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IMPRESSIONS FROM GOETHE.

IN THREE PARTS.

Second:—His Autobiography.

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Under the name of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, which has been rendered by the English equivalent "The prose and poetry of my life," Goethe has given us what is known in England and America as his Autobiography, a book, considered upon the whole, as one of the most delightful in the German tongue; full of sunny gleams of the old fatherland, but nowhere affording the interest, or precise detail, which usually constitute the charm peculiar to biography. There is enough of detail respecting others, but a provoking reticence about himself and the whole of his life, but more especially the youthful period, is felt to be inaccurate in tone as well as in fact, not intentionally, but arising out of the circumstances of the writer, who was far advanced in life before he thought of the work, and produced it, under the influence of those artistic views of existence, for which he became so celebrated, and which gained for him the praise, but oftenest the blame, that he looked

upon life only as an artist. Other autobiographies interest us by the succession of historic events, by the record of things done and suffered; this is taken up mainly with the reaction of things upon the man, not so much with what he accomplished, as with what was accomplished in him. Hence everything is taken up with culture; it is the end and object of existence; and hence in true Germanic fashion, character and picture are everything, action and event little or nothing.

Goethe was born on the 28th of August, 1749. His father, Johann Caspar Goethe, was the son of a Frankfort tailor; he had raised himself to the dignity of an imperial councillor, and in 1748 married Catherina Elizabeth Textor, daughter of the chief magistrate of the city. The father seems to have been a cold, formal, pedantic man, but of vigorous and rigid will; the mother a simple hearted, vivacious and affectionate woman, who loved poetry and the romantic love of the nursery.

"From my father," says Goethe, "I derive my frame and the steady guidance of my life, and from my dear mother, my happy disposition, and love of storytelling." His early education was wholly domestic, and acquired in the company of his only sister, Cornelia, to whom he was passionately attached. Of his native Frankfort, a mediæval city, rich in old associations and remnants of primitive