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ἔνθα βουλαι μὲν γερόντων καὶ νέων ἀνδρῶν ἄμιλλαι
καὶ χοροὶ καὶ Μοῖσα καὶ ἀγλαῖα.

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GÖETHE AND ROUSSEAU.

FIRST PRIZE ESSAY, BY A. ALEXANDER, N. Y.

The comparison of two natures apparently so different as those of Rousseau and Goethe seems at first unmeaning. But a close examination of external and internal circumstances shows resemblance as well as difference, in the qualities of these two remarkable men.

The eighteenth century, which revolutionized Europe in Literature as well as in Politics, called Rousseau and Goethe into being. The former was born in 1712; the latter in 1749. The period was one which left upon Europe imperishable marks. The power of Locke's philosophy had raised up the school of Voltaire, and under the influence of the latter, sensualism resulted in France. Even Germany felt the shock. But while France was led on by the Atheist and the Deist, Germany recovered in the revulsion under the Königsberg philosopher. The brilliancy of Voltaire dazzled the eyes of the most sober thinkers. Glowing rhetoric and keen satire took the place of deeper thought in France. But the century left another stain on Europe beside that of

error; it left the stain of human blood, and the heads of Fashion and Luxury bowed low beneath the awful curse. Rousseau saw but the faint beginnings of the mighty struggle; Gœthe lived calmly throughout the revolutionary period, surveying the scene from his German home.

But they were both men whose characters were formed but little by the time, whose influence roused European Society to energy and action. Rousseau, born at the beginning of the century, made the France of Louis XV. turn toward him with mingled emotions. Gœthe came to maturity when the century was drawing to a close, to illumine the Philosophy, History and Poetry which had preceded him, with the glorious light of his genius. Each nature bore the marks of national individuality. Rousseau, though not a Frenchman by birth, was a descendant of an old French family early transplanted to the picturesque vales of Switzerland. But Geneva his birthplace left only a Calvinistic, not a national stamp upon his character, and in after years his heart beat responsive to that of France, the country which he dearly loved. Gœthe was the true offspring of Southern Germany—the land of the Rhine, the land of Romance; and in all the unique grandeur of his genius, we trace the power which seems to belong to the Teutonic race alone. The mind of Rousseau was far inferior to that of the German poet, both in depth and comprehensiveness; but in the brief sketch which follows there may be observed a certain similarity in their natures, which places them in a position of equality, as well as a certain dissimilarity which raises the latter above heights to which the former never aspired.

There is a contrast in their youth. We watch with painful anxiety the feeble childhood of Rousseau, left motherless on the day of his birth, trembling between life and death. A growing interest attends his youth, when he plunged deep into works of romance under his father's

guidance. His mind turned from Fiction to Fact, and Plutarch became his delight. At length the innocence of his early life was brought to a close, and he was placed under other instruction, when he learned the first lessons of that sensualism which tarnished his after years. The heart is moved to pity and indignation at the brutality which crushed his sensitive nature, struggling to rise to a higher plane of existence. By means of this cruelty, evil qualities were developed, which marred his growing disposition, and we are not surprised at the morbid fancies which early clustered in the brain of this much abused genius, who belonged so truly to Humanity.

In striking contrast are Gœthe's early days. He was born at Frankfort, under the pleasant influences of a German home. His father was a cold and formal stoic of the modern type, a seeker after truth, a careful observer. From his mother Gœthe inherited that disposition of radiant cheerfulness—that enthusiastic German spirit, generally characteristic of the race. The precocious intellect of Gœthe was strangely different from the stunted faculties of Rousseau. The Frenchman was poorly educated, and his mind, intellectually weak, derived but little benefit from the meagre studies of his youth. Sensation in him was predominant, and while his nature was abundantly receptive, there was little of that spontaneity which goes out in the mind of the lover of truth, of the man of science, toward objects presented. In Gœthe, on the other hand, the balance of Sensation and Perception was fully accomplished. There were to him the pleasures of the purely sensuous, as well as those of definite cognition. His education, so careful, yet at times unproductive, started at once a healthy growth in his mind. His early life shows plainly the human element, as he turns from the earnest pursuits of the study to the gaieties of Society, and then back once more to his quiet retreat.

The career of Rousseau and Gœthe, from the beginning of manhood onward, displays the comparative excellencies and demerits of their natures. While we leave reluctantly the scenes and incidents of absorbing interest clustering about their lives, we are compelled by the limits of our subject to attend to the discussion of their respective characters.

The first characteristic common to them both was susceptibility. With that quality the name of Rousseau has become almost synonymous. It was largely displayed in the characters of both. In the one case, it was smothered in early life by brutal treatment, the slights of the world, and the consequences which often follow from an insignificant presence. Quenched as it was for a time, it burst forth in after years with fierce vehemence. In Gœthe, on the other hand, susceptibility was fed and nourished. The grand appearance of the young German, whose flashing eye and sympathetic manner betrayed the man within, carried him triumphant through many a place where Rousseau would have failed to walk, yet ever drew around him seductive snares. Gœthe advanced with victorious steps, often overwhelmed by passion and devotion, and while his life presents a series of cruel disappointments in love, they were in many instances the result of his own recklessness. To those familiar with his life, the names of Gretchen, Anchen, and Frederika, recall times when the emotions, so vividly awakened at first, died away, leaving two melancholy hearts behind. With Rousseau, love was hardly a passion, it was an extravagance, the intoxication of intellect and sense, the absorption of the intellect in emotion, the emotion unbridled by the will. All through his life the fires of sensualism are potential, needing only a peculiar condition of his morbid nature to kindle them anew. With Gœthe love was more refined, and while he lost his self-control in many cases where reason should have been obeyed, the refinement of

the man is seldom lost to sight. The early life of Rousseau, now as notary's clerk; now as footman and lackey; finally as companion to a French woman of the eighteenth century; was ill-adapted to develop gentlemanly instinct. His susceptibility is often combined with a rudeness and coarseness, anomalous and perplexing. Two incidents, one in the life of each, display their different qualities in trying circumstances—in an unfortunate affection for their neighbors' wives. With Rousseau the affair of Madame d' Houtelot; with Gœthe, the friendship of Charlotte Kestner. Rousseau courted this dangerous path of love, though often confronted by the brilliant and magnanimous St. Lambert, the devotee of the artful madame. But Gœthe, though plunged in the depths of a hopeless affection and drawn into a whirlpool of passion, from which even the forbearance yet firmness of Kestner could scarcely save him, at length rose by a mighty effort of the will, and with his heart lonely and depressed, left the danger behind him, and sought another way of relief. One experience produced the "Nouvelle Heloise," a work which charmed France and drew after the author trains of that profligate society which he so studiously decried. The other was the source of "Werther," that work of genius, which produced so powerful an effect in Germany, from the realism of the characters and the awful fate of the hero, as well as from the sublime inspiration which came from the depths of the author's soul. In the works of Rousseau the facts are illuminated by the figures; in those of Gœthe the figures are the facts. The brightness of Rousseau's production arises from the beauty of the surroundings, that of Gœthe's from the realities shining in their own light. Both of these works belong emphatically to their respective countries, and to the age, in significance as well as in time.

Having discussed the susceptibility which was common to both, and found expression in their lives and their writings, let us turn to the development of genius in each.

1. Love for Nature, which inspired them both, became practically expressed, as their lives advanced, as their natures developed. Rousseau lived a life of delicious sensuousness. He dwelt for days in communion with the physical world, in his Genevan home, in Savoy, and on many a sunny plain of France. The landscape of peace was his delight. There might be towering rocks and rugged scenery, peaceful fields and shady groves, but the sea, the storm, the grander sights and sounds of Nature were by him unloved. Gœthe, too, loved Nature, and in her portrayal he found delight. To this end he climbed the solitary mountain top beyond the reach of fashion, pomp and wealth. To this end he roved in sunny Italy, resting beneath a southern sky, gazing upon the glistening sea. But in the development of his genius, as displayed in his words, Rousseau gave no expression to this love of Nature for Nature's own sake. It was incidental but not supreme. In Gœthe's works she is adored.

2. Let us observe how each regarded the world as a combination of the rational and irrational. Rousseau was a socialist; Gœthe, an aristocrat. In succeeding years Rousseau was a divinity of the French Revolution; Gœthe came later, and scorned the Revolution. Rousseau's radical discourses, and the more moderate productions of his later years show a mind that looked harshly upon the society of the time. The grand doctrine which animated him was the equality of Man. To his surging passions the restraints of rank and caste, property and quality were intolerable. The wild glare of instinctive Radicalism lit up the gloom of his cynical efforts. Let us return to Nature! was his cry. This progress toward a civilized condition is destructive. Vice and crime herald its approach; an army of evils follow in its train. Let us return to Nature, where humanity is savage but serene, where the barriers of distinction are swept away, and we are launched on a sea of free existence.

Suffering under a bodily disease, working in the midst of a society upon which he looked with an unfriendly eye, the "Discourses" came with an intensity not easily appreciated. Years afterward, when he spoke out boldly in the "Savoyard Vicar," the "Social Contract" and "Emile," his position was higher in the popular ranks. The dangers of his influence were realized. His retrogressive theories received a share of persecution, and driven like a wild beast from lair to lair, he lived suffering and almost friendless.

With Gœthe the world assumed a far different form. Not only did he love the free beauty of Nature, as did Rousseau, but to him Man was Divinity itself. He saw the Deity in all the forms of Nature—river and ocean, forest and plain, mountain and valley. But there is a deeper significance in Man—the Godlike. For him a higher destiny remained. There were intellectual problems yet to be solved. This idea rises like thunder above the wild melodies of "Faust," and stands as a fixed light in the ever-changing gloom of Life. Man was to Gœthe the embodiment of Divinity, and in all the restless surgings of nations and of men, the problems were being solved, which make men feel their claims in the great All of existence. Instead, then, of a *return to Nature*, he raised on high the banner of progression. Culture and perfection, were the guiding lights of his career, and though he often erred in the peculiarities of his genius, we are compelled to recognize this unity of purpose pervading his life and works.

3. From what has already been said, it will appear that there are two sides to the character of Rousseau—the sensual and the cynical: one apparent in his life, the other exemplified in his works. The defects of his education and training may have been in some measure responsible for this. The bodily disease from which he suffered such agonies may have made his mind morose. At all events, these two characteristics appear, distinct and limiting. The

genius of Gœthe seemed unlimited: Art, Science, and above all Poetry were elevated and strengthened through his efforts. Rousseau was bounded by limited fields of thought, Religion and Politics: but Gœthe from the abundance of his imagination and his invention, his generalizing skill and his varied genius, poured forth streams to gladden Germany and the world. The mind which produced "Wilhelm Meister," planned the "Parbenlehre;" the soft music of the minor lyrics was from the same harp which sounded the immortal strains of Faust. No limit was fixed to the expanding powers of the German poet—botanist—novelist.

The religious opinions of the two were very different. Rousseau's returning to Nature seemed to intimate a religion of Nature. His sensitive mind feels instinctively the existence of a God. Hear what he says as he gazes out upon the Cosmos: "Sometimes in the privacy of my study with my hands pressed tight over my eyes, or in the darkness of the night, I am of the opinion that there is no God. But look yonder, the rising of the sun, scattering the mists that cover the earth and laying bare the wondrous glittering scene of Nature, disperses at the same time all cloud from my soul; I find my faith again, my God, my belief in him; I admire and adore him; and I prostrate myself in his presence." It was more of a sentiment than a reasonable belief. The friend of Diderot, the companion of the courtesan, could have felt but few strong religious convictions; but in a Frenchman even the profession of Theism was at that day remarkable. Calvin was born at Geneva, and Calvinism influenced Rousseau. Rising and growing above his sensualism and cynicism, were the germs of immortal truth. Tossed on the sea of a restless humanity; harassed by "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," Rousseau could still look back to the dawn of Christian morals with all the enthusiasm of his emotional nature,

and comparing the coldness of Greek Philosophy with the divinity of Christian life, could exclaim; "Socrates died like a Philosopher but Jesus Christ like a God."

Goethe, as we have intimated, appears before us with all the charms of a Pantheistic creed—a creed which tempts the poetic mind and leads the lover of Nature to adore that which he loves. All sounds, from the murmur of the rivulet, to the wild thunders of the tempest, were to him the voice of God. The sunny days of summer, the fierce storms of winter, were but the smiles and frowns of Deity. The ceaseless rising of the mighty sea seemed but the glorious breathing of a Deified Universe. The mountains reared their rugged peaks, like the features of the Omnipotent; and then the mind turns from wild Nature to Man the king of earth. In each grand uprising of Humanity the Godhead is revealed. All individuals lose their separate existence and become but the diversified forms of a common God. From the wild cry of the aimless mob, to the strong voice which rules, and leads to higher purposes, expressions of the Deity are ever set forth. And so as a final culmination of this religion, the goal of happiness is set up, to which all may tend.

Without stopping to consider the changes of this faith, we advance a step further in the discussion of our subject.

The effects of the works of these two men may be generally stated. The power of Rousseau was, to a certain degree, lessened by the triumphant influence of Voltaire. Gifted as the latter was in the arts of conversation and repartee, endowed with wealth and social position, he formed, *as a man*, a striking contrast to the poor footman, who had gained a reputation for writing, but whose manners were harsh and austere; who defied sovereignty and repulsed the advances of friends. But if Voltaire outshone him in society, they were brought more to an equality in their works. Voltaire wrote to dazzle and enchant; Rous-

seau to convince and move. The immediate popularity of the former was far greater than that of his eccentric rival. But it was after the strange cynic had passed away that his genius fully moved the French nation. One figure who stands like a demon or a God—we scarcely know which—amid the clouds of the Reign of Terror, turned back to the writings of the great socialist. Robespierre brought his mighty arm to the task of carrying out many of Rousseau's principles. Voltaire may have done much to set the revolutionary army upon the march; but it was Rousseau who, by the power of his works, guided its destinies. In England and America his writings had an effect. His patriotism toward France, the country which had persecuted him, seemed sublime. Practically he had little influence upon England, but in the revolution which soon arose in America, the voice of Rousseau seemed audible, enunciating that greatest of all Republican principles—the Equality of Man. Gœthe's influence was naturally more of a literary and poetic kind. The great dramatic poet of modern times produced a grand sensation. The mere expression of personal emotion, "Werther," raised up a sentimental school, which flourished for a time with a weak and sickly growth. Finally, we can measure to a small extent only, the power of Gœthe's writings. Their effects are not yet ended. It would seem as if his spirit pervaded the All, in unison with which he ever breathed and sympathized.

A grand mind arose in England, shook off the conventionalities of accepted rhetoric, and forced the world to listen to his wild fancies and commanding thoughts. The doctrine of hero-worship fell from his lips, and in practical exemplification of this doctrine, the English genius bowed low before that figure—the grandest in German Literature. The grand music of Gœthe's poetry entranced Carlyle, the inspired power of Gœthe's genius brought him to worship at its shrine. Speaking of the German poet he says: "The

Literature of Europe will pass away, Europe itself, the earth itself will pass away; this little life-boat of an earth will have one day vanished, faded like a cloud-speck from the azure of the All! What then is Man? He endures but for an hour and is crushed before the moth. Yet in the being and in the working of a faithful man is there a something which pertains not to this wild death element of TIME; that triumphs over time, and *is*, and will be when Time shall be no more."

The natural characteristic common to these men, the development of genius in each, their religion, and the general effects of their widely differing writings have already been noticed. Their lives we have not reviewed. Rousseau revealed his nature in the "Confessions;" Gœthe in his "Autobiography;" both in the works which display their separate individualities. It has been our aim to sketch briefly a few lines of coincidence and divergence in the characters of these two men, whose lives filled the century important above all others in Continental History.

The death of Gœthe was as different from that of Rousseau, as is the setting of the summer sun, from the quick extinction of the flaming torch. The persecutions by the enemies of the latter, harassed him to his dying day. To these vague fears, were added strange half-insane inventions of his own mind. The black cloud of death came down suddenly upon him. Apoplexy, said some; Suicide, whispered others. But he dies among comparative strangers. The wild glare of his life was suddenly darkened, darkened forevermore. "By the serene moonrise of a summer night, his body was put under the ground, on an island in the midst of a small lake, where poplars throw shadows over the still water, silently figuring the destiny of mortals. Here it remained for sixteen years. Then amid the roar of cannon, the crash of trumpet and drum, and the wild acclamations of a populace gone mad in exultation,

terror, fury, the poor dust was transported to the national temple of great men."

At the clear noonday of approaching spring, when Germany was putting on a robe of vernal brightness, Gœthe died. His last hours are thus described. "In silent anguish, the close, now so surely approaching, was awaited. His speech was becoming less and less distinct. The last words audible were '*more light!*' The final darkness grew apace, and he whose eternal longings had been for more Light, gave a parting cry for it as he was passing under the shadow of death."

Rousseau and Gœthe! Each had passed a strange existence. One eternally tormented by the morbid fancies of his wild mind; the other ever restless to solve those problems which rose before him. The one, a wild flash from the burning genius of France; the other the eternal morning star of German Literature.

DOWN BY THE SEA.

Down by the sea,
Where murmuring waves sing soft 'neath the moon,
Where whispering winds through the dark cedars croon.

Where sparkle the dew-drops by thousands so bright,
The gems that are lost from blue robes of night,
Down by the sea.

Down by the sea,
Where silvery sails, 'neath the stars' mellow beam,
Like hope-laden spirits of gladness out gleam.

Where zephyrs are nursing the diver's low speech,—
Down where the ripples are kissing the beach,
Down by the sea.

TRICOTRIN.