

pears in the Christian conception of human life as a lawful manifestation of a deep-rooted, fundamental instinct, in obedience to whose promptings it reaches up towards its Maker in love and admiration of his infinite perfection, and in an unconscious endeavor to enlarge and ennoble its own limited powers after that divine exemplar. This strange mystery of the human heart, inscrutable to the wisdom of the ancients, finds its simple and obvious explanation in the all-penetrating, all-illuminating light of the Gospel, the message which Faust rejects.

The titanic element of the mediæval myth, which Goethe thus has seized upon, has, moreover, a close relation to the aspirations and the general tendency of his own time. There is everywhere apparent in those days a never satisfied striving after knowledge which had not before entered within the circle of human cognition, even after secret and preternatural knowledge, just as it had been in the time of the historical Faust. There is, moreover, apparent a dissatisfaction with the traditional subject matter of human experience, with the "stale theories of the past," and a titanic striving for the nobler fruits on the tree of life, which heretofore had hung concealed from human sight and beyond the reach of human hand. It was a time not only of political but especially of intellectual fermentation, which gave birth to the French Revolution, but likewise to the French Encyclopedia. The startling scientific discoveries, as well as the new political experiments, had opened up to the mind new avenues of thought, new vistas, seemingly boundless, of human inquiry. It was a time, therefore, of wild search, of search without guide or path, restless and aimless, which took a special delight even in this seeking without finding, in this purposeless, limitless rush after unknown and unknowable objects. It was a time, also, which discarded with disdain the quiet enjoyment of truths already established, but which, in its youthful exuberance of energy and power, but likewise in its youthful lack of clearness and fixedness of purpose, would accept nothing which it had not itself experienced, enjoyed and created. This period is fitly called in Germany the period of "Sturm and Drang," which in English might aptly be rendered by a period of high-pressure.

Goethe's Faust is expressive of this tendency, and can only be completely understood when considered in connection with the time that first gave it birth. On the other side, it would be a grave error to consider it only in this historical relation to its own age, as it has been attempted by some critics. By such a course, the drama would be stripped of its most ennobling characteristics, and would be placed on the same level with that most typical production of its time, Goethe's "Werther's Sorrows." It would then be only a production of its own age, and a good one of that kind, but yet it would not be an embodiment of the spirit of all ages of the archetypal man with all his longings and aspirations. The greatness of Faust is only perceived to its full extent when it is considered in this light, as the concrete embodiment of our common human nature in its struggle against its own barriers, its natural limitations. It is in this respect that it stands on a par with the greatest creations of all ages, such as the Prometheus of Æschylus, Dante's Divine Comedy and, in a more limited sense, the Hamlet of Shakespeare.

It would thus appear that Faust, in its deeper sense, is a psychological drama, whose hero is not a definite historical character connected with definite historical relations of time and place, not a man in his individual limitations, but rather man in his totality. It must not, however, be imagined, on account of this broad generalization, which has thus become apparent in Goethe's hero, that Faust is nothing but an empty abstraction, a metaphysical shadow devoid of life and reality, and put upon the stage for the sake of airing some pet philosophical theory. There is nothing further removed from Goethe's genius than that vapid idealism which vents itself in such monstrosities. His mind was essentially analytical, it perceived the abstract through the concrete. Nobody has ever painted the individual features of life and nature more strikingly and more touchingly, and yet his objects are set before us in colors so diaphanous as to exhibit the deeper workings, the heart of things palpitating underneath. It is on this characteristic that Goethe's greatness chiefly rests. To his clear eye the things about him appeared not in a delusive mist, not in distorted shapes, but in their true, simple, natural forms, and he pre-