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IMPRESSIONS FROM GOETHE.

IN THREE PARTS.

*Third:—Meister and Faust.*

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Goethe is probably best known to English readers by two of his works, which are, by far, the most characteristic of his writings, I mean "Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship," and "Faust;" the former has been translated by Carlyle, the latter by about a dozen German Scholars; of these, Hayward has given us a prose translation, which is said to be distinguished for faithfulness to the original. There are translations in verse, by Swanwick and Blackie, and a recent one by Theodore Martin, which probably reads better than any of them. I believe we are also soon to have an American translation by Bayard Taylor, who has spent a great part of his life in bringing it to perfection.

My original intention was to confine myself entirely to the views of life presented in these remarkable productions of the poet, but the extraordinary prominence given in late days, to all things German, determined the adoption of a plan, embracing a wider field, and therefore affording less time to be devoted to the original design.

Goethe had long been the ruling spirit in Weimar, had loved and flirted, travelled in Italy and Switzerland, written plays, studied Kant and Spinoza, botany, anatomy and optics, before he wrote the Wilhelm Meister. The Werther period was to him, a kind of poetical and metaphysical slough of despond, from which he arose to a certain newness of life, very different indeed from that divine illumination attained by the typical pilgrim, in his wonderful progress from the city of destruction to the gates of the New Jerusalem, but at the same time highly curious and suggestive, withal.

The Wilhelm Meister is a novel or fiction, consisting of two parts, the *Lehrjahre*, or apprenticeship, and the *Wanderjahre*, or travels. Artisans in Germany have to spend so many years in acquiring a knowledge of their trade, but, before they are admitted to mastership, they are obliged to spend a year in travelling. In many Guilds this custom is as old as their existence, and is said to have originated in the frequent journeys of the German Emperors to Italy, and the consequent improvement observed in such workmen among their menials, as had attended them thither.

Under the idea of a craftsman learning his trade, therefore, Wilhelm sets out to acquire in the world, not so much a knowledge of its ways, as the accomplishment within him of a deep and varied