VINTAGE

POINTS OF VIEW

W SOMERSET MAUGHAM

VINTAGE CLASSICS

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Eclectic and illuminating, these essays are the last that Maugham published. Ranging from an appreciation of Goethe’s novels, to an encounter with an Indian holy man, with a considered analysis of the form at which Maugham himself excelled – the short story – they present the enduring views and opinions of this eminent writer.

About the Author

William Somerset Maugham was born in 1874 and lived in Paris until he was ten. He was educated at King's School, Canterbury, and at Heidelberg University. He spent some time at St. Thomas' Hospital with the idea of practising medicine, but the success of his first novel, *Liza of Lambeth*, published in 1897, won him over to letters. *Of Human Bondage*, the first of his masterpieces, came out in 1915, and with the publication in 1919 of *The Moon and Sixpence* his reputation as a novelist was established. At the same time his fame as a successful playwright and writer was being consolidated with acclaimed productions of various plays and the publication of several short story collections. His other works include travel books, essays, criticism and the autobiographical *The Summing Up* and *A Writer's Notebook*.

In 1927 Somerset Maugham settled in the South of France and lived there until his death in 1965.

ALSO BY W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

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W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

Points of View

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The Three Novels of a Poet

1

I THINK IT ONLY FAIR to tell the reader of the following pages why, at this time of day, when surely everything that could be said about Goethe has long since been said, I should write an essay on his novels. It has given me pleasure to do so, and if there is a better reason for writing anything I have yet to hear of it. From my earliest years I could speak English and French; as a child, French better than English; and when still in my teens I spent a year in Germany and attended lectures at the University. I learnt German. I had read poetry at school, but as a task. Goethe's lyrics are the first poems I read for my pleasure and it may be that is why, when I read them now, I read them with the same rapture as I did more than half a century ago. I read not only with my eyes, but with the recollections of my youth, Heidelberg with its old streets, the ancient castle, the wooded walk to the top of the Königstuhl and the beautiful plain of the Neckar spread out before one, the skating in winter, the canoeing in summer, the interminable conversations about art and literature, free will and determinism; and first love, though, heaven knows, I never knew it for what it was.

It was during this period that I read the novels of Goethe. I did not read them again till a few years ago when, after a long interval, I began to pay visits to Germany. He wrote three. They are *The Sorrows of Werther, Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, with its sequel, and *The Elective Affinities*. Of these *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* is the

most important and the most interesting. I suppose few people in England read it now, unless for scholastic reasons they are obliged to, and I don’t know why anyone should—except that it is lively and amusing, both romantic and realistic; except that the characters are curious and unusual, very much alive and presented with vigour; except that there are scenes of great variety, vivid and admirably described, and at least two of high comedy, a rarity in Goethe’s works; except that interspersed in it are lyrics as beautiful and touching as any that he ever wrote; except that there is a disquisition on Hamlet which many eminent critics have agreed is a subtle analysis of the Dane’s ambiguous character; and above all, except that its theme is of singular interest. If, with all these merits, the novel on the whole is a failure, it is because Goethe, for all his genius, for all his intellectual powers, for all his knowledge of life, lacked the specific gift which would have made him a great novelist as well as a great poet.

If anyone were to ask me what this specific gift is, I should not know how to answer. It is evident that the novelist must be something of an extrovert, since otherwise he will not have the urge to express himself; but he can make do with no more intelligence than is needed for a man to be a good lawyer or a good doctor. He must be able to tell such story as he has to tell effectively so that he may hold his readers’ attention. He need not love his fellow-creatures (that would be asking too much) but he must be profoundly interested in them; and he must have the gift of empathy which enables him to step into their shoes, think their thoughts and feel their feelings. Perhaps Goethe, terrific egoist as he was, failed as a novelist because he lacked just that.

In the following pages I do not propose to tell the story of Goethe’s life; but since he said himself that pretty well everything he wrote, except the books devoted to his scientific interests, was in one way or another a revelation

of himself, I shall be obliged to give some account of various events of his personal history. When just over twenty, he entered the university of Strasbourg to study law, the profession which, much against his own wishes, his father had decided he should follow. Goethe was then a very comely youth, so comely indeed, that those who saw him for the first time were lost in amazement. He was a little above the middle height, slender, and he held himself so well that he looked taller than he really was. He was of a darkish complexion and he had a fine head of hair, with a natural wave in it; his nose was straight, rather large, and his mouth full and well-shaped; but his magnificent brown eyes, with their unusually large pupils, were his most striking feature. He had immense vitality and a charm that was irresistible. Children doted on him, and he would play with them and tell them stories by the hour together.

After Goethe had been at Strasbourg for some months, a fellow-student suggested that they should ride over to Sesenheim, twenty miles away, to spend two or three nights with friends of his, a pastor, Brion by name, and his wife and daughters. Goethe agreed; they set out and were warmly welcomed. One of the daughters was called Friederike. Goethe fell in love with her at first sight and she with him. How could she fail to? She had never seen anyone so handsome, so charming, and so light on his feet. A new-fangled dance, the waltz had come to Strasbourg only ten years before and, all the rage had ousted the old-fashioned minuet and gavotte. It was an added attraction that Goethe had learned it and was able to teach her. He loved everything about Friederike, her fair hair and blue eyes, her grace, her simplicity, her activity about the house, the peasant dress she so becomingly wore; and when, forty years later, he dictated an account of the romance in his autobiography, they say that his emotion made his voice tremble. For some months the lovers were deliriously happy. Goethe wrote a number of poems to Friederike;

many were lost, but those that remain attest the fervour of his passion. How far things went none can tell. It is asserted that the idea of marrying her never entered his head. That may be so. Even then, Goethe had that sense of class distinctions which in later life was markedly characteristic of him. He belonged to a well-to-do and respectable family, and he knew, of course, that his father, a stern and self-important man, on whom he was entirely dependent, would never consent to his marriage with the daughter of a penniless country parson. But he was young and in love. We all know that men under the influence of passion say things and make promises which in calmer moments they forget. They are taken aback to discover that the woman they have said them to has remembered and taken them seriously. It is surely not unlikely that Goethe at one time or another had said something to Friederike that led her to believe that he would marry her.

An incident eventually occurred which brought it home to him that, for all her charm and grace, she was little more than a peasant. The Brions had relations in Strasbourg, whom Goethe rather patronisingly describes as “of good position and reputation, and in their circumstances comfortably off”. Friederike and her sister, whom he calls Olivia, went to stay with them for a while. The two girls found it difficult to adapt themselves to a mode of life that was strange to them. They, like the servants, wore their peasant dress, whereas their cousins and the ladies who visited them were dressed in the French fashion. They could not but feel themselves out of place in these unaccustomed surroundings, and the cousins, perhaps none too pleased to produce to their friends these poor relations, did nothing to make things easy for them. Friederike bore the embarrassing situation with a certain placidity, but Olivia was deeply affronted. The visit was a dismal failure. “At last I saw them drive away,” Goethe wrote, “and it seemed as though a stone fell from my heart,

for my feelings had shared the feelings of Friederike and Olivia; certainly I was not passionately harassed like the latter, but I felt in no way comfortable like the former." It is not a pretty story, but it is understandable. If ever he had contemplated marrying Friederike, this experience proved to him that it was out of the question.

He made up his mind that they must part. Since at the time he was working for an examination, he had a decent excuse to go to Sesenheim less frequently. He took his degree and three weeks later left Strasbourg for home. He could not refrain from riding over to see Friederike once more. The parting was painful. "As I reached my hand from horseback, tears stood in her eyes, and I was heavy at heart." He left her, he says, when their parting almost cost her her life; but it looks as though even then he had not had the courage to tell her that it was for good. When at last he did, it was by letter. Friederike's answer, he tells us, rent his heart. "I now for the first time," he wrote, "felt the loss she suffered, and I saw no possibility of supplying it, or of alleviating the pain." He added, rather sourly, that the reasons of a girl who draws back in such a case always appear valid, but those of a man, never. "I had wounded the most beautiful heart in its depths, and so the period of a gloomy remorse, with the want of an animating love, to which I had grown accustomed, was highly painful, indeed intolerable. But man wishes to live, and so I took a sincere interest in others." The young are able to bear the woes of others with a good deal of fortitude; Goethe was doubly fortunate in that, when his conscience told him that in his treatment of Friederike he had been sadly to blame, he could seek relief in poetry. "I pursued again the traditional poetic confession, so that by this self-tormenting penance I should become worthy of an inward absolution. The two Marys in *Götz von Berlichingen* and *Clavigo* [his first two plays] and the two sorry figures which their lovers cut may well have been the result of such penitent reflections." Had

Goethe seduced her? We shall never know. One would think that if there had been no more between them than a violent flirtation his pangs of conscience would have been less persistent. It may well be that Goethe bore Friederike's anguish in mind when he wrote the beautiful and moving song of which the first line runs: *Meine Ruh ist hin, mein Herz ist schwer;* and perhaps, highly susceptible as he was and tremulously sensitive, it was the torture of his remorse that led him to give immortal expression to the tragic story of Gretchen.

But this is only one of the many conjectures that have been made to discover the origins of his greatest work. In no long while he was able to state that his heart was untouched and unoccupied.

2

The Sorrows of Werther was the outcome of another love affair. Six months or so after leaving Strasbourg and breaking with Friederike, Goethe, in order to complete his training as a lawyer, went to Wetzlar. There at a ball he danced with a girl called Charlotte Buff. She was engaged to be married to a certain Johann Christian Kestner. Goethe fell in love with her there and then. Next day he called on her. Very soon he was seeing her every day. They took walks together, and Kestner, when his occupations left him free, accompanied them. He was a very decent fellow, somewhat matter-of-fact and uncommonly tolerant; but it is plain that, notwithstanding his good nature, Goethe's attention to his betrothed made him at times uneasy. He wrote in his diary, "When I've done with my work and go to see my girl, I find Dr. Goethe there. He's in love with her, and though he's a philosopher and a good friend of mine, he's not pleased when he sees me coming to have a pleasant time with my girl. And although I'm a good friend of his, I don't like it that he should be alone with my girl and entertain her."

A few weeks later he wrote, "Goethe got a good talking-to from Lottchen. She told him that he could not hope for anything more than friendship from her: he went pale and was very depressed. He went for a walk."

Goethe lingered on at Wetzlar through the summer, trying to make up his mind to leave Lotte, but unable to bring himself to do so; and it was not till the beginning of

autumn that he at last summoned up the courage to go. He spent his last evening with Lotte and Kestner without disclosing his intention to them, and next morning was gone. He left a despairing letter to Lotte which brought tears to her eyes.

Goethe went back to Frankfort, and there, some weeks later, the news reached him that an acquaintance of his, a young man called Jerusalem, had committed suicide at Wetzlar owing to an unhappy love affair. He immediately wrote to Kestner for full details of the event and made a careful copy of the information thus supplied to him. “At this moment,” he wrote in his autobiography, “the plan of *Werther* was found, the whole shot together from all sides and became a solid mass, as water in a vessel which is on the point of freezing is transformed into solid ice by the slightest agitation. To hold fast this strange prize, to keep before me and carry out in all its parts a work of such varied and significant contents was for me so much the more pressing, as I had already fallen into a painful situation, which permitted me less hope than those which had gone before, and foreboded nothing but depression, if not disgust.” This refers to the fact that Goethe had again fallen in love. “It is a very pleasant sensation,” he wrote, “when a new passion begins to stir within us, before the old one has quite passed away. Thus at sunset we like to see the moon rising on the opposite side, and one takes delight in the double splendour of the two heavenly luminaries.” The young woman who occasioned this poetic simile was called Maximiliane de la Roche, and Goethe wrote to her mother: “Your Max I cannot do without as long as I live, and I shall always venture to love her.” But a marriage had been arranged for her with a certain Peter Brentano, many years older than herself, a dealer in herrings, oil and cheese, who lived in Frankfort. The ill-suited pair were married and Goethe spent many hours a day in her

company. But Peter Brentano was not so easy-going as Johann Kestner, and soon Goethe was forbidden the house.

It was, as his own words show, the news of Jerusalem's tragic death that served as the necessary spark so to kindle Goethe's imagination as to lead to the writing of *The Sorrows of Werther*. It cannot have been long before he saw that by making use of his unhappy love for Lotte Buff, and combining it with the suicide of Jerusalem, with all that had brought it about, he had to his hand the complete material for a novel. He had himself from time to time coquetted with the idea of suicide. Coquetted is the word George Henry Lewes used in his *Life of Goethe* (still readable after well over a hundred years) and I should say it was the right one. It is true that in the autobiography, written fifty years later, Goethe stated that his anguish was such that the temptation to do away with himself was deadly serious and no one could know how great an effort he had to make not to succumb to it. I venture to suggest that, as men, even the most eminent, are apt to do when they recall the past, he somewhat exaggerated. The young Goethe had high spirits, animation and a cheerful temper; but, like many another, he paid for it by periods of depression. At one time he went to bed with a dagger by his bedside and played with the notion of plunging it in his heart. But, of course, it was only a fantasy, such as, I suppose, many a young man has had in moments of dejection. His vitality was far too great for him ever really to determine to put an end to the life he enjoyed so much. But it is not unlikely that it occurred to him that the feelings which had now and then possessed him could be put to good use when he came to describe those of the hero of his novel. At last he began to write it. He used the form of letters, which was popular at the time owing to the novels of Richardson and Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. It is the easiest way for an inexperienced novelist to write a work of fiction. It is out of fashion now; but it has its merits,

not the least of which is that it adds a convincing verisimilitude to the facts narrated.

The story of *The Sorrows of Werther* can be told in a few lines. A young man arrives at an unnamed town (Wetzlar, of course) and there meets an attractive girl at a country dance. He falls in love with her, discovers that she is engaged to be married, loves her to distraction and eventually tears himself away. After some time he returns, drawn back by love for her, to find her happily wedded. His passion undiminished, nay, aggravated, so absorbs him that nothing else in the world has meaning for him; and at last, since his love is hopeless, since life without her is intolerable, he shoots himself. The novel, short as it is (it can be read in a couple of hours) is divided into two books. The first ends with Werther's departure; the second begins with his return and ends with his death.

The first book, the reader will see from my account of Goethe's sojourn at Wetzlar, follows the facts very closely. In it Goethe has given his hero his own charm, his gaiety and good humour, his affectionateness, his ease in social intercourse, and his love of nature. In fact he has drawn a very engaging portrait of himself. Goethe wrote an idyll suffused with the poetry of the long summer days and the moonlit nights of that beautiful countryside. You get a pleasant feeling of the uprightness and decency of those simple and amiable people, and of the *Gemüt-lichkeit* of the life they led in Germany so long ago. You sympathise with Lotte (Goethe had given his heroine Lotte Buff's christian name), so good, so tender, so pretty and such an excellent housewife; you sympathise with her patient, sedate betrothed, whom Goethe called Albert; and you sympathise with Werther for the hopelessness of his love. The first book is a delight to read. It is clearly autobiographical. Now, the autobiographical novel, whether written in the first person or the third, is vitiated by a falsity which is irremediable. This does not consist in the author making

himself more resourceful, more gallant and more attractive than he really is, abler and better-looking : that, if he chooses, is his right; he is writing fiction, not history. It consists in his omitting the one characteristic which determines his personality—his creative instinct. It is true that David Copperfield was an author, and a successful one; but it is not an essential element in the narrative; it is the accidental consequence of his circumstances. For all the effect it has on his life, and the story Dickens had to tell, he might just as well have been a civil servant or a schoolmaster. We know that when Goethe found himself in a distressing situation, when he was unhappy and conscience-stricken, he turned to poetry for solace. He had a strong propensity to fall madly in love with any charming girl he ran across; but his mind seethed with the plays and poems he had in mind, and in his heart of hearts, I suggest, they meant more to him than his violent, but ephemeral, passions. Perhaps even, he slightly resented their interference with what was his main preoccupation—to create. There is in the Werther of the first book no such urge. He is a sociable, agreeable, but rather futile dilettante. When at last he brought himself to leave Wetzlar and Lotte, he would have consorted with his friends, consoled himself by writing poetry and fallen in love with somebody else. That, as the reader has seen, is exactly what Goethe himself did.

The second book is pure fiction. Werther is not the man we have come to know in the first. He is a very different one. When this occurred to me I thought I had made an interesting discovery and was rather pleased with myself. But by chance I came across an account of a visit Crabb Robinson had paid Frau Aja, Goethe’s mother, and in course of conversation she remarked that the Werther of the first book was Goethe, whereas the Werther of the second was not. Since then so much has been written about this famous novel that the patent fact must have been

noted over and over again. In truth, it stares one in the face. From the beginning Goethe had, of course, intended that Werther should commit suicide, and, to prepare the reader, he introduced early on a scene in which Werther, Lotte, and Albert discuss its justification. Lotte and Albert are horrified at the idea, but Werther argues that when a person finds life unbearable, it is his only refuge. He claims that in certain circumstances it is a necessary and courageous act, which should not be condemned, but applauded. Goethe's instinct must have told him that the character he had created in the first book, to whom he had given his own zest for life, would have been, whatever his anguish, no more likely to commit suicide than he himself; he had now to create one that would be irresistibly impelled to it. That is what Goethe did. It was inevitable that the Werther of the second book should turn out to be a very different man from the Werther of the first.

Some time after leaving Wetzlar, on the persuasion of his friends he accepts the post of secretary to a diplomatic representative at one of the German Courts. The Werther to whom we are now introduced is prickly, intolerant, disdainful and quick to take offence. His chief naturally wants letters to be written in his own way, and when Werther writes them in *his* way, he returns them and demands, to his secretary's indignation, that they should be re-written. There was at the time, it appears, a craze among the cultured young to make use of inversions. They thought it added elegance to their style. It was not unreasonable that the envoy, an experienced man of affairs, should regard this as out of place in official documents and prefer to have them written in the 'officialese' to which he was accustomed, rather than in what may be described as 'literatese'. Employer and employee were soon at loggerheads.

Presently an incident occurred which had unfortunate consequences. Werther had made friends with a high

official of the Court to which his chief was accredited, and one evening dined with him. His host was giving a party to the nobility and gentry of the town and after dinner went to the drawing-room to receive his guests. Werther accompanied him. As a commoner of no position he had not been invited to the party. The guests arrived, Princes, Counts, Barons, with their ladies, and Werther immediately noticed that they were surprised to see him. He became aware that his presence in that exclusive gathering was creating unfavourable comment; but, with a singular lack of tact, he stayed on. After a while, one of the more important ladies went up to the host and protested; his host sent for him and politely enough asked him to leave. To us this must seem outrageous. One has to remember how great the gulf was at the time in Germany between the aristocracy and the middle class. The news spread quickly through the town that Werther had been guilty of a gross impertinence and had been turned out of the house. He was deeply mortified and a week later sent in his resignation.

A certain Prince, who has taken a fancy to the young man, perhaps out of pity for the humiliation he had suffered invites Werther to accompany him to his estates and spend the spring with him. This Werther does, but after a few weeks comes to the conclusion that the Prince and he have nothing in common. “He is a man of understanding,” he writes, “but of quite ordinary understanding; his company entertains me no more than the reading of a well-written book.” A supercilious youth! Werther decides to leave and drifts back to the town in which Lotte and Albert, now married, live. Albert appears to have been none too pleased to see him; his affairs obliged him to be absent now and then, and, though he does not openly object, he does not like the idea that Werther should be so much with his wife. Goethe has described Lotte’s feelings with subtlety. She knows that Albert resents Werther’s presence, and she wishes that he would go and leave them in peace, yet has

not the heart to drive him away. She loves and respects her husband, but is more than a little in love with Werther. Christmas approaches. Albert is again absent. Lotte has made Werther promise that he will not attempt to see her while her husband is away, and when, nevertheless, he comes, she reproaches him bitterly for not keeping his promise. It is evening; and so that she should not be alone with him, she sends a message to some friends asking them to look in. They are engaged and unable to. Werther has brought books with him and Lotte suggests that he should read to her. He has made some translations of Ossian, and these he reads. What he reads moves them both, and she bursts into tears. Her tears shatter him and, weeping, he throws his arms round her and passionately kisses her. She is torn between love and anger. She pushes him away. “That’s the last time!” she cries. “You shall never see me again.” “And then,” the author writes, “with a look of deep love at the wretched man, she hurried into the next room and shut herself in.” Next day Werther writes a heart-stricken letter to Lotte in which he tells her that he is going to kill himself. He tells her that now at last he knows that she loves him. “You are mine, Lotte, to all eternity.” Werther, learning from his servant that Albert has come home, sends him to ask for the loan of his pistols as he is going on a journey. Albert, we may presume relieved to know this, sends them, and early on the following morning Werther shoots himself. The letter to Lotte is found among his effects.

Such, baldly related, is the story of *The Sorrows of Werther*. The final pages, even today, are moving. The book was published and achieved a success that, perhaps, no other novel has had. It was widely read, widely discussed and widely imitated. It was translated into a dozen languages. The only persons who seem to have received the book somewhat coldly were Kestner and Lotte. That they had served as Goethe’s models was immediately

recognised. Kestner was justifiably annoyed to find himself portrayed as a dull, rather stupid fellow, unworthy of his charming wife, and to have it suggested that she had been in love with Goethe. Many wondered how much fiction there was in the novel, and how much fact, Kestner wrote to protest. Goethe's reply was high-handed. "Could you but realise," he wrote, "the thousandth part of what Werther is to a thousand hearts, you would not reckon the cost it is to you."

When one reads *The Sorrows of Werther* today one can hardly fail to ask oneself what there was in it to cause so great a sensation. I suppose the answer is that it exactly suited what we now call the climate of opinion. Romanticism was already in the air. The works of Rousseau were translated and eagerly read. Their influence was enormous. The young Germans of the day were impatient with the hard and cramping routine of the Age of Enlightenment, and the dryness of the orthodox religion offered nothing to hearts that were yearning for infinitude. Rousseau offered the young just what they craved for. They were only too ready to believe with him that emotion was more estimable than reason and the promptings of the heart nobler than the uncertainties of the mind. They cherished sensibility; it was the mark of a beautiful soul. They despised common sense; it showed want of feeling. Their emotions were uncontrollable; men and women on the smallest provocation burst into floods of tears. The letters they wrote, even of those old enough to know better, were extravagantly gushing. Wieland, a poet and a professor, in his forties, began a letter to Lavater by addressing him as Angel of God, and ended with the words, "If I could only spend three weeks with you! But I feel in advance that you would become too dear to me. I should in actual fact become ill with love; and die, when I had to leave you again." The German commentator of this effusion dryly adds that Wieland frequently visited his friends and

left them without falling ill for love of them, and dying. If such was the climate of opinion, it is no wonder that *The Sorrows of Werther* captivated readers. They were touched by the hopelessness of the youth's passionate love; and that Werther, irked by the limitations of life on this earth, should have sought freedom in death aroused in their tender hearts awe and admiration. Werther made Goethe famous, and for many years, whatever else he wrote, he was universally known as the author of this book. Though he lived to old age he never again achieved such an astounding success.

3

The Sorrows of Werther was published in the autumn of 1774. Towards the end of that year a certain Major von Knebel, acting as bear-leader to the two young Princes of Weimar, knocked at the door of Goethe's house and asked to see him. He came with the message that his two charges desired to make the acquaintance of the distinguished author. The acquaintance was made, and the two boys, the elder of whom was not yet eighteen, were enchanted with him. Shortly after this, Goethe was taken by a friend to a party given by a certain Frau Schönemann, a rich banker's widow. She had an only child, a daughter, fair-haired and blue-eyed, who, when Goethe entered the room, was playing the piano. As was his way, he fell in love with her. Before long she loved him too. Their mutual attachment pleased neither her family nor his. Lili Schönemann's belonged to the upper class of Frankfort society and, as an heiress, was expected to make a good marriage. Goethe's grandfather was a tailor, who married the widow of an inn-keeper, and for the rest of his life followed his predecessor's lucrative profession. His son, Goethe's father, received a legal training and acquired the honorary rank of Imperial Councillor, which gave him a social status, but not such as to admit him into the higher ranks of Frankfort society. He was a harsh, austere man, and he was very much against his son's bringing into the house as his bride a young woman of fashion. Lili was sixteen and as was only natural took delight in the pleasures of her age.

She loved dancing, parties and picnics. Goethe was not unaware that the gay life she led was not the life for him, but he was too much in love to care. He wrote poems to her, some of the most beautiful he ever wrote; but they have not quite the youthful abandon of those he wrote to Friederike; you feel in them some hint of uncertainty. He was not quite sure of himself, and not quite sure of Lili. Notwithstanding the opposition of their families, however, they became engaged. But no sooner had this happened than Goethe grew uneasy. He was twenty-six, conscious of his great powers, and his zest for life was intense. He had no wish to settle down.

So, after anxious consideration (we may surmise) and, if he gave a thought to Lili's distress, perhaps not without some qualms of conscience, he came to the conclusion that he must destroy his love for her. A happy chance enabled him, as he thought, to do something to effect this. Two young men of rank, the Counts Stolberg, fervent admirers of the poet, came to Frankfort and made friends with him. They were on their way to Switzerland and asked Goethe to join them. He consented. They started off in the costume which Werther had always worn and in which he had left instructions that he should be buried—blue coat, yellow hose and waistcoat, top boots and round grey hats. Goethe left without telling Lili he was going, without a word of farewell, and both she and her family very naturally resented it. It was, to say the least, unmannerly; but there was on occasion something of brutality in the way Goethe treated others. He was curiously insensitive to the pain he caused. The young men made a tour of Switzerland and admired the scenery; but Goethe did not succeed in forgetting Lili. From some touching lines he wrote we know how hungrily he hankered after her. So far as that went, the trip had been a failure.

He returned to Frankfort. From the accounts we have, it is not clear whether the young things still looked upon