

## Delineation of the English and German characters and languages, with respect to their reciprocal influence upon each other.

Some decenniums hence, a matter of controversy, still to be settled, has been carried forth: whether those short essays, by which the annual reports about the first-rate schools in Germany are preceded, ought to be intended for the use of learned people only, or of the pupils too, not to speak of those who, amid the troubles and vexations of life, take an interest in any branch of knowledge. I presume, that matter of dispute could very easily be adjusted, if we chose to fix our eyes upon the situation of the authors of the foretold treatises, firstly with regard to Science, and secondly to their pupils.

No doubt, those writings are in the first place to testify the pedagogical experiences, which the author has gone through, and which he intends to forward to his colleagues. Besides he may show, that, notwithstanding the hardships and struggles of life, he has in his bytime found leisure and preserved strength of mind, to improve his learning by studying on other subjects, than those which are daily represented to his mind. When we moreover add, that now-a-days no printer, even with the greatest predilection of literature and philology, will offer his services, without seeing his troubles duly paid and his profits secured, it may easily be understood, why a great many learned men betake themselves to the programmes as to the only means of publishing the observations, they think worth being handed down to posterity.

But, on the other hand, the links which chain us together with our fellow-creatures, are never to be dismissed from our view. In this regard, I think, a teacher ought never to loosen his most intimate connexion with the school and especially with the pupils, whose forthcoming and welfare for times to-come he has been appointed to secure. The principal object of a thoroughbred schoolmaster must, of course, be to educate, that is to bring up useful and respectable members of human society. And there being a general tendency among all judicious men, not to exaggerate the advantages of learning — for that is impossible — but to submit to its power, acknowledged through-

out the whole world, what should we like better the youth being supplied with, than a rich fund of knowledge, never to be exhausted and furnishing them for life with the means of striving and rising. Without this one may edge his way through the crowded paths of life, raise himself perhaps, with the help of energy, power of mind, cunningness or bribery — not to mention worse means — to a much better station, than he ever was entitled to occupy; but human sympathy will always keep its distance, the knowing ones will look at him as „an upstart,“ but never as what the English so significantly call, a „gentleman.“ And as there is no genuine getting up, but by the assistance of an accomplished education, as knowledge is the only power, which will never be disregarded, the teaching as well as the learning ones are to take to the very source, from which all this is abundantly flowing to Science. It would be wasting time and paper, to speak any more about its worth; I, therefore, beg, the readers' leave to quote the verses of Thomson, tending to my purpose and perfectly summing up the preceding thoughts:

— In the service of mankind to be

A guardian god below; still to employ

The mind's brave ardour in heroic aims,

Such as may raise us o'er the groveling herd

And make us shine for ever — that is life.

I observed before, that Science ought to be considered the source of all civilization not only, but of all genuine happiness too. No wonder, that plenty of our most distinguished scholars so extravagantly cling to it, as to deny the least worthiness of any other human striving. Let them have their way, if they are enabled by their fortune, to devote themselves to any subject, they please. But with extremely few exceptions this is not the case with our equals, who, besides all higher purposes, are to turn the linguistic studies to a pedagogical account. Science, therefore, is not to be looked upon as our idol, but as an ally, by the assistance of which we may grow qualified to fill the station, that, for life-time, has been assigned to us.

Above all, there must not be overlooked, that the education in our country is not left at all to the free-will neither of the pupils, nor even of the parents; but part of it being rigidly ordered by act of government, the other part is almost as narrowly limited and ruled by privileges and rewards. Notwithstanding which, the expectations and claims, laid to our young people, in most cases are so exaggerated, that to bring them to perfection in any department or discipline, must be yielded up to further endeavours of their own. Since the schoolyears commonly are so few in number, in comparison to the manifoldness of the departments and the immense richness of the materials, to expect our pupils, to make any of them their complete property, would be nonsensical. To finish their education, the foundation of which has been laid by incessant labour during former years, is the mission of later studies, fit to raise them to the level of their fellowmen and upon the height of their age.

As for the richness of languages, to which the greatest importance is attached in our schools, and which I in my essay particularly have in view, the pupils can be

supplied at the most with an idea of it. Those who, during their schoolyears, have used their best endeavours, to conquer the difficulties of grammar, and to penetrate into the peculiarities of the languages, which they are enjoined or inclined to learn, may possibly be enabled, afterwards to make them thoroughly their own with ease. And the regard to those only, who commonly are very few in number, while the greater part will hardly get over the elements, points it out to every conscientious instructor, not to deprive them of any means of gaining that end, -I quoted.

Such is, in some respect, the case with the programmes, which, provided they be judiciously arranged, do not form the smallest part of that allowance which every school provides for its pupils. Since they are chiefly to testify the activity of School and the endeavours of those who are employed in it, and as the preceding treatises have, in the first place, no other meaning, but to trim up those annually recurring reports and lists, they must not be only proofs of the profound knowledge of them who teach; but those pupils who, by natural capacity and by fertility of thought, are qualifying themselves for dealing with the higher branches of knowledge, ought to take from them useful hints, which for the future, they may turn to a profitable account. The more so, since it certainly shows considerable skilfulness and since it is no bad token of downright scholarship, to write thus, as to enforce acknowledgment from the fellow-scholars, as well as to engage the younger ones to take interest in the materials which, during the very years of learning, cannot be treated but in a narrowly limited and isolated manner. By this means an intimacy needs most arise between instructors and pupils, not for a few years only, but for the whole lifetime, and they who have succeeded with the assistance, I mentioned before, will never be wanting in gratitude and respect towards the leaders of their earlier studies.

After these preceding thoughts it will easily be understood, why I resolved on writing about the English language. There is firstly a general predilection towards that language, which becomes usually very soon a favourite-discipline to all learning ones, on account of its vigour, expressiveness and flexibility, together with its plain and popular laws-of-speech and its peculiarities so well adapted to the German conception. (Notwithstanding which I do not agree with their own judgment, who profess boldly, the English language to be thoroughly beautiful, especially because it was entirely free of „those formidable clusters of consonants!“) Secondly the readers, for whom these few pages are particularly destined, are almost all descended from a society which by its personal and commercial interest is very narrowly allied to the English nation and to its relation, the American. Moreover since about a hundred and fifty years the Germans and English are connected by a chain, the links of which, essential ingredients of the innermost spiritual relation, are so fast linked together, that they will never be rent asunder, neither by time nor by misfortune. After the parting of the Anglo-Saxons from the great German family-race, the nations have been more and more alienated by

various business and interest; but like two souls, whose essence is founded on the same principles, the characters of them both could be separated for a time, but not for ever. Sooner or later they were to meet again, and the more they grow together, the more each of them will rise in sublime peculiar beauty. — Neither of them can spare the other, much as the English, as well as their relation, the Americans, dwell insipidly on their selfsufficiency, and boast in being in no need at all of any other nation's political or industrious interfering. There is no denying, but the energy and constancy, which enabled them to carry their commerce and their arms into every corner of the globe, is an heritage of the whole Germanic race, and they are in no way entitled, to claim those virtues, without yielding them, as a common dowry, to the congeneric nations.

As for the language, the English tongue, of course, prevails in the great empire beyond the Atlantic as well as in its rival in the southern hemisphere, so much, that English now-a-days is the language of nearly a hundred and fifty millions of human beings. No wonder, that the English have more and more become the proudest of all nations, and that they all in a body have locked themselves up against foreign influences. I cite as an example, the wellknown utterance of a German author:

„The Germans sometimes wish to be Frenchmen, the latter do not always abhor from being Germans; but the English declare with selfconfidence, if they were not, they should like to be Englishmen.“

Addison already in his essay about the English language professes:

„I look upon it as a peculiar blessing, that I was born an Englishman!“ and I recollect an Englishman in Switzerland pronouncing boldly, when asking for an information about the country: „there was no more profit to be taken from learning foreign languages!“ This last example however, I am very much inclined to put to the account of the general want of politeness in those English people who annually overflow the beautiful parts of the continent, and who commonly do not belong to the best part of English society. (cf. Montesquieu: *Notes sur l'Angleterre*, printed by Didot, page 629 cet.) In all this, and in their endless and heavy complaints about foreigners, they overlook entirely, that the foreigners speaking English, and the Englishmen speaking foreign languages bear the proportion of a hundred to one. To return to our purpose, wherever we may look upon the progress of science, commerce and industry, we do always meet the English and the Germans striving hand in hand.

In regard of art and literature, it has not been but since the last fifty years, that the German one could penetrate into English life and manners. In the first years of our century only a few learned men in England knew the German language, and it has been assigned to Carlyle and his followers, to negotiate a narrow alliance between English and German literature. To all others they still persevere in that principle of seclusion, which from the earliest times appears in all their customs. This very incident, that on the one hand the English could not escape the German taste, introducing itself into English manners, and that on the other hand it was only the German, which gained its entrance into England, proves perfectly the reality of what I explained about the

relation between our nationalities. The kindred of both the languages has often been sufficiently shewn, and their dependence upon each other appears more clearly from day to day. In Germany it has been allotted to the past century, to bring both the languages and literatures to that lucky alliance, I quoted before. A hundred years ago, during the seventeenth century, the men of literature, who endeavoured to bring German poetry into distinct and regular forms, were by that incessant occupation, or as it were by a sort of self-confidence and conceitedness, together with the dependence upon the dominating French influences, rendered altogether unfit to acknowledge the greatness and importance of English literature, which then became more and more known in Germany. Wieland was the first to point to the richness of English poetry, and there is no doubt, but its great importance towards the German one did not escape his sight. I at least am very much inclined to believe, that his last poetic tales and epic poems — Oberon for instance and Shah-Bambo's daughters — are not free at all from English art and manner, as well as they recall everywhere French and Italian patterns to our mind. We now-a-days are quite enabled to value the reforms, which both the English and the German literatures have undergone by each other's influence, and I am not afraid of being considered too bold, if declining that sentence of Goethe's about Byron (works of Goethe IV p. 687) in this way:

„English poetry and literature are now to be regarded the most. The more we grow familiar with the singularities of their authors, the more we shall sympathize with their compositions, so much that men and women, boys and girls nearly seem to neglect their Germanhood and nationality.“

To this we must heartily agree, calling the applause to our mind, which is given to every production of English writers, and considering above, that by Freiligrath's and others' splendid translations plenty of English and Scotch songs and ballads have nearly become national songs in our country. To add an excellent judgment, which I read some of these days in, I do not remember which, German illustrated newspaper, running somewhat in the following terms:

„It is delightful, that among that congener people of Europe, whose public spirit and political institutions, acknowledged through centuries, have been a pattern to all nations, and to whose language and literature, since they have proved to be of the most wholesome influence on the cultivation of our mind, the greatest attention has been paid in our schools, it is delightful, I say, that there are not only Britons, who fully appreciate the worthiness of our literature, but that their most industrious linguists have applied themselves to examining the life and works of our most eminent poets with praiseworthy zeal. And, to be sure, it has come from a genuine emulation, that as Shakespear a long while hence has been translated and interpreted in all directions by German philologists, our Goethe has lately been treated in England with nearly the same respect and predilection.“

In the early part of our century those instances were extremely rare, but in our days, besides the great poets, prominent thinkers and men of knowledge, belonging

to that fortunate, petted number, even our princes and talented statesmen have been favoured with a cheering and judicious treatment. Recently Carlyle has set to his contemporaries an example of remedying the deplorable backwardness of science, and especially of history in England, by his „life of Frederic II.“ In this we perceive not only an accuracy and minuteness, that would become a German philologist, but by its splendid characteristics and exquisite dwelling on every important action it holds out prospects of what will be done towards discovering the principles which govern the character and destiny of nations. More and more the English will be open to the reasons and laws which regulate the changes of human speech, and which in the hand of philologists have been discovered to elucidate the most obscure periods in the migration of nations. More and more they will develop their truly German character by imbuing themselves with the progress, made in every branch of knowledge, and by considering the scientific truths not the dowry of a few learned men, but of mankind.

Since the English have discontinued in this regard shutting themselves up against foreign influence, since German language, literature and industry have been more and more allowed to have an abode and to obtain acknowledgment in their country, since then the most advantageous change has taken place with respect to themselves. German assiduity and researches have drawn their attention to the fund of literature, which lay unobserved, like goods stored up in a shrine, from whence they needed to be drawn, in order to be a priceless treasure to their owners and to have an irresistible action upon all congenial literatures. How great a danger those splendid masterpieces have been exposed to, what a dreadful fate even the English language would nearly have undergone, as far as its share goes in science, is clearly proved by that circumstance, that Gibbon had already taken into his head to write his immortal work in French, as in the most universal language, from which he was dissuaded by the advice of Hume, who then already foresaw the future ascendancy of the English. The Britons possessed the works of Chaucer, Shakespear, Bacon, Milton, Pope and Johnson, without being aware of those riches, much less receiving any benefit from their literature, or exacting acknowledgment of their performances upon other nations. About all this they had been so careless, that the English language was scarcely known on the continent, that English literature was almost unheard of. Those writers who were sensible of this impropriety, attempted to gain fame by translating their works into Latin, while others, whose patriotism prevailed, Milton and Johnson for instance, professed themselves content with these islands as their world. Not until all those literary treasures had been fully taxed in Germany, and until they had been shewn to be of an undoubted importance towards all national productions of the Germanic races, not till then the English became conscious of being on the level with their contemporaries, as far as intellectual vigour, literary gift and scientific progress went. — Thus the Germans pioneered that fortunate change, which I mentioned before, that perpetual interchange of literary productions, by which they and the English have grown and will become more and more aware of each other's nearest spiritual connexion. Thus only the Germanic nations will be persuaded to relinquish the deplorable prejudice,

which, I am sorry to say, has not yet entirely been suppressed, that France, who by her geographical position had been most favourably and effectually been assisted in establishing her superiority over all surrounding nations, and whose language had in consequence ranked itself easily up to the place of the Latin, which prevailed during the middle ages, that France, I say, was the centre of civilization. By this reason only the correct proportion could be reestablished, that nobody is entitled to bestow any literary preference upon Latin, or French, or German, or English, nor to call any of them the language of common intercourse of learned people or statesmen, but that each of them has its fully acknowledged place in the civilized world.

Two nations, particularly if there exists no original distinction of race between them, are two persons as it were, who, on the one hand intimately related, are disunited in all other points by the difference of their abodes and by their personal interests most powerfully affected by those agents. To deny their belonging together would be equally improper and ineffective, as on the contrary to hold them out being dependent upon each other. Their peculiarities, rising from the nature of their abodes and gradually developed by corresponding causes, will in the course of time turn original, and all types of them both, that are conspicuous in a high degree amid their fellowmen, will often afford very few, if any points of contact at all. Properly speaking a thoroughbred Englishman and a downright German will generally front one another as two entirely contrary characters, notwithstanding the correspondence, which exists between their origin, languages, pursuits and commonly their interests too. The former will perhaps make, on account of his fellownations, some allowances to all, that claims a tribute of respect, but even this will pass unnoticed by his personal intuition and his selfreliance. The Germans on the contrary are rather disposed to disavow their own accomplishments for the only reason, that they may give the preference to those which are presented to their sight by other nations. They will always appear candid and hearty in their extolling other peoples' institutions and productions, while the eulogies of the congener Britons „the intellectual nation“ as they call themselves, prove for the most part to be affected or extorted by any particular predicament.

Both the nations we might think, when forming an opinion at first sight, to have got the same point, viz. to have become citizens of the world. But upon a somewhat minute examination other causes not only come into play, but the real results too will turn out to be entirely different. — After breaking totally with their primitive countries, the English have cast off the overplus of population into foreign lands, in order to increase their power and for the accumulation of wealth; while at the same time the bounty of nature made the most abundant return to their labour, and while they enjoyed early the happiest political and domestic situation, together with the greatest social improvements. They all, therefore, who left England with the intention of getting upon a higher place in life and in society, have striven, no matter whether they

carried their object abroad or not, to return some day to their „sweet home“, and to breathe their last in the lands of their forefathers. Their principal agent to give the benefit of their accomplishments, and of their power with them, to a large portion of mankind, has been egoism, and egoists they will always prove to be, wherever and whatever they have to deal with. And why should we expect matters to stand otherwise with men, who profess themselves candidly, that „there is in their country no greater crime than poverty“, to withholding which by a regular profession „a stigma is attached“, while on the other hand the largest munificence is employed with incessant zeal in lessening the want and misery of the poor.

In Germany the matter lies otherwise. The ungenial nature of the soil, and its ally, poverty; inconvenient territorial privileges or a wretched political situation and what needs must result from them, uneasiness, discontent, if not despair; failing commercial conjunctures; the mutations of fortune and the frowns of adversity, attended with exigency and shame; all these improprieties have been exacting a very fatal influence upon the social situation of the German countries, by driving off thousands upon thousands of industrious subjects into foreign lands. Even included those adventurers, who go abroad with the anticipation of accumulating wealth, without straining their nerves and faculties, they all have not turned away from their fellow-races, but have endeavoured to join with them in exerting their active industry, energy and talents, and, by partaking of the abundant returns, yielded to common labour, to collect the materials for their own subsistence, and to achieve their way to welfare, wealth and happiness. And as they generally were received, for their excellent faculties and good-will, with great benevolence and even with enthusiasm, they all, in the security of their new abodes, could not be long in forgetting the inconveniences and insults, which drove them from their real home, and in endeavouring to live at ease, instead of feeling uneasy, because they lived with strangers. The German race generally is endowed with a deep sense of patriotism, which disposition appears more clearly every day. Nevertheless among the number of those, who go abroad under the foretold circumstances, hardly one out of ten will show so little gratitude towards his new countrymen, as to long for the return into his original land, without regard to a supposed renewal of his late sufferings. Unless urgent personal exigencies or incessant misfortune be driving him back, the newly-found ease and the comfort of his fresh settlement will counterbalance his longing for the place of his childhood.

Thus both the nations have spread over far the greatest part of the globe, have penetrated in every empire, kingdom, or republic of any renown, have succeeded in enforcing their entrance into all states, even the most carefully shut off against any invasion of foreign peoples, customs and institutions; but all this they performed in a very different way and with entirely different intentions. — The English acted upon no other principle, but to make all their own, that could possibly be wrung from their foreign settlements, without caring for the improvement of their new abodes, by bestowing their own accomplishments upon the original inhabitants; they did not even start back from



taking arms against those, by whom they had been received with hospitality and benevolence, and to whom they feigned to give share in the blessings of Christendom. Often, very often they left the land, to which they ought to have proved themselves benefactors, like robbers, who leave a place, when there is nothing more to be got; laden with the curses of those who instead of partaking of the blessings, drawn out of the newcomers' faculties and industry, had nothing lavished upon themselves, but the cunningness, baseness and vices of their suppressors. And such a deportment, far from being considered disreputable, or what it really is, a knavery, those who did their utmost in discrediting the English name and character in foreign lands, saw themselves promoted to the highest rank and honours as a reward for their „excellent merits in behalf of the creed, science and — POWER.“ —

In this regard we, the Germans, ought to look upon it as a peculiar blessing from Heaven, that we have, properly speaking, no common country to strive for; otherwise our reputation throughout the world might have got into the same scrape; and certainly we may get without difficulty over the disdain, which sometimes is given to our brothers with respect to that circumstance, particularly by the English and Americans. It is redressed a thousand-fold by the acknowledgment and respect paid everywhere to German intelligence, ability and honesty. With the help of these agents, together with an extreme faculty of accommodating themselves to foreign customs and characters, they rapidly succeeded in becoming highly estimated members of all nations, whom they solicited for an abode, in order to draw from it the means of subsistence. And in this they excel particularly, that they do not look upon their new settlements as upon a soil, out of which to get any possible yield, and from which afterwards to turn away ungratefully. Taught from a child, to bring agricultural improvements to a most intimate connexion to commercial and political prosperity, wherever they settle, they will immediately endeavour to become familiar with the best way of improving the condition of their abodes. Before expecting any return, they will make the most out of their bodily strength and mental faculties, in order to increase the productiveness of the resources; they will get thoroughly acquainted with the political and legislative institutions, with the view to not being disabused afterwards; they will take an interest in every circumstance, which tends to useful reforms; they will be busy discovering abuses not only, but pointing out, how they are to be remedied. And thus their entering a country has never been a signal for destruction, but to their abilities the civilization and the social progress is owed in the greatest part of the globe.

After contemplating in the foregoing passages the character of the two nations in general, and after stating, why with different intentions and by entirely contrary means they filled up almost the same mission and carried very similar objects, viz. in taking the lead of all civilized peoples, and in propagating knowledge and industry all over the world, I have not thought improper to dwell a little longer on some of the

most conspicuous individuals, whom they both issued forth into society. For although there are a great many points of view, in which two great parties may be corresponding, such is not the case with the latter. And the higher somebody will raise himself above the surrounding company, the more decidedly he will assume the type of his race, notwithstanding his genius supplying him with the utmost faculty of accommodating himself to universality, and with as great a deal of common sense, as to enable him to understand, that every branch of knowledge has no other end, but to increase the vast empire of Science. Two individuals of that kind, descended from different nations, will hardly afford one point of contact in any department of human performance. — As it is not my purpose to contribute to the history of the English and Germans, and as I am dealing only with their characters and languages, I do believe myself fully entitled to choose my characters from those who, with respect to literature, have not as yet had their equals, much less their superiors. And I am not apprehensive lest the objection might be made, that in regard of literature and science, being provinces equally assigned to the whole civilized world, there ought not to be found such contrasts, as I mentioned before. For besides what I said in the last pages about the English and German nationalities, and how very differently they shared in the promulgation of knowledge, both of them are too well known as truly national characters, as not to select them from a large body of renowned men of letters, in order to serve our purpose of showing the difference between the two peoples. Perhaps many of the readers have already guessed, that I hinted to GOETHE and BYRON.

There will scarcely be found any remark about some man of literary renown, equally applicable on two great men, than Goethe's utterance about Byron's personality: „It was of so strong an eminence“, he says, „as there has never been before him, nor will be met with afterwards.“ (Boettiger, Byron's life and works p. XI.). And if we may pay any credit to Shelley and Medwin, Byron did not ungratefully overlook that favourable judgment; for he often regretted his ignorance of the German language, only because by that inconvenience he was prevented of reading the original works of „great Goethe“. (Byron's own words would be in German: „Altmeister Göthe“). And Jacobsen, methinks, is rather wrong, who, when speaking about Byron's Manfred (letters about English poets N. 35 p. 635), writes: „I do not prefer Byron to Goethe the man, but to Goethe the old man“ (I beg the readers' pardon, because the translation looks like a pun; in German it runs: *Ich setze Byron nicht über Göthe, den Mann, aber über Göthe, den Greis*). Of course it might be pretty difficult to draw a comparison between two geniuses, who were the most accomplished in natural truth and greatness. The excellency of them both and their superiority in every talent has often been allowed, and is daily shown by experience. Coleridge already, who spoke and wrote German perfectly well, started back from Shelley's bold request, to translate Goethe's works, because he who would take that task, that is to say, who would thoroughly understand that author, was to train his thoughts quite in the same way as Goethe did himself. And how little other nations are enabled to make Byron their own, is clearly proved by the few ill-succeeded trials to

translate his poems. Even with the strongest capacity of human mind nobody at all might be entitled to fancy his talents so immense, as to understand perfectly two of the greatest geniuses, belonging to different nations.

The pondering on the relations between two renowned individuals has to deal with a double question. Firstly they may have been in each other's personal acquaintance and friendship, or secondly their relations have been only spiritual. We will not consider, in this our essay, but the latter part of that question. For although Goethe and Byron were contemporaries, and even Byron in his last expedition to Greece passed through Germany (1816), there is no doubt, that they never met. Otherwise Byron in the dedication of *Sardanapalus* could hardly have assumed the title of a „Stranger and literary vassal of master Goethe“; nor would he, in the inscription of *Werner*, have called himself: „One of Goethe's most unassuming admirers“; his terms would certainly have run more heartily, and would have shown the just claims of a somewhat steady friendship. For the same reason, connected with several occurrences in Byron's literary life, it is irrefutable, I believe, that they never carried on any correspondence with one another. Probably the few words, through which Byron recommended from Genoa Mr. Sterling, a young Englishman, to Goethe, and Goethe's little poem, addressed to Byron, (*Ein freundlich Wort etc.* Goethe's Works I p. 564 Nr. 15) were the sole direct intercourse, they had with each other. And even in that poem, I alluded to, we miss the heartiness and cordiality, which we are wont to observe in whatever Goethe dedicated to his next relation. But no wonder, for Byron did not even communicate to Goethe his intention of setting off for Greece, and so Goethe's verses resemble an old debt, paid before the parting of his creditor Byron; and by no means they equal the hearty trifle, that in return Byron sent from Leghorn (24. July 1823). There is in the former not any counsel of a friend's, and yet Goethe liked so well to discuss with friends all matters, which had any bearing on their reciprocal affairs; not any wish or entreaty to retain the impetuous Briton.

Nevertheless the cause of this thing lies deeper; every personal intimacy between them both would have been of short duration, besides the circumstance, I mentioned before, which is confirmed by Montesquieu's:

„En Angleterre on ne fait point amitié; est-il nécessaire que l'on vous fasse des amitiés?“

Byron and Goethe were too genuine characters, as to allow other people to influence them. Once Goethe calls Byron a „wild and uneasily cultivated talent“ (Works I p. 227), and therein every one knows, that their geniuses could not be drawn together but by mutual admiration. They both are to be ranked among those talents, which command respect of all people, and which possess the authority to enforce submission; the very nature of their minds prevents every possibility of acknowledging each other's supremacy. But that there existed between them, in spite of this reciprocal seclusion, a strong mutual admiration, I believe myself to have shown, as far as Byron is regarded; notwithstanding, in want of knowledge of Goethe's original compositions, he was obliged

to take his information either out of bad French translations, or from the discourses of his learned friends Shelley, Medwin etc. In consideration of Goethe it is another thing. When his attention had been drawn at Strassburg by Herder towards the English poets, he soon perceived the influence, which Ossian's bardic songs, Percy's collection of ancient English ballads, and particularly Shakespear's dramas were to exert upon the whole poetry to-come. Then he immediately applied himself to the study of the English language; and how much he had become familiar with it during Byron's lifetime, is sufficiently proved both by his numerous remarks on English literature, and chiefly by the three fragments of Don Juan and Manfred, which he has translated (Works. I p. 167 & 168). Thus he enjoyed the great Briton's works in their natural gigantic shape and certainly Goethe was able to penetrate and to apprehend a poetic soul, even so very different from his own. To him we allow willingly so bold an utterance, as there is in the little poem, I quoted beforehand: „And as I have known him, he may know himself.“ — Therefore Byron's admiration of Goethe resulting for the major part from that, which he learned of him by his friends, more than from his own knowledge and judgment, that of Goethe is to be the more esteemed, because in the full appreciation of the author's worth he often allots to him the prize above all his compatriots, on account of the contents and form of his poems, and of the domination of the poetical speech. Allow me to cite as an example some words out of Goethe's examination of Don Juan:

„That poem is a boundless ingenuous work, misanthropical to the sternest cruelty, philanthropical, until it absorbs you in the depth of sweetest heartiness. We therefore having learned by degrees to estimate the author, and not being disposed to wish him to be another one, than he really is, we, I say, enjoy gratefully, whatever he dares to bring before us with an immoderate frankness, not to say impudence. The poet spares the language as little as the characters, and accurately looking upon it we know, that English poetry has got already a quite accomplished comical language, which we, the Germans, are entirely in want of.“ —

• Still greater appears that homage, which Goethe after Byron's death paid to his genius in the second part of Faustus (Act III at the end), where the choir is heard praising in a gentle song „Euphorion-Byron's“ prominent talents and merits. Add to this Goethe's sentence, (Works IV, p. 683: my interest in other people's performances etc.) and the two little poems, written in Byronlike manner, (Works I, p. 218 N. I and VI) which certainly belong to the Briton's life and fate. By all this, methinks, the interest, which Goethe had in Byron's fate and works, is largely shewn, to have been much more considerable than the latter's, shortly to have been truly German and unselfish; but that our two heroes of English and German poetry could not be drawn nearer together, as I said already, Goethe himself alludes to with these words (Works IV p. 683):

„As often, as I was about to approach Byron's personality, swelling with hypochondrical passion and strong self-hatred, I feared to be repelled by his muse.“

The personal and direct spiritual relations between our two geniuses being done with, our attention is now to be drawn to scrutinizing, whether Goethe and Byron

and how far they appealed or alluded to each other's thoughts and works. In submitting this to the reader, I shall be obliged to dwell a little while upon their most eminent preferences, that took rise from their characters and natural gifts.

When Goethe became acquainted with the first poems of the nineteen years-old British author, (printed about 1807) he was already in the mature age of sixty to seventy. Through different periods of his busy life he had struggled to that age, which he paints himself so beautifully in his epilogus to Schiller's bell:

„Who in his life has passed through the sternest of all vexations of mankind,  
„that is, who has got the victory over himself, he may surely be praised:  
„that is he, that is all his own!“

(In German it runs as follows:

„Wenn ein Mann von allen Lebensproben  
Die sauerste besteht, sich selbst bezwingt,  
Dann kann man ihn mit Freuden Andern zeigen  
Und sagen: Das ist er, das ist sein eigen!“)

Then he had become, what he always aspired to, a true German poet, philosopher, man of letters, and I do not consider Byron's expression too bold a one, who, in the dedication of *Sardanapalus*, praises Goethe as him who had created the literature of his native country. As he observed diligently all, that belongs to human life and nature, his works show everywhere the utmost truth of human life. They are stored too with wisdom of life, by which men of empirical knowledge have their own thoughts ratified, their presentiments explained distinctly, and in which there is offered to younger people plenty of warning and instruction. Even his last words: „Some more light!“ reflect best the character of our grand poet and reasoner, whose hardest and most careful exertions were spent on his own being, in order to make himself familiar with truth and reality.

It may easily be understood, that a spirit of that species could not throw off his productions with as spontaneous an effort as that of a tree, resigning a leaf to the winds. Such was, according to Walter Scott's funeral speech, the art and manner of Byron, whose muse did not even know, how to spend more than a very short time upon any composition, contrary to Wieland, who pored over a single verse of his *Oberon* for three or four weeks. — Byron's works owe altogether their existence to the instantaneous fancy, his impetuous soul being the leading-star of his genius. All that he laid hold on in his mind, was immediately to be done; and having thrown his compositions among his fellow-creatures, he cared as little for their lot afterwards, that sometimes he did not even recollect his own productions. — And, of course, he did not need it, for all he wrote was instantly embraced with so warm an affection, that he could soon get over the grievous critic, by which in his first authorship his ambition had nearly been overthrown. — Notwithstanding the sprinkling and lightning, as it were, of Byron's genius, his original wit, his happy imagination, accomplished and whetted on a large scale by the secret workings of passion, claim our warmest admiration. For although in that respect he takes quite

the opposite part of Goethe, and we, the Germans, like much better the calm and thoughtfulness of our great countryman, nevertheless even that striking beauty and sublime singularity of works, formed in that manner, arrest our notice by their peculiar charms. And that there is in them nothing strange to the genuine people, becomes to perfection apparent by the circumstance, that Schiller (whose nature and muse agree much more with those of Byron; setting aside the former's chastity of thoughts and words, contrary to the boundless dominion of sensuality, to which the latter always proved to be a most obedient slave) pleases at first sight extremely well, until through diligent meditations and observations we have grown accustomed to and afterwards admirers of Goethe's empirical and objective writings.

John Scherr is exceedingly right, who in his history of English literature says: „There will certainly pass away still a rather large space of time, until an artist with all his perceptive faculties will succeed in delineating that comical mixture of Don-Iuanery, Titanism, enthusiasm and scorn.“ To join with this sentence, Byron's singular fate had woven through all those qualities from the beginning of his life a sullen thread, which, whenever his extravagant fancy embraced him with any happier feeling, went across his thoughts and darkened his mind more and more to the sternest hatred against himself and his fellow-people. That misanthropical disposition, which always fetched its relief from the strangest diversions, can not be better pictured, than Byron did himself in the prisoner of Chillon:

vv. 226—230: „A frantic feeling, when we know,  
That, what we love, will ne'er be so.  
I know not, why  
I could not die;  
I had no earthly hope,“ (but faith,  
And that forbade a selfish death.)

Besides this he often complained to his friends of his being tormented by a perpetual ennui. (By the by I cite that well-known utterance of his wife: „Byron, you are the most melancholy man in the world, and generally the most, when you seem to be the brightest.“) Thus we owe indeed the most and not the worst of his compositions to his attempts of frightening away the shadows, which that tedious humour raised in his mind. But even this sullen and whimsical disposition enabled him to embrace as much every passion and situation, that there will hardly be found any topic of human life, which has escaped his pen. His genius too became more and more prolific and various, the most prodigal efforts, in lieu of exhausting his powers, seeming rather to increase their vigour.

Now a comparison between our heroes of poetry will furnish us with the most striking results. Highly gifted by Nature, they both underwent during their boyhood and first manly age nearly the same perversities, which sprang off from their sensible souls and vivacious fancies. However there must not be overlooked, that Goethe was by a careful and almost severe education equipped with plenty of common sense and

experiences and that he had been fitted out to consider the aim of his life to be a useful one to all people beyond himself; while Byron misapprehended by his mother, kindred and tutors, was obliged to beat his path from boyhood to virility alone, and by that circumstance loitered afterwards through human life, as across an infinite space of terra incognita. When they extended the range of their observations, their natural dispositions unfolded themselves in quite a different way. For although during their whole lives their inclinations were bent on the same objects, viz. „Nature, Freedom and Love,“ yet the beforetold differences led them in peculiar directions. Goethe after his academical studies having been accustomed, by his residence in Strassburg and Wetzlar, and by the experiences, made in his first tumultuous sojourn at the court of the youthful-extravagant duke of Weimar, to consider himself a single little part of the great entire beyond him, grew more and more calm and sedate. By and by his genius displayed its powers in a mild and lovely way; by subordinating his mind to common and true intuitions he excelled as the poet of manners, of the very nature and life; and without leaving his individuality he got the supremacy of the most objective reality.

Byron, on the contrary, being early upon inimical terms with all people below, never attained to clear up only so far, as to disengage himself from his individuality. (I dare to maintain this opinion against Th. Moore, who calls Byron „the practical poet“, that is, who had painted with the hues of life, while Shelley had looked at all things through his own intermedium). Whatever he may plead, to defend himself against that reproach of having pictured in all principal persons his own image, more or less all his compositions reflect his restless soul, often disturbed even to the sternest desolation and despair. Much may be exaggerated in the accounts about his wicked companions in Newstead-Abbey and the funny, but destitute society, which he frequented in London; about his dissolute housekeeping in Italy, until he became familiar with the noble family of Gamba and with his dearest friend, the countess Guicciola, be that, as it may, still it is undoubted, that he always took his refuge to the strangest and most efficacious means of getting rid for some instants of his sullen humour. When in the last of his life drinking and pistol-shooting would do no more, his extravagant fancy sought and found some satisfaction in swimming across the Hellespont and afterwards in partaking of the struggles and dangers of the Greeks, who then endeavoured to cast off the odious supremacy of the Turks. Little inclined, — both of his own accord, and irritated by the repulses, which he had often suffered, — to court his fellow-people, in order to enjoy their company or friendship, he retired more and more from the surrounding society and has afterwards very seldom looked at anything, but with eyes, veiled and saddened with strong misanthropy. — But as it is the peculiar heritage of those natures, to pronounce excellently well all that deeply touches the inside of man, Byron keeps a rather insurmountable rank in regard to his „miscellaneous poems“ and „Hebrew melodies“, the contents of which, derived altogether from the author's feelings, cannot fail their impression, even upon the most prosaical soul. (They have been so well valued and praised by O. L. B. Wolff in: Die schöne Literatur Europa's Leipzig 1832, pag. 179, that I think

myself entitled to spare my words in this respect. And where in all literatures may be found more heartiness and fervour in the effusion of a heart, wounded to death, than Byron laid in his „fare thee well“ etc., addressed to Lady Byron, after she had returned to her father's. Scarcely our Heine, whose natural disposition and temper offer a great many points of contact with Byron's, is to be acknowledged, with a few of his little poems not to have equalled the great Briton, but rivalled worthily with his genius. — Provided this, the pictures of Byron, principally the characters of his dramatical figures, without encroaching upon their often astounding beauty and truth, do not seldom touch the limits of exaggeration and distortion. In this respect I am quite in accordance with Rosenkranz, who on account of that circumstance writes (in his *Ästhetik des Säßlichen*): „Several characters of Byron's, Manfred for instance, and chiefly Werner, are produced as having been choked by a single little fault throughout a whole long life.“ —

Before I this pursue my examination, I am obliged to propose to the reader some excuses about that kind of comparison, I have hitherto chosen. For it may appear rather comical, that instead of explaining the resemblances and relations between our two poets, I seem to have done my utmost, to show in the last part of my essay, the strong contrast, their geniuses form towards each other. But he who knows, that original characters are brought into the nearest relation by their very peculiarities, can not, methinks, but agree with the way of exposition, I have taken. On the other hand the inquiring one with anxious accuracy into the little likeness, that exists between Goethe and Byron, would very likely either be soon at the end of his dealing, or often misled into the strangest errors. All those essays bear somewhat the marks of sterility and artificial bombast, whose nothingness has been extremely well castigated by Byron himself, when he defended his property against the reproach of having copied Goethe, (cf. *Gespräche mit Medwin in Böttigers L. B's. pag. 40.*) Add to this his sentence about Walter Scott, whose works he taxed to be, in all originality, stores of ancient and modern knowledge and investigation. Thus I am not afraid lest I be asked, what use was to be expected from that only way of examination, I could take; the more so, as we here are particularly discussing about the interest, a German man of letters took in an English one and vice versa.

Be that, as it may, I cannot help now allowing some place of my exposition to that very likeness, which they show in two points of view. He who has grown acquainted with their works, perceives immediately, that I allude to the pictures of Nature and female characters. In those paintings we are entirely undecided, to whose success to allot the prize, especially as, according to their peculiar natural dispositions, they made use of different colours and details, in order to variegate the entire. In regard to their powers of sketching, as well as to the truth in their observations on human life and manners, both our poets have displayed their faculties in an unrivalled degree. Undoubtedly they have witnessed all scenes, they paint, some way or another, known all shapes, they produce, and studied them with eyes both of lovers and philosophers. — Thus we are sometimes caught by the grandeur and sublime beauty, sometimes by the idyllic



loveliness which their sketches are endowed with, and it seems me to be a very difficult task to decide, whether to praise more Byron's vigorous and striking images, scattered through „Don Juan“, „the pilgrimage“ and „the island“, or those of Goethe, painted with cloudless undisturbed calm, which are found in „Hermann and Dorothy“, „W. Meister“, and „Werther's Leiden“. Now terrified by tremendous precipices and waste masses of rocks, or hurled through the fathomless ocean by the towering waves, we soon afterwards repose on the sunny green shore, in a shadowy grotto or a verdant bower, and stretch our eyes with delight over the rich bloomy fields of the South and East, or over the laughing plains of our dear home. Sometimes revelling in the charms of our native country and scarcely believing any other thing worth longing for, we then in a twinkling neglect all our neighbourhood and surrounding company, basking in cheerful dreams of that yearned land, bubbling with milk and honey.

And according to that different scenery there occur those delightful female figures, in the praise of whom all critics must be unanimous. Both Byron, amusing himself, and Goethe, gathering beyond that experiences in the intercourse with the other sex and studying its characters, have shown in an astounding manner, how to direct strange influences into the right way, and without subordinating themselves, to grow masters of all people and situations. Whenever Byron sometimes exaggerated his paintings, by indulging too much in the vices of mankind, nevertheless his figures have all been taken from out the very life; and to them who are offended by the author's protervity, I can not do better, than quote Goethe's splendid excusation: „Poëts and author's would be obliged to behave very odd, if they intended to be more pestiferous to the morality, than the daily news exactly are.“ (Works V, 595.)

Caught by the beautiful figures, as there are chiefly Myrrha, in whom Byron stored up all female excellencies, while Goethe distributed them on several women, Stella, Marguerite, Clara, Iphigenie, and the princess in Torquato Tasso, we pay, in regard to truth and reality, little less admiration to the less gentle and eminent characters, Donna Iulia, for instance, and Philine, Haydee and Mignon, Zuleika (in the bride of Abydos) and Mary (in Goethe's Götz). —

To finish with this examination, the spiritual riches of either of them were surely all their own, with nothing borrowed from the other. In consideration of Goethe, without believing his mind to have become too settled and fixed, when Byron appeared in the ranks of authors, as that he could not have drawn it in any other direction, his productions had been from the beginning too original and too well-finished, as to be encumbered with strange admixtions. And Byron, even if his imagination had not enabled him to compose and to embellish his productions from his own, would have started back from all those attempts through obstinacy and love of independence. And supposed, some poëts or nations had modified each other's thoughts by reciprocal influence, there is no reason, why to think any of them an impostor or less fitted for art and literature. This consideration together with all, I have told in the course of my essay, show

to perfection clearly, that both of them were not only original and unequalled, but that they are in all respects to be looked upon as true types of German and English nationality.

Many other comparisons may be drawn between the two nations in question, with respect to every branch of human knowledge and performance; but whoever will take the pains to compare the growth of the English and German intellect and scientific progress, will see, that in all the most important departments the English have been the first in the order of time, not in merit. With the view to prose, poëtry and every other branch of intellectual excellence I showed already and an examination on the development of the mechanical arts will prove still more, that the English, though they had the start of us by nearly a century, were not conscious of that circumstance, until by our eminent progress in every instance they were driven from their self-complacency into emulation. The raising of literature and science in both the countries, the remarkable improvement of all social institutions, shaped after each other's model, the increase of arts and manufactures in so high a degree, that there is not only a reciprocal demand of each other's faculties and workmanship, but also a general tendency to use, to imitate and to introduce each other's productions as their own, and a mutual acknowledgment of their respective abilities; all these are the best commentaries of my assertions. It would therefore be tedious and invidious to institute a farther comparison between the two nationalities, in order to state the superiority of either of them over the other. It is sufficient to say, that the more the English will condescend to pay attention and respect to and to turn other peoples' prevalence to their own account, and the higher the pliable mind of the Germans will raise itself to exacting authority upon others, the better the faculties and energy of both of them will unfold themselves, as much as to render them more fit from day to day for taking the lead of all peoples under heaven. Wonders have already been effected by this mutual sympathy and incitement, since in Germany the impediments had begun to be removed, which during the last two centuries checked all intellectual and mechanical progress, and which for a far greater space of time have been so injurious to France, that she can not yet recover from her moral and intellectual decay, produced by a misplaced protective spirit and an immoderate ecclesiastical power. Those protective principles, influencing still all society in our neighbouring country, when introduced into politics, theology, trade and manufacture, will prove to be an insurmountable obstacle to that freedom, which is an indispensable ingredient of public morals and of the happiness of a nation. The manner, in which French and English intellect developed themselves since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, was remarkably similar; in both the countries the progress of knowledge bore the same proportion to the decline of governemental suppression and ecclesiastical influence; in both the exertions to obtain that prosperity for the enjoyment of the whole nations in a body, the longing after toleration and equality before the laws led to civil wars. But while the latter, when that dreadful but wholesome period of fermentation was over, when the

mighty fabrics of prerogative and aristocracy had passed away in one ruin together, were brought to that happiness and freedom, which they enjoy up to this day, and which, often admired, has not been equalled but in a very few instances, the French on the contrary from the times of Louis XIV suffered themselves not only to be led back into, but to grow proud of a condition, which the meanest Englishman would spurn as an intolerable yoke. Even the Revolution, which sprang off from nearly the same causes, could not be effectual in this regard, because they who might have led it into a wholesome and useful train, were so very few in number, that they were soon overpowered, confounded with the suppressors and obliged to leave things to take their irrational and unsuccessful course.

And Germany, suffering early from the improprieties of the feudal system, executed in an intolerable manner, and languishing afterwards, when the little princes clung to their dominating French „idéal d'un souverain“, under all the encumbrances, that issued from an unlimited power and arbitrariness, Germany, I say, shared the lot of those nations, who had been blessed with civilization and science, in order to lose liberty, and had afterwards, through incessant bloody struggles against the domestical inconveniences and the pestiferous influences from abroad, to regain the latter, in order to share in the profits rising from the former. For arts and sciences can not flourish but in the train of liberty; without this there can be no unfolding the operations of an immortal soul, no expanding over infinite space, to which the remotest barriers of creation would be equal to captivity, no recording with truth and dignity the duties and privileges of society. — And literature, far from being considered, as it ought to be, the last unassailable resource of liberty, brought its worshippers and followers into the most painful and ignominious situations. As for France, plenty of instances may be gathered out of the history of government from Louis XIV. up to the Revolution (cf. Buckle l. I. III 115—126); and in Germany even the most intelligent prince of the last century, who, to be sure, did not agree with that French principle of declaring every able and judicious man, who dared to deal with liberal opinions, a personal enemy of the crown, even this was so far from encouraging German literature and knowledge, as to pronounce the German language unfit to be made use of for thinking and speaking, much less for writing. Not until all these barriers had fallen down, when German men of letters had boldly professed knowledge to be a privilege of mankind, not to be suppressed, and that there is no limitation, through which the rigid claims of Nature on a regular progress can be barred, then only our nation could think of getting on a level with their relation, the Britons. Then all embarrassments of intellect vanished under the powerful strokes, which hailed down upon them from the well-provided stocks of knowledge of them, whose only task is included in those often abused maxims:

„Knowledge is Power,“ and

„No Liberty, but through Knowledge.“

Upon these principles rebellions, if necessary, ought to be planned, and then their fruits will always prove to be the participating of the whole society in the most

sacred intellectual and real privileges, wrested from the dominating party. And that there is no reaction to be apprehended for that sort of success, the history both of England and America, whose constitutions and happy social situations ought to be a pattern to all civilized nations, furnishes us with the best proofs. After many a hard-fought battle against prejudices, the inveterate tenacity of which might almost cause them to be deemed a part of the original constitution of human mind, in the greater part of Germany the establishment of those principles of toleration and liberty has taken place. More and more the maxims obnoxious to every progress have been attacked, more and more the Germans will get free in this regard from that reproach of considering Paris their metropolis, and will cling to those nations, which from Nature they have been appointed to associate with.

As I am not allowed here in these pages to dive any farther into the history of both the languages, and as I must yield up that task to a further opportunity, there is only one question left, which perhaps will have occurred to many of the readers during the latter part of my examination. It will, of course, be rather difficult to understand, why the English could not have got upon that station, which the French occupied through some centuries among the civilized nations of Europe. To be sure, that happy political and social predicament, I explained the English to have been blessed with since the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and which through many hard struggles and assaults from the opposite parties has not undergone but perpetual consolidation and improvement by useful reforms, might have entitled them to exercise an irresistible influence upon all other peoples. Pondering on the respect, which in the age of the usurper Cromwell has been paid to that nation, although not any sovereign in the neighbouring countries did agree with the reforms, that were successfully working in the system of English government; adding moreover, that every man of note in the following times shared, even with the greatest personal risks, in the general admiration due to her liberal institutions and ensuing prosperity, we must, of course, be startled at the tardiness, which the English employed in following up their important mission. Shakespear already admires his country as

„a precious stone set in the silver sea“,

and, to be sure, the English have always been proud of that priceless keepsake of their own. Most of their poets and prose-writers are endless in extolling the accomplishments and advantages of their country and particularly of the only town worth mentioning, „fair London“. The more astonishing it is, that this seat of a government, whose connexions are extended and influence exercised to the remotest points of the globe, this favourite-seat of intelligence, activity and commerce, as they call it themselves, this demesne of freedom and hardihood in the expression of liberal opinions, this protector and promoter of every informing science, every useful and embellishing art, could not be promoted to that station, which Paris occupied through several centuries and occupies in some degrees up to this day. The causes of that singular circumstance are to be found in the English character, whose peculiarity I have tried to examine before-hand.

Early separated from the German race and mixing up with elements of the indigenous, Romans, Danes, Normans and others, they did not only abandon their original disposition, but in the most important topics even suffered their language to become such a one, as hardly to show its German origin. During a long space of time they were embarrassed by incessant struggles for the sake of the possession of the soil, and not until they had grown together with the conquerors and suppressed natives into one body, they found leisure to open their eyes towards the surrounding nations. But then the exclusiveness and ensuing selfishness of their character prevailed so much already, that in those very times, when they had enforced respect upon all the civilized world, they did not care but for their own aggrandizement and increase, provided other nations did not think of intruding upon English politics and their system of accumulating wealth and power. They never were fit for accommodating themselves as much to other people's intuitions and principles, as there would have been necessary in order to interfere successfully with a civilizing policy. And so it would have been now-a-days, unless the last century brought on that happy crisis, that was destined to chain the English and Germans together into those contacts, which Nature has assigned to congener nations.

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