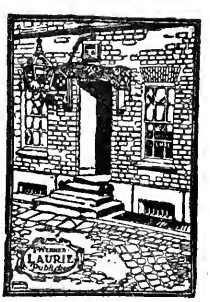
SOME GERMAN WOMEN AND . . . . . THEIR SALONS . .



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Rahel

SOME GERMAN WOMEN AND THEIR SALONS

BY

MARY HARGRAVE

ILLUSTRATED

LONDON
T. WERNER LAURIE
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PREFACE

THE women included in these sketches all belong to the same period, that about the year 1800, a generation or so on either side of this date.

The close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries mark a period of Revolution for men and of Evolution for women. The ideas of the French Revolution, that time of upheaval, of revaluing of values, of imperious assertion of the rights of the individual, swept over Europe like a quickening wind and everywhere there was talk of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, realised (and perhaps only realisable) in that same order of precedence. At any rate, Liberty came first and foremost. The rights of the individual became imperious.

The minds of intellectual women were stirred, they became more conscious of themselves, more philosophic, more independent. They began, really for the first time, to express themselves

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intellectually. There was a clear, vital atmosphere in the dawn of the last century, before reaction set in, before romance dwindled to sickly sentiment, to the resigned, dead level of the Holy Alliance on the Continent and Victorianism in England. France produced a writer of the calibre of Madame de Staël; England, a Mary Somerville, a Jane Austen; and Germany, although the stronghold of the domestic ideal, also had her brilliant intellectual women who, outside their own country, have perhaps not become as widely known as they deserve.

The women of the *salons* were not royal, aristocratic, or even artistic personages. Simple *bürgerliche* or middle-class, they emerged brilliantly from its levels, absorbed current ideas, enjoyed friendships with men of note, achieved European celebrity. This at a period when the German writer Gutzkow lamented: "It is the misfortune of our time that the women are so far behind the men," and "the relations between men and women are a perfect caricature." Thus the few women like Goethe's Bettina and Rahel the Jewess stand out all the more sharply from their sisters of the German domesticated type. Friendships such as Rahel

had with the notable men of her day (she was Bettina's senior by fifteen years); letters such as she wrote to these friends, frank expressions of her ideas and aspirations, were something unheard of until then in Germany; she was, as it were, the first of her sex to speak out plainly and declare her individuality. And although she possessed no creative gifts, either literary or artistic, yet the force of her personality was such as to win for her the title of the "Sibyl of the Nineteenth Century."

In the same way Bettina von Arnim, who influenced both by her personality and her writings, was called a "Sibyl" (the "Sibyl of the Romantic Movement"), a word which expresses the intuitive divination of the spirit of the age possessed by such women and their inspiring intellectual influence upon the men of their day.

In Germany the noted women of this period have for their centre the Romantic movement, that wonderful tendency in art and literature in which the German soul for the first time realised itself. Women helped and influenced this movement in no small degree. The Romantic *salons* in Berlin were a very vital influence, each one forming a nucleus of attraction for leaders and adherents of the

movement and diffusing their ideas in ever-widening circles.

Rahel Varnhagen, the "first great modern woman" of her nation, belonged to Romanticism in its earliest, purest phase—belonged instinctively, not merely receptively. "You *are* Romanticism, before ever the word was invented," Gentz wrote to her. Intellectually she belonged to the movement in its dawn, in its most beautiful period, when it meant freedom from conventionality, a return to nature, a free outlook, a free soul. Later, when Romanticism degenerated into popular mysticism, seeking glamour in material accessories, Rahel's clear soul felt no longer in sympathy with the movement and she turned to "Young Germany."

Bettina von Arnim, on the other hand, was a genuine child of romance, by temperament rather than intellect. She saw the world with the true romantic vision through a veil of glamour and wonder, from her childish days when she would steal out to watch the passing of the night, or climb a tower to be near the stars. The Blue flower certainly bloomed for Bettina.

Henriette Herz, good soul, belonged to the

Romantic movement because it came her way. One feels that she would have belonged intelligently and receptively to any movement in which her lot chanced to fall, always with moderation and elegance, an ornament to any *salon*. The men who frequented hers chanced to be leaders of the movement.

As for Caroline Schlegel, she was "modern." Her restlessness drove her from conventional circles, she was romantic in her quest of happiness — at any cost—away from the dead levels of respectability. She naturally joined the new forces, an inspired and inspiring element, and found a resting-place in Jena, the "cradle of Romanticism."

Charlotte Stieglitz really falls in the "Young Germany" movement rather than with the Romanticists. But her death came in point of time so near that of Rahel and so near the publication of Bettina's "Letters to a Child"—that "last bright flame of Romanticism, the sparkling fireworks with which it closes its festival"[1]—that she may well be included with their generation. Her tragic suicide has been called romantic, but in truth it was more akin to the spirit of ancient Greece, or rather—and

[1] Robert Prutz.

equally alien to our civilisation—to the ruthless self-immolation of a Japanese heroine.

Goethe's mother belongs to the eighteenth century, but she lived well into the first decade of the nineteenth. She had no *salon*, but her house welcomed all the noted men and women of the day who visited Frankfurt, and her stimulating influence was felt by the younger generation, such as Clemens and Bettina Brentano.

And Queen Luise of Prussia must always be sure of a place among noble women of that or any period. We see in her an embodiment of Germany's highest ideals of woman. She was the *Landesmutter*.

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ELISABETH GOETHE

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Frau Rat Goethe

ELISABETH GOETHE

"Providence has often given me unexpected joys, and I have confidence that many such are yet awaiting me."

"First learn to know all things, even to the farthest, deepest star; then only may'st thou say, 'It is impossible.'"—FRAU RATH.

"MADAME, je suis la mère de Goethe!"

With these words, if we may accept the familiar account of Bettina von Arnim, did Frau Rath Goethe introduce herself to Madame de Staël, when that lady visited Frankfurt in the course of her travels through Germany—those travels wherein she so fluttered the intellectual dovecotes and discovered (seemingly to her surprise) a "perfect mine of genius," both in the *salons* of Berlin, and among the literary coteries of the various small dukedoms and principalities.

With naïve pride the good Frau Rath put forward her claim to recognition, awaiting in all solemnity the deference due to her exalted title. It was indeed the most fitting presenta-

tion of herself to the world. What greater claim could she advance than this of having given a Goethe to the German nation?

Among those who knew her, however, Frau Rath was accustomed to recognition, not only for her great son's sake, but by reason of her own unique personality. A splendid poet's mother she certainly was, but her successful motherhood was naturally the outcome of her own strong whole-hearted nature: stimulating, inspiring, yet at the same time no less sympathetic and capable of self-effacement: an ideal for wifehood and motherhood.

Her name has become a household word in Germany; her sayings, her quaint and lovable traits are treasured for their own sake wherever her great son's name is honoured.

Frau Aja is a national possession.

Some years after Goethe's death the city of Frankfurt paid homage to its illustrious son; a statue was erected to his memory. After the ceremony of unveiling was over, the laurel wreath which had crowned the poet was laid, a touching and fitting tribute, on the grave of his mother.

We come into touch with Frau Rath chiefly in her letters, only lately collected and given

to the world in something like connected form. Until this was done the scattered pages, worn and yellow with age, were not accessible to the general public, among whom, nevertheless, a kind of legend of Frau Aja was lovingly treasured. This was in a large measure gleaned from Bettina von Arnim's vivacious Letters and Diary, material used by Goethe in his autobiographical *Dichtung und Wahrheit.*

Many of Frau Rath's letters were destroyed or lost, especially a large number to her son. And many to celebrated men and women have only been preserved partially, in fragments. Those which still exist are delightful in their spontaneity and freshness, their characteristic humour. They possess the flavour, the essence of life which, Goethe said, make letters precious.

It is said that the mothers of men of genius are often women with real but undevoloped intellectual gifts, women whose talents have not been exploited or exhausted, but have lain dormant ready to bear fruit in the achievements of their children. Genius, indeed, like the flowering aloe which matures slowly and dies after bursting into flower, ripens and perfects itself unperceived through generations, only to realise itself in one unique life.

Goethe acknowledges how much he owed his mother in the oft-quoted lines:

> "Vom Vater hab' ich die Statur,
> Des Lebens ernstes Führen;
> Vom Mütterchen die Frohnatur,
> Die Lust zu' fabuliren."[1]

There is no doubt about the "Lust zu fabuliren." Goethe's mother was a magical story-teller, a perfect Scheherezade who wove romances night after night, not for a cruel Sultan but for a certain exacting little boy with big dark eyes and a keen critical faculty.

"Write books?" she said as an old lady. "No, I can't do that, but as for relating what others have written, in that I should like to find my master!"

Undeniably, with all her practical common-sense, her keen and humorous wit, Frau Rath had that something more, the imaginative mind, which made her a weaver of fairy tales, a dreamer of dreams—which gave her, in short, the touch of idealism which by no means always graces the capable housewife.

[1] "From my father I have my stature,
My earnest aims in living;
From little mother my joyous nature
And love of story-weaving."

Some of her sayings give us glimpses of a beautiful soul.

"First know everything, even to the farthest, deepest star; then only may'st thou say, 'It is impossible.'"

This is the keynote of her philosophy, her cheerful confidence and faith in the Unseen, and in that "farthest, deepest star" is there not a touch worthy of the mother of a poet?

And this mother, daughter of a healthy, sturdy race of prosperous *Bürger* or middle-class people, bestowed on her son a fine physical frame, sound to the core, befitting one who was to be a real world-genius, not merely a poet of moods, but one of those natures who seem, physically and mentally, to belong to a superior race of men, long-lived, touching life at all points, supreme.

Katherina Elisabeth Textor was born in the year 1731 in the fine old free-city Frankfurt-on-the-Main. She was the eldest daughter of the *Schultheiss* or Chief Magistrate, afterwards Mayor of the city, a personage of civic importance. The Textors were prosperous folk, highly respected, living in the orderly fashion of solid *Bürgerthum* as they had apparently done for generations.

Her father was the typical old-world *bourgeois*, a man of method and routine, a lover of comfort and good cheer. His hobby was gardening and his spare moments were spent in his big garden by the city walls, clad in a curious garb of dressing-gown, velvet cap and slippers, and the fine gloves presented to him annually in some civic function. Here in leisurely fashion ("like Laertes the father of Odysseus," his grandson declared) he cultivated his peaches, mulberries, and vines; his tulips, roses, and dahlias all in their season.

The mother, married in her teens, was young with her children, and let them romp and be merry, provided they subsided into due decorum when the father came home.

Four children were born after Elisabeth. As a matter of course she was versed in all the domestic duties of a good German maiden. In later years she was noted as a capable Hausfrau, but as a girl she had no great love for household tasks. All her life she had a certain *penchant* for dress, and as a girl she loved to put on her prettiest frocks and sit in leisure like a "princess to sew a fine seam" or read; hence her sisters nick-named her "Prinzessin Elisabeth." Also she was rather given to day-dreaming.

There was certainly a strong imaginative strain in the Textor family. The good *Schultheiss*, for instance, had great faith in his own dream warnings. On one occasion he dreamed of his election to the coveted post of Mayor on the death of the then holder of the title. Elisabeth was greatly impressed by this vision, and when the post fell vacant through the death of its occupier, with naïve faith she donned her best attire, and sat ready to receive the messengers who, she felt sure, must come to announce her father's election.

Her mother and sisters laughed, but Elisabeth's faith remained unshaken and was justified, for in due course a deputation of city fathers and dignitaries arrived in state at the Textor house to announce that the choice had fallen upon her father. "Princess Elisabeth" was the only one prepared to receive them, which she did with becoming dignity, enjoying hugely the rites and ceremonies proper on such occasions, whilst the rest of the family, more or less *en deshabille*, remained in the background.

Many years later she herself gave credence to a mysterious dream-warning, and there is a story of Goethe's vision of himself, meeting, as he rode, his own semblance clothed in a certain

uniform. Some years afterwards the vision was realised, for he found himself riding along the same road clad in the garb of his vision, which betokened a State appointment.

Such details, trivial in themselves, are not without interest as showing the imaginative strain on the mother's side.

A characteristic childish romance, founded on nothing, seems in keeping with our dreamy "Prinzessin." She was present in the historic Kaisersaal at the crowning of the Emperor Karl VII., a splendid ceremony worthy of the rich old city, for centuries the seat of the Coronations. The handsome melancholy face of the Emperor made a deep impression upon Elisabeth; she fancied his eyes had rested upon her, and that his greeting had been for her, and in his progress through the city on several successive days she contrived to follow him, imagining that he smiled at her and was conscious of her presence. The little girl cherished a romantic dream in her heart. Karl VII., in short, played the part of a romantic Prince Charming in her quiet life.

And years after, when Frau Aja came to die, an old wound on her knee which had been bruised at the time of the coronation, made

itself felt again, and when the doctor ordered oil, myrrh, and wine as a liniment, the old lady smiled and said it was surely an omen of death, and strangely it recalled the oil and wine used in the Coronation ceremony of 1742. To her dying day Frau Rath's heart was the haunt of romance.

Elisabeth and her sisters probably went to a parish school near their home to learn writing and arithmetic (it had been considered an innovation at the beginning of the eighteenth century when girls were taught these accomplishments, and in any case girls were not expected to learn as much as boys). Knitting and needlework were taught in "sewing school," and Elisabeth was clever with her needle. As an old lady she enjoyed making pillow-lace, and in 1795 was making lace for a great-grandchild.

"I wager a thousand to one I am the first great-grandmother to make lace for her great-grandchild, and, as you can see, not just any sort of lace, but a very beautiful Brabant pattern."

Of book-learning the Princess enjoyed very little, but she was rather inclined to believe that "mother wit," of which she possessed a full measure, flourishes best in an atmosphere of

freedom from rules and bookish learning, and she would uphold the "good old days" when children were not wearied by too much study.

As she expressed it, "My nature has never worn stays, it has grown and flourished as it listed; it was allowed to spread out its branches, not cut and maimed like trees in dreary pleasure gardens which are trimmed into shape. Therefore I feel, perhaps more than thousands of my sex, all that is really good and noble."

A little clavier-playing was taught to daughters of the upper middle-class, and Elisabeth profited by this, though she was not high enough in the social scale to be brought up in the French style, and to learn foreign languages — privileges as yet reserved for the nobility and upper ten of the *bourgeoisie*.

Frau Rath's letters do not tell us anything about her young days. They only begin in August 1774, when she was already in middle age. In her youth, especially before marriage, Elisabeth was no scribe, in fact, until her husband set himself to improve her education, her writing and spelling must have been of the poorest. Even after his *régime* both were open to criticism. Her spelling always remained phonetic, but of course spelling was somewhat

variable in those days, so that her quaint mistakes are not surprising, whilst her use of the racy Frankfurt vernacular often imparts a piquant flavour to her utterances. She was always proud of being a *Frankfurter Bürger*, and in this independent old city idiosyncrasies of every sort flourished and were regarded by the good citizens with the peculiar pride attached to one's own, whether family, race or habitation.

Life was by no means dull or stagnant in this busy centre of merchandise. The Frankfurt Fair, twice a year, was always a stirring time, a wonderful and important event, bringing men, beasts, merchandise from all parts of the world, a perfect motley, a raree show for old and young.

And travelling companies of real actors brought the latest novelties in the dramatic world, not omitting plays—tragedy and comedy —from the French, translated or adapted into German prose or stiff heroic verse. Is there not a peculiar interest in noticing on the bills of the Marionette Theatre of those days such dramas as *The Tragedy of the Arch-Wizard Doktor Faustus with his merry servant Hanswurst?*

Elisabeth grew up into a fine girl with handsome, regular features and beautiful dark

eyes. Mother, daughter, and grandson all had those expressive eyes, full of fire which remained undimmed by age. And so with household tasks, small pleasures, gossip and chat in neighbours' houses, and the rest, girlhood passed fleetly until, in Frau Rath's own words:

"Before we knew where we were, paff, we were grown-up and had husbands!"

Girls were married young in those days. At seventeen, pretty, light-hearted Elisabeth Textor became the wife of Johann Kaspar Goethe, a serious, worthy man of thirty-eight, belonging to the same good *Bürger* class as the Textors, though slightly inferior to them in social position. He had acquired the title of Rath or Councillor, from which his bride took her name of Frau Räthin (or Rath) by which she became afterwards so familiarly known.

Johann Kaspar Goethe was an excellent man, business-like, upright — in short, he possessed most of the virtues of the sterner sort. He had a pedantic turn of mind, was reserved, self-centred, and his real kindness of heart was hidden beneath a dry manner. Not a man to captivate a young girl's fancy, but that was a secondary consideration. He set himself at once to complete his wife's education, notably in

writing and spelling, further by procuring for her good lessons on the clavichord and singing.

Herr Goethe took his bride to his large old-fashioned house in the Hirschgraben, the back part of which was occupied by his mother. We see her, a gentle, kindly figure, in her fragile old age, dressed in white, flitting in the background of the lives of her grandchildren. Here in the following year, 28th August 1749, was born Elisabeth Goethe's first child, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, destined to become Germany's greatest poet.

"Elisabeth, he lives!" was the announcement made by the kind old mother-in-law, when the child first gave signs of life, for he came into the world more dead than alive. At this "my mother-heart awoke," says Elisabeth Goethe, "and has lived ever since to this very hour in constant enthusiasm. Must I not be grateful to Providence when I think how a life, then hanging on a breath of air, is now firm in a thousand hearts, the *only* life to me?"

A daughter, Cornelia, was born in the following year, followed by two other children, both of whom died young; only Wolfgang and Cornelia survived.

Now began Elisabeth's real life, as a happy mother. She was young with her children, played with them, adored them, and acted as mediator often enough between them and the undemonstrative father.

Characteristic is the well-known story of how Goethe as a little boy amused himself one Sunday morning by throwing first his toys and then the household crockery out of the window, enjoying the delightful sound of the smash, and animated to fresh efforts by the neighbours over the way, who took a malicious pleasure in the proceedings. The mother came home from church at the height of the fun, and saw with dismay the store of dishes and plates which she had lately bought, flying to destruction, but she "could not help laughing," which shows exactly what sort of a mother she was. Her darling enjoyed it so much!

"Children need love," was her chief maxim of education. And when the severe father insisted on the children going to bed in the dark to cure them of being afraid of ghosts and goblins, the young mother coaxed them with marzipan and cakes to overcome their fears.

"I and my Wolfgang have always held together," she would say, "that is because we were both young and not so many years between us as between Wolfgang and his father."

The father was a terrible pedagogue, a man of maxims and principle; he loved to teach, but his lessons were times of weariness for the children. Germany's future poet as a little boy spent many winter evenings reading aloud Power's *Lives of the Popes*, a dry work over which the whole family, even the father, yawned. But tedious as these volumes were, they had to be read to the bitter end, for Herr Goethe held that children must be taught to finish anything once begun. There were rebellious scenes sometimes, "catastrophes" Goethe called them.

The mother's fairy stories told on winter evenings by the stove were more entertaining than the *Lives of the Popes*. Wolfgang, on a little stool at his mother's feet, listened spellbound.

"I never grew weary of relating, any more than he did of listening: Air, Fire, Water, Earth, I pictured as beautiful princesses, investing all that happens in the world of nature

with a meaning, in which I soon believed myself more firmly than my audience. And when we had imagined roads between the constellations, and that we should some day inhabit stars, and what great spirits we should meet there above, then there was no one so eager for the hour of narration with the children as I was, nay, I was curious in the highest degree about the further progress of our little imaginative tales, and an invitation robbing me of such an evening always annoyed me.

"There I sat, he nearly devouring me with his great black eyes, and when the fate of my heroine did not turn out exactly according to his fancy, I saw how the passionate veins swelled upon his forehead, whilst he choked back his tears. He often interrupted before I had come to the turning point in my story:

"'Mother, the princess won't marry the nasty tailor, even if he does slay the giant, will she?' If I put off the *dénouement* until next evening, I might be sure that he had thought it all out meantime, and thus, when my imagination was exhausted, his fancy would help me. And when next evening, guiding the reins of fate according to his desire, I would say: 'You

have guessed it, it happened just like that,' he would become all fire and flame, and one could hear his little heart beat. . . . To his grandmother (who lived in the back part of the house and whose pet he was) he always confided his views as to how the story would go on, and from her I learned how I should continue my text according to his wishes—there was a secret diplomatic correspondence between us. Thus I had the satisfaction of relating my fairy tales to the delight and astonishment of my audience."

After the death of the grandmother (1754) Herr Goethe carried out a long-cherished wish and rebuilt his house, enlarging and improving it until it took on its present form in the Hirschgraben (*the Goethe-Haus*).

There were constant wars and rumours of wars in those days; at this particular time it was the Seven Years' War which made a ground-bassto life. No sooner was the house rebuilt to the satisfaction of its owner, than the French took Frankfurt and remained in occupation for some time (1759-62).

The good old custom of quartering soldiers in private houses was apt to fall heavily upon citizens. The Goethe household received a

French officer, Count Thorane, and some of his *suite*. Things might have been worse, for Count Thorane was an exceptionally refined, kind-hearted man, who tried to inconvenience his unwilling host as little as possible. He was very kind to the children, sending them dainties from his own table, and Wolfgang, the handsome, intelligent boy, was an especial favourite. Wolfgang grew fond of this kind friend, whose presence brought life and movement to the quiet house; artists and men of the world visited Count Thorane, and the boy felt instinctively drawn to this side of life, so different from prosaic *bourgeois* circles. Intercourse with this polished Frenchman was really a boon to Wolfgang.

As for Frau Rath, with her usual commonsense, she promptly took French lessons by way of facilitating intercourse with her guests, and she soon discovered many good points in the "enemy."

Herr Rath Goethe, however, was not capable of such wide sympathies. He scorned to unbend to the hereditary foe, remained persistently ungracious and hostile, and on one memorable occasion, indeed, ran imminent danger of arrest for wishing his guest to the Devil.

Frau Rath fortunately was popular among the members of the Count's *suite*; she begged them to delay carrying out the order as long as possible. The Count's interpreter, too, was on her side and interceded, so that her offending husband was pardoned.

The young wife had other occasions for practising her womanly *rôle* of peacemaker; billeting was not the only cause of friction. Families were divided against themselves; friends suffered estrangement. Notably Herr Rath Goethe, enthusiastic for Frederic the Great, and his father-in-law Textor, on the side of the Emperor, were given to arguments, quarrels, almost it came to blows. All Frau Rath's tact and good temper were needed to keep the peace between husband and father.

Herr Goethe, narrow, obstinate, irritable, certainly appears somewhat of a household tyrant in spite of his excellent qualities. He loved his children, yet could not win their affection. His wife was young with them. "I and my Wolfgang were young together, we have always held together."

Wolfgang was his mother's favourite. Cornelia was a thoughtful, quiet child, whose shyness made a barrier between herself and her parents; her

best qualities of heart and mind remained unexpressed. But, from childhood, she always adored her clever, handsome brother, showered all her affection upon him, and Wolfgang loved and understood his too often misunderstood sister. She was his *confidante*, the sharer of his secrets and aspirations, and it was often Cornelia who kept him to his task of writing when youthful resolution flagged. (This was the case with his early drama *Götz von Berlichingen.*)

Poor Cornelia! After Wolfgang left home for the University (1765) the whole brunt of her father's pedagogic leanings fell upon her. Unfortunately for herself, she was a promising pupil, and Herr Rath enjoyed superintending her education. She had inherited her mother's musical talent, and behold, the poor girl kept several hours a day practising at the clavichord! Cornelia bitterly resented these hours of drudgery, and never forgave her father for "spoiling her youth." Outwardly obedient, her girlish soul was full of rebellion and hatred. She grew taciturn and unloving, occasionally there were scenes of bitterness.

With peculiar obtuseness her father used to make her indite formal letters to her absent brother, in which his own moral maxims seemed

to come from her pen. "I often smile," brother Wolfgang maliciously wrote in a family letter, "to see how a good simple girl utters thoughts which can only come from a serious and experienced man."

Thus a well-meaning father tormented and estranged two noble young hearts. Their attitude is painfully characterised by a passage in one of the son's letters:

"Shall I be like him when I am old? Shall I no longer love what is beautiful and good? Strangely enough, we imagine that the older we grow, the more we are free from what is wordly and petty. But one grows more and more worldly and petty."

It was sad, too, that Cornelia was too reserved to win more of her mother's affection; their natures were not really sympathetic.

After three years at the University of Leipzig, Wolfgang returned home in 1768 to be nursed by his mother through a serious illness, remaining at home until the spring of 1770.

During this time, both mother and son came under the influence of a family friend, Fräulein von Klettenberg. She was the centre of a religious sect (inclined to mysticism and quietism), which included some of the most important

men and women of the city. Fräulein von Klettenberg was a remarkable woman in her way, a deeply religious nature, refined and gentle. Frau Goethe was greatly attached to her, and consulted her on all important occasions. (Later, when Goethe enshrined her friend's memory in *Confessions of a Beautiful Soul*, she wrote to thank him.) In the languor of convalescence Wolfgang, too, came under her influence, and with the usual impulsive acquisitiveness of his genius threw himself into the problems of mysticism, studying all kinds of books on this and kindred subjects, including alchemy and chemistry.

Herr Rath observed mistrustfully these interests of his son, who somehow never developed into the ideal son he dreamed of—Wolfgang worked industriously enough, but Herr Rath preferred law to poetry and dabblings in natural science. The germ of *Faust* was growing in secret, unsuspected and invisible — whilst the father dreamed of a decorous lawyer to uphold the name of Goethe, and wondered that the "curious individual," the *singuläre Mensch*, his son, was not more dazzled by the prospect.

But the mother never doubted, she had always known that her Wolfgang was destined to great things.

To this period belongs the well-known story of Goethe skating on the river one bitter winter when the Main was frozen over, a scene indelibly printed on the mother's memory. She loved to describe how she drove out to watch the skaters, wrapped up in her warm fur-lined coat of red velvet with a long train, and how Wolfgang came up to her, his cheeks glowing and the powder blown from his brown locks. Laughingly he begged for the coat:

"'Mother, you are not cold in the carriage, lend me your cloak!'

"'You surely don't want to wear it?'

"'Of course I do.'

"So I take off my fine warm coat, he puts it on, and, throwing the train over his arm, he skates over the ice—a very child of the Gods. Bettina, if you had only seem him! There never was anything more splendid. I clap my hands for joy! To the end of my life I shall still see him as he skated in and out through the arches of the bridge, the wind blowing the train out behind him."

During the next five years Wolfgang came and went, spending, on the whole, a good deal of time at home. After passing his examinations in law, following a period of study in Strasburg, there was another joyous return home.

More halcyon days for the happy mother, when her son, in all the pride of early manhood, handsome as a young god, the favourite of men and women alike, and with that faint aura of genius glowing brighter, more unmistakable, day by day, lived four wonderful years at home!

And now (1773) *Götz von Berlichingen* was making a sensation, and *Werther's Leiden* (1774) took Europe by storm. Young Goethe was famous, recognised by his literary contemporaries, his acquaintance sought by high and low. Aristocratic circles also began to interest themselves in the handsome young poet, the scion of a good *bürger* family, who was such a dashing boon companion, ready to enjoy life in every phase and to flavour the cup with wit and intellect.

Men of note came to the house in the Hirschgraben. Frau Rath was at the zenith of her motherhood. Both parents loved to entertain their son's friends royally, and Frau Rath was extremely popular, not only for her excellent dinners—her son's friends loved her handsome, sunny presence, her wit, her kind heart. Was ever a finer picture of mother and son in the comfortable prosperous old home?

The familiar nickname "Frau Aja" is said to

date from this time. There is an old legend of the *Haimonskinder* and their mother Frau Aja, sister of Charlemagne and wife of Count Haimon, one of whose sons in a quarrel killed the son of Charlemagne and was outlawed with his brothers. After many wanderings the longing to see their mother grew strong within them, they ventured home in disguise, and Frau Aja, the loving mother, refreshed her children with wine and food.

One day when Goethe and his friends, in full *Sturm und Drang*, were inveighing against kingdoms, governments, injustice, and tyranny, their talk grew so revolutionary and bloodthirsty that the mother became uneasy. To make a diversion she brought out her best red wine, and placed it before the young men, saying: "This is the true tyrants' blood. Drink this as much as you like, but don't bring murderous ideas into my house."

From that day as "Frau Aja" she was lovingly known among the band of gay young spirits, and "Frau Aja" she remains to this day.

Presently came the turning point in Goethe's life; the call to Weimar, in the autumn of 1775, when the young Duke of Weimar, Goethe's friend, his companion in amusements and follies,

insisted on appointing him minister at his Court. Not to Herr Rath's satisfaction; he cared naught for services with princes, had a sturdy *bourgeois* distrust of Court favour. In vain he warned. Even the unworldly Fräulein von Klettenberg advised Wolfgang to take the path opening before him. The die was cast, and after long delays and uncertainties, Goethe turned back from a journey begun to Italy, stepped into the chaise sent for him by the Duke, and was borne off to Weimar.

Henceforward Frau Aja only saw her darling at intervals. As with all devoted mothers whose children go into the world, so with her—her life returned upon itself; she had to take up the threads of existence and weave them, no longer around the life of another but into a pattern for herself.

Cornelia had left home two years before, and her early death prevented any *rapprochement* which years and experience sometimes bring about between parents and misunderstood children. Cornelia never found happiness, never found her right corner in the world, Her story must be typical of many women who, like her, were out of place in those days of women's subjection and the domestic ideal; she was an anachronism. At a later date she might have found her

sphere. Goethe, who understood her better than any one, says that he never could picture her as a housewife, but rather in some position of authority, "an abbess or a foundress of some community of noble souls." Evidently the problem of this sister led him to ponder on the contradictions, limitations, sufferings in woman's nature and destiny. One imagines that Cornelia was in his mind when he wrote of Iphigenia and her brother, and put into a woman's mouth the sorrowful lines:

"Ich rechte mit den Göttern nicht; allein
Der Frauen Zustand ist beklagenswerth.
Zu Haus' und in dem Kriege herrscht der Mann.
Und in der Fremde weiss er sich zu helfen.
Ihn freuet der Besitz; ihn kront der Sieg!
Ein ehrenvoller Tod ist ihm bereitet.
Wie eng- gebunden ist des Weibes Glück!
Schon einem rauhen Gatten zu gehorchen,
Ist Pflicht und Trost; wie elend, wenn sie gar
Ein feindlich Schicksal in die Ferne treibt!"[1]

(*Iphigenia auf Tauris.*)

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[1] "I seek no quarrel with the gods, and yet
A woman's life is all too pitiful.
Man rules in war, at home he rules in peace,
Nor is he desolate on a foreign shore.
Possession makes him glad and victory crowns,
And even Death brings honour in its train.
What narrow bounds encompass woman's lot!
Ev'n to obey a husband's rough behests
Is joy and duty. Wretched thrice is she
Whom hostile Fate drives far from friend and home."

She had grown up rather delicate in health, a plain girl longing passionately for beauty, but unable to "make the best of herself."

In 1773 a suitor appeared and was accepted. In November of that year she became the wife of Georg Schloesser, a lawyer, a friend of her brother's, who pronounced him "a man of excellent intentions but with a dry manner, which might have repelled had he not possessed great literary culture." One feels that Schloesser fulfilled the ideals of Herr Rath, his father-in-law.

Although he admired Cornelia, justifying his love for her as "founded in virtue and reason," the marriage was not a happy one. Cornelia never became the capable, bustling housewife who ought to have adorned Schloesser's home. And whilst a bright intellectual circle would have suited her, she was transplanted to a country district in the Black Forest — no neighbours within four miles.

She wrote gloomily of her lonely hours, when her husband was away at his professional duties, of her ill-health, of the dreadful season of winter, which always tried her: "Here the beauties of nature are our one delight, and when nature sleeps everything else sleeps."

With only a small income, with the advent of children and Cornelia's long illnesses (she was in bed for two years after the birth of her first child), it must have been a weary struggle to make both ends meet. The worthy Schloesser complained that his wife was not strong,

"Every wind, every drop of rain she feels, even when indoors; she is afraid of cellar and kitchen." Poor Cornelia, conscious of her own deficiences, pined away, and after four years of married life she died, 1777, leaving two girl children, one a baby.

Goethe felt his sister's loss deeply. His diary chronicles:

"*June* 16, 1777. Letter about my sister's death. Dark, broken day."

And he wrote to his mother of "the strong root that held me to earth being torn up, so that its branches must wither."

For Frau Aja began the trying period of her husband's illness, which soon assumed a serious aspect and for several years absorbed all her energies.

In the winter of 1776, Herr Rath was ill and grew so nervous that the shutting of a door startled him.

She says in a letter to Lavater:

"I had to be the messenger bearing the news of his daughter's death; he had loved her above all (poor Cornelia!). Truly the years are coming, of which it is said: I have no pleasure in them."

In 1780 he had several attacks of paralysis, and sank into a helpless state in which he could not feed himself and could only speak with difficulty. From this he never recovered.

"Poor Herr Rath has gradually grown weaker during the last year; especially in his mental faculties, memory, reflective power, all gone. He really only vegetates like a plant. Providence sees fit to lead me by all sorts of ways, for I need not tell such a feeling soul as you how much I suffer. Especially as I have no compensation through my children—all and everything is far, far away from poor Frau Aja."

Frau Aja nursed him devotedly to the end and on his death could only write:

"Well for him! May God preserve any one from such a life as his has been during the last two years!"

Evidently she had needed all her philosophy during the time, that woman's philosophy of little things which was her strength.

"I always do the most unpleasant things first,

holding with friend Wieland that, if you must swallow the Devil, don't look at him long first . . . and as soon as things are straight again I defy any one to surpass me in good temper."[1]

"I rejoice in life because the lamp still glows —look for no thorns, treasure up small pleasures. If the doors are low I stoop—if I can move the stone out of the way, I move it—if it is too heavy, I go round it. Thus I find each day something that pleases me—and the corner-stone is: I have faith in God, which makes my heart joyful and my face bright."

And a little remedy for depression: "I shake myself once or twice, sit down to my piano, and the ideas become *couleur de rose* again."

The Duchess Anna Amalia of Saxe-Weimar, mother of Goethe's reigning Duke, came to visit Frau Aja in 1778, and the two mothers became firm friends, as their correspondence shows. The Duchess sometimes writes to her as "Dear Mother," and frequently invites her to visit Weimar. But at first it was impossible on account of the ailing husband, and later the difficulties of travelling made the journey too formidable for an elderly lady. "If I could fly through the air on Faust's cloak! yes, but . . ."

[1] Letter of May 1801.

And so Weimar remained an unknown place of delight.

Often the longing for her son grew painfully strong, but Frau Aja only lets a word escape her now and then. So many people came to see her, but "*Sohn Wolf kommt nicht*," she says pathetically.

Wieland made Frau Aja's acquaintance at first through her son, but soon learnt to love and esteem her for her own sake. "Goethe," he wrote, "in spite of his idiosyncrasies, is one of the best, noblest and most splendid beings on God's earth. And who would not wish to know the father and mother of such a man?"

After corresponding with her for some time, sending her his last works and begging for her unconventional criticisms, he found Frau Rath's letters so delightful that he decided: "I must see Goethe's mother, nothing else will do," and in December (1777) Wieland, Kranz, and Merck all came on a visit to the hospitable house in the Hirschgrabe, departing after a week of Frau Aja's good cheer and company in a state of enthusiasm for their hostess. Kranz wrote that he wanted to proclaim it abroad: "Hear me, every one! I am writing to Frau Rath Goethe."

In such esteem was the poet's mother held by these men.

Frau Aja equally enjoyed their visit. ("I always loved to have great men and women about me," she said.)

"We have learnt to know friend Wieland this winter. Who can see him and not love him? I will not say what he deserves. He and Merck stayed a week with us, and, oh! what a delightful time it was. You have no idea, for you always have good folk about you, but as for us . . . ! I am always afraid of growing rusty."

And to Lavater in 1779 in the same strain:

"What suits me least in this workaday world is that people can be so little to each other. God's plans ordain that one should be in the East, the other in the West, to be the salt of the world and preserve it from going putrid."

She greatly admired Schiller and was delighted at his friendship with her son, the works of both will be immortal, she says, and especially commends both poets for never replying to stupid criticisms of their works.

Many visitors came to enjoy Frau Rath's hospitality, and her fame was noised abroad. Princes and princesses as well as poets felt at home in her genial presence. She writes to her

son that she still served her good red wine, the "tyrants' blood," to her guests, that Frau Aja still "ajated" (*ajatete*), but with moderation.

Letters from Weimar were events. How much more the occasional visits of her idol (such as those in 1791, 1792, 1793, 1797), when mother and son renewed their familiar affectionate ways, and Goethe realised always anew what a wonderfully fresh and vital nature was hers and wished they could live together always!

And now in the autumn of her life, Frau Aja, free but lonely, ordered the days and gathered in them what joys she might. She received or paid visits in the afternoon, and dressed for the theatre, where from her box her well-known face beamed upon the performers. With pardonable vanity, as the mother of the great dramatic poet, she felt that she had a certain right to criticise, and sometimes conveyed her opinions to the actors in audible conversation. Her applause, when she was pleased, was loud and hearty. Bettina, in fact, declares that her first acquaintance with Frau Aja dated from the theatre, when she, Bettina, remarked audibly that "Frau Rath might well clap, when she had such fine arms to show," at which Frau Rath called her a "pert girl," but without displeasure.

A letter to the theatre-manager Grossmann shows her sound judgment:

"The favourable reception of *Hamlet* (by the Frankfurters) almost made me respect our public . . . but it meant nothing, absolutely nothing. With a few exceptions they reason like horses. Only a few days ago I met a lady of the great world—so called—who thought *Hamlet* was only a farce. Oh! goodness! goodness! *Hamlet* a farce!! I almost fainted on the spot. Some one else remarked, 'the devil take him, if he could not write such a stupid thing himself,' this was a stout, lusty wine merchant. There is such a cry just now about the enlightened times in this our century, etc., yet (excepting with a few, the real salt of the earth), these gentlemen and ladies seem so inane, so empty, vapid, everything is pitiful, so poor, so out of place, so stunted, that they are unable to digest a piece of meat. Pap, frozen stuff, *bonbons,* such are their food. Indeed, they ruin their digestions more and more."

The sun of her life was in Weimar, and nothing delighted her so much as letters describing the doings of her adored one. Her gratitude to any one who would take the trouble to send her news of her Wolfgang is pathetic.

Thusnelda von Gockel, the witty maid-of-

honour, was one of Frau Rath's best correspondents. She described, for instance, the first performance of *Iphigenie auf Tauris* on Easter Tuesday, 1779, in which Goethe himself played Orestes, and Prince Constantine Pylades, an artistic festival recalling the courts of *renaissance* princes:

"Doctor Goethe played his Orestes splendidly. His costume, like that of Pylades, was Greek, and never in my life have I seen him look so handsome. The whole drama, in fact, was acted so well that King and Queen would have liked to say, 'Dear lion, roar again.'"

Frau Rath is promised a copy of the drama as soon as possible. In return for Thusnelda's many entertaining letters, Frau Rath sent her a *silhouette* of herself in a locket with some rhyming verse. (This was at Christmas 1781.) The verses expressed Frau Aja's trust in her own lucky star, therefore the lines are characteristic, if not poetical.

"Doch ist Frau Aja auserkorn,
In einem guten Zeichen geborn;
Kennt brave Leut, dess ist sie froh
Und singt in *dulci jubilo*."[1]

[1] "Frau Aja chosen by a sign
Was born beneath a star benign;
Right glad is she good folk to know
And sings in *dulci jubilo*."

Fräulein Thusnelda is greatly delighted with the portrait of the "dearest, best heart's mother," and the "unspeakably delightful letter."

On the death of the Emperor, Joseph II., in 1780, Frankfurt was plunged into mourning. On the coronation of his successor in the following year the town was crowded:

"The *Quartierherren* have not yet visited me —so I dare not go outside the door—and sit in the Bastille, as it were, during this splendid weather, for if they found me absent they would perhaps occupy the whole house (the gentlemen are cursedly prompt in taking possession), and once the rooms are marked, I shouldn't advise any one else to make use of them." (Letter to her son, 1781.)

Ultimately the two little girl princesses of Mecklenburg Strelitz (one of whom was the future Queen Luise), their brother Prince George, and the governess were quartered in the Goethe house, where they became firm friends with Frau Aja.

"In my house instead of stiff Court etiquette, they had perfect freedom, they danced, sang, and jumped the whole day long—every day at noon they came to my little table armed with three forks—tried everything—it tasted delicious. After dinner the present queen played the

pianoforte, and the Prince and I waltzed. Then I had to tell them about former coronations, also fairy tales, etc. All this made such an impression on their young minds, that they never forgot it, no matter in what other splendid doings." Queen Luise, in fact, never forgot Frau Rath, and visited her in after years when she came to Frankfurt, on one memorable occasion presenting her with a gold necklace (19th June 1803). "Dear God, what am impression that makes on folk!" said the old lady referring to the visit, "it made a halo round my head, which became me very well."

In the winter of 1792 war again broke in upon the peaceful routine of life, war with the old enemy, France.

Again Frau Rath had the discomfort of having soldiers quartered upon her, an officer and two common soldiers, Hessians. "They are good folk," she wrote to her son, "but (between ourselves) very poor—I have to feed them," and with her usual philosophy, "The catering is very troublesome, but as every one has to do it, there is nothing more to be said."

In spite of discomfort and expense, Frau Aja took a certain pleasure in feeding up these poor

fellows, who were half starved on their meagre ration of bread, and eagerly devoured her good food. She relates with satisfaction how she gave them a joint of roast pork, and what a "kingly pleasure" it was to see them eat it. In addition one of the officers quartered with her was ill of a gun-shot wound, and a surgeon had to be taken in as well as other attendants. Her provision of wood fell low—a serious matter, as good fires had to be kept up for the sick man—"*summa summarum* (one of her favourite expressions) it is a heavy burden."

For two winters Frau Rath had to put up with the billeting, her house was full excepting one room for herself, which had to do duty both as bed and sitting-room, and she finds the constant tobacco smoke rather a trial.

"If only these *Menschen-kinder* would not smoke tobacco all day long!" she sighs. "My room might be a guard room!"

To avoid further billeting and the worry of a too large house, Frau Aja was at last persuaded by her son to remove to a smaller dwelling. And with her usual good fortune she found the exact one which fulfilled all her ideals. These she had confided at some length in a letter, and lo! incredibly she discovered almost

the exact realisation of the conditions and advantages she had dreamed of.

It was a house called the Goldener Brunnen in the Rossmarkt, overlooking the Zeil, Frankfurt's principal street. "No such view, no such position in the whole town—a nice well-lighted kitchen, a large dining-room, a good wood-place, *summa summarum*, exactly my ideal!" And to this she came, leaving the old house with its rooms full of memories, its possibilities of billeting, selling off all superfluous furniture, and delighted to find two Prussian soldiers who carried her possessions carefully to the new house.

Here Frau Rath lived peacefully her remaining years, watching the affairs of the town from her window, enjoying the splendid sunshine and the view of the Katherine-thurm. The view becomes of increasing importance, for Frau Aja is getting older and finds going up and down stairs more of a trial than it used to be.

She writes to her son that she is so busy and the view so charming, she has no time for letters.

"If you were not Wolfgang you would have had to wait."

In July 1796 more wars and alarms. This

time the French bombarded the town. On 12th July poor Frau Aja was awakened at 2 A.M. by the guns, had her valuables carried into a safe in the cellar, and although in previous times she had "never let one grey hair grow on account of the war," this time the horrors came so near, she heard of so many friends who were wounded and killed—"a foot or a hand torn off"—that at last even brave Frau Rath resolved to go, but not far, "only just to escape the bombardment." Some friends drove her to Offenbach.

"I am not one of the nervous souls, but this terrible night, which I spent peacefully with Mamma La Roche, might have cost me either my life or my health in Frankfurt." A few days later she returned to her home, thankful to find that nothing had been plundered, and that fires which had broken out had been put out by the French, who, she ungrudgingly admits, now seemed not enemies but "saviours and protectors of our property and our homes."

And presently she is settled again, reading Voltaire's *History of the World*, and playing her piano "until I might be heard at head-quarters, and thus good, and less good, days pass over."

Such was Frau Aja in her sixty-seventh year.

For home distractions Frau Aja had her clavier playing, reading, making Brabant lace, and chess, her four hobby horses—she calls these, and does not know which she loves most, and often cannot make up her mind which particular hobby horse she will "let galop."

On Saturday afternoons she had a *kränzchen* or circle of young girls, who came to eat Frau Rath's good cakes and enjoy her society. She would read to them, play games, give them the latest gossip from Weimar with extracts from her son's letters, or show them the latest presents she had received from the Duchess Amalia. The greatest joy was when the old lady could be persuaded to tell them a story —not merely a story taken from some poem or drama, but one of "her very own."

"At first," says one of these privileged maidens, "she was rather discursive, possibly the number of listeners made her a little nervous, but before long all the *dramatis personæ* in their fantastic habiliments, were dancing merrily in their own odd way upon the stage of her memory."

Clemens Brentano, the romantic writer, brother of Bettina, made Frau Aja's acquaintance as a

boy. The dreaming desultory lad, misunderstood by his father, the dry man of business, was in the position of the round peg which is being forced into the square hole. He had made an old coffee barrel into a knightly castle called Baduz, to the amusement of the family, but Frau Aja comforted him. "Take no notice of them—Baduz is your own, although it is on no map. No one can take it from you . . . your kingdom is in the clouds and not on this earth, and whenever it touches earth, tears fall like rain. May you have a beautiful rainbow!"

As practical help Frau Aja persuaded the father to send him to Bonn University. Clemens married, first, the poetess Sophie Mereau, but after her death eloped with a Fräulein Busmann in the summer of 1807 — an unhappy affair, which caused a scandal in Frankfurt. But the benevolent Frau Rath ascribes "all these mad doings to the extraordinary heat; sixty persons went out of their minds in Rome, of course it is not so bad with us, but then the difference between Rome and Frankfurt!"

Later Clemens remembered Frau Aja. In 1838 he wrote sadly:

"The children of this age turn their backs on

me, so does imagination, and Frau Rath, God bless her, can no longer comfort me, as she did long ago."

How wise and loving is her attitude towards her son's relations with Christiane Vulpius. Goethe had told his mother of the *liaison* when he visited her in 1792, and she wrote affectionate, motherly letters to the unknown before the marriage, and when in 1806 the union was legalised, she wrote to the couple:—

"*27th October* 1806.

"I wish you all happiness, blessings and prosperity in your new condition of life. You have acted after the wish of my heart. God preserve you both! You have my blessing in fullest measure."

To Christiane Vulpius.

"*September* 1800.

"Your good letter came at the right time, for the men of Freedom (the French) were threatening to take our money again, which by no means put us in good humour—scarcely four weeks ago they extorted 300,000 guldens from our town. Just then came good news of you all, and I was glad and thought—money here, money there, if only my dear ones in Weimar keep well and

happy, I can sleep in peace. And so I did, even in all that hullabaloo."

She was a generous grandmother, fond of sending presents and letters, but when Goethe thought of giving his boy a toy guillotine, a gruesome product of that period, she wrote (23rd December 1793) that she will do anything to please him, "but to buy such an infamous murder machine, at no price will I do it. The inventors should away to the pillory, if I were in authority and the toy should be publicly burnt by the hangman. What! to allow children to play with such a dreadful thing—to put murder and shedding of blood into their hands for a pastime—no, that will never do!"

Frau von Stein, the friend of Goethe's youth, was on good terms with Frau Aja, visiting her in 1789, and her son Fritz as a lad of thirteen had a royal time in the old house, when, Goethe said, "he really learnt what freedom was, and my mother taught him the philosophy of the merry life."

To Fritz von Stein.

"*9th September* 1784.

"I am particularly glad that you already know good from evil. So far, good. Bravo, dear son! That is the only way to become noble,

great and useful to mankind: a man who does not know his faults or does not wish to know them will end by becoming unbearable, vain and full of pretensions, intolerant—no one will put up with him, even if he be the greatest genius. I know striking examples of this. But we must also know the good that is in us, that is just as necessary, just as useful. A man who does not know his worth — or his strength, and has no belief in himself—is just a simpleton, who cannot walk properly but goes for ever in leading strings and remains a child—for ever and ever."

The relation between mother and son was always loving. Goethe's illnesses were carefully kept from her until they were over lest she should be made anxious. She on her side made light of her disappointment when a proposed visit fell through, or when he refused the offer of a post in Frankfurt. The two understood each other. Both had an antipathy to news of illness, misfortune, or death, to anything which disturbed the harmony of existence. They preferred to look on the bright side of things.

Frau Aja writes to her son:—

"31*st December* 1802.

"I never could bear to be consoled. Very few people are able to put themselves in the place

of the sorrowful, and so they make unpleasant comforters. Expect no consolation from me—but thanksgiving to God who has kept you well."

The affectionate intercourse with Bettina von Arnim was a pleasant thing in Frau Aja's very last years (1806-8). "A woman of my age and an ardent young girl who is content to stay by me, asks nothing better, this is worthy of thanks. I have written this to Weimar . . . . he (Goethe) says it is a comfort to him to know you are with me." But her healthy common-sense restrains Bettina's exaggerated raptures about Goethe.

"Girl, you are quite mad. What are you thinking of? Who, pray, is your sweetheart who is to think of you by moonlight? Do you suppose he has nothing better to do? I tell you again—everything must be done in order, and write decent letters, with something to read in them. Stupid nonsense writing to Weimar; write what happens to you, one thing after another in its proper order. First who is there and how you like every one, and what they all wore, and if the sun is shining or if it rains—this is important too."

She outlived the good Duchess Amalia, who died in the spring of 1807.

In the following year Frau Aja herself died

(13th September 1808). She had written in the previous winter that "the grandmother is quite *allegro* this winter, but keeps herself wrapped up in cotton-wool as in a bandbox, because of the north wind, her deadly enemy. She has not been to the play all this winter, but has visited her good friends all the more, wrapped, however, from head to foot in fur." She would not allow herself to murmur against the evils of old age.

"Shame on you, old Rätin! You have had enough good days in the world, and Wolfgang as well, now, when the bad ones come, you must put up with them and not pull a cross face! Do you always want to walk on roses when you are over the limit—over seventy years?"

Her last letter dates from July of the following summer—a short note to her daughter-in-law, which breaks off suddenly, complaining of the heat.

With her usual cheerful philosophy Frau Aja met Death, the inevitable. When some friends, not knowing of her illness, sent her an invitation to dinner, she replied with a flash of her old spirit that Frau Rath could not come, she was busy dying.

THE JEWISH *SALONS*

INTRODUCTION

THE JEWISH *SALONS*

THE most remarkable fact about the romantic *salons* in Berlin is that they were created by Jewesses, a fact which can only be understood by considering the position of their race at that time.

The attitude of Germans towards Jews was still incredibly hostile and unjust. Even the law made a distinction between Jews and Christians. Under one edict (confirmed as late as 1802) they were classed with thieves and murderers; they were restricted to their own quarters of the great cities, exposed to rough treatment if they ventured beyond their limits. Thus the philosopher, Moses Mendelssohn (grandfather of the musician), and his children were actually pelted with stones one day when walking outside the Jewish quarters.

The Jews, on their side, naturally hated their persecutors. Shut in upon themselves, they

became more and more narrow, intolerant, fanatic. To such a point was this carried that a Jewish boy was solemnly excommunicated because he had carried a German book for a Christian from one street to another.

But the same Moses Mendelssohn who had been stoned in the street arose, like his namesake of old, to help his people. He roused them to a consciousness of their position, and inspired them to fight against it. The Jews, he said, had been "too long content to pray and suffer, not to act." Under his influence Jewish children were taught to speak German, instead of a kind of "Yiddish," and thus the wide domain of German literature and culture opened before them. The spirit of scepticism under Frederic the Great, the strong winds of intellectual freedom which swept over Europe towards the close of the eighteenth century, helped to sweep away the prejudice of Gentile against Jew, and by the close of that century the Jews themselves, as well as their position, were greatly improved. Yet Rahel Levin, who had absorbed European thought and culture from the foremost minds of her time, Rahel the Goethe-worshipper, whose whole life was a passionate struggle for

freedom of every kind, was somewhat of an alien among her own people. She suffered doubly, out of sympathy with the narrow fanatical spirit of her Jewish surroundings, humiliated and despised if she ventured beyond them. Nearly all her life she suffered from the mere fact of being a Jewess; she herself considered her birth the source of her greatest unhappiness. Speaking of the numerous good gifts which fell to her share in life, she says bitterly: "But Fate added, 'Be a Jewess,' and now my whole life is a wound." In the simplicity of this "Be a Jewess" is concentrated centuries of misery, centuries during which her race had learnt the dumb, patient suffering of a beast of burden. To Rahel the word "Jew" is synonymous with woe.

This very ostracism, however, brought with it compensation to the Jew. Excluded from ordinary German society, from social intercourse in any wide sense, the Jew concentrated his affection and his riches upon his home. He adorned his house with costly furniture and works of art, with pictures and statues by the best artists (sometimes the gift of princes whom he had helped financially); his tables

were covered with the daintiest linen, served with the choicest foods and wines. The Jews lived in a luxury and refinement unknown to the proud but poor Gentile aristocracy. Jewish women enjoyed leisure and opportunity for culture in a measure undreamed of by their German contemporaries. Henriette Herz describes how Jewish women lived whilst their men-folk were busy in shop and counting house, how they formed circles for reading, for languages, for philosophy. They read Racine and Voltaire in French, Shakespeare in English, they learnt Italian in order to read Dante in his own tongue. Such women with their quick Oriental minds, cultured and refined, were the modern women of their day, certainly the most charming and accomplished. Their drawing-rooms attracted the more liberal men of note, who rose above the prejudices of the day—artists, musicians, travellers from foreign lands, the intellectual among the young aristocrats. Actors and singers, at that time excluded from "good society" in Germany, were welcomed in these Jewish houses. One met all manner of interesting people, young poets, old philosophers, an enterprising princeling or so, men of science, in an atmosphere of cultured Bohemia, presided

over by charming and accomplished women of the world. Small wonder that the more intellectual Germans were attracted, for such pleasant freedom of intercourse was unknown in their own circles. There one was bored by stiff etiquette and general dulness (*Schloss Langeweile* "Castle Ennui," the aristocratic circles were nicknamed), and the women had lost the art of frank, unaffected intercourse with men, whilst the Court was so often plunged into mourning that some one dubbed the Courtiers *Pleureusenmenschen.*

Thus Jewish women created the *salon* in Berlin, and exercised an important influence on intellectual life and thought. "The most important centres of Romanticism in Berlin were the brilliant Jewish *salons,* presided over by women of genius such as Henriette Herz and Rahel Levin. These *salons,* which found a common bond in their unequivocal worship of Goethe, were the focuses of German literature at the beginning of the century."[1]

The first in point of time was that of Henriette Herz.

[1] J. M. Robertson, *A History of German Literature.*

I

HENRIETTE HERZ

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Henriette Herz

HENRIETTE HERZ

"The only thing which comforts and strengthens me is the doing good, caring for, watching over others."—R. VARNHAGEN.

HENRIETTE HERZ has been styled the Madame Recamier of Berlin, and there are certainly many points of resemblance between the two famous leaders of *salons*.

Both owed their celebrity, in the first instance, to their beauty; both were women of sympathetic rather than original intellect; they appealed by womanly charm rather than brilliance of wit, and both were women of high personal character, who, in loveless marriages, contrived to keep the respect and friendship of their admirers.

Madame Recamier's friendship with Chateaubriand was paralleled by Henriette's with Schleiermacher, who, during the years of his best literary activity, used to go every day to talk over his work with his "most sympathetic affinity."

Henriette Herz was not a writer herself (we

may except two novels, both destroyed unpublished), but a biography, compiled from her own sayings and writings, has been given to the world by her friend Julius Fürst.

It gives an interesting picture of life in Old Berlin, especially among the Jewish circles to which she by birth belonged. To her vivid descriptions we owe much of our knowledge of these circles at the moment when the Jews began to emerge from their century-old exclusive, excluded life, and to make their intellectual influence felt in Germany.

Henriette was born 5th September 1764, the eldest daughter of a Portuguese Jew, Dr Benjamin de Lemas, at that time the best Jewish doctor in Berlin. He was a well-known figure in the streets of the city, of handsome presence, always exquisitely dressed in fine cloth, silk, or velvet, with silk stockings and spotless linen (for he held that a physician should present himself pleasingly to his patients), at night preceded by a servant bearing a lantern through Berlin's badly lighted streets. At home he was an honoured and beloved personage. Henriette especially adored her father, and loved to remember his beautiful voice, his perfect German. He was an excellent linguist, and

never spoke the "Yiddish" dialect prevalent in Jewish circles. Moreover, although he remained orthodox, he was too enlightened to be fanatic. The mother was severe and irritable with the children (of whom there were seven), but she worshipped her husband as the rest of the household did, in fact the beautiful relationship between her parents was never forgotten by Henriette. Jewish family life was seen under its best aspect here.

Henriette was a high spirited, vivacious child, mentally and physically precocious, often in conflict with her mother. But a word from that adored father was sufficient to subdue her wildest spirits, and if, for some childish fault, he refused her his customary blessing on the Sabbath, she would throw herself at his feet weeping and cling to his knees until he relented.

Even as a child Henriette's loveliness was extraordinary and brought her into notice. At the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, for instance, which the orthodox Jews celebrated by building arbours and living out of doors, the Princess Amélie, sister of Frederic the Great, came as a curious onlooker, and little Henriette was presented to her as "the beautiful Jewish child." When she went to school the officers would

way-lay her with compliments, until her parents took her from school and completed her education at home. That education consisted of arithmetic, geography, French, Hebrew; she began when quite a child to translate the Old Testament "with commentaries," from Hebrew to German. Music had to be discontinued for economical reasons, although at the age of nine she played the piano well enough to assist in a charity concert, making quite a sensation, as, she rather disparagingly said later, "only by my beauty."

She relates how, as a child of nine, being already tall for her years, she was invited to take part in amateur theatricals. The rehearsals even were a welcome change from the monotony of home life, and her vanity was flattered by being allowed to act with "grown-ups." She was to take the part of a country girl in a fascinating costume — "A white silk petticoat with rose-coloured ribbons and rose-coloured bodice, a great amount of silver gauze, and a white silk hat with China flowers."

Everything was ready for the performance, when a sudden blow fell—to the consternation of the young people. The Elders forbade the performance. These Elders, the richest and

most important members of the Jewish community, were the supreme authority; against their word there was no appeal.

In this extremity the high-spirited Henriette took a mighty resolve, of which she told no one, not even her parents. On the following Sabbath a pretty little girl appeared alone before the railed space wherein the Patriarchs sat in solemn conclave. She begged them to reconsider their decision. In vain. "At this," says Henriette, "my pride was hurt and raising my voice, I told them it was not seemly for such old, grave men to interfere with children's amusements!" Whether the Elders were struck by this argument or charmed by the boldness of the pretty child, does not appear, but they gave way, and the play was performed, in fact with such success that two other performances followed. Henriette's beauty, her acting, her singing, all created quite a *furore*, and she confesses she was in a fair way to be spoilt, had not her parents wisely decided she should take no part in dramatic performances for some time to come.

But there was some compensation in frequent visits to the theatre, for, like all good "Berliners" of that day, Henriette and her parents adored the drama. Vividly she describes their visits to

the Opera, sitting in their *parterre-loge*, with the soldiers (commanded to attend opera by Frederic the Great) filling the whole of the stalls and pit. When the celebrated *prima donna* La Mara sang, these rough warriors would stand motionless, "holding their breath; a tense silence reigned throughout the building. And when the great singer ceased, a deep breath was drawn by the whole crowded audience."

As a girl she read everything that came to hand, including the sentimental novels at that time in vogue—by no means the best food for an imaginative young temperament; frequent were her journeys to a convenient lending-library near home.

But the period of her girlhood was unusually short, even in those days of early marriages. When only fifteen she became the wife of Dr Marcus Herz, a friend of her father's and, of course, much older than herself, a man already famous as a doctor and scientist. Her betrothal took place eighteen months before, and was conducted quite on the ancient patriarchal lines, the father disposing absolutely of his daughter's hand. Henriette, a mere child, was not consulted in the matter until on the very day of the betrothal, when her father casually enquired

at dinner: "My child, whom would you rather marry, a rabbi or a doctor?" "Any one you choose for me," was Henriette's dutiful reply; then, remembering her beloved father's profession, she added politely that, on the whole, she would prefer a doctor.

That same evening the betrothal was celebrated with due rites and ceremonies. Henriette, dressed in her best finery (an apple-green and white striped silk, a black hat with feathers), remained alone in an inner room, for, according to Jewish etiquette, the bride must not appear until the notary's deed was signed. As she waited, with beating heart and heightened colour, she caught sight of her own reflection in a mirror, and for the first time realised that she was "really very beautiful, not merely pretty." At last the *Bräutigam* appeared, kissed her hand, and led her to the assembled company. She knew Dr Herz, very slightly, as her father's friend, and had met him sometimes on her errands to the library to exchange those sentimental novels, certainly never dreaming of him as a possible lover. He was little, ugly, and, to her thinking, old, being seventeen years older than herself. A contrast indeed to the romantic heroes of the *Empfindsamkeit* period! In spite

of these drawbacks she looked forward to betrothal as a rather delightful period of privileges; such, for instance, as walking out on her *fiancé's* arm, an increase of pocket-money (her modest allowance being two *groschen* per month), the sharing of certain little dainties especially prepared for her father at table. Above all, there would be the dignity of having a hairdresser to do her hair!

But none of these childish dreams were realised, the only privilege accorded to the little *Braut* being that when Dr Herz came every evening to play cards she was allowed to sit by his side and look on, an entertainment which, as she says, bored her to death, whilst he added to her vexation by calling her the "child," and treating her as one throughout the period of their engagement.

Such was the manner of Henriette's wooing. Nor was the wedding day itself (1st December 1779) a festive occasion for this little Jewish bride. She was miserable at leaving home, above all at leaving her father, and shed floods of tears as she begged him to forgive any wrong doing of which she might have been guilty. He, too, wept as he gave her his blessing. The snow was falling as she stood beneath a

baldachin in the courtyard (according to the Jewish rite), dressed in white satin embroidered with roses, whilst Herz's grand friends crowded round, staring curiously at the bride of whose beauty they had heard so much. "All was wintry," she says, "within and without." And on the following morning, as she sat alone, she thought of the dear ones at home. "Every moment, I hoped would bring one of them. At last I heard footsteps on the stairs, a man's footsteps. It must be my father! The door opens. A long cherished wish is fulfilled at the wrong time, alas! It is the hairdresser."

But in spite of this inauspicious commencement, the marriage turned out well. Looking back many years later, on the anniversary of her wedding day (1st December 1817), fourteen years after her husband's death, Henriette was able to write that she had not been unhappy. "My marriage I can call a happy relationship, though not really a happy marriage. Marriage was not the central point of my husband's existence and ours was not blessed by children . . . . but I can say my husband was as happy through me as he possibly could be made happy by any woman."

Dr Herz, already in the foremost rank of

Berlin's physicians, had many literary and scientific friends, and loved to entertain them in his own home. Perhaps he had recognised possibilities in his young bride, at any rate he educated and trained her as a hostess. Her great beauty, her gifts of intelligence and charm proved an irresistible attraction, and their house soon became the *rendezvous* of all the clever men and women of the day. Henriette easily became the leader of the most important *salon* in Berlin.

Unlike Rahel Varnhagen, Henriette Herz remained in Jewish surroundings. Her husband brought his friends to her, and she was spared the conflicting elements which spoilt so many years of Rahel's life after she had outgrown the traditions of her own race and yet found no firm footing outside it.

Henriette was unquestionably the greatest beauty of her day, and was recognised as such in Berlin. She was painted as Hebe by the artist Dorothea Therbusch, another portrait by Graf shows her soon after her marriage in all her young loveliness as a bride. Even in her fifty-fourth year, during her stay in Rome, she sat to four painters on one day, her features having still kept their exquisite and fascinating

lines. Taller than most women of her day—a distinction which she shared with Queen Luise — she had a perfect figure, rounded yet slender, which she kept until late in life. Her almost Greek profile, with the classic line of nose and brow, gained for her the name of the Tragic Muse. Her mouth and teeth were perfect, her eyes and hair dark. She fascinated every one, and many were the men who loved her. Laroche, one of the handsomest men of his time (son of Sophie Laroche and uncle of Bettina von Arnim), was for more than fifty years her devoted friend and admirer. Alexander von Humboldt and his brother Wilhelm both worshipped at her shrine; the great Mirabeau, when visiting Berlin, was enthralled by the beautiful Jewess. Schleiermacher's friendship with Henriette lasted for some forty years; unbroken by his marriage, it continued until his death in 1834. More dramatic, though less deep, was the hopeless passion of the youthful Ludwig Börne, afterwards known as a brilliant journalistic writer. This young Jew (originally Ludwig Baruch) was studying medicine under Dr Herz, in whose house he lived. He had grown up in a gloomy orthodox family in the *Judengasse* of

Frankfurt, and the change to the brilliant social and intellectual life of Berlin seems to have dazzled the young student. More than all, he was fascinated by his beautiful hostess, although she was quite twenty years older than he. Realising the hopelessness of his passion, he twice tried to commit suicide, and had to be sent away to Halle, where, under the wise counsels of Schleiermacher, he recovered and distinguished himself among the ultra-patriotic and democratic students.

The first attempt at anything like a literary circle in Berlin had been in the house of Moses Mendelssohn, but want of means restricted hospitality in this case, and the first house really thrown open for the sake of intellectual intercourse, the first real *salon* in Berlin, was that of the Herzens.

There was quite a galaxy of talent and genius at this period. One is struck by the famous names in every province of art and thought. Most of them were young, still seeking a rallying-point, a centre of inspiration, still in the unrest and promise of spring. A meeting place was an essential, the congenial *salon* a heaven-sent boon. At the moment of their concentration into a movement the German

Romanticists found this boon in the Berlin *salons* presided over by the enthusiastic inspiring women, the "Sibyls" of the Romantic movement.

Among the habitués at Henriette's receptions were Schadow the sculptor, Fichte, Gentz, the two Humboldts, Tieck, Jean Paul Richter, Friedrich Schlegel, Engel, Moritz, Rahel and Varnhagen von Ense, Schleiermacher. Moses Mendelssohn was her fatherly friend, and his daughter, Dorothea Veit, met in her *salon* Friedrich Schlegel, whose wife she afterwards became.

The episode of Friedrich and Dorothea caused great excitement in Romantic circles. Dorothea, the daughter of Moses Mendelssohn, had grown up in much the same surroundings as Henriette, and, like her, was given in marriage by her father, without having any choice in the matter. She was one of the most intellectual of these Jewish women, a strong, energetic personality, rather masculine in appearance, her only claim to beauty being her fine dark eyes. With her husband, the banker Veit, Dorothea had little in common, and when the brilliant, erratic Friedrich Schlegel dawned upon her horizon, she fell in love with him. For his sake she left her husband, although realising that a marriage with Schlegel

was highly improbable. Henriette, as the friend of both husband and wife, acted as mediator, and largely under her influence Veit consented to a divorce, provided Dorothea with money, and let her keep the two sons of their marriage. Friedrich Schlegel was not equally generous, but after some hesitation he married Dorothea, and his novel, *Lucinde*, was a reflection of this affair, glorifying *en Romanticiste* the freedom of the affections and shocking the public, although Schleiermacher persisted in pronouncing favourably upon it. Dorothea herself had more literary talent than Schlegel, her novel *Florinde* (unfinished) ranks among the best specimens of romantic writing, but she idealised Friedrich and spoke of herself as a mere "craftsman" of the pen, content to earn a little money for herself and her idol.

Schleiermacher, when he first made Henriette's acquaintance (about 1794) was a shy, awkward, slightly deformed young man; she recognised the intellectual possibilities beneath this unpromising exterior, and her sympathetic influence did much to develop him. She was one of the very few who sympathised with his enthusiasm for his vocation as a minister of religion, which most of the sceptical Berlin circle failed to under-

stand. Their friendship grew rapidly. At first the young *Prediger* (he was appointed pastor at the Charité Hospital), came to the usual receptions in the evening, soon he was welcomed among a more intimate circle of friends, who called in the late afternoon before the tea-hour to discuss any new topic of interest, such, for instance, as Jean Paul's *Hesperus* (1795), or a new poem by Goethe. It is significant of the influence of these women (devoted Goethe worshippers) that Schleiermacher, on a first reading of *Wilhelm Meister*, only praised its perfect prose, but on reading the work again with Henriette, discovered many other beauties.

The Herzens lived in the new Friedrichstrasse, Schleiermacher at some distance, and, as in those days Berlin was practically unlighted and unpaved, the friends presented him with a little lantern which he could hang on his buttonhole, to light him on his way on dark nights.

In Henriette's house Schleiermacher made friends with Friedrich Schlegel, above mentioned, the brilliant young writer, who, a few years later, edited the *Athenæum* (1798-1800), the organ of Romanticism, to which Schleiermacher, who represented religion in the Romantic movement, contributed his Creed of Noble Women.

Schleiermacher's utterances about women are particularly interesting because they reflect the high ideals of intercourse in those circles, and the attitude taken by women Romanticists.

"I believe in eternal humanity, which was, before it took upon itself the veil of Masculine and Feminine.

"I believe that I do not live to obey or to amuse myself, but to be and to become. And I believe in the power of the Will and of Education to bring me back to the Eternal, to deliver me from the fetters of mis-education, and to free me from the limits of sex."

And a new commandment:—

"Thou shalt not bear false witness for men, thou shalt not gloss over their barbarity with words or deeds."

Börne said of Schleiermacher that he "taught Christianity as Socrates would have taught it, had Socrates been a Christian."

If Henriette helped to develop the social and intellectual qualities of the young philosophic theologian, Schleiermacher's influence on Henriette was equally strong. He found a spoilt beauty frittering away her energies for lack of a definite aim, drifting towards moral stagnation. He taught her to concentrate

those energies, and inspired her with his own inexorable ideas of duty. Between these two, outwardly so different, there certainly existed an unusual sympathy, based on affinities of heart and mind, and although Schleiermacher had many other women friends, he always declared that Henriette was his "nearest related substance, no other affinity could ever come between them."

Schleiermacher to Henriette Herz.

"You know Schiller's little moral-arithmetical maxim about beautiful souls and numbers? But you even doubt your own capabilities and there you are very wrong. Have you not as much individuality as other people? Have you not formed your own very individual style of life? Are not many qualities united in you in a peculiar measure, which one sees in others only separate or at least in a very modified form? Shall I enumerate all these? Your sense of duty, your love, your receptiveness, your social gifts, and so on? Your imitative faculty, from which are derived both your talent for languages and your knowledge of mankind, your practical talents, which never find full scope? Ah! How shall I further stimulate your laziness? For

lazy you are, if only in this one point of self-knowledge."

Perhaps such unusual Platonic affection was rendered possible by the fact that the beautiful Henriette was somewhat cold and passionless —Schleiermacher naïvely says that he found her so towards himself. Certainly Henriette, accustomed to admiration and love from the handsomest, most brilliant men of her day, saw in the good "Schleier" ("I call him that to shorten his tiresome name," she wrote) a splendid friend, but in the outer semblance of an "odd, awkward little man." At any rate they both laughed whole-heartedy at a caricature which appeared of the two walking out together—she Juno-like, stately, carrying Schleiermacher on the stick of her parasol.

On hearing through Friedrich Schlegel of some foolish gossip Schleiermacher wrote to his sister:

"That was really too much. Let ordinary people believe of ordinary people that a man and a woman cannot be friends, without being passionately in love with each other, that is all very well, but of us two! To me it seemed so extraordinary that I really could not discuss it at all, but just curtly gave Schlegel my word that it was not so and never would be."

Henriette seems to have really loved a certain Count Alexander von Dohna, who was devoted to her and remained unmarried for her sake, though she refused to marry him after her husband's death, because his family were bitterly opposed to the idea of marriage with a Jewess. Not the only occasion, this, on which a certain proud generosity stood in the way of her advancement and happiness.

There is no doubt that Henriette suffered from her husband's cold, reserved nature. She was loving, if not passionate, and on one occasion was humiliated almost to tears when Prince Louis Ferdinand presented her to the Duchess of Courland with the tactless remark, "Look well at this woman—she has never been loved as she deserves," and she herself says, "however kind my husband was, however lovingly he cared for the education of my mind, he never knew love such as I bore in my heart and considered any expression of it childish."

One of her letters throws a side-light, amusing enough, upon her husband's scientific attitude of mind. He was reading one of Goethe's poems (*Der Fischer*), and joined the circle of friends. "Kühl bis ins Herz hinan," he cried, "will someone kindly explain what on earth he means." "But who wants to understand a poem in *that*

way?" said Moritz, pointing to his forehead. Herz stared at him in astonishment. It was only natural that a brilliant, high-spirited girl, bound to an unresponsive nature like that of Dr Herz, should throw herself into the pleasures of society, the delights of conquest and homage, for a time. But after a few years the illusion and glamour were over, and by thirty years of age she is described as being extraordinarily clear, calm, self-possessed, with wonderful insight and understanding of men and things. She was never excitable and pushing, like some Jewesses who became "emancipated" at this time, but always dignified and full of repose. Of course Henriette had her failings and her detractors. Rahel Varnhagen thought her a *poseuse*.

"Madame Herz was always dressed for state occasions, and never even knew that one might undress or what it felt like."[1]

Those were the days of Reading Circles and

[1] A really malicious acrostic was ascribed to Ludwig Robert, Rahel's brother:

"Junonische Riesin,
Egyptische Markisin,
Treu, doch nicht liebend,
Tugend verübend,
Entzückt mit Gewalt.
Heiter und herzlos
Eitel und schmerzlos
Ruhig und Kalt
Zu jung für so alt."

The initial letters give Jette Herz, Jette being the diminutive of Henriette.

Intellectual Teas (tea was immensely the fashion in Berlin). There was unlimited enthusiasm for high thought and culture. A chosen few, inspired by Henriette, formed a *Tugendbund*[1] with the aim of "moral development and the attainment of happiness by self-devotion," a process naturally accompanied by much sentimental introspection and vapid out-pourings, but on the whole stimulating.

Henriette relates how the *Lesezirkel* would meet at each others' houses, actors, actresses, authors, even statesmen. Dr Herz would read science to them, Fischer performed experiments; dramatic works were read aloud, each person taking a *rôle* (Shakespeare, Racine, Cervantes, as well as Goethe and Schiller). Nor were original poems and essays excluded. These séances were often poorly lighted by a few tallow candles, and after the reading came a frugal meal, "but all were content." At the Mendelssohns, the earliest "circle" of all, she relates, the almonds and raisins (*de rigueur* at these evening entertainments of plain living and high thinking) were carefully counted, so many to each guest.

An important one was at the house of a certain Hofrath Bauer, about 1785, to which,

[1] Not to be confounded with the political society of that name.

among other distinguished men, came the brothers Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt, charming young men of sixteen and eighteen years of age. The younger members rather inclined towards dancing after supper (not so Frau Bauer, "who never could get enough reading"), and on one occasion Alexander von Humboldt taught Henriette the new *Menuet à la Reine*, in spite of Frau Bauer's disapproval of such frivolity.

Henriette attracted to her circle not only the clever men but also the clever women of her time, and started a sort of club which many women joined, for the purpose of exchanging ideas by correspondence. Some members never met, others only late in life, but they enjoyed a stimulating exchange of thought and ideas. One can imagine how precious such an outlet must have been in those days when books and newspapers were scarce, and opportunities of intellectual intercourse were confined to a few privileged circles.

Again, at a later period, Henriette observed how many girls of good family were too poor to afford a proper education, and to supply this need she started classes in languages and other subjects, teaching and training the pupils herself.

She afterwards found posts as governesses for many of them, and "the young ladies of Madame Herz" were in great request.

Her charitable interests were many, for she was essentially a woman of generous impulses. In her old age her great regret was "people never made enough use of me, as long as I was able to be of use."

But these happy days came to an abrupt end. Henriette's father had died a few years after her marriage and Dr Herz left her a widow in 1803, with only a small pension, for he had spent his money lavishly, much of it, indeed, in their joint love of hospitality. Society had become a necessity of her life, and, finding it impossible to entertain on small means, she accepted an engagement to teach English to the daughter of the Duchess of Courland, which gave her the *entrée* to the Duchess's receptions. In this house one met every one worth knowing in the way of birth or intellect and, as the Duchess introduced a democratic mingling of ranks, it was "possible for the widow of a Jewish doctor to sit at the same table with royal Princes and Princesses." Here Henriette met Schiller, Madame de Staël, and August Schlegel, renewed her acquaintance with the

brilliant Prince Ferdinand (nephew of Frederic the Great), who admired the beautiful widow too much for his peace of mind. It is a coincidence that his brother, Prince Augustus, fell in love with Madame Recamier and wished to marry her.

But soon all social intercourse was suspended, for the terrible war, long threatened, was declared at last (1806). Henriette records a certain autumnal Sunday afternoon, the day before the King and Queen—the beloved Queen Louise—were to leave the capital and join the army. According to custom the military band played before the palace in Charlottenburg, and the King and Queen appeared on the terrace. Henriette felt that the handsome, noble couple stood at a turning point in their career, which was indeed the case, felt she must "see them once more in undisturbed splendour." "Adieu, Madame Herz," said Queen Luise in her beautiful, musical voice, as she caught sight of Henriette, although not knowing her personally. "She seemed so cheerful, as if she did not realise the significance of that moment!"

Not long after this Schleiermacher, too, was suffering from the fortunes of war. Writing to a friend from Halle (November 1806) he

describes his unpleasant experiences: "The pillage was, of course, dreadful, though not so bad as one imagines such events. Directly after the fight many troopers forced their way, through the carelessness of the people downstairs, into the house and up to us. Steffens and Gass were with me, we all three had to give up our watches, Gass also his silver money (Steffens had none left), on me they only found a few thalers, but they took all my shirts but five, and all the silver spoons but two. We were almost in danger during the fight. Steffens came that morning to summon us to his house if we wanted to see fighting, and in fact we saw the attack on the bridge very well from thence. But when I saw the Prussian guns silenced and the position being lost, I persuaded Steffens to come to my house because his place was too much exposed. We hurried as fast as possible; but I had not reached our house with Hanna before shooting began in the town behind us, and Steffens was nearly caught with the child in his arms in the crowd of retiring Prussians and advancing French."

Thus all our *dramatis personæ* are caught and whirled hither and thither in the whirlpool of hostilities.

At this time Henriette was helping her blind mother and an unmarried sister from her own slender resources; but very soon, in the general upheaval of social conditions, her widow's pension was no longer paid, and she found herself almost penniless. She was offered the post of governess to the King's eldest daughter, Princess Charlotte, on condition of becoming a Christian, but although she had herself long outgrown Jewish traditions, she refused to take the step, knowing it would distress her mother too deeply. Thus she lost the chance of a position which would have relieved her of many difficulties, but not until her mother's death, in 1817, would she formally renounce the Jewish faith.

At last (in the spring of 1808) she found refuge during these troubled times on the Island of Rügen in the family of an old friend, whose children she taught. Frau von Kathen was a woman of charming character and intellectual tastes, and there was a delightful atmosphere of kindliness in the household, but Rügen was of course isolated from the great world which Henriette loved so dearly.

Schleiermacher, however, found his lasting affinity here in Rügen in the person of Henriette von Willich, the young widow of

a Pastor Willich, formerly one of his friends. He came over, and the marriage took place nearly at the close of Henriette's sojourn with the Von Kathens (1809). The union was a very happy one, although Schleiermacher was twenty years older than his bride. At the end of 1809 Henriette left the island. With other distinguished women she helped to nurse the wounded soldiers during the war, a task which brought all her best qualities into play, her generosity, self-sacrifice, splendid organising gifts.

In 1815 occurred the death of her favourite sister, an artist, and in 1817 that of her mother, after which Henriette formally entered the Christian Church.

With the close of the war came improved conditions, and the payment of her pension was resumed. She was now able to travel, and spent nearly two years in Italy, finding a second home among the German colony of artists and literary folk in Rome. Among old friends, such as the Von Humboldts, Dorothea Schlegel and her son Philip Veit, were new ones: Thorwaldsen, Bunsen, Niebuhr, Canova Rückert, Chamisso. In spite of modest means she was able to hold a little circle.

Her Memoirs chat amusingly of the artist fraternity. German artists and *littérateurs* caused a sensation in Rome by wearing their "so called German dress," still more by their long, untidy hair, "an adornment every one considered indispensable whether it suited him or not." Notably in respect to hair, the big broad-shouldered Rückert achieved the impossible; in the outskirts of Rome he was the terror not only of children, but of grown-up people. She relates a story of a Roman lady, her nurse, and children, running away in terror on a lonely road before the apparition of Rückert, whom they took to be the wizard "Simone Magoa." This is peculiarly amusing when one recalls Rückert's dainty lyrics. Chamisso was another poet who cultivated artistic carelessness to an extraordinary extent.

The English, too, attracted attention. The women, she says, dressed "peculiarly" whilst the men affected a "strange tourist garb," which, to the eyes of foreigners, was then unfamiliar, as Englishmen had at that time been practically excluded from the continent for some years. Their isolation had confirmed them in certain English prejudices and habits, and they sometimes appeared awkward and

rude in refusing to fall in with the customs of the country. "This made them very unpopular, and a target for Roman mockery."

Such was the foreign colony in Rome in the first decades of the last century.

In Vienna she had stayed with Friedrich and Dorothea Schlegel before this, helping to nurse the sick and wounded. The romance of former years, she noted, had faded into prose. Friedrich, grown stout and self-indulgent, sat eating oranges and drinking Alicante on a certain evening, whilst his wife shivered in an attack of ague. Poor Dorothea, a true Romantic, was always destined to disappointment.

Her first husband had not satisfied her intellectually, but he was kind and generous. In Friedrich Schlegel she found brilliant intellect, but an appalling selfishness and want of depth.

"At a later period," Henriette records, "she lived in Frankfurt with her son, the painter Philip Veit. At her wish I destroyed our long and interesting correspondence, and have only kept her last letter, written two months before her death. She was tired and longed for a better world, but in spite of this longing and the hardships of age, she bore her life with patience and cheerfulness. A cold spring

made her suffer. 'But,' she wrote in this letter, 'one must put up with it as the plants and flowers do, which do their duty, and go on with their business of blooming as if it were the greatest pleasure.' And in another place, in reference to something I had written in a moment of discontent: 'All that we children of earth used to call the Poetry of Life is far, far away! I could say with you that I have had enough of it. But all the same I will not say it, and I implore you not to say it again. Be brave! that is, do not rebel, but resign yourself bravely and cheerfully. Do not let world-weariness become a ruling sentiment, but bear constantly in mind that this poor life is not given to us as a possession, nor for our own arbitrary disposal, nor for pleasurable use; each day is a jewel of grace, a capital which you must neither bury nor throw away.'"

The journey home with Frau von Humboldt and others led through Stuttgart, where a meeting with Jean Paul Richter, "grown fat and *bourgeois*," took place, to Frankfurt, where they found Louis Börne, now a "celebrated man," and cured of his mad passion.

In 1819 Henriette settled again in Berlin and lived peacefully, though *diminuendo* as to

fortunes and conditions, to a great age. Her last years were a complete contrast to the brilliant period of her youth, but she found some compensation in charitable works and study. As the years passed, the circle of friends grew smaller, and, like all who live to be very old — like Madame Recamier also in this — Henriette Herz knew the bitterness of outliving her best friends. The irony of life was never more apparent than in the letters of Börne. Cruel contrast between the love-sick youth:

"I cannot go away when I am with her. My feet are as if rooted to the spot when I stand near her. . . . I cannot grasp it, this unhoped, splendid happiness. She allows me to continue sunning myself in her eyes."

And his visit to Berlin some twenty-six years later.

"*29th April* 1828.

"I have just come home from old Madame Herz, having taken leave of her; she gave me her cheek to kiss. When I left her twenty-five years ago, my tears flowing, unable to speak a single word from emotion, I was seventeen years of age, she in her summer time. I loved her, but then I only ventured

to kiss her hand. And now. . . . *Il vaut mieux jamais que tard.*"

"18*th February* 1823.

"The Herz is now sixty-four years old, but one still perceives the traces of her former beauty. I saw her in her prime. A Juno! that word was then on every one's lips. She lives in constant activity and employs each quarter of an hour as if it were a day. . . . From nine to twelve o'clock every morning she teaches the children of poor, formerly well-to-do, parents, teaches living languages, and *gratis*. This she has done since 1813."

"When I called to-day. . . . I found three young men dining with her, she sitting serving them. I should have liked to paint her, she seemed so lovable. Every Wednesday it seems, she has four poor students to dinner. This is really very splendid, for she is not at all well off. But that is the least part of it; you should see her attentive kind way of serving them: the dainty appointments, the abundance of food, there was enough for ten, and the unrestrained appetite of the young men. One sees nothing of that sort in Frankfurt, certainly not done in that way. Madame Herz wore a

white satin dress and a white Turkish turban on her head and looked fifteen years younger than she is."

In another letter he takes up the cudgels for Madame Herz, because people laugh at her somewhat youthful way of dressing. "Old age is an evil, I think, and if one shuts one's eyes and refuses to see an evil, which one is obliged to feel, is that so blameworthy? No one tells her to her face that she is old, and if she herself can contrive to forget it, does that hurt anybody?"

With failing health she found her means sadly insufficient until, although she tried bravely to conceal the fact of her poverty from the world, it became only too apparent. At last her friend, Alexander von Humboldt, personally begged the King for some increase to her slender pension. Friedrich Wilhelm IV. responded generously and promptly by doubling her pension, and sending her the same evening fifty *louis d'or* from his private purse, saying it was both a duty, and a pleasure to assist one, who, "as long as her strength permitted, had done so much for the public welfare." He further showed his respect by paying a visit to Madame Herz, recalling that as a boy he had been taken to her house by his tutor, and

had seen his first chemical experiments performed there by her husband.

Only a few months after this visit Henriette died, 22nd October 1847, at the age of eighty-three.

Fortunately her declining years were soothed by the affectionate care of her nieces and a young girl, the daughter of the Pastor Wolff who had baptized her into the Christian faith. During her last illness, which only lasted a fortnight, she was brave and cheerful, touchingly afraid of giving trouble to those about her.

A fine and generous trait, although it deprives the world of much interesting gossip, was her destroyal of most of her correspondence, including letters—and many love-letters—from some of the cleverest men in Europe. She had seen the pain caused to her own friends by the indiscriminate publication of similar letters, and resolved there should be none in her case. Thus she destroyed nearly all her correspondence with Schleiermacher, from 1800 to 1815, continuing after his marriage, and the diary of Ludwig Börne with its ardent confession of love for her.

Henriette was not a woman to make capital of her love letters.

II

RAHEL VARNHAGEN

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Rahel

RAHEL VARNHAGEN

THE GERMAN SIBYL OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

"He (the blockhead) tumbled out on me his definition of genius: the trivial old distinction of intellect and heart; as if there ever was, or could be, a great intellect with a mean heart!"—RAHEL.

A BRIGHT particular star in Henriette's circle of women friends, one destined to outshine them all—"the first great and modern woman in Germany" in the words of Georg Brandes—was Rahel Levin, better known to the world by her married name, Rahel Varnhagen.

"She was about six years younger than I and most of my friends," wrote Henriette Herz, "but the warmth of her own nature, combined with suffering, ripened her early. I knew her from her childhood, and know how soon she raised those high expectations which were fulfilled later."

Rahel was born on Whitsunday, 1771, the first surviving child of the Jewish jeweller and

banker, Marcus Levin.[1] Another daughter and three sons were born after Rahel. She was an extremely delicate child, hovering between life and death during the first months of babyhood, and remaining all her life ultra-sensitive to weather and atmosphere. "In the story of my life climate must be mentioned," she used to say.

Her father, himself a brilliant conversationalist and wit, who loved to gather people around him, was a Jew of the old type, and ruled his family despotically. The household trembled before his fits of ungovernable rage. A portrait in the Berlin National Gallery depicts him with a cane in his hand, a round, keen, energetic face. One of his whims was that no birthdays should be kept in his family, the dates therefore were not even recorded, and Rahel did not know her own, save that she came into the world on Whitsunday of a certain year.

In one of her letters, written late in life, she excuses herself for forgetting the date of a birthday: "Forgive a person who never was allowed to have a birthday. . . . we never even knew the date of ours. Even now I do not know mine, nor my parents', nor that of my

[1] The family name was afterwards changed to Robert.

brothers and sisters—no one's except Goethe's and our king's."

The father was proud of his daughter's cleverness and witty sayings, and wished to train her in the superficial brilliance he admired, but Rahel had the courage to rebel in this and in other matters. Hence, conflict and bitterness.

She suffered intensely, as a sensitive child would, under her father's *régime*. Writing to her brother Marcus, when she was but sixteen, she says: "If our mother were to die, death would certainly be the best thing for us. I, at least, should prefer it."

She describes her lonely hours spent in a room at the top of the house, which she was allowed to use as her own sanctum: "My attic, where I lived, loved, suffered, rebelled. Learnt to know Goethe! Grew up with, adored him unspeakably."

It was a wonderful period in which to grow up, a period pulsing with new ideas and aspirations. In France the Revolution and its train of writers, thinkers. In Germany, Lessing uttered his great parable of religious tolerance — *Nathan der Weise*; Herder, Kant, Fichte, all taught and proclaimed Freedom, the unloosening of mental fetters; Goethe and

Schiller were raising German poetry to undreamed of heights. Above all, Goethe embodied the revolt of Nature against convention.

Goethe was too great to be fully understood and appreciated by his own generation. A few intuitive minds realised his significance, the majority only became of the same opinion after he was established beyond dispute, after he had become a household word — that is, in another generation. It is true that Goethe at this time was in a brilliant position at Weimar, but many persons saw in him besides the successful courtier and man of the world, merely "one of" the poets of the day. His dramas were seriously compared with those of Kotzebue, and frequently the comparison was in favour of that mediocre genius. One of the most striking things about Rahel is the sureness of her attitude in regard to Goethe. She was a whole-hearted worshipper from the first. Her recognition of the poet was so entirely the prompting of her own nature; even as a mere girl she grasped and comprehended the significance of a genius as yet unknown to the majority, as yet only understood by the few. Quite alone, a mere girl, studying in her *Dachstube*, her nature responded intuitively

to the master soul, and she declared him boldly to be beyond compare the highest, greatest, only poet.

"A new volume of Goethe," she says, "was a festival to me, a beautiful, beloved, honoured guest, who opened for me new gates of life, of unknown, bright life. *My* Poet."

Through all her life this attitude remained unchanged. She followed Goethe at a distance, an enthusiastic worshipper, communicating her enthusiasm to her friends (love of Goethe became a cult in her circle), but never forcing herself upon the great man's notice. She had a curious shyness on this point, taking a certain pride in her reserve, keeping as she said, "a pure shrine" for the poet in her heart, unknown and unrecognised, perhaps in contempt of the women who worshipped the great Olympian's very human personality and flung themselves at his feet. Some passages in her husband's correspondence throw an interesting light on this. It was when Rahel was no longer young that Varnhagen sent Goethe some of her notes on his poems, without revealing her identity. The poet was surprised and delighted with their insight, and said it must be a very wonderful nature which understood him so thoroughly.

Yet even then Rahel would not allow him to be told who had written the notes. Goethe's remarks, on his side, are interesting. He criticises his unknown correspondents, with great insight calling Varnhagen the "receiver," Rahel the "giver," not in the least suspecting their identity.

When Rahel was twenty-three she was sent to Toeplitz to drink the waters, and here she met Goethe and charmed him by her sympathy and *esprit*. "A beautiful soul," he calls her, "harmonious — the more one knows her, the more one is attracted and lovingly held! A girl of rare understanding, who really thinks and feels—where can one find such another? Oh! we were constantly together, very friendly and intimate with each other. One admires her great originality—and even her originality is lovable." High praise, from the great knower of men! As for the little Jewess, she said simply: "I worship him," yet she made no attempt afterwards to force a continuance of the sympathetic friendship which must have meant so much to her. Her "beautiful soul," lonely and self-possessed, was capable of such reserve.

After the delightful days at Toeplitz she did

not meet Goethe again until some twenty years later, when the unkind fates granted a short, disappointing interview — an interview which had even a ludicrous side.

In the intervening years Rahel had known vicissitudes, had loved more than once, and had married late in life after a long engagement. She was in fact forty-three at the time of her marriage with Varnhagen von Ense, and not until three years later did the eventful meeting take place. It was in August 1815 that Goethe came to Frankfurt and, hearing of the whereabouts of his sympathetic friend of former years, honoured her with a visit. At a quarter past nine in the morning the great man unexpectedly arrived. Rahel was not yet dressed. Should she receive him *en négligé* or keep him waiting? Unfortunately she did the first. Hastily throwing herself into a black wadded dressing-gown, "sacrificing myself so as not to keep him waiting five minutes," she rushed to receive her distinguished visitor. But the feeling of "unloveliness" made her shy and awkward, Goethe was polite and unbending, the visit was short and constrained. The black wadded dressing-gown cast a gloom over it all, and one can only sigh for the ruined interview

which slipped away for ever in the shadow of that unlovely garment.

As for Rahel, she wrote to her husband that "after he had gone, I dressed myself very carefully, as if to make up for it, to mend the matter! A pretty white dress with a high collar, a lace cap, lace kerchief, the Moscow shawl. . . ." This was, fortunately, not Rahel's last interview with the Goethe whom she adored.

After her father's death (when she was about nineteen) Rahel breathed a freer atmosphere, she grew stronger and happier, although household authority was now vested in her brothers, who held entire control of money matters. The mother's spirit had been crushed by the tyranny of her husband, and she sank into a peevish, narrow old age, becoming somewhat of a miser too, and spoiling her children's lives by petty ideas of saving money. Rahel had not much in common with her family, they did not understand her, and had little sympathy with her aims, with the exception of her youngest "heart's brother" Ludwig, an author, who introduced her to his literary friends.

At twenty-five the Demoiselle Levin was a personage in Berlin, received even in "high" society, although a *bourgeoise* and a Jewess,

whilst her own receptions were by far the most interesting in the city. From her thirtieth year to her death Rahel was not only the centre of intellectual life in Berlin, but one of the intellectual centres in Germany as a whole.

It is wonderful how a girl like Rahel, without particular beauty or riches, contrived to have and to hold a circle of friends like hers. It was characteristic of her that she attracted and sympathised with persons of such widely different types. Royal princes, artists, learned men, men of the world, poets, many women from different spheres of life, all came to her receptions, her "company of the attic" she called them. Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia, nephew of Frederic the Great, was at this time one of her real intimate friends. He was a young man about her own age, of uncommon personal beauty and intellect, a dashing soldier to boot, and he confided in Rahel as his dearest friend, as a sister, she, in return, treating him with the greatest frankness and sincerity, advising or blaming him, sympathising with his love-affairs, as she says, "not in the least as if he were a prince." In fact, she made it a condition of their intercourse that she should treat him exactly as an equal. Prince Ferdinand

thoroughly appreciated this sincerity and might often be seen riding up to the old house in the Jägerstrasse to hear "harsh truths of the attic (*Dachstubewahrheiten*)" from his "dear little friend."

Count Brinckmann, a young Swedish poet (later known as a poet and diplomatist), was studying at this time in Berlin. To the end of his life he acknowledged the immense influence of Rahel upon his mental development. She taught him the importance of moral courage, of independence of thought; how "no enthusiasm should come to us from outside, but must glow from within us. . . . Everything depends on thinking for one's self." "The highest morality can only come through the highest freedom." The embodiment of this idea, which he had sought in vain, he says, in philosophers and religious persons, he found in the "attic" of this rare original thinker.

Enthusiastic and fired with noble inspiration herself, this Jewish girl struck sparks from every one. "Thou winged one," Jean Paul Richter calls her, and "the only humorous woman he ever met." Schleiermacher, who had such high ideals of women, knew Rahel intimately, and expressed one secret of her influence thus:

"Rahel offers the unusual phenomenon of a human being who is always concentrated, always possesses herself wholly." She herself aimed at what she called Unity in life, feeling how much the young minds of her day suffered from being torn asunder by conflicting aims. ("The disjointed moderns, the sick Europeans," she says.) "I am at one with myself, and consider myself a good, beautiful gift. The first great inmost need has been granted me, that of human existence. I recognise this and am glad." And further, with deep insight: "I have never regretted anything which I did gladly; only, and always, what I did reluctantly."

She had a fine contempt for people who lived for what she called the "Is-it-proper morality" (*es - schickt - sich - Moral*), and she waged war especially against pedantry and affectation in every form. "I kill priggishness within a thirty mile radius," she said once laughingly.

An ardent disciple of Fichte, Rahel was one of the keenest Individualists who have ever lived. Instinctively she chose for her intellectual guides the two great master minds of her time. Fichte and Goethe, she said, were "Germany's two eyes." And no one absorbed Fichte's philosophy of the realisation of the Ego more

passionately than this Jewish girl, because it touched a kindred note in her own soul. This philosophy, indeed, coloured all the ideas of that generation, and lay at the root of the Romantic movement. We can trace its influence, in ever-widening circles, from Emerson to the school-mistress heroines of our own Charlotte Brontë, who are proud of being themselves, portionless and plain, yet fitting soul-mates for their heroes.

"I thank God that I am Rahel and no one else," said Rahel; "*Ich bin eine Person*," was her proudest boast. Fichte was the mental centre of her *salon* at this period.

She did not classify people into clever and stupid, good and bad, but into those with a self, an Ego, and those without one. And it was her opinion, expressed in her *brusque* careless way that "Every one would really be original if people did not collect undigested ideas in their heads and give them out again undigested."

Her love of the natural and original in every form was the key to the diversity of her friendships, which included the most widely different types of character, some of whom society did not approve.

It was quite an honour and an event for strangers in Berlin to be presented to the

"Demoiselle Levin," and more than one has recorded the fact in his memoirs, struck with admiration for his wonderful hostess, her charm of manner, her wit, and her real kindness of heart.

To the pen of a French nobleman we owe a graphic description of one of Rahel's "evenings" in 1801. Armed with an introduction from Diderot's daughter, he was presented by Brinckmann. The two young men were ushered upstairs to a large room facing the street, simply, almost barely furnished, without superfluous knick-knacks, its windows draped with white muslin curtains. Flowering plants were there, and the grand pianoforte stood invitingly open with Beethoven's latest sonata upon it. (Rahel was a passionate lover of music, and could play a little herself.) Some books were scattered about, the *Musen - Almanach* for instance, Tieck's drama *Genoveva*, some poems, among them a few in manuscript by Ludwig Robert, Rahel's brother. Count S—— describes his hostess as "neither tall nor beautiful, but refined and delicately formed, with a pleasing expression to which a look of suffering — she had, in fact, only recently recovered from an illness — added a pathetic charm, but her clear, fresh complexion, dark

and expressive eyes gave unmistakable proof of a vigorous nature. From those eyes a look fell upon me which seemed to pierce my soul. I should not have cared to meet it with a bad conscience. Not that I seemed to interest her especially, the look was merely a passing question, needing no definite answer." Friedrich Schlegel was there, talking to Ludwig Robert, whilst Rahel sat upon the sofa with the beautiful Countess Einsiedel. Madame Unzelmann, a noted actress, rushed in, having an evening to spare. Rahel's sister-in-law and other ladies of her family appeared, one of them presiding over the tea-table. These ladies were not in the least intellectual or socially brilliant, but Rahel treated them with the greatest deference, and did her best to "draw them out." All kinds of things were discussed, "the boldest ideas, the deepest thoughts, the cleverest witticisms, the most capricious fancies, all strung together by careless chit-chat. All were animated and at their ease, all seemed equally ready to listen or to talk. But the most remarkable was Demoiselle Levin herself. With what grace and ease she roused, brightened and inspired every one about her! Impossible to withstand her cheerfulness! And her conversation! I

heard from her some really inspired utterances, wonderful sayings often in a few words only, like lightning flashes, which went to one's heart. About Goethe she spoke with an admiration which I have never heard equalled." New arrivals filled the room, among them Gentz, the writer and diplomatist, the most extraordinary combination of boldness and shyness. With timid uncertainty he examined seats and faces. "He appeared to consider me, a stranger, unimportant; others he recognised as friends, but the sight of Friedrich Schlegel filled him with horror, and he took a seat as far distant as possible. Comfortably and safely ensconced between Madame Unzelmann and his patron, Schack, he began a conversation with them which soon became general. He had dined with the Minister Haugwitz, with ambassadors and generals, who brought all the latest news from Paris and London. But Madame Unzelmann protested against politics, and demanded only such information as she could be interested in. 'Certainly, my angel,' said Gentz quickly, 'we did not talk so much of politics as of Parisian manners, pleasures, and wickedness, of love affairs, theatres, restaurants—all delightful subjects, are they not?'"

And, warming to his subject, in spite of the scowls of his enemy, Friedrich Schlegel, Gentz drifted into an eloquent discourse on love, for he was a brilliant conversationalist, who held every one entranced, once his timidity was overcome. He was interrupted by the arrival of Prince Louis Ferdinand, on which all the company rose for an instant only and then resumed their seats and conversation as before. The Prince sat down by Mademoiselle Levin, and immediately began to talk to her. He seemed preoccupied, nervous, his handsome face was clouded. He spoke angrily of Napoleon, who was undermining freedom in Europe; bitterly of the weakness of the Prussian Court. Count S—— was lost in admiration of his magnificent figure and bearing; "a heroic figure which gives one an idea of a higher race of mankind."

His manners were charming, kindly, natural; he was perfectly at his ease and made others so.

When the Prince took his leave it was midnight, and the company broke up. But on the stairs he met his brother-in-law, Prince Radziwill, who brought him back again. Brinckmann and his friend were walking up and down the street in the soft night air, when they heard the strains

of music from the open windows of the room they had just left. Prince Ferdinand was playing, improvising, as he sometimes did when in the mood. Rahel and Prince Radziwill were standing by the window listening, and the two friends remained below for some time listening too.

On another occasion the French visitor called in the morning to see Ludwig Robert, and was taken upstairs by an "odd-looking old servant" who had kept darting in among the fine company on the previous evening.

Rahel appeared and, excusing her brother's absence, begged the Count to wait in her room for him. This was her sanctum, where she received her more intimate friends, the room with sloping roof and simple furniture, from which her friends had nicknamed her the "Sybil of the Attic." They were in the midst of an interesting conversation when Gentz rushed in, exclaiming excitedly that he could bear no more —he was "worn out with writing all night, and those confounded creditors since five o'clock! They persecute me wherever I go, hunt me to death. No rest for me anywhere. Let me sleep here in peace, at all events for half an hour!"

And Gentz, who seemed utterly distracted and worn out, threw himself on the sofa without

taking the slightest notice of the visitor, and closed his eyes "with every appearance of being able to obtain the rest he desired." Mademoiselle Levin smiled and led the way to another room.

These surroundings of the Sibyl sound somewhat Bohemian. In them she developed and attracted all ranks. The Frenchman adds that on leaving Berlin he felt convinced that he would never meet a woman equal to Rahel in this world and "this my belief has been justified."

Her meeting with Madame de Staël, when that lady was travelling in Germany (1803), deserves to be remembered. Brinckmann had spoken of Rahel with enthusiasm as a genius. "Ah! you compare her with me?" said Madame de Stäel, amused. "That is not bad! Has she written anything?" "No, nor do I believe she ever will; but I wish she could inspire twenty authors with her genius, some of them would be the better for it." Madame de Stäel naturally wished to make the acquaintance of this "marvel," and they met at an evening reception, crowded with princes, learned men, court ladies, poets. Disregarding these, the two ladies sat on a sofa and talked together earnestly for no less than an hour and a half,

Madame de Stäel then said: "She is wonderful! Germany is really a mine of genius, as I have remarked during this journey of mine!" And to Rahel herself she said: "If I stayed here, I should envy your superiority!" To which the clever little Jewess replied by a neat compliment, capable of disarming any and every form of feminine jealousy. Her own estimate of the great Frenchwoman shows her remarkable insight into character, one of her strongest points. "She has intellect enough, but her soul never *listens*. It is never still within her. She never seems to meditate alone, but always to be talking about it to others; those early *salons* have done her harm. . . . Everything about her is *à rebours*, as when one strokes blades of grass upwards, nothing sweet or gentle. Among so many gifts it is a pity that one is lacking, the one which could make her harmonious; the gift of a quiet, simple soul-atmosphere."

Rahel herself could always listen, it was one of the secrets of her successful conversations, if one may be pardoned an Irishism. Speaking of some one she said: "His mind, his soul, and his heart never hold converse together. The only amusing intercourse!"

The above extracts give an idea of Rahel's

way of writing, of her style of expressing herself both in speaking and writing. Above all things she was natural, clear-headed, and simple in a most affected and unnatural period. She tried to write and speak exactly as she felt, without pedantry (for of this she had the greatest horror) —in short, as clearly and simply as possible. "I don't wish to write speeches but conversations, as they are carried on by living poeple," by which she meant to write down ideas and moods just as they came, letting the style form itself.

The Jews, it is said, have given *esprit* to the Germans, it is one of their fairy gifts, and Rahel was the first brilliant incarnation of this *esprit*, which culminated in Heine. Countless witticisms and epigrams from her lips became national property and exercised the widest influence upon the life and art of her day. She touched things with such a light but sure hand! And she was always in front, in the van of progress, always echoing the Goethian "Light, more light!" whether in her youth with the Romanticists or in her mature years with young Germany. How could people go on discussing things which "we" left off discussing ten years ago? she wondered. "How very few people have ideas!"

Varnhagen von Ense, whom she married after

a friendship of several years, describes her at their first meeting as small but well-formed, with tiny hands and feet, dark eyes and hair, and a beautiful voice, soft yet full and clear. She had rather a sad expression at that time. "The most wonderful way of talking I had ever heard, naïve and witty, keen yet loving, true and warm-hearted."

In spite of the recognition of her exceptional personality, Rahel was not allowed to forget her origin. It was brought home to her by a bitter experience. Among the Germans who frequented the house was a handsome young nobleman, Count Karl von Finckenstein, who fell in love with this daughter of the despised race. (This was in 1796, when Rahel was twenty-four.) Rahel loved him in return and they became engaged. But his family (a mother and sisters) strongly disapproved of the match, wishing him to marry in his own rank and people. The affair dragged on for four years; the young man himself was too weak to take a decided course. He even told Rahel how difficult it was for him to choose between her and his family, and she set him free. Thus her engagement and its breaking were wounds to heart and pride alike.

A severe illness followed, and on her recovery a friend, Countess von Schlabrendorff, took her to Paris by way of distracting her thoughts. This visit (1800), cut all too short by her mother's parsimony, was a revelation to Rahel. She delighted in the grace and lightness of French conversation, regretting the Germans knew nothing of this art — that their language was not yet moulded by social intercourse.

Her own influence was destined to make itself felt in this respect of the moulding of the German language both conversationally and in writing.

Writing, much later (1831), to Victor Hugo, she expressed the same thought.

"L'Allemagne est un pays qui n'a point de centre, point de Paris qui timbre les gloires; mais sur tous les points de cette Allemagne il se trouve des âmes ouvertes aux beautés de tous les genres, qui épient ce qui mérite l'admiration, sans toutefois posséder la grace qui rend un culte agréable aux dieux."

But, although not blind to the faults of her nation, she was intensely patriotic, and enjoyed telling Parisians that she was just "a Jewess from Berlin."

Rahel's second love-affair proved equally unhappy. It was a couple of years later (1802),

when she fell in love with a handsome young Spaniard, named D'Urquijo, Secretary to the Spanish ambassador, a man with charming manners and the frank boyish expansiveness of the Southerner, qualities which always attracted Rahel. The difference in nationality, however, which at first attracted, in the end created misunderstandings. D'Urquijo was madly jealous, and could not bear to see her so universally beloved and admired; he had little sympathy with her intellectual interests. He tormented poor Rahel with humiliating scenes of jealousy and reproaches, until, at last, in spite of her passionate love for him, she broke off this second engagement at the cost of no little suffering to herself. Many years later she looked back on these things in the calm light of middle-age. "I coloured, I loved shadows cast by my own fire," she wrote — "the weak unmanly Finckenstein, the suspicious savage Urquijo, these childish innocent murderers." One of her deepest and saddest sayings dates from this period: "People not only do not understand each other, but they do not all love in the same hour."

But now, although dark days were still in store, a new friend came into Rahel's life,

one whose coming was to bring lasting happiness. This was Varnhagen von Ense, whose wife she ultimately became. Their friendship before marriage lasted six years, a period of vicissitudes and uncertainties, but in the end the union was an entirely happy one.

Karl August Varnhagen von Ense, born 1785 (fourteen years Rahel's junior), was the son of a Düsseldorf doctor of good family. After his father's death he found himself, a mere lad, compelled to earn the money necessary to complete his studies, and when he first met Rahel he was tutor in a Jewish family in Berlin.

Varnhagen was fascinated from the first. Carefully he records in his Memoirs their first meeting in a friend's house; another time at Fichte's lectures, which Rahel attended with her brother Ludwig;[1] again on a snowy March day in "Under den Linden" when their friendship really began.

[1] These lectures of Fichte's (1807 - 8) were his celebrated "Addresses to the German Nation" in which he tried to awaken national pride and patriotism, at this time sunk to their lowest ebb. No little courage was needed for such a task, for the French were quartered in Berlin (1806 - 8), and the drums of their soldiers marching past often interrupted the lecturer's discourse. Ludwig Robert and Rahel were among Fichte's friends and enthusiastic supporters.

About this time Rahel went to live in a small house in Charlottenburg, her mother, who had grown morbidly peculiar, having practically turned her out of the family home. In spite of rebuffs she used to visit the old lady every day, and eventually returned home to nurse her during an illness of some months. Finally the mother died in her daughter's arms, softened by her affection and care, and Rahel was happy in the complete reconciliation of those last days. Rahel was a true daughter of her race in the strength of her affection for her family, "fibre love" as she called it. She was always ready to help, nurse, or otherwise devote herself to them, and they seem to have taken it all as a matter of course, without having the least appreciation of her character and intellect. Her sister Rose, whom she loved dearly, had married early; the two elder brothers were hard business men, but in Ludwig she found perfect sympathy of character and intellectual tastes.

During the summer Varnhagen used to visit her every afternoon in Charlottenburg, driving or walking out, as soon as his work was over for the day. As they sat in the cool porch of her little house or walked in the shady

paths of the village, or on the banks of the Spree, by moonlight or starlight, their friendship grew until it became the chief thing in Rahel's life. Varnhagen was now only twenty-four, but this made no difference in their relation, although both felt that he must make a position for himself before they could think of a union. Rahel was certainly the guiding, forming influence in this case, Varnhagen was weaker both in character and intellect, but he understood and loved Rahel as no one else had ever done.

But across their lives, as across the whole of that generation, stalked the dread spectre of the Napoleonic Wars, Prussia's struggle with the arch-enemy. War brought the usual upheaval of social conditions, banks stopped payment, families were dispersed, friends scattered. Rahel's income shrank until it barely covered the necessities of life and she, who had grown up in luxury, found poverty a hard thing, especially with delicate health.

With the outbreak of war, Varnhagen joined the Austrian army as a volunteer, was wounded, taken prisoner, then sent to Paris. Rahel lived through dreary years alone and poor, "sitting alone in the *Morgue* of my heart," as she expressed it.

"Since I have no more hope for the beauty of life, and have lost or had to give up all that was dearest to me, I no longer feel so keenly unhappy, and I can look upon beautiful objects in Nature with real understanding. . . . My birth shut me out of the world, happiness would not let me in. I hold for ever fast to the strength of my own heart, and the teaching of my soul."

It seemed as if the terrible war would never end. Rahel longed intensely for peace.

"Dear, beautiful, misunderstood peace! As beautiful as youth, innocence, health, which one only realises when one has lost it. Unhoped for miracle!"

Part of this time Rahel spent in Austria with various friends. Both in Berlin and Prague she organised a band of women to nurse the wounded soldiers, and found her greatest comfort in alleviating their sufferings.

"The only thing which comforts and strengthens me is the doing good, caring for, watching over others." (1831.)

Patriotic German women did splendid service at this time, and Jewish women were especially generous both with gifts and personal help. Henriette Herz joined with Rahel, as we have

seen. Fichte and his wife both died of hospital fever contracted in nursing (1814). Rahel showed herself a capable organiser, collecting money, directing — once when she was ill in bed, she had the bureau transferred to her bedside—and she had a gift for talking to the soldiers, cheering and inspiring them; she was quite a mother.

Rahel had indeed a genius for friendship. It was exemplified at this time in a thoroughly characteristic manner by her relationship to Alexander von der Marwitz. This young man (born 1787) is an interesting reflection of the troublous times in which his lot was cast. Of good family, handsome, intellectual, endowed with every quality of heart and mind, he could find no sphere of congenial work and sank into despair. He was like a Prince without a kingdom, and was drifting into a Hamlet-like brooding when Rahel's sympathy and courage saved him from suicide and inspired him with new life.

Some of her most characteristic letters are written to von Marwitz:

"I worry myself to death about you, thinking what is best for you. What can any one with a soul like yours do? You cannot escape your

epoch. Every one is bound to his epoch. Ours is that of consciousness, mirroring itself dizzy, reflecting itself to infinity. Heroic natures, men of action, gifted with understanding and imagination, must perish of inactivity, must evaporate in such a time. If any one can save the world or his own country I advise him to do it, even if it were you! . . . *Is it possible, is it any good?* This brooding about help and the times, these ambitious projects are the worst of all. Life, love, study, work, marriage—if it chances to come our way—the making every trifle right and vital, this is *living* and no one can prevent our doing these. . . . You must do anything rather than live miserably. Go, and if you perish (the worst!) you know that I shall think: 'he could not live miserably.'"

The conclusion of her whole philosophy was, as she told him, "It does not matter what our fate is, so long as we gain wisdom. Development is our fate."

Thus she supported, convinced, inspired, until he bravely took his part, fighting with Varnhagen in the Austrian army. He was killed in the battle of Montmirail, 1813.

One of her most beautiful letters was written on the death of another friend, Heinrich von

Kleist, the poet, who shot himself in despair at the failure of all his attempts to make even a bare living in this period of national distress.

"You know how I think of suicide: as you do. It is not well that men, wretched men, should have to suffer to the very dregs. We must hope in Divine love. Could *that* be made to cease by a mere pistol-shot? I am glad that my noble friend—for with bitter tears I claim him as a friend—would not suffer an indignity; he has suffered enough, and not one of those who perhaps will blame him would have given him ten thalers, would have sacrificed nights to him, or have had patience with him, if he had let them see his misery—would never have left off calculating whether he had a right, or whether he really had *not* a right to a cup of coffee. . . . He is and remains a Courage."

At last the war and its horrors came to an end, and on 27th September 1814 Rahel and Varnhagan were married. She had been formally baptized into the Christian faith by Pastor Stegemann, who received her "with as much respect as if it were Spinoza who presented himself for baptism." The names Antonie Friederike were added to that of Rahel.

Varnhagen had proved himself a worthy

soldier and was also known for his literary work. He was now a member of the diplomatic corps, sent to Vienna, afterwards made Chargé d'Affaires at Carlsruhe, which they both found a dull and uninspiring place.

In 1819 they settled again in Berlin, henceforth their permanent home. It was a new Berlin, with many gaps in the circle of friends and a new spirit in society. Gone was the wonderful glow of the Romantic period, gone the enthusiasm of the Freedom Wars. There was no enthusiasm now, only stagnation. In the words of Börne, after the effort of the war was over, "people returned to the making of dumplings." Varnhagen devoted himself to literary work, chiefly biographical portraits and memoirs.

He was a brilliant talker and their *salon* became of the first importance, a meeting-place for social stars of every kind. Rahel called it "her old company of the attic, continued and enlarged."

To this later *salon* came, among many others, Hegel and his disciples, Alexander von Humboldt, the poet Heine, De la Motte Fouqué, the Mendelssohn family, Chamisso the poet, the Von Arnims. Heine dedicated the

Lyrical Intermezzo in his *Buch der Lieder* to Rahel in her fiftieth year. He called her "the most *spirituelle* woman in the Universe," and his acquaintance with her the beginning of a new period of life. He would not mind, he said, wearing a dog-collar with the inscription: "I belong to Frau Varnhagen." Rahel, on her side, delighted in the young poet, though she was by no means blind to defects in his character, his vanity, want of depth and sincerity, and her frankness in telling him so sometimes caused a coolness between them. "Heine must become *real*" (*Heine muss wesentlich werden*), she used to say.

Rahel's intercourse with Bettina and her brother, Clemens Brentano, was not altogether smooth at first. They displayed some of the old German prejudice against the Jews, also there was an element of jealousy, for Bettina had her *salon*, too, and her devoted adherents. Finally, however, the two "Sibyls" understood each other and became intimate friends. Bettina, Goethe's "Child love," now the worthy mother of seven, appreciated Madame Varnhagen's delightful ways with children, unreasonably demanding of a governess that she should be "exactly like Madame Varnhagen

with the children." One of Rahel's most delightful *traits* was this love of children. Childless herself, she adored her nephews and nieces, inventing wonderful games to amuse them. One of her letters, written about two years before her death, speaks of the "children to dinner for a birthday party, and Dore (the old servant) sitting at table, too, because she has been ill. *Voila mes fêtes!*"

A typical evening at the Varnhagen's *salon* has been described by a visitor about 1830.

The guests came and went, some looked in on their way to other entertainments; there were no invitations, but every one was welcome.

The conversation touched upon all possible topics; politics, literature, music, arguments as to Rossini and the Italian School *versus* the German—a burning question of the day. Henriette Sonntag was criticised for singing music of too light a style for her great gifts. Rahel defended her as a child of the times, from which she said the great and sublime had departed, it was now the day of the restrained and graceful. A celebrated *cantatrice* sang songs by Beethoven and Schubert, an especial delight to Rahel. Alexander von Humboldt (the star of Rahel's later *salon*, as Fichte had been of her

first) looked in on his way from Court, and stayed long enough to give a witty description of the various forms of piety which he had met on his travels, classifying them as a botanist does his plants. Then the talk drifted back to politics and the absorbing question of France: would she finally decide for a Republic or a Monarchy? Rahel declared France must inevitably become a republic, sooner or later. Every Frenchman, she said, has republicanism in his blood, and, no matter how many attempts may fail, a republic France will be at last. "All obstacles are but as dust in the path" of great destined world-events like that, she said with enthusiasm, looking like an inspired prophetess, with flashing eyes and animated bearing. Every one was impressed, though no one thought her prophecy likely to be fulfilled.

Presently Bettina von Arnim entered, and Rahel subsided into the quiet hostess, content to listen delightedly, throwing in a word now and then as was her wont, for Bettina was a brilliant talker, and every one listened fascinated to her witty, sparkling flow of words.

Such a *salon* was neither a "crush" nor a "function," but a meeting-place for recreation and interest. Men and women then cared

passionately for ideas and met together to discuss them, as an end in itself.

As a rule Rahel made no long speeches, she threw in a remark here and there, something witty or inspiring, like a lightning flash. She never wanted to monopolise the conversation, but could always guide and correct it. If argument waxed too hot she would divert it by a witticism or happy saying into peaceful channels. "I don't want to make long speeches," she said, and "I don't want to shine, but to see light."

Bettina von Arnim declared Rahel was at her best *tête-à-tête.*

"Frau v. Arnim was with us," relates Rahel's Diary (13th March 1826), "and spoke finely about many things. She said: 'Before falling asleep it is possible to direct the spirit, and as it were send it along certain paths;' she had often tried it and had found it affirmed by Plato. Then I reminded Varnhagen of what I always said: In real deep sleep the soul goes home, to gather strength; otherwise it could not endure. This is a wise provision, the soul bathes in God's sea. Frau v. Arnim complained that so many human talents and energies are never utilised, never become deeds; one feels this

plainly, often bitterly. After she had gone, Varnhagen repeated that and added: 'That is the case with all talented people. Yes and even with those of apparently least talent. How much lies dormant in each one!' 'Yes,' said I, 'it must be so; it is like oil in the lamp, if it were not there the light would go out; but there must be *more* oil there than the light needs; the last drop of light must be borne by the others. . . . Ah! everything is right, only we do not understand it!'"

In these happy years Rahel was reconciled with fate, which at first had seemed against her. She was even reconciled to her Jewish origin, and shortly before her death spoke of herself as "the fugitive from Egypt," led by destiny to the love of husband and friends. "What was so long the greatest shame, the bitterest sorrow and suffering to me, my Jewish birth, now I would not change it at any price." The last four years of her life were spoilt by illness and bodily suffering, which she bore with marvellous courage and cheerfulness. Always delicate, she now suffered among other ills from a distressing form of asthma, and the attacks became more severe and frequent. More and more confined to the house, she was deprived of any amuse-

ment such as the theatre, which she keenly enjoyed, and of much social intercourse. The sudden death of her beloved brother Robert, followed by that of his wife, was a heavy blow. This was in the year preceding her own death, as was also the death of Goethe, which she felt deeply. Her life was despaired of in the winter of 1832, but she rallied towards spring, when Bettina von Arnim persuaded her to try a new system of treatment under a homœopathic doctor who was visiting Berlin. This treatment necessitated leaving off various medicines which alleviated the attacks, but she persevered in spite of increased suffering. Finally, in March 1833, a terrible attack came on one night, no remedies were at hand, and she expired in the arms of the faithful old servant Dore.

Her husband survived her until 1858. He felt her loss keenly. Writing some years after her death he said she was ever and always "the youngest and freshest creature in my life. She had all the warmth and brillance of a being who has just come from God's hands. I know nothing resembling her. Talent and capabilities others may possess the same and more, but personality, no one. . . . It is easier for a

Goethe, a Spinoza, a Plato, to manifest themselves again than a Rahel."

This may sound exaggerated praise, yet a more recent and less prejudiced critic has pronounced Rahel "the feminine counterpart of Goethe."

It was fitting that Varnhagen, as a labour of love, should collect her letters and sayings and give them to the world. *Rahel, ein Buch des Andenkens für ihre Freunde* was published a year after her death.

Many of her aphorisms and sayings had been published during her life-time by Fouqué in his weekly paper, *Berliner Blätter für deutsche Frauen.* Not that Rahel had written them with a view to publication. It chanced that Fouqué, being one day short of "copy," rushed to Varnhagen and begged for something which he could insert. Rahel was ill, and Varnhagen, searching among her correspondence, found some aphorisms and notes, which Fouqué published immediately under the heading "*Denkblätter einer Berlinerin.*"

With her keen feeling for literary style, Rahel always lamented her own shortcomings, and wrote to Fouqué in admiration of "your words, like well-drilled soldiers in smart uniform,

whilst mine are like a crowd of peasants with clubs." And she told Jean Paul, "You and I cannot write."

Rahel's letters are numerous and lengthy. It was the fashion in her day to write letters, but hers are not written in the careful, flowing style of the then literary lady. She was not an authoress, had neither creative power nor literary style. Her letters are living, because they were thrown off carelessly, grave or gay, witty or passionate, according to her mood. She did not aim at style in the conventional sense. "I want to write just as I talk," she says. "I throw off explosions." Nearly all her brilliant sayings are in these letters, thrown off "as one talks." By these we know her. And her nervous, epigrammatic, impressionist utterance is really modern, just as her ideas were modern.

In an amusing and characteristic letter (dated 1823) she chats about the future: "air—balloons, telegraph, railways, thought-perspective (with which we shall see thoughts through people's heads), weather-makers and *quite* new festivities unknown to us are yet to come. We shall not think of dying any more, that is an accident and must be got

rid of before anything else. But suddenly adieu!"

As a matter of fact she exercised a strong influence on German literary style by her own peculiar way of writing. Regretting that the German language, unlike the French, was not yet moulded conversationally, that it had not yet realised itself and its possibilities, she tried to make it live and sparkle, both in speaking and writing. She certainly struck sparks from it, made it less heavy, less pedantic, though this influence only made itself felt after her death and the publication of her letters.

And she had poetic feeling which expresses itself sometimes in quite beautiful passages, short and fleeting as her other utterances, but with a charm which is very evident in the original. Nietzsche wrought the German language into beautiful prose, here and there Rahel too puts a beautiful thought poetically. "Pure, delicate, and holy as the budding leaf within the almond is our truest inmost wish." After Goethe's death she wrote simply (1832):

"Softer than rains in May are children's kisses, the perfume of roses, nightingales' songs, the warbling of larks. . . . Goethe hears them no more. A great witness is lacking."

Rahel's youth fell in the period of the Romantic movement, to which she belonged heart and soul. She lived to see that movement giving place to *Jung Deutschland* with its strong realistic tendencies, and she inspired the youth of that period as she had inspired those of her own. But there is no contradiction in this. Rahel's romanticism was that of Goethe, the early, healthy romanticism which was the rebellion of nature against convention and classicism. With its later developments she was less in sympathy. Clearness of vision was Rahel's great characteristic, mentally she was more akin to the Latin than to the Teutonic race. The choice of subjects of the later romantic writers, who sought glamour in the Past or the Supernatural, did not appeal to her. She did not care, for instance, for Weber's romantic operas, and, although she received an overwhelming impression from reading the Nibelungen legend, she preferred the Greek gods to the northern "gods of mist and fog." Nothing interested her so much as human beings and real life. Hence her sympathy with Young Germany and realism. The movement was more political and social than creative in literature; "Young Germany" left imagina-

tion and dreams to the Romanticists. Rahel realised the importance of the present, "the beloved, honoured Now," and the significance of the period in which she lived. "I am glad to live now," she wrote in later years, "because the world really is progressing, because ideas, dreams are becoming alive, because industries, inventions, associations, realise these dreams. . . . The Present is the Future, and the world is moving. (*Sie geht, die welt.*)"

After the Napoleonic wars new problems confronted the minds of men. Rahel could sympathise with the Saint Simonists and Communists, although her essentially individualist soul refused to go far on Collectivist lines. This was a personal feeling, and persisted in spite of her very real sympathy with the people. "I love the working classes," she said, "because they are the most and the poorest," and she wonders whether the highest development of the best people is worth the suffering and misery which produce the "century-old manure," necessary for that development of the few. She saw the limits of nationality. "There will come a time when national pride will be ranked with self-love, and other forms of vanity and war and fighting." Yet in her

heart she was something of a Nietzschian or rather an anticipator of Nietzsche. She thanked God that she was born "noble," in the Greek sense "aristocratic," a personality, that she was her whole life through "Rahel and no one else." Courage was for her the highest virtue, cowardice and lying the lowest vices. Quite Nietzschian is her daring: "Virtue is much worse than a passion. The latter may be overcome, but I should like to see the man who could ever make himself free from the former, if she had once enslaved him. He may cease to be a saint, but he will certainly never be a free devil, only a bad and timid one."

Of a great man she said:

"He is so far ahead in his ideas, that there can no longer be any question whether he is good or not good; that lies far beneath him." "Innocence is beautiful: Virtue is a plaster, a scar, an operation." "People are all good, but they are not worth anything."

Speaking of too great yielding to others as a fault, she says "something of the eagle nature" is necessary in life, though she has it not.

Rahel's ideas on love and marriage were considerably in advance of the conventional, both of her day and ours.

"I see that human beings are so degraded that they have to make their *declaration d'amour* before a priest and before the law. They know themselves!"

"It is hard that in Europe men and women belong to two different classes: one moral, the other not. This can only be kept up by dissimulation. And this was chivalry! These few words are most true; they contain much misery and much wickedness. Some one should write a book about this."

European evils she sums up as "the Negro traffic, war, marriage; and they are surprised and try to mend matters!" She wrote burning words of the mother and her rights. "All mothers should be held in honour and innocent —like Mary."

There were women writers in her day (Caroline Schlegel, Dorothea Tieck), who wrote under men's names. Rahel blamed them for this affected modesty, "old-Frankish coquetry" she called it. "Poor fear! A book might be good, even if a mouse wrote it. If Mrs Fichte had written Fichte's works, would they be any the worse for that?" The "old Frankish coquetry," under which she classed all affectations, prudery, dissimulations in intercourse between men and

women, was Rahel's *bête noire.* Equality of the sexes was her ideal, but she saw that the women of her time needed intellectual training before that could be realised. She suggested a University education long before such an idea was dreamed of, and she felt that women had a right to work as citizens and that social economy was, above all, a suitable sphere for their activity. She had organised a band of women nurses during the Freedom Wars, and became convinced of their capabilities.

Women should institute a Board of Poor-helpers (*Armendirektorium*) she thought, anticipating the fine organisations of German women at the present day.

When some one considered that a literary woman had missed her true vocation, Rahel exclaimed: "Granted! So many women miss their true vocation that the few who miss it by writing may well slip in among the rest. There is no need to pity them more than those others who have but little pity bestowed on them."

The great characteristic of her personal intercourse was that she was natural, gave herself simply and frankly as she was, and others found themselves doing the same, consciously or unconsciously. This gift of being natural,

one of the rarest, but also the first and most necessary for the hostess of a *salon*, was one secret of Rahel's charm: the other was a perfect genius of insight and sympathy. About this Bettina said one of her clever things: "Rahel could still taste the salt where others only despised the ashes of a burnt life." This made her sympathies so wide, the rank and even the reputation of her friends was a matter of indifference to her, as long as they were interesting personalities. Hence her enemies blamed the somewhat Bohemian character of her receptions.

Varnhagen himself did not always approve her choice of friends. There was the beautiful Pauline Wiesel for instance, who knew no law save her own wayward impulses, and, as someone said, had really the soul of a Greek courtesan; for a time she bestowed her affections on Prince Ferdinand: the lovely blonde Bohemian Countess Josefine Pachte, equally "Greek," who left her husband and a brilliant position for the sake of a lover. What Rahel really admired in these women was that they dared to be themselves. On the other hand she condemned Henriette Herzen's æsthetic flirtations as "a cold simulacre of love," nor would

she join the *Tugendbund*, because she disliked its atmosphere of sentimental introspection.

Quite characteristic was her attitude to her old friend Gentz, the brilliant writer, politician, and *viveur*, who, with many faults, always kept a certain *naïve* childlike heart. In his old age he fell in love with Fanny Elsler, a beautiful young dancer, and Rahel, he said, was the only one to whom he dared confess the reality of his love. Others laughed this "old man's infatuation" to scorn, but Rahel saw deep enough to understand, and congratulated him upon still being capable of real and lasting affections. "Good hearts," she wrote, "can always be in love, always want to be." As for Gentz, he was so delighted with Rahel's letters that he would copy them (so badly written were they) in order to read them in comfort.

Rahel adored music, the drama, the dance. A town without a theatre she compared to "a person with closed eyes; a place without a current of air, without movement." She felt all forms of art instinctively, as only an original nature feels them, and her criticisms penetrated in a flash to the heart of things. Hence her judgment on plays and acting was keenly sought after, although she expressed herself in

a *dilettante*, untrained fashion, as, for instance, when filled with enthusiastic admiration for a Neapolitan dancer, she wrote: "He describes conditions and relationships, instead of reciting difficult steps and spelling with his feet." An actor she blamed for "sending out a few single words in the middle, before, or from a phrase, like lost sentries, giving them no means of support, such as accent or tone to connect them." And on every stage in Germany she complains there is one like him to annoy her!

In the same way, though not a writer herself, she could give in a letter to Varnhagen unconsciously the best possible rules for writing:

"When you write, let yourself go. Don't think of any friend, of any model, not even of the greatest masters except to avoid them. Picture yourself, all that you see and as you see it. This only is what you, I, the world, respect and adore in Goethe, Shakespeare, Cervantes, and in all great men, they picture *themselves*."

Music she loved passionately, and in her last years of failing health the artistic singing of a sister-in-law was her greatest enjoyment.

During a stay in Toeplitz she had made the acquaintance of Beethoven, whom she

encountered one day, like herself, on a solitary ramble. Beethoven was struck by the expression of her face and procured an introduction. Evidently he found the lonely rambler sympathetic, for he played and improvised for her unasked, an especial mark of favour.

It is interesting to know the attitude of a mind like Rahel's towards the Unseen. Her profession of Christianity was really more a confession of sympathy with national and social ideals than with religious dogma. She subscribed to no dogma, holding that no belief is of value unless it be the result of personal conviction. Each soul must find its own revelation, determine its own relation to the Unknown. "What is man but a question! He is here for that, for asking honest, bold questions, and humbly waiting for answers. Not asking *boldly* enough and giving one's self-flattering answers, that is the deep source of all error." This belief in a revelation personal to each soul inclined her towards mysticism, and in her late years she was fond of the writings of Saint Martin, a French mystic, and those of Angelus Silesius, a seventeenth-century German mystic, whom Friedrich Schlegel had re-discovered.[1]

[1] Saint Martin (1743-1804). Angelus Silesius (1624-77).

"We are only a drop of consciousness! And I will so gladly return to the sea!" was her conclusion.

Heinrich Heine came in 1821 to study in Berlin, a young man of twenty-two, "sent down" from the University of Göttingen for a duel. Rahel and her circle were congenial friends.

Rahel says, "as he was subtle and peculiar I often understood him and he me, when others failed to do so, that won him, and he took me as Protectress."

And Heine in the well-known passage acknowledges how well Rahel understood him.

"When I read her letter it was as if I arose in my sleep dreamily and stood before the mirror, conversing with myself. I need not write to Frau von Varnhagen, she knows all I could tell her, knows what I am feeling, thinking." His very handwriting is growing like hers, naturally so, for their thoughts are as like as one star to another, "especially those stars which are millions of miles away from this planet of ours."

It is a pity that Rahel's letters to Heine, those letters which he says "ruin my eyes and refresh my heart," have been destroyed. He

cannot think of her without sadness, the dear friend, rich in love and never-failing sympathy, who had often been anxious about him in the period of his youthful extravagance, when (he says) the flame of truth gave out more heat than light.

"It is quite natural," he wrote (17th June 1823) to Varnhagen, "that I should be thinking most of the day of you and your wife, and I always remember how much kindness and love both of you have shown me and how you cheered, strengthened, and smoothed me, a morose, sick man, helping me with deed and word, and refreshing me with macaroni and mental food. I have found so little real kindness in my life and have been so often deceived, have only experienced real human treatment from you and your large-hearted wife." So it is not wonderful that he calls the house, No. 20. Frauzösischestrasse, his "Fatherland," or that he dates a new period of life from his acquaintance with the "dear, good little woman with the great soul!"[1]

He wrote, on the publication of Varnhagen's *Memoirs* of Rahel: "It was a noble deed of August Varnhagen, when, putting aside all

[1] Otto Berdrow, *Rahel Varnhagen.*

petty considerations, he published those letters in which Rahel manifests her whole personality. This book came out at the right time to influence, strengthen and console."

Rahel admired Heine's poems greatly, criticising them in her usual outspoken manner. His gift of style delighted her. Fredrich Schlegel, she said, had that gift too—"a sieve in the ear which lets nothing bad pass through."

As regards Rahel's personal magnetism, the description of the poet Grillparzer is significant. At the time of their meeting Rahel was some fifty-six years of age. It was late one evening. Grillparzer, who was visiting Berlin, was tired out with sight-seeing when Varnhagen insisted on taking him home and introducing him to Rahel, "that Rahel," says Grillparzer, "who was afterwards celebrated, but of whom I knew nothing at that time. I had been going about all day and felt dead tired, so was heartily glad when they told us at the door, the *Frau Legationsräthin* was not at home. However, as we went down the steps, the lady met us, and I resigned myself to my fate. But as soon as this woman — elderly, perhaps, never pretty, elf-like, not to say witch-like, in appearance—as soon as she began to speak I was

bewitched. My fatigue vanished, or rather it gave way to ecstasy. She talked and talked until nearly midnight, and I don't remember whether they turned me out or whether I went of my own accord. I never heard any one talk so well or in such an interesting manner." To a friend he declared she was the only woman he would ever have cared to marry.

Enterprising interviewers are fond of publishing portraits of their subjects at different periods of life from infancy to old age. We can trace Rahel's soul-development in her sayings, those "explosions" crystallised into little chips of philosophy.

In the saddest period of her youth she clung to courage. "I hold for ever fast to the strength of my own heart and the teaching of my soul." "Justice for others; courage for ourselves," was her favourite motto through life. Later she recognised that her fate was the common fate of all, "we fall like blossoms blown by the great unknown wind," and, that hardest lesson, "careless fate never requires of us what we were really capable of doing."

Then came the resignation of middle-age, and she discovers: "What makes us really so very unhappy is that we cannot make up our minds

not to be happy. But once we have been driven to this point, old age suddenly comes upon us: we no longer trouble ourselves about the infinite, but take our share of life and live, as the saying is, for the moment. Tears, splendour, and rage are over; we become stiff, kindly disposed, and wrinkled. Old age comes suddenly and not by degrees (as we fancy) like all true knowledge."

The real aim of life dawned upon her, expressed in a letter to her friend, Alexander von Marwitz. To him she wrote: "It does not matter what our fate is, so long as we gain wisdom. *Development is our fate.*" Finally, her practical ideal: "To see, to love, to understand, not to wish for anything, to be simply resigned, to revere the great Being; not to be for ever improving, inventing and hammering, to be merry and to grow better."

Sayings of Rahel

"Justice for others; courage for ourselves."

"All our dreams and our bitterest sufferings centre in possession, yet the only thing we can ever really possess is the capacity for enjoyment."

"I envy no one anything, excepting those things which no one has."

"We are really what we wish to be, and not what we are."

"I have lost . . . yet I would not be of those who never stake on the game."

"Those who suffer, have the most."

"Every man is, and is meant to be, an Original, not a manufactured article."

"One thing is just in this world: faces all grow like their souls."

"We see ourselves as concave, others see us as convex."

"For me, the difference between human beings lies in their manner of asking questions; they all answer in the same way."

"Freedom can never be anything but the being able to follow one's inmost nature slavishly."

"I have never regretted anything which I did gladly, only and always what I did reluctantly."

"Good things exist long before they are famous, and their fame exists long after they are no more."

"We never make new experiences; it is always new people who make the old experiences."

"Good hearts can always be in love, always want to be. Only they find so few worthy objects, hence all the love troubles."

"Always to love the same thing or something else, that is to be constant in loving. To love nothing is to be inconstant (to love)."

"Our heart is quite in the dark, quite alone, and all alone it knows best. Only when we look into it do we find knowledge; for the dazzling lights of the big world do not penetrate. It lives within us as a standard of another world, as a Yes or No: nothing more."

"If one listens to the conversations of passers-by in the street, one seldom hears anything but complaints or boasts. All men really aspire to a more worthy and dignified existence; if they do so sincerely, they complain; if falsely, they boast."

Rahel's soul, the essence of her individuality, is contained for us in sayings like the foregoing, aphoristic, detached fragments from the mass of letters and correspondence which form her only "literary remains."

These letters, which only very few students

care to wade through nowadays, are full of such fragments of insight, philosophical, sad, or witty, according to her mood, *à propos* of any and everything, thrown off, as she says, "carelessly, as one talks," "explosions, with here and there a jewel." These *are* Rahel, though they lack the charm of personality and manner — only realisable by contemporaries — which went so far to make her famous.

BETTINA VON ARNIM

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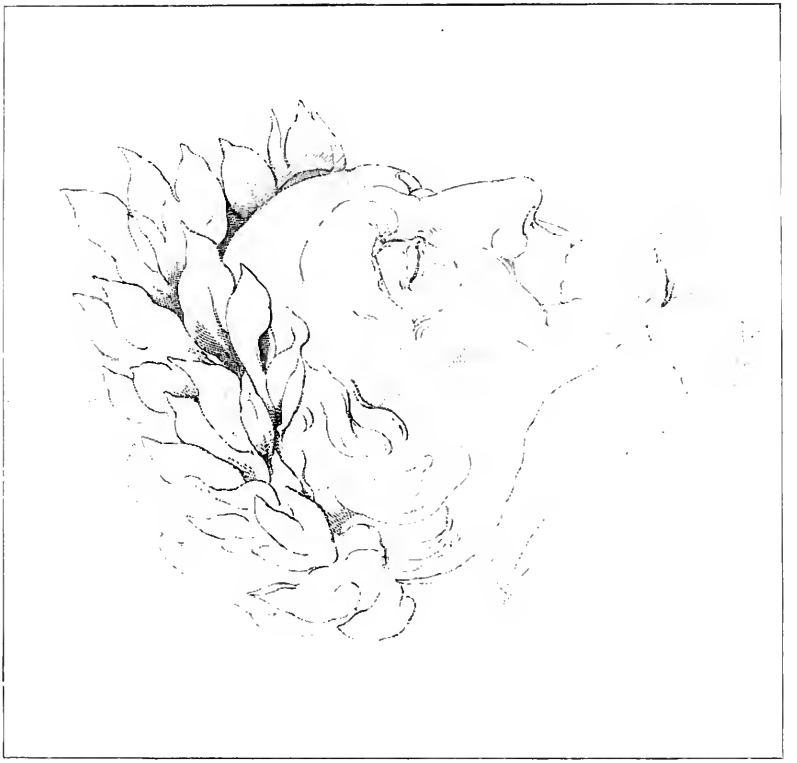

Goethe (on his Deathbed)

BETTINA VON ARNIM

"Would I could sit at his door, a poor beggar child, and take a piece of bread from his hand—and he would read in my eyes what spirit dwells in me. Then he would draw me to him, and wrap me in his cloak to warm me. Surely he would not bid me depart, but would let me stay on and on in his house. . . . And the years would pass, and life would pass, whilst in his face the whole world would be mirrored for me, I should have no need of other learning."

WHAT student of German literature has not enjoyed the delightful episode of Bettina, the "Child," in Goethe's life? Her impetuous entrance into the poet's friendship, her enthusiastic worship of Beethoven, her own flashes of poetry and inspiration make her story a fascinating human document. Unconventional and Bohemian as any modern cosmopolitan young art-student, she was in her girlhood the familiar friend of two of the greatest men of genius who have ever lived. Her famous book was one of those fresh, original expressions which startle every one into interest. It was the self-revelation of a girl eager to live and understand, full of the glamour of youth, a diary as fascinating as Marie Bashkirtseff's,

but finer work, for it was literature. Bettina was fully as brilliant and vivid a personality as the celebrated Russian, but her book is free from the constant self-analysis, the obsession of the *I*, above all it is without the modern neurotic taint. Her nature was warm-blooded, healthy; her "singing flames" are love. In giving herself to the world as she did in her writings, in daring to be herself regardless of convention, she revealed the soul of a genial and highly gifted woman, making her sex richer by a strong and original personality.

At the time when Rahel Levin was solacing an unhappy girlhood with books in her "attic," Anna Elizabeth Brentano, Goethe's Bettina, was born 4th April 1785 in Frankfurt-on-the-Main—Goethe's birthplace—the old free town full of merchandise, traditions, and self-importance, surrounded by fruitful plains, yet not too far from the Rhine and its romance.

Her father was a wealthy merchant of Italian origin. On her mother's side were literary traditions. Her grandmother, Sophie La Roche, born in the same year as Goethe's mother, was a well-known authoress in the sentimental vein then in vogue. Her novel, *Geschichte des*

Fräuleins von Sternheim, was, in fact, a good specimen of *Empfindsamkeit*. An unhappy youthful attachment to the poet Wieland still shed a glow of romantic interest in later life, and a literary circle consoled her in some measure for a not particularly happy marriage with Hofrat La Roche. A true daughter of that period of Sensibility, she was somewhat of a *poseuse*. On meeting Wieland after many years, they both wept, the spectators of the scene were also moved to tears. But this extreme sensibility did not prevent her from marrying her daughters to men whom they did not love, to the astonishment and indignation of honest, downright Frau Rath Goethe, who could not understand "a woman like La Roche, who is determined to make her daughters unhappy, and yet writes Sternheims and women's letters—in a word, my head is in a whirl. If I understand anything of all this, may I become an oyster!"

Goethe frequented the house of Madame La Roche in his youth, enjoying her motherly friendship, eminently attracted by her beautiful daughter, Maximiliane. In fact, in the dark eyes of "dear Max" he drowned the remembrance of a former passion.

With cool self-analysis he wrote: "Soon the eldest daughter especially attracted me. It is a pleasant sensation when a new passion begins to move within us before the old one has quite died out. Thus one loves to see with the setting sun the moon rising in the opposite quarter, rejoicing in the double brilliance of both heaven's lights."

But "dear Max" was married at seventeen by that inexorable sentimentalist, her mother, to Peter Brentano, the Milanese merchant, a widower of forty with five children, a man described as "vain and stupid." From her mother's intellectual circles she was transplanted to the gloomy house of merchandise, redolent of oil and cheese. Goethe visited the young stepmother sometimes, they made music together (Max played the piano, Goethe the 'cello) until Brentano grew jealous, and, after an angry scene, Goethe thought it best to avoid meeting her again. This renunciation, he said, was "worth more than the assiduity of the most ardent lover." Echoes of this episode resound in *Werther's Leiden*, the beautiful dark eyes of Lotte are surely those of "Max," although the story was inspired from other sources.

Maximiliane's marriage was in these circum-

stances not a happy one. Of her numerous children Clemens and Bettina were the only remarkable ones; both were poetic natures, dreamy and imaginative, yet humorous, fascinating and interesting creatures from their earliest childhood.

The beginning of Bettina's adoration of Goethe lay in this episode of her mother's youth, which came to her knowledge when she was herself scarcely more than a child. Some of Goethe's letters to her mother revealed the story, and these treasures have been found carefully copied in her own girlish handwriting.

When Bettina was only five years old her mother died, and she grew up partly under the care of her grandmother and partly in a convent school at Fritzlar near Cassel. Here she learnt various accomplishments, was clever at needlework, painting, modelling, had a decided gift for music (studying the guitar and composition), but was impatient of anything like systematic study.

She enjoyed an unusual amount of liberty, loved to watch insects, plants, animals, to bury her face in the grass, to feel at one with nature, and was particularly fond of climbing trees. Once she climbed an old tower and drew the

ladder up after her, so as to be really alone. In such fastnesses she would sit for hours dreaming the dreams of a clever child, half poet, half woman. "The abyss of dry, mouldering history beneath me, the unattainable heaven of stars above, and at night thoughts which make my brain reel."

In Bettina's Diary and Letters are charming pictures of her childish days in the convent, how she helped Mère Celatrice tend the bees, or Sister Monica in gardening operations. Sister Monica lived to a great age, and one day Bettina found the old nun lying dead among her flowers. "I took the plants from her stiff hands, and set them in the freshly turned earth, watering them with the last jug of water which she had carried from the Madlenen fountain, the good sister Monica! How beautiful those carnations grew, deep red and big! Later, when he who knows and loves me compared me to a dark red carnation, I thought of the flowers I had taken from the dead hand of age and planted, and wondered if death would haply surprise me, too, planting flowers; death the triumphant herald of life!" The romantic glamour was about her even then. As a little child of eight she used to steal out of the

dormitory, past the rows of sleepers, out in the deep still night, to the fountain in the midst of flower-beds "where each flower, each bud, in the illusive twilight expresses a dream face. There I stood watching the jet of water blown hither and thither by the wind, whilst moonbeams weave through the restless waters, and the lightning writes silver hieroglyphics in them." Once she stayed out through a thunderstorm, clinging close to a flowering lime-tree for protection, whilst the nuns arose and went into the church to pray. The little girl beneath the tree watched the lights and the white figures moving past the windows, heard the singing and the tolling of the bell to avert the lightning.

Never had a young girl a more delightful and interesting youth. As a change from nature-worship came visits to relatives in Frankfurt and to her grandmother, whose house *Grillenhütte* was the meeting-place for all sorts of interesting people. About this time many French refugees were to be met here, whilst in Frankfurt Bettina's brother Clemens, the budding poet, gathered round him another circle of young ardent souls. Bettina was never among "common-place" people, she was all her life in a world of the *élite*, in mind and

character. Even in these circles the young girl Bettina was considered a wonder, every one admired her originality, wit, and cleverness. Her brother Clemens adored her, and even the serious Schleiermacher was heard to say: "God must have been in a happy mood when he made Bettina." But she was no mere *Schöngeist* dabbling in art and literature. She knew the worth of these things, and knew how far more precious are the things of the heart.

"Piano-playing, Aria-singing, foreign languages, history, science—all make a character worthy of respect. But, ah! I always seek beneath all these, something that I could love!"

Bettina's life unfolds itself like a romance: a happy youth, a happy marriage, happy motherhood, her literary work appreciated, her fascinating personality adored—such was Bettina's page of life.

Among other tasks she had been chosen as a girl acolyte, a post of honour. It was her duty to clean the chalice in which the consecrated wafers were kept, to wash the chalice napkins. "Many a hot afternoon have I sat under the arch of the vestry door . . . to the left in the corner of the cloisters stood the bee-house beneath tall yew trees, to the right

the little bee-garden, planted with fragrant herbs and pinks. . . . From thence I could see into the distance; the distance that raises such strange feelings in the child-soul . . . awakens that first dim foreboding of a veiled future."

In the convent there were no mirrors, and for four years Bettina never saw her own reflection. But in her thirteenth year she one day beheld two nuns and her grandmother coming to meet her, the whole group in the looking-glass. "I recognised them all excepting one, the girl with sparkling eyes, glowing cheeks, with soft dark curly hair; I did not know her, but my heart leapt towards her, such a face I have loved in my dreams, in her glance is something which moves me to tears, I must follow this being, must swear fealty and belief to her; when she weeps, I will softly mourn, when she is joyful, I will serve her silently. I beckon to her—see, she rises and comes to meet me, we smile at each other, and I no longer doubt, it is my picture which I see in the mirror.

"Ah! yes. . . . I have no other friend except myself, I have often wept with, not for myself, I have laughed with myself, and that was still sadder, for no one else shared our mirth.

If any one had told me that each one seeks in love only himself, and that the greatest happiness is to find one's self in that love, I should not have understood it."

Thus Bettina grew up in a freedom which gave full scope to all the promptings of a poetical and an imaginative nature. One cannot indeed imagine her cribbed, cabined, or confined, she was always following her own impulses, listening to the promptings of her own "demon," in whom she firmly believed. Many were her daring escapades, only revealed later by her diary, as when she stole out at night to the haunted churchyard, fearful but irresistibly drawn; or, again, by night to the river in thaw after a severe winter, springing from one ice floe to another, always alone and enjoying her solitude. Her real education was nature's.

She had a passionate love for animals, her diary is full of anecdotes about them, humorous or poetical. Her friendship with a nightingale, for instance:

"She came down from one branch to another, nearer and nearer, clung to the lowest bough to see me. I turned towards her gently so as not to startle her, our eyes met and we

gazed at each other steadily. . . . On the following day the nightingale came again, so did I, for I had felt she would come. I had brought my guitar to play to her. It was by the poplar grove, opposite the hedge of wild roses . . . there she perched, craning her little neck, and watched me playing with the sand. Nightingales are inquisitive, they say; it is a proverb with us: 'as inquisitive as a nightingale,' but why should she be curious about us human beings, who have apparently no relations with her? . . . It was sultry, but soon the wind began to blow, massing an army of clouds above us. The rose-hedge rose and sank with the wind, but the bird perched firmly; the more the storm raged, the louder her song, her whole life streamed exultant from her tiny throat; neither falling rain nor loud rustling trees stopped her, nor did the thunder frighten and overwhelm her." Such rhapsodies, such ecstasies were Bettina's daily food. Early she discovered, "If you are alone, you are with your Genius."

Bettina writes from a little place on the Rhine, an idyllic picture of life in those days.

"In the evening we saunter along the banks of the Rhine, and then encamp in the timber

yard. I read Homer aloud; the peasants draw near and listen, the moon rises between the hills. . . . In the distance lies the dark ship, where a fire burns . . . the spitz dog on the deck barks from time to time. When we close the book, a regular political discussion ensues: the gods themselves pass for neither more nor less than statesmen and opinions are defended as warmly as if it had all taken place yesterday, and many things might still be changed. . . . If I had not read Homer to the peasants I should not have known the poem, their questions and remarks have made me understand it. When we return home we go one after another to bed. Then I sit down to the piano and melodies come to me, to which I sing before Heaven, the songs I love best. . . .

"On Saturday my brothers were here and stayed till Monday, during which time we passed the nights on the Rhine, George with his flute, to which we sang. Thus we passed from village to village, till the breaking day drove us home. . . .

"On the way home I made the acquaintance of the little goose-girl, who beamed at me from under her long eyelashes. The other children made fun of her, and said every one laughed

because her lashes were so long. She stood there shyly, and at last began to weep. I comforted her and said: 'God gave you those long eyelashes because he meant you to look after the beautiful white geese, and because you have to stay in the open meadow.' The geese thronged round the weeping child, hissing at me and the laughing children. If I could only paint, what a picture that would be!"

Her young life was fed by every kind of mental nourishment, all the thoughts and movements of her time were reflected in her surroundings, and she absorbed greedily all that came. Her letters are kaleidoscopic pictures of intellectual interests.

"At grandmamma's in the evening the *emigrés* discuss all kinds of politics and try to turn the big world-pumpkin over from all sides, they consider it rotten. I stand among the disputants as under a dripping-well; Protestant, philosopher, encyclopædist, *illuminé*, democrat, Jacobin, terrorist, *homme de sang*, all rain down on me."

Little did these world-reformers suspect what a shrewd critic was in their midst in the person of this slim girl with her dark southern eyes and her black curls, by turns passionate,

exaltée, witty, or full of roguish pranks as a schoolboy.

Some of Bettina's girlish enthusiasms sound strangely familiar to us of a century later. She was a vegetarian, talked much about the world-soul, and was deeply interested in her grandmother's theory that our "own soul comes from a spirit-seed in another life, this seed is what has ripened during a life-time." Her friend, Karoline von Günderode, the poetess, writing to Bettina, says a mutual acquaintance had enquired after her. "I could not tell him that you are a founder of religions, and have taken the whole human race on your shoulders, and intend them to live on air and without culture; that you will eat no cooked food but live on raw turnips and onions." This same Karoline von Günderode, the object of Bettina's first girlish adoration, wrote, under the name of "Tian," poems in somewhat Ossianic strain. She committed suicide in consequence of an unhappy love-affair with the scientist Creuzer when she was only twenty-six (1806), and her tragic death came as the first great shock in Bettina's life. Many years later she enshrined her friend's memory in a book, *Die Günderode*, a charming series of letters between two enthusi-

astic, highly-gifted girls, with all the magic of the spring outlook on life. Bettina, the younger, is all *Schwärmerei*, she pours out her adventures, her thoughts, her dreams, her friend, older and more restrained, playfully advising or commenting. Bettina, in absence, longs to be back with her dear Günderode. "We will have our beds close together and talk all night long, whilst the wind rattles in the tumble-down roof, and the mice come to drink the oil in our lamps, and we two philosophers, interrupted charmingly by these *intermezzi*, speculate big, deep things, enough to make the old world creak on its rusty hinges."

Or Bettina climbs a tree opposite her friend's window to read aloud to her, climbing one branch higher at every chapter.

As one reads this book, lately re-edited,[1] its charm and freshness strikes one as immortal; spring-time, youth, poetry, romance still breathe from its pages, as they did from those small cramped pages of its first edition seventy years ago.

A hundred years have passed since Bettina was young, but this book lives in the eternal spring of the world.

[1] Dr Paul Ernst, *Die Günderode*, 1904.

Of Bettina's relatives her brother Clemens was the most sympathetic. These two, the artist-natures of their family, resembled each other in temperament and character. Both were dreamy, ardent, impulsive, desultory. Clemens deplored this last characteristic in his wonderful sister. He was afraid lest she should be led astray by her brilliant, facile gifts. "Can't you turn to some one thing with all your five senses and grasp that wholly? You often say clever things and jump to conclusions which philosophers have not yet found. Write something!"

But Bettina's time for writing had not yet come, she was first to live, and Clemens might have followed his own advice with great advantage to himself. In the end Bettina was more successful both in life and writings than her brother. In her marriage she certainly found anchorage, whilst Clemens, after losing his wife (the intellectual Sophie Mereau), drifted into eccentricities, estranged his friends by peculiar moods, sarcasms, impertinences, and, finally embracing Roman Catholicism, devoted his last years to chronicling the visions of a hysteric nun.

In 1801 Bettina returned to Frankfurt, living partly with relatives and partly in the

Kronstettenstift, a residence for ladies. The old city was undergoing vicissitudes in this time of unrest. In 1806 Napoleon came and was pleased to change it from a Free Republic to a Kingdom with a Prince (*Fürst-Primas*), to the no small disgust of the sturdy burghers. Frau Goethe comments that Bonaparte "broke down the walls of Frankfurt instead of entering our hearts, and Madam Bonaparte rehearses receptions with empty chairs and stools, whilst Mr Bonaparte studies a book on etiquette."

It was when Bettina was suffering her first great sorrow—the loss of her friend Karoline von Günderode—that she sought out Goethe's mother, the famous "Frau Rath," in her cheerful, healthy old age (she was seventy-five), living on the Rossmarkt and extremely proud of her great son, then "throning in Weimar on Olympian heights."

The old lady loved the dark-eyed impetuous girl, so different from the ordinary maidens of her acquaintance, and a warm friendship began, which was the delight of her remaining years. She loved Bettina's pranks, adventures, enthusiasms, laughed with her, scolded her, as occasion required. They laughed often, for both ladies possessed the gift of humour.

and Frau Rath's heart was young to the end. "Enjoy yourself and be merry, for he who laughs cannot commit a mortal sin" was her advice to the absent Bettina, and Bettina always enjoyed herself.

There are some pretty touches in the friendship between these two women, one on the threshold of life, the other soon to leave it.

"I was at a concert on Friday," writes Frau Rath, "where the violoncello was played and I thought of thee, for its tones sounded exactly like thy brown eyes. Adieu, lassie, thou art in every way missed by thy Frau Rath."

And Bettina writes that the maid is to dust *her* stool, and no one else is to be allowed to sit upon it.

Bettina's loving records of Frau Rath's sayings and doings, recorded for Goethe, have preserved much interesting material, not only about this wonderful mother but also about the childish and youthful days of the poet himself. Many things Goethe had forgotten were recalled to his memory by Bettina's notes and used in his autobiographical *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. "Quaint extracts from house-chronicles gathered by a young friend of our family, garnered in her loving heart and finally committed to memory,"

said Goethe. Shortly before his death he was going over this material with a view to using it as *Aristeia der Mutter.*

Of course the great link between the two was Goethe. Bettina came full of romantic adoration for the poet whom she had never seen, but who had once loved her mother. Greedily she listened to Frau Rath's stories of his wonderful boyhood, youth, love affairs. She was never weary, and the proud mother was never weary of pouring her rich store of remembrances into such sympathetic ears.

Then came the great event of Bettina's youth, the visit to Goethe. She was but twenty-three, and the poet was already fifty-eight. In her letters to Frau Rath she describes the journey across Germany with her sister and brother-in-law, a vivid picture of travelling in that period, its discomforts and dangers.

Her brother-in-law decided, to her great delight, that she was to travel in male attire. In a joyous letter she announces the fact:

"*20th March* 1807.

"Now guess what the tailor is making for me. An Adrian? No! A Paduasoy? A bodice? No! A hoop petticoat? No! A mantilla? No! A pair of pockets? No! A dress with a train? No!

A pair of trousers? Yes! Hurrah! (other times are coming now) and a waistcoat, and a coat too.

"To-morrow everything is to be tried on, and it is sure to fit—for I have ordered everything to be large and comfortable—then I throw myself into a chaise and journey day and night post haste, through all the armies—friends and enemies alike—all fortresses opening before me, and so on to Berlin, where some business must be transacted which does not concern me. Then quickly back without a stop to Weimar. O Frau Rath, what will it be like there? My heart beats fast, although I must travel till the end of April before I get there. . . ."

It is in winter, and when they lose their way in the snow Bettina climbs a tree to reconnoitre. They arrive at Magdeburg one evening after the fortress-gates have been closed and are refused admission, so must spend the night in their carriage — Bettina on the box, wrapped in a cloak. "In the morning I awoke covered with snow looking like a snow-man, but quite warm and happy. Cold strikes sparks out of me. . . .

"Towards midnight we heard whistling in the wood. My brother-in-law handed me a pistol from the carriage, and asked if I had courage

enough to fire, if the rogues came. I said 'Yes.' 'Do not fire too soon,' said he. Lulu inside was very much afraid; but I, under the open sky with loaded pistol, buckled sword, countless twinkling stars above me, the sparkling trees throwing giant shadows across the moonlit road —all made me feel brave on my high seat."

When they arrive in Weimar worn out with fatigue, Bettina is too excited to eat, but rushes off to visit Goethe, first getting an introduction from Wieland the poet.

"I had never seen Wieland. I behaved as if I were an old acquaintance; he tried to remember and said, 'Yes, you certainly are a dear familiar angel, but I cannot remember when and where I have met you.'

"I made him give me a note for your son. This I took away with me and kept for a remembrance. I am copying it for you: 'Bettina Brentano, Maximiliane's daughter, Sophia La Roche's grand-daughter wishes to see you, dear brother, and pretends she is afraid of you, and that a little note from me will be a talisman to give her courage. Although I am pretty certain she is poking fun at me, I have to do what she wishes, and I shall be surprised if it is not the same with you.'"

With true romantic glamour she describes the calm, still house of Goethe — her impressions. "He took me into his room and placed me on the sofa opposite. We were both dumb; at last he broke silence: 'You have no doubt read in the papers of the death of the Duchess Amalia a few days ago?' 'Ah!' said I, 'I don't read the papers.' 'Indeed! I thought you were interested in everything in Weimar.' 'No, nothing interests me except you, and I am far too impatient to turn over the pages of newspapers.' 'You are a dear child.' A long pause. I, glued to the sofa, very frightened. You know I cannot possibly sit there so properly. I said suddenly, 'I can't stay here on the sofa,' and jumped up. 'Well,' said he, 'sit where you like.' I rushed and threw myself into his arms, he drew me to his heart. It was quite, quite still. I lost count of things. I had not slept for so long; for years I had longed for him, I fell asleep on his breast, and when I awoke a new life began."

This is Bettina's version of the famous interview. The correspondence began and was continued during the next four years, but she only visited Goethe a few times. This first meeting was in April 1807. Some remarks of Bettina's

about Goethe's wife, four years later, caused a serious estrangement, and the correspondence ceased after April 1811.

Bettina's friendship with Beethoven is interesting.

On a spring day in 1810 Bettina, once more on her travels, found herself in Vienna, and set out alone in her usual unconventional style to visit the genius who, in his own realm, was as great as her adored poet.

In a letter to Goethe she says: "Beethoven has three dwelling-places, one in the country, one in town, and one on the city walls. Here I found him, on the third floor."

She was rather nervous, for people told her that Beethoven was not fond of visitors, and was becoming very misanthropical. He was seated at his piano, and Bettina entered unannounced, but on hearing her name he was very affable; indeed he seems to have been unusually gracious from the first to the fascinating Bettina. He played over and sang one of his songs on Goethe's words: *Kennst Du das Land*, with a great deal of expression and seemed pleased with her hearty and cheerful approval. "For," he said (a saying which deserves to be recorded), "most people are

moved to tears by anything good. Not so with artist natures. Artists are fiery, they do not weep." He then sang her another song: *Trocknet nicht, Thränen der ewigen Liebe*, and afterwards was so gracious as to accompany her home. On the way Beethoven talked about art, talked very loudly, and kept stopping whenever anything interested him particularly, so that people in the street turned to look at them. He even entered the house with her, and, undeterred by the big company at "Diné," he stayed on, and afterwards, without being requested, sat down to the piano and played to them. After this Bettina constituted herself Beethoven's friend. "He comes to see me every day or I go to him. I neglect society, picture galleries, theatres, even the tower of St Stephen." And all their conversations—that is, Beethoven's (for one of Bettina's charms was that she was such a beguiling listener)—all Beethoven's remarks were carefully chronicled for the idol of her heart, Goethe. Humbly she wrote: "It was always our plan to discuss music, but since I have met Beethoven I feel that I do not know enough about it."

Goethe was glad of her letters, which, as he says, give him an idea of Beethoven the man,

and paint a great and noble character in his work and aspirations. He speaks of Beethoven as "one who has his own Demon, and what *he* utters, an ordinary person must respect. Give him my heartiest greetings, and tell him I would do anything in order to make his personal acquaintance."

Goethe himself was no musician, and he acknowledges it and says further: "It would be sacrilege, even for those who know more than I do, to attempt to teach Beethoven, for his genius illumines and often enlightens him in a flash, whilst we sit in darkness, scarcely knowing from which side day may dawn." On hearing this, Beethoven, who had the greatest admiration for Goethe as a poet, exclaimed: "If any one can explain music to him, it is I." Regretfully he recalled an occasion at Karlsbad when he might have made Goethe's acquaintance, but had been too timid to do so. Goethe, on his side, wants some of Beethoven's settings of his (Goethe's) words, "but they must be written out clearly and legibly." Bettina sent them, and also two of her own compositions which Beethoven had seen and praised. He had even said she might have achieved a good

deal in music if she had devoted herself to the art. But she had replied that her art was only "laughing and sighing in a small way, but no one can beat me at that." At any rate, with the quick and loving intuition which was her real genius, Bettina grasped and comprehended something of the mighty spirit of Beethoven.

"If I could understand him as I feel him, I should know all," she writes. And "one might prophesy that such a spirit will return again in full perfection as a Ruler of the world." There was much insight in her girlish *Schwärmerei*, although Goethe writes with laughing indulgence of her "explosions about music, these excited ideas of your little head." In her enthusiasm Bettina no doubt touched up Beethoven's sayings considerably, she had a gift for literary expression which the grim old master certainly lacked, and it is more than probable that she embellished his remarks. Yet it is quite conceivable that he did unbend and talk unrestrainedly to such a sympathetic listener, and that her version of the substance, if not the form, of his remarks is correct. "Tell Goethe," is one of his messages, according to Bettina, "tell him to hear my symphonies, and he will

confess I am right in saying that music is the only and spiritual entrance into a higher world of knowledge which embraces man, but which man himself cannot fully grasp. Few understand music, for, as thousands marry for love and yet love is never revealed to them, so thousands are intimate with music and yet music never reveals herself to them." Once the old master broke off suddenly in one of his monologues, saying drolly he must interrupt the flow of his wisdom or he would be late for a rehearsal. And he took Bettina with him. She sat alone in a box in the big, dark hall and enjoyed herself hugely, indulging in rhapsodies and *Schwärmerei*, as was her wont. From her dark corner she watched Beethoven conducting, saw "this enormous Spirit directing his army. O Goethe! No Emperor and no King has such full consciousness of his power. . . ." Many an enthusiastic girl has had such thoughts, but Bettina, in her familiar intercourse with two of the greatest minds who have ever lived, had a unique opportunity.

Next day, she says, she showed Beethoven her written report of his utterances, a report destined, of course, for Goethe. "Did I say all that? Well I must have been off my head

a little!" said Beethoven, laughing. But he read it, corrected passages here and there with a pencil, and, on the whole — according to Bettina—was satisfied.

Although Goethe could not understand Beethoven's music, Beethoven on his side, thoroughly appreciated Goethe's poetry. There is something touching in his attitude of humble reverence to the poet, his anxiety to know him and talk to him of his beloved art. Would *he* understand me? he asked wistfully. Loneliness weighed him down, the loneliness of genius; it was not easy for such a mind to find one who could understand him. "I have no friend," he said, "I have to live alone; but I know that God is nearer to me than to others in my art." And he confessed that he could not help despising a world "which never guesses that music is a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy."

It was all the sadder that when Goethe and Beethoven did meet—it was in Teplitz, in August 1812—the result should have been so disappointing. Two of the greatest minds of their epoch, indeed of any epoch, they met and failed to understand each other. To Goethe, at any rate, the polished courtier and

man of the world, the somewhat rough manners of Beethoven, were distasteful.

Bettina was not able to enjoy Beethoven's society long; all too soon she left Vienna with her relatives, but she corresponded with him by letter. In one of her own letters to a friend she says how "only a short time ago I was still in the big city of Vienna . . . every day brought new joys, and every pleasure was a source of interest. High above all towered Beethoven, the great arch-spirit who led us into the invisible world, raising us high above our own limited self to communion with the Universal Spirit. What a pity that he is not here in this solitude, so that I might in listening to his words forget the ceaseless chirping of the grasshopper, which keeps on reminding me that there is nothing to interrupt my loneliness save her solitary song."

"VIENNA, *11th August* 1810.

"DEAREST BETTINA.—I say it is not possible to have a more beautiful spring than the one we have had. I feel thus because in it I have made your acquaintance. You have no doubt seen for yourself that in society I am like a fish out of water, which turns over and over and cannot get away until some well-meaning Galatea puts

it back again into the mighty sea. Yes, dearest Bettina, I was right up on dry land when you fell upon me unawares at a moment when I was a prey to melancholy, which actually vanished at sight of you. I saw at once that you came from some other world rather than this absurd one. . . .

"My ears are unhappily a dividing wall through which I can have no friendly communication with the outer world. I am sending you now, written with my own hand, *Kennst du das Land*, as a remembrance of that hour when I met you. I am also sending that other song which I have composed since saying 'Good-bye' to you, dear dearest heart:

> "'Herz, mein Herz, was soll das geben,
> Was bedränget dich so sehr,
> Welch ein fremdes, neues Leben,
> Ich erkenne dich nicht mehr.'[1]

"Yes, dearest friend, answer me soon, write me how it is with you since my heart has become such a rebel. Write to your faithful friend, BEETHOVEN."

It was a friend of Clemens, one of his circle of Romanticists, who fell in love with Bettina and became her husband. Ludwig Joachim, usually known as Achim von Arnim (born

[1] From Goethe's *Lied, Neue Liebe, neues Leben.*

26th June 1781, four years her senior), was a tall handsome man "with all knightly virtues, generous, fiery, mild, brave, faithful in friendship," not unlike Fouqué in his admiration for mediæval chivalry. With Clemens Brentano he collected the folk-songs of Germany, a volume of which appeared under the title *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, and also took part in the New-Romantic organ *Zeitung fur Einsiedler*, in which they were joined by Ludwig Tieck, Uhland, Hölderlin, the Grimm brothers, Kerner, and Görres. Bettina contributed to this occasionally, and to her Von Arnim dedicated his *Wintertag*. The two fell speedily in love, but, in characteristic romantic fashion, Bettina insisted on a secret marriage. No one knew the date of their wedding (11th March 1811), save the old Pastor who married them in his study with his wife as witness. "We only made it known several days later," Bettina wrote to Goethe, "and nobody would believe us, and now our day's work is as follows: I study music the whole morning, and Arnim does his work. Towards evening we work in a little garden behind our little house, which stands in a large garden, and, well! Philemon and Baucis could not live more quietly."

In April, on their wedding journey, they visited Weimar, but unfortunately on this occasion Bettina was guilty of the rude speech to Goethe's wife which caused an estrangement between the poet and herself. The breach was not healed until 1824, when she ventured to write to him once more. In 1826 she visited him again, and he considered her greatly improved. She had learnt, he told her, to treat people politely, which she had never done before! And in 1832 the last link in the chain of relations between Goethe and Bettina's family was forged when her eldest son, Freimund, visited the old poet a few days before his death and was kindly received.

Thus Goethe during a period of fifty years had been the friend of four generations.

Meantime Bettina and her husband spent happy years on the Arnim family estate at Wiepersdorf in den Marken. Their seven children (five boys and two girls) were all healthy, happy creatures, "the keynote of their home life was joyousness." Von Arnim continued his literary work, which ranks him among the best Romantic writers. His *Landhausleben*, by the way, contains a charming description of their home. Bettina's spare time

was spent in music and painting. She had decided gifts for both arts; one of her friends in later life was Joachim the violinist, who used a theme composed by her in a Concerto. Her children enjoyed nearly as much freedom as she had done herself; it is not surprising to hear that they were great climbers and that their father found them in birches and fir-trees when the hour for lessons came round.

The winters were spent in Berlin, and here Bettina became friends with Rahel—a beautiful friendship this of the two "Sibyls." Bettina always declared that Rahel was at her very best *tête-à-tête*. She admitted frankly how much she gained from Rahel. "Intercourse with you," she wrote, "has made me study more deeply the still unformed instincts and qualities of my nature." Rahel was, in fact, more intellectual than Bettina, she had clearer insight into men and things, although Bettina had more temperament, imagination, and creative power. Her impulsive affection, her joyous outlook on life charmed Rahel as they did every one else. "The most original woman of my acquaintance," she pronounced Bettina, but added: "Her spirit possesses her, she does not possess her spirit."

Even after marriage and motherhood Bettina was addicted to *Schwärmerei*, almost as much as in her girlhood. In Berlin she discovered more than one fit object of adoration. Schleiermacher she judged, "if not the greatest, certainly the best man who ever lived." And Count H. von Pückler-Muskau, the world traveller, was another hero dangerous to Bettina's peace of mind. In both cases there were wives unfavourable to *Schwärmerei*. The Humboldt brothers, those "two Olympians," were also her friends, and Schinkel, the architect, was always interested in the designs and sketches which occupied her unceasingly.

Bettina's own *salon* was naturally frequented by much the same circle as Rahel's, animated by the same Goethe cult, which she continued after Rahel's death. Later, with more decided political and socialistic leanings than Rahel, Bettina threw herself into the modern *Jung Deutschland* movement.

Her husband's sudden death in 1831 was a terrible blow, for she had loved him devotedly; the Varnhagens were her greatest consolers and supporters in this time of trial.

The loss of Goethe followed in the following year. In 1833 Rahel died and in her turn

Bettina had to find words of comfort for the bereaved husband.

Now began a different phase of existence for Bettina. Thus far her life had been that of the fascinating woman of the world — the literary world — with sufficient originality to make her a personage. During her husband's liftetime she had not written for publication, but now, at the age of forty-eight, she suddenly leapt into fame as an authoress. On Goethe's death her youthful letters were returned, and it occurred to Bettina to publish this correspondence with the poet, with certain editings. In vain friends and relatives tried to dissuade her: she had no literary experience, was too old to begin, the letters were too personal, they feared indiscretions. In spite of all warnings Bettina persisted. In 1833 the world was startled by the publication of *Goethe's Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde.*

She coloured the correspondence rather highly, made the friendship appear a serious and passionate affair (which it had not been), and produced a glowing romantic work. Every one read the book, fascinated by its poetry and romance. Alexander von Humboldt, for instance, always took a copy with him on his

travels. Written in no particular form, neither diary, letters, story, nor reminiscences, but a touch of all these, it was a wonderful success. Apparently jotted down carelessly, those pages were really the work of a skilful artist; Bettina was a careful writer, who spared no pains. She worked slowly, touched up, brought the experience of years to turn the sentences of her girlhood's dreams, but she secured the magical effect of freshness.

After the first storm of success came doubts, denials of authenticity, discussions, over which critics and learned professors wagged their heads for half a century. In the reaction Bettina was unwarrantably condemned, and it was not until 1879, when Löper published the original letters of Goethe to Bettina and her grandmother, Sophie La Roche, that the pendulum again swung round and the world recognised that the correspondence really had existed, and that the book after all was justified by facts.

When a book enthrals, fascinates, as does this of Bettina's—even now, when Romanticism is long since dead and her atmosphere, her *milieu* are dead with it—when even now the breath of spring-time and youth breathes in the work, it seems futile to enquire whether it be strictly

accurate in detail! It is a poem, a picture, an impression. One recollects Turner's reply to a lady who complained that she had never seen one of his sunsets: "Ah, madam, don't you wish you could?"

The exact proportions of truth and fiction, Bettina's good faith, her glowing imagination, vanity—who shall determine? No doubt she exaggerated certain episodes, skilfully shaded others, substituted the familiar *Du* (which occurs only in one letter) for the formal *Sie*, complacently attributed to herself poems meant for others. Still there remains a fascinating story of a young girl's adoration of a genius. Many other women adored Goethe; Bettina alone knew how to express her adoration in fine literary form. Her "singing flames" had atmosphere, poetry. "Enthusiastic adoration alone could not have raised so fine a monument to Goethe's genius; Bettina herself was a poet."

Besides, the letters, although embellished, really did exist; Goethe really had valued his correspondence with his youthful admirer, as his replies to her epistles testify. He begs her to continue writing to him, her letters, he says, contain so much that is delightful and refreshing, "from your rich heart-life." This was Bettina's

literary method: the truth, reality — viewed through highly-coloured romantic sentiment. If well done it is interesting. Bettina's books *were* interesting.

One need not then discuss the exact authenticity of Bettina's letters or of her glowing accounts of her intercourse with Goethe. They were a groundwork of truth frankly embroidered. The one real touchstone for literature of this sort is whether it interests or not. Bettina certainly interested her readers, and if she "touched up" her experiences, she touched them up with the pencil of an artist.

Goethe characterises her letters with his usual insight. In them he says, "She daintily turns over pages of a whole book of pictures; one sees the treasures as they fly past before one has time to master the contents." But she should have more method and arrangement in her ideas. "Your thoughts, like precious pearls, not all evenly shaped, are strung loosely together on a thread which easily breaks; when it does, they are dispersed into all corners and many are lost."

He speaks of her letters as a refreshing spring of youth, a breath of enthusiasm reminding him of his own spring-time.

"Your letters" (Bettina's version gives the

familiar "thy" instead of "you") — "Your letters . . . remind me of the time when I was perhaps as foolish as you, but certainly happier and better than now."

This utterance seems sufficient to characterise his attitude to the adoring Bettina.

It is evident that Bettina made some impression on Goethe, although his letters to her are simply calm and benevolent. The naïve homage of an enthusiastic girl pleased him. He had grown isolated of late; few were the friends who really understood him or his works; he had long outlived his time of storm and passion, and was considered coldly egotistical, often unjustly so.

"Die Flut der Leidenschaft, sie stürmt vergebens
Ans unbezwungene, feste Land,
Sie wirft poetische Perlen an den Strand
Und das ist schon Gewinn des Lebéne."[1]

Goethe's laconic note to Bettina on her marriage is certainly a death-blow to suppositions of romance.

"12*th November* 1810.

"Here the duets! At this moment I am only calm and collected enough to say: continue

[1] "The waves of passion dash in vain
Against the firm, unconquered shore,
The pearls of poetry they fling,
Life's prize, to poets evermore."

to be kind and sweet. Let me soon hear of a christening. Adieu."

As a sample of his letters:

"WEIMAR, *1st August* 1807.

"Your hasty pages, dearest Bettina, came just at the right moment to alleviate somewhat the sorrow caused by your disappearance. Enclosed I give you some of them back (poems enclosed); you see how one tries to avenge one's self on time which robs us of our dearest, and to immortalise beautiful moments. May these lines reflect the value of what you are to the poet.

"If your vagabond life should continue longer, do not forget to give me news of all; I like to follow where your demonic spirit leads.

"I enclose these lines in a letter to my mother, she will send them to you at a favourable moment, as I do not know your exact address. Farewell, and keep your promises.

GOETHE."

Or,

"You are very kind, dear Bettina, to send another bright letter to your silent friend, and give him news of your condition and of the places in which you are wandering. I under-

stand how you feel, and my powers of imagination follow you pleasurably, on the mountain heights as well as into the narrow courtyards of castle and cloister. Think of me as well as of the lizards. A letter of thanks from my wife has already gone to you. Your unexpected gift gave incredible pleasure—each thing has been admired singly and is highly prized. I must thank you for the many letters which you have written me and which surprised me in the solitude of Karlsbad. I found them entertaining and absorbing. Your explanations about music interested me."

Bettina was not only *schwärmerisch*, she could write humorously, and amused Goethe by thumbnail sketches of various celebrities—the philosopher Jacobi, for instance, a friend of the poet:

"His two sisters palisade him round about, it is provoking to be kept away from him by empty excuses. He is patient even to weakness and has no will of his own to oppose to two beings as capricious and domineering as Semiramis. This regiment of women pursues him even to the President's Chair in the Academy. They wake him, they dress him,

they button his waistcoat, give him his medicine, and if he wishes to go out, it is too raw, if he wants to stay at home he must take exercise. If he goes to the Academy, the nimbus must be polished so as to shine properly; they put on a cambric shirt with clean jabot and cuffs and a fur coat lined with beautiful sable—the foot-warmer must precede him. When he returns from the sitting he must sleep a little—not if he wishes to. So it goes on in continued contradiction until evening, when they can pull his night-cap over his ears and conduct him to bed. . . . Lotte and Lene forbid Jacobi to think, as it is injurious, and he trusts them more than his own genius—if his genius gives him an apple he asks them to see if it has a worm in it."

Encouraged by the success of her first book[1] Bettina now, on similar lines, published her correspondence with Karoline von Günderode (*Die Günderode*) (1840), dedicating this book in a poetical preface to the University students, "to you wandering, seeking ones . . . who spring up like golden flowers on well-trodden

[1] John G. Robertson, *A History of German Literature*. He pronounces the *Briefwechsel* "one of the most beautiful books of the whole German 'Romantik' and an excellent illustration of the unsophisticated Romantic temperament."

fields . . . treading the paths of enthusiasm from generation to generation."

A similar book (1844), *Bettina's Frühlingskranz* ("Bettina's Spring Garland") enshrined the memory of her brother Clemens in his youth, although the figure of the authoress herself dominates its pages.

Bettina had always sympathised keenly with the poor and unfortunate. In 1831 she fearlessly nursed the sick during the cholera epidemic (at which time Rahel, it must be confessed, was in a panic of fear), and afterwards she continued to visit among the poor regularly, especially in the worst quarters of the city. Generous to a fault, she was always ready to help, and often wearied her friends, especially those in high places, by her constant appeals on behalf of objects worthy and unworthy. She began to feel the urgent need for reform, social and political.

Up to this time Bettina had been welcome at Court—she was, in fact, on terms of personal friendship with Friedrich Wilhelm IV.—but as her socialistic leanings became more apparent, she found herself more coldly received, until her book of 1843, *Dies Buch gehört dem König* ("This Book belongs to the King"), gave direct

offence. Written in a rambling conversational form, purporting to come from the lips of Frau Rath Goethe, it was an appeal to the King to alleviate the misery of the Berlin working-classes, demanding "freedom" in a somewhat vague and naïve manner. Freedom was its keynote. This book was the end of her friendship with the King. A second part, published in 1852 and entitled *Gespräche mit Dämonen. Des Königs-buchs zweites Band* ("Conversations with Demons. The Second Volume of the King's Book") was suppressed. Written in the same spirit, it advocated the emancipation of the Jews, the uplifting of the masses, confidence and brotherly love between King and people, the suppression of war and a Republic of the Spirit. Naturally it was scarcely pleasing to a monarch to find himself represented as the "Sleeping King" whom the "Spirit of Islam" lectured on statecraft, or to be told that his ministers are asses. This was the last of Bettina's books.

One more collection of letters, the *Briefwechsel zwischen Ilius Pamphilius und die Ambrosia* (1848), had marked another *Schwärmerei* in Bettina's later life, this time for the young poet Nathusius. *A propos* of this (not so good in style, by

the way, as her earlier works) Bettina told Varnhagen that she saw no "reason why one should cease to love even with wrinkles on one's brow." But to a younger generation the childlike impulsive manner and other girlish affectations, which seemed inseparable from Bettina, sat ill on the odd-looking little woman of advancing years.

Her two daughters were happily married, one to Count Oriola, the other to Hermann Grimm, son of Wilhelm, the old friend of her youth and of Clemens.

Bettina's last years (she lived entirely in Berlin after her husband's death) were occupied with the idea of a national monument to Goethe. She made countless sketches for an allegorical group, one of which was finally carried out by the sculptor Steinhäuser. This was bought by the Duke of Weimar, and is now in the Weimar Museum. It represents Goethe in Greek dress as Jupiter, holding a wreath in one hand and in the other a lyre, on the strings of which a child-genius is playing. The original sketch, designed and modelled by Bettina, is preserved in Berlin.

The *Briefwechsel* was, in fact, written partly to glorify Goethe and partly to obtain money for

this monument, a sketch of which was printed with the book.[1]

Even in the poet's lifetime she had designed a monument and sent it to him. This too was in Greek style, and represented Bettina herself as a dainty Mœnad, with Mignon, whom she so greatly resembled. Goethe was rather amused, and pronounced Frau von Arnim's sketch "the oddest thing in the world, one cannot help admiring it somewhat and smiling at it somewhat. If the dainty little favourite of the impassive old idol were made respectable by a few rags to cover its nakedness, and if the stiff, dry figure would deign to show pleasure in the dainty creature's grace, the idea might inspire a pretty little model. But it may stay as it is; it makes one think even so."

To the end Bettina was busy with this idea of glorifying Goethe, working at the plaster model in her house even when she was almost too weak to stand. Fate smiled on her to the end. After a slight illness she passed away peacefully in her sleep during the night of

[1] To this end Bettina insisted on translating her book into English, again against the advice of friends and in spite of her limited knowledge of the language. Her indomitable will prevailed, and she produced a readable translation (grotesque in parts) published in 1838.

19th February 1859. Her body lay near the model of the Goethe monument in her house until it was taken to the family burying-place in Wiepersdorf.

A fitting epitaph is contained in Varnhagen's words on Bettina—"She may have been sometimes small in small things, but certainly she was always great in great things."

In her girlish enthusiasm she had written to Goethe: "You are good to me as to a child who brings grass and wildflowers, thinking it has gathered a choice nosegay. . . . These poor flowers would fade by evening; you hold them in the fire of your immortality and give them back to me."

Goethe really has conferred something like immortality on Bettina. She sits at the poet's feet.

QUEEN LUISE

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Queen Luise (1805)

QUEEN LUISE

"Wer liebt, der lebt und nur der lebt der liebt, das ist mein Wahlspruch, mit dem ich lebe und sterbe." [1]—QUEEN LUISE.

WHILST the women of the Romantic *Salons* were inspiring their men-folk, nursing the sick and wounded, tossed hither and thither by the fortunes of war, they had a contemporary who, in her exalted position by the side of the monarch, received the full brunt of the storm. She, the representative of the women of her nation, suffered perhaps even more than they; the humiliation of Prussia seemed concentrated in the humiliation of its queen.

In her the sufferings of that time of a nation's deepest woe, its most valiant courage, its purest aspirations, all find an embodiment, a symbol. The snowy marble at Charlottenburg enshrines not only the beloved Queen Luise, but the memory of a period: war, sufferings, sacrifices, endurance, victory.

[1] "He who loves, lives—and only he; that is my motto, with it I live and die."

Her life presents itself in two acts or parts—one in sunshine, one in shadow; in the first she appears as the glad princess in a fairy tale, in the second as a suffering woman bereft of her kingdom, yet strong in love and inner peace. The chronicles of the war, its battle, campaigns, the intrigues, the diplomacy of statesmen must be sought in the history of the period, too long and too complicated for a brief sketch. Against that lurid background of European war stands the figure of the heroic queen, noble, innocent, adorable.

Luise Auguste Wilhelmine Amalia was born 10th March 1776 in Hanover, daughter of Duke Karl Ludwig of Mecklenburg-Strelitz and Princess Friederike Karoline Luise of Hesse-Darmstadt, the sixth child of their family of ten.

The mother died when Luise was a child of six and after two years the Duke married his wife's sister, who also passed away after a brief period of marriage (1785). After this the children were placed under the care of their maternal grandmother, the Landgräfin of Hesse-Darmstadt, and were brought up simply enough, chiefly in or near Darmstadt.

Two elder sisters having married early, the Princesses Luise and Friederike, with only a

year between them, grew up together, their education being chiefly in the hands of a governess, Mademoiselle de Gèlieu (daughter of a Neuchatel pastor), whom all her life Luise remembered with affection.

The Princess was not fond of study. Her exercise books (preserved as precious relics for a century) are untidy, full of faults and corrections, also of her own efforts in caricature. She was a joyous, high-spirited creature, too restless to sit long over books—the nickname Fräulein Husch (Mademoiselle l'Etourdie), bestowed on her in the family circle, scarcely characterises a student.

The education of the Princesses would not be considered thorough nowadays: the chief thing to be acquired was French, at that time *par excellence* the language of courts; some English, music, dancing were the requisite accomplishments, and in the last-named both sisters excelled. It was a quiet idyllic life, not overburdened with etiquette, and with kindly, homely sympathies. They visited the cottages of the poor with their governess, and Luise began her charities early, giving royally on one occasion not only all her own pocket-money, but also some borrowed from a servant,

to a poor woman whom she met on the road. On hearing of this the wise grandmother immediately increased her allowance, but forbade any future borrowing.

The Princesses further widened their mental horizon by accompanying their grandmother in various journeys through Germany and Holland. At the Coronation of Leopold II., for instance, in Frankfurt-on-the-Main (1790), the two sisters, their brother George, and the governess lodged in the Goethe house with Frau Rath. Here they enjoyed (tradition says) the famous opportunity, rare in royal circles, of pumping water in the courtyard in spite of the protestations of the governess. Not for the world would Frau Rath have deprived them of such an innocent amusement, and she boasted that she had locked the protesting governess in her room until they were tired of the novelty.

On a later visit to Frankfurt the two Princesses, grown meantime into beautiful girls, met their future husbands (1793).

It was the beginning of Germany's struggle with France, and the King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm II., took up his quarters in Frankfurt. He had brought his two sons (the Crown Prince and Prince Louis) with him, not, it would seem,

without hope of a possible bride for one of them. When the Landgräfin presented her granddaughters, the King was enchanted with the two "angels," and invited them to supper after the play. Diplomacy was unnecessary. With the Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm it was a case of love at first sight. Luise was just seventeen, beautiful and charming; the Prince was five years older, handsome, chivalrous; both these royal children were kindly, simple natures, sincere, unaffected, absolutely unspoilt.

"I will have her or no one else in the world!" the Crown Prince declared, after the first meeting. As it sometimes happens after such propitious meetings in royal circles, there were no obstacles, and in a very short time the betrothal was celebrated (24th April 1793) in Darmstadt—a double betrothal, for Prince Louis, the Crown Prince's brother, became affianced to Princess Friederike, less beautiful than Luise, but equally attractive in manner and conversation.

In a naïve letter[1] Princess Luise announced the event to her sister Therèse (Princess of Thurn and Taxis)—a letter written in her

[1] Paul Bailleu. (*Aus der Brautzeit der Königin Luise*, Hohenzollern Jahrbuch I., 1897)—"The Prince is extremely good and sincere, he uses no unnecessary flow of words, but is wonderfully true," etc.

characteristic French-German, which reads so quaintly :—

"Le Prince est extrèmement bon und gerade, kein unnöthiger Schwarm von Worten begleitet seine Rede, sondern er ist erstaunend wahr. Enfin il ne reste plus rien à désirer, car le prince me plaît, qu'il me trouve bonne, je puis le croire, car il ne m'a jamais flattée encore . . . Adieu mon ange, le prince arrive. LUISE."

She was radiantly happy, witness her frank letter to the Prince in the following summer :—

"I do nothing but sing and dance, so that every one thinks the heat must have affected me. I shall be so happy at our next meeting that I believe I shall be capable, like the daughter of Herodias, of dancing a *solo* before the whole army, to the tune of 'If it could only always, always last.' The old waggons, that is the carriages, are at the door, the old metal bells are ringing, and I, I don't want to go to church—God forgive me.

"Adieu, Altesse royale de mon cœur!"

Thus the Princess's gay little love-letter.

During the campaign which followed the betrothal the two Princesses with their grandmother often visited the camp by the Rhine.

Goethe saw them once when he was with the army and watched them from his tent; he pronounced them both *himmlische Erscheinungen* ("heavenly apparitions"), whose memory would never be effaced.

The wedding took place in Berlin on Christmas Eve, 1793. Prince Charles of Mecklenburg-Strelitz with his two daughters (performing the journey from Darmstadt to Berlin in a week) reached Potsdam on 21st December. Two days later Berlin received them with lavish decorations and rejoicings. Everywhere garlands, triumphal arches, inscriptions. The first address (appropriately enough in that time of struggle with France) came from a band of thirty orphans in the French Colony in Berlin, dressed in green—the colour of hope. One of their number presented a poem to the bride:

"Hommage
de la Colonie Française
à son Altesse Sérénissime
Madame la Princesse Louise
de Mecklenburgh Strelitz."

a petition for future protection, "accoutumés sous des Rois bienfaisans à jouir d'un bonheur durable," and assuring her of their love for the Royal House of Prussia.

Near them a band of German maidens, symbolising Innocence, Joy, and Hope, were also prepared with a poem, setting forth how the Crown Prince, to their sorrow and alarm, had lately left Berlin to "conquer the Hydra risen on the banks of the Seine," but to their joy had now returned with glory and the loveliest bride.

Charmed by the pretty child who recited this effusion, the Princess kissed her in defiance of Court etiquette, but winning all hearts.

And with all possible rejoicings and demonstrations of loyalty and affection, with banquets, balls, processions by day and night, the diamond crown of the Hohenzollern was placed on the head of the young bride in the evening of 24th December 1793. After the ceremony came a state ball and a wonderful torch dance, in which all princes, princesses, noblemen, and high officials trod a solemn measure. Poor Countess Voss who regulated Court etiquette, a lady in her sixty-fifth year, was obliged by that etiquette to stand from 6 P.M. till midnight, and made a note of the fact in her diary.

On Christmas Day, after a state procession to the Cathedral, the young couple took up their residence in the Crown Prince's palace in *Unter den Linden*.

Two days later came the marriage of Prince Louis to Princess Friederike and at a Court ball on 10th January, the sister brides appeared "dressed alike in white satin and black velvet, their beautiful hair disdaining powder, which promptly fell out of favour with the ladies of Berlin."

Both sisters made a *furore* by their beauty and charm, their perfect dancing. All was *couleur de rose.*

Princess Luise was considered one of the most beautiful women of her time. Tall and slender, yet exquisitely rounded, her figure was admirably set off by the fashion of the day, and she held herself like a queen. One of the Court ladies praises the extraordinary grace of her carriage, her bow, her greeting. When Queen Luise came gliding into a crowded room, she always seemed the most beautiful, the most graceful presence there. Entirely devoid of affectation or self-consciousness, this grace seemed the expression of some inner harmony, some symmetry of soul and heart. An English lady who saw her in 1800 described her enthusiastically as a realisation of a beautiful young queen in a fairy tale, with her blonde hair, fine and delicate colouring, and her beautiful blue eyes. She

dressed with perfect taste, but preferred simple every day attire to the robes used on state occasions. Her husband, too, loved to see her simply dressed, and after a court function would say that he was glad to have his "pearl again in her original purity."

"Thank God that you are my wife again!" he was heard to say once after a court function.

"How so?" asked Luise. "Am I not always your wife?"

"Alas, no, you have to be the Crown Princess far too often."

Princess Luise was fond of dancing; she it was, by the way, who introduced waltzing at Court, in spite of the Queen's disapproval. Later she liked General Blücher for a partner, because he was such an excellent dancer.

Dazzled at first, the light-hearted princess threw herself into pleasure and festivities, but soon she found her greatest happiness in adapting herself to her husband's quieter tastes. They both really preferred a simple way of living, and delighted in shocking Countess Voss, "dame d'étiquette," as the Crown Prince called her, whose conscientious insistence on ceremonies, rules, precedence, was often irksome.

Their first living child was born 15th October

1795, a boy, later to become Friedrich Wilhelm IV. Luise became more home-loving than ever after this event, and her letters speak of longing to be away out of the "big world" of balls and functions and snug in her "little world."

"When we were at home of an evening, drinking tea in our small circle, reading now and again, and rejoicing in our little darling, I am so happy that I never want to be anything else in all my life."

She was before all things a good wife and a good mother, devoted to her children (eight in all) with the tenderest affection. Their favourite home was at Paretz, near Potsdam, a country house embowered in gardens, lilac groves, avenues of poplar, where they lived the life of country gentry. The Princess might be seen dancing at a harvest festival (careful to wear court finery because it pleased the country folk), or superintending the fêtes of village children. "I am never dull there," she said. "I enjoy playing the part of the Lady of the Manor of Paretz."

On 22nd March 1797, her second son was born, Wilhelm, who became the first Emperor of Germany.

There was a purer air at Paretz than at

Court, where during the last years of Friedrich Wilhelm II. the tone grew extremely corrupt. The King was under the sway of a certain Countess Lichtenstein, the Queen only visiting her husband, who resided chiefly at Potsdam, after asking permission.

A change came when the monarch, after a long and severe illness, died (16th November 1797). The young king and his consort initiated a different *régime*, and after some years Novalis could praise the influence of Queen Luise, which had been all for good.

Friedrich Wilhelm III., who hated pomps and ceremonies, had reason to be grateful to his wife, who did the honours so regally and took much of the burden of state functions from his shoulders. She was sufficiently beautiful to dominate the splendour of a court, it seemed indeed a fitting setting for her, the throne a fitting pedestal for one who graced it so well. And she knew how to rule her world. The men adored her, a young Englishman[1] visiting Berlin at that time was struck by the chivalrous devotion with which she inspired the band of young courtiers, all intent on her slightest word.

After his accession Friedrich Wilhelm made

[1] Sir G. Jackson.

several long tours through his dominions, Queen Luise accompanying him. On all these journeys, which must have been fatiguing to an extent unrealisable in our day, the young Queen with her sweet face and manner, her acts of kindness, won the hearts of her subjects. She fulfilled the ideal of a *Landesmutter*, the mother of her country; the name of the "Good Queen" became a tradition throughout Prussia. She remembered all sorts and conditions of her poorer subjects, and would send long afterwards presents and tokens of remembrance to the woodcutters, the coalminers, the workers in amber, and others who had interested her.

(Only a fortnight after returning from the first of these tours, the Queen gave birth to a daughter, Louise Charlotte, afterwards married to Nicholas of Russia.)

And she could be equally charming to those in other ranks of life—to old General Köckeritz, for instance, whose pipe she filled by way of inviting him to smoke in the royal dining-room; to another veteran, Kriegsrath Scheffner, whom she enjoined to come in boots to a function, "on no account shoes and thin stockings; you know I am fond of old friends and like to take care of them."

Of such kindly thoughtful acts, the small change which buys popularity for princes, this Queen had full store.

So far, the path had lain in sunshine, flecked by the troubles which fall to every lot, the unavoidable illnesses and family bereavements. But all this time the war-clouds were massing ominously, and the latter part of the Queen's short life was ravaged by the full fury of the storm.

To touch briefly upon the political aspect of affairs in as far as they affect the Queen: Prussia had pursued a disastrous policy of indecision ever since 1798, when she had made the fatal mistake of refusing to join the coalition of Great Britain and Russia against France. The King and his minister Haugwitz wavered between Russia and France, wishing to remain neutral, finding too late that it was impossible. The Queen, with more insight, was for strong, decisive action.

By 1805 the situation had grown only more urgent. Europe was now combining against Napoleon: Austria, Russia, England, and some of the smaller German states were united. Prussia still wavered; the King's policy was still undecided at that moment when decision

was imperative. He was anxious to avoid war, for which Prussia was certainly ill-prepared, moreover the bait of Hanover, held out by Napoleon, tempted him. But there was another party at Court, a party anxious for Prussia to assert herself, to declare war, to join the enemies of the Corsican upstart, who treated Europe as a playground of war, dethroned and set up princes like puppets.

To this party belonged the King's brothers, the Minister Hardenberg, the King's cousin, Prince Louis Ferdinand (to whom Rahel Levin was friend and *confidante*). The sympathies of the Queen, it was no secret, went with this, the "patriotic" party, although on every other point she and the King were as one. A temperamental difference doubtless lay at the root of this divergence of policy; the King was inclined to prudence, to hesitation, to careful weighing of consequences, a slow, reflective nature; the Queen, high-spirited, impulsive, courageous. Much blame was attached to her undue influence at this time, it would seem unjustly; she never attempted to form or lead a political party.

"The Queen did not play any conspicuous part, but she was a constant incentive to the

best of the nation to work for their country's deliverance. It was what she was, not what she did, that made her name a watchword for the enemies of Napoleon."[1]

A decision became imminent after the battle of Austerlitz, in which Austria and Russia were defeated. Napoleon offered a final alternative: immediate war or alliance with France and the coveted Hanover. Haugwitz sent this treaty to Berlin for the royal signature. It was so unpopular that the King was obliged to demand modifications; a fresh one, still more humiliating for Prussia, was drawn up, and this he weakly signed. After this Prussia was a negligible quantity in Napoleon's diplomacy; he demanded the dismissal of ministers whom he disliked, set up a new Confederation of the Rhine without consulting Prussia, and finally declared that he no longer recognised the German constitution. This roused a storm of patriotic feeling; the youth of Berlin made a protest under the windows of the French Ambassador, who had published the declaration, sharpening their swords on his doorstep.

The patriotic party grew imperious in its insistence on war. The crowning act of Napoleon's system of repression and tyranny in Germany

[1] E. H. Hudson, *Louise, Queen of Prussia.*

came with the murder of the bookseller Palm of Nüremberg, who had published a pamplet, *The Deepest Humiliation of Germany*, and on refusing to betray the author's name, was decoyed to neutral territory and shot by Napoleon's orders.

When the inevitable war was finally declared it was war against overwhelming odds—Prussia, with a small army, badly equipped, with scanty supplies of money in her treasury, almost isolated, against the conqueror of Europe with an army four times as great, his veterans, his military genius.

The Queen's courage grew with danger. She was seen welcoming her own regiment (Queen's Dragoons) wearing a coat with their colours, when they passed through Berlin (18th September 1806), often riding at the King's side when he reviewed the troops, and presently she joined him at the camp, her brave, cheerful presence inspiring both King and soldiers. "Persuade the Queen to remain with the army as long as possible," said General Kalkreuth. "I consider her presence absolutely necessary."

This was the beginning of Queen Luise's wanderings; the Court was practically exiled from Berlin until December 1809.

When the army was on march the King and

Queen travelled in a close carriage, followed by some twenty other vehicles with their suite and effects, the whole surrounded by an escort, a truly strange procession. Thus up and down hill, along muddy or dusty roads, through the mists or sunshine of autumn the royal equipage travelled in the midst of the troops. "The grand *cortège* came travelling on, all were apparently in good spirits; the soldiers believed they were on the eve of a great battle and were sanguine of success; the officers talked of the changes which would result and of the independence which would be given to all Europe."[1]

Prussia was still dreaming of the glories of Frederic the Great.

Until the eve of the battle of Jena, the Queen remained with the army, but it was then decided that she would be safer in Berlin, and on 14th October she set out on the weary return journey, attended by Countess Voss, whose undiminished energy seems almost incredible. At a turn in the road the King bade her farewell, they parted with a silent hand-clasp, too full of fears and anxieties to speak. The King returned to fight a battle which should decide the fate of his nation, whilst the Queen pursued her anxious

[1] G. H. Hudson, *Louisa, Queen of Prussia.*

flight along the least frequented roads, in painful uncertainty as to the fate of both husband and kingdom. Not until the fugitives reached Brandenburg did they hear any tidings. A courier met them there with the laconic message: "The King lives, the battle is lost." The odds had been too great; Jena and Auerstadt were national disasters (16th October 1806). Luise afterwards spoke of this as the most dreadful journey of her life.

In Berlin another courier brought a message from the King.

"Where is the King? Is he not with the army?" asked the Queen.

"We have no army now," was the reply.

All was in confusion at Berlin. The royal children had already been taken away for safety, and the Queen stayed only one night, leaving early next morning to join them at Schwedt.

Presently came the news that the King was safe, and after another week of wandering and hardships she joined him at the fortress of Cüstrin, where they remained some time. Often the Queen was seen here, wrapped in a travelling cloak, walking on the ramparts by her husband's side.

Before the French advance the fugitive

monarchs retreated from place to place, enduring all kinds of privation and misery. At the wretched village of Oertelsberg their only accommodation was one small room which had to do duty both as sitting and bedroom, so that the King perforce went out for a walk every morning whilst breakfast was being prepared. Food and water were bad: the room was dirty, vermin-infested; at Marienwerder they were lodged in an equally dirty tavern.

Through all this wretchedness the Queen kept her courage high; never was she more lovable and sympathising, more of a helpmeet to her husband. Her cheerfulness and tact were invaluable, and never were such qualities in better place, for the King was by nature gloomy, easily depressed, taciturn. To such a nature the companionship of a bright, strong spirit like the Queen's, meant everything. He realised what she was to him, and told her that their troubles had made him love her more than ever.

There is a significant entry in her diary (5th December 1806), the day of their departure from Oertelsberg:—

"Who never ate his bread in sorrow,
Who never spent the darksome hours
Weeping and watching for the morrow,
He knows ye not, ye heavenly Powers.

"To earth, this weary earth, ye bring us,
To guilt ye let us heedless go,
Then leave repentance fierce to wring us:
A moment's guilt, an age of woe!"

—Goethe's *Harper's Song*. T. Carlyle (Trans.).

In these dark days the only consolation for the royal couple came from the constant assurances of love and esteem from all classes of their subjects, as when, for instance, a deputation arrived with the sum of two thousand gold pieces, "collected by His Majesty's faithful Mennonites" (an obscure religious sect), a gift thankfully received and repaid in happier days. With this a farmer's wife brought fresh butter for Her Majesty, when the Queen in her impulsive way took off her own shawl and put it on the good wife's shoulders, "as a keepsake from me."

Meantime the French occupied Berlin and Napoleon housed in the royal palaces, boasting that only to his generosity did Berlin owe its continued existence; he might have set fire to it and killed the inhabitants—*à sang et à feu.*

Queen Luise was the object of his extraordinary, implacable hatred. The bitterness of his denunciations, in fact, gives the measure of her importance: she was a foeman worthy of his

steel. He set himself deliberately to weaken her influence by blackening her character, publishing his series of infamous *bulletins* in which he represented her as the real cause of the war. "The best blood of the nation has been shed through her," he declared.

"We have taken 150 flags" (ran the *bulletin* of 30th October 1806), "some of them embroidered by the hands of the beautiful Queen, a beauty as dangerous to the Prussian nation as Helen was to the Trojan." Another declared: "Every one acknowledges that the Queen is the cause of the misfortunes suffered by the Prussian nation." Always jealous of Prussia's friendship with Russia, he accused the Queen of shameless intrigues with the handsome Czar Alexander, and, further, of every kind of immorality and intrigue. He was not above examining her private papers, ransacking her apartments in Potsdam and Berlin for correspondence which might incriminate her. This mad persecution of a helpless woman defeated its own ends by arousing universal sympathy with its object. Queen Luise was loved, adored by the nation as never before; her very name became a national watchword, a symbol of Prussia's hopes. A convincing instance of this occurred a year later.

On her birthday (10th March 1807) Napoleon gave orders that no public demonstration was to be permitted. In the evening at the theatre Iffland the actor appeared on the stage with a bouquet, which he pressed significantly to his heart and then hid beneath his coat. The audience, perfectly understanding this dumb show, burst into applause so loud and unceasing that it threatened to become a demonstration. The actor was actually arrested and sent to prison, but declared that he gloried in such persecution for the sake of his noble Queen. Illuminations in her honour were held behind shuttered windows, even French soldiers drank her health: "Moi aussi," said General Hulin, "j'ai bu à la santé de cette jolie femme." And yet another celebration of the day was the *Luisenstift*, an institution for the education of the children of poor soldiers, for which funds were collected by Berlin citizens.

The exiled Court spent Christmas (1806) at Königsberg under better conditions than those of Oertelsberg. But now the Queen and one of her children were ill with typhoid; at Christmas her condition was critical. And no sooner was the crisis past than news came of the French advance on Königsberg. It was thought dangerous to

remove the patient at this stage of the illness, but she herself urged it.

Her physician, Dr Hufeland, describes how on 7th January, in the bitterest cold, in storm and sleet, the Queen was placed on mattresses in the carriage and driven some twenty (German) miles to Memel. Three days and nights they travelled, partly on the ice, spending the night in whatever wretched quarters were available. "The first night the Queen lay in a room with broken windows, the snow drifting in on her bed, without proper food. Surely no Queen was ever in such straits! I was constantly afraid of a stroke. Yet she kept her courage, her trust in God, and inspired us all. The open air, however, proved beneficial; instead of growing worse she improved during this dreadful journey. Just as we perceived Memel at last on the farther shore the sun shone out, lighting up the town which was to be our resting-place. We took it as a good omen."

Here the Court remained for some time, the Queen recovering her strength. The daily routine was necessarily simple, and three times a week the Queen held an informal reception, at which she and her ladies made lint for the wounded.

Presently came the armistice. The three monarchs—of Russia, Prussia, and France—took up their quarters in Tilsit in order to discuss terms of peace.

A letter from Queen Luise to her father dates from this period, when Prussia's fate was trembling in the balance.

It was written in Memel, 17th June 1807:

"Again terrible trouble and grief are upon us and we are on the point of leaving the kingdom, perhaps for ever. Think what I feel, but I implore you, do not misunderstand your daughter! Never believe it is cowardice which brings me low.

"Two consoling thoughts raise me above suffering: first, that we are not the playthings of chance, we are in God's hands, He guides us; secondly, that we shall fall with honour. The King has proved to the world that his desire is for honour, not for shame. Prussia will not voluntarily wear the chains of slavery. In no single respect could the King have acted otherwise, without being untrue to himself and a traitor to his people. . . .

"If serious danger threatens, I am to go to Riga—God will help me to bear the sad moment when I must pass the boundary of my kingdom.

It will need strength. . . . Once more, best of fathers, we shall fall with honour, respected and beloved by the nations. We shall always have friends because we deserve them. I cannot express the consolation I find in this thought. I bear everything with the calm which only faith and a clear conscience can give. Therefore rest assured, dear father, that we can never be quite unhappy; many, loaded with fortune's gifts and crowns, are less happy than we. . . . One more word for your comfort, never, never shall we do anything not in strictest accordance with honour and for the good of the whole. Do not think of single acts of pettiness."

She can be happy in poverty as long as honour is saved, but "I cannot hope again, no one can who has been cast down from the heights as I have. If good should befall us, ah, no one could grasp it, feel it and enjoy it more thankfully than I, but I cannot hope again."

The famous interview of Queen Luise with Napoleon, in which a woman's wit and influence was pitted against the conqueror of Europe, reads dramatically. Its compliments, allusions, its stilted thrusts and parryings have almost a theatrical flavour. It is difficult to realise how

at the time each word was living, each pause tense with the tremendous odds at stake.

When it was first suggested that she should beg for favourable terms of peace, the Queen shed tears of wounded pride at the thought of going as a suppliant to the man who had so vilely insulted her. "Only God knows what this costs me, for although I may not actually hate this man, I cannot help seeing in him the cause of the wretchedness of the whole nation and of the King. I must be polite to him; it will be very difficult."

To an extraordinary degree the King, his ministers, the Czar Alexander, all placed their hopes in the personal influence of the Queen whom Napoleon had insulted; it was their last resource, and they clung to it desperately. The negotiations were going badly. "All our hope is in you. Save the State!" was the cry. Luise herself had no great hope of success; feeling, she said, like a bird with a broken wing, how could she hope to prevail? Full of misgivings and dread she went to Tilsit. The interview was 6th July 1807. Napoleon on his side was quite curious to see this Queen, of whom he had heard so much, and he treated her at this juncture with imperial politeness. At

Tilsit his own state carriage drawn by eight horses met her with an escort of French dragoons, and brought her to the temporary quarters of the King of Prussia (the house of a miller), where the interview took place. Soon after her arrival at this house Napoleon rode up with a brilliant retinue, among them Murat, Berthier, Talleyrand, and was received by the Prussian King before the house, the Queen awaiting him in an upper room. Two of her ladies, one of them the faithful, inevitable Countess Voss, met Napoleon at the foot of the staircase, and he hastened upstairs, where the Queen was awaiting him in a beautiful dress of white crêpe embroidered with silver, a tiara of pearls in her hair.

During the interview the King and his suite remained below, and only Talleyrand accompanied Napoleon.

The Queen regretted that the Emperor should have to visit her in such a poor place—he had stumbled in mounting the narrow staircase—to which Napoleon replied by a banal compliment about the insignificance of obstacles with such an aim in view.

She made a few commonplace remarks about the climate of Prussia, trusting that his soldiers

had not found it too trying, to which the Emperor returned his military catchword: "The French soldier is trained to endure every kind of climate," adding: "How could you think of going to war with me?"

"We were mistaken in our calculations as to our resources," the Queen answered.

"And you trusted in the fame of Frederic the Great and deceived yourselves — that is, Prussia?"

And Queen Luise proudly replied: "Sire, on the strength of the Great Frederic we may be excused for having been mistaken as to our own strength, if indeed we were entirely mistaken. . . ."

At which reply, Talleyrand incomprehensibly declared afterwards, Napoleon looked as awkward as a school-boy.

Still, the past glory of Frederic the Great did not solve the question of the moment—Prussia's future.

Luise implored favourable terms of peace, using every possible argument, appealing to his generosity, his reputation in the eyes of Europe, shedding tears as she spoke of the sufferings of her people and her husband.

Napoleon listened with interest; he wavered

—Luise even saw a kindly expression in his smile. "Vous demandez beaucoup, mais j'y songerai."

At this moment the King entered. He appeared in the nick of time, Napoleon told the Czar Alexander that same day, "il y mit son mot et j'en fus délivré . . . a quarter of an hour more and I should have promised the Queen everything."

Napoleon admitted afterwards that the Queen of Prussia was undoubtedly clever, well informed and possessed extraordinary knowledge of State affairs. She had been the real ruler for years, he judged. In spite of his utmost efforts, he declared, she constantly led the conversation, directing it as she chose, recurring to her subject, yet with so much delicacy and tact that it was impossible to be offended. He had expected to see a beautiful woman and a Queen with manners befitting her station, but he saw "the most admirable Queen and at the same time the most interesting woman I had ever met."

Napoleon invited their Majesties to supper that evening and to a banquet a couple of days later, at which it became evident that he was unwavering in his determination to crush Prussia. Queen Luise was dressed in full regal state,

and Napoleon received her with every mark of courtesy, placing her on his right hand, the King of Prussia on his left. Thus the enemies sat through the banquet, the Emperor in high good humour, the King reserved and grave. By one of life's little ironies Countess Voss arrived at the supper to find no place reserved for her, but as etiquette demanded that the Queen should have a lady in attendance, a place was found for the venerable embodiment of ceremonial at the foot of the imperial table.

During the banquet it became evident that Napoleon was determined to drive a hard bargain, there was to be no question of relenting. The Queen did her best to throw in a supplicating word, but in vain.

"Comment donc, la Reine de la Prusse porte un turban? Ce n'est pas pour faire la cour à l'Empereur de Russie, qui est en guerre avec les Turcs?" thus Napoleon jestingly alluded to her head-dress.

"C'est plutôt, je crois, pour faire ma cour à Rustan" (the Emperor's attendant Mameluke). So the poor Queen parried the clumsy sallies of her adversary.

When he offered her a rose, Luise smiled and pleaded, "With Magdeburg—at least?"

But Napoleon showed the claws beneath the velvet glove, and said he must remind her that it was for him to give, for her to take. And the Queen—

"There is no rose without a thorn, but these thorns are too sharp for me," as she refused the flower.

And all through the evening entertainment of music and dancing her hopes sank ever lower, and the next day in an interview with the King it was clear that Napoleon meant to keep the fortress Magdeburg, the key to Berlin, which he would enter when he chose. He would make it impossible for Prussia to injure, however much she might hate, France. Probably he was embarrassed at having to refuse so persistently Luise's persistent entreaties, and in the end, on taking leave with many complimentary speeches, regretted that he could not grant what she had desired—it was his evil destiny!

"I have been cruelly deceived!" said Luise, as she realised that she had humbled her pride in vain.

In a letter of Queen Luise (to Frau von Berg, 10th October 1807), she speaks of the terribly hard conditions imposed by the French upon Prussia. An indemnity of 154 million

(marks); a third of which was to be paid at once, another third was to be met by the ceding of territory. As guarantee, the French demanded five fortress towns, which they would occupy with 40,000 French soldiers. Of these 10,000 were cavalry, and the King of Prussia was to feed, clothe, and arm them . . . it seemed impossible to meet these conditions.

"If we only keep Berlin; but I often fear he will rob us of that too, and make it the capital of another kingdom. If it comes to that, I have only one wish: that we may go far away to live as private individuals and forget, if possible! How is Prussia fallen! Abandoned through weakness, persecuted by arrogance, weakened through misfortune, we *must* fall! . . ."

"My birthday was a dreadful day for me! In the evening a brilliant festival given by the town in my honour . . . how sad that made me! My heart was torn. I danced, I smiled! I said pleasant things to my hosts, was friendly to all, and I did not know what to do for misery! To whom will Prussia belong next year? Where shall we all be scattered?"

We see the same suffering reflected in the lives of all the notable persons of that period of national humiliation, but surely the full

brunt of the tempest was felt most by those at the helm of the ship of state.

The royal family remained at Königsberg during the French occupation of Berlin (which continued until the end of 1808), only returning to their capital 23rd December 1809, when they received a wonderful welcome. It was the 16th anniversary of Queen Luise's entry into Berlin as a bride: she had won all hearts then, but now she was idolised. Her beautiful face bore traces of suffering, her smile was rare, her lovely eyes dimmed, she had grown delicate in health. "Even in the midst of this unspeakable joy" (she had written to her brother George) "my heart contracts, a nameless fear makes me dread accidents before or after this longed-for moment (of return to Berlin). You will say perhaps I have grown fearful through being so long unaccustomed to happiness. I often catch myself adopting this form of consolation, but, unfortunately, it does not help. Dispersed for the moment, my fears return with renewed force."

These fears and forebodings which so frequently depressed the Queen in her last months, were doubtless a symptom of ill-health; her heart was weakened by the strain

of long sufferings, whilst the harsh climate of East Prussia had severely tried a constitution formed in the mild districts by the Rhine.

Her two last children had been born in Königsberg (in 1808 and 1809), and she was still far from strong.

The wonderful Countess Voss at 80 years of age was still regulating Court ceremonial. At the christening of the last baby she entered in her diary:

"*7th November* 1809.—The Queen brought little Princess Charlotte to ask if I would let her, in place of me, hold the baby to be baptised. Of course I said yes—although it is not really correct—at eleven years of age, in a child's frock, without a train! She is really too young, but we must remember we are still in Königsberg, and cannot be so particular about etiquette!"[1]

Countess Voss, who at 78 years of age, during the Court's wanderings, could sleep cheerfully and well on the floor when there was no bed, was indeed a wonderful example of that heroic generation. She was destined to outlive the royal mistress whom she had learnt to love so devotedly.

[1] Voss, S. W. C. (Gräfin) *Neun und sechzig Jahre am preussischen Hofe.*

With the cessation of war a new era dawned for Prussia, an era of reform and progress, in which Queen Luise took the keenest interest. No one realised more than she the necessity for progressive measures; she recognised that Prussia had clung to the old ideals too long. France was intellectually her superior. Largely owing to the Queen's influence, Stein was recalled, and appointed Chief Minister (October 1807), inaugurating immediately a series of reforms in land laws, education, allowing freedom of choice as to vocation, etc. Men of ideas always found in the Queen not only sympathy but understanding; she combined rare insight with a broad outlook. Long ago she had been convinced that all Germans should unite closely, and form one nation, otherwise they could never possess any political significance. She was deeply interested in the education of her children, and delighted with the ideas of Pestalozzi. "Men make the times," she said, "the times do not make themselves; therefore I wish my children to grow up good, that they may influence their times for good." Whilst at one with the King on this point, she saw that his ideal of bringing up a prince to be good, sincere, and just, was

not sufficient; he must have wide views of life and things as well.

As late as 1808 she was busy studying the historical lectures of Professor Süvert, asking frankly for explanations of words and points she did not understand (the Gracchi and the word "hierarchy" she confessed, puzzled her). "I am never ashamed to ask questions; those who never ask remain stupid, and I hate stupidity." She admired Schiller greatly, and repeatedly begged him to settle in Berlin.

In June 1810 the Queen visited her father in Mecklenburg-Strelitz, meeting her grandmother, her sister Friederike and other members of the family once more. Here the King joined her, and some happy days were spent, in which she seemed almost her old joyous self.

Conscious of her exceeding peace and contentment, she sat down at her father's writing-table, during the temporary absence of her husband and the rest of the family, and penned what was destined to be her last letter:

"Mon cher père, — Je suis bien heureuse aujourd'hui comme votre fille et comme l'epouse du meilleur des époux! Luise.

"Neu-Strelitz, *ce* 28 *Juin* 1810."

She seemed slightly ailing next day, it was, however, judged of so trifling a nature that the King returned to Berlin for a few days. But on 16th July a sudden spasm of the heart came on, and for five hours the agony continued. It was then that the physicians discovered serious disease of the heart, and a messenger was despatched for the King. Before he could arrive (July 19th) she had suffered excruciatingly, an inflammation of the lungs complicated by heart trouble was declared, and it became evident that beautiful Queen Luise was doomed.

"She could be saved if she were not my wife," said the King, in the bitterness of his heart at this last blow of fate. "She is my wife, and therefore she must die."

He had brought with him their two eldest sons, the Crown Prince and Prince Wilhelm, but the poor Queen was too weak to speak, and could only struggle painfully for breath as she died before their eyes. The King sat on the edge of her bed chafing her cold hands, "then," says Countess Voss, "he kept one and put the other in my hands for me to rub it warm." So the sands of life ran out. Late in the evening the Queen opened her beautiful eyes wide and looking up to heaven, said: "I am dying. Jesus,

make it easy!" A moment later she had drawn her last breath.

The King was literally heartbroken and never really recovered from this blow; some consolation he found in their seven surviving children, but no one could take the place of the wife who had been everything to him. With his own hand he locked the gate of the avenue at Paretz through which she had walked by his side before her last journey to Mecklenburg. It remained unopened for decades.

No one was better fitted than Countess Voss to speak of the character of the royal mistress she had known so intimately and loved so well, from her advent at the Court as a girlish bride, through all the hopes and fears of womanhood.

She wrote:

"At all times (as at the birth of her still-born child) I was amazed at her courage and steadfastness . . . then and in those darkest days later; at the death of her darling, the little Prince Ferdinand; in the miseries of war, flying from one place to another, her resignation to God's will never faltered; no suffering could trouble her soul's peace and her faith in Eternal Providence."

CAROLINE SCHLEGEL

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Caroline Schlegel

CAROLINE SCHLEGEL

"Development is our fate."—R. VARNHAGEN.

AMONG the enthusiastic band of young Romanticists who captured literary Germany at the end of the eighteenth century flits the graceful figure of Caroline Schlegel, her blue eyes smiling, still somewhat enigmatically, as she gazes at us across the gulf of a century.

The life of this woman is closely bound up with the leaders of the Romantic School, with the Schlegel brothers, with Schelling; she was in the centre of the movement at Jena "the cradle of Romanticism," an inspiring, intellectual force as well as a charming feminine personality. Caroline was the emancipated woman of her day, living her theories rather than expressing them in literature or art.

Drifting from the ordinary conventional circles, she cast in her lot with the intellectual nomads, afire with revolutionary ideas, under whose banner the most brilliant minds in Germany

were enlisting. Had it been otherwise, had her life-story been less closely interwoven with that of these famous men, the great world would probably have heard little of Caroline. She was personally charming, witty, intellectual, wrote delightful letters (what clever women did not, in those days?), and even excellent literary criticisms, but these gifts alone would not have brought her fame. Her claim remains that she lived her ideas instead of writing them. And her personality fascinated and influenced the men who were her friends; some—Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel, for instance—she inspired to their best work. She had her *salon* in Jena; had it been in Berlin, she would certainly have rivalled the other notable Romantic women there. And her letters tell us so many interesting personal details about the great men of her day, they link up so many threads in the relations between them! Reading them, we seem to have known these circles quite intimately: to have lived in Jena, when Fichte lectured and Goethe came over to call, to have attended philosophical teas and listened to the Schlegels' satirical comments on Schiller's latest poems.

Dorothea Caroline Albertina Michaelis was born 2nd September 1763 in Gottingen, at

that time the most famous University on the Continent. Her father, Professor Michaelis, was a well-known Oriental scholar, and his house formed an intellectual centre both for the leading lights of the University and for any distinguished travellers who chanced to pass that way. Caroline grew up in the University atmosphere; like other girls she absorbed current ideas from brothers and students, flirted, and formed friendships with girls in her own set. Therese Heym, for instance, like herself the daughter of a professor, was destined to exercise an enormous influence on Caroline's subsequent career.

Caroline grew up into a tall, graceful girl, with soft blue eyes and a "flower-like droop of the head,"—quite uncommonly pretty besides being uncommonly intelligent. Hers was a lovable nature, bright and sunny, with womanly charm and winning ways which disarmed criticism of the coquetry and pert speeches of which, it must be confessed, she was often guilty. All through her life Caroline kept her happy, bright disposition; she even cultivated a philosophy of happiness to which she clung in the most adverse circumstances. "One must never be as sad as one's fate" was a saying of

hers in later years. Friedrich Schlegel was struck by this characteristic. "She considers enjoyment the aim of life, happiness a duty," he wrote, and "the strongest proof of her inner perfection is her cheerful self-contentment." By this *Selbstzufriedenheit* he meant, of course, not conceit, but the harmony which comes from a well-balanced nature, a harmony sadly lacking in Friedrich himself, as in so many of the Romantics.

Caroline's marriage with Georg Böhmer, a young country doctor (in June 1784) transplanted her from the inspiring circles of Göttingen to Clausthal, a mining village in the Hartz mountains, unfortunately also to a narrow and monotonous existence.[1] With her

[1] Her girlish letter describing the wedding transports us to old world days, with the bridal wreath woven of real myrtle, and "many presents, including the silhouette on glass of the two maidens binding the wreath. . . . When my toilet was completed, I was a pretty bride. . . . After 4 o'clock came Boehmer and the guests, about thirty people. Thank Heaven, the old uncles and aunts were not there, so it all passed off better than is usual on such occasions." There was much merry-making, although, according to the fashion of that period of sentiment, every one was frequently "moved to tears." After a *souper* at a friend's house a few days later the bride and bridegroom were conducted to the garden to admire an illuminated device with the words: "Blessed is he who has a virtuous wife, his span of life shall be doubled." After which they revelled in sentiment and punch. "What a spectacle that is," wrote Caroline, "a family each member of which is so loving and good, and now to be received in it as a bride!"

usual optimism she made the best of things, proved herself a good wife and mother—three children were born here—and struggled bravely against depression. "Don't be too downhearted, Caroline," she would say sometimes, with a smile at her own reflection in the mirror. Her great resource was reading; her letters to friends are full of requests for new books. Mental fare was solid in those days: history, biography, Spinoza's philosophy, French and English authors (Miss Burney's *Cecilia* is mentioned) and the *Don Carlos* of Schiller, a young Swabian poet—"rather too provincial as yet," Caroline pronounced his style.

Clausthal was undoubtedly dull, and Caroline found it so. In after years she looked back upon it with a shudder, upon herself as a prisoner in that gloomy valley.

But at the end of four years the prison doors were opened. Dr Böhmer, who had been a devoted husband in spite of the scant intellectual sympathy between them, died rather suddenly (1788), and Caroline left Clausthal for ever, returning to her parents' home in Göttingen. Her third child, a boy, born after his father's death, only lived a few months, her second little girl died in the following year, and the

young widow was left with one daughter, Auguste Böhmer, and life still before her.

There were offers of marriage and numerous flirtations. All her life Caroline was busy with *affaires du cœur*. August Wilhelm Schlegel, at this time a student at Göttingen, six years her junior, fell in love, but she laughed him to scorn although encouraging his attentions. A deeper feeling attracted her to a somewhat older man, a certain Tatter, tutor to the Hanoverian Princes, who were then attending the University, but this admirer always seems to have fought shy of marriage with the "coquettish widow," as Caroline calls herself.

In 1792 she decided to leave her own people and make a fresh start in Mainz, now the home of the old friend of her girlhood, Therese Forster (formerly Therese Heym), whose husband, Georg Forster, a literary man, was ardently in sympathy with the French Revolutionists.

At this time Mainz (Mayence), so near the French frontier, seemed uncertain as to which country it belonged or wished to belong. The aristocrats at the head of affairs were of course German in sympathy, but a strong party of democratic spirits desired to join the French Republic. The Forsters were of this party.

and Caroline was soon drawn into the circle of political intrigue. In December 1792 the city admitted the French under General Custine, without striking a blow; the aristocrats fled and the Republic was proclaimed. Forster, the city librarian, was made President of the Jacobin Club and otherwise identified himself with the French cause. In this time of political upheaval social ties were also loosened; freedom was the password in every department of life. So that Therese Forster, no longer in sympathy with her husband, left him, accepting the protection of Huber, a secretary to the German Legation. Thus Therese left Mainz, but Caroline stayed on and became known as the friend of Forster. Soon she was so deeply implicated with the Revolutionists that Tatter, to whom she made a last appeal, definitely withdrew from any responsibility connected with her affairs, and in a desperate mood, resolved, as she said, "to be happy at any cost," she became the mistress of a Frenchman, whose name does not transpire.

With the spring of the following year (1793) came retribution. The German army, several of the little Rhenish principalities uniting to make a force, re-took Mainz. Forster had gone to Paris as a representative of the "Rhenish

Republic" (which never existed), and Caroline was arrested and accused of all kinds of immorality as well as political offences. In some sense she was considered a hostage for Forster, being described as his *amie* (quite wrongfully, judging from all the evidence on that point); her protests were unavailing.

With her little daughter Auguste she was imprisoned in a fortress, herded with other prisoners in a common room—in short treated with the utmost harshness. After some wretched months her brother, Dr Philip Michaelis, petitioned for her release, offering his services as an army surgeon in return. Wilhelm Schlegel, the despised suitor of former days, hastened to add what influence he possessed in her favour, and the prisoners were released.

But Caroline found herself practically an outcast, her reputation gone, scandal magnifying her offences. She was not allowed to set foot in the Rhenish provinces, even Göttingen closed its gates to her and she was forbidden to return.[1]

[1] As late as 1800 this was in force. "Decree of the Hanoverian University Council to the Rector of Göttingen, 26th September 1800: We learn from many sources that Professor August Wilhelm Schlegel of Jena with his wife, formerly the widow Bochmer, *née* Michaelis, will shortly arrive in Göttingen. As already under date 16th August 1794 we forbade her to remain there, it must be intimated to her relatives, and, if necessary, to herself that she

Everywhere she found herself coldly received. Worse than all, she was expecting to become a mother, this time without the legal protection of a husband.

Wilhelm Schlegel, who in spite of everything remained devoted, placed her under the care of his brother Friedrich, a young student in Leipzig. Here, too, difficulties arose, and a lodging had to be found for her outside the Saxon frontier, though not far from the city. And here a child was born which, fortunately, did not live, and with this the disreputable episode in Caroline's life came to an end.

The two Schlegel brothers, August Wilhelm and Friedrich, are notable figures among the Romanticists. Wilhelm, the elder by five years, will always be famous as the man who by his fine, poetic translation gave Shakespeare to the German nation. In daily life he was the correct, polished, yet kindly man of the world. Friedrich, "with more genius but less talent," was the enthusiastic young poet, the dreamer. These

must leave, in the event of the said Professor's wife wishing to stay longer than a couple of days in passing through the town. (This does not apply to her husband.) Should, however, the professor's brother, Frederic Schlegel, who has become notorious through his corrupt writings, arrive with the intention of remaining some time, he also is to be informed that he must leave Göttingen.'

two brothers adored each other, and their brotherly love was a rare and delightful thing. Overflowing with ideas and aspirations, "*die übermüthigen Götterbuben*" (as Wieland called them) joined forces with other young men of the same modern tendency: Brentano, Von Arnim, the Grimms, Tieck, Novalis, and consolidated into a force, a movement.

It was Friedrich Schlegel, who, five years later, started the *Athenæum* in whose pages the ideas of the Romanticists were formulated. It ran only a brief course (1798-1800), but was eagerly read and exercised an enormous influence on art and literature. For the *Athenæum* Schleiermacher, the philosophic theologian, wrote his *Creed for Noble Women* which sounds strangely modern in our ears a hundred years later. Wilhelm Schlegel's famous comparison of music with architecture appeared in its pages.

Like most young men with ideas, Friedrich Schlegel considered it his mission to awaken the Philistines (as he called them, the Harmonious Blockheads). Romanticism, in awakening individual consciousness, certainly also did much to rouse German national consciousness, then at such a low level. "Not Hermann and Wotan,

but Art and Science are German national divinities," wrote Friedrich in the *Athenæum*. "Perhaps no nation is worthy of freedom but justice awards it before the *forum dei*." There was a great belief in the speedy advent of a new order of things. In a passage of peculiar metaphor the *Athenæum* wrote: "The new era announces itself as quick-footed, winged; the rosy dawn has put on seven-leagued boots." Great things were at hand: "lightning flashes have long played across the horizon of poetry, soon, however, it will no longer be question of one single storm, the whole sky will be aflame. . . . Then the nineteenth century will really begin, and at last there will be readers who can read," *i.e.*, the *Athenæum* would no longer be declared "incomprehensible."

Friedrich himself was at his best in short paragraphs and aphorisms; his "Fragmente" were a great feature. Caroline contributed some Reviews and Criticisms, which—especially those on Shakespeare—display a fine literary judgment, "We must have some *Esprit de Caroline*," Friedrich used to say.

Caroline's influence on Friedrich Schlegel was extraordinary. Until she appeared upon his horizon the young man had never concentrated

his talents in any particular direction but was leading an idle, dissipated, aimless existence. When she came to Leipzig, fugitive and outcast, his chivalrous instincts awoke. She seemed to him a wonderful, heroic creature, a new type of woman, persecuted by fate but always cheerful, courageous, even noble in her misfortunes. She inspired him to work, and he idealised her in the character of Juliane in his much discussed novel, *Lucinde*. "Through her I have become a better man," he wrote. He was certainly in love with Caroline, but with real nobility, knowing his brother's love for her, he kept his own feelings in the background, and the fine relationship of the brothers remained undisturbed.

Finally, in 1796, Caroline, urged by her family and realising the need of a protector for herself and Auguste, became the wife of Wilhelm Schlegel (1st July 1796), and settled with him in Jena. This union, it must be confessed, was not at all in accordance with Romantic traditions. In spite of Schlegel's splendid qualities of heart and intellect, she never really loved him, and married him from motives of worldly wisdom. At first, indeed, they thought of dispensing with the legal tie, and only submitted to it as

a social necessity. "We never considered the union a binding one," Caroline declared later. However, by this marriage she achieved social rehabilitation, and that, all things considered, with surprising suddenness. And in the beginning things promised well.

Jena, the University town, was a congenial home for literary folk. Schiller was living here; Fichte was giving his famous lectures on the Ego; Weimar, the home of Goethe and Wieland, was delightfully near. Jena is described in a letter by Dorothea Veit: "Green velvet carpets on the mountains, embroidered over with violets, cowslips, and primroses, all inwoven with sweet-smelling herbs; all the trees in the most glorious blossom, masses of lilac and May-flowers; a kind of willow with orange-like perfume grows everywhere on meadows and hills. The swift rushing river, clear as a mirror . . . an atmosphere soft, mild, and blue all around one, lying like a veil on the hills, such is spring-time in Jena." The students, too, were less rough in their manners than was the case in other universities, where ladies could not venture to take country-walks alone. Here they were refined, musical, philosophical—"everywhere talk of poetry, of

Wilhelm Meister—of transcendental philosophy, and from every house the sound of guitar and violin." Such was Jena, destined to become the "Cradle of Romanticism."[1]

The young couple were welcomed by the Schillers and other residents, and settled down in this pleasant spot, Wilhelm busy with his translations, Caroline helping him, copying manuscripts, writing criticisms, etc. Some of his best work, it is noted, was done under her influence. Her stormy past seems to have been forgotten, at any rate she was soon one of the bright particular stars of Jena. A charming hostess, she speedily made their home a centre of social intercourse. Schlegel, too, loved society, and their evening receptions were quite brilliant affairs. Another attraction was her daughter, Auguste Böhmer, now growing into a pretty and interesting girl, idolised by her mother, the pet of her stepfather and the youthful Uncle Friedrich.

It was a pity that Caroline soon estranged the Schillers by her unsparing ridicule of Schiller's poems, which she never appreciated, or indeed understood. Goethe was the idol of the Romanticists, but they never did justice to

[1] Ricarda Huch, *Die Romantik.*

Schiller. Caroline writes to the absent Auguste once that "we nearly fell from our chairs with laughing" at the first reading of "that ridiculous poem, *Die Glocke*," which some wit suggested might be improved by being read backwards! She and her husband certainly influenced Friedrich Schlegel (who at first had admired Schiller greatly), and inspired some of his most cutting criticisms. Schiller never forgave these things. His nickname, "Dame Lucifer," clung to Caroline more closely than she liked. Some satirical lines in the *Xenien* were supposed, too, to aim at her. Whether well-founded or not, the supposition is significant.

In 1798 a new figure appears on the scene. This was a young lecturer of philosophy named Schelling, a pupil of Fichte, who had already recognised his strong originality.

Starting a modest course of lectures on his own account (as *Privat Dozent*, unattached to the University) he made an extraordinary impression at once, and soon had enthusiastic followers. Fichte's strong cult of individuality lay at the root of the Romantic movement, but Schelling exercised an enormous influence on its later development, imparting a deep, mystical tendency which coloured Romantic art and

literature. He taught the absolute identity of the spirit within and of nature outside ourselves: "Nature is spirit; spirit is invisible nature. Nature and spirit are two aspects of the World Soul." Nature is this spirit striving towards outward expression. This philosophy was the very soul of Romanticism and intensified the movement in a marvellous degree. The young professor (he was only twenty-three) was a striking personality; strength in every line of his square-cut face with its broad brow and flashing eyes, a being all fire and impetuous energy—"bold, daring, abrupt." (Bettina von Arnim describes Tieck as modelling the square, broad, splendid *Schelling-Kopf*.)

Friedrich Wilhelm Josef Schelling, like the Schlegel brothers, had grown up in a quiet parsonage (their father was a Protestant pastor near Hanover, he was the son of a pastor in Würtemberg). He joined them in the literary movement of the day and Jena soon became the most important centre of Romanticism. For although the *Athenæum* was published in Berlin, the literary leaders were at this time in Jena.

Life in these Jena circles was full of interest. Goethe would come over from Weimar to talk

over literary matters with Wilhelm Schlegel. Parties were made up to drive over to Weimar on such occasions as the first performance of a new play by Schiller. After *Wallenstein's Lager* (1798), for instance (which the Romantics as usual condemned), Caroline writes that Fichte persuaded her to drink champagne with him, and she afterwards drove home with Schelling, whilst her husband stayed behind to talk to Goethe.

Caroline writes that Goethe came over on horseback with the last part of "*Wilhelm Meister* tied on behind him, for he rides a good deal in spite of his stoutness, and brings it over in MSS. Schiller says he will invite us soon to hear it read." She made Fichte's acquaintance at the "Clubb," and describes him as "a short, sturdy man with fiery eyes, very carelessly dressed. After the *Athenæum* here, the newest event is the performance of *Wallenstein*, Part I., *Die Piccolomini*. . . . I am translating Shakespeare's *As You Like It* into iambics, prose, and even rhymes occasionally." (Caroline appears to have rendered considerable help in these translations, and Schlegel did very little of this work after she left him.)

Friedrich Schlegel brought his wife (formerly Dorothea Veit), to his brother's home on a long

visit, but Caroline did not find her sympathetic —she was too abrupt and masculine, lacking those feminine graces which Caroline herself cultivated so admirably. At this time the Schlegels seem to have practically kept open house, some eighteen persons dining every day, —fortunately Caroline was an excellent housekeeper as well as a clever hostess.

They were devoted to amateur theatricals. On New Year's Eve of 1800, a masque written by William Schlegel was performed, in which the new Century was represented as an Infant, the foster child of Ignorance, recognising its real parents as Genius and Freedom, a characteristic expression of the boundless hope felt in the dawn of a new era.

In summer there were long walks and excursions, on winter evenings they read and studied. Caroline describes these things in her bright, gossiping letters to Auguste, who spent some months (1799) in Dessau, where she had the opportunity of good singing lessons. It was then that Tischbein painted Auguste's portrait, a sweet girlish face with a charming expression and a striking resemblance to her mother.

After Auguste had gone came a rainy day.

"I could think of no other consolation than buying a heap of flowers and arranging them about me, they were my children. They had a delicious fragrance, but they could not sing."

"31*st October* 1799.

"I know not what my child is doing. Do you think because I was willing to let you stay there longer, that I do not love you? Believe me, you are the dearest thing your mother has, and you will know this well later." She gossips of literary interests. "Kotzebue has written a play against the Schlegels and had it performed during the Fair. One part, described in the *Athenæum*, is meant to represent Frederic, 'lately sent to the mad-house,' for the rest, the thing has absolutely no wit, outside the Schlegel's own. There was a great uproar in the theatre for and against, the Leipzigers were naturally for it. Müller, however, has forbidden its further performance. It is called the *Hyperborean Donkey* or *The Civilization of our Time.* . . . Schiller's *Musencalendar* has come. The poem of Imhof is not much more than a troop of hexameters, but yesterday morning we nearly fell off our chairs laughing over a poem of Schiller's, *The Song of the Bell.* It is *à la* Voss, *à la* Tieck, *à la Diable*, at least it will be this

last. . . . Child of my heart, do you want anything? . . . La Veit continues to be an excellent woman, and Frederic goes on dreaming. The Schillers have a daughter. Are you at last learning to sing? Your despairing mother,

CAROLINE."

The relations between Schelling and the Schlegel household seem strangely complicated; one has to read between the lines of Caroline's letters in order to understand them. Schelling was soon an inmate of the house. At first he did not understand Caroline, and she complains that he is quarrelsome. "He is always on his guard against the irony in the Schlegel family." But before long they were friends, and both mother and daughter admired and loved him. Schlegel was always his friend. Schelling seems to have loved Auguste, a girl of wonderful promise, with all her mother's talent and charm, precociously developed in this atmosphere of intellect.

Evidently Auguste was drifting into an engagement with Schelling; Caroline content to have it so, when in the summer of 1800, mother and daughter travelled to Boklet, a little place in Bavaria, where Caroline was to drink

the waters. They were escorted on their journey by Schelling, who was going to Bamberg on business. Suddenly, after a few day's illness, Auguste died (12th July 1800), her death coming as an impossible, overwhelming catastrophe to all who knew her. In the letters of all these celebrated men the girl of fifteen is spoken of with extraordinary admiration and affection. Her young life had been the budding centre of so many hopes. Her death was a crushing blow to Schelling, who fell seriously ill.

Caroline was at first inconsolable. And in her sorrow she drifted away from her husband, though at first she seems to have deceived herself as to the real nature of her affection for Schelling, now no longer motherly. Caroline wrote to Schelling, trying to ignore the possibility of love between them. "Goethe loves you as a father, I as a mother, what strange parents! Do not grieve us. . . ." And in the style of her "set" she told him (1800):

"'I must try if I cannot produce from

$$\begin{matrix}\text{Death}\\\text{Grief}\end{matrix} \times \begin{matrix}\text{Joy}\\\text{Love}\end{matrix} \quad \text{Life and Peace.'"}$$

Significantly she once begged her husband to find for her a passage in Homer, "Die Herzen

der guten sind heilbar" ("The hearts of the good can be healed"), for "I cannot find it in Homer, only in my own heart." At last the two recognised the fact that they loved each other. Schelling, strange as it may seem, was the real love of Caroline's life, in spite of the difference in their ages (he was twelve years younger). Wilhelm Schlegel was much in Berlin at this time on account of his literary work, and in 1802 settled there altogether. Caroline preferred Jena, and she and Schelling now became inseparable, taking no pains to hide the fact. Strange, how this woman was once more borne on the stormy waves of passion from her quiet haven of refuge to an entirely new life! This time she acted on the promptings of her own nature. The Romantics recognised no tie as binding save that of real affection, and Wilhelm Schlegel put no difficulties in the way of a divorce. A petition (chiefly in Caroline's handwriting) was sent to the Grand Duke, pleading incompatibility and the childlessness of the marriage, and a divorce was granted immediately. In May 1803 Caroline was once more free. "We broke a tie which neither of us had ever considered binding," she writes. Throughout Schlegel and Schelling corresponded about the affair in a friendly spirit,

and Schlegel afterwards visited the couple in Munich. After the divorce Schelling took Caroline to his parents at the quiet parsonage in Murrhardt, Würtemberg, and they seem to have received her affectionately as a suitable bride for their son. Schelling's diary shows the simple entry :—

"26*th June* 1803. Father married us."

At first they settled in Würzburg, where a Chair of Philosophy was offered to Schelling. Afterwards (1805) he obtained a post at the Academy in Munich.

There was a general dispersal of the Jena Romanticists about this time. Wilhelm Schlegel had settled in Berlin. Friedrich and his wife were in Paris. Fichte had been compelled to resign his post at the Jena University in 1799 on account of the ætheistic tendency of his teaching, in spite of the efforts of the Schlegels on his behalf. Caroline laments that "the little circle gathered in Jena is now scattered about the world, teaching the heathen," a remark significant of the Romantic attitude towards an unenlightened world.

Apparently Caroline had found a congenial soul-mate at last. She worshipped her husband, shared his intellectual interests as few women

could have done, and made him, besides, a charming and delightful companion. She kept her fascinating personality to the end; his letters breathe devotion and admiration. It was an ideal union—for six years — and then Caroline was suddenly taken by death from her happiness, possibly from future disillusionment. She died almost as suddenly as her daughter had done, and in a similar way, apparently from a form of cholera which was then a constant scourge. They were on a three days' walking tour, and Caroline (Schelling wrote) had never been so sweet and lovable, when she suddenly fell ill and succumbed at once, dying within a few hours (7th September 1809); he thought she was weakened by having just nursed him through an illness.

There is no doubt that Caroline's friends loved her devotedly. She was a unique creature, Schelling said: "one must either love her wholly or not at all . . ." a rare woman with "the keenest intellect united with the most womanly, the tenderest, the most loving heart." He was inconsolable at her loss.

"God gave her to me, Death cannot rob me of her," were the words he inscribed on her tomb.

Even her enemies admitted her absolute sincerity, and the way in which she remained, true to herself and her convictions. It was this which made her so true a daughter of the Romantic movement.

Schelling married after some years Pauline Gotter, the daughter of a friend of Caroline's youth. Friedrich Schlegel died suddenly in 1828. The vicissitudes of Wilhelm Schegel are chronicled by Henriette Herz:

"No sooner had Madame de Staël met August W. Schlegel than she realised his intellectual importance, and wished to attach him to herself." She begged Madame Herz to persuade him. "I only want him to teach my children German; all the rest of the time shall be at his own disposal. He makes his translation of Shakespeare a pretext, but *je ne vois pas la necessité*," she said with some warmth, "I do not see the necessity for translating the English poet for the benefit of the Prussian capital!"

In due course Madame de Staël carried her point and Schlegel as tutor of her children to Coppet. Here he shone in congenial intellectual circles; also travelled in Italy and France, visited Vienna and Stockholm. He wrote a few lectures and essays, became secretary to the

Crown Prince of Sweden in 1813, and after the fall of Napoleon returned to Madame de Staël.

A second marriage with the daughter of a professor turned out no better than the first, it ended in a separation. In later life he devoted himself to the study of Oriental languages, and became professor of Sanscrit in Bonn. He died in 1845.

Henriette says the time Schlegel spent with Madame de Staël was the time of his best literary work. Her influence was stimulating and inspiring. "He was not at his best as a University professor in Bonn. He was not fitted to be a German professor, not at home with the rough German students. He must often have seemed ridiculous to them and very strange to his colleagues. I saw him again on my return from Italy in 1819 as professor in Bonn, on which occasion he was very friendly towards me. How he had altered externally! The bright glance of other days was dull, his complexion pale and faded, the tall figure had grown heavy, his former intellect was only to be imagined!

"We made excursions by land and water with Bonn professors and their wives. They were merry and noisy, but the more merry and noisy they grew, the quieter Schlegel became. At

last he would sit in complete but polite indifference, like an elderly Frenchman who does not understand German but is thrown into German society, nor did his external appearance contradict this idea. Really he did not grasp what was spoken around him, even if he understood the words. He made a painful impression upon me." A sad picture of the once brilliant and courtly Romantic writer!

CHARLOTTE STIEGLITZ

BOOKS CONSULTED.

Brandes, G. *Rahel, Bettina, and Charlotte Stieglitz*, 1896.
Mundt T. *Charlotte Stieglitz, ein Denkmal*, 1835.

Charlotte Stieglitz

CHARLOTTE STIEGLITZ

"A great thought which has lost itself."—C. Stieglitz.

In the early Thirties of the last century the name of Charlotte Stieglitz rang throughout Germany, startling as a sudden cry. Mundt's book, *Charlotte Stieglitz, ein Denkmal*, which appeared in 1835, the year following her death, was read in a frenzy of admiration and enthusiasm. She promptly became the heroine of *Jung Deutschland*, and was glorified in their writings, notably in Gutzkow's *Wally*, and other works of the then New School.

One single act—her own suicide—had made her famous. It was a mad, foolish act, done for so little reason, for such a childish, ludicrously mistaken idea of value. One can almost smile pityingly as well as shudder at the poor girl's dreadful heroism (she was only twenty-eight at the time of her death). It was a mad impulse, born of bookish ideals, lamplight ambitions, literary cravings — all far removed

from everyday human life and the good solid earth.

Yet there was something in the splendid courage of the deed, something noble in the nature of the woman who did it, which roused an enthusiasm throughout Germany such as it is scarcely possible to realise now. She had thrown away her life for a mistake, it is true, but it was thrown away with such magnificent generosity and self-sacrifice.

And deeper than the superficial reasons for Young Germany's enthusiasm lies the fact that, coming at the moment when the world's ideals of women were being raised to higher levels, Charlotte Stieglitz revealed a new and unsuspected force of character in her sex, an energy of initiative which made her bold enough to be her own fate, and sacrifice herself instead of conforming to the old ideals of suffering passively and being sacrificed. One of Germany's famous women at the dawn of woman's "emancipation," she revealed, not woman's possible intellect like Rahel Varnhagen, but woman's possible heroism.

This seems to have been the psychological significance of her message to *Jung Deutschland.*

Charlotte Stieglitz

Charlotte Sophie Willhöfft, for this was her maiden name, was born in 1806, of middle-class parentage. She grew up in Leipzig, and, when only sixteen years of age, became engaged to a young student named Heinrich Stieglitz. They married six years later, on his obtaining the post of librarian at the Royal Library in Berlin. In addition to his work at the library and as a teacher, Stieglitz was unfortunately also a poet—unfortunately, for herein lies the tragedy of their lives. He was but an indifferent poet and he was ambitious. Conscious of his own poetical weakness, he was constantly tortured by his inability to produce something really great.

Charlotte, who adored her husband and believed him to be a great man, shared these ambitions, she cherished the highest ideals and wished her Heinrich to become nothing less than a great inspiring National Genius. But he could not. Genius bloweth where it listeth, and Heinrich Stieglitz remained uninspired by its breath.

In vain he worked industriously at versification, in vain his devoted wife watched over him and his moods, in vain she encouraged and besought his lagging Muse; the forceful word

never came. Stieglitz remained neat and literary, but uninspired, mediocre. He inclined chiefly to Oriental subjects for his poems, which met with a very fair amount of success, but he was not, and never could be, a great poet.

Ill-health compelled him to give up his post as librarian, and he fell into a state of nervous depression. Charlotte began to fancy that by marrying her he had condemned himself to a life of sordid drudgery unworthy of a poet, that the daily routine of teaching dulled his best energies. Perhaps, if he were set free, he might be lifted above the small miseries of life. Once she said with remarkable insight:

"I have watched you closely and am convinced that the best thing for you would be some real, deep suffering. Now you are ill in and of your own self; a real great grief would lift you above your self."

The poet himself had a fateful dream in which, after seeing his wife drown, he was suddenly inspired to write great things.

Charlotte herself was by no means without inspirations. Once when her husband had struggled unsuccessfully with a scene in his tragedy, *Selim III.*, she wrote it for him during his absence. The scene is a very good

one, Stieglitz himself called it *seelenvoll*, and it is published in the tragedy.

She was the bright centre of a little group of intellectual friends who gathered round them in Berlin, and her beautiful voice and artistic singing attracted musicians to the house as well as literary men.

In appearance she was very attractive; her portraits shows a young face, innocent, intelligent, and tender; she is described as having beautiful regular features, a charming mouth and large brown eyes "sparkling with courage," with a mass of brown curls dressed in the fashion of the day. As a young girl some one noticed in her a strange, mystical expression, such as the old Teutonic races were wont to ascribe to their wise women, those who had the gift of prophecy.

Her sayings are both witty and thoughtful. Her remark, for instance, about a man with poetic gifts who had grown dull and prosy in the routine of daily life: "The swan has left him, but the duck still waddles after him."

Of the second part of Goethe's *Faust* she said, "It is a work of Goethe grown old—not of our *old* Goethe."

Her husband has recorded that on visiting the

waterfall Imatra in Finland she exclaimed: "Is it not like a great thought which has lost itself in the loneliness of these rocks?"

And in her diary she wrote: "That we shall live on I believe. *How* shall we live? Certainly in some wonderful spiritual manner. And I see so many wonders here that I believe in still greater ones *yonder*."

Once she said to her husband: "Has not every poet his dream-ladder on which angels go up and down?" But no angels alighted on her poet's dream-ladder, and Charlotte became increasingly distressed thereat.

Poor little poet's wife! She once said that human beings are our anchors in the sea of life, "only they must be the right ones," and unfortunately she never found her right anchor in life. In the world outside, too, there was a disturbed atmosphere; Europe was ringing with echoes of old and new. Everywhere was unrest, a striving after some unattainable thing. In France, Fourier and Saint Simon were preaching; in Germany, Hegel was in the air; the young school with Heine was waging war against Romanticism. She was interested in everything, but her strength was worn out in the constant effort to ward off her husband's periods of

depression, to inspire him with courage and perseverance, to save him all the worries of daily life — in short, to maintain him in the mood suited to a great poet who was to voice the aspirations of his age.

He was but a poor hero, her poet, and not in the least what she imagined him. He is described as *looking* "bold, passionate, full of genius," but *being* in reality weak and without any perseverance, one of those in whom appearance and character are at variance. His complaints of world-weariness and the like sound very weak and trivial. "How short is life and how much time is wasted in attending to our lowest needs!" And Charlotte answered: "Length of life is nothing, strength of life is everything."

In a pessimistic mood he declared: "Only the dead are healthy, no living human being is healthy if he once begins to think and feel deeply . . . no matter what hours of intellectual ecstasy—that divine poison—he may enjoy."

And Charlotte again answered: "Yes, but such hours are not real life, however splendid they may be. Real life is the strength which possesses itself, and is calm within and by itself."

This was about the sum and total of the

many reasonings and discussions in their drama of intellect and moods. Charlotte's word was always "Strength."

But it was hard work and Charlotte herself was not equal to the strain. Her husband was in a worse state of depression than ever, and she herself was ill, when she at last came to a dreadful decision.

On 29th December 1834, Stieglitz was absent for some hours at a concert. The young wife put the house in order and wrote a letter of farewell to him, clothed herself in a long white dress, and, lying down on her bed, calmly stabbed herself to the heart with a dagger of Turkish workmanship, which had been her present to her husband when they started on their wedding journey, six years before.

She must have lain there and suffered in stoic silence for some time, but she was dead when Stieglitz returned. Her letter ran thus:—

"You could not be unhappier than you are, beloved! But you may become happier, even in real sorrow! There is often a strange blessedness in being unhappy, it will surely come to you. . . . Things will go better with you, much better now, why? I feel it, although I have no

words to express why. We shall meet again some time, freer, less bound! But you must first live your life out here, must go about in the world bravely.

"Greet all whom I loved and who loved me in return. Through all eternity.

"Thy CHARLOTTE.

"Do not be weak, be calm and strong and great!"

But the strange terrible deed of sacrifice nearly killed Stieglitz. He had loved Charlotte very dearly, and never recovered from the blow, although he lived some fifteen years longer. In obedience to her last wishes he tried to be calm and strong. Henceforth he looked upon himself and his life as something to be carefully kept for her sake, and so used as, if possible, to justify her deed. But he never became a great poet.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend," he wrote, "but no one ever with greater love caused greater suffering than Charlotte."

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