare swear, to finish any one of them! You look them through and through once or twice, then throw them by, and begin something new."

"To finish is not the scholar's care: it is enough if he improves himself by practice."

"But also completes according to his best ability."

"And still the question might be asked, 'Is there not good hope of a youth, who, on commencing some unsuitable affair, soon discovers its unsuitableness, and discontinues his exertions, not choosing to spend toil and time on what never can be of any value?'"

"I know well enough it was never your concern to bring aught to a conclusion: you have always sickened on it before it came half way. When you were the director of our puppet-show, for instance, how many times were fresh clothes got ready for the dwarfish troop, fresh decorations furbished up? Now this tragedy was to be acted, now that; and at the very best you gave us some fifth act, where all was going topsy-turvy, and people cutting one another's throats."

"If you talk of those times, whose blame really was it that we ripped off from our puppets the clothes that fitted them, and were fast stitched to their bodies, and laid out money for a large and useless wardrobe? Was it not yours, my good friend, who had always some fragment of ribbon to traffic with; and skill, at the same time, to stimulate my taste, and turn it to your profit?"

Werner laughed, and continued, "I still recollect, with pleasure, how I used to extract gain from your theatrical campaigns, as army contractors do from war. When you mustered for the 'Deliverance of Jerusalem,' I, for my part, made a pretty thing of profit, like the Venetians in the corresponding case. I know of nothing in the world more rational than to turn the folly of others to our own advantage."

"Perhaps it were a nobler satisfaction to cure men of their follies."

"From the little I know of men, this might seem a vain endeavor. But something towards it is always done, when any individual man grows wise and rich; and generally this happens at the cost of others."

"Well, here is 'The Youth at the Parting of the Ways;' it has just come into my hand," said Wilhelm, drawing out a bunch of papers from the rest; "this at least is finished, whatever else it may be."

"Away with it! to the fire with it!" cried Werner. "The invention does not deserve the smallest praise: that affair has plagued me enough already, and drawn upon yourself your father's wrath. The verses may be altogether beautiful, but the meaning of them is fundamentally false. I still recollect your Commerce personified: a shrivelled, wretched-looking sibyl she was. I suppose you picked up the image of her from some miserable huckster's shop. At that time you had no true idea at all of trade; whilst I could not think of any man whose spirit was, or needed to be, more enlarged than

the spirit of a genuine merchant. What a thing is it to see the order which prevails throughout his business! By means of this he can at any time survey the general whole, without needing to perplex himself in the details. What advantages does he derive from the system of book-keeping by double entry! It is among the finest inventions of the human mind: every prudent master of a house should introduce it into his economy."

"Pardon me," said Wilhelm, smiling; "you begin by the form, as if it were the matter: you traders commonly, in your additions and balancings, forget what is the proper net result of life."

"My good friend, you do not see how form and matter are in this case one, how neither can exist without the other. Order and arrangement increase the desire to save and get. A man embarrassed in his circumstances, and conducting them imprudently, likes best to continue in the dark: he will not gladly reckon up the debtor entries he is charged with. But, on the other hand, there is nothing to a prudent manager more pleasant than daily to set before himself the sums of his growing fortune. Even a mischance, if it surprise and vex, will not affright, him; for he knows at once what gains he has acquired to cast into the other scale. I am convinced, my friend, that, if you once had a proper taste for our employments, you would grant that many faculties of the mind are called into full and vigorous play by them."

"Possibly this journey I am thinking of may bring me to other thoughts."

"Oh, certainly! Believe me, you want but to look upon some great scene of activity to make you ours forever; and, when you come back, you will joyfully enroll yourself among that class of men whose art it is to draw towards themselves a portion of the money, and materials of enjoyment, which circulate in their appointed courses through the world. Cast a look on the natural and artificial productions of all the regions of the earth; consider how they have become, one here, another there, articles of necessity for men. How pleasant and how intellectual a task is it to calculate, at any moment, what is most required, and yet is wanting, or hard to find; to procure for each easily and soon what he demands; to lay in your stock prudently beforehand, and then to enjoy the profit of every pulse in that mighty circulation. This, it appears to me, is what no man that has a head can attend to without pleasure."

Wilhelm seemed to acquiesce, and Werner continued.

"Do but visit one or two great trading-towns, one or two seaports, and see if you can withstand the impression. When you observe how many men are busied, whence so many things have come, and whither they are going, you will feel as if you, too, could gladly mingle in the business. You will then see the smallest piece of ware in its connection with the whole mercantile concern; and for that very reason you will reckon nothing paltry, because every thing augments the circulation by which you yourself are supported."

Werner had formed his solid understanding in constant intercourse with Wilhelm; he was thus accustomed to think also of *his* profession, of *his* employments, with elevation of soul; and he firmly believed that he did so with more justice than his otherwise more gifted and valued friend, who, as it seemed to him, had placed his dearest hopes, and directed all the force of his mind, upon the most imaginary objects in the world. Many a time he thought his false enthusiasm would infallibly be got the better of, and so excellent a soul be brought back to the right path. So hoping in the present instance, he continued, "The great ones of the world have taken this earth of ours to themselves; they live in the midst of splendor and superfluity. The smallest nook of the land is already a possession which none may touch or meddle with: offices and civil callings bring in little profit. Where, then, will you find more honest acquisitions, juster conquests, than those of trade? If the princes of this world hold the rivers, the highways, the havens, in their power, and take a heavy tribute from every thing that passes through them, may not we embrace with joy the opportunity of levying tax and toll, by *our* activity, on those commodities which the real or imaginary wants of men have rendered indispensable? I can promise you, if you would rightly apply your poetic view, my goddess might be represented as an invincible, victorious queen, and boldly opposed to yours. It is true, she bears the olive rather than

the sword: dagger or chain she knows not. But she, too, gives crowns to her favorites; which, without offence to yours be it said, are of true gold from the furnace and the mine, and glance with genuine pearls, which she brings up from the depths of the ocean by the hands of her unwearied servants."

This sally somewhat nettled Wilhelm; but he concealed his sentiments, remembering that Werner used to listen with composure to *his* apostrophes. Besides, he had fairness enough to be pleased at seeing each man think the best of his own peculiar craft, provided only *his*, of which he was so passionately fond, were likewise left in peace.

"And for you," exclaimed Werner, "who take so warm an interest in human concerns, what a sight will it be to behold the fortune, which accompanies bold undertakings, distributed to men before your eyes! What is more spirit-stirring than the aspect of a ship arriving from a lucky voyage, or soon returning with a rich capture? Not only the relatives, the acquaintances, and those that share with the adventurers, but every unconcerned spectator also, is excited, when he sees the joy with which the long-imprisoned shipman springs on land before his keel has wholly reached it, feeling that he is free once more, and now can trust what he has rescued from the false sea to the firm and faithful earth. It is not, my friend, in figures of arithmetic alone that gain presents itself before us. Fortune is the goddess of breathing men: to feel her favors truly, we must live and be men who toil with their living minds and bodies, and enjoy with them also."

CHAPTER XI

It is now time that we should know something more of Wilhelm's father and of Werner's, – two men of very different modes of thinking, but whose opinions so far coincided, that both regarded commerce as the noblest calling; and both were peculiarly attentive to every advantage which any kind of speculation might produce to them. Old Meister, when his father died, had turned into money a valuable collection of pictures, drawings, copper-plates, and antiquities: he had entirely rebuilt and furnished his house in the newest style, and turned his other property to profit in all possible ways. A considerable portion of it he had embarked in trade, under the direction of the elder Werner, – a man noted as an active merchant, whose speculations were commonly favored by fortune. But nothing was so much desired by Meister as to confer upon his son those qualities of which himself was destitute, and to leave his children advantages which he reckoned it of the highest importance to possess. Withal, he felt a peculiar inclination for magnificence, – for whatever catches the eye, and possesses at the same time real worth and durability. In his house he would have all things solid and massive; his stores must be copious and rich, all his plate must be heavy, the furniture of his table must be costly. On the other hand, his guests were seldom invited; for every dinner was a festival, which, both for its expense and for its inconvenience, could not often be repeated. The economy of his house went on at a settled, uniform rate; and every thing that moved or had place in it was just what yielded no one any real enjoyment.

The elder Werner, in his dark and hampered house, led quite another sort of life. The business of the day, in his narrow counting-house, at his ancient desk, once done, Werner liked to eat well, and, if possible, to drink better. Nor could he fully enjoy good things in solitude; with his family he must always see at table his friends, and any stranger that had the slightest connection with his house. His chairs were of unknown age and antic fashion, but he daily invited some to sit on them. The dainty victuals arrested the attention of his guests, and none remarked that they were served up in common ware. His cellar held no great stock of wine, but the emptied niches were usually filled by more of a superior sort.

So lived these two fathers, often meeting to take counsel about their common concerns. On the day we are speaking of, it had been determined to send Wilhelm out from home, for the despatch of some commercial affairs.

"Let him look about him in the world," said old Meister, "and at the same time carry on our business in distant parts. One cannot do a young man any greater kindness than initiate him early in the future business of his life. Your son returned so happily from his first expedition, and transacted his affairs so cleverly, that I am very curious to see how mine will do: *his* experience, I fear, will cost him dearer."

Old Meister had a high notion of his son's faculties and capabilities: he said this in the hope that his friend would contradict him, and hold up to view the admirable gifts of the youth. Here, however, he deceived himself. Old Werner, who, in practical concerns, would trust no man but such as he had proved, answered placidly, "One must try all things. We can send him on the same journey: we shall give him a paper of directions to conduct him. There are sundry debts to be gathered in, old connections are to be renewed, new ones to be made. He may likewise help the speculation I was lately talking of; for, without punctual intelligence gathered on the spot, there is little to be done in it."

"He must prepare," said Meister, "and set forth as soon as possible. Where shall we get a horse for him to suit this business?"

"We shall not seek far. The shopkeeper in H – , who owes us somewhat, but is withal a good man, has offered me a horse instead of payment. My son knows it, and tells me it is a serviceable beast."

"He may fetch it himself. Let him go with the diligence; the day after to-morrow he is back again betimes; we have his saddle-bags and letters made ready in the mean time; he can set out on Monday morning."

Wilhelm was sent for, and informed of their determination. Who so glad as he, now seeing the means of executing his purpose put into his hands, the opportunity made ready for him, without co-operation of his own! So intense was his love, so full was his conviction of the perfect rectitude of his intention to escape from the pressure of his actual mode of life, and follow a new and nobler career, that his conscience did not in the least rebel; no anxiety arose within him; he even reckoned the deception he was meditating holy. He felt certain, that, in the long-run, parents and relations would praise and bless him for this resolution: he acknowledged in these concurring circumstances the signal of a guiding fate.

How slowly the time passed with him till night, till the hour when he should again see his Mariana! He sat in his chamber, and revolved the plan of his journey; as a conjurer, or a cunning thief in durance, often draws out his feet from the fast-locked irons, to cherish in himself the conviction that his deliverance is possible, nay, nearer than short-sighted turnkeys believe.

At last the appointed hour struck: he went out, shook off all anxiety, and hastened through the silent streets. In the middle of the great square he raised his hands to the sky, feeling as if all was behind him and below him: he had freed himself from all. One moment he figured himself as in the arms of his beloved, the next as glancing with her in the splendors of the stage: he soared aloft in a world of hopes, only now and then the call of some watchman brought to his recollection that he was still wandering on the vulgar earth.

Mariana came to the stairs to meet him, – and how beautiful, how lovely! She received him in the new white *negligée*: he thought he had never seen her so charming. Thus did she handsel the gift of her absent lover in the arms of a present one; with true passion she lavished on her darling the whole treasure of those caresses which nature suggested, or art had taught: need we ask if he was happy, if he was blessed?

He disclosed to her what had passed, and showed her, in general terms, his plan and his wishes. He would try, he said, to find a residence, then come back for her: he hoped she would not refuse him her hand. The poor girl was silent: she concealed her tears, and pressed her friend against her bosom. Wilhelm, though interpreting her silence in the most favorable manner, could have wished for a distinct reply; and still more, when at last he inquired of her in the tenderest and most delicate terms, if he might not think himself a father. But to this she answered only with a sigh, with a kiss.

CHAPTER XII

Next morning Mariana awoke only to new despondency; she felt herself very solitary; she wished not to see the light of day, but staid in bed, and wept. Old Barbara sat down by her, and tried to persuade and console her; but it was not in her power so soon to heal the wounded heart. The moment was now at hand to which the poor girl had been looking forward as to the last of her life. Who could be placed in a more painful situation? The man she loved was departing; a disagreeable lover was threatening to come; and the most fearful mischiefs were to be anticipated, if the two, as might easily happen, should meet together.

"Calm yourself, my dear," said the old woman: "do not spoil your pretty eyes with crying. Is it, then, so terrible a thing to have two lovers? And though you can bestow your love but on the one, yet be thankful to the other, who, caring for you as he does, certainly deserves to be named your friend."

"My poor Wilhelm," said the other, all in tears, "had warning that a separation was at hand. A dream discovered to him what we strove so much to hide. He was sleeping calmly at my side; on a sudden I heard him mutter some unintelligible sounds: I grew frightened, and awoke him. Ah! with what love and tenderness and warmth did he clasp me! 'O Mariana!' cried he, 'what a horrid fate have you freed me from! How shall I thank you for deliverance from such torment? I dreamed that I was far from you in an unknown country, but your figure hovered before me; I saw you on a beautiful hill, the sunshine was glancing over it all; how charming you looked! But it had not lasted long, before I observed your image sinking down, sinking, sinking: I stretched out my arms towards you; they could not reach you through the distance. Your image still kept gliding down: it approached a great sea that lay far extended at the foot of the hill, – a marsh rather than a sea. All at once a man gave you his hand, and seemed meaning to conduct you upwards; but he led you sideways, and appeared to draw you after him. I cried out: as I could not reach you, I hoped to warn you. If I tried to walk, the ground seemed to hold me fast; if I could walk, the water hindered me; and even my cries were smothered in my breast.' So said the poor youth, while recovering from his terror, and reckoning himself happy to see a frightful dream thrust aside by the most delicious reality."

Barbara made every effort to reduce, by her prose, the poetry of her friend to the domain of common life; employing, in the present case, the ingenious craft which so often succeeds with bird-catchers, when they imitate with a whistle the tones of those luckless creatures they soon hope to see by dozens safely lodged in their nets. She praised Wilhelm: she expatiated on his figure, his eyes, his love. The poor girl heard her with a gratified heart, then arose, let herself be dressed, and appeared calmer. "My child, my darling," continued the old woman, in a cozening tone, "I will not trouble you or injure you: I cannot think of tearing from you your dearest happiness. Could you mistake my intention? Have you forgotten that on all occasions I have cared for you more than for myself? Tell me only what you wish: we shall soon see how it may be brought about."

"What can I wish?" said Mariana; "I am miserable, miserable for life: I love him, and he loves me; yet I see that I must part with him, and know not how I shall survive it. Norberg is coming, to whom we owe our whole subsistence, whom we cannot live without. Wilhelm is straitened in his fortune: he can do nothing for me."

"Yes, unfortunately, he is of those lovers who bring nothing but their hearts; and these people, too, have the highest pretensions of any."

"No jesting! The unhappy youth thinks of leaving his home, of going upon the stage, of offering me his hand."

"Of empty hands we have already four."

"I have no choice," continued Mariana; "do you decide for me. Cast me away to this side or to that: mark only one thing, – I think I carry in my bosom a pledge that ought to unite me with him still more closely. Consider and determine: whom shall I forsake? whom shall I follow?"

After a short silence, Barbara exclaimed. "Strange, that youth should always be for extremes! To my view, nothing would be easier than for us to combine both the profit and the enjoyment. Do you love the one, let the other pay for it: all we have to mind, is being sharp enough to keep the two from meeting."

"Do as you please: I can imagine nothing, but I will obey."

"We have this advantage: we can humor the manager's caprice and pride about the morals of his troop. Both lovers are accustomed already to go secretly and cautiously to work. For hours and opportunity I will take thought: only henceforth you must act the part that I prescribe to you. Who knows what circumstances may arise to help us? If Norberg would arrive even now, when Wilhelm is away! Who can hinder you from thinking of the one in the arms of the other? I wish you a son, and good fortune with him: he will have a rich father."

These projects lightened Mariana's despondency only for a very short time. She could not bring her situation into harmony with her feelings, with her convictions: she would fain have forgotten the painful relations in which she stood, and a thousand little circumstances forced them back every moment to her recollection.

CHAPTER XIII

In the mean time, Wilhelm had completed the short preliminary journey. His merchant being from home, he delivered the letter of introduction to the mistress of the house. But neither did this lady give him much furtherance in his purposes: she was in a violent passion, and her whole economy was in confusion.

He had not waited long when she disclosed to him, what in truth could not be kept a secret, that her step-daughter had run off with a player, – a person who had parted lately from a small strolling company, and had staid in the place, and commenced teaching French. The father, distracted with grief and vexation, had run to the *Amt* to have the fugitives pursued. She blamed her daughter bitterly, and vilified the lover, till she left no tolerable quality with either: she deplored at great length the shame thus brought upon the family; embarrassing our hero not a little, who here felt his own private scheme beforehand judged and punished, in the spirit of prophecy as it were, by this frenzied sibyl. Still stronger and deeper was the interest he took in the sorrows of the father, who now returned from the *Amt*, and with fixed sorrow, in broken sentences, gave his wife an account of the errand, and strove to hide the embarrassment and distraction of his mind; while, after looking at the letter, he directed that the horse it spoke of should be given to Wilhelm.

Our friend thought it best to mount his steed immediately, and quit a house where, in its present state, he could not possibly be comfortable; but the honest man would not allow the son of one to whom he had so many obligations to depart without tasting of his hospitality, without remaining at least a night beneath his roof.

Wilhelm had partaken of a melancholy supper, worn out a restless night, and hastened, early in the morning, to get rid of these people, who, without knowing it, had, by their narratives and utterances, been constantly wounding him to the quick.

In a musing mood, he was riding slowly along, when all at once he observed a number of armed men coming through the fields. By their long, loose coats, with enormous cuffs; by their shapeless hats, clumsy muskets; by their unpretending gait, and contented bearing of the body, – he recognized in these people a detachment of provincial militia. They halted beneath an old oak, set down their fire-arms, and placed themselves at their ease upon the sward, to smoke a pipe of tobacco. Wilhelm lingered near them, and entered into conversation with a young man who came up on horseback. The history of the two runaways, which he knew but too well, was again detailed to him, and that with comments not particularly flattering, either to the young pair themselves, or to the parents. He also learned that the military had come hither to take into custody the loving couple, who had already been seized and detained in a neighboring village. After some time, accordingly, a cart was seen advancing to the place, encircled with a city guard more ludicrous than appalling. An amorphous town-clerk rode forth, and made his compliments to the *Actuarius* (for such was the young man Wilhelm had been speaking to), on the border of their several districts, with great conscientiousness and queer grimaces; as perhaps the ghost and the conjurer do, when they meet, the one within the circle and the other out of it, in their dismal midnight operations.

But the chief attention of the lookers-on was directed to the cart: they could not behold, without compassion, the poor, misguided creatures, who were sitting upon bundles of straw, looking tenderly at one another, and scarcely seeming to observe the by-standers. Accident had forced their conductors to bring them from the last village in that unseemly style; the old chaise, which had previously transported the lady, having there broken down. On that occurrence she had begged for permission to sit beside her friend; whom, in the conviction that his crime was of a capital sort, the rustic bailiffs had so far brought along in irons. These irons certainly contributed to give the tender group a more interesting appearance, particularly as the young man moved and bore himself with great dignity, while he kissed more than once the hands of his fair companion.

"We are unfortunate," she cried to the by-standers, "but not so guilty as we seem. It is thus that cruel men reward true love; and parents, who entirely neglect the happiness of their children, tear them with fury from the arms of joy, when it has found them after many weary days."

The spectators were expressing their sympathy in various ways, when, the officers of law having finished their ceremonial, the cart went on; and Wilhelm, who took a deep interest in the fate of the lovers, hastened forward by a foot path to get some acquaintance with the *Amtmann* before the procession should arrive. But scarcely had he reached the *Amthaus*, where all was in motion, and ready to receive the fugitives, when his new friend, the *Actuarius*, laid hold of him; and giving him a circumstantial detail of the whole proceedings, and then launching out into a comprehensive eulogy of his own horse, which he had got by barter the night before, put a stop to every other sort of conversation.

The luckless pair, in the mean time, had been set down behind, at the garden, which communicated by a little door with the *Amthaus*, and thus brought in unobserved. The *Actuarius*, for this mild and handsome treatment, accepted of a just encomium from Wilhelm; though in truth his sole object had been to mortify the crowd collected in front of the *Amthaus*, by denying them the satisfaction of looking at a neighbor in disgrace.

The *Amtmann*, who had no particular taste for such extraordinary occurrences, being wont on these occasions to commit frequent errors, and, with the best intentions, to be often paid with sour admonitions from the higher powers, went with heavy steps into his office-room; the *Actuarius* with Wilhelm and a few respectable citizens following him.

The lady was first produced; she advanced without pertness, calm and self-possessed. The manner of her dress, the way in which she bore herself, showed that she was a person not without value in her own eyes. She accordingly began, without any questions being put, to speak, not unskilfully, about her situation.

The *Actuarius* bade her be silent, and held his pen over the folded sheet. The *Amtmann* gathered up his resolution, looked at his assistant, cleared his throat by two or three hems, and asked the poor girl what was her name, and how old she was.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said she, "but it seems very strange to me that you ask my name and age, seeing you know very well what my name is, and that I am just of the age of your oldest son. What you do want to know of me, and need to know, I will tell freely without circumlocution.

"Since my father's second marriage, my situation in his house has not been of the most enviable sort. Oftener than once I have had it in my power to make a suitable marriage, had not my step-mother, dreading the expense of my portion, taken care to thwart all such proposals. At length I grew acquainted with the young Melina; I felt constrained to love him; and, as we both foresaw the obstacles that stood in the way of our regular union, we determined to go forth together, and seek in the wide world the happiness denied us at home. I took nothing with me that was not my own: we did not run away like thieves and robbers; and my lover does not merit to be hauled about in this way, with chains and handcuffs. The prince is just, and will not sanction such severity. If we are liable to punishment, it is not punishment of this kind."

The old *Amtmann* hereupon fell into double and treble confusion. Sounds of the most gracious eulogies were already humming through his brain, and the girl's voluble speech had entirely confounded the plan of his protocol. The mischief increased, when to repeated official questions she refused giving any answer, but constantly referred to what she had already said.

"I am no criminal," she said. "They have brought me hither on bundles of straw to put me to shame, but there is a higher court that will bring us back to honor."

The *Actuarius*, in the mean time, had kept writing down her words: he whispered the *Amtmann*, "just to go on, – a formal protocol might be made out by and by."

The senior then again took heart, and began, with his heavy words, in dry prescribed formulas, to seek information about the sweet secrets of love.

The red mounted into Wilhelm's cheeks, and those of the pretty criminal likewise glowed with the charming tinge of modesty. She was silent, she stammered, till at last her embarrassment itself seemed to exalt her courage.

"Be assured," she cried, "that I should have strength enough to confess the truth, though it made against myself; and shall I now hesitate and stammer, when it does me honor? Yes: from the moment when I first felt certain of his love and faith, I looked upon him as my husband; I freely gave him all that love requires, – that a heart once convinced cannot long refuse. Now do with me what you please. If I hesitated for a moment to confess, it was solely owing to fear lest the admission might prove hurtful to my lover."

On hearing this confession, Wilhelm formed a high opinion of the young woman's feelings, while her judges marked her as an impudent strumpet; and the townsfolk present thanked God that in their families no such scandal had occurred, or at least been brought to light.

Wilhelm transported his Mariana into this conjuncture, answering at the bar: he put still finer words in her mouth, making her uprightness yet more affecting, her confession still nobler. The most violent desire to help the two lovers took possession of him. Nor did he conceal this feeling, but signified in private to the wavering *Amtmann*, that it were better to end the business; all being clear as possible, and requiring no further investigation.

This was so far of service that the young woman was allowed to retire; though, in her stead, the lover was brought in, his fetters having previously been taken off him at the door. This person seemed a little more concerned about his fate. His answers were more careful; and, if he showed less heroic generosity, he recommended himself by the precision and distinctness of his expressions.

When this audience also was finished, and found to agree in all points with the former, except that, from regard for his mistress, Melina stubbornly denied what had already been confessed by herself, the young woman was again brought forward; and a scene took place between the two, which made the heart of our friend entirely their own.

What usually occurs nowhere but in romances and plays, he saw here in a paltry court-room before his eyes, – the contest of reciprocal magnanimity, the strength of love in misfortune.

"Is it, then, true," said he internally, "that timorous affection, which conceals itself from the eye of the sun and of men, not daring to taste of enjoyment save in remote solitude and deep secrecy, yet, if torn rudely by some cruel chance into light, will show itself more courageous, strong, and resolute than any of our loud and ostentatious passions?"

To his comfort, the business now soon came to a conclusion. The lovers were detained in tolerable quarters: had it been possible, he would that very evening have brought back the young lady to her parents. For he firmly determined to act as intercessor in this case, and to forward a happy and lawful union between the lovers.

He begged permission of the *Amtmann* to speak in private with Melina, a request which was granted without difficulty.

CHAPTER XIV

The conversation of these new acquaintances very soon grew confidential and lively. When Wilhelm told the downcast youth of his connection with the lady's parents, and offered to mediate in the affair, showing at the same time the strongest expectation of success, a light was shed across the dreary and anxious mind of the prisoner: he felt himself already free, already reconciled with the parents of his bride, and now began to speak about his future occupation and support.

"On this point," said our friend, "you cannot long be in difficulty; for you seem to me directed, not more by your circumstances than by nature, to make your fortune in the noble profession you have chosen. A pleasing figure, a sonorous voice, a feeling heart! Could an actor be better furnished? If I can serve you with a few introductions, it will give me the greatest pleasure."

"I thank you with all my heart," replied the other, "but I shall hardly be able to make use of them; for it is my purpose, if possible, not to return to the stage."

"Here you are certainly to blame," said Wilhelm, after a pause, during which he had partly recovered out of his astonishment; for it had never once entered his head, but that the player, the moment his young wife and he were out of durance, would repair to some theatre. It seemed to him as natural and as necessary as for the frog to seek pools of water. He had not doubted of it for a moment, and he now heard the contrary with boundless surprise.

"Yes," replied Melina, "I have it in view not to re-appear upon the stage, but rather to take up some civil calling, be it what it will, so that I can but obtain one."

"This is a strange resolution, which I cannot give my approbation to. Without especial reasons, it can never be advisable to change the mode of life we have begun with; and, besides, I know of no condition that presents so much allurements, so many charming prospects, as the condition of an actor."

"It is easy to see that you have never been one," said the other.

"Alas, sir," answered Wilhelm, "how seldom is any man contented with the station where he happens to be placed! He is ever coveting that of his neighbor, from which the neighbor in his turn is longing to be free."

"Yet still there is a difference," said Melina, "between bad and worse. Experience, not impatience, makes me determine as you see. Is there in the world any creature whose morsel of bread is attended with such vexation, uncertainty, and toil? It were almost as good to take the staff and wallet, and beg from door to door. What things to be endured from the envy of rivals, from the partiality of managers, from the ever-altering caprices of the public! In truth, one would need to have a hide like a bear's, that is led about in a chain along with apes, and dogs of knowledge, and cudgelled into dancing at the sound of a bagpipe before the populace and children."

Wilhelm thought a thousand things, which he would not vex the worthy man by uttering. He merely, therefore, led the conversation round them at a distance. His friend explained himself the more candidly and circumstantially on that account. "Is not the manager obliged," said he, "to fall down at the feet of every little *Stadtrath*, that he may get permission, for a month between the fairs, to cause another *groschen* or two to circulate in the place? Ours, on the whole, a worthy man, I have often pitied; though at other times he gave me cause enough for discontentment. A good actor drains him by extortion; of the bad he cannot rid himself; and, should he try to make his income at all equal to his outlay, the public immediately takes umbrage, the house stands empty; and, not to go to wreck entirely, he must continue acting in the midst of sorrow and vexation. No, no, sir! Since you are so good as to undertake to help me, have the kindness, I entreat you, to plead with the parents of my bride: let them get me a little post of clerk or collector, and I shall think myself well dealt with."

After exchanging a few words more, Wilhelm went away with the promise to visit the parents early in the morning, and see what could be done. Scarcely was he by himself, when he gave utterance

to his thoughts in these exclamations: "Unhappy Melina! not in thy condition, but in thyself, lies the mean impediment over which thou canst not gain the mastery. What mortal in the world, if without inward calling he take up a trade, an art, or any mode of life, will not feel his situation miserable? But he who is born with capacities for any undertaking, finds in executing this the fairest portion of his being. Nothing upon earth without its difficulties! It is the secret impulse within, it is the love and the delight we feel, that help us to conquer obstacles, to clear out new paths, and to overleap the bounds of that narrow circle in which others poorly toil. For *thee* the stage is but a few boards: the parts assigned thee are but what a task is to a school-boy. The spectators thou regardest as on work-days they regard each other. For thee, then, it may be well to wish thyself behind a desk, over ruled ledgers, collecting tolls, and picking out reversions. Thou feelest not the co-operating, co-inspiring whole, which the mind alone can invent, comprehend, and complete: thou feelest not that in man there lives a spark of purer fire, which, when it is not fed, when it is not fanned, gets covered by the ashes of indifference and daily wants, yet not till late, perhaps never, can be altogether quenched. Thou feelest in thy soul no strength to fan this spark into a flame, no riches in thy heart to feed it when aroused. Hunger drives thee on, inconveniences withstand thee; and it is hidden from thee, that, in every human condition, foes lie in wait for us, invincible except by cheerfulness and equanimity. Thou dost well to wish thyself within the limits of a common station, for what station that required soul and resolution couldst thou rightly fill? Give a soldier, a statesman, a divine, thy sentiments, and as justly will he fret himself about the miseries of *his* condition. Nay, have there not been men so totally forsaken by all feeling of existence, that they have held the life and nature of mortals as a nothing, a painful, short, and tarnished gleam of being? Did the forms of active men rise up living in thy soul; were thy breast warmed by a sympathetic fire; did the vocation which proceeds from within diffuse itself over all thy frame; were the tones of thy voice, the words of thy mouth, delightful to hear; didst thou feel thy own being sufficient for thyself, – then wouldst thou doubtless seek place and opportunity likewise to feel it in others."

Amid such words and thoughts, our friend undressed himself, and went to bed, with feelings of the deepest satisfaction. A whole romance of what he now hoped to do, instead of the worthless occupations which should have filled the approaching day, arose within his mind: pleasant fantasies softly conducted him into the kingdom of sleep, and then gave him up to their sisters, sweet dreams, who received him with open arms, and encircled his reposing head with the images of heaven.

Early in the morning he was awake again, and thinking of the business that lay before him. He revisited the house of the forsaken family, where his presence caused no small surprise. He introduced his proposal in the most prudent manner, and soon found both more and fewer difficulties than he had anticipated. For one thing, the evil was already *done*: and though people of a singularly strict and harsh temper are wont to set themselves forcibly against the past, and thus to increase the evil that cannot now be remedied; yet, on the other hand, what is actually done exerts an irresistible effect upon most minds: an event which lately appeared impossible takes its place, so soon as it has really occurred, with what occurs daily. It was accordingly soon settled, that Herr Melina was to wed the daughter; who, however, in return, because of her misconduct, was to take no marriage-portion with her, and to promise that she would leave her aunt's legacy, for a few years more, at an easy interest, in her father's hands. But the second point, touching a civil provision for Melina, was attended with greater difficulties. They liked not to have the luckless pair continually living in their sight: they would not have a present object ever calling to their minds the connection of a mean vagabond with so respectable a family, – a family which could number even a superintendent among its relatives; nay, it was not to be looked for, that the government would trust him with a charge. Both parents were alike inflexible in this matter; and Wilhelm, who pleaded very hard, unwilling that a man whom he contemned should return to the stage, and convinced that he deserved not such a happiness, could not, with all his rhetoric, produce the slenderest impression. Had he known the secret springs of the business, he would have spared himself the labor of attempting to persuade. The father would gladly

have kept his daughter near him; but he hated the young man, because his wife herself had cast an eye upon him: while the latter could not bear to have, in her step-daughter, a happy rival constantly before her eyes. So Melina with his young wife, who already manifested no dislike to go and see the world, and be seen of it, was obliged, against his will, to set forth in a few days, and seek some place in any acting company where he could find one.

CHAPTER XV

Happy season of youth! Happy times of the first wish of love! A man is then like a child that can for hours delight itself with an echo, can support alone the charges of conversation, and be well contented with its entertainment if the unseen interlocutor will but repeat the concluding syllables of the words addressed to it.

So was it with Wilhelm in the earlier and still more in the later period of his passion for Mariana; he transferred the whole wealth of his own emotions to her, and looked upon himself as a beggar that lived upon her alms: and as a landscape is more delightful, nay, is delightful only, when it is enlightened by the sun; so likewise in his eyes were all things beautified and glorified which lay round her or related to her.

Often would he stand in the theatre behind the scenes, to which he had obtained the freedom of access from the manager. In such cases, it is true, the perspective magic was away; but the far mightier sorcery of love then first began to act. For hours he could stand by the sooty light-frame, inhaling the vapor of tallow lamps, looking out at his mistress; and when she returned, and cast a kindly glance upon him, he could feel himself lost in ecstasy: and, though close upon laths and bare spars, he seemed transported into paradise. The stuffed bunches of wool denominated lambs, the waterfalls of tin, the paper roses, and the one-sided huts of straw, awoke in him fair poetic visions of an old pastoral world. Nay, the very dancing-girls, ugly as they were when seen at hand, did not always inspire him with disgust: they trod the same floor with Mariana. So true is it, that love, which alone can give their full charm to rose-bowers, myrtle-groves, and moonshine, can also communicate, even to shavings of wood, and paper-clippings, the aspect of animated nature. It is so strong a spice, that tasteless or even nauseous soups are by it rendered palatable.

So potent a spice was certainly required to render tolerable, nay, at last agreeable, the state in which he usually found her chamber, not to say herself.

Brought up in a substantial burgher's house, cleanliness and order were the elements in which he breathed; and, inheriting as he did a portion of his father's taste for finery, it had always been his care, in boyhood, to furbish up his chamber, which he regarded as his little kingdom, in the stateliest fashion. His bed-curtains were drawn together in large, massy folds, and fastened with tassels, as they are usually seen in thrones; he had got himself a carpet for the middle of his chamber, and a finer one for his table; his books and apparatus he had, almost instinctively, arranged in such a manner, that a Dutch painter might have imitated them for groups in his still-life scenes. He had a white cap, which he wore straight up like a turban; and the sleeves of his night-gown he had caused to be cut short, in the mode of the Orientals. By way of reason for this, he pretended that long, wide sleeves encumbered him in writing. When, at night, the boy was quite alone, and no longer dreaded any interruption, he usually wore a silk sash tied round his body; and often, it is said, he would fix in his girdle a sword, which he had appropriated from an old armory, and thus repeat and declaim his tragic parts; nay, in the same trim he would kneel down and say his evening prayer.

In those times, how happy did he think the players, whom he saw possessed of so many splendid garments, trappings, and arms; and in the constant practice of a lofty demeanor, the spirit of which seemed to hold up a mirror of whatever, in the opinions, relations, and passions of men, was stateliest and most magnificent. Of a piece with this, thought Wilhelm, is also the player's domestic life, – a series of dignified transactions and employments, whereof their appearance on the stage is but the outmost portion; like as a mass of silver, long simmering about in the purifying furnace, at length gleams with a bright and beautiful tinge in the eye of the refiner, and shows him, at the same time, that the metal now is cleansed of all foreign mixture.

Great, accordingly, was his surprise at first, when he found himself beside his mistress, and looked down, through the cloud that environed him, on tables, stools, and floor. The wrecks of a

transient, light, and false decoration lay, like the glittering coat of a skinned fish, dispersed in wild disorder. The implements of personal cleanliness, – combs, soap, towels, – with the traces of their use, were not concealed. Music, portions of plays and pairs of shoes, washes and Italian flowers, pin-cushions, hair-skewers, rouge-pots, and ribbons, books and straw hats, – no article despised the neighborhood of another: all were united by a common element, – powder and dust. Yet as Wilhelm scarcely noticed in her presence aught except herself; nay, as all that had belonged to her, that she had touched, was dear to him, – he came at last to feel, in this chaotic housekeeping, a charm which the proud pomp of his own habitation never had communicated. When, on this hand, he lifted aside her bodice, to get at the harpsichord; on that, threw her gown upon the bed, that he might find a seat; when she herself, with careless freedom, did not seek to hide from him many a natural office, which, out of respect for the presence of a second person, is usually concealed, – he felt as if by all this he was coming nearer to her every moment, as if the communion betwixt them was fastening by invisible ties.

It was not so easy to reconcile with his previous ideas the behavior of the other players, whom, on his first visits, he often met with in her house. Ever busied in being idle, they seemed to think least of all on their employment and object: the poetic worth of a piece they were never heard to speak of, or to judge of, right or wrong; their continual question was simply, How much will it *bring*? Is it a stock-piece? How long will it run? How often think you it may be played? and other inquiries and observations of the same description. Then commonly they broke out against the manager, that he was stinted with his salaries, and especially unjust to this one or to that; then against the public, how seldom it recompensed the right man with its approval, how the German theatre was daily improving, how the player was ever growing more honored, and never could be honored enough. Then they would descant largely about wine-gardens and coffee-houses; how much debt one of their comrades had contracted, and must suffer a deduction from his wages on account of; about the disproportion of their weekly salaries; about the cabals of some rival company: on which occasions, they would pass again to the great and merited attention which the public now bestowed upon them; not forgetting the importance of the theatre to the improvement of the nation and the world.

All this, which had already given Wilhelm many a restless hour, came again into his memory, as he walked his horse slowly homewards, and contemplated the various occurrences in which he had so lately been engaged. The commotion produced by a girl's elopement, not only in a decent family, but in a whole town, he had seen with his own eyes; the scenes upon the highway and in the *Amthaus*, the views entertained by Melina, and whatever else he had witnessed, again arose before him, and brought his keen, forecasting mind into a sort of anxious disquietude; which no longer to endure, he struck the spurs into his horse, and hastened towards home.

By this expedient, however, he but ran to meet new vexations. Werner, his friend and future brother-in-law, was waiting for him, to begin a serious, important, unexpected conversation.

Werner was one of those tried, sedate persons, with fixed principles and habits, whom we usually denominate cold characters, because on emergencies they do not burst forth quickly or very visibly. Accordingly, his intercourse with Wilhelm was a perpetual contest; which, however, only served to knit their mutual affection the more firmly; for, notwithstanding their very opposite modes of thinking, each found his account in communicating with the other. Werner was very well contented with himself, that he could now and then lay a bridle on the exalted but commonly extravagant spirit of his friend; and Wilhelm often felt a glorious triumph, when the staid and thinking Werner could be hurried on with him in warm ebullience. Thus each exercised himself upon the other; they had been accustomed to see each other daily; and you would have said, their eagerness to meet and talk together had even been augmented by the inability of each to understand the other. At bottom, however, being both good-hearted men, they were both travelling together towards one goal; and they could never understand how it was that neither of the two could bring the other over to his own persuasion.

For some time Werner had observed that Wilhelm's visits had been rarer; that in his favorite discussions he was brief and absent-minded; that he no longer abandoned himself to the vivid depicting of singular conceptions, – tokens by which, in truth, a mind getting rest and contentment in the presence of a friend is most clearly indicated. The considerate and punctual Werner first sought for the root of the evil in his own conduct; till some rumors of the neighborhood set him on the proper trace, and some unguarded proceedings on the part of Wilhelm brought him nearer to the certainty. He began his investigation, and ere long discovered, that for some time Wilhelm had been openly visiting an actress, had often spoken with her at the theatre, and accompanied her home. On discovering the nightly visits of his friend, Werner's anxiety increased to a painful extent: for he heard that Mariana was a most seductive girl, who probably was draining the youth of his money; while, at the same time, she herself was supported by another and a very worthless lover.

Having pushed his suspicions as near certainty as possible, he had resolved to make a sharp attack on Wilhelm: he was now in full readiness with all his preparations, when his friend returned, discontented and unsettled, from his journey.

That very evening Werner laid the whole of what he knew before him, first calmly, then with the emphatic earnestness of a well-meaning friendship. He left no point of the subject undiscussed, and made Wilhelm taste abundance of those bitter things which men at ease are accustomed, with virtuous spite, to dispense so liberally to men in love. Yet, as might have been expected, he accomplished little. Wilhelm answered with interior commotion, though with great confidence, "You know not the girl! Appearances, perhaps, are not to her advantage; but I am certain of her faithfulness and virtue, as of my love."

Werner maintained his accusations, and offered to bring proofs and witnesses. Wilhelm waived these offers, and parted with his friend out of humor and unhinged, like a man in whose jaw some unskilful dentist has been seizing a diseased, yet fast-rooted, tooth, and tugging at it harshly to no purpose.

It exceedingly dissatisfied Wilhelm to see the fair image of Mariana overclouded and almost deformed in his soul, first by the capricious fancies of his journey, and then by the unfriendliness of Werner. He adopted the surest means of restoring it to complete brilliancy and beauty, by setting out at night, and hastening to his wonted destination. She received him with extreme joy: on entering the town, he had ridden past her window; she had been expecting his company; and it is easy to conceive that all scruples were soon driven from his heart. Nay, her tenderness again opened up the whole stores of his confidence; and he told her how deeply the public, how deeply his friend, had sinned against her.

Much lively talking led them at length to speak about the earliest period of their acquaintance, the recollection of which forms always one of the most delightful topics between two lovers. The first steps that introduce us to the enchanted garden of love are so full of pleasure, the first prospects so charming, that every one is willing to recall them to his memory. Each party seeks a preference above the other; each has loved sooner, more devotedly; and each, in this contest, would rather be conquered than conquer.

Wilhelm repeated to his mistress, what he had so often told her before, how she soon abstracted his attention from the play, and fixed it on herself; how her form, her acting, her voice, inspired him; how at last he went only on the nights when *she* was to appear; how, in fine, having ventured behind the scenes, he had often stood by her unheeded; and he spoke with rapture of the happy evening when he found an opportunity to do her some civility, and lead her into conversation.

Mariana, on the other hand, would not allow that she had failed so long to notice him: she declared that she had seen him in the public walk, and for proof she described the clothes which he wore on that occasion; she affirmed that even then he pleased her before all others, and made her long for his acquaintance.

How gladly did Wilhelm credit all this! How gladly did he catch at the persuasion, that, when he used to approach her, she had felt herself drawn towards him by some resistless influence; that she had gone with him between the side-scenes on purpose to see him more closely, and get acquainted with him; and that, in fine, when his backwardness and modesty were not to be conquered, she had herself afforded him an opportunity, and, as it were, compelled him to hand her a glass of lemonade.

In this affectionate contest, which they pursued through all the little circumstances of their brief romance, the hours passed rapidly away; and Wilhelm left his mistress with his heart at peace, and firmly determined on proceeding forthwith to the execution of his project.

CHAPTER XVI

The necessary preparations for his journey his father and mother had attended to: some little matters, that were yet wanting to his equipage, delayed his departure for a few days. Wilhelm took advantage of this opportunity to write to Mariana, meaning thus to bring to a decision the proposal, about which she had hitherto avoided speaking with him. The letter was as follows: —

"Under the kind veil of night, which has often over-shadowed us together, I sit and think, and write to thee: all that I meditate and do is solely on thy account. O Mariana! with me, the happiest of men, it is as with a bridegroom who stands in the festive chamber, dreaming of the new universe that is to be unfolded to him, and by means of him, and, while the holy ceremonies are proceeding, transports himself in longing thought before the mysterious curtains, from which the loveliness of love whispers out to him.

"I have constrained myself not to see thee for a few days: the sacrifice was easy, when united with the hope of such a recompense, of being always with thee, of remaining ever thine! Need I repeat what I desire? I must! for it seems as if yet thou hadst never understood me.

"How often, in the low tones of true love, which, though wishing to gain all, dares speak but little, have I sought in thy heart for the desire of a perpetual union. Thou hast understood me, doubtless; for in thy own heart the same wish must have arisen: thou *didst* comprehend me, in that kiss, in the intoxicating peace of that happy evening. Thy silence testified to me thy modest honor; and how did it increase my love! Another woman would have had recourse to artifice, that she might ripen by superfluous sunshine the purpose of her lover's heart, might elicit a proposal, and secure a firm promise. Mariana, on the contrary, drew back: she repelled the half-opened confidence of him she loved, and sought to conceal her approving feelings by apparent indifference. But I have understood thee! What a miserable creature must I be, if I did not by these tokens recognize the pure and generous love that cares not for itself, but for its object! Confide in me, and fear nothing. We belong to one another; and neither of us leaves aught or forsakes aught, if we live for one another.

"Take it, then, this hand! Solemnly I offer this unnecessary pledge! All the joys of love we have already felt, but there is a new blessedness in the firm thought of duration. Ask not how, — care not. Fate takes care of love, and the more certainly as love is easy to provide for.

"My heart has long ago forsaken my paternal home: it is with thee, as my spirit hovers on the stage. O my darling! to what other man has it been given to unite all his wishes, as it is to me? No sleep falls upon my eyes: like the redness of an everlasting dawn, thy love and thy happiness still glow around me.

"Scarcely can I hold myself from springing up, from rushing forth to thee, and forcing thy consent, and, with the first light of to-morrow, pressing forward into the world for the mark I aim at. But, no! I will restrain myself; I will not act like a thoughtless fool, will do nothing rashly: my plan is laid, and I will execute it calmly.

"I am acquainted with the manager Serlo: my journey leads me directly to the place where he is. For above a year he has frequently been wishing that his people had a touch of my vivacity, and my delight in theatrical affairs: I shall doubtless be very kindly received. Into your company I cannot enter, for more than one reason. Serlo's theatre, moreover, is at such a distance from this, that I may there begin my undertaking without any apprehension of discovery. With him I shall thus at once find a tolerable maintenance: I shall look about me in the public, get acquainted with the company, and then come back for thee.

"Mariana, thou seest what I can force myself to do, that I may certainly obtain thee. For such a period not to see thee; for such a period to know thee in the wide world! I dare not view it closely. But yet if I recall to memory thy love, which assures me of all; if thou shalt not disdain my prayer, and give me, ere we part, thy hand, before the priest, — I may then depart in peace. It is but a form

between us, yet a form so touching, – the blessing of Heaven to the blessing of the earth. Close by thy house, in the Ritterschaftliche Chapel, the ceremony will be soon and secretly performed.

"For the beginning I have gold enough; we will share it between us; it will suffice for both; and, before that is finished, Heaven will send us more.

"No, my darling, I am not downcast about the issue. What is begun with so much cheerfulness must reach a happy end. I have never doubted that a man may force his way through the world, if he really is in earnest about it; and I feel strength enough within me to provide a liberal support for two, and many more. The world, we are often told, is unthankful: I have never yet discovered that it was unthankful, if one knew how, in the proper way, to do it service. My whole soul burns at the idea, that *I* shall at length step forth, and speak to the hearts of men something they have long been yearning to hear. How many thousand times has a feeling of disgust passed through me, alive as I am to the nobleness of the stage, when I have seen the poorest creatures fancying they could speak a word of power to the hearts of the people! The tone of a man's voice singing treble sounds far pleasanter and purer to my ear: it is incredible how these blockheads, in their coarse ineptitude, deform things beautiful and venerable.

"The theatre has often been at variance with the pulpit: they ought not, I think, to quarrel. How much is it to be wished, that in both the celebration of nature and of God were intrusted to none but men of noble minds! These are no dreams, my darling! As I have felt in thy heart that thou couldst love, I seize the dazzling thought, and say, – no, I will not say, but I will hope and trust, – that we two shall yet appear to men as a pair of chosen spirits, to unlock their hearts, to touch the recesses of their nature, and prepare for them celestial joys, as surely as the joys I have tasted with thee deserved to be named celestial, since they drew us from ourselves, and exalted us above ourselves.

"I cannot end. I have already said too much, and know not whether I have yet said all, all that concerns *thy* interests; for to express the agitations of the vortex that whirls round within myself, is beyond the power of words.

"Yet take this sheet, my love! I have again read it over: I observe it ought to have begun more cautiously; but it contains in it all that thou hast need to know, – enough to prepare thee for the hour when I shall return with the lightness of love to thy bosom. I seem to myself like a prisoner that is secretly filing his irons asunder. I bid good-night to my soundly sleeping parents. Farewell, my beloved, farewell! For this time I conclude; my eyelids have more than once dropped together; it is now deep in the night."

CHAPTER XVII

It seemed as if the day would never end, while Wilhelm, with the letter beautifully folded in his pocket, longed to meet with Mariana. The darkness had scarcely come on, when, contrary to custom, he glided forth to her house. His plan was, to announce himself for the night; then to quit his mistress for a short time, leaving the letter with her ere he went away; and, returning at a late hour, to obtain her reply, her consent, or to force it from her by the power of his caresses. He flew into her arms, and pressed her in rapture to his bosom. The vehemence of his emotions prevented him at first from noticing, that, on this occasion, she did not receive him with her wonted heartiness; yet she could not long conceal her painful situation, but imputed it to slight indisposition. She complained of a headache, and would not by any means consent to his proposal of coming back that night. Suspecting nothing wrong, he ceased to urge her, but felt that this was not the moment for delivering his letter. He retained it, therefore; and, as several of her movements and observations courteously compelled him to take his leave, in the tumult of unsatiable love he snatched up one of her neckerchiefs, squeezed it into his pocket, and forced himself away from her lips and her door. He returned home, but could not rest there: he again dressed himself, and went out into the open air.

After walking up and down several streets, he was accosted by a stranger inquiring for a certain inn. Wilhelm offered to conduct him to the house. In the way, his new acquaintance asked about the names of the streets, the owners of various extensive edifices, then about some police regulations of the town; so that, by the time they reached the door of the inn, they had fallen into quite an interesting conversation. The stranger politely compelled his guide to enter, and drink a glass of punch with him. Ere long he had told his name and place of abode, as well as the business that had brought him hither; and he seemed to expect a like confidence from Wilhelm. Our friend, without any hesitation, mentioned his name, and the place where he lived.

"Are you not a grandson of the old Meister, who possessed that beautiful collection of pictures and statues?" inquired the stranger.

"Yes, I am. I was ten years old when my grandfather died, and it grieved me very much to see these fine things sold."

"Your father got a fine sum of money for them."

"You know of it, then?"

"Yes, indeed: I saw that treasure ere it left your house. Your grandfather was not merely a collector, he had a thorough knowledge of art. In his younger happy years he had been in Italy, and had brought back with him such treasures as could not now be got for any price. He possessed some exquisite pictures by the best masters. When you looked through his drawings, you would scarcely have believed your eyes. Among his marbles were some invaluable fragments; his series of bronzes was instructive and well chosen; he had also collected medals, in considerable quantity, relating to history and art; his few gems deserved the greatest praise. In addition to all which, the whole was tastefully arranged; although the rooms and hall of the old house had not been symmetrically built."

"You may conceive," said Wilhelm, "what we young ones lost, when all these articles were taken down and sent away. It was the first mournful period of my life. I cannot tell you how empty the chambers looked when we saw those objects vanish one by one, which had amused us from our earliest years, and which we considered as unalterable as the house, or the town itself."

"If I mistake not, your father put the capital produced by the sale into some neighbor's stock, with whom he commenced a sort of partnership in trade."

"Quite right; and their joint speculations have prospered in their hands. Within the last twelve years, they have greatly increased their fortunes, and are now the more vehemently bent on gaining. Old Werner also has a son, who suits that sort of occupation much better than I."

"I am sorry the place should have lost such an ornament as your grandfather's cabinet was to it. I saw it but a short time prior to the sale; and I may say, I was myself the cause of its being then disposed of. A rich nobleman, a great amateur, but one who, in such important transactions, does not trust to his own solitary judgment, had sent me hither, and requested my advice. For six days I examined the collection: on the seventh, I advised my friend to pay down the required sum without delay. You were then a lively boy, often running about me: you explained to me the subjects of the pictures, and in general, I recollect, could give a very good account of the whole cabinet."

"I remember such a person, but I should not have recognized him in you."

"It is a good while ago, and we all change more or less. You had, if I mistake not, a favorite piece among them, to which you were ever calling my attention."

"Oh, yes! it represented the history of that king's son dying of a secret love for his father's bride."

"It was not, certainly, the best picture, – badly grouped, of no superiority in coloring, and executed altogether with great mannerism."

"This I did not understand, and do not yet: it is the subject that charms me in a picture, not the art."

"Your grandfather seemed to have thought otherwise. The greater part of his collection consisted of excellent pieces; in which, represent what they might, one constantly admired the talent of the master. This picture of yours had accordingly been hung in the outermost room, – a proof that he valued it slightly."

"It was in that room where we young ones used to play, and where the piece you mention made on me a deep impression; which not even your criticism, greatly as I honor it, could obliterate, if we stood before the picture at this moment. What a melancholy object is a youth that must shut up within himself the sweet impulse, the fairest inheritance which nature has given us, and conceal in his own bosom the fire which should warm and animate himself and others, so that his vitals are wasted away by unutterable pains! I feel a pity for the ill-fated man that would consecrate himself to another, when the heart of that other has already found a worthy object of true and pure affection."

"Such feelings are, however, very foreign to the principles by which a lover of art examines the works of great painters; and most probably you, too, had the cabinet continued in your family, would have by and by acquired a relish for the works themselves, and have learned to see in the performances of art something more than yourself and your individual inclinations."

"In truth, the sale of that cabinet grieved me very much at the time; and often since I have thought of it with regret: but when I consider that it was a necessary means of awakening a taste in me, of developing a talent, which will operate far more powerfully on my history than ever those lifeless pictures could have done, I easily content myself, and honor destiny, which knows how to bring about what is best for me, and what is best for every one."

"It gives me pain to hear this word destiny in the mouth of a young person, just at the age when men are commonly accustomed to ascribe their own violent inclinations to the will of higher natures."

"You, then, do not believe in destiny? No power that rules over us and directs all for our ultimate advantage?"

"The question is not now of my belief, nor is this the place to explain how I may have attempted to form for myself some not impossible conception of things which are incomprehensible to all of us: the question here is, What mode of viewing them will profit us the most? The fabric of our life is formed of necessity and chance: the reason of man takes its station between them, and may rule them both; it treats the necessary as the groundwork of its being; the accidental it can direct and guide, and employ for its own purposes: and only while this principle of reason stands firm and inexpugnable, does man deserve to be named the god of this lower world. But woe to him who, from his youth, has used himself to search in necessity for something of arbitrary will; to ascribe to chance a sort of reason, which it is a matter of religion to obey. Is conduct like this aught else than to renounce

one's understanding, and give unrestricted scope to one's inclinations? We think it is a kind of piety to move along without consideration; to let accidents that please us determine our conduct; and, finally, to bestow on the result of such a vacillating life the name of providential guidance."

"Was it never your case that some little circumstance induced you to strike into a certain path, where some accidental occurrence ere long met you, and a series of unexpected incidents at length brought you to some point which you yourself had scarcely once contemplated? Should not lessons of this kind teach us obedience to destiny, confidence in some such guide?"

"With opinions like these, no woman could maintain her virtue, no man keep the money in his purse; for occasions enough are occurring to get rid of both. He alone is worthy of respect, who knows what is of use to himself and others, and who labors to control his self-will. Each man has his own fortune in his hands; as the artist has a piece of rude matter, which he is to fashion to a certain shape. But the art of living rightly is like all arts: the capacity alone is born with us; it must be learned, and practised with incessant care."

These discussions our two speculators carried on between them to considerable length: at last they parted without seeming to have wrought any special conviction in each other, but engaging to meet at an appointed place next day.

Wilhelm walked up and down the streets for a time: he heard a sound of clarinets, hunting-horns, and bassoons; it swelled his bosom with delightful feelings. It was some travelling showmen that produced this pleasant music. He spoke with them: for a piece of coin they followed him to Mariana's house. The space in front of the door was adorned with lofty trees; under them he placed his artists; and, himself resting on a bench at some distance, he surrendered his mind without restraint to the hovering tones which floated round him in the cool mellow night. Stretched out beneath the kind stars, he felt his existence like a golden dream. "She, too, hears these flutes," said he within his heart: "she feels whose remembrance, whose love of her, it is that makes the night full of music. In distance, even, we are united by these melodies, as in every separation, by the ethereal accordance of love. Ah! two hearts that love each other are as two magnetic needles: whatever moves the one must move the other with it; for it is one power that works in both, one principle that pervades them. Can I in her arms conceive the possibility of parting from her? And yet I am soon to be far from her, to seek out a sanctuary for our love, and then to have her ever with me.

"How often, when absent from her, and lost in thoughts about her, happening to touch a book, a piece of dress or aught else, have I thought I felt her hand, so entirely was I invested with her presence! And to recollect those moments which shunned the light of day and the eye of the cold spectator; which, to enjoy, the gods might determine to forsake the painless condition of their pure blessedness! To recollect them! As if by memory we could renew the tumultuous thrilling of that cup of joy, which encircles our senses with celestial bonds, and lifts them beyond all earthly hinderances. And her form" – He lost himself in thoughts of her; his rest passed away into longing; he leaned against a tree, and cooled his warm cheek on its bark; and the winds of the night wafted speedily aside the breath, which proceeded in sighs from his pure and impassioned bosom. He groped for the neckerchief he had taken from her; but it was forgotten, it lay in his other clothes. His frame quivered with emotion.

The music ceased, and he felt as if fallen from the element in which his thoughts had hitherto been soaring. His restlessness increased, as his feelings were no longer nourished and assuaged by the melody. He sat down upon her threshold, and felt more peace. He kissed the brass knocker of her door: he kissed the threshold over which her feet went out and in, and warmed it by the fire of his breast. He again sat still for a moment, and figured her behind her curtains in the white night-gown, with the red ribbon round her head, in sweet repose: he almost fancied that he was himself so near her, she must needs be dreaming of him. His thoughts were beautiful, like the spirits of the twilight; rest and desire alternated within him; love ran with a quivering hand, in a thousand moods, over all the chords of his soul; it was as if the spheres stood mute above him, suspending their eternal song to watch the low melodies of his heart.

Had he then had about him the master-key with which he used to open Mariana's door, he could not have restrained himself from penetrating into the sanctuary of love. Yet he went away slowly; he slanted, half-dreaming, in beneath the trees, set himself for home, and constantly turned round again; at last, with an effort, he constrained himself, and actually departed. At the corner of the street, looking back yet once, he imagined that he saw Mariana's door open, and a dark figure issue from it. He was too distant for seeing clearly; and, before he could exert himself and look sharply, the appearance was already lost in the night; yet afar off he thought he saw it again gliding past a white house. He stood, and strained his eyes; but, ere he could arouse himself and follow the phantom, it had vanished. Whither should he pursue it? What street had the man taken, if it were a man?

A nightly traveller, when at some turn of his path he has seen the country for an instant illuminated by a flash of lightning, will, with dazzled eyes, next moment, seek in vain for the preceding forms and the connection of his road; so was it in the eyes and the heart of Wilhelm. And as a spirit of midnight, which awakens unutterable terror, is, in the succeeding moments of composure, regarded as a child of imagination, and the fearful vision leaves doubts without end behind it in the soul; so likewise was Wilhelm in extreme disquietude, as, leaning on the corner-stone of the street, he heeded not the clear gray of the morning, and the crowing of the cocks; till the early trades began to stir, and drove him home.

On his way, he had almost effaced the unexpected delusion from his mind by the most sufficient reasons; yet the fine harmonious feelings of the night, on which he now looked back as if they too had been a vision, were also gone. To soothe his heart, and put the last seal on his returning belief, he took the neckerchief from the pocket of the dress he had been last wearing. The rustling of a letter which fell out of it took the kerchief away from his lips: he lifted and read, —

"As I love thee, little fool, what ailed thee last night? This evening I will come again. I can easily suppose that thou art sick of staying here so long: but have patience; at the fair I will return for thee. And observe, never more put me on that abominable black-green-brown jacket: thou lookest in it like the witch of Endor. Did I not send the white night-gown, that I might have a snowy little lambkin in my arms? Send thy letters always by the ancient sibyl: the Devil himself has selected her as Iris."

BOOK II

CHAPTER I

Whoever strives in our sight with vehement force to reach an object, be it one that we praise or that we blame, may count on exciting an interest in our minds; but, when once the matter is decided, we turn our eyes away from him: whatever once lies finished and done, can no longer at all fix our attention, especially if we at first prophesied an evil issue to the undertaking.

Therefore we shall not try to entertain our readers with any circumstantial account of the grief and desperation into which our ill-fated friend was cast, when he saw his hopes so unexpectedly and instantaneously ruined. On the contrary, we shall even pass over several years, and again take up our friend, where we hope to find him in some sort of activity and comfort. First, however, we must shortly set forth a few matters necessary for maintaining the connection of our narrative.

The pestilence, or a malignant fever, rages with more fierceness, and speedier effect, if the frame which it attacks was before healthy and full of vigor; and in like manner, when a luckless, unlooked-for fate overtook the wretched Wilhelm, his whole being in a moment was laid waste. As when by chance, in the preparation of some artificial firework, any part of the composition kindles before its time; and the skilfully bored and loaded barrels, which, arranged, and burning after a settled plan, would have painted in the air a magnificently varying series of flaming images, now hissing and roaring, promiscuously explode with a confused and dangerous crash, – so, in our hero's case, did happiness and hope, pleasure and joys, realities and dreams, clash together with destructive tumult, all at once in his bosom. In such desolate moments, the friend that has hastened to deliverance stands fixed in astonishment; and for him who suffers, it is a benefit that sense forsakes him.

Days of pain, unmixed, ever-returning, and purposely renewed, succeeded next: still, even these are to be regarded as a grace from nature. In such hours Wilhelm had not yet quite lost his mistress: his pains were indefatigable struggles, still to hold fast the happiness that was gliding from his soul; again to luxuriate in thought on the possibility of it; to procure a brief after-life for his joys that had departed forever. Thus one may look upon a body as not utterly dead while the putrefaction lasts; while the forces that in vain seek to work by their old appointment, still labor in dissevering the particles of that frame which they once animated; and not till all is disunited and inert, till we see the whole mouldered down into indifferent dust, – not till then does there rise in us the mournful, vacant sentiment of death, – death, not to be recalled, save by the breath of Him that lives forever.

In a temper so new, so entire, so full of love, there was much to tear asunder, to desolate, to kill; and even the healing force of youth gave nourishment and violence to the power of sorrow. The stroke had extended to the roots of his whole existence. Werner, by necessity his confidant, attacked the hated passion itself with fire and sword, resolutely zealous to search into the monster's inmost life. The opportunity was lucky, the evidence at hand, and many were the histories and narratives with which he backed it out. With such unrelenting vehemence did he make his advances, leaving his friend not even the respite of the smallest momentary self-deception, but treading down every lurking-place in which he might have saved himself from desperation, that Nature, not inclined to let her darling perish utterly, visited him with sickness, to make an outlet for him on the other side.

A violent fever, with its train of consequences, medicines, overstraining, and exhaustion, besides the unwearied attentions of his family, the love of his brothers and sisters, which first becomes truly sensible in times of distress and want, were so many fresh occupations to his mind, and thus formed a kind of painful entertainment. It was not till he grew better, in other words, till his strength was exhausted, that Wilhelm first looked down with horror into the gloomy abyss of a barren misery, as one looks down into the hollow crater of an extinguished volcano.

He now bitterly reproached himself, that, after so great a loss, he could yet enjoy one painless, restful, indifferent moment. He despised his own heart, and longed for the balm of tears and lamentation.

To awaken these again within him, he would recall to memory the scenes of his by-gone happiness. He would paint them to his fancy in the liveliest colors, transport himself again into the days when they were real; and when standing on the highest elevation he could reach, when the sunshine of past times again seemed to animate his limbs and heave his bosom, he would look back into the fearful chasm, would feast his eye on its dismembering depth, then plunge down into its horrors, and thus force from nature the bitterest pains. With such repeated cruelty did he tear himself in pieces; for youth, which is so rich in undeveloped force, knows not what it squanders when, to the anguish which a loss occasions, it adds so many sorrows of its own production, as if it meant then first to give the right value to what is gone forever. He likewise felt so convinced that his present loss was the sole, the first, the last, he ever could experience in life, that he turned away from every consolation which aimed at showing that his sorrows might be less than endless.

CHAPTER II

Accustomed in this way to torment himself, he now also attacked what still remained to him; what next to love, and along with it, had given him the highest joys and hopes, – his talent as a poet and actor, with spiteful criticisms on every side. In his labors he could see nothing but a shallow imitation of prescribed forms, without intrinsic worth: he looked on them as stiff school-exercises, destitute of any spark of nature, truth, or inspiration. His poems now appeared nothing more than a monotonous arrangement of syllables, in which the most trite emotions and thoughts were dragged along and kept together by a miserable rhyme. And thus did he also deprive himself of every expectation, every pleasure, which on this quarter at least might have aided the recovery of his peace.

With his theatric talent it fared no better. He blamed himself for not having sooner detected the vanity on which alone this pretension had been founded. His figure, his gait, his movements, his mode of declamation, were severally taxed: he decisively renounced every species of advantage or merit that might have raised him above the common run of men, and so doing he increased his mute despair to the highest pitch. For, if it is hard to give up a woman's love, no less painful is the task to part from the fellowship of the Muses, to declare ourselves forever undeserving to be of their community, and to forego the fairest and most immediate kind of approbation, what is openly bestowed on our person, our voice, and our demeanor.

Thus, then, our friend had long ago entirely resigned himself, and set about devoting his powers with the greatest zeal to the business of trade. To the surprise of friends, and to the great contentment of his father, no one was now more diligent than Wilhelm, on the exchange or in the counting-house, in the sale-room or the warehouses: correspondence and calculations, all that was intrusted to his charge, he attended to and managed with the greatest diligence and zeal. Not, in truth, with that warm diligence which to the busy man is its own reward, when he follows with constancy and order the employment he was born for, but with the silent diligence of duty, which has the best principle for its foundation; which is nourished by conviction, and rewarded by conscience; yet which oft, even when the clearest testimony of our minds is crowning it with approbation, can scarcely repress a struggling sigh.

In this manner he lived for a time, assiduously busied, and at last persuaded that his former hard trial had been ordained by fate for the best. He felt glad at having thus been timefully, though somewhat harshly, warned about the proper path of life; while many are constrained to expiate more heavily, and at a later age, the misconceptions into which their youthful inexperience has betrayed them. For each man commonly defends himself as long as possible from casting out the idols which he worships in his soul, from acknowledging a master error, and admitting any truth which brings him to despair.

Determined as he was to abandon his dearest projects, some time was still necessary to convince him fully of his misfortune. At last, however, he had so completely succeeded, by irrefragable reasons, in annihilating every hope of love, or poetical performance, or stage representation, that he took courage to obliterate entirely all the traces of his folly, – all that could in any way remind him of it. For this purpose he had lit a fire in his chamber, one cool evening, and brought out a little chest of relics, among which were multitudes of small articles, that, in memorable moments, he had begged or stolen from Mariana. Each withered flower brought to his mind the time when it bloomed fresh among her hair; each little note the happy hour to which it had invited him; each ribbon-knot the lovely resting-place of his head, – her beautiful bosom. So occupied, was it not to be expected that each emotion which he thought long since quite dead, should again begin to move? Was it not to be expected that the passion over which, when separated from his mistress, he had gained the victory, should, in the presence of these memorials, again gather strength? We first observe how dreary and disagreeable an

overclouded day is when a single sunbeam pierces through, and offers to us the exhilarating splendor of a serene hour.

Accordingly, it was not without disturbance that he saw these relics, long preserved as sacred, fade away from before him in smoke and flame. Sometimes he shuddered and hesitated in his task: he had still a pearl necklace and a flowered neckerchief in his hands, when he resolved to quicken the decaying fire with the poetical attempts of his youth.

Till now he had carefully laid up whatever had proceeded from his pen, since the earliest unfolding of his mind. His papers yet lay tied up in a bundle at the bottom of the chest, where he had packed them; purposing to take them with him in his elopement. How altogether different were his feelings now in opening them, and his feelings then in tying them together!

If we happen, under certain circumstances, to have written and sealed and despatched a letter to a friend, which, however, does not find him, but is brought back to us, and we open it at the distance of some considerable time, a singular emotion is produced in us, on breaking up our own seal, and conversing with our altered self as with a third person. A similar and deep feeling seized our friend, as he now opened this packet, and threw the scattered leaves into the fire; which was flaming fiercely with its offerings, when Werner entered, expressed his wonder at the blaze, and asked what was the matter.

"I am now giving proof," said Wilhelm, "that I am serious in abandoning a trade for which I was not born." And, with these words, he cast the second packet likewise into the fire. Werner made a motion to prevent him, but the business was already done.

"I cannot see how thou shouldst bring thyself to such extremities," said Werner. "Why must these labors, because they are not excellent, be annihilated?"

"Because either a poem is excellent, or it should not be allowed to exist. Because each man who has no gift for producing first-rate works, should entirely abstain from the pursuit of art, and seriously guard himself against every deception on that subject. For it must be owned, that in all men there is a certain vague desire to imitate whatever is presented to them; and such desires do not prove at all that we possess within us the force necessary for succeeding in these enterprises. Look at boys, how, whenever any rope-dancers have been visiting the town, they go scrambling up and down, and balancing on all the planks and beams within their reach, till some other charm calls them off to other sports, for which perhaps they are as little suited. Hast thou never marked it in the circle of our friends? No sooner does a *dilettante* introduce himself to notice, than numbers of them set themselves to learn playing on his instrument. How many wander back and forward on this bootless way! Happy they who soon detect the chasm that lies between their wishes and their powers!"

Werner contradicted this opinion: their discussion became lively, and Wilhelm could not without emotion employ against his friend the arguments with which he had already so frequently tormented himself. Werner maintained that it was not reasonable wholly to relinquish a pursuit for which a man had some propensity and talent, merely because he never could succeed in it to full perfection. There were many vacant hours, he said, which might be filled up by it; and then by and by some result might be produced which would yield a certain satisfaction to himself and others.

Wilhelm, who in this matter was of quite a different opinion, here interrupted him, and said with great vivacity, —

"How immensely, dear friend, do you err in believing that a work, the first presentation of which is to fill the whole soul, can be produced in broken hours scraped together from other extraneous employment. No: the poet must live wholly for himself, wholly in the objects that delight him. Heaven has furnished him internally with precious gifts; he carries in his bosom a treasure that is ever of itself increasing; he must also live with this treasure, undisturbed from without, in that still blessedness which the rich seek in vain to purchase with their accumulated stores. Look at men, how they struggle after happiness and satisfaction! Their wishes, their toil, their gold, are ever hunting restlessly, — and after what? After that which the poet has received from nature, — the right enjoyment of the world,

the feeling of himself in others, the harmonious conjunction of many things that will seldom exist together.

"What is it that keeps men in continual discontent and agitation? It is, that they cannot make realities correspond with their conceptions, that enjoyment steals away from among their hands, that the wished-for comes too late, and nothing reached and acquired produces on the heart the effect which their longing for it at a distance led them to anticipate. Now, fate has exalted the poet above all this, as if he were a god. He views the conflicting tumult of the passions; sees families and kingdoms raging in aimless commotion; sees those inexplicable enigmas of misunderstanding, which frequently a single monosyllable would suffice to explain, occasioning convulsions unutterably baleful. He has a fellow-feeling of the mournful and the joyful in the fate of all human beings. When the man of the world is devoting his days to wasting melancholy, for some deep disappointment, or, in the ebullience of joy, is going out to meet his happy destiny, the lightly moved and all-conceiving spirit of the poet steps forth, like the sun from night to day, and with soft transitions tunes his harp to joy or woe. From his heart, its native soil, springs up the lovely flower of wisdom; and if others, while waking, dream, and are pained with fantastic delusions from their every sense, he passes the dream of life like one awake; and the strangest of incidents is to him a part both of the past and of the future. And thus the poet is at once a teacher, a prophet, a friend of gods and men. What! thou wouldst have him descend from his height to some paltry occupation! He who is fashioned like the bird to hover round the world, to nestle on the lofty summits, to feed on buds and fruits, exchanging gayly one bough for another, *he* ought also to work at the plough like an ox; like a dog to train himself to the harness and draught; or perhaps, tied up in a chain, to guard a farmyard by his barking!"

Werner, it may well be supposed, had listened with the greatest surprise. "All true," he rejoined, "if men were but made like birds, and, though they neither spun nor weaved, could yet spend peaceful days in perpetual enjoyment; if, at the approach of winter, they could as easily betake themselves to distant regions, could retire before scarcity, and fortify themselves against frost."

"Poets have lived so," exclaimed Wilhelm, "in times when true nobleness was better revered; and so should they ever live! Sufficiently, provided for within, they had need of little from without: the gift of communicating lofty emotions and glorious images to men, in melodies and words that charmed the ear, and fixed themselves inseparably on whatever objects they referred to, of old enraptured the world, and served the gifted as a rich inheritance. At the courts of kings, at the tables of the great, beneath the windows of the fair, the sound of them was heard; while the ear and the soul were shut for all beside: and men felt as we do when delight comes over us, and we stop with rapture if, among the dingles we are crossing, the voice of the nightingale starts out touching and strong. They found a home in every habitation of the world, and the lowliness of their condition but exalted them the more. The hero listened to their songs, and the conqueror of the earth did reverence to a poet; for he felt, that, without poets, his own wild and vast existence would pass away like a whirlwind, and be forgotten forever. The lover wished that he could feel his longings and his joys so variedly and so harmoniously as the poet's inspired lips had skill to show them forth; and even the rich man could not of himself discern such costliness in his idol grandeurs, as when they were presented to him shining in the splendor of the poet's spirit, sensible to all worth, and exalting all. Nay, if thou wilt have it, who but the poet was it that first formed gods for us, that exalted us to them, and brought them down to us?"

"My friend," said Werner, after some reflection, "it has often grieved me that thou shouldst strive by force to banish from thy soul what thou feelest so vividly. I am greatly mistaken, if it were not better for thee in some degree to yield to these propensities, than to waste thyself by the contradictions of so hard a piece of self-denial, and with the enjoyment of this one guiltless pleasure to renounce the enjoyment of all others."

"Shall I confess it," said the other, "and wilt not thou laugh at me if I acknowledge, that these ideas pursue me constantly; that, let me flee from them as I will, when I explore my heart, I find all

my early wishes yet rooted there, firmly, – nay, more firmly than ever? Yet what now remains for me, wretched as I am? Ah! whoever should have told me that the arms of my spirit, with which I was grasping at infinity, and hoping with certainty to clasp something great and glorious, would so soon be crushed and smote in pieces, – whoever should have told me this, would have brought me to despair. And yet now, when judgment has been passed against me; now, when *she*, that was to be as my divinity to guide me to my wishes, is gone forever, – what remains but that I yield up my soul to the bitterest woes? O my brother! I will not deceive you: in my secret purposes, she was as the hook on which the ladder of my hopes was fixed. See! With daring aim the mountain adventurer hovers in the air: the iron breaks, and he lies broken and dismembered on the earth. No, there is no hope, no comfort for me more! I will not," he cried out, springing to his feet, "leave a single fragment of these wretched papers from the flames." He then seized one or two packets of them, tore them up, and threw them into the fire. Werner endeavored to restrain him, but in vain. "Let me alone!" cried Wilhelm: "what should these miserable leaves do here? To me they give neither pleasant recollections nor pleasant hopes. Shall they remain behind to vex me to the end of my life? Shall they perhaps one day serve the world for a jest, instead of awakening sympathy and horror? Woe to me! my doom is woe! Now I comprehend the wailings of the poets, of the wretched whom necessity has rendered wise. How long did I look upon myself as invulnerable and invincible; and, alas! I am now made to see that a deep and early sorrow can never heal, can never pass away: I feel that I shall take it with me to my grave. No! not a day of my life shall escape this anguish, which at last must crush me down; and *her* image too shall stay with me, shall live and die with me, the image of the worthless, – O my friend! if I must speak the feeling of my heart, – the perhaps not altogether worthless! Her situation, the crookedness of her destiny, have a thousand times excused her in my mind. I have been too cruel; you steeled me in your own cold unrelenting harshness; you held my wavering senses captive, and hindered me from doing for myself and her what I owed to both. Who knows to what a state I may have brought her! my conscience by degrees presents to me, in all its heaviness, in what helplessness, in what despair, I may have left her. Was it not possible that she might clear herself? Was it not possible? How many misconceptions throw the world into perplexity! how many circumstances may extort forgiveness for the greatest fault! Often do I figure her as sitting by herself in silence, leaning on her elbows. 'This,' she says, 'is the faith, the love, he swore to me! With this hard stroke to end the delicious life which made us one!'" He broke out into a stream of tears; while he threw himself down with his face upon the table, and wetted the remaining papers with his weeping.

Werner stood beside him in the deepest perplexity. He had not anticipated this fierce ebullition of feeling. More than once he had tried to interrupt his friend, more than once to lead the conversation elsewhere, but in vain: the current was too strong for him. It remained that long-suffering friendship should again take up her office. Werner allowed the first shock of sorrow to pass over, while by his silent presence he testified a pure and honest sympathy. And thus they both remained that evening, – Wilhelm sunk in the dull feeling of old sorrows; and the other terrified at this new outbreaking of a passion which he thought his prudent councils and keen persuasion had long since mastered and destroyed.

CHAPTER III

After such relapses, Wilhelm usually applied himself to business and activity with augmented ardor; and he found it the best means to escape the labyrinth into which he had again been tempted to enter. His attractive way of treating strangers, the ease with which he carried on a correspondence in any living language, more and more increased the hopes of his father and his trading-friends, and comforted them in their sorrow for his sickness, – the origin of which had not been known, – and for the pause which had thus interrupted their plan. They determined a second time on Wilhelm's setting out to travel; and we now find him on horseback, with his saddle-bags behind him, exhilarated by the motion and the free air, approaching the mountains, where he had some affairs to settle.

He wended slowly on his path, through dales and over hills, with a feeling of the greatest satisfaction. Overhanging cliffs, roaring brooks, moss-grown rocky walls, deep precipices, he here saw for the first time; yet his earliest dreams of youth had wandered among such regions. In these scenes he felt his age renewed; all the sorrows he had undergone were obliterated from his soul; with unbroken cheerfulness he repeated to himself passages of various poems, particularly of the "Pastor Fido," which, in these solitary places, flocked in crowds into his mind. He also recollected many pieces of his own songs, and recited them with a peculiar contentment. He peopled the world which lay before him with all the forms of the past, and each step into the future was to him full of augury of important operations and remarkable events.

Several men, who came behind him in succession, and saluted him as they passed by to continue their hasty way into the mountains, by steep footpaths, sometimes interrupted his thoughts without attracting his attention to themselves. At last a communicative traveller joined him, and explained the reason of this general pilgrimage.

"At Hochdorf," he said, "there is a play to be acted to-night; and the whole neighborhood is gathering to see it."

"What!" cried Wilhelm. "In these solitary hills, among these impenetrable forests, has theatric art sought out a place, and built herself a temple? And I am journeying to her festivities!"

"You will wonder more," said the other, "when you learn by whom the play is to be acted. There is in the place a large manufactory, which employs many people. The proprietor, who lives, so to speak, remote from all human society, can find no better means of entertaining his workmen during winter, than allowing them to act plays. He suffers no cards among them, and wishes also to withdraw them from all coarse rustic practices. Thus they pass the long evenings; and to-day, being the old gentleman's birthday, they are giving a particular festival in honor of him."

Wilhelm came to Hochdorf, where he was to pass the night, and alighted at the manufactory, the proprietor of which stood as a debtor in his list.

When he gave his name, the old man cried in a glad surprise, "Aye, sir, are you the son of that worthy man to whom I owe so many thanks, – so long have owed money? Your good father has had so much patience with me, I should be a knave if I did not pay you speedily and cheerfully. You come at the proper time to see that I am fully in earnest about it."

He then called out his wife, who seemed no less delighted than himself to see the youth: she declared that he was very like his father, and lamented, that, having such a multitude of guests already in the house, she could not lodge him for the night.

The account was clear, and quickly settled: Wilhelm put the roll of gold into his pocket, and wished that all his other business might go on so smoothly. At last the play-hour came: they now waited nothing but the coming of the head forester, who at length also arrived, entered with a few hunters, and was received with the greatest reverence.

The company was then led into the playhouse, formed out of a barn that lay close upon the garden. Without any extraordinary taste, both seats and stage were yet decked out in a cheerful and

pretty way. One of the painters employed in the manufactory had formerly worked as an understrapper at the prince's theatre: he had now represented woods and streets and chambers, somewhat rudely, it is true, yet so as to be recognized for such. The play itself they had borrowed from a strolling company, and shaped it aright, according to their own ideas. As it was, it did not fail to yield some entertainment. The plot of two lovers wishing to carry off a girl from her guardian, and mutually from one another, produced a great variety of interesting situations. Being the first play our friend had witnessed for so long a time, it suggested several reflections to him. It was full of action, but without any true delineation of character. It pleased and delighted. Such are always the beginnings of the scenic art. The rude man is contented if he see but something going on; the man of more refinement must be made to feel; the man entirely refined, desires to reflect.

The players he would willingly have helped here and there, for a very little would have made them greatly better.

His silent meditations were somewhat broken in upon by the tobacco-smoke, which now began to rise in great and greater copiousness. Soon after the commencement of the play, the head forester had lit his pipe: by and by others took the same liberty. The large dogs, too, which followed these gentlemen, introduced themselves in no pleasant style. At first they had been bolted out; but, soon finding the back-door passage, they entered on the stage, ran against the actors, and at last, jumping over the orchestra, joined their masters, who had taken up the front seats in the pit.

For afterpiece an oblation was represented. A portrait of the old gentleman in his bridegroom dress stood upon an altar, hung with garlands. All the players paid their reverence to it in the most submissive postures. The youngest child came forward dressed in white, and made a speech in verse; by which the whole family, and even the head forester himself, whom it brought in mind of his own children, were melted into tears. Thus ended the play; and Wilhelm could not help stepping on the stage, to have a closer view of the actresses, to praise them for their good performance, and give them a little counsel for the future.

The remaining business, which our friend in the following days had to transact in various quarters of the hill-country, was not all so pleasant, or so easy to conclude with satisfaction. Many of his debtors entreated for delay, many were uncourteous, many lied. In conformity with his instructions, he had to sue some of them at law; he was thus obliged to seek out advocates, and give instructions to them, to appear before judges, and go through many other sorry duties of the same sort.

His case was hardly bettered when people chanced to incline showing some attention to him. He found very few that could any way instruct him, few with whom he could hope to establish a useful commercial correspondence. Unhappily, moreover, the weather now grew rainy; and travelling on horseback in this district came to be attended with insufferable difficulties. He therefore thanked his stars on again getting near the level country; and at the foot of the mountains, looking out into a fertile and beautiful plain, intersected by a smooth-flowing river, and seeing a cheerful little town lying on its banks, all glittering in the sunshine, he resolved, though without any special business in the place, to pass a day or two there, that he might refresh both himself and his horse, which the bad roads had considerably injured.

CHAPTER IV

On alighting at an inn, upon the market-place, he found matters going on very joyously, – at least very stirringly. A large company of rope-dancers, leapers, and jugglers, having a strong man along with them, had just arrived with their wives and children, and, while preparing for a grand exhibition, kept up a perpetual racket. They first quarrelled with the landlord, then with one another; and, if their contention was intolerable, the expressions of their satisfaction were infinitely more so. Undetermined whether he should go or stay, he was standing in the door looking at some workmen, who had just begun to erect a stage in the middle of the square.

A girl with roses and other flowers for sale, coming by, held out her basket to him, and he purchased a beautiful nosegay; which, like one that had a taste for these things, he tied up in a different fashion, and was looking at it with a satisfied air, when the window of another inn on the opposite side of the square flew open, and a handsome woman looked out from it. Notwithstanding the distance, he observed that her face was animated by a pleasant cheerfulness; her fair hair fell carelessly streaming about her neck; she seemed to be looking at the stranger. In a short time afterwards, a boy with a white jacket, and a barber's apron on, came out from the door of her house towards Wilhelm, saluted him, and said, "The lady at the window bids me ask if you will not favor her with a share of your beautiful flowers." – "They are all at her service," answered Wilhelm, giving the nosegay to this nimble messenger, and making a bow to the fair one, who returned it with a friendly courtesy, and then withdrew from the window.

Amused with this small adventure, he was going up-stairs to his chamber, when a young creature sprang against him, and attracted his attention. A short silk waistcoat with slashed Spanish sleeves, tight trousers with puffs, looked very pretty on the child. Its long black hair was curled, and wound in locks and plaits about the head. He looked at the figure with astonishment, and could not determine whether to take it for a boy or a girl. However, he decided for the latter: and, as the child ran by, he took her up in his arms, bade her good-day, and asked her to whom she belonged; though he easily perceived that she must be a member of the vaulting and dancing company lately arrived. She viewed him with a dark, sharp side-look, as she pushed herself out of his arms, and ran into the kitchen without making any answer.

On coming up-stairs, he found in the large parlor two men practising the small sword, or seeming rather to make trial which was the better fencer. One of them plainly enough belonged to the vaulting company: the other had a somewhat less savage aspect. Wilhelm looked at them, and had reason to admire them both; and as the black-bearded, sturdy contender soon afterwards forsook the place of action, the other with extreme complaisance offered Wilhelm the rapier.

"If you want to take a scholar under your inspection," said our friend, "I am well content to risk a few passes with you."

Accordingly they fought together; and, although the stranger greatly overmatched his new competitor, he politely kept declaring that it all depended upon practice; in fact, Wilhelm, inferior as he was, had made it evident that he had got his first instructions from a good, solid, thorough-paced German fencing-master.

Their entertainment was disturbed by the uproar with which the party-colored brotherhood issued from the inn, to make proclamation of the show, and awaken a desire to see their art, throughout the town. Preceded by a drum, the manager advanced on horseback: he was followed by a female dancer mounted on a corresponding hack, and holding a child before her, all bedizened with ribbons and spangles. Next came the remainder of the troop on foot, some of them carrying children on their shoulders in dangerous postures, yet smoothly and lightly: among these the young, dark, black-haired figure again attracted Wilhelm's notice.

Pickleherring ran gayly up and down the crowded multitude, distributing his handbills with much practical fun, – here smacking the lips of a girl, there breeching a boy, and awakening generally among the people an invincible desire to know more of him.

On the painted flags, the manifold science of the company was visibly delineated, particularly of the Monsieur Narciss and the Demoiselle Landrinette: both of whom, being main characters, had prudently kept back from the procession, thereby to acquire a more dignified consideration, and excite a greater curiosity.

During the procession, Wilhelm's fair neighbor had again appeared at the window; and he did not fail to inquire about her of his new companion. This person, whom for the present we shall call Laertes, offered to take Wilhelm over and introduce him. "I and the lady," said he laughing, "are two fragments of an acting company that made shipwreck here a short while ago. The pleasantness of the place has induced us to stay in it, and consume our little stock of cash in peace; while one of our friends is out seeking some situation for himself and us."

Laertes immediately accompanied his new acquaintance to Philina's door; where he left him for a moment, and ran to a shop hard by for a few sweetmeats. "I am sure you will thank me," said he, on returning, "for procuring you so pleasant an acquaintance."

The lady came out from her room, in a pair of tight little slippers with high heels, to give them welcome. She had thrown a black mantle over her, above a white *negligée*, not indeed superstitiously clean; which, however, for that very reason, gave her a more frank and domestic air. Her short dress did not hide a pair of the prettiest feet and ankles in the world.

"You are welcome," she cried to Wilhelm, "and I thank you for your charming flowers." She led him into her chamber with the one hand, pressing the nosegay to her breast with the other. Being all seated, and got into a pleasant train of general talk, to which she had the art of giving a delightful turn, Laertes threw a handful of gingerbread-nuts into her lap; and she immediately began to eat them.

"Look what a child this young gallant is!" she said: "he wants to persuade you that I am fond of such confectionery, and it is himself that cannot live without licking his lips over something of the kind."

"Let us confess," replied Laertes, "that in this point, as in others, you and I go hand in hand. For example," he continued, "the weather is delightful to-day: what if we should take a drive into the country, and eat our dinner at the Mill?"

"With all my heart," said Philina: "we must give our new acquaintance some diversion."

Laertes sprang out, for he never walked: and Wilhelm motioned to return for a minute to his lodgings, to have his hair put in order; for at present it was all dishevelled with riding. "You can do it here," she said, then called her little servant, and constrained Wilhelm in the politest manner to lay off his coat, to throw her powder-mantle over him, and to have his head dressed in her presence. "We must lose no time," said she: "who knows how short a while we may all be together?"

The boy, out of sulkiness and ill nature more than want of skill, went on but indifferently with his task: he pulled the hair with his implements, and seemed as if he would not soon be done. Philina more than once reproved him for his blunders, and at last sharply packed him off, and chased him to the door. She then undertook the business herself, and frizzled Wilhelm's locks with great dexterity and grace; though she, too, appeared to be in no exceeding haste, but found always this and that to improve and put to rights; while at the same time she could not help touching his knees with hers, and holding her nosegay and bosom so near his lips, that he was strongly tempted more than once to imprint a kiss on it.

When Wilhelm had cleaned his brow with a little powder-knife, she said to him, "Put it in your pocket, and think of me when you see it." It was a pretty knife: the haft, of inlaid steel, had these friendly words wrought on it, "Think of me." Wilhelm put it up, and thanked her, begging permission at the same time to make her a little present in return.

At last they were in readiness. Laertes had brought round the coach, and they commenced a very gay excursion. To every beggar, Philina threw out money from the window; giving along with it a merry and friendly word.

Scarcely had they reached the Mill, and ordered dinner, when a strain of music struck up before the house. It was some miners singing various pretty songs, and accompanying their clear and shrill voices with a cithern and triangle. In a short while the gathering crowd had formed a ring about them, and our company nodded approbation to them from the windows. Observing this attention, they expanded their circle, and seemed making preparation for their grandest piece. After some pause, a miner stepped forward with a mattock in his hand; and, while the others played a serious tune, he set himself to represent the action of digging.

Ere long a peasant came from among the crowd, and, by pantomimic threats, let the former know that he must cease and remove. Our company were greatly surprised at this: they did not discover that the peasant was a miner in disguise, till he opened his mouth, and, in a sort of recitative, rebuked the other for daring to meddle with his field. The latter did not lose his composure of mind, but began to inform the husbandman about his right to break ground there; giving him withal some primary conceptions of mineralogy. The peasant, not being master of his foreign terminology, asked all manner of silly questions; whereat the spectators, as themselves more knowing, set up many a hearty laugh. The miner endeavored to instruct him, and showed him the advantage, which, in the long-run, would reach even him, if the deep-lying treasures of the land were dug out from their secret beds. The peasant, who at first had threatened his instructor with blows, was gradually pacified; and they parted good friends at last, though it was the miner chiefly that got out of this contention with honor.

"In this little dialogue," said Wilhelm, when seated at the table, "we have a lively proof how useful the theatre might be to all ranks; what advantage even the state might procure from it, if the occupations, trades, and undertakings of men were brought upon the stage, and presented on their praiseworthy side, in that point of view in which the state itself should honor and protect them. As matters stand, we exhibit only the ridiculous side of men: the comic poet is, as it were, but a spiteful tax-gatherer, who keeps a watchful eye over the errors of his fellow-subjects, and seems gratified when he can fix any charge upon them. Might it not be a worthy and pleasing task for a statesman to survey the natural and reciprocal influence of all classes on each other, and to guide some poet, gifted with sufficient humor, in such labors as these? In this way, I am persuaded, many very entertaining, both agreeable and useful, pieces, might be executed."

"So far," said Laertes, "as I, in wandering about the world, have been able to observe, statesmen are accustomed merely to forbid, to hinder, to refuse, but very rarely to invite, to further, to reward. They let all things go along, till some mischief happens: then they get into a rage, and lay about them."

"A truce with state and statesmen!" said Philina: "I cannot form a notion of statesmen except in periwigs; and a periwig, wear it who will, always gives my fingers a spasmodic motion: I could like to pluck it off the venerable gentleman, to skip up and down the room with it, and laugh at the bald head."

So, with a few lively songs, which she could sing very beautifully, Philina cut short their conversation, and urged them to a quick return homewards, that they might arrive in time for seeing the performance of the rope-dancers in the evening. On the road back she continued her lavish generosity, in a style of gayety reaching to extravagance; for at last, every coin belonging to herself or her companions being spent, she threw her straw hat from the window to a girl, and her neckerchief to an old woman, who asked her for alms.

Philina invited both of her attendants to her own apartments, because, she said, the spectacle could be seen more conveniently from her windows than from theirs.

On arriving, they found the stage set up, and the background decked with suspended carpets. The swing-boards were already fastened, the slack-rope fixed to posts, the tight-rope bound over

trestles. The square was moderately filled with people, and the windows with spectators of some quality.

Pickleherring, with a few insipidities, at which the lookers-on are generally kind enough to laugh, first prepared the meeting to attention and good-humor. Some children, whose bodies were made to exhibit the strangest contortions, awakened astonishment or horror; and Wilhelm could not, without the deepest sympathy, see the child he had at the first glance felt an interest in, go through her fantastic positions with considerable difficulty. But the merry tumblers soon changed the feeling into that of lively satisfaction, when they first singly, then in rows, and at last all together, vaulted up into the air, making somersets backwards and forwards. A loud clapping of hands and a strong huzza echoed from the whole assembly.

The general attention was next directed to quite a different object. The children in succession had to mount the rope, – the learners first, that by practising they might prolong the spectacle, and show the difficulties of the art more clearly. Some men and full-grown women likewise exhibited their skill to moderate advantage; but still there was no Monsieur Narciss, no Demoiselle Landrinette.

At last this worthy pair came forth: they issued from a kind of tent with red spread curtains, and, by their agreeable forms and glittering decorations, fulfilled the hitherto increasing hopes of the spectators. He, a hearty knave, of middle stature, with black eyes and a strong head of hair; she, formed with not inferior symmetry, – exhibited themselves successively upon the rope, with delicate movements, leaping, and singular postures. Her airy lightness, his audacity; the exactitude with which they both performed their feats of art, – raised the universal satisfaction higher at every step and spring. The stateliness with which they bore themselves, the seeming attentions of the rest to them, gave them the appearance of king and queen of the whole troop; and all held them worthy of the rank.

The animation of the people spread to the spectators at the windows: the ladies looked incessantly at Narciss, the gentlemen at Landrinette. The populace hurraed, the more cultivated public could not keep from clapping of the hands: Pickleherring now could scarcely raise a laugh. A few, however, slunk away when some members of the troop began to press through the crowd with their tin plates to collect money.

"They have made their purpose good, I imagine," said Wilhelm to Philina, who was leaning over the window beside him. "I admire the ingenuity with which they have turned to advantage even the meanest parts of their performance: out of the unskilfulness of their children, and exquisiteness of their chief actors, they have made up a whole which at first excited our attention, and then gave us very fine entertainment."

The people by degrees dispersed; and the square was again become empty, while Philina and Laertes were disputing about the forms and the skill of Narciss and Landrinette, and rallying each other on the subject at great length. Wilhelm noticed the wonderful child standing on the street near some other children at play: he showed her to Philina, who, in her lively way, immediately called and beckoned to the little one, and, this not succeeding, tripped singing down stairs, and led her up by the hand.

"Here is the enigma," said she, as she brought her to the door. The child stood upon the threshold, as if she meant again to run off; laid her right hand on her breast, the left on her brow, and bowed deeply. "Fear nothing, my little dear," said Wilhelm, rising, and going towards her. She viewed him with a doubting look, and came a few steps nearer.

"What is thy name?" he asked. "They call me Mignon." – "How old art thou?" – "No one has counted." – "Who was thy father?" – "The Great Devil is dead."

"Well! this is singular enough," said Philina. They asked her a few more questions: she gave her answers in a kind of broken German, and with a strangely solemn manner; every time laying her hands on her breast and brow, and bowing deeply.

Wilhelm could not satisfy himself with looking at her. His eyes and his heart were irresistibly attracted by the mysterious condition of this being. He reckoned her about twelve or thirteen years of

age: her body was well formed, only her limbs gave promise of a stronger growth, or else announced a stunted one. Her countenance was not regular, but striking; her brow full of mystery; her nose extremely beautiful; her mouth, although it seemed too closely shut for one of her age, and though she often threw it to a side, had yet an air of frankness, and was very lovely. Her brownish complexion could scarcely be discerned through the paint. This form stamped itself deeply in Wilhelm's soul: he kept looking at her earnestly, and forgot the present scene in the multitude of his reflections. Philina waked him from his half-dream, by holding out the remainder of her sweetmeats to the child, and giving her a sign to go away. She made her little bow as formerly, and darted like lightning through the door.

As the time drew on when our new friends had to part for the evening, they planned a fresh excursion for the morrow. They purposed now to have their dinner at a neighboring *Jägerhaus*. Before taking leave of Laertes, Wilhelm said many things in Philina's praise, to which the other made only brief and careless answers.

Next morning, having once more exercised themselves in fencing for an hour, they went over to Philina's lodging, towards which they had seen their expected coach passing by. But how surprised was Wilhelm, when the coach seemed altogether to have vanished; and how much more so, when Philina was not to be found at home! She had placed herself in the carriage, they were told, with a couple of strangers who had come that morning, and was gone with them. Wilhelm had been promising himself some pleasant entertainment from her company, and could not hide his irritation. Laertes, on the other hand, but laughed at it, and cried, "I love her for this: it looks so like herself! Let us, however, go directly to the *Jägerhaus*: be Philina where she pleases, we will not lose our promenade on her account."

As Wilhelm, while they walked, continued censuring the inconsistency of such conduct, Laertes said, "I cannot reckon it inconsistent so long as one keeps faithful to his character. If this Philina plans you any thing, or promises you any thing, she does it under the tacit condition that it shall be quite convenient for her to fulfil her plan, to keep her promise. She gives willingly, but you must ever hold yourself in readiness to return her gifts."

"That seems a singular character," said Wilhelm.

"Any thing but singular: only she is not a hypocrite. I like her on that account. Yes: I am her friend, because she represents the sex so truly, which I have so much cause to hate. To me she is another genuine Eve, the great mother of womankind: so are they all, only they will not all confess it."

With abundance of such talk, in which Laertes very vehemently exhibited his spleen against the fair sex, without, however, giving any cause for it, they arrived at the forest; into which Wilhelm entered in no joyful mood, the speeches of Laertes having again revived in him the memory of his relation to Mariana. Not far from a shady well, among some old and noble trees, they found Philina sitting by herself at a stone table. Seeing them, she struck up a merry song; and, when Laertes asked for her companions, she cried out, "I have already cozened them: I have already had my laugh at them, and sent them a-travelling, as they deserved. By the way hither I had put to proof their liberality; and, finding that they were a couple of your close-fisted gentry, I immediately determined to have amends of them. On arriving at the inn, they asked the waiter what was to be had. He, with his customary glibness of tongue, reckoned over all that could be found in the house, and more than could be found. I noticed their perplexity: they looked at one another, stammered, and inquired about the cost. "What is the use of all this studying?" said I. "The table is the lady's business: allow me to manage it." I immediately began ordering a most unconscionable dinner, for which many necessary articles would require to be sent for from the neighborhood. The waiter, of whom, by a wry mouth or two, I had made a confidant, at last helped me out; and so, by the image of a sumptuous feast, we tortured them to such a degree that they fairly determined on having a walk in the forest, from which I imagine we shall look with clear eyes if we see them come again. I have laughed a quarter of an hour for my own

behoof; I shall laugh forever when I think of the looks they had." At table, Laertes told of similar adventures: they got into the track of recounting ludicrous stories, mistakes, and dexterous cheats.

A young man of their acquaintance, from the town, came gliding through the wood with a book in his hand: he sat down by them, and began praising the beauty of the place. He directed their attention to the murmuring of the brook, to the waving of the boughs, to the checkered lights and shadows, and the music of the birds. Philina commenced a little song of the cuckoo, which did not seem at all to exhilarate the man of taste: he very soon made his compliments, and went on.

"Oh that I might never hear more of nature, and scenes of nature!" cried Philina, so soon as he was gone: "there is nothing in the world more intolerable than to hear people reckon up the pleasures you enjoy. When the day is bright you go to walk, as to dance when you hear a tune played. But who would think a moment on the music or the weather? It is the dancer that interests us, not the violin; and to look upon a pair of bright black eyes is the life of a pair of blue ones. But what on earth have we to do with wells and brooks, and old rotten lindens?" She was sitting opposite to Wilhelm; and, while speaking so, she looked into his eyes with a glance which he could not hinder from piercing at least to the very door of his heart.

"You are right," replied he, not without embarrassment: "man is ever the most interesting object to man, and perhaps should be the only one that interests. Whatever else surrounds us is but the element in which we live, or else the instrument which we employ. The more we devote ourselves to such things, the more we attend to and feel concern in them, the weaker will our sense of our own dignity become, the weaker our feelings for society. Men who put a great value on gardens, buildings, clothes, ornaments, or any other sort of property, grow less social and pleasant: they lose sight of their brethren, whom very few can succeed in collecting about them and entertaining. Have you not observed it on the stage? A good actor makes us very soon forget the awkwardness and meanness of paltry decorations, but a splendid theatre is the very thing which first makes us truly feel the want of proper actors."

After dinner Philina sat down among the long, overshadowed grass, and commanded both her friends to fetch her flowers in great quantities. She wreathed a complete garland, and put it round her head: it made her look extremely charming. The flowers were still sufficient for another: this, too, she plaited, while both the young men sat beside her. When, at last, amid infinite mirth and sportfulness, it was completed, she pressed it on Wilhelm's head with the greatest dignity, and shifted the posture of it more than once, till it seemed to her properly adjusted. "And I, it appears, must go empty," said Laertes.

"Not by any means: you shall not have reason to complain," replied Philina, taking off the garland from her own head, and putting it on his.

"If we were rivals," said Laertes, "we might now dispute very warmly which of us stood higher in thy favor."

"And the more fools you," said she, while she bent herself towards him, and offered him her lips to kiss; and then immediately turned round, threw her arm about Wilhelm, and bestowed a kind salute on him also. "Which of them tastes best?" said she archly.

"Surprisingly!" exclaimed Laertes: "it seems as if nothing else had ever such a tang of wormwood in it."

"As little wormwood," she replied, "as any gift that a man may enjoy without envy and without conceit. But now," cried she, "I should like to have an hour's dancing; and after that we must look to our vaulters."

Accordingly, they went into the house, and there found music in readiness. Philina was a beautiful dancer: she animated both her companions. Nor was Wilhelm without skill; but he wanted careful practice, a defect which his two friends voluntarily took charge of remedying.

In these amusements the time passed on insensibly. It was already late when they returned. The rope-dancers had commenced their operations. A multitude of people had again assembled in

the square; and our friends, on alighting, were struck by the appearance of a tumult in the crowd, occasioned by a throng of men rushing towards the door of the inn, which Wilhelm had now turned his face to. He sprang forward to see what it was; and, pressing through the people, he was struck with horror to observe the master of the rope-dancing company dragging poor Mignon by the hair out of the house, and unmercifully beating her little body with the handle of a whip.

Wilhelm darted on the man like lightning, and seized him by the collar. "Quit the child!" he cried, in a furious tone, "or one of us shall never leave this spot!" and, so speaking, he grasped the fellow by the throat with a force which only rage could have lent him. The showman, on the point of choking, let go the child, and endeavored to defend himself against his new assailant. But some people, who had felt compassion for Mignon, yet had not dared to begin a quarrel for her, now laid hold of the rope-dancer, wrenched his whip away, and threatened him with great fierceness and abuse. Being now reduced to the weapons of his mouth, he began bullying, and cursing horribly. The lazy, worthless urchin, he said, would not do her duty; refused to perform the egg-dance, which he had promised to the public; he would beat her to death, and no one should hinder him. He tried to get loose, and seek the child, who had crept away among the crowd. Wilhelm held him back, and said sternly, "You shall neither see nor touch her, till you have explained before a magistrate where you stole her. I will pursue you to every extremity. You shall not escape me." These words, which Wilhelm uttered in heat, without thought or purpose, out of some vague feeling, or, if you will, out of inspiration, soon brought the raging showman to composure. "What have I to do with the useless brat?" cried he. "Pay me what her clothes cost, and make of her what you please. We shall settle it to-night." And, being liberated, he made haste to resume his interrupted operations, and to calm the irritation of the public by some striking displays of his craft.

As soon as all was still again, Wilhelm commenced a search for Mignon, whom, however, he could nowhere find. Some said they had seen her on the street, others on the roofs of the adjoining houses; but, after seeking unsuccessfully in all quarters, he was forced to content himself, and wait to see if she would not again turn up of herself.

In the mean time, Narciss had come into the house; and Wilhelm set to question him about the birthplace and history of the child. Monsieur Narciss knew nothing about these things, for he had not long been in the company; but in return he recited, with much volubility and levity, various particulars of his own fortune. Upon Wilhelm's wishing him joy of the great approbation he had gained, Narciss expressed himself as if exceedingly indifferent on that point. "People laugh at us," he said, "and admire our feats of skill; but their admiration does nothing for us. The master has to pay us, and may raise the funds where he pleases." He then took his leave, and was setting off in great haste.

At the question, whither he was bent so fast, the dog gave a smile, and admitted that his figure and talents had acquired for him a more solid species of favor than the huzzaing of the multitude. He had been invited by some young ladies, who desired much to become acquainted with him; and he was afraid it would be midnight before he could get all his visits over. He proceeded with the greatest candor to detail his adventures. He would have given the names of his patronesses, their streets and houses, had not Wilhelm waived such indiscretion, and politely dismissed him.

Laertes had meanwhile been entertaining Landrinette: he declared that she was fully worthy to be and to remain a woman.

Our friend next proceeded to his bargain with the showman for Mignon. Thirty crowns was the price set upon her; and for this sum the black-bearded, hot Italian entirely surrendered all his claims: but of her history or parentage he would discover nothing, only that she had fallen into his hands at the death of his brother, who, by reason of his admirable skill, had usually been named the "Great Devil."

Next morning was chiefly spent in searching for the child. It was in vain that they rummaged every hole and corner of the house and neighborhood: the child had vanished; and Wilhelm was afraid she might have leaped into some pool of water, or destroyed herself in some other way.

Philina's charms could not divert his inquietude. He passed a dreary, thoughtful day. Nor at evening could the utmost efforts of the tumblers and dancers, exerting all their powers to gratify the public, divert the current of his thoughts, or clear away the clouds from his mind.

By the concourse of people flocking from all places round, the numbers had greatly increased on this occasion: the general approbation was like a snowball rolling itself into a monstrous size. The feat of leaping over swords, and through the cask with paper ends, made a great sensation.

The strong man, too, produced a universal feeling of mingled astonishment and horror, when he laid his head and feet on a couple of separate stools, and then allowed some sturdy smiths to place a stithy on the unsupported part of his body, and hammer a horseshoe till it was completely made by means of it.

The Hercules' Strength, as they called it, was a no less wonderful affair. A row of men stood up; then another row, upon their shoulders; then women and young lads, supported in like manner on the second row; so that finally a living pyramid was formed; the peak being ornamented by a child, placed on its head, and dressed out in the shape of a ball and weather-vane. Such a sight, never witnessed in those parts before, gave a worthy termination to the whole performance. Narciss and Landrinette were then borne in litters, on the shoulders of the rest, along the chief streets of the town, amid the triumphant shouts of the people. Ribbons, nosegays, silks, were thrown upon them: all pressed to get a sight of them. Each thought himself happy if he could behold them, and be honored with a look of theirs.

"What actor, what author, nay, what man of any class, would not regard himself as on the summit of his wishes, could he, by a noble saying or a worthy action, produce so universal an impression? What a precious emotion would it give, if one could disseminate generous, exalted, manly feelings with electric force and speed, and rouse assembled thousands into such rapture, as these people, by their bodily alertness, have done! If one could communicate to thronging multitudes a fellow-feeling in all that belongs to man, by the portraying of happiness and misery, of wisdom and folly, nay, of absurdity and silliness; could kindle and thrill their inmost souls, and set their stagnant nature into movement, free, vehement, and pure!" So said our friend; and, as neither Laertes nor Philina showed any disposition to take part in such a strain, he entertained himself with these darling speculations, walking up and down the streets till late at night, and again pursuing, with all the force and vivacity of a liberated imagination, his old desire to have all that was good and noble and great embodied and shown forth by the theatric art.

CHAPTER V

Next morning, the rope-dancers, not without much parade and bustle, having gone away, Mignon immediately appeared, and came into the parlor as Wilhelm and Laertes were busy fencing. "Where hast thou been hid?" said Wilhelm, in a friendly tone. "Thou hast given us a great deal of anxiety." The child looked at him, and answered nothing. "Thou art ours now," cried Laertes: "we have bought thee." – "For how much?" inquired the child quite coolly. "For a hundred ducats," said the other: "pay them again, and thou art free." – "Is that very much?" she asked. "Oh, yes! thou must now be a good child." – "I will try," she said.

From that moment she observed strictly what services the waiter had to do for both her friends; and, after next day, she would not any more let him enter the room. She persisted in doing every thing herself, and accordingly went through her duties, slowly, indeed, and sometimes awkwardly, yet completely, and with the greatest care.

She was frequently observed going to a basin of water, and washing her face with such diligence and violence, that she almost wore the skin from her cheeks; till Laertes, by dint of questions and reproofs, learned that she was striving by all means to get the paint from her skin, and that, in her zealous endeavors towards this object, she had mistaken the redness produced by rubbing for the most obdurate dye. They set her right on this point, and she ceased her efforts; after which, having come again to her natural state, she exhibited a fine brown complexion, beautiful, though sparingly intermingled with red.

The siren charms of Philina, the mysterious presence of the child, produced more impression on our friend than he liked to confess: he passed several days in that strange society, endeavoring to elude self-reproaches by a diligent practice of fencing and dancing, – accomplishments which he believed might not again be put within his reach so conveniently.

It was with great surprise, and not without a certain satisfaction, that he one day observed Herr Melina and his wife alight at the inn. After the first glad salutation, they inquired about "the lady-manager and the other actors," and learned, with astonishment and terror, that the lady-manager had long since gone away, and her actors, to a very few, dispersed themselves about the country.

This couple, subsequently to their marriage, in which, as we know, our friend did his best to serve them, had been travelling about in various quarters, seeking an engagement, without finding any, and had at last been directed to this little town by some persons who met them on their journey, and said there was a good theatre in the place.

Melina by no means pleased the lively Laertes, when introduced to him, any more than his wife did Philina. Both heartily wished to be rid of these new-comers; and Wilhelm could inspire them with no favorable feelings on the subject, though he more than once assured them that the Melinas were very worthy people.

Indeed, the previous merry life of our three adventurers was interfered with by this extension of their society, in more ways than one. Melina had taken up his quarters in the inn where Philina staid, and he very soon began a system of cheapening and higgling. He would have better lodging, more sumptuous diet, and readier attendance, for a smaller charge. In a short while, the landlord and waiter showed very rueful looks; for whereas the others, to get pleasantly along, had expressed no discontent with any thing, and paid instantly, that they might avoid thinking longer of payment, Melina now insisted on regulating every meal, and investigating its contents beforehand, – a species of service for which Philina named him, without scruple, a ruminating animal.

Yet more did the merry girl hate Melina's wife. Frau Melina was a young woman not without culture, but wofully defective in soul and spirit. She could declaim not badly, and kept declaiming constantly; but it was easy to observe that her performances were little more than recitations of words. She labored a few detached passages, but never could express the feeling of the whole. Withal,

however, she was seldom disagreeable to any one, especially to men. On the contrary, people who enjoyed her acquaintance commonly ascribed to her a fine understanding; for she was what might be called a kind of *spiritual chameleon*, or *taker-on*. Any friend whose favor she had need of she could flatter with peculiar adroitness, could give in to his ideas so long as she could understand them, and, when they went beyond her own horizon, could hail with ecstasy such new and brilliant visions. She understood well when to speak and when to keep silence; and, though her disposition was not spiteful, she could spy out with great expertness where another's weak side lay.

CHAPTER VI

Melina, in the mean time, had been making strict inquiry about the wrecks of the late theatrical establishment. The wardrobe, as well as decorations, had been pawned with some traders; and a notary had been empowered, under certain conditions, to dispose of them by sale, should purchasers occur. Melina wished to see this ware, and he took Wilhelm with him. No sooner was the room opened, than our friend felt towards its contents a kind of inclination, which he would not confess to himself. Sad as was the state of the blotched and tarnished decorations; little showy as the Turkish and pagan garments, the old farce-coats for men and women, the cowls for enchanters, priests, and Jews, might be, – he was not able to exclude the feeling, that the happiest moments of his life had been spent in a similar magazine of frippery. Could Melina have seen into his heart, he would have urged him more pressingly to lay out a sum of money in liberating these scattered fragments, in furbishing them up, and again combining them into a beautiful whole. "What a happy man could I be," cried Melina, "had I but two hundred crowns, to get into my hands, for a beginning, these fundamental necessities of a theatre! How soon should I get up a little playhouse, that would draw contributions from the town and neighborhood, and maintain us all!" Wilhelm was silent. They left these treasures of the stage to be again locked up, and both went away in a reflective mood.

Thenceforth Melina talked of nothing else but projects and plans for setting up a theatre, and gaining profit by it. He tried to interest Philina and Laertes in his schemes; and proposals were made to Wilhelm about advancing money, and taking them as his security. On this occasion, Wilhelm first clearly perceived that he was lingering too long here: he excused himself, and set about making preparations for departure.

In the mean time, Mignon's form, and manner of existence, were growing more attractive to him every day. In her whole system of proceedings there was something very singular. She never walked up or down the stairs, but jumped. She would spring along by the railing, and before you were aware would be sitting quietly above upon the landing. Wilhelm had observed, also, that she had a different sort of salutation for each individual. For himself, it had of late been with her arms crossed upon her breast. Often for the whole day she was mute. At times she answered various questions more freely, yet always strangely: so that you could not determine whether it was caused by shrewd sense, or ignorance of the language; for she spoke in broken German interlaced with French and Italian. In Wilhelm's service she was indefatigable, and up before the sun. On the other hand, she vanished early in the evening, went to sleep in a little room upon the bare floor, and could not by any means be induced to take a bed or even a *paillasse*. He often found her washing herself. Her clothes, too, were kept scrupulously clean; though nearly all about her was quilted two or three plies thick. Wilhelm was moreover told, that she went every morning early to hear mass. He followed her on one occasion, and saw her kneeling down with a rosary in a corner of the church, and praying devoutly. She did not observe him; and he returned home, forming many a conjecture about this appearance, yet unable to arrive at any probable conclusion.

A new application from Melina for a sum of money to redeem the often-mentioned stage apparatus caused Wilhelm to think more seriously than ever about setting off. He proposed writing to his people, who for a long time had heard no tidings of him, by the very earliest post. He accordingly commenced a letter to Werner, and had advanced a considerable way with the history of his adventures, in recounting which he had more than once unintentionally swerved a little from the truth, when, to his vexation and surprise, he observed, upon the back of his sheet, some verses which he had been copying from his album for Madam Melina. Out of humor at this mistake, he tore the paper in pieces, and put off repeating his confession till the next post-day.

CHAPTER VII

Our party was now again collected; and Philina, who always kept a sharp lookout on every horse or carriage that passed by, exclaimed with great eagerness, "Our Pedant! Here comes our dearest Pedant! Who the deuce is it he has with him?" Speaking thus, she beckoned at the window; and the vehicle drew up.

A woful-looking genius, whom by his shabby coat of grayish brown, and his ill-conditioned lower garments, you must have taken for some unprosperous preceptor, of the sort that moulder in our universities, now descended from the carriage, and, taking off his hat to salute Philina, discovered an ill-powdered, but yet very stiff, periwig; while Philina threw a hundred kisses of the hand towards him.

As Philina's chief enjoyment lay in loving one class of men, and being loved by them; so there was a second and hardly inferior satisfaction, wherewith she entertained herself as frequently as possible; and this consisted in hoodwinking and passing jokes upon the other class, whom at such moments she happened not to love, – all which she could accomplish in a very sprightly style.

Amid the flourish which she made in receiving this old friend, no attention was bestowed upon the rest who followed him. Yet among the party were an oldish man and two young girls, whom Wilhelm thought he knew. Accordingly it turned out, that he had often seen them all, some years ago, in a company then playing in his native town. The daughters had grown since that period: the old man was a little altered. He commonly enacted those good-hearted, boisterous old gentlemen, whom the German theatre is never without, and whom, in common life, one also frequently enough falls in with. For as it is the character of our countrymen to do good, and cause it, without pomp or circumstance; so they seldom consider that there is likewise a mode of doing what is right with grace and dignity: more frequently, indeed, they yield to the spirit of contradiction, and fall into the error of deforming their dearest virtue by a surly mode of putting it in practice.

Such parts our actor could play very well; and he played them so often and exclusively, that he had himself taken up the same turn of proceeding in his ordinary life.

On recognizing him, Wilhelm was seized with a strong commotion; for he recollected how often he had seen this man on the stage with his beloved Mariana: he still heard him scolding, still heard the small, soothing voice, with which in many characters she had to meet his rugged temper.

The first anxious question put to the strangers, – Whether they had heard of any situation in their travels? – was answered, alas, with No! and, to complete the information, it was further added, that all the companies they had fallen in with were not only supplied with actors, but many of them were afraid lest, on account of the approaching war, they should be forced to separate. Old Boisterous, with his daughters, moved by spleen and love of change, had given up an advantageous engagement: then, meeting with the Pedant by the way, they had hired a carriage to come hither; where, as they found, good counsel was still dear, needful to have, and difficult to get.

The time while the rest were talking very keenly of their circumstances, Wilhelm spent in thought. He longed to speak in private with the old man: he wished and feared to hear of Mariana, and felt the greatest disquietude.

The pretty looks of the stranger damsels could not call him from his dream; but a war of words, which now arose, awakened his attention. It was Friedrich, the fair-haired boy who used to attend Philina, stubbornly refusing, on this occasion, to cover the table and bring up dinner. "I engaged to serve you," he cried, "but not to wait on everybody." They fell into a hot contest. Philina insisted that he should do his duty; and, as he obstinately refused, she told him plainly he might go about his business.

"You think, perhaps, I cannot leave you!" cried he sturdily, then went to pack up his bundle, and soon hastily quitted the house.

"Go, Mignon," said Philina, "and get us what we want; tell the waiter, and help him to attend us."

Mignon came before Wilhelm, and asked in her laconic way, "Shall I? May I?" To which Wilhelm answered, "Do all the lady bids thee, child."

She accordingly took charge of every thing, and waited on the guests the whole evening, with the utmost carefulness. After dinner, Wilhelm proposed to have a walk with the old man alone. Succeeding in this, after many questions about his late wanderings, the conversation turned upon the former company; and Wilhelm hazarded a question touching Mariana.

"Do not speak to me of that despicable creature!" cried the old man: "I have sworn to think of her no more." Terrified at this speech, Wilhelm felt still more embarrassed, as the old man proceeded to vituperate her fickleness and wantonness. Most gladly would our friend have broken off the conversation, but now it was impossible: he was obliged to undergo the whole tumultuous effusions of this strange old gentleman.

"I am ashamed," continued he, "that I felt such a friendship for her. Yet, had you known the girl better, you would excuse me. She was so pretty, so natural and good, so pleasing, in every sense so tolerable, I could never have supposed that ingratitude and impudence were to prove the chief features of her character."

Wilhelm had nerved himself to hear the worst of her; when all at once he observed, with astonishment, that the old man's tones grew milder, his voice faltered, and he took out his handkerchief to dry the tears, which at last began to trickle down his cheeks.

"What is the matter with you?" cried Wilhelm. "What is it that suddenly so changes the current of your feelings? Conceal it not from me. I take a deeper interest in the fate of this girl than you suppose. Only tell me all."

"I have not much to say," replied the old man, again taking up his earnest, angry tone. "I have suffered more from her than I shall ever forgive. She had always a kind of trust in me. I loved her as my own daughter; indeed, while my wife lived, I had formed a resolution to take the creature to my own house, and save her from the hands of that old crone, from whose guidance I boded no good. But my wife died, and the project went to nothing.

"About the end of our stay in your native town, – it is not quite three years ago, – I noticed a visible sadness about her. I questioned her, but she evaded me. At last we set out on our journey. She travelled in the same coach with me; and I soon observed, what she herself did not long deny, that she was with child, and suffering the greatest terror lest our manager might turn her off. In fact, in a short while he did make the discovery; immediately threw up her contract, which at any rate was only for six weeks; paid off her arrears; and, in spite of all entreaties, left her behind, in the miserable inn of a little village.

"Devil take all wanton jilts!" cried the old man, with a splenetic tone, "and especially this one, that has spoiled me so many hours of my life! Why should I keep talking how I myself took charge of her, what I did for her, what I spent on her, how in absence I provided for her? I would rather throw my purse into the ditch, and spend my time in nursing mangy whelps, than ever more bestow the smallest care on such a thing. Pshaw! At first I got letters of thanks, notice of places she was staying at; and, finally, no word at all, – not even an acknowledgment for the money I had sent to pay the expenses of her lying-in. Oh! the treachery and the fickleness of women are rightly matched, to get a comfortable living for themselves, and to give an honest fellow many heavy hours."

CHAPTER VIII

Wilhelm's feelings, on returning home after this conversation, may be easily conceived. All his old wounds had been torn up afresh, and the sentiment that Mariana was not wholly unworthy of his love had again been brought to life. The interest the old man had shown about her fate, the praises he gave her against his will, displayed her again in all her attractiveness. Nay, even the bitter accusations brought against her contained nothing that could lower her in Wilhelm's estimation; for he, as well as she, was guilty in all her aberrations. Nor did even her final silence seem greatly blamable: it rather inspired him with mournful thoughts. He saw her as a frail, ill-succored mother, wandering helplessly about the world, – wandering, perhaps, with his own child. What he knew, and what he knew not, awoke in him the painfullest emotions.

Mignon had been waiting for him: she lighted him up stairs. On setting down the light, she begged he would allow her, that evening, to compliment him with a piece of her art. He would rather have declined this, particularly as he knew not what it was; but he had not the heart to refuse any thing this kind creature wished. After a little while she again came in. She carried below her arm a little carpet, which she then spread out upon the floor. Wilhelm said she might proceed. She thereupon brought four candles, and placed one upon each corner of the carpet. A little basket of eggs, which she next carried in, made her purpose clearer. Carefully measuring her steps, she then walked to and fro on the carpet, spreading out the eggs in certain figures and positions; which done, she called in a man that was waiting in the house, and could play on the violin. He retired with his instrument into a corner: she tied a band about her eyes, gave a signal; and, like a piece of wheel-work set a-going, she began moving the same instant as the music, accompanying her beats and the notes of the tune with the strokes of a pair of castanets.

Lightly, nimbly, quickly, and with hair's-breadth accuracy, she carried on the dance. She skipped so sharply and surely along between the eggs, and trod so closely down beside them, that you would have thought every instant she must trample one of them in pieces, or kick the rest away in her rapid turns. By no means! She touched no one of them, though winding herself through their mazes with all kinds of steps, wide and narrow, nay, even with leaps, and at last half kneeling.

Constant as the movement of a clock, she ran her course; and the strange music, at each repetition of the tune, gave a new impulse to the dance, recommencing and again rushing off as at first. Wilhelm was quite led away by this singular spectacle; he forgot his cares; he followed every movement of the dear little creature, and felt surprised to see how finely her character unfolded itself as she proceeded in the dance.

Rigid, sharp, cold, vehement, and in soft postures, stately rather than attractive, – such was the light in which it showed her. At this moment he experienced at once all the emotions he had ever felt for Mignon. He longed to incorporate this forsaken being with his own heart, to take her in his arms, and with a father's love to awaken in her the joy of existence.

The dance being ended, she rolled the eggs together softly with her foot into a little heap, left none behind, harmed none; then placed herself beside it, taking the bandage from her eyes, and concluding her performance with a little bow.

Wilhelm thanked her for having executed, so prettily and unexpectedly, a dance he had long wished to see. He patted her; was sorry she had tired herself so much. He promised her a new suit of clothes; to which she vehemently replied, "Thy color!" This, too, he promised her, though not well knowing what she meant by it. She then lifted up the eggs, took the carpet under her arm, asked if he wanted any thing further, and skipped out of the room.

The musician, being questioned, said, that for some time she had taken much trouble in often singing over the tune of this dance, the well-known fandango, to him, and training him till he could

play it accurately. For his labor she had likewise offered him some money; which, however, he would not accept.

CHAPTER IX

After a restless night, which our friend spent, sometimes waking, sometimes oppressed with unpleasant dreams, seeing Mariana now in all her beauty, now in woful case, at one time with a child on her arm, then soon bereaved of it, the morning had scarcely dawned, when Mignon entered with a tailor. She brought some gray cloth and blue taffeta; signifying in her own way that she wished to have a new jacket and sailor's trousers, such as she had seen the boys of the town wear, with blue cuffs and tiers.

Since the loss of Mariana, Wilhelm had laid aside all gay colors. He had used himself to gray, – the garment of the shades; and only perhaps a sky-blue lining, or little collar of that dye, in some degree enlivened his sober garb. Mignon, eager to wear his colors, hurried on the tailor, who engaged to have his work soon ready.

The exercise in dancing and fencing, which our friend took this day with Laertes, did not prosper in their hands. Indeed, it was soon interrupted by Melina, who came to show them circumstantially how a little company was now of itself collected, sufficient to exhibit plays in abundance. He renewed the proposal that Wilhelm should advance a little money for setting them in motion; which, however, Wilhelm still declined.

Ere long Philina and the girls came in, racketing and laughing as usual. They had now devised a fresh excursion, for change of place and objects was a pleasure after which they always longed. To eat daily in a different spot was their highest wish. On this occasion they proposed a sail.

The boat in which they were to fall down the pleasant windings of the river had already been engaged by the Pedant. Philina urged them on: the party did not linger, and were soon on board.

"What shall we take to now?" said Philina, when all had placed themselves upon the benches.

"The readiest thing," replied Laertes, "were for us to extemporize a play. Let each take a part that suits his character, and we shall see how we get along."

"Excellent!" said Wilhelm. "In a society where there is no dissimulation, but where each without disguise pursues the bent of his own humor, elegance and satisfaction cannot long continue; and, where dissimulation always reigns, they do not enter at all. It will not be amiss, then, that we take up dissimulation to begin with, and then, behind our masks, be as candid as we please."

"Yes," said Laertes: "it is on this account that one goes on so pleasantly with women; they never show themselves in their natural form."

"That is to say," replied Madam Melina, "they are not so vain as men, who conceive themselves to be always amiable enough, just as nature has produced them."

In the mean time the river led them between pleasant groves and hills, between gardens and vineyards; and the young women, especially Madam Melina, expressed their rapture at the landscape. The latter even began to recite, in solemn style, a pretty poem of the descriptive sort, upon a similar scene of nature; but Philina interrupted her with the proposal of a law, that no one should presume to speak of any inanimate object. On the other hand, she zealously urged on their project of an extempore play. Old Boisterous was to be a half-pay officer; Laertes a fencing-master, taking his vacation; the Pedant, a Jew; she herself would act a Tyrolese; leaving to the rest to choose characters according to their several pleasures. They would suppose themselves to be a party of total strangers to each other, who had just met on board a merchant-ship.

She immediately began to play her part with the Jew, and a universal cheerfulness diffused itself among them.

They had not sailed far, when the skipper stopped in his course, asking permission of the company to take in a person standing on the shore, who had made a sign to him.

"That is just what we needed," cried Philina: "a chance passenger was wanting to complete the travelling-party."

A handsome man came on board; whom, by his dress and his dignified mien, you might have taken for a clergyman. He saluted the party, who thanked him in their own way, and soon made known to him the nature of their game. The stranger immediately engaged to act the part of a country parson; which, in fact, he accomplished in the adroitest manner, to the admiration of all, – now admonishing, now telling stories, showing some weak points, yet never losing their respect.

In the mean time, every one who had made a false step in his part, or swerved from his character, had been obliged to forfeit a pledge: Philina had gathered them with the greatest care, and especially threatened the reverend gentleman with many kisses; though he himself had never been at fault. Melina, on the other hand, was completely fleeced: shirt-buttons, buckles, every movable about his person, was in Philina's hands. He was trying to enact an English traveller, and could not by any means get into the spirit of his part.

Meanwhile the time had passed away very pleasantly. Each had strained his fancy and his wit to the utmost, and each had garnished his part with agreeable and entertaining jests. Thus comfortably occupied, they reached the place where they meant to pass the day; and Wilhelm, going out to walk with the clergyman, as both from his appearance and late character he persisted in naming him, soon fell into an interesting conversation.

"I think this practice," said the stranger, "very useful among actors, and even in the company of friends and acquaintances. It is the best mode of drawing men out of themselves, and leading them, by a circuitous path, back into themselves again. It should be a custom with every troop of players to practice in this manner: and the public would assuredly be no loser if every month an unwritten piece were brought forward; in which, of course, the players had prepared themselves by several rehearsals."

"One should not, then," replied our friend, "consider an extempore piece as, strictly speaking, composed on the spur of the moment, but as a piece, of which the plan, action, and division of the scenes were given; the filling up of all this being left to the player."

"Quite right," said the stranger; "and, in regard to this very filling up, such a piece, were the players once trained to these performances, would profit greatly. Not in regard to the mere words, it is true; for, by a careful selection of these, the studious writer may certainly adorn his work; but in regard to the gestures, looks, exclamations, and every thing of that nature; in short, to the mute and half-mute play of the dialogue, which seems by degrees fading away among us altogether. There are indeed some players in Germany whose bodies figure what they think and feel; who by their silence, their delays, their looks, their slight, graceful movements, can prepare the audience for a speech, and, by a pleasant sort of pantomime, combine the pauses of the dialogue with the general whole; but such a practice as this, co-operating with a happy natural turn, and training it to compete with the author, is far from being so habitual as, for the comfort of play-going people, were to be desired."

"But will not a happy natural turn," said Wilhelm, "as the first and last requisite, of itself conduct the player, like every other artist, – nay, perhaps every other man, – to the lofty mark he aims at?"

"The first and the last, the beginning and the end, it may well be; but, in the middle, many things will still be wanting to an artist, if instruction, and early instruction too, have not previously made that of him which he was meant to be: and perhaps for the man of genius it is worse in this respect than for the man possessed of only common capabilities; the one may much more easily be misinstructed, and be driven far more violently into false courses, than the other."

"But," said Wilhelm, "will not genius save itself, not heal the wounds which itself has inflicted?"

"Only to a very small extent, and with great difficulty," said the other, "or perhaps not at all. Let no one think that he can conquer the first impressions of his youth. If he has grown up in enviable freedom, surrounded with beautiful and noble objects, in constant intercourse with worthy men; if his masters have taught him what he needed first to know, for comprehending more easily what followed; if he has never learned any thing which he requires to unlearn; if his first operations have been so guided, that, without altering any of his habits, he can more easily produce what is excellent in future, – then such a one will lead a purer, more perfect and happier, life, than another man who has

wasted the force of his youth in opposition and error. A great deal is said and written about education; yet I meet with very few who can comprehend, and transfer to practice, this simple yet vast idea, which includes within itself all others connected with the subject."

"That may well be true," said Wilhelm; "for the generality of men are limited enough in their conceptions to suppose that every other should be fashioned by education, according to the pattern of themselves. Happy, then, are those whom Fate takes charge of, and educates according to their several natures!"

"Fate," said the other, smiling, "is an excellent but most expensive schoolmaster. In all cases, I would rather trust to the reason of a human tutor. Fate, for whose wisdom I entertain all imaginable reverence, often finds in Chance, by which it works, an instrument not over manageable. At least the latter very seldom seems to execute precisely and accurately what the former had determined."

"You seem to express a very singular opinion," said Wilhelm.

"Not at all," replied the other. "Most of what happens in the world confirms my opinion. Do not many incidents at their commencement show some mighty purport, and generally terminate in something paltry?"

"You mean to jest."

"And as to what concerns the individual man," pursued the other, "is it not so with this likewise? Suppose Fate had appointed one to be a good player; and why should it not provide us with good players as well as other good things? Chance would perhaps conduct the youth into some puppet-show, where, at such an early age, he could not help taking interest in what was tasteless and despicable, reckoning insipidities endurable or even pleasing, and thus corrupting and misdirecting his primary impressions, – impressions which can never be effaced, and whose influence, in spite of all our efforts, cling to us in some degree to the very last."

"What makes you think of puppet-shows?" said Wilhelm, not without some consternation.

"It was an accidental instance: if it does not please you, we shall take another. Suppose Fate had appointed any one to be a great painter, and it pleased Chance that he should pass his youth in sooty huts, in barns and stables: do you think that such a man would ever be enabled to exalt himself to purity, to nobleness, to freedom of soul? The more keenly he may in his youth have seized on the impure, and tried in his own manner to ennoble it, the more powerfully in the remainder of his life will it be revenged on him; because, while he was endeavoring to conquer it, his whole being has become inseparably combined with it. Whoever spends his early years in mean and pitiful society, though at an after period he may have the choice of better, will yet constantly look back with longing towards that which he enjoyed of old, and which has left its impression blended with the memory of all his young and unreturning pleasures."

From conversation of this sort, it is easy to imagine, the rest of the company had gradually withdrawn. Philina, in particular, had stepped aside at the very outset. Wilhelm and his comrade now rejoined them by a cross-path. Philina brought out her forfeits, and they had to be redeemed in many different ways. During which business, the stranger, by the most ingenious devices, and by his frank participation in their sports, recommended himself much to all the party, and particularly to the ladies; and thus, amid joking, singing, kissing, and raileries of all sorts, the hours passed away in the most pleasant manner.

CHAPTER X

When our friends began to think of going home, they looked about them for their clergyman; but he had vanished, and was nowhere to be found.

"It is not polite in the man, who otherwise displayed good breeding," said Madam Melina, "to desert a company that welcomed him so kindly, without taking leave."

"I have all the time been thinking," said Laertes, "where I can have seen this singular man before. I fully intended to ask him about it at parting."

"I, too, had the same feeling," said Wilhelm; "and certainly I should not have let him go, till he had told us something more about his circumstances. I am much mistaken if I have not ere now spoken with him somewhere."

"And you may in truth," said Philina, "be mistaken there. This person seems to have the air of an acquaintance, because he looks like a *man*, and not like Jack or Kit."

"What is this?" said Laertes. "Do not we, too, look like men?"

"I know what I am saying," cried Philina; "and, if you cannot understand me, never mind. In the end my words will be found to require no commentary."

Two coaches now drove up. All praised the attention of Laertes, who had ordered them. Philina, with Madam Melina, took her place opposite to Wilhelm: the rest bestowed themselves as they best could. Laertes rode back on Wilhelm's horse, which had likewise been brought out.

Philina was scarcely seated in the coach, when she began to sing some pretty songs, and gradually led the conversation to some stories, which she said might be successfully treated in the form of dramas. By this cunning turn, she very soon put her young friend into his finest humor: from the wealth of his living imaginative store, he forthwith constructed a complete play, with all its acts, scenes, characters, and plots. It was thought proper to insert a few catches and songs; they composed them; and Philina, who entered into every part of it, immediately fitted them with well-known tunes, and sang them on the spot.

It was one of her beautiful, most beautiful, days: she had skill to enliven our friend with all manner of diverting wiles; he felt in spirits such as he had not for many a month enjoyed.

Since that shocking discovery had torn him from the side of Mariana, he had continued true to his vow to be on his guard against the encircling arms of woman; to avoid the faithless sex; to lock up his inclinations, his sweet wishes, in his own bosom. The conscientiousness with which he had observed this vow gave his whole nature a secret nourishment; and, as his heart could not remain without affection, some loving sympathy had now become a want with him. He went along once more, as if environed by the first cloudy glories of youth; his eye fixed joyfully on every charming object, and never had his judgment of a lovely form been more favorable. How dangerous, in such a situation, this wild girl must have been to him, is but too easy to conceive.

Arrived at home, they found Wilhelm's chamber all ready to receive them; the chairs set right for a public reading; in midst of them the table, on which the punch-bowl was in due time to take its place.

The German chivalry-plays were new at this period, and had just excited the attention and the inclination of the public. Old Boisterous had brought one of this sort with him: the reading of it had already been determined on. They all sat down; Wilhelm took possession of the pamphlet, and began to read.

The harnessed knights, the ancient keeps, the true-heartedness, honesty, and downrightness, but especially the independence of the acting characters, were received with the greatest approbation. The reader did his utmost, and the audience gradually mounted into rapture. Between the third and fourth acts, the punch arrived in an ample bowl; and, there being much fighting and drinking in the piece itself, nothing was more natural than that, on every such occurrence, the company should

transport themselves into the situation of the heroes, should flourish and strike along with them, and drink long life to their favorites among the *dramatis personæ*.

Each individual of the party was inflamed with the noblest fire of national spirit. How it gratified this German company to be poetically entertained, according to their own character, on stuff of their own manufacture! In particular, the vaults and caverns, the ruined castles, the moss and hollow trees, but above all the nocturnal gypsy scenes, and the Secret Tribunal, produced a quite incredible effect. Every actor now figured to himself how, ere long, in helm and harness, he; every actress how, with a monstrous spreading ruff, she, – would present their Germanship before the public. Each would appropriate to himself without delay some name taken from the piece or from German history; and Madam Melina declared that the son or daughter she was then expecting should not be christened otherwise than by the name of Adelbert or of Mathilde.

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