

sents them to our view in language just as simple and direct. Nevertheless, by this most artless of arts he brings us closer to the deeper essences of things than could be accomplished by the fieriest diction and the most flaming imagery. This simplicity does not, however, imply a lack of comprehension and force. His prose writings, works of science as well as of fiction, refute such an assumption. They demonstrate his power of generalization and his ability of giving utterance to it in language at once noble and impressive. But poetry with Goethe is not the language of the intellect but of the heart. It expresses not the truth which the intellect digs out from the objects around it by the laborious process of reasoning and observation. That is science, with which he was well acquainted. His poetry gives spontaneous utterance to the beauty, the truth and the goodness which the heart has felt and experienced in contact with life and nature. With him the poet sings like the lark which pours its gay joy upon the morn, or like the nightingale which breathes its sorrow upon the silent night.

It is this personal element in Goethe, together with that objectivity alluded to above, which imparts to his poetry that inimitable truth, to his characters that delightful freshness and naturalness, and to his prose style that quiet grace, that even flow, that clearness and transparency. On the reader, however, and on the hearer it acts with a mild and yet irresistible power. It possesses something soothing, healing and conciliating, an ambient spell that creeps around the heart, which beside him no poet has ever possessed to the same degree.

Still, there is one deficiency in his artistic composition, which the English critic has not been slow to detect. Passion, especially, those violent and aggressive passions which tear the heart and rack the brain, and in their mad career would knock the universe into ruins, are foreign to his art as they were to his life. Such violent outbursts he could not appreciate as poetic material either in the individual nor in the nation. Thus, in the great struggle for liberty which his youth witnessed around him, he could not find anything to inspire his muse. The clash and clangor of conflicting elements was

distasteful to his sensitive soul, in which a calm serenity was the prevailing disposition.

One passion, however, he was able to depict with a startling reality—the passion of love. It forms one of the most conspicuous features of his art, as it did of his own life. In his *Faust*, it occupies a central position upon which the drama greatly depends for its effect. Still, in *Faust* the love episode is really an accident which has grown out of a perversion of motive by the Evil One. When *Faust* calls upon the "Spirits that weave at the loom of time," with which his pantheistic creed peopled the universe, there appeared to him, not a demiurge, that would lift his soul to the empyrean and steep his heart in the music of the spheres, but the Christian Devil, who holds out to him, in especially attractive colors, a higher enjoyment of the senses. And to prove once more that all human wisdom is but vanity, he that would scale the heavens, immediately falls a willing captive to these grosser allurements of the arch-fiend of hell.

Thus the character of *Faust* does not depend for its chief interest upon the love plot, although this gives it its true human coloring, without which it would be nothing but an airy abstraction. His greatness lies rather in that vast conception of mental power and daring which he bodies forth, and which is wonderfully enhanced by the supernatural element that surrounds him.

This supernatural machinery is so skillfully selected from those invisible agents that have a permanent place in the imagination of men, and is, moreover, so artfully interwoven with the elements of actual life that it does not detract much from the freshness and naturalness of the story, and, on the other side, furnishes frequent occasions for sublime flights of diction and impressive scenic effects.

The poet, moreover, by this means, attains the advantage—so largely utilized by the ancients—of ennobling his hero by confronting him with beings of a superior mould. Our human nature, by being represented in a successful contest with the higher powers, is elevated above its ordinary plane of being. To this expedient, to a great extent, is owing that massive strength and colossal outline which we perceive in the heroes of the *Iliad* and the *Æneid*. If they had fought only against