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The Sorrows of Young Werther

Die Leiden des jungen Werthers

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
1774 · 1787

Fiction · Novels

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Translated from the German by Ether Library

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Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832)

Translated from the German by Ether Library

First published anonymously in Leipzig by Weygand in 1774; revised by Goethe for the 1787 edition of his collected writings, the text translated here.

A Note on the Translation

This is a complete translation of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, made directly from the German; no earlier English version was used as its basis. The novel appeared anonymously in 1774. For the first volume of his collected writings (Göschen, 1787) Goethe revised it, reworking the end of Book One and much of Book Two, adding the story of the farmhand, and rewriting much of the editor's report. We translate this 1787 text, the one read today, from a public-domain transcription of the Hamburg Edition.

The transcription lacks the editor's two-paragraph preface, which has been supplied from the 1787 text. Four lines lost in transcription (in the thunderstorm at the ball, twice in Book Two, and in the Songs of Selma) and some twenty misspelled words are read as the 1787 text has them, and the Ossian letter is dated October 12, not October 10. The editor's brief footnotes of 1787 are not in our source and have not been added.

The book has two voices. Werther writes to his friend Wilhelm almost daily, in long breathless sentences that suddenly break off; we keep his every exclamation, question, and dash, and add no feeling words of our own. The editor reports in a sober past tense, and the letters he lets in return at once to Werther's heat.

English cannot mark the difference between *Sie* and *du*. Werther and Lotte say *Sie* to each other until his last letter, where he writes *du* for the first time; we mark the change by register alone, his words to her composed until that letter and unguarded from there on. The Ossian songs he reads to her are translated from Goethe's own German, not taken from Macpherson.

Goethe's divisions are headed "Preface," "Book One," "Book Two," and "The Editor to the Reader." Each of the 436 paragraphs of the source is one paragraph here, and every dated letter keeps its heading line. Names keep their German form; Lotte's father, the *Amtmann*, is the magistrate. Spelling is American. There are no translator's notes.

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Preface

Whatever I have been able to find of the story of poor Werther I have diligently collected, and I lay it before you here, knowing that you will thank me for it. You cannot deny his spirit and his character your admiration and love, nor his fate your tears.

And you, good soul, who feel the same longing as he did, draw comfort from his sufferings, and let this little book be your friend if, through fate or your own fault, you can find none closer!

Book One

May 4, 1771

How glad I am to be away! Dearest friend, what a thing is the human heart! To leave you, whom I love so much, from whom I was inseparable, and to be glad! I know you forgive me. Weren't my other attachments chosen by fate precisely to torment a heart like mine? Poor Leonore! And yet I was innocent. Could I help it that, while her sister's willful charms gave me pleasant entertainment, a passion was forming in that poor heart? And yet—am I wholly innocent? Didn't I feed her feelings? Didn't I myself delight in those utterly true expressions of nature that so often made us laugh, little as they were laughable? Didn't I—oh, what is man, that he may complain of himself! I will, dear friend, I promise you, I will improve; I will no longer chew over every little trouble that fate sets before us, as I always have. I will enjoy the present, and the past shall be past for me. You are certainly right, my dear friend: there would be less pain among people if they did not—God knows why they are made that way!—busy their imaginations so diligently with calling back the memories of past troubles, rather than bearing an indifferent present.

Be so good as to tell my mother that I shall manage her business as well as I can and send her news of it very soon. I have spoken with my aunt and found her far from the wicked woman they make of her at home. She is a lively, impetuous woman with the best of hearts. I explained my mother's complaints to her about the share of the inheritance she has been holding back; she told me her reasons, her grounds, and the conditions on which she

would be willing to hand over everything, and more than we asked —in short, I don't want to write about it now; tell my mother that all will go well. And in this small affair, my dear friend, I have found once again that misunderstandings and indolence perhaps cause more trouble in the world than cunning and malice. At least the last two are certainly rarer.

For the rest, I am very well here. Solitude is a precious balm to my heart in this paradise of a countryside, and this season of youth warms my often shivering heart with all its abundance. Every tree, every hedge is a bouquet of blossoms, and you would like to turn into a May beetle so as to float about in that sea of fragrance and find all your nourishment in it.

The town itself is unpleasant, but all around it lies an inexpressible beauty of nature. That is what moved the late Count M. to lay out a garden on one of the hills, which cross one another in the loveliest variety and form the sweetest valleys. The garden is simple, and as soon as you enter you feel that it was not a scientific gardener who drew up the plan but a feeling heart that wanted to enjoy itself here. I have already wept many a tear for the departed in the crumbling little summerhouse that was his favorite spot and is mine too. Soon I shall be master of the garden; the gardener has taken to me, after only these few days, and he will not lose by it.

May 10

A wonderful serenity has taken possession of my whole soul, like the sweet spring mornings that I enjoy with my whole heart. I am alone and glad of my life in this countryside, which was made for souls like mine. I am so happy, dear friend, so completely sunk in the feeling of quiet existence, that my art suffers for it. I could not draw now, not a single line, and yet I have never been a greater painter than in these moments. When the lovely valley steams around me, and the high sun rests on the surface of the impene-

trable darkness of my forest, and only a few stray rays steal into the inner sanctuary, and I lie in the tall grass by the falling brook, and, closer to the earth, a thousand different little grasses catch my notice; when I feel the teeming of the little world among the stalks, the countless, unfathomable forms of the little worms and gnats, closer to my heart, and feel the presence of the Almighty, who created us in his image, the breath of the All-loving, who bears and sustains us, floating in eternal rapture; my friend! When it grows dim before my eyes then, and the world around me and the sky rest wholly in my soul like the form of a beloved—then I often feel a longing and think: ah, if only you could express all this again, if only you could breathe onto paper what lives in you so fully, so warmly, so that it would become the mirror of your soul, as your soul is the mirror of the infinite God!—my friend—but it is ruin to me; I am overwhelmed by the power and splendor of these appearances.

I don't know whether deceiving spirits hover about this place, or whether it is the warm, heavenly fancy in my heart that makes everything around me seem such a paradise. Just outside the town there is a well, a well that holds me spellbound like Melusine and her sisters.—You go down a little hill and find yourself in front of a vault, where some twenty steps lead down to where the clearest water wells up out of marble rock. The low wall that encloses it above, the tall trees that shade the place all around, the coolness of the spot: there is something so inviting about it all, something that makes you shiver. Not a day goes by that I don't sit there for an hour. The girls come out from the town to fetch water, the most innocent of tasks and the most necessary, which in times gone by the daughters of kings performed themselves. When I sit there, the world of the patriarchs comes so vividly alive around me: how they, all the forefathers, made acquaintance and courted at the well, and how kindly spirits hover about wells and springs.

Oh, anyone who cannot feel this with me has never refreshed himself at the coolness of a well after a hard day's walking in summer.

May 13

You ask whether you should send me my books?—My dear friend, I beg you for God's sake, keep them off my back! I no longer want to be guided, encouraged, fired up; this heart of mine surges enough on its own. What I need is a cradle song, and I have found it in all its fullness in my Homer. How often I lull my rebellious blood to rest; for you have never seen anything so uneven, so restless as this heart. My dear friend! Do I need to tell you that, you who have so often borne the burden of watching me pass from grief to wild excess, and from sweet melancholy to ruinous passion? And I treat my poor heart like a sick child; it is allowed its every wish. Don't tell anyone; there are people who would hold it against me.

May 15

The humble folk of the place know me already and love me, especially the children. I have made a sad observation. When I first joined them and asked them in a friendly way about this and that, some of them thought I meant to make fun of them and brushed me off quite rudely. I did not let that vex me; I only felt most keenly what I have often noticed before: people of some rank will always keep themselves at a cold distance from the common people, as though they believed they would lose by coming close; and then there are frivolous types and nasty jokers who seem to condescend only in order to make the poor people feel their arrogance all the more painfully.

I know very well that we are not equal and cannot be; but I hold that anyone who believes he must keep away from the so-called rabble in order to preserve their respect is just as much to blame as a coward who hides from his enemy because he is afraid of being beaten.

The other day I came to the well and found a young servant girl who had set her pitcher on the lowest step and was looking around to see whether some friend would come along to help her lift it onto her head. I went down and looked at her. “Shall I help you, miss?” I said.—She blushed scarlet all over. “Oh no, sir!” she said.—“No fuss now.”—She settled her collar, and I helped her. She thanked me and went up the steps.

May 17

I have made all sorts of acquaintances, but I have found no company yet. I don’t know what it is about me that attracts people; so many of them like me and attach themselves to me, and then it hurts me when our ways run together for only a short stretch. If you ask what the people here are like, I must tell you: like people everywhere! The human race is a monotonous thing. Most of them spend the greater part of their time working in order to live, and the little bit of freedom they have left frightens them so much that they look for every means of getting rid of it. Oh, the destiny of man!

But a very good sort of people! When I forget myself now and then, and now and then enjoy with them the pleasures still granted to human beings, joking around a nicely laid table with all openness and good faith, arranging a drive or a dance at the right moment, and things like that, it does me a lot of good; only I must not let it occur to me that so many other powers lie dormant in me, all moldering unused, which I have to hide carefully. Ah, that cramps the whole heart so.—And yet! To be misunderstood is the fate of people like us.

Ah, that the friend of my youth is gone! Ah, that I ever knew her!—I would say to myself: you are a fool! You are looking for what is not to be found here below! But I did have her, I felt that heart, that great soul, in whose presence I seemed to myself more than I was, because I was all that I could be. Good God! Was there a sin-

gle power of my soul left unused then? Could I not unfold before her the whole wonderful feeling with which my heart embraces nature? Was our companionship not a never-ending weaving of the finest feeling and the keenest wit, whose variations, down to their very naughtiness, were all stamped with genius? And now!—Ah, the years she had on me led her to the grave before me. I will never forget her, never her steady mind and her divine forbearance.

A few days ago I met a young V., an open-hearted boy with a very happy cast of face. He has only just come down from the university; he doesn't exactly think himself wise, but he does believe he knows more than others. He has worked hard, too, as I can tell from all sorts of things; in short, he has a nice store of knowledge. When he heard that I drew a great deal and knew Greek (two prodigies in these parts), he turned to me and unpacked a great deal of learning, from Batteux to Wood, from de Piles to Winckelmann, and assured me that he had read the first part of Sulzer's *Theory* all the way through and owned a manuscript by Heyne on the study of antiquity. I let that pass.

I have come to know another very good man, too, the prince's magistrate, an open, trusting person. They say it is a joy to the soul to see him among his children, of whom he has nine; people make a great deal of his eldest daughter especially. He has invited me to his house, and I mean to visit him one of these days. He lives at a hunting lodge of the prince's, an hour and a half from here, where he was given permission to move after his wife's death, since staying here in town and in the magistrate's house had become too painful for him.

Besides these, a few warped eccentrics have crossed my path, in whom everything is unbearable, and most unbearable of all their displays of friendship.

Farewell! You will like this letter; it sticks entirely to the facts.

May 22

That human life is only a dream has occurred to many before me, and the feeling goes about with me everywhere too. When I look at the confinement in which the active and inquiring powers of man are shut up; when I see how all our efforts come down to satisfying needs that in turn have no purpose but to prolong our poor existence, and then, that all our reassurance on certain points of inquiry is only a dreaming resignation, in which we paint the walls we sit imprisoned between with colorful figures and bright prospects—all that, Wilhelm, leaves me speechless. I go back into myself and find a world! Again, more in intimation and dark desire than in clear form and living power. And then everything swims before my senses, and I go on smiling into the world, dreaming.

That children do not know why they want things, all the highly learned schoolmasters and tutors agree; but that grown people, too, stagger about on this earth like children and, like them, do not know where they come from or where they are going, act just as little for true ends, are governed just as much by biscuits and cake and the birch rod: nobody likes to believe that, and yet it seems to me you can grasp it with your hands.

I readily admit to you, for I know what you would like to say to me here, that the happiest are those who, like children, live from one day to the next, drag their dolls around, dress and undress them, and creep with great respect around the drawer where Mama has locked away the sugar bread, and when at last they snatch what they want, gobble it down with full cheeks and cry, "More!"—those are happy creatures. Those too are well off who give grand titles to their shabby occupations, or even to their passions, and put them down to the account of the human race as gigantic operations for its salvation and welfare.—Happy the man who can be like that! But whoever recognizes in his humility where

all this leads, who sees how neatly every comfortable citizen knows how to trim his little garden into a paradise, and how tirelessly even the unhappy man keeps panting on his way under his burden, and how all are equally eager to see the light of this sun one minute longer—yes, he is quiet, and he too builds his world out of himself, and he too is happy, because he is a human being. And then, however confined he is, he still keeps in his heart the sweet feeling of freedom, and knows that he can leave this prison whenever he likes.

May 26

You have long known my way of settling in, of putting up a little hut for myself in some intimate spot and living there within the narrowest limits. Here too I have found another little place that has drawn me.

About an hour from town there is a place they call Wahlheim. Its situation on a hillside is very interesting, and when you come out of the village at the top by the footpath, you suddenly see the whole valley below you. A good landlady, obliging and lively for her age, serves wine, beer, and coffee; and best of all are two linden trees whose spreading branches cover the little square in front of the church, which is closed in all around by farmhouses, barns, and yards. I have rarely found such an intimate, homely little place, and I have my little table brought out there from the inn, and my chair, and drink my coffee there and read my Homer. The first time I came under the lindens, by chance, on a fine afternoon, I found the little square quite deserted. Everyone was out in the fields; only a boy of about four was sitting on the ground, holding another child of about six months, which sat between his feet in front of him, with both arms against his chest, so that he served it as a kind of armchair, and for all the liveliness with which his black eyes looked about him, he sat perfectly still. The sight delighted me: I sat down on a plow that stood opposite and drew the broth-

erly pose with great pleasure. I added the nearest fence, a barn door, and some broken cartwheels, all just as they stood one behind another, and after an hour I found that I had made a well-composed, very interesting drawing without adding the least thing of my own. That strengthened me in my resolve to keep to nature alone from now on. Nature alone is infinitely rich, and nature alone forms the great artist. A great deal can be said in favor of rules, roughly what can be said in praise of civil society. A man who forms himself by them will never produce anything tasteless or bad, just as one who lets himself be molded by laws and propriety can never become an intolerable neighbor or a remarkable villain; but on the other hand, say what you like, every rule will destroy the true feeling of nature and its true expression! You will say, 'That is too harsh! A rule only restrains, prunes the rank vines,' and so on.—My good friend, shall I give you a parable? It is like love. A young heart clings wholly to a girl, spends every hour of the day with her, squanders all his strength, all his fortune, to show her at every moment that he gives himself to her completely. And then along comes a philistine, a man in public office, and says to him: 'My fine young sir! To love is human, only you must love in a human way! Divide up your hours, some for work, and devote the hours of recreation to your girl. Count up your means, and out of what is left over from your necessities I do not forbid you to make her a present, only not too often, say on her birthday and her name day,' and so on.—If the fellow obeys, you get a useful young man, and I would advise any prince to put him on a board of administration; only it is all over with his love, and, if he is an artist, with his art. Oh, my friends! Why does the torrent of genius so rarely burst forth, so rarely come roaring in on high floodwaters and shake your astonished souls?—Dear friends, because on both banks live the placid gentlemen whose little garden houses, tulip beds, and cabbage patches would be ruined, and who therefore

know how to ward off the threatening danger in good time with dams and drainage ditches.

May 27

I see I have fallen into raptures, parables, and declamation, and in the process forgotten to finish telling you what became of the children. Deep in a painter's feelings, which my letter of yesterday sets out for you in very broken pieces, I sat on my plow for a good two hours. Then toward evening a young woman comes up to the children, who had not stirred in the meantime, with a little basket on her arm, and calls from a distance: "Philipps, you're a very good boy."—She greeted me; I thanked her, got up, went closer, and asked whether she was the children's mother. She said yes, and, giving the elder half a roll, she picked up the little one and kissed it with all a mother's love.—"I gave my Philipps the little one to hold," she said, "and went into town with my eldest to get white bread and sugar and an earthenware pan for porridge."—I saw it all in the basket, whose lid had fallen off.—"I want to cook my Hans (that was the name of the youngest) a little soup for supper; that rascal, the big one, broke my pan yesterday when he was squabbling with Philipps over the scrapings of the porridge."—I asked about the eldest, and she had hardly told me that he was out in the meadow chasing a couple of geese when he came bounding up and brought the second boy a hazel switch. I went on talking with the woman and learned that she was the schoolmaster's daughter, and that her husband had gone on a journey to Switzerland to collect an inheritance from a cousin.—"They meant to cheat him out of it," she said, "and didn't answer his letters; so he went there himself. If only nothing bad has happened to him; I hear nothing from him."—I found it hard to tear myself away from the woman; I gave each of the children a kreuzer, and gave her one for the youngest too, to bring him a roll for his soup when she went into town, and so we parted.

I tell you, my dear, when my senses will no longer hold together at all, all the tumult is soothed by the sight of such a creature, going in happy calm around the narrow circle of its existence, getting by from one day to the next, watching the leaves fall and thinking nothing of it but that winter is coming.

Since then I have often been out there. The children are quite used to me; they get sugar when I drink coffee, and in the evening they share their bread and butter and sour milk with me. On Sundays they never go without their kreuzer, and if I am not there after the hour of prayers, the landlady has orders to pay it out.

They are at ease with me, tell me all sorts of things, and I take special delight in their passions and their simple outbursts of desire when more children from the village gather round.

It cost me a great deal of trouble to relieve the mother of her worry that they might be a nuisance to the gentleman.

May 30

What I told you the other day about painting surely holds for poetry too; it is only a matter of recognizing what is excellent and daring to express it, and that, to be sure, is saying a great deal in few words. Today I witnessed a scene that, simply copied down, would make the loveliest idyll in the world; but what are poetry, scene, and idyll for? Must everything always be tinkered with before we are allowed to take part in a natural event?

If after such a preamble you are expecting something lofty and distinguished, you are badly deceived once again; it is nothing but a farmhand who has carried me away into such lively sympathy. As usual I shall tell it badly, and as usual, I imagine, you will find me exaggerating; again it is Wahlheim, always Wahlheim, that produces these rarities.

There was a party out under the lindens, drinking coffee. As it was not quite to my taste, I stayed behind on some pretext.

A farmhand came out of a neighboring house and set about fixing something on the plow I had drawn the other day. Since I liked his manner, I spoke to him and asked about his circumstances; we were soon acquainted and, as usually happens to me with people of this sort, soon on intimate terms. He told me that he was in service with a widow and was very well treated by her. He talked so much about her and praised her so highly that I could soon see he was devoted to her body and soul. She was no longer young, he said; she had been badly treated by her first husband and did not want to marry again; and from his story it shone out so plainly how beautiful, how charming she was to him, how much he wished she might choose him, to wipe out the memory of her first husband's faults, that I would have to repeat it word for word to make you see the pure affection, the love and faithfulness of this man. Indeed, I would need the gift of the greatest poet to bring alive for you at the same time the expression of his gestures, the harmony of his voice, the secret fire of his looks. No, there are no words for the tenderness that was in his whole being and expression; anything I could bring out again is merely clumsy. What moved me especially was how he feared I might think wrongly of his relations with her and doubt her good conduct. How charming it was when he spoke of her figure, of her body, which, without the charms of youth, drew him to it powerfully and held him captive, I can only repeat to myself in my innermost soul. Never in my life have I seen urgent desire and hot, yearning longing in such purity; indeed, I may well say I have never imagined or dreamed it in such purity. Don't scold me if I tell you that at the memory of this innocence and truth my innermost soul glows, and that the image of this faithfulness and tenderness follows me everywhere, and that I, as if set on fire by it myself, thirst and languish.

Now I shall try to see her too, as soon as I can, or rather, now that I think it over properly, I shall avoid it. It is better that I see

her through the eyes of her lover; perhaps to my own eyes she would not appear as she stands before me now, and why should I spoil the beautiful picture for myself?

June 16

Why don't I write to you?—You ask that, and you one of the learned? You should guess that I am well, and indeed—in short, I have made an acquaintance who touches my heart more nearly. I have—I don't know.

To tell you in proper order how it came about that I got to know one of the loveliest creatures will be hard. I am contented and happy, and so no good historian.

An angel!—Pah! Everyone says that of his own, don't they? And yet I am not able to tell you how perfect she is, why she is perfect; enough, she has taken my every sense captive.

So much simplicity with so much understanding, so much goodness with so much firmness, and calm of soul together with real life and activity.—All this I am saying of her is ugly drivel, wretched abstractions that do not express a single feature of her self. Another time—no, not another time, I will tell you right now. If I don't do it now, it will never happen. For, between ourselves, since I began writing I have three times been on the point of putting down my pen, having my horse saddled, and riding out. And yet this morning I swore to myself that I would not ride out, and still I keep going to the window every moment to see how high the sun still is.—I couldn't hold out; I had to go out to her. Here I am again, Wilhelm; I'll eat my bread and butter for supper and write to you. What rapture it is for my soul to see her in the circle of those dear, lively children, her eight brothers and sisters! —If I go on like this, you will be as wise at the end as at the beginning. Listen, then; I will force myself to go into detail.

I wrote to you the other day how I had come to know Magistrate S., and how he had asked me to visit him soon in his

hermitage, or rather his little kingdom. I neglected it, and might never have gone there if chance had not revealed to me the treasure that lies hidden in that quiet spot.

Our young people had arranged a ball in the country, and I readily agreed to go. I offered my hand to a girl from here, good, pretty, and otherwise unremarkable, and it was settled that I should hire a carriage, drive out with my partner and her cousin to the scene of the festivities, and pick up Charlotte S. on the way. —"You are going to meet a beautiful young lady," said my companion as we drove through the wide, thinned-out forest toward the hunting lodge.—"Take care," added the cousin, "that you don't fall in love!"—"Why?" I said.—"She is already promised," the first replied, "to a very fine man, who has gone away to put his affairs in order, because his father has died, and to apply for a good position."—The news was fairly indifferent to me.

The sun was still a quarter of an hour above the mountains when we drew up at the courtyard gate. It was very sultry, and the ladies voiced their fear of a thunderstorm that seemed to be gathering all around the horizon in small, close, whitish-gray clouds. I allayed their fear with a pretended knowledge of the weather, though I myself was beginning to suspect that our festivities would suffer a blow.

I had got out, and a maid who came to the gate asked us to wait a moment; Miss Lotte would be right out. I went across the courtyard to the well-built house, and when I had climbed the steps in front and stepped into the doorway, my eyes fell on the most charming scene I have ever beheld. In the front hall six children, from eleven down to two years old, were swarming around a girl with a lovely figure, of medium height, who wore a simple white dress with pale pink ribbons at her arms and breast. She was holding a loaf of black bread and cutting a piece for each of the little ones around her in proportion to their age and appetite, giving it

to each with such kindness, and each one cried its "Thank you!" so artlessly, having stretched its little hands up high for a long while before the piece was even cut, and now went off contented with its supper, either bounding away or, if of a quieter nature, walking calmly toward the courtyard gate to see the strangers and the carriage in which their Lotte was to drive away.—"I beg your pardon," she said, "for troubling you to come in and keeping the ladies waiting. What with dressing and giving all sorts of orders for the house while I am away, I forgot to give my children their afternoon bread, and they won't have their bread cut by anyone but me."

I paid her some insignificant compliment; my whole soul rested on her figure, her voice, her bearing, and I had just time to recover from my surprise when she ran into the parlor to fetch her gloves and fan. The little ones were looking at me sideways from some distance, and I went up to the youngest, a child with the happiest face. He drew back just as Lotte came out of the door and said, "Louis, give your cousin your hand."—The boy did so very frankly, and I could not keep from kissing him heartily, his runny little nose notwithstanding.

"Cousin?" I said, as I gave her my hand. "Do you think I am worthy of the good fortune of being related to you?"—"Oh," she said with a mischievous smile, "our cousinhood is very far-flung, and I should be sorry if you were to be the worst of the lot."—As she went, she told Sophie, the eldest sister after her, a girl of about eleven, to keep a good eye on the children and to give Papa her love when he came home from his ride. She told the little ones to mind their sister Sophie as if it were she herself, which some of them expressly promised. But a pert little blonde of about six said, "But she isn't you, Lotte, we like you better."—The two eldest boys had climbed up on the back of the carriage, and at my pleading she allowed them to ride with us as far as the edge of the forest, if they promised not to tease each other and to hold on tight.

We had hardly settled in, the ladies had hardly welcomed one another, made their remarks in turn about each other's dress and especially about the hats, and given the company they were expecting a proper going-over, when Lotte had the coachman stop and let her brothers get down; they wanted to kiss her hand once more, which the elder did with all the tenderness that can belong to the age of fifteen, the other with a great deal of impetuousness and carelessness. She sent her love to the little ones once more, and we drove on.

The cousin asked whether she had finished the book she had sent her the other day.—"No," said Lotte, "I don't like it; you can have it back. The one before wasn't any better either."—I was astonished when I asked what books they were and she answered me:—I found so much character in everything she said; with every word I saw new charms, new rays of the spirit break from her features, which seemed gradually to open out with pleasure because she felt that I understood her.

"When I was younger," she said, "I loved nothing so much as novels. God knows how happy I was when on Sundays I could sit down in some little corner and share with my whole heart in the good and ill fortune of a Miss Jenny. I don't deny that the kind still has some charm for me. But since I so seldom get to a book, it really has to be to my taste. And the author I like best is the one in whom I find my own world again, where things go on as they do around me, and whose story still becomes as interesting and dear to me as my own domestic life, which, to be sure, is no paradise, but on the whole a source of unspeakable happiness."

I tried to hide how these words stirred me. That did not get very far, to be sure: for when I heard her speak, in passing and with such truth, of *The Vicar of Wakefield*, of ——, I was quite beside myself and told her everything I had to, and only noticed after some time, when Lotte turned the conversation to the oth-

ers, that they had been sitting there all the while with their eyes wide open as if they were not there at all. The cousin looked at me more than once with a mocking little turn of the nose, which mattered nothing to me.

The talk fell on the pleasures of dancing.—"If this passion is a fault," said Lotte, "I'll gladly confess to you that I know nothing better than dancing. And when I have something on my mind and drum out a contredanse for myself on my out-of-tune clavier, everything is all right again."

How I feasted on her black eyes as we talked—how her lively lips and her fresh, glowing cheeks drew my whole soul—how, completely absorbed in the glorious sense of what she said, I often did not even hear the words she used to express it—of that you have some idea, because you know me. In short, I got out of the carriage like a man in a dream when we stopped in front of the pavilion, and I was so lost in dreams in the dusky world around me that I hardly noticed the music that rang down to meet us from the lighted ballroom.

The two Messrs. Audran and a certain N. N.—who can keep all the names?—who were the cousin's and Lotte's partners, received us at the carriage door, took possession of their ladies, and I led mine upstairs.

We wound around one another in minuets; I asked one lady after another, and precisely the most insufferable could not bring themselves to give you their hand and make an end of it. Lotte and her partner began an English dance, and you can imagine how happy I was when she came to dance the figure with us in the line. You have to see her dance! You see, she is in it with her whole heart and her whole soul, her whole body one harmony, so carefree, so unselfconscious, as if that really were everything, as if she thought of nothing else, felt nothing else; and at that moment, surely, everything else vanishes before her.

I asked her for the second contredanse; she promised me the third, and with the most charming frankness in the world she assured me that she loved to dance the German dance.—"It is the fashion here," she went on, "for each couple who belong together to stay together for the German dance, and my partner waltzes badly and will thank me if I spare him the work. Your lady can't do it either and doesn't care to, and I saw in the English dance that you waltz well; so if you want to be mine for the German dance, go and ask my gentleman for me, and I will go to your lady."—I gave her my hand on it, and we arranged that her partner should keep my partner company in the meantime.

Now it began, and for a while we delighted in all the ways of winding our arms together. With what charm, with what lightness she moved! And when we came to the waltz itself and went rolling around each other like the spheres, things were a little chaotic at first, of course, since very few know how to do it. We were clever and let them wear themselves out, and when the clumsiest had cleared the floor, we joined in and held out bravely with one other couple, Audran and his partner. Never have I moved so lightly. I was no longer human. To hold the loveliest creature in your arms and fly around with her like the wind, so that everything around you dissolved, and—Wilhelm, to be honest, I did swear to myself that a girl I loved, on whom I had any claim, should never waltz with anyone but me, even if it were the ruin of me. You understand me!

We took a few turns around the room walking, to catch our breath. Then she sat down, and the oranges I had put aside, which were now the only ones left, had an excellent effect, except that with every slice she gave, for politeness' sake, to a greedy lady next to her, a stab went through my heart.

In the third English dance we were the second couple. As we danced down the line and I hung, God knows with what rapture,

on her arm and her eyes, which were full of the truest expression of the frankest, purest pleasure, we come to a woman who had caught my eye because of the lovely expression of a face no longer quite young. She looks at Lotte with a smile, raises a warning finger, and as she flies past says the name Albert twice with great meaning.

"Who is Albert?" I said to Lotte, "if it is not presumptuous to ask."—She was about to answer when we had to separate to make the grand figure eight, and I thought I saw something pensive on her brow as we crossed past each other.—"Why should I deny it to you?" she said as she gave me her hand for the promenade. "Albert is a fine man, to whom I am as good as engaged."—Now this was nothing new to me (for the girls had told me on the way), and yet it was so completely new, because I had not yet thought of it in relation to her, who in so few moments had become so precious to me. Enough: I grew confused, forgot myself, and blundered in between the wrong couple, so that everything went topsy-turvy, and it took all Lotte's presence of mind and a good deal of tugging and pulling to put it quickly right again.

The dance was not yet over when the lightning, which we had long seen flashing on the horizon and which I had kept passing off as heat lightning, began to grow much stronger, and the thunder drowned out the music. Three ladies ran out of the line, followed by their gentlemen; the disorder became general, and the music stopped. It is natural that when a misfortune or something terrible surprises us in the midst of pleasure, it makes a stronger impression on us than at other times, partly because of the contrast, which can be felt so keenly, partly, and still more, because our senses, once opened to feeling, take an impression all the faster. To these causes I must ascribe the extraordinary grimaces into which I saw several of the ladies break out. The cleverest sat down in a corner with her back to the window and held her ears shut.

Another knelt down in front of her and hid her head in the first one's lap. A third pushed in between the two and hugged her little sisters with a thousand tears. Some wanted to go home; others, who knew even less what they were doing, had not enough presence of mind to check the impudence of our young scamps, who seemed very busy catching from the lips of the fair ladies in distress all the anxious prayers that were meant for heaven. Some of our gentlemen had gone downstairs to smoke a pipe in peace; and the rest of the company did not refuse when the landlady hit on the clever idea of showing us into a room that had shutters and curtains. We had hardly got there when Lotte was busy setting out a circle of chairs and, when the company had sat down at her request, proposing a game.

I saw more than one of them pursing his lips and stretching his limbs in hope of a juicy forfeit.—"We'll play counting!" she said. "Now pay attention! I'll go around the circle from right to left, and you count around the circle too, each the number that comes to him, and it has to go like wildfire, and whoever falters or makes a mistake gets a box on the ear, and so on up to a thousand."—Now that was fun to watch: she went around the circle with her arm outstretched. "One," the first began, his neighbor "two," "three" the next, and so on. Then she began to go faster, faster and faster; then someone slipped: smack! A box on the ear, and in the laughter the next one too: smack! And faster and faster. I myself got two slaps and thought I noticed, with deep delight, that they were harder than the ones she usually dealt out to the others. General laughter and uproar ended the game before the thousand had been counted out. Those who were closest drew one another aside, the storm was over, and I followed Lotte into the ballroom. On the way she said, "With all the slaps they forgot the weather and everything!"—I could give her no answer.—"I was one of the most frightened," she went on, "and by acting brave to give the

others courage, I became brave myself."—We went to the window. The thunder was moving off to one side, and the glorious rain whispered down on the land, and the most refreshing fragrance rose up to us in all the fullness of the warm air. She stood leaning on her elbows; her gaze took in the whole countryside; she looked up at the sky and at me; I saw her eyes full of tears; she laid her hand on mine and said, "Klopstock!"—At once I remembered the glorious ode she had in mind, and I sank into the stream of feelings that she poured over me with that one word. I could not bear it; I bent over her hand and kissed it amid the most rapturous tears. And looked into her eyes again—Noble poet! If you had seen your apotheosis in that gaze! And may I never again hear your so often profaned name spoken!

June 19

I no longer know where I left off with my story the other day; what I do know is that it was two in the morning when I got to bed, and that if I could have chattered to you instead of writing, I might have kept you up until daybreak.

What happened on our drive back from the ball I have not told you yet, and today is not the day for it either.

It was the most glorious sunrise. The dripping forest and the refreshed fields all around! Our companions dozed off. She asked me whether I didn't want to join them; I needn't mind on her account.—"As long as I see those eyes open," I said, looking at her steadily, "there is no danger of that."—And we both held out until we reached her gate, where the maid quietly opened for her and, in answer to her questions, assured her that her father and the little ones were well and all still asleep. Then I left her, asking to be allowed to see her again that same day; she granted it, and I went—and since that time sun, moon, and stars may go calmly about their business; I don't know whether it is day or night, and the whole world fades away around me.

June 21

I am living through days as happy as those God saves for his saints; and whatever becomes of me, I cannot say that I have not enjoyed the joys, the purest joys of life.—You know my Wahlheim; I am completely settled there; from there it is only half an hour to Lotte; there I feel myself and all the happiness that is given to man.

Had I imagined, when I chose Wahlheim as the goal of my walks, that it lay so close to heaven! How often, on my long rambles, now from the mountain, now from the plain across the river, I have seen the hunting lodge that now holds all my wishes!

Dear Wilhelm, I have been thinking about all sorts of things: about the desire in man to expand, to make new discoveries, to roam about; and then again about the inner urge to surrender willingly to confinement, to go along in the rut of habit and not trouble oneself about right or left.

It is wonderful: when I came here and looked down from the hill into the lovely valley, how everything around drew me.—There the little wood!—Ah, if you could mingle with its shadows!—There the mountaintop!—Ah, if you could look out over the wide country from there!—The hills linked one into another, and the intimate valleys!—Oh, if I could lose myself in them!—I hurried there, and came back, and had not found what I hoped for. Oh, it is with distance as it is with the future! A great dim whole lies before our soul; our feeling blurs into it as our eye does, and we long, ah! to give up our whole being, to let ourselves be filled with all the rapture of a single, great, glorious feeling.—And ah! when we hurry there, when There becomes Here, everything is as it was before, and we stand in our poverty, in our confinement, and our soul thirsts for the refreshment that has slipped away.

So the most restless vagabond longs at last for his own country again and finds in his hut, at his wife's breast, in the circle of his

children, in the work of keeping them, the rapture he looked for in vain in the wide world.

When I go out to my Wahlheim at sunrise in the morning and pick my own sugar peas there in the inn garden, sit down, string them, and read in my Homer in between; when I choose a pot in the little kitchen, cut myself some butter, put the pods on the fire, cover them, and sit down by them to shake them now and then: then I feel so vividly how Penelope's arrogant suitors slaughter, cut up, and roast oxen and swine. There is nothing that fills me with such a quiet, true feeling as the traits of patriarchal life, which, thank God, I can weave into my way of living without affectation.

How glad I am that my heart can feel the simple, innocent rapture of a man who brings to his table a head of cabbage he has grown himself, and now enjoys, all in one moment, not the cabbage alone but all the good days, the fine morning when he planted it, the lovely evenings when he watered it and took pleasure in its growing.

June 29

The day before yesterday the doctor came out here from town to see the magistrate and found me on the floor among Lotte's children, some of them crawling all over me, others teasing me, while I tickled them and raised a great uproar with them. The doctor, a very dogmatic puppet on a wire who pleats his cuffs as he talks and keeps tugging out his frill without end, found this beneath the dignity of a sensible man; I could tell that by his nose. But I didn't let anything disturb me; I let him hold forth on very sensible matters and built the children's houses of cards up again, which they had knocked down. Afterward he went around town complaining that the magistrate's children were spoiled enough as it was, and now Werther was ruining them completely.

Yes, dear Wilhelm, children are closest to my heart of anything on earth. When I watch them and see in the little things the seeds

of all the virtues, all the powers they will one day need so badly; when I see in their stubbornness future steadfastness and firmness of character, in their mischief good humor and the lightness to slip past the dangers of the world, all so unspoiled, so whole!—always, always I repeat then the golden words of the Teacher of humankind: "Unless you become like one of these!" And now, my dear friend, these, who are our equals, whom we should look upon as our models, we treat as subjects. They are to have no will!—And have we none? And where does the privilege lie?—Because we are older and wiser!—Good God in your heaven, you see old children and young children, and nothing more; and which of them gives you more joy, your Son proclaimed long ago. But they believe in him and do not listen to him—that is an old story too!—and they form their children in their own image and—Adieu, Wilhelm! I don't want to ramble on about it any further.

July 1

What Lotte must be to a sick person I feel in my own heart, which is worse off than many a heart pining away on a sickbed. She is going to spend a few days in town with a good woman who, the doctors say, is nearing her end and wants to have Lotte with her in these last moments. Last week I went with her to visit the pastor of St., a little village an hour off to one side in the mountains. We got there toward four. Lotte had brought her second sister along. When we stepped into the parsonage yard, shaded by two tall walnut trees, the good old man was sitting on a bench in front of the door, and when he saw Lotte he came alive as if new, forgot his knotted stick, and ventured to get up and go to meet her. She ran to him, made him sit down again as she sat beside him, brought him many greetings from her father, and hugged his ugly, dirty youngest boy, the little pet of his old age. You should have seen her keeping the old man occupied, raising her voice to make herself heard by his half-deaf ears, telling him of young,

robust people who had died unexpectedly, of the excellence of Karlsbad, praising his decision to go there next summer, finding that he looked much better and was much livelier than the last time she had seen him.—Meanwhile I had paid my respects to the pastor's wife. The old man grew quite lively, and since I could not help praising the fine walnut trees that shaded us so pleasantly, he began, though with some difficulty, to give us their history.—"The old one," he said, "we don't know who planted it; some say this pastor, others that. But the younger one there at the back is as old as my wife, fifty years in October. Her father planted it in the morning, and she was born toward evening. He was my predecessor in office, and how dear the tree was to him I can't tell you; to me it is certainly no less dear. My wife was sitting under it on a beam, knitting, when I first came into this yard twenty-seven years ago, a poor student."—Lotte asked after his daughter; we were told she had gone out to the meadow with Mr. Schmidt, to the workers, and the old man went on with his story: how his predecessor had grown fond of him, and the daughter too, and how he had become first his curate and then his successor. The story was not long over when the pastor's daughter came through the garden with the so-called Mr. Schmidt: she welcomed Lotte with heartfelt warmth, and I must say I rather liked her; a quick, well-made brunette who would have kept one well entertained for a short stay in the country. Her suitor (for Mr. Schmidt at once presented himself as such), a refined but quiet man, would not join in our conversation, though Lotte kept drawing him in. What troubled me most was that I seemed to see in his features that it was more stubbornness and bad temper than any limit of understanding that kept him from opening up. Unfortunately this became only too clear later on; for when Friederike, out walking, went with Lotte and now and then with me as well, the gentleman's face, which was of a brownish color anyway, darkened so visibly that it

was time for Lotte to tug at my sleeve and give me to understand that I had been too gallant with Friederike. Now nothing vexes me more than when people torment one another, most of all when young people in the bloom of life, when they could be most open to every joy, spoil each other's few good days with sulks, and only see too late that what they have squandered can never be replaced. It galled me, and toward evening, when we had gone back to the parsonage and were sitting at a table eating curds and milk, and the conversation turned to the joys and sorrows of the world, I could not help taking up the thread and speaking out from my heart against bad temper.—"We human beings often complain," I began, "that there are so few good days and so many bad ones, and, it seems to me, mostly without reason. If we always had an open heart to enjoy the good that God prepares for us each day, we would then have strength enough to bear the evil when it comes."—"But we don't have our moods in our power," replied the pastor's wife; "how much depends on the body! When one is not well, nothing is right anywhere."—I granted her that.—"Then let us look at it," I went on, "as an illness, and ask whether there is no remedy for it."—"That makes sense," said Lotte. "I believe at least that a great deal depends on ourselves. I know it from myself. When something nags at me and tries to make me cross, I jump up and sing a couple of contredanses up and down the garden, and it's gone at once."—"That is what I meant to say," I replied. "It is exactly the same with bad temper as with sloth, for it is a kind of sloth. Our nature leans very much that way, and yet if only we once have the strength to pull ourselves together, the work goes briskly from our hands, and we find a true pleasure in activity."—Friederike was very attentive, and the young man objected that one is not master of oneself, and least of all can one command one's feelings.—"We are talking here about an unpleasant feeling," I replied, "which everyone is glad to be rid of; and no one knows

how far his strength goes until he has tried it. Surely anyone who is ill will ask every doctor around, and will not refuse the greatest renunciations, the bitterest medicines, to recover the health he wishes for."—I noticed that the honest old man was straining his hearing to take part in our discussion; I raised my voice and turned my words to him. "People preach against so many vices," I said; "I have never yet heard of anyone working against bad temper from the pulpit."—"That is for the town pastors to do," he said; "peasants have no bad tempers. Though it might not do any harm now and then; it would be a lesson for the pastor's wife at least, and for the magistrate."—The company laughed, and he heartily with us, until he fell into a fit of coughing that interrupted our discussion for a while; whereupon the young man spoke up again: "You called bad temper a vice; that seems to me an exaggeration."—"Not at all," I answered, "if that by which we harm ourselves and our neighbor deserves the name. Is it not enough that we cannot make one another happy; must we also rob one another of the pleasure that every heart can still sometimes grant itself? And name me the man who is in a bad temper and yet decent enough to hide it, to bear it alone, without destroying the joy around him! Or is it not rather an inward discontent with our own unworthiness, a displeasure with ourselves that is always bound up with an envy stirred up by foolish vanity? We see happy people whom we have not made happy, and that is unbearable."—Lotte smiled at me when she saw how stirred I was as I spoke, and a tear in Friederike's eye spurred me on.—"Woe to those," I said, "who use the power they have over a heart to rob it of the simple joys that spring up from within it. All the gifts, all the kindnesses in the world cannot make up for one moment of pleasure in ourselves that the envious discomfort of our tyrant has embittered."

My whole heart was full at that moment; the memory of so much in the past crowded in on my soul, and tears came to my

eyes.

"If only one told oneself this every day," I cried. "You can do nothing for your friends but leave them their joys and increase their happiness by sharing it with them. When their inmost soul is tormented by an anxious passion, shattered by grief, can you give them one drop of relief?

"And when the last, most fearful illness falls upon the creature you undermined in her days of bloom, and she lies there in the most pitiful exhaustion, her eyes looking up to heaven without feeling, the sweat of death coming and going on her pale brow, and you stand before the bed like one of the damned, with the deepest feeling that with all you have you can do nothing, and anguish cramps you inside, so that you would give everything to be able to pour into the perishing creature one drop of strength, one spark of courage."

At these words the memory of such a scene, at which I had been present, fell on me with all its force. I put my handkerchief to my eyes and left the company, and only Lotte's voice, calling to me that we were leaving, brought me back to myself. And how she scolded me on the way for taking everything too warmly to heart, and said that it would be the ruin of me! That I should spare myself!—Oh, the angel! For your sake I must live!

July 6

She is always with her dying friend, and she is always the same, always that attentive, lovely creature who, wherever she looks, eases pain and makes people happy. Yesterday evening she went for a walk with Mariane and little Malchen; I knew of it and met them, and we walked together. After an hour and a half we came back toward town, to the well that is so dear to me and is now a thousand times dearer. Lotte sat down on the low wall; we stood in front of her. I looked around, ah, and the time when my heart was so alone came alive before me again.—"Dear well," I said, "since

then I have not rested in your coolness again; hurrying past, I have sometimes not even looked at you."—I looked down and saw Malchen climbing up, very busy with a glass of water.—I looked at Lotte and felt everything I have in her. Just then Malchen comes up with a glass. Mariane wanted to take it from her: "No!" cried the child with the sweetest expression, "no, Lotte, you must drink first!"—I was so delighted by the truth, the goodness with which she cried it, that I could express my feeling in no other way than by lifting the child from the ground and kissing her warmly, whereupon she at once began to scream and cry.—"You have done wrong," said Lotte.—I was taken aback.—"Come, Malchen," she went on, taking her by the hand and leading her down the steps, "wash yourself in the fresh spring, quick, quick, and then it won't matter."—As I stood there and watched how eagerly the little one rubbed her cheeks with her wet little hands, with what faith that the miraculous spring would wash away all defilement and spare her the disgrace of growing an ugly beard; how Lotte said, "That's enough!" and the child still went on washing eagerly, as if a lot would do more than a little—I tell you, Wilhelm, I have never attended a baptism with more reverence; and when Lotte came up, I would gladly have thrown myself down before her as before a prophet who has consecrated away the guilt of a nation.

In the evening, in the joy of my heart, I could not help telling the incident to a man whom I credited with human feeling because he has a good mind; but what a reception I got! He said that it had been very wrong of Lotte; one should not tell children such tales; that sort of thing gave rise to countless errors and superstitions, from which children must be protected early.—Then it occurred to me that the man had had a child baptized a week before, so I let it pass and remained true in my heart to the truth: we should do with children as God does with us, who makes us happiest when he lets us stagger along in friendly illusion.

July 8

What a child one is! How one hungers for a single look! What a child one is!—We had gone to Wahlheim. The ladies drove out, and during our walks I thought I saw in Lotte's black eyes—I am a fool, forgive me! You should see them, those eyes.—To be brief (for my eyes are closing with sleep): you see, the ladies got into the carriage, and standing around it were young W., Selstadt, Audran, and I. There was chatter through the carriage door with those young fellows, who were light and airy enough, to be sure.—I sought Lotte's eyes: ah, they went from one to the other! But on me! Me! Me! who stood there, resigned to her alone, they did not fall!—My heart bade her a thousand farewells! And she did not see me! The carriage drove past, and a tear stood in my eye. I looked after her and saw Lotte's headdress lean out of the carriage door, and she turned around to look, ah! at me?—My dear friend! I hover in this uncertainty; that is my comfort: perhaps she turned around to look at me! Perhaps!—Good night! Oh, what a child I am!

July 10

You should see the silly figure I cut when she is talked about in company! And when someone actually asks me how I like her?—Like! I hate that word like death. What sort of person must he be who likes Lotte, whose every sense, every feeling she does not fill! Like! Like! The other day someone asked me how I liked Ossian!

July 11

Mrs. M. is very ill; I pray for her life, because I suffer with Lotte. I see Lotte seldom, at a friend's house, and today she told me of a remarkable incident.—Old M. is a miserly, grasping skinflint who has thoroughly tormented and pinched his wife all her life; but the woman always knew how to manage. A few days ago, when the doctor had given her up, she sent for her husband (Lotte was in the room) and spoke to him thus: "I must confess something to you that might cause confusion and trouble after my death. Until

now I have kept house as orderly and thriftily as possible; but you will forgive me for having deceived you these thirty years. At the beginning of our marriage you set aside a small sum to pay for the kitchen and other household expenses. When our household grew larger and our business bigger, you could not be moved to increase my weekly allowance in proportion; in short, you know that at the time when it was largest you demanded that I make do with seven gulden a week.

"I took them without a word of protest and every week fetched the rest from the till, since no one suspected that the wife would rob the cash box. I have wasted nothing, and I would have gone to meet eternity in peace even without confessing it, if it were not that the woman who has to keep house after me would not know how to manage, and you could always insist that your first wife made do with it."

I talked with Lotte about the incredible blindness of the human mind: that a man should not suspect there must be something else behind it when someone makes do with seven gulden where you can see the expense running to perhaps twice as much. But I have known people myself who would have accepted the prophet's never-failing little jar of oil in their house without any surprise.

July 13

No, I am not deceiving myself! I read in her black eyes true sympathy for me and for my fate. Yes, I feel, and in this I may trust my heart, that she—oh, may I, can I speak heaven in these words? —that she loves me!

She loves me!—And how precious I become to myself, how I—to you I may say it, you understand such things—how I adore myself, since she loves me!

Is that presumption, or a feeling of how things truly stand?—I don't know the man I would fear in Lotte's heart. And yet—when she speaks of her fiancé, speaks of him with such warmth, such

love—then I feel like a man stripped of all his honors and dignities, whose sword is taken from him.

July 16

Ah, how it runs through all my veins when my finger accidentally touches hers, when our feet meet under the table! I draw back as from fire, and a secret power draws me forward again—all my senses grow so dizzy.—Oh! And her innocence, her unselfconscious soul does not feel how much these little intimacies torment me. When, in conversation, she even lays her hand on mine and, absorbed in what we are saying, moves closer to me, so that the heavenly breath of her mouth can reach my lips:—I think I will sink to the ground, as if struck by lightning.—And, Wilhelm! If I ever presume upon this heaven, this trust—! You understand me. No, my heart is not so corrupt! Weak! Weak enough!—And isn't that corruption?—She is sacred to me. All desire falls silent in her presence. I never know what is happening to me when I am with her; it is as if my soul were turning over in every nerve.—She has a melody she plays on the clavier with the power of an angel, so simple and so full of spirit! It is her favorite song, and it cures me of all pain, confusion, and fancies the moment she strikes the first note of it.

Not a word about the magic power of ancient music seems improbable to me. How that simple song takes hold of me! And how well she knows when to play it, often at a time when I would like to put a bullet through my head! The confusion and darkness of my soul scatter, and I breathe more freely again.

July 18

Wilhelm, what is the world to our heart without love! What a magic lantern is without light! You have hardly put the little lamp inside when the most colorful pictures shine onto your white wall! And if it were nothing but that, nothing but passing phantoms, it still makes our happiness when we stand in front of it like young

boys and are enchanted by the miraculous apparitions. Today I could not go to Lotte; a party I could not get out of kept me away. What was to be done? I sent my servant out there, just to have someone near me who had been close to her today. With what impatience I waited for him, with what joy I saw him again! I would gladly have taken his head in my hands and kissed him, if I had not been ashamed.

They tell of the Bologna stone that, if you lay it in the sun, it draws in the sun's rays and glows for a while at night. That is how it was for me with the lad. The feeling that her eyes had rested on his face, his cheeks, his coat buttons, and the collar of his overcoat made all of it so sacred to me, so precious! At that moment I would not have given the boy up for a thousand thaler. I felt so good in his presence.—God keep you from laughing at it. Wilhelm, are they phantoms, when we feel happy?

July 19

"I shall see her!" I cry out in the morning when I wake and look out with all serenity toward the beautiful sun; "I shall see her!" and then I have no other wish for the whole day. Everything, everything is swallowed up in that prospect.

Your idea that I should go to *** with the envoy will not become mine yet. I am not very fond of subordination, and we all know that the man is a disagreeable person besides. My mother would like to see me in some activity, you say; that made me laugh. Am I not active now as well, and isn't it all one in the end whether I count peas or lentils? Everything in the world comes down to a lot of nonsense in the end, and a man who wears himself out for money or honor or anything else for the sake of others, without its being his own passion, his own need, is always a fool.

July 24

Since you care so much that I not neglect my drawing, I would rather pass over the whole matter than tell you that little has been

done lately.

Never was I happier, never was my feeling for nature, down to the smallest pebble, the smallest blade of grass, fuller or more intimate, and yet—I don't know how to express it; my power of representation is so weak, everything swims and wavers so before my soul that I cannot catch an outline; but I imagine that if I had clay or wax, I could shape it well enough. I will take some clay, too, if this goes on any longer, and knead away, and if it turns out cakes, so be it!

Three times I have begun Lotte's portrait, and three times I have made a fool of myself; which vexes me all the more because some time ago I was very good at catching a likeness. So then I made her silhouette, and that will have to do.

Yes, dear Lotte, I will see to everything and order it all; only give me more errands, and often. One thing I ask of you: no more sand on the little notes you write me. Today I raised one quickly to my lips, and my teeth crunched.

July 26

I have more than once resolved not to see her so often. Yes, if only one could keep to it! Every day I give in to temptation and promise myself solemnly: tomorrow you really will stay away. And when tomorrow comes, I find another irresistible reason after all, and before I know it, I am with her. Either she said in the evening, "You will come tomorrow, won't you?"—who could stay away then? Or she gives me an errand, and I think it only proper to bring her the answer myself; or the day is just too beautiful, I go to Wahlheim, and once I am there, it is only another half hour to her! —I am too close within her atmosphere—whoosh! and I'm there. My grandmother had a fairy tale about the magnetic mountain: the ships that came too near were all at once robbed of all their ironwork, the nails flew to the mountain, and the poor wretches were wrecked among the planks crashing down on one another.

July 30

Albert has arrived, and I shall go; and even if he were the best, the noblest of men, one to whom I would be ready to rank myself inferior in every respect, it would be unbearable to see him before my face in possession of so much perfection.—Possession!—Enough, Wilhelm, the fiancé is here! A good, dear man whom one cannot help liking. Fortunately I was not there when she welcomed him! That would have torn my heart. And he is so decent, too: he has not kissed Lotte a single time in my presence. God reward him for it! For the respect he shows the girl, I have to love him. He means well by me, and I suspect that is more Lotte's doing than his own feeling; for in this women are subtle, and they are right; if they can keep two admirers on good terms with each other, the advantage is always theirs, however seldom it works.

Meanwhile I cannot deny Albert my esteem. His calm exterior contrasts very sharply with the restlessness of my character, which cannot be hidden. He has a great deal of feeling and knows what he has in Lotte. He seems to have little bad temper, and you know that is the sin I hate in a human being worse than any other.

He takes me for a man of sense; and my attachment to Lotte, the warm joy I take in all she does, increases his triumph, and he loves her all the more for it. Whether he never torments her with some little fit of jealousy, I leave open; at least in his place I would not be entirely safe from that devil.

Be that as it may, my joy in being with Lotte is gone. Shall I call it folly or delusion?—What do names matter! The thing speaks for itself!—I knew everything I know now before Albert came; I knew that I had no claim to make on her, and I made none—that is, as far as it is possible not to desire, where there is so much to love—and now the idiot makes big eyes because the other one really does come and takes the girl away from him.

I grit my teeth and mock my misery, and would mock twice and three times over anyone who might say that I should resign myself, since it could not be otherwise.—Get these men of straw off my back!—I run about in the woods, and when I come to Lotte and Albert is sitting with her in the little garden under the arbor, and I can go no further, I turn wildly giddy and start a great deal of clowning, a great deal of confused nonsense.—"For heaven's sake," Lotte said to me today, "I beg you, no scene like the one yesterday evening! You are dreadful when you are so merry."—Between ourselves, I watch for the times when he is busy; whoosh! I'm out there, and I am always happy when I find her alone.

August 8

I beg you, dear Wilhelm, it was certainly not aimed at you when I called those people unbearable who demand of us that we submit to inevitable fate. I really did not think that you could be of the same opinion. And at bottom you are right. Only one thing, my dear friend! In this world things are very seldom settled with an either-or; feelings and ways of acting shade into one another in as many gradations as there are between a hooked nose and a snub nose.

So you won't hold it against me if I grant you your whole argument and still try to steal my way through between the either and the or.

Either, you say, you have hope of Lotte, or you have none. Good: in the first case, try to carry it through, try to grasp the fulfillment of your wishes; in the other, pull yourself together and try to get rid of a wretched feeling that must consume all your strength.—Dear friend! That is well said, and—soon said.

And can you demand of the unhappy man whose life is slowly, inexorably dying away under a creeping illness, can you demand of him that he should put an end to his torment at one stroke with a

dagger? And does the evil that consumes his strength not also rob him of the courage to free himself from it?

You could, of course, answer me with a related parable: who would not rather have his arm cut off than put his life at risk by hesitating and faltering?—I don't know!—And let us not bite at each other with parables. Enough—yes, Wilhelm, I sometimes have such a moment of leaping, shake-it-all-off courage, and then—if only I knew where to, I would go.

Evening

My diary, which I have neglected for some time, fell into my hands again today, and I am amazed at how knowingly I walked into all this, step by step! How I always saw my state so clearly and yet acted like a child, and still see it so clearly, and there is still no sign of improvement.

August 10

I could lead the best, the happiest life if I were not a fool. Circumstances as lovely as those I am in now do not easily come together to delight a person's soul. Ah, so certain is it that our heart alone makes its happiness.—To be a member of that lovely family, to be loved by the old man like a son, by the little ones like a father, and by Lotte!—then honest Albert, who disturbs my happiness with no moody rudeness, who embraces me with heartfelt friendship, to whom I am, after Lotte, the dearest thing in the world!—Wilhelm, it is a joy to hear us when we go walking and talk to each other about Lotte: nothing more ridiculous than this situation has ever been invented in the world, and yet it often brings tears to my eyes.

When he tells me about her good mother: how on her deathbed she handed over her house and her children to Lotte and commended Lotte to him; how since that time a quite different spirit has animated Lotte; how, in her care for the household and in her seriousness, she has become a true mother; how not a moment of

her time has passed without active love, without work, and yet her cheerfulness, her light heart have never left her.—I walk along beside him and pick flowers by the way, arrange them very carefully into a bouquet, and—throw them into the stream flowing past and watch them as they drift softly down.—I don't know whether I have written to you that Albert is going to stay here and receive a post with a decent income from the court, where he is well liked. I have seen few to equal him for order and diligence in business.

August 12

Albert is certainly the best man under heaven. I had a remarkable scene with him yesterday. I went to take leave of him, for I had been seized by a desire to ride into the mountains, from where I am writing to you now, and as I walk up and down in the room, his pistols catch my eye.—"Lend me your pistols," I said, "for my journey."—"Fine with me," he said, "if you will take the trouble to load them; with me they only hang there pro forma."—I took one down, and he went on: "Since my caution played me such a nasty trick, I don't want anything more to do with the stuff."—I was curious to know the story.—"I was staying in the country with a friend," he told me, "for about three months, had a pair of pocket pistols, unloaded, and slept soundly. Once, on a rainy afternoon, as I sit there idle, I don't know how it comes into my head: we might be attacked, we might need the pistols and might—you know how it is.—I gave them to the servant to clean and load; and he fools around with the maids, tries to frighten them, and God knows how, the gun goes off with the ramrod still in it and shoots the ramrod into the ball of one girl's right hand and smashes her thumb. Then I had all the lamenting, and the doctor's bill to pay on top of it, and since then I leave all firearms unloaded. My dear fellow, what is caution? You can never learn all there is to know about danger! Although."—Now you know that I am very fond of the man, all but his althoughs; for doesn't it go without saying that

every general statement admits of exceptions? But that is how self-justifying he is! When he thinks he has said something rash, general, half-true, he never stops limiting, modifying, adding and taking away, until in the end there is nothing left of the matter at all.

And on this occasion he got very deep into his subject: in the end I stopped listening to him altogether, fell into brooding, and with a sudden gesture pressed the mouth of the pistol to my forehead above my right eye.—"Ugh!" said Albert, pulling the pistol down, "what's that for?"—"It isn't loaded," I said.—"Even so, what's the point?" he returned impatiently. "I can't imagine how a man can be so foolish as to shoot himself; the mere thought of it disgusts me."

"That you people," I cried, "when you talk about anything, must at once say, 'That is foolish, that is wise, that is good, that is bad!' And what does it all mean? Have you looked into the inner circumstances of an action before you say so? Can you set out with certainty the causes why it happened, why it had to happen? If you had, you would not be so hasty with your judgments." "You will grant me," said Albert, "that certain actions remain vicious, whatever the motive from which they are done." I shrugged my shoulders and granted it.—"And yet, my dear fellow," I went on, "even here there are some exceptions. It is true, theft is a vice: but the man who goes out to rob in order to save himself and his family from starving to death here and now, does he deserve pity or punishment? Who will cast the first stone at the husband who, in righteous anger, sacrifices his unfaithful wife and her worthless seducer? At the girl who in an hour of rapture loses herself in the irresistible joys of love? Even our laws, those cold-blooded pedants, let themselves be moved and hold back their punishment."

"That is something quite different," replied Albert, "because a man who is carried away by his passions loses all power of reflection and is regarded as drunk, as insane." "Ah, you sensible people!" I cried with a smile. "Passion! Drunkenness! Madness! You stand there so calm, so unmoved, you moral people, scold the drunkard, abhor the madman, pass by like the priest and thank God like the Pharisee that he has not made you like one of these. I have been drunk more than once, my passions were never far from madness, and I regret neither: for I have learned to understand, to a certain degree, why all extraordinary people who did something great, something that seemed impossible, have always had to be decried as drunk or mad. But even in ordinary life it is unbearable to hear people shout after almost anyone who does something halfway free, noble, unexpected: 'The man is drunk, he's a fool!' Shame on you, you sober ones! Shame on you, you wise men!" "There go your fancies again," said Albert. "You exaggerate everything, and here at least you are certainly wrong to compare suicide, which is what we are talking about, with great actions, when it can surely be considered nothing but a weakness. For of course it is easier to die than to bear a life of torment steadfastly." I was about to break off; for no argument puts me out of my composure so much as when someone comes along with an insignificant commonplace while I am speaking from my whole heart.

But I collected myself, because I had heard it often before and been annoyed by it more often still, and answered him with some heat: "You call that weakness? I beg you, don't be misled by appearances. A people groaning under the unbearable yoke of a tyrant, may you call them weak when at last they rise up and tear their chains apart? A man who, in his terror that fire has caught his house, feels all his powers strained and carries away with ease loads he could hardly move in a calm state of mind; a man who, in the fury of an insult, takes on six and overpowers them, are they to

be called weak? And, my good fellow, if exertion is strength, why should overexertion be the opposite?"—Albert looked at me and said, "Don't take it amiss, but the examples you give don't seem to belong here at all."—"That may be," I said; "I have often been reproached before that my way of combining things sometimes borders on drivel. Let us see, then, whether we can imagine in some other way how a man may feel who resolves to throw off the burden of life, pleasant as it otherwise is. For only insofar as we feel with him do we have the honor of talking about the matter."

"Human nature," I went on, "has its limits: it can bear joy, sorrow, and pain up to a certain degree, and it perishes as soon as that degree is exceeded. So the question here is not whether a man is weak or strong, but whether he can endure the measure of his suffering, be it moral or physical. And I find it just as strange to say that the man who takes his own life is a coward as it would be improper to call a man a coward who dies of a malignant fever."

"Paradox! Very paradoxical!" cried Albert.—"Not as much as you think," I replied. "You grant me that we call it a sickness unto death when nature is so attacked that its forces are partly consumed, partly so put out of action that it is incapable of helping itself up again, of restoring the ordinary course of life by any fortunate turn.

"Now, my dear fellow, let us apply this to the mind. Look at a man in his confinement: how impressions work on him, how ideas fix themselves in him, until at last a growing passion robs him of all calm power of mind and destroys him.

"In vain does the calm, rational man survey the state of the unhappy one; in vain does he talk to him! Just as a healthy man standing at the sickbed cannot pour into the patient the least of his own strength."

To Albert this was too generally put. I reminded him of a girl who had been found dead in the water not long ago, and repeated

her story to him.—"A good young creature who had grown up in the narrow circle of household tasks, of fixed weekly work, who knew no prospect of pleasure beyond perhaps walking about the town on Sundays with girls like herself, in finery she had put together bit by bit, perhaps dancing once on each of the high holidays, and otherwise chattering away many an hour with a neighbor, with all the liveliness of the most heartfelt interest, over the cause of some quarrel or some bit of slander—her fiery nature at last feels deeper needs, which are increased by the flatteries of men; her former joys gradually lose their taste for her, until at last she meets a man to whom an unknown feeling irresistibly draws her, on whom she now throws all her hopes; she forgets the world around her, hears nothing, sees nothing, feels nothing but him, the only one, longs only for him, the only one. Not spoiled by the empty pleasures of a fickle vanity, her desire goes straight toward its goal: she wants to become his, she wants to find in an everlasting union all the happiness she lacks, to enjoy the union of all the joys she longed for. Repeated promises that seal for her the certainty of all her hopes, bold caresses that increase her desires, take her soul entirely captive; she floats in a dim awareness, in a foretaste of every joy; she is strained to the highest pitch; at last she stretches out her arms to embrace all her wishes—and her lover leaves her.—Numb, senseless, she stands before an abyss; all is darkness around her, no prospect, no comfort, no hope! For he has left her in whom alone she felt her existence. She does not see the wide world that lies before her, nor the many who could make up her loss to her; she feels alone, abandoned by all the world—and blindly, driven into a corner by the terrible anguish of her heart, she throws herself down, to smother all her torments in a death that closes around her on every side.—You see, Albert, that is the story of so many a human being! And tell me, is it not the case of an illness? Nature finds no way out of the labyrinth of confused

and contradictory forces, and the person must die. Woe to the man who could stand by and say, 'The foolish girl! If she had waited, if she had let time do its work, her despair would have passed, someone else would surely have turned up to comfort her.'—That is just as if someone said, 'The fool, dying of a fever! If he had waited until his strength recovered, his humors improved, the tumult of his blood subsided: all would have gone well, and he would be alive to this day!'"

Albert, to whom the comparison was not yet clear, raised a few more objections, among others that I had spoken only of a simple girl; but how a man of understanding, who was not so confined and could see more of the circumstances, might be excused, he could not comprehend.—"My friend," I cried, "man is man, and the little bit of understanding a man may have counts for little or nothing when passion rages and the limits of humanity press in on him. Rather—another time," I said, and reached for my hat. Oh, my heart was so full—and we parted without having understood each other. As indeed in this world no one easily understands another.

August 15

It is certain, after all, that nothing in the world makes a person necessary but love. I can feel in Lotte that she would not like to lose me, and the children have no idea but that I will always come back tomorrow. Today I had gone out to tune Lotte's clavier, but I couldn't get to it, because the little ones pursued me for a fairy tale, and Lotte herself said I should do as they wished. I cut their bread for supper, which they now take almost as gladly from me as from Lotte, and told them their great favorite, the story of the princess who is waited on by hands. I learn a great deal from it, I assure you, and I am astonished at the impression it makes on them. Because I sometimes have to invent an incident, which I forget the second time, they say at once that it was different last time, so that now I am practicing reciting it without change, in a

singsong cadence, straight off like beads on a string. I have learned from this how an author, by a second, altered edition of his story, however much better it may have become as poetry, must necessarily harm his book. The first impression finds us willing, and man is so made that you can persuade him of the most fantastic things; but they stick fast at once as well, and woe to anyone who tries to scratch them out and wipe them away again!

August 18

Did it have to be so, that what makes a man's happiness should become in turn the source of his misery?

The full, warm feeling of my heart for living nature, which flooded me with so much rapture, which made the world around me a paradise, is now becoming an unbearable torturer to me, a tormenting spirit that pursues me on every path. When in the past I looked out from the rock across the river to those hills over the fertile valley and saw everything around me sprouting and welling up; when I saw those mountains clothed from foot to summit with tall, dense trees, those valleys in all their winding shaded by the loveliest woods, and the gentle river gliding along between the whispering reeds and mirroring the dear clouds that the soft evening wind rocked across the sky; when I heard the birds around me bring the forest to life, and the millions of swarming gnats danced boldly in the last red ray of the sun, and its last quivering glance freed the humming beetle from its grass, and the whirring and weaving all around me drew my attention to the ground, and the moss that wrests its nourishment from my hard rock, and the brushwood growing down the dry sandy hill, opened to me the inner, glowing, holy life of nature: how I took all that into my warm heart, felt myself as though made divine in that overflowing abundance, and the glorious forms of the infinite world moved, giving life to all, in my soul. Enormous mountains surrounded me, abysses lay before me, and torrents plunged down,

the rivers streamed below me, and forest and mountains resounded; and I saw them working and creating in one another in the depths of the earth, all those unfathomable forces; and now above the earth and beneath the sky swarm the races of manifold creatures. Everything, everything peopled with a thousand forms; and then human beings huddle together for safety in little houses and make their nests and in their own minds rule over the wide world! Poor fool! You who think so little of everything, because you are so small.—From the inaccessible mountains across the wilderness that no foot has trodden, to the end of the unknown ocean, breathes the spirit of the Eternal Creator, and rejoices in every speck of dust that hears him and lives.—Ah, in those days, how often I longed, with the wings of a crane that flew over me, for the shore of the boundless sea, to drink from the foaming cup of the infinite that swelling rapture of life, and to feel, if only for one moment, in the confined strength of my breast, one drop of the bliss of the being who brings forth everything in himself and through himself.

Brother, only the memory of those hours does me good. Even this effort to call back those unspeakable feelings, to put them into words again, lifts my soul above itself, and then makes me feel doubly the anguish of the state that surrounds me now.

It is as if a curtain had been drawn back from before my soul, and the stage of infinite life is changing before me into the abyss of the forever open grave. Can you say, This is! when everything passes away? When everything rolls past with the speed of a storm, so seldom lasts out the full strength of its existence, ah, is torn away in the current, plunged under, and dashed against the rocks? There is no moment that does not consume you and those dear to you around you, no moment when you are not a destroyer, and must be one; the most harmless walk costs a thousand poor little worms their lives; one footstep shatters the laborious build-

ings of the ants and stamps a little world into an ignominious grave. Ha! It is not the great, rare disasters of the world, these floods that wash away your villages, these earthquakes that swallow your cities, that move me; what undermines my heart is the consuming power that lies hidden in the whole of nature, which has formed nothing that does not destroy its neighbor and itself. And so I stagger on in anguish. Heaven and earth and their weaving forces all around me: I see nothing but a monster, eternally devouring, eternally chewing its cud.

August 21

In vain I stretch out my arms toward her in the morning, when I come out of heavy dreams; in vain I seek her at night in my bed, when a happy, innocent dream has deceived me into thinking I was sitting beside her in the meadow, holding her hand and covering it with a thousand kisses. Ah, when, still half in the daze of sleep, I grope for her and wake up from it—a stream of tears bursts from my oppressed heart, and I weep, inconsolable, toward a dark future.

August 22

It is a misfortune, Wilhelm: my active powers have been put out of tune into a restless idleness; I cannot be idle and yet I cannot do anything either. I have no imagination, no feeling for nature, and books disgust me. When we fail ourselves, everything fails us. I swear to you, sometimes I wish I were a day laborer, only so that on waking in the morning I might have some prospect of the coming day, an urge, a hope. I often envy Albert, whom I see buried up to his ears in documents, and imagine I would be happy if I were in his place! Several times already the impulse has seized me to write to you and to the minister to apply for the post at the legation, which, as you assure me, would not be refused me. I believe so myself. The minister has liked me for a long time and has long urged me to devote myself to some kind of work; and for an hour

or so I am quite set on it too. Afterward, when I think it over again and the fable comes to mind of the horse that, impatient with its freedom, lets saddle and harness be put on it and is ridden to ruin —I don't know what I should do.—And, my dear friend! Isn't this longing in me for a change of circumstances perhaps an inner, uneasy impatience that will follow me wherever I go?

August 28

It is true: if my illness could be cured, these people would cure it. Today is my birthday, and very early I receive a little packet from Albert. As I open it, one of the pale pink ribbons catches my eye at once, the ones Lotte was wearing when I first met her, and which I have asked her for several times since. There were two little books in duodecimo with it, the small Wetstein Homer, an edition I had so often wanted, so as not to have to drag the Ernesti edition along on my walks. You see! That is how they anticipate my wishes, how they seek out all the little kindnesses of friendship, which are a thousand times more precious than those dazzling presents by which the giver's vanity humiliates us. I kiss this ribbon a thousand times, and with every breath I drink in the memory of the bliss with which those few, happy, irretrievable days filled me to overflowing. Wilhelm, it is so, and I do not complain: the blossoms of life are only appearances! How many pass away without leaving a trace behind, how few set fruit, and how few of those fruits ripen! And yet there are enough of them still; and yet—oh, my brother!—can we neglect ripe fruit, despise it, let it rot unenjoyed?

Farewell! It is a glorious summer; I often sit up in the fruit trees in Lotte's orchard with the fruit picker, the long pole, and fetch the pears down from the treetops. She stands below and takes them as I let them down to her.

August 30

Unhappy man! Aren't you a fool? Aren't you deceiving yourself? What is the point of this raging, endless passion? I have no prayer left but to her; no other form appears to my imagination but hers, and everything in the world around me I see only in relation to her. And that gives me many a happy hour—until I have to tear myself away from her again! Ah, Wilhelm! What my heart often drives me to!—When I have sat with her for two, three hours, and feasted on her figure, her bearing, the heavenly expression of her words, and now gradually all my senses are strained taut, it grows dark before my eyes, I can hardly hear anymore, and something seizes me by the throat like an assassin, then my heart, in wild beats, tries to give air to my oppressed senses and only increases their confusion—Wilhelm, I often don't know whether I am in the world at all! And—if melancholy does not sometimes gain the upper hand and Lotte allows me the wretched comfort of weeping out my anguish over her hand—then I have to get away, have to go out, and then I roam far and wide across the fields; to climb a steep mountain is my joy then, to work my way along a path through a trackless forest, through the hedges that hurt me, through the thorns that tear me! Then I feel somewhat better! Somewhat! And when I sometimes lie down along the way from weariness and thirst, sometimes in the deep of night, with the high full moon above me, sit down in the lonely forest on a crooked tree to give my sore feet a little relief, and then, in an exhausted calm, doze off in the dim light! Oh, Wilhelm! The lonely dwelling of a cell, the hair shirt and the spiked belt would be refreshments for which my soul is pining. Adieu! I see no end to this misery but the grave.

September 3

I must go away! Thank you, Wilhelm, for settling my wavering resolve. For two weeks now I have been turning over the thought of leaving her. I must go away. She is in town again with a friend. And Albert—and—I must go away!

September 10

What a night that was! Wilhelm! Now I can get through anything. I shall not see her again! Oh, that I cannot fly to your neck, my dear friend, and with a thousand tears and raptures pour out to you the feelings that are storming my heart. Here I sit gasping for air, trying to calm myself, waiting for morning, and the horses are ordered for sunrise.

Ah, she is sleeping peacefully and does not think that she will never see me again. I have torn myself away; I was strong enough, in a conversation of two hours, not to betray my intention. And God, what a conversation!

Albert had promised me that he would be in the garden with Lotte right after supper. I stood on the terrace under the tall chestnut trees and watched the sun, which was now setting for me for the last time over the lovely valley, over the gentle river. So often I had stood here with her and watched that same glorious spectacle, and now—I walked up and down the avenue that was so dear to me; a secret sympathetic pull had so often held me here, even before I knew Lotte, and how glad we were when, at the beginning of our acquaintance, we discovered our shared fondness for this spot, which is truly one of the most romantic I have ever seen produced by art.

First, between the chestnut trees, you have the wide view—Ah, I remember, I think I have already written you a great deal about it: how tall walls of beeches close you in at last, and the avenue grows darker and darker through an adjoining grove, until finally everything ends in an enclosed little space, haunted by all the shivers of solitude. I can still feel how intimate and hidden it felt to me when I first stepped into it at high noon; I had the faintest foreboding of what a scene it was yet to become, of bliss and pain.

I had been feasting for about half an hour on the languishing, sweet thoughts of parting and of seeing her again, when I heard

them coming up onto the terrace. I ran to meet them; with a shiver I took her hand and kissed it. We had just come up when the moon rose behind the bushy hill; we talked of many things and drew near, without noticing, to the dark summerhouse. Lotte went in and sat down, Albert beside her, and I too; but my restlessness did not let me sit for long; I got up, stood in front of her, walked up and down, sat down again: it was an anxious state. She pointed out to us the lovely effect of the moonlight, which, at the end of the walls of beeches, lit up the whole terrace in front of us: a glorious sight, all the more striking because deep dusk enclosed us on every side. We were silent, and after a while she began: "I never go walking in the moonlight, never, without the thought of my dead coming to meet me, without the feeling of death, of the future, coming over me. We shall be!" she went on, in a voice of the most glorious feeling; "but, Werther, shall we find each other again? Know each other again? What do you feel? What do you say?"

"Lotte," I said, giving her my hand, my eyes filling with tears, "we shall see each other again! Here and there, we shall see each other again!"—I could not go on—Wilhelm, did she have to ask me that, when I had this anxious parting in my heart!

"And do the dear departed know of us," she went on, "do they feel when things go well with us, that we remember them with warm love? Oh! My mother's form always hovers around me when I sit on a quiet evening among her children, among my children, and they are gathered around me as they were gathered around her. Then I look up to heaven with a tear of longing and wish that she could look in for a moment and see how I keep the promise I gave her in the hour of her death: to be the mother of her children. With what feeling I cry out: 'Forgive me, dearest, if I am not to them what you were. Ah! I do everything I can, after all; they are clothed and fed, ah, and, what is more than all of that, cared for and loved. If you could see how we live in harmony, dear saint! You

would glorify with the warmest thanks the God to whom you prayed, with your last, bitterest tears, for the welfare of your children.'"—She said that! Oh, Wilhelm, who can repeat what she said! How can the cold, dead letter render this heavenly flowering of the spirit! Albert gently interrupted her: "This affects you too much, dear Lotte! I know your soul is very much drawn to these ideas, but I beg you."—"Oh, Albert," she said, "I know you don't forget the evenings when we sat together at the little round table, when Papa was away and we had sent the little ones to bed. You often had a good book and so seldom got to reading anything—wasn't the company of that glorious soul worth more than anything? That lovely, gentle, cheerful, and ever-busy woman! God knows the tears with which I often threw myself down before him in my bed, praying that he would make me like her."

"Lotte!" I cried, throwing myself down before her, taking her hand and wetting it with a thousand tears, "Lotte! God's blessing rests upon you, and your mother's spirit!" "If only you had known her," she said, pressing my hand—"she was worthy of being known by you!"—I thought I would dissolve.

Never had a greater, prouder word been spoken of me—and she went on: "And this woman had to go in the bloom of her years, when her youngest son was not six months old! Her illness did not last long; she was calm, resigned; only her children hurt her, especially the little one. When the end was coming and she said to me, 'Bring them up to me!' and I led them in, the little ones who didn't understand, and the eldest, who were beside themselves, and they stood around the bed, and she raised her hands and prayed over them, and kissed them one after another and sent them away and said to me, 'Be their mother!'—I gave her my hand on it!—'You are promising a great deal, my daughter,' she said, 'a mother's heart and a mother's eye. I have often seen from your grateful tears that you feel what that means. Have it for your brothers and sisters,

and for your father a wife's faithfulness and obedience. You will comfort him.'—She asked for him; he had gone out to hide from us the unbearable grief he felt; the man was utterly torn apart.

"Albert, you were in the room. She heard someone walking and asked who it was and called you to her, and how she looked at you and at me, with that comforted, calm look, that we would be happy, happy together."—Albert threw his arms around her neck and kissed her and cried, "We are! We will be!"—Calm Albert was quite beside himself, and I did not know what was happening to me. "Werther," she began, "and this woman was to be gone! God! When I sometimes think how one lets the dearest thing in one's life be carried away, and no one feels it as sharply as the children, who went on complaining for a long time that the black men had carried Mama away!" She stood up, and I was roused and shaken; I stayed sitting and held her hand.—"Let us go," she said, "it is time."—She wanted to draw back her hand, and I held it tighter. —"We shall see each other again," I cried, "we shall find each other, in whatever form we shall know each other. I am going," I went on, "I am going willingly, and yet, if I had to say forever, I could not bear it. Farewell, Lotte! Farewell, Albert! We shall see each other again."—"Tomorrow, I should think," she returned, joking.—I felt that tomorrow! Ah, she did not know, as she drew her hand out of mine—They went out down the avenue; I stood and looked after them in the moonlight, and threw myself on the ground and wept my fill, and sprang up and ran out onto the terrace and saw, still, down there in the shadow of the tall linden trees, her white dress shimmering toward the garden gate; I stretched out my arms, and it vanished.

Book Two

October 20, 1771

We arrived here yesterday. The envoy is unwell and will keep to his rooms for a few days. If only he weren't so disagreeable, all would be well. I can tell, I can tell, fate has hard trials in store for me. But courage! A light heart carries everything! A light heart? It makes me laugh, the way that word comes into my pen. Oh, a little lighter blood would make me the happiest man under the sun. What! Others, with their scrap of strength and talent, swagger about in front of me in comfortable self-satisfaction, and I despair of my strength, of my gifts? Good God, who gave me all this, why did you not hold back half of it and give me self-confidence and contentment instead?

Patience! Patience! Things will get better. For I tell you, my dear friend, you are right. Since I have been driven about among people every day and see what they do and how they go about it, I am on far better terms with myself. Surely, since we are once and for all so made that we compare everything with ourselves and ourselves with everything, our happiness or misery lies in the things we keep company with, and nothing is more dangerous than solitude. Our imagination, urged by its very nature to rise, and fed on the fantastic images of poetry, builds itself a ladder of beings going upward, on which we stand lowest, and everything outside us seems more splendid, everyone else more perfect. And that comes about quite naturally. We so often feel that we lack this or that, and precisely what we lack, someone else often seems to us to possess; and then we give him everything we have as well, and a

certain idealized contentment on top of it. And so the happy man stands finished and complete, a creature of our own making.

On the other hand, when, with all our weakness and toil, we simply keep working straight on, we very often find that with our dawdling and tacking we get further than others with their sailing and rowing—and—it is a true feeling of yourself, after all, when you keep pace with others or even run ahead of them.

November 26

I am beginning to find things here quite tolerable, so far as that goes. The best of it is that there is enough to do; and then the many kinds of people, all these new figures, put on a colorful show before my soul. I have made the acquaintance of Count C., a man I cannot help revering more every day, a broad, great mind, and not cold for all that, though he takes in so much; a man whose company shines with so much feeling for friendship and love. He took an interest in me when I carried out a piece of business with him and he noticed at the first words that we understood each other, that he could talk with me as he could not with everyone. Nor can I praise enough his open manner toward me. There is no joy in the world so true and so warm as seeing a great soul open itself to you.

December 24

The envoy gives me a great deal of vexation; I foresaw it. He is the most punctilious fool there could possibly be; one step at a time and as fussy as an old aunt; a man who is never satisfied with himself, and whom therefore nobody can satisfy. I like to work briskly, and as it stands, so it stands; and he is quite capable of handing a draft back to me and saying, "It is good, but look it over; one can always find a better word, a purer particle."—Then I could go to the devil. Not one "and," not one little conjunction may be left out, and he is the mortal enemy of all the inversions that sometimes slip out of me; if you do not grind out your sentences

to the customary tune, like a barrel organ, he understands nothing in them. It is a torment to have to deal with such a man.

The confidence of Count C. is still the one thing that makes up for it. The other day he told me quite frankly how dissatisfied he was with the slowness and the scruples of my envoy. Such people make things hard for themselves and for others. "But," he said, "one has to resign oneself to it, like a traveler who has to cross a mountain; of course, if the mountain were not there, the road would be much easier and shorter; but there it is, and over it one must go!"

My old man no doubt senses, too, the preference the count gives me over him, and it annoys him, and he seizes every opportunity to speak ill of the count to me; naturally I take the other side, and that only makes matters worse. Yesterday he actually made me lose my temper, for he meant me too: for worldly business of that kind, he said, the count was quite good; he worked with great ease and wielded a good pen, but he lacked solid learning, like all belletrists. And he made a face as if to say, "Do you feel the sting?" But it did not have that effect on me; I despised a man who could think and behave like that. I stood up to him and fought back with some heat. I said the count was a man who deserved respect, for his character as much as for his knowledge. "I have never known anyone," I said, "who has succeeded so well in enlarging his mind, spreading it over countless subjects, and still keeping this activity for ordinary life."—To that brain it was all Greek, and I took my leave so as not to swallow any more bile over more of his nonsense.

And you are all to blame for it, all of you who talked me into this yoke and sang me so many songs about activity. Activity! If the man who plants potatoes and rides into town to sell his grain does not do more than I do, then I will slave ten more years on the galley to which I am now chained.

And the glittering misery, the boredom among the nasty people who are thrown together here! Their craving for rank, the way they watch and lie in wait to gain one little step on each other; the most wretched, most pitiful passions, without so much as a petticoat to cover them. There is a woman, for example, who entertains everyone with talk of her nobility and her country, so that every stranger must think: there is a fool who imagines wonders of her bit of nobility and the fame of her country.—But it is much worse than that: this very woman is a district clerk's daughter from the neighborhood.—Look, I cannot understand the human race, that it has so little sense as to prostitute itself so flatly.

To be sure, I see more every day, my dear friend, how foolish it is to measure others by oneself. And because I have so much to do with myself, and this heart is so stormy—ah, I am glad to let the others go their own way, if only they could let me go mine.

What galls me most is the wretched business of station and class. To be sure, I know as well as anyone how necessary the distinction of ranks is, how many advantages it brings me myself: only it should not stand squarely in my way just where I might still enjoy a little joy, a glimmer of happiness on this earth. On a walk recently I made the acquaintance of a Miss B., a lovable creature who has kept a great deal of nature in the midst of this stiff life. We took pleasure in our conversation, and when we parted I asked her permission to call on her. She granted it with such frankness that I could hardly wait for the proper moment to go to her. She is not from here and lives in the house of an aunt. I did not like the old woman's physiognomy. I paid her much attention, my conversation was mostly addressed to her, and in less than half an hour I had pretty well made out what the young lady herself afterward admitted to me: that her dear aunt, in her old age, lacks everything, has no decent fortune, no wit, and no support but the line of her ancestors, no shelter but the rank behind which she has pal-

isaded herself, and no pleasure but looking down from her upper floor over the heads of the commoners. In her youth she is said to have been beautiful and to have trifled her life away, first tormenting many a poor young man with her willfulness, and in her riper years to have ducked meekly under the rule of an old officer, who for that price and a tolerable living spent the age of bronze with her and died. Now, in the age of iron, she finds herself alone, and no one would look at her if her niece were not so lovable.

January 8, 1772

What people they are, whose whole soul rests on ceremony, whose every thought and effort for years on end is bent on edging one chair higher up the table! And not that they had nothing else to attend to: no, the work piles up precisely because the petty vexations keep everyone from getting the important things done. Last week there was a quarrel on the sleigh ride, and all the fun was spoiled.

The fools, who do not see that the place really does not matter at all, and that the one who has the first place so seldom plays the first part! How many a king is governed by his minister, how many a minister by his secretary! And who, then, is first? The one, it seems to me, who sees over the others and has power or cunning enough to harness their strengths and passions to the carrying out of his plans.

January 20

I must write to you, dear Lotte, here in the parlor of a humble country inn where I have taken refuge from a heavy storm. As long as I have been dragging about in that dreary hole D., among strangers, utter strangers to my heart, I have not had one moment, not one, in which my heart bade me write to you; and now, in this hut, in this solitude, in this confinement, with snow and hail raging against my little window, here you were my first thought. As I

came in, your figure came over me, the memory of you, O Lotte! So holy, so warm! Good God! The first happy moment again.

If you could see me, my dear Lotte, in this flood of distractions! How dried up my senses become! Not one moment of fullness of heart, not one blissful hour! Nothing! Nothing! I stand as if before a peep show and watch the little men and little horses jerking about in front of me, and I often ask myself whether it is not an optical illusion. I play along, or rather, I am played like a marionette, and sometimes I take my neighbor by his wooden hand and shrink back with a shudder. In the evening I resolve to enjoy the sunrise, and I do not get out of bed; in the daytime I hope to delight in the moonlight, and I stay in my room. I do not really know why I get up, or why I go to bed.

The leaven that set my life in motion is missing; the charm that kept me awake and lively in the deep of night is gone; the charm that woke me from sleep in the morning is gone.

One single womanly creature I have found here, a Miss B.; she resembles you, dear Lotte, if anyone can resemble you. “Well!” you will say, “the man is taking to pretty compliments!” It is not entirely untrue. For some time now I have been very agreeable, because after all I cannot be otherwise; I am very witty, and the ladies say no one knows how to praise so delicately as I do (and to lie, you will add, for it cannot be done without that, you understand?). I meant to speak of Miss B. She has a great deal of soul, which looks out fully from her blue eyes. Her rank is a burden to her; it satisfies none of the wishes of her heart. She longs to be out of the bustle, and we dream away many an hour in rural scenes of unmixed happiness; ah! and of you! How often she must pay you homage; no, not must, she does it freely, she so likes to hear about you, she loves you.—Oh, if I could sit at your feet in that dear, familiar little room, and our little dear ones were tumbling all

around me, and when they got too loud for you, I would gather them quietly around me with a gruesome fairy tale.

The sun is setting gloriously over the snow-bright countryside, the storm has passed over, and I—must shut myself up in my cage again.—Adieu! Is Albert with you? And how—? God forgive me this question!

February 8

For a week we have had the most abominable weather, and it does me good. For as long as I have been here, not one fine day has appeared in the sky that someone has not spoiled or soured for me. Now when it really rains and drifts and freezes and thaws: ha! I think, it can't be worse indoors than it is outside, or the other way around, and so it's all right. When the sun rises in the morning and promises a fine day, I can never keep from exclaiming: there they have another heavenly good that they can rob each other of! There is nothing they do not rob each other of. Health, good name, cheerfulness, rest! And mostly out of silliness, incomprehension, and narrowness, and, if you listen to them, with the best intentions. Sometimes I would like to beg them on my knees not to rage so madly against their own entrails.

February 17

I am afraid my envoy and I will not hold out together much longer. The man is utterly unbearable. His way of working and conducting business is so ridiculous that I cannot keep from contradicting him and often doing a thing after my own head and in my own way, which of course never suits him. For this he recently complained of me at court, and the minister gave me a reprimand, a gentle one, but a reprimand all the same, and I was on the point of asking for my discharge when I received a private letter from him, a letter before which I knelt down and worshiped the lofty, noble, wise mind that wrote it. How he corrects my excessive sensitivity; how he honors my overstrained ideas of effectiveness, of

influence on others, of pushing things through in affairs, as youthful good spirits, and tries not to root them out but only to temper them and guide them to where they have their true play and can work with full force. And so I have been strengthened for a week and at one with myself. Peace of soul is a glorious thing, and joy in oneself. Dear friend, if only the jewel were not as fragile as it is beautiful and precious.

February 20

God bless you, my dear ones, and give you all the good days he takes away from me!

I thank you, Albert, for deceiving me: I was waiting for news of when your wedding day would be, and had resolved on that very day to take Lotte's silhouette down from the wall with all solemnity and bury it among other papers. Now you are married, and her picture is still here! Well, so it shall stay! And why not? I know that I am with you too, that I am in Lotte's heart without harm to you; I have, yes, I have the second place in it, and I want to keep it and must. Oh, I would go mad if she could forget—Albert, there is a hell in that thought. Albert, farewell! Farewell, angel of heaven! Farewell, Lotte!

March 15

I have had a vexation that will drive me away from here. I am gnashing my teeth! The devil! There is no making it good, and it is all your fault after all, you who spurred me and drove me and tormented me into taking a post that was not to my liking. Now I have it! Now you have it! And so that you will not say again that my overstrained ideas spoil everything, here, my dear sir, is an account, plain and neat, as a chronicler would set it down.

Count C. loves me, singles me out; everyone knows it; I have told you so a hundred times. Well, yesterday I dined with him, on the very day when the noble society of gentlemen and ladies gathers at his house in the evening, which I never thought about; nor

did it ever occur to me that we subordinates do not belong there. Good. I dine with the count, and after dinner we walk up and down in the great hall, I talk with him, and with Colonel B., who joins us, and so the hour of the party draws near. I am thinking, God knows, of nothing. In comes the more than gracious Mrs. von S. with her lord and husband and their well-hatched gosling of a daughter, with her flat chest and her dainty laced bodice; en passant they put on their customary, highborn eyes and nostrils, and since I heartily detest the breed, I meant to take my leave at once and was only waiting until the count was free of their dreadful chatter, when my Miss B. came in. Since my heart always opens a little when I see her, I simply stayed, stood behind her chair, and noticed only after some time that she was talking to me with less openness than usual, with some embarrassment. That struck me. Is she, too, like all these people? I thought, and I was stung and wanted to go, and yet I stayed, because I would have liked to excuse her, and did not believe it, and still hoped for a kind word from her, and—whatever you like. Meanwhile the company filled up. Baron F. with his entire wardrobe from the coronation days of Francis the First, Court Councilor R., here, however, styled in qualitate Mr. von R., with his deaf wife, and so on, not to forget the shabbily veneered J., who patches the holes in his old-fashioned wardrobe with new-fashioned rags: they come crowding in, and I talk with some of my acquaintances, who are all very laconic. I was thinking—and paid attention only to my Miss B. I did not notice that the women at the end of the hall were whispering in one another's ears, that it was going around among the men, that Mrs. von S. was talking with the count (Miss B. told me all this afterward), until at last the count came straight up to me and took me aside into a window.—"You know," he said, "our strange conditions here; the company, I notice, is displeased to see you here. I would not for anything—" "Your Excellency," I broke in, "I beg your par-

don a thousand times; I should have thought of it before, and I know you will forgive me this inconsistency; I meant to take my leave some time ago. An evil genius held me back," I added with a smile, bowing.—The count pressed my hands with a feeling that said everything. I slipped quietly out of the distinguished company, went off, got into a cabriolet, and drove to M., to watch the sun go down from the hill there and to read in my Homer the glorious book that tells how Odysseus is entertained by the excellent swineherd. That was all good.

In the evening I come back to dinner; there were still only a few people in the public room; they were playing dice at one corner and had turned back the tablecloth. Then in comes honest Adelin, puts down his hat, looking at me, comes over to me, and says quietly, "You've had some trouble?"—"I?" I said.—"The count turned you out of the party."—"The devil take them!" I said. "I was glad to get out into the fresh air."—"Good," he said, "that you take it lightly. Only it annoys me; it's all over town already."—It was only then that the thing began to gnaw at me. Everyone who came in to dinner and looked at me, I thought, is looking at you because of it! That bred bad blood.

And now today, wherever I go, people pity me; I hear that my enviers are triumphant and saying: there you could see where the arrogant end up, who pride themselves on their bit of brains and think it entitles them to set themselves above all conventions, and whatever else that dogs' gossip runs to—and you could drive a knife into your heart; for say what you like about independence, I would like to see the man who can bear having scoundrels talk about him when they have an advantage over him; when their chatter is empty, ah, then it is easy to let them be.

March 16

Everything is hounding me. Today I meet Miss B. in the avenue; I could not keep from speaking to her and, as soon as we were

some way from the others, showing her how hurt I was by her behavior the other day.—"O Werther," she said in a heartfelt tone, "could you take my confusion that way, when you know my heart? What I suffered for your sake, from the moment I came into the hall! I foresaw everything; a hundred times it was on the tip of my tongue to tell you. I knew that the S. and T. women and their husbands would leave rather than stay in your company; I knew that the count cannot afford to fall out with them—and now the uproar!"—"What do you mean, miss?" I said, hiding my alarm; for everything Adelin had told me the day before yesterday ran through my veins like boiling water at that moment.—"What it has cost me already!" said the sweet creature, with tears standing in her eyes.—I was no longer master of myself; I was on the point of throwing myself at her feet.—"Explain yourself!" I cried.—The tears ran down her cheeks. I was beside myself. She dried them without trying to hide them.—"You know my aunt," she began. "She was there and—oh, with what eyes she looked at it all! Werther, last night, and again this morning, I had to sit through a sermon about my friendship with you, and I have had to listen to you being belittled and degraded, and I could defend you, I was allowed to defend you, only halfway." Every word she spoke went through my heart like a sword. She did not feel what a mercy it would have been to keep all this from me, and now she went on to tell me what further gossip there would be, how a certain kind of people would triumph over it.

How they would now tickle themselves and gloat over the punishment of my arrogance and my contempt for others, which they have long held against me. To hear all this, Wilhelm, from her, in a voice of the truest sympathy—I was shattered, and I am still raging inside. I wish someone would dare to reproach me with it, so that I could run my sword through his body; if I saw blood, I would feel better. Ah, a hundred times I have seized a knife to give air to this

oppressed heart. They tell of a noble breed of horses that, when they are terribly overheated and hard driven, instinctively bite open one of their own veins to help themselves breathe. I often feel like that; I would like to open a vein that would bring me eternal freedom.

March 24

I have asked the court for my discharge and will, I hope, receive it, and you will forgive me for not asking your permission first. I simply had to go, and I know everything you had to say to talk me into staying, and so—break it to my mother in a spoonful of syrup; I cannot help myself, and she will have to put up with it if I cannot help her either. Of course it must hurt her. To see the fine career on which her son had just set off, straight toward privy councilor and envoy, suddenly halted, and back to the stable with the little beast! Make of it what you like, and work out all the possible cases in which I could and should have stayed; enough, I am going, and so that you know where I am going: Prince ** is here, who takes great pleasure in my company; when he heard of my intention, he asked me to go with him to his estates and spend the lovely spring there. I am to be left entirely to myself, he has promised me, and since we understand each other up to a certain point, I will take my chances and go with him.

Notice

April 19

Thank you for both your letters. I did not answer, because I let this sheet lie until my discharge from the court had come; I was afraid my mother might turn to the minister and make my plan harder. But now it is done; my discharge is here. I would rather not tell you how reluctantly they gave it to me, and what the minister writes me—you would break out in fresh lamentations. The hereditary prince has sent me twenty-five ducats as a parting gift, with a

word that moved me to tears; so I do not need the money from my mother that I wrote about the other day.

May 5

Tomorrow I leave here, and because my birthplace is only six miles off the road, I want to see it again too and remember the old, happily dreamed-away days. I want to go in by the very gate through which my mother drove out with me when, after my father's death, she left that dear, familiar place to shut herself up in her unbearable town. Adieu, Wilhelm; you shall hear about my journey.

May 9

I have completed the pilgrimage to my home with all the devotion of a pilgrim, and many unexpected feelings have seized me. At the great linden that stands a quarter of an hour outside the town on the road to S., I had the coach stop, got out, and told the postilion to drive on, so that I could taste every memory on foot, quite fresh and vivid, as my heart would have it. There I stood under the linden that once, when I was a boy, had been the goal and the boundary of my walks. How different! Then, in happy ignorance, I longed to go out into the unknown world, where I hoped to find so much nourishment for my heart, so much enjoyment, to fill and satisfy my striving, yearning breast. Now I come back from the wide world—oh, my friend, with how many failed hopes, with how many shattered plans!—I saw the mountains lying before me that had been the object of my wishes a thousand times. I could sit here for hours and long to be over there, losing myself with my whole soul in the forests and the valleys that showed themselves to my eyes in so friendly a dusk; and when I had to go back at the appointed time, with what reluctance I left that dear spot!—I came nearer the town; I greeted all the old, familiar garden houses; the new ones I disliked, as I did all the other changes that had been made. I went in at the gate and at once found myself again, wholly.

My dear friend, I will not go into detail; delightful as it was to me, it would be just as monotonous in the telling. I had decided to lodge on the market square, right next to our old house. On the way there I noticed that the schoolroom where an honest old woman had penned up our childhood had been turned into a shop. I remember the restlessness, the tears, the dullness of mind, the anguish of heart I had endured in that hole.—I did not take a step that was not memorable. A pilgrim in the Holy Land does not come upon so many places of religious memory, and his soul is hardly so full of holy emotion.—One more, for a thousand. I went down the river as far as a certain farm; that used to be my way too, and there were the little spots where we boys practiced getting the most skips out of flat stones on the water. I remembered so vividly how I sometimes stood and watched the water go, with what wonderful presentiments I followed it, how adventurously I pictured the regions it was flowing to, and how I soon came up against the limits of my imagination there; and yet it had to go on, further and further, until I lost myself entirely in gazing into an invisible distance.—Look, my dear friend, so limited and so happy were the glorious forefathers! So childlike their feeling, their poetry! When Odysseus speaks of the measureless sea and the boundless earth, it is so true, human, heartfelt, narrow, and mysterious. What good does it do me that I can now repeat after every schoolboy that it is round? A man needs only a few clods of earth to enjoy himself on, and fewer to rest beneath. Now I am here at the prince's hunting lodge. One can still get on quite well with the gentleman; he is genuine and simple. There are strange people around him whom I do not understand at all. They do not seem to be rogues, and yet they do not have the look of honest people either. Sometimes they seem honest to me, and still I cannot trust them. What I also regret is that he often talks about things he has only heard or read about, and then from exactly the point of view from which some-

one else may have presented them to him. He also values my understanding and my talents more than this heart, which is after all my only pride, which alone is the source of everything, of all strength, all bliss, and all misery. Ah, what I know, anyone can know—my heart I have to myself alone.

May 25

I had something in mind that I did not want to tell you about until it was carried out; now that nothing will come of it, it is just as well. I wanted to go to war; that has long been close to my heart. It was mainly for that reason that I followed the prince here; he is a general in the *** service. On a walk I disclosed my plan to him; he advised me against it, and it would have had to be more passion than whim with me if I had not been willing to listen to his reasons.

June 11

Say what you like, I cannot stay any longer. What am I to do here? Time hangs heavy on me. The prince treats me as well as anyone could, and yet I am not in my element. At bottom we have nothing in common. He is a man of understanding, but of a quite ordinary understanding; his company entertains me no more than reading a well-written book. I will stay another week, and then I will go wandering about again. The best thing I have done here is my drawing. The prince has feeling for art and would feel it still more strongly if he were not confined by that nasty scientific manner and the usual terminology. Sometimes I gnash my teeth when I am leading him around nature and art with a warm imagination and he suddenly thinks he is doing very well by stumbling in with some stock technical term.

June 16

Yes, to be sure, I am only a wanderer, a pilgrim on the earth! And are you any more than that?

June 16

Where am I going? Let me tell you in confidence. I have to stay here another two weeks after all, and then I have talked myself into believing that I want to visit the mines in ∗∗∗; but there is really nothing to it; I only want to be nearer Lotte again, that is all. And I laugh at my own heart—and let it have its way.

July 29

No, it is good! Everything is good!—I—her husband! O God, who made me, if you had prepared this bliss for me, my whole life would be one unbroken prayer. I will not argue with you, and forgive me these tears, forgive me my vain wishes!—She, my wife! If I had held the dearest creature under the sun in my arms—a shudder goes through my whole body, Wilhelm, when Albert puts his arm around her slender waist.

And, may I say it? Why not, Wilhelm? She would have been happier with me than with him! Oh, he is not the man to fulfill all the wishes of this heart. A certain lack of sensibility, a lack—take it as you will; that his heart does not beat in sympathy at—oh!—at the passage in a beloved book where my heart and Lotte's meet as one; in a hundred other incidents, when it happens that our feelings about something a third person has done are spoken aloud. Dear Wilhelm!—To be sure, he loves her with his whole soul, and such a love, what does it not deserve!

—An unbearable man has interrupted me. My tears are dried. I am distracted. Adieu, my dear friend!

August 4

It is not only with me. All people are disappointed in their hopes, cheated in their expectations. I visited my good woman under the linden. The eldest boy ran to meet me; his cry of joy brought his mother, who looked very downcast. Her first words were, "Oh, good sir, my Hans has died!"—He was the youngest of her boys. I said nothing. "And my husband," she said, "is back from Switzerland and has brought nothing home, and if it weren't for

kind people he would have had to beg his way out; he caught a fever on the way."—I could say nothing to her and gave the little one something; she asked me to take a few apples, which I did, and I left that place of sad memory.

August 21

As quickly as you turn a hand over, things change with me. Sometimes a joyful glimpse of life will dawn again, ah, only for a moment!—When I lose myself in dreams like that, I cannot fend off the thought: what if Albert died? You would! Yes, she would—and then I chase after the phantom until it leads me to the edge of abysses before which I shrink back trembling.

When I go out of the gate, along the road I drove the first time to fetch Lotte for the dance, how utterly different it was then! Everything, everything has passed away! Not a hint of the world that was, not one pulse beat of what I felt then. I feel as a ghost must feel who has come back to the burned-out, ruined castle that he once built as a flourishing prince and furnished with every gift of splendor and, dying, left full of hope to his beloved son.

September 3

Sometimes I cannot understand how another man can love her, can be allowed to love her, when I love her so wholly, so deeply, so fully, and know nothing, understand nothing, have nothing but her!

September 4

Yes, it is so. As nature turns toward autumn, it is becoming autumn in me and around me. My leaves are turning yellow, and already the leaves of the trees nearby have fallen. Didn't I once write to you about a farmhand, just after I came here? I asked after him again in Wahlheim; they said he had been driven out of his place, and nobody wanted to know anything more about him. Yesterday I met him by chance on the road to another village; I spoke to him, and he told me his story, which moved me twice and three times over, as you will easily understand when I tell it to you

in turn. But what is the use of all this? Why don't I keep to myself what frightens and grieves me? Why do I sadden you as well? Why do I keep giving you occasion to pity me and to scold me? So be it; that too may be part of my fate!

With a quiet sadness, in which I thought I noticed something a little shy, the man at first only answered my questions; but very soon, more openly, as if he had suddenly recognized himself and me again, he confessed his faults to me and lamented his misfortune. If only I could lay every one of his words before you, my friend, as before a court! He admitted, in fact he told me with a kind of pleasure and happiness in remembering, that his passion for the woman of the house had grown in him day by day, that in the end he had not known what he was doing, nor, as he put it, which way to turn his head. He had been unable to eat or drink or sleep; it had stuck in his throat; he had done what he should not have done; what he was told to do, he forgot; he had been as if pursued by an evil spirit, until one day, knowing she was in an upstairs room, he had gone after her, or rather had been drawn after her; when she would not listen to his pleading, he had tried to take her by force; he did not know what had come over him, and he called God to witness that his intentions toward her had always been honest and that he had wished for nothing more ardently than that she would marry him, that she would spend her life with him. When he had talked for a while, he began to falter, like someone who still has something to say and does not dare to say it out; at last, shyly, he confessed to me as well what little intimacies she had allowed him and what closeness she had granted him. He broke off two or three times and repeated the most fervent protestations that he was not saying this to make her out bad, as he put it, that he loved and respected her as before, that such a thing had never crossed his lips, and that he was telling me only to convince me that he was not a wholly perverse and senseless man.

—And here, my dear friend, I begin my old song again, the one I will be singing forever: if only I could show you the man as he stood before me, as he still stands before me! If only I could tell you everything rightly, so that you would feel how I share in his fate, how I must share in it! But enough; since you know my fate too, and know me too, you know only too well what draws me to all the unhappy, and to this unhappy man above all.

As I read this sheet over, I see that I have forgotten to tell the end of the story, though it is easy to supply. She fought him off; her brother came in, who had long hated him and long wished him out of the house, because he fears that if his sister marries again, his own children will lose the inheritance that now, since she is childless, gives them fine hopes; this brother, he said, had thrown him out of the house at once and made such a noise about the matter that the woman, even if she had wanted to, could not have taken him back. Now she had taken on another hired man, and over him too, people said, she had fallen out with her brother, and it was said for certain that she would marry him, but he was firmly resolved not to live to see it.

What I am telling you is not exaggerated, not prettified; in fact I may well say that I have told it weakly, weakly, and that I have coarsened it by putting it in our conventional moral words.

So this love, this faithfulness, this passion is no poet's invention. It lives; it exists in its greatest purity among the class of people we call uneducated, we call coarse. We educated people—miseducated into nothing! Read the story with reverence, I beg you. I am quiet today as I write this down; you can see from my hand that I am not scrawling and scribbling as I usually do. Read, my beloved friend, and think as you read that it is your friend's story too. Yes, that is how it went with me, that is how it will go with me, and I am not half so brave, not half so resolute, as the poor unhappy man with whom I hardly dare compare myself.

September 5

She had written a little note to her husband in the country, where he was staying on business. It began: “My best, my dearest, come as soon as you can; I am waiting for you with a thousand joys.”—A friend who came in brought word that, owing to certain circumstances, he would not be back so soon. The note was left lying and fell into my hands in the evening. I read it and smiled; she asked what at.—“What a divine gift imagination is,” I cried. “For a moment I could make myself believe it was written to me.”—She broke off; it seemed to displease her, and I said nothing.

September 6

It was hard to make up my mind to put aside the plain blue tail-coat in which I first danced with Lotte; but in the end it had become quite shabby. So I have had one made exactly like the old one, collar and lapels, and again a yellow waistcoat and breeches to go with it. Still, it does not quite have the same effect. I don’t know—I think in time I will grow fonder of this one too.

September 12

She had been away for a few days to fetch Albert. Today I came into her room; she came to meet me, and I kissed her hand with a thousand joys.

A canary flew from the mirror onto her shoulder.—“A new friend,” she said, and coaxed him onto her hand. “He’s meant for my little ones. He is too sweet! Look at him! When I give him bread, he flutters his wings and pecks so prettily. He kisses me too, look!”

When she held out her mouth to the little creature, it pressed itself so sweetly against her lovely lips, as if it could feel the bliss it was enjoying.

“He shall kiss you too,” she said, and handed the bird across.—The little beak made its way from her mouth to mine, and its pecking touch was like a breath, a presentiment of loving pleasure.

“His kiss,” I said, “is not entirely without desire; he is looking for food and comes back unsatisfied from the empty caress.”

“He eats from my mouth too,” she said.—She gave him a few crumbs with her lips, from which the joys of an innocent, sharing love smiled in all their rapture.

I turned my face away. She should not do it, should not excite my imagination with these images of heavenly innocence and bliss, should not wake my heart from the sleep into which the indifference of life sometimes rocks it!—And why not?—She trusts me so! She knows how I love her!

September 15

It is enough to drive you mad, Wilhelm, that there should be people with no sense or feeling for the little on earth that still has any value. You know the walnut trees under which I sat with Lotte at the honest pastor’s in St., the glorious walnut trees that always, God knows, filled me with the greatest joy of soul! How intimate they made the parsonage yard, how cool! And how glorious the branches were! And the memory, reaching back to the honest clergymen who planted them so many years ago. The schoolmaster often told us one of their names, which he had heard from his grandfather; such a good man he is said to have been, and his memory was always sacred under those trees. I tell you, there were tears in the schoolmaster’s eyes when we spoke yesterday of their having been cut down—cut down! I could go out of my mind; I could murder the dog who struck the first blow. I, who could pine away with grief if a couple of trees like that stood in my yard and one of them died of old age, I have to stand by and watch. My dear, there is one thing about it, though: what human feeling is! The whole village is grumbling, and I hope the pastor’s wife will feel in her butter and eggs and the rest of their goodwill what a wound she has dealt her village. For it is she, the wife of the new pastor (our old one has died too), a gaunt, sickly creature who has every

reason to take no interest in the world, since no one takes any interest in her. A fool who sets up to be learned, meddles in the study of the canon, works hard at the new-fashioned moral-critical reformation of Christianity, and shrugs her shoulders at Lavater's enthusiasms; her health is quite shattered, and so she has no joy on God's earth. Only a creature like that could have cut down my walnut trees. You see, I cannot get over it! Just imagine: the falling leaves make her yard dirty and dank, the trees take away her daylight, and when the nuts are ripe the boys throw stones at them, and that gets on her nerves, that disturbs her in her deep reflections when she is weighing Kennicot, Semler, and Michaelis against one another. When I saw how discontented the people in the village were, especially the old ones, I said, "Why did you allow it?"—"When the mayor wants something, around here," they said, "what can you do?"—But one thing turned out right. The mayor and the pastor, who after all wanted to get something out of his wife's whims too, since they put no fat in his soup anyway, thought they would share the proceeds; then the revenue chamber heard of it and said, "Hand it over!" for it still had old claims to the part of the parsonage yard where the trees stood, and it sold them to the highest bidder. There they lie! Oh, if I were a prince! I would have the pastor's wife, the mayor, and the revenue chamber —Prince!—yes, if I were a prince, what would the trees in my country matter to me!

October 10

If I only see her black eyes, I am well already! Look, and what vexes me is that Albert does not seem as happy as he—hoped—as I —thought I would be—if—I do not like using dashes, but here I cannot express myself any other way—and it seems to me clear enough.

October 12

Ossian has driven Homer out of my heart. What a world that glorious poet leads me into! To wander over the heath, with the storm wind roaring around me as it leads the spirits of the fathers in steaming mists by the dim light of the moon. To hear from the mountains, in the roar of the forest torrent, the half-blown-away groaning of the spirits from their caves, and the laments of the girl grieving herself to death around the four moss-covered, grass-grown stones of the nobly fallen one, her beloved. When I find him then, the wandering gray bard, who seeks the footprints of his fathers on the wide heath and, ah, finds their gravestones, and then, lamenting, looks toward the dear star of evening that hides itself in the rolling sea, and the times of the past come alive in the hero's soul, when the friendly beam still lit the dangers of the brave and the moon shone on their garlanded ship returning in victory. When I read the deep grief on his brow, see the last, forsaken, glorious one tottering toward the grave in utter exhaustion, how he drinks in ever new, painfully glowing joys in the powerless presence of the shades of his departed, and looks down at the cold earth, the tall, waving grass, and cries: "The wanderer will come, will come, who knew me in my beauty, and ask, 'Where is the singer, Fingal's excellent son?' His footstep passes over my grave, and he asks for me in vain upon the earth."—Oh, friend! Like a noble armor-bearer I would draw my sword, free my lord at one stroke from the convulsive torment of a slowly dying life, and send my soul after the liberated demigod.

October 19

Ah, this void! This terrible void I feel here in my breast!—I often think: if you could press her to this heart only once, only once, this whole void would be filled.

October 19

Yes, it is becoming certain to me, my dear friend, certain and ever more certain, that little depends on the existence of any one

creature, very little. A friend came to see Lotte, and I went into the next room to get a book, and could not read, and then I took a pen to write. I heard them talking softly; they were telling each other unimportant things, news of the town: how this one is getting married, how that one is ill, very ill.—"She has a dry cough, the bones are sticking out of her face, and she has fainting fits; I wouldn't give a kreuzer for her life," said the one.—"N. N. is in a bad way too," said Lotte.—"He's already swollen," said the other.—And my lively imagination carried me to the bedside of these poor people; I saw with what reluctance they turned their backs on life, how they—Wilhelm! And my little women were talking about it just the way people do talk about it—that a stranger is dying.—And when I look around and look at the room, and all around me Lotte's clothes and Albert's papers and this furniture I have grown so friendly with, even this inkwell, and think: look what you are to this house now! All in all. Your friends honor you! You often give them joy, and it seems to your heart as if it could not be without them; and yet—if you went now, if you left this circle? Would they, how long would they feel the void your loss would tear in their fate? How long?—Oh, man is so transient that even there where he has the real certainty of his existence, where he makes the one true impression of his presence, in the memory, in the soul of those he loves, even there he must go out, must vanish, and so soon!

October 27

I would often like to tear open my breast and dash my brains out, that people can be so little to one another. Ah, the love, joy, warmth, and rapture that I do not bring with me, the other will not give me; and with a whole heart full of bliss I will not make the other happy who stands before me cold and without strength.

I have so much, and my feeling for her swallows everything; I have so much, and without her everything turns to nothing.

October 27, evening

A hundred times I have been on the point of throwing my arms around her neck! The great God knows what it does to you to see so much loveliness moving about in front of you and not be allowed to reach for it; and reaching out is, after all, the most natural impulse of humankind. Don't children reach for everything that comes into their heads?—And I?

October 30

God knows! So often I go to bed wishing, yes, sometimes hoping, never to wake again; and in the morning I open my eyes, see the sun again, and am wretched. Oh, if only I could be a creature of moods, could put the blame on the weather, on a third person, on an undertaking that failed, then the unbearable burden of discontent would rest only half on me. Woe is me! I feel too truly that all the blame lies with me—not blame! Enough that in me lies hidden the source of all misery, as once the source of all bliss. Am I not still the very same man who once floated about in all the fullness of feeling, whom a paradise followed at every step, who had a heart to embrace a whole world with love? And this heart is dead now; no raptures flow from it any more; my eyes are dry, and my senses, no longer refreshed by reviving tears, draw my brow together in anguish. I suffer much, for I have lost what was the one rapture of my life, the holy, quickening power with which I created worlds around me; it is gone!—When I look out of my window at the distant hill, and see the morning sun break through the mist above it and shine on the quiet meadows of the valley, and the gentle river winds toward me between its leafless willows—oh! when this glorious nature stands before me as stiff as a little varnished picture, and all that rapture cannot pump a single drop of bliss up from my heart into my brain, and the whole fellow stands before the face of God like a well run dry, like a cracked bucket. I have often thrown myself on the ground and begged God for tears,

as a farmer begs for rain when the sky is brass above him and the earth around him is dying of thirst.

But ah, I feel it: God does not give rain and sunshine in answer to our impetuous pleading, and those times whose memory torments me, why were they so blissful, if not because I waited for his spirit with patience and received the rapture he poured out over me with a whole and deeply grateful heart!

November 8

She has reproached me for my excesses! Ah, so lovingly! My excesses: that I sometimes let one glass of wine tempt me into drinking a bottle.—"Don't do it!" she said. "Think of Lotte!"—"Think!" I said. "Do you need to tell me to? I think!—I do not think! You are always before my soul. Today I sat at the spot where you got out of the carriage the other day."—She talked of something else, so as not to let me get deeper into my subject. Dearest friend, I am done for! She can do with me what she will.

November 15

I thank you, Wilhelm, for your heartfelt sympathy, for your well-meant advice, and I beg you to be calm. Let me endure to the end; for all my weariness I still have strength enough to see it through. I revere religion, you know that; I feel that it is a staff to many who are faint, refreshment to many who are languishing. Only—can it, must it be that to everyone? When you look at the great world, you see thousands for whom it was not that, thousands for whom it will not be, preached or unpreached, and must it be that to me? Does not the Son of God himself say that those would be with him whom the Father has given him? What if I am not given to him? What if the Father wants to keep me for himself, as my heart tells me?—I beg you, do not misread this; do not see mockery in these innocent words; it is my whole soul that I lay before you; otherwise I would rather have kept silent, just as I do not like to waste a word on all those things of which everyone

knows as little as I do. What is it but the fate of man to suffer out his measure, to drink his cup to the dregs?—And if the cup was too bitter for the God from heaven on his human lips, why should I boast and pretend it tastes sweet to me? And why should I be ashamed, in the terrible moment when my whole being trembles between being and not-being, when the past flashes like lightning over the dark abyss of the future and everything around me sinks and the world perishes with me? Is it not then the voice of the creature driven wholly in upon itself, failing itself, plunging irresistibly downward, grinding out from the inmost depths of its vainly struggling powers: "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?" And should I be ashamed of the words, should I dread that moment, since even he who rolls up the heavens like a cloth did not escape it?

November 21

She does not see, she does not feel, that she is preparing a poison that will destroy both me and her; and I, with utter voluptuousness, drain the cup she hands me for my ruin. What does it mean, the kind look with which she often—often?—no, not often, but still sometimes looks at me, the graciousness with which she receives an involuntary expression of my feeling, the pity for my endurance that is written on her brow?

Yesterday, as I was leaving, she gave me her hand and said, "Adieu, dear Werther!"—Dear Werther! It was the first time she had called me dear, and it went through me to the marrow. I have repeated it to myself a hundred times, and last night, as I was about to go to bed and was chattering to myself about all sorts of things, I suddenly said, "Good night, dear Werther!" and afterward had to laugh at myself.

November 22

I cannot pray, "Let me keep her!" and yet she often seems to me to be mine. I cannot pray, "Give her to me!" for she belongs to

another. I play the wit with my pain; if I let myself go, there would be a whole litany of antitheses.

November 24

She feels what I am suffering. Today her look went deep into my heart. I found her alone; I said nothing, and she looked at me. And I no longer saw in her the lovely beauty, no longer the shining of her excellent mind; all that had vanished before my eyes. A far more glorious look worked on me, full of the expression of the deepest sympathy, the sweetest pity. Why was I not allowed to throw myself at her feet? Why was I not allowed to answer with a thousand kisses on her neck? She took refuge at the clavier and breathed harmonious sounds in a sweet, soft voice to her playing. Never have I seen her lips so enchanting; it was as if they opened thirstily to drink in those sweet tones that welled up from the instrument, and only the secret echo rang back from her pure mouth—if only I could tell you how it was!—I resisted no longer, bowed my head, and swore: never will I dare to press a kiss upon you, lips on which the spirits of heaven hover.—And yet—I will—ha! You see, it stands like a partition wall before my soul—this bliss—and then to perish, to atone for this sin—sin?

November 26

Sometimes I say to myself: your fate is unique; call the others happy—no one has ever been tormented like this.—Then I read a poet of ancient times, and it seems to me as if I were looking into my own heart. I have so much to endure! Ah, have human beings before me ever been so wretched?

November 30

I am not meant, I am not meant to come to myself! Wherever I go, I meet an apparition that throws me out of all composure. Today! O fate! O humanity!

At the noon hour I walk along by the water; I had no desire to eat. Everything was desolate; a raw, damp west wind was blowing

from the mountain, and the gray rain clouds were moving into the valley. From far off I see a man in a shabby green coat, clambering about among the rocks and seemingly looking for herbs. When I came closer and he turned around at the noise I made, I saw a most interesting face, whose chief feature was a quiet sorrow, but which otherwise expressed nothing but plain good sense; his black hair was pinned up in two rolls, and the rest braided into a thick queue that hung down his back. Since his clothes seemed to me to mark a man of humble station, I thought he would not take it amiss if I paid attention to what he was doing, and so I asked him what he was looking for.—"I am looking," he answered with a deep sigh, "for flowers—and I find none."—"But this is not the season for them," I said, smiling.—"There are so many flowers," he said, coming down toward me. "In my garden there are roses and honeysuckle, two kinds, one my father gave me; they grow like weeds; I have been looking for them for two days now and can't find them. Out here there are always flowers too, yellow and blue and red, and the centaury has a pretty little flower. I can't find any of them."—I sensed something uncanny, and so I asked in a roundabout way, "And what do you want with the flowers?"—A strange, twitching smile twisted his face. "If you won't give me away," he said, pressing his finger to his lips, "I have promised my sweetheart a nosegay."—"That is good of you," I said.—"Oh!" he said, "she has lots of other things, she is rich."—"And still she will be fond of your nosegay," I replied.—"Oh!" he went on, "she has jewels and a crown."—"And what is her name?"—"If the States General would pay me," he replied, "I would be a different man! Yes, there was a time once when I was so well! Now it's all over with me. Now I am …" A wet look toward heaven said everything.—"So you were happy?" I asked.—"Ah, I wish I were like that again!" he said. "I was so well then, so merry, so light, like a fish in water!"—"Heinrich!" called an old woman who was coming along the road, "Heinrich,

where have you got to? We've looked for you everywhere; come and eat."—"Is that your son?" I asked, going up to her.—"Yes, my poor son!" she replied. "God has laid a heavy cross on me."—"How long has he been like this?" I asked.—"This quiet," she said, "he has been for half a year now. Thank God he is only this far gone; before that he was raving for a whole year, and they had him in chains in the madhouse. Now he does no harm to anyone; only he is always busy with kings and emperors. He was such a good, quiet man, who helped me make a living and wrote a beautiful hand, and all of a sudden he turns melancholy, falls into a burning fever, and from that into madness, and now he is as you see him. If I were to tell you everything, sir."—I interrupted the stream of her words with the question, "What time is that, then, that he boasts of, when he was so happy, so well?"—"The foolish man!" she cried with a pitying smile. "He means the time when he was out of his mind; he always boasts about it; that is the time he was in the madhouse, when he knew nothing of himself."—That struck me like a thunderclap; I pressed a coin into her hand and left her in haste. When you were happy! I cried out, walking quickly toward the town, when you were as well as a fish in water!—God in heaven! Have you made it the fate of men that they are happy only before they come to their reason and after they lose it again!—Poor wretch! And yet how I envy your melancholy, the confusion of your senses, in which you are wasting away! You go out full of hope to pick flowers for your queen—in winter—and grieve when you find none, and do not understand why you cannot find any. And I—and I go out without hope, without purpose, and come home again as I went.—You imagine what a man you would be if the States General paid you. Blessed creature, who can put down the lack of his happiness to an earthly obstacle! You do not feel, you do not feel that your misery lies in your ruined heart, in your shattered brain, and that all the kings on earth cannot help you. May he perish without

comfort who mocks a sick man for traveling to the most distant spring, though it will only increase his sickness and make the rest of his life more painful! Who looks down on the oppressed heart that, to be rid of its remorse and put away the sufferings of its soul, makes a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulcher. Every footstep that cuts through his soles on the untrodden way is a drop of balm for the anguished soul, and with every day's journey endured the heart lies down lighter by many afflictions.—And dare you call that delusion, you word-peddlers on your cushions?—Delusion!—O God! You see my tears! Did you, who created man poor enough, have to give him brothers as well, to rob him even of his bit of poverty, his bit of trust in you, in you, the All-loving! For trust in a healing root, in the tears of the vine, what is it but trust in you, that you have put healing and soothing power into everything around us, which we need so hour by hour? Father, whom I do not know! Father, who once filled my whole soul and has now turned his face away from me, call me to you! Be silent no longer! Your silence will not hold back this thirsting soul—and could a man, a father, be angry if his son, coming home unexpectedly, fell on his neck and cried, "I am back, my father! Do not be angry that I break off the journey that by your will I was to endure longer. The world is the same everywhere: for toil and labor, reward and joy; but what is that to me? I am well only where you are, and before your face I want to suffer and enjoy."—And you, dear heavenly Father, would you turn him away?

December 1

Wilhelm! The man I wrote you about, that happy unhappy man, was a clerk in the service of Lotte's father, and a passion for her, which he nourished, concealed, revealed, and for which he was dismissed from his post, drove him mad. Feel, as you read these dry words, with what frenzy the story seized me when Albert told it to me as calmly as you will perhaps read it.

December 4

I beg you—you see, it is all over with me, I cannot bear it any longer! Today I sat beside her—sat, she was playing on her clavier, all sorts of melodies, and all that expression! All!—All!—What more do you want?—Her little sister was dressing her doll on my knee. Tears came into my eyes. I bent my head, and her wedding ring caught my eye—my tears flowed—and all at once she struck up the old, heavenly sweet melody, all at once, and through my soul there went a feeling of comfort and a memory of the past, of the times when I had heard that song, of the dark intervals of vexation, of the failed hopes, and then—I walked up and down the room; my heart was suffocating under the onrush.—"For God's sake," I said, turning on her in a violent outburst, "for God's sake, stop!"—She stopped and looked at me fixedly. "Werther," she said with a smile that went through my soul, "Werther, you are very ill; your favorite dishes disgust you. Go! I beg you, calm yourself."—I tore myself away from her and—God! You see my misery, and you will end it.

December 6

How her image pursues me! Waking and dreaming, it fills my whole soul! Here, when I close my eyes, here in my forehead, where the inner power of sight comes together, stand her black eyes. Here! I cannot express it to you. If I close my eyes, they are there; like a sea, like an abyss they lie before me, in me, and fill the senses of my brow.

What is man, that much-praised demigod! Do his powers not fail him just where he needs them most? And when he soars up in joy or sinks down in suffering, is he not stopped in both just there, brought back just there to dull, cold consciousness, at the very moment he was longing to lose himself in the fullness of the infinite?

The Editor to the Reader

How I wish that enough testimony in our friend's own hand had come down to us from his last remarkable days that I would not have to interrupt the sequence of the letters he left behind with a narrative.

I have made it my business to gather exact accounts from the mouths of those who could be well informed about his story; it is simple, and all the accounts of it agree with one another except in a few small details; only about the dispositions of the persons involved do opinions differ and judgments divide.

What remains for us but to relate conscientiously what we have been able to learn by repeated effort, to insert the letters the departed left behind, and not to think lightly of the smallest scrap of paper found; especially since it is so hard to discover the most personal, true motives of even a single action when it takes place among people who are not of the common sort.

Dejection and listlessness had struck ever deeper root in Werther's soul, had wound themselves ever more tightly together, and had gradually taken possession of his whole being. The harmony of his mind was completely destroyed; an inner heat and violence, which churned all the powers of his nature together, produced the most adverse effects and in the end left him only an exhaustion out of which he struggled upward still more anxiously than he had fought with all his ills before. The anguish of his heart consumed the other powers of his mind, his liveliness, his acuteness; he became a sad companion, ever more unhappy, and ever more unjust the unhappier he became. At least that is what

Albert's friends say; they maintain that Werther could not judge rightly a pure, calm man who had now come into a long-desired happiness, nor his conduct in seeking to keep this happiness for the future as well, he who, as it were, used up his whole fortune every day, only to suffer and go in want in the evening. Albert, they say, had not changed in so short a time; he was still the same man whom Werther had known from the beginning and so esteemed and honored. He loved Lotte above everything; he was proud of her and wished her to be acknowledged by everyone as the most glorious of creatures. Could he be blamed, then, if he wished to avert every appearance of suspicion, if at that moment he had no desire to share this precious possession with anyone, even in the most innocent way? They admit that Albert often left his wife's room when Werther was with her, but not out of hatred or dislike for his friend, only because he had felt that his friend was oppressed by his presence.

Lotte's father had been taken with an ailment that kept him indoors; he sent her his carriage, and she drove out to him. It was a fine winter day; the first snow had fallen heavily and covered the whole countryside.

Werther followed her the next morning, so that, if Albert did not come to fetch her, he could escort her back to town.

The clear weather could do little for his gloomy spirits; a dull weight lay on his soul, the sad images had fixed themselves in him, and his mind knew no movement but from one painful thought to the next.

Since he lived in endless discord with himself, the state of others too seemed to him only the more precarious and confused; he believed he had disturbed the fine relationship between Albert and his wife, and he reproached himself for it, and with these reproaches a secret resentment against the husband was mingled.

His thoughts turned to this subject on the way as well. “Yes, yes,” he said to himself, secretly gnashing his teeth, “that is the intimate, friendly, tender companionship that shares in everything, the calm, lasting faithfulness! It’s satiety, and indifference! Doesn’t every wretched piece of business draw him more than his dear, precious wife? Does he know how to value his happiness? Does he know how to respect her as she deserves? He has her; well and good, he has her—I know that, as I know other things too; I think I am used to the thought; it will drive me mad yet, it will kill me yet—and has his friendship for me held up? Doesn’t he already see in my attachment to Lotte an encroachment on his rights, in my attentions to her a silent reproach? I know it well, I feel it: he doesn’t like to see me, he wishes me gone, my presence is a burden to him.”

Often he checked his rapid pace, often he stood still and seemed about to turn back; but he kept setting his course forward again, and with these thoughts and these conversations with himself he finally arrived, almost against his will, at the hunting lodge.

He went in at the door and asked for the old man and for Lotte, and found the house in some commotion. The eldest boy told him that over in Wahlheim there had been a misfortune; a farmer had been struck dead!—This made no further impression on him.—He went into the room and found Lotte trying to talk the old man out of going over, in spite of his illness, to investigate the deed on the spot. The culprit was still unknown; the dead man had been found that morning in front of the house door; there were suspicions: the murdered man was the hired man of a widow who had previously had another in her service, and he had left the house on bad terms.

When Werther heard this, he started up violently.—“Is it possible!” he cried. “I must go over there; I can’t rest a moment.”—He hurried off toward Wahlheim; every memory came alive in him,

and he did not doubt for a moment that the deed had been done by the man he had talked with so often, who had become so dear to him.

Since he had to pass through the lindens to reach the tavern where they had laid the body, he was horrified at the place he had once loved so much. That threshold on which the neighbors' children had so often played was smeared with blood. Love and faithfulness, the finest human feelings, had turned into violence and murder. The strong trees stood leafless and white with hoarfrost; the lovely hedges that arched over the low churchyard wall were bare, and the gravestones, covered with snow, showed through the gaps.

As he approached the tavern, in front of which the whole village had gathered, a shout suddenly went up. A troop of armed men could be seen in the distance, and everyone cried that the culprit was being brought in. Werther looked and was not long in doubt. Yes, it was the farmhand who had loved that widow so much, whom he had met some time before, going about with that silent fury, that secret despair.

"What have you done, unhappy man!" Werther cried, going straight up to the prisoner.—The man looked at him quietly, said nothing, and at last replied quite calmly, "No one will have her; she will have no one."—They took the prisoner into the tavern, and Werther hurried away.

By this terrible, violent shock everything in his being had been shaken together. For a moment he was torn out of his grief, his ill humor, his indifferent resignation; sympathy took irresistible hold of him, and an unspeakable desire seized him to save the man. He felt him to be so unhappy, he found him, even as a criminal, so innocent, he put himself so deeply into his situation, that he was sure he could convince others of it as well. Already he wished he could speak for him; already the liveliest plea was crowding to his

lips; he hurried to the hunting lodge and on the way could not keep from speaking aloud, half under his breath, everything he meant to put to the magistrate.

When he came into the room, he found Albert there, and this put him out for a moment; but he soon collected himself and set out his views to the magistrate with fire. The magistrate shook his head several times, and although Werther brought forward with the greatest liveliness, passion, and truth everything that one human being can say in excuse of another, the magistrate, as may easily be imagined, was not moved by it. On the contrary, he did not let our friend finish, contradicted him heatedly, and rebuked him for taking a treacherous murderer under his protection; he showed him that in this way every law would be abolished, all the security of the state destroyed; he added, too, that in such a matter he could do nothing without taking the gravest responsibility on himself; everything must go in order, in the prescribed course.

Werther did not give up yet, but only begged the magistrate to look the other way if someone helped the man to escape! This too the magistrate refused. Albert, who finally joined in the conversation, also took the old man's side. Werther was outvoted, and he set off in terrible suffering, after the magistrate had said to him several times, "No, he cannot be saved!"

How much these words must have struck him we see from a little note that was found among his papers and was certainly written on that same day:

"You cannot be saved, unhappy man! I see well that we cannot be saved."

What Albert had said last about the prisoner's case in the magistrate's presence had been extremely repugnant to Werther: he thought he had noticed some irritation against himself in it, and although on further reflection his acuteness did not fail to see

that both men might be right, still he felt as if he would have to renounce his innermost being if he were to admit it, to concede it.

A little sheet that refers to this, and that perhaps expresses his whole relationship to Albert, we find among his papers: "What good does it do to tell myself again and again that he is decent and good? It tears my very entrails apart; I cannot be fair."

Because it was a mild evening and the weather was beginning to turn toward a thaw, Lotte walked back with Albert. On the way she looked around now and then, just as if she missed Werther's company. Albert began to talk about him; he found fault with him while doing him justice. He touched on his unhappy passion and wished it might be possible to send him away.—"I wish it for our sake too," he said, "and I beg you," he went on, "try to give his behavior toward you a different direction, to make his visits less frequent. People are taking notice, and I know there has been talk about it here and there."—Lotte said nothing, and Albert seemed to have felt her silence; at least from that time on he did not mention Werther to her again, and when she mentioned him, he let the conversation drop or turned it elsewhere.

The vain attempt Werther had made to save the unhappy man was the last flaring up of the flame of a dying light; he sank only the deeper into pain and inactivity; above all he was almost beside himself when he heard that he might even be called as a witness against the man, who had now taken to denying everything.

Everything unpleasant that had ever befallen him in his active life, the vexation at the legation, everything else that had gone wrong for him, that had ever hurt him, rose and fell in his soul. By all this he found himself, as it were, entitled to inactivity; he found himself cut off from every prospect, incapable of grasping any of the handles by which one takes hold of the business of ordinary life; and so at last, wholly given over to his strange feeling, his strange way of thinking, and an endless passion, in the eternal

sameness of a sad companionship with the lovable and beloved creature whose peace he was disturbing, storming against his own strength and wearing it out without purpose or prospect, he drew ever nearer to a sad end.

Of his confusion, his passion, his restless driving and striving, his weariness of life, some letters he left behind are the strongest testimony, and we will insert them here.

December 12

Dear Wilhelm, I am in the state those unhappy people must have been in who were believed to be driven about by an evil spirit. Sometimes it seizes me; it is not fear, not desire—it is an inner, unknown raging that threatens to tear my breast apart, that chokes my throat! Woe! Woe! And then I roam about in the terrible night scenes of this season so hostile to man.

Last night I had to go out. A thaw had suddenly set in; I had heard that the river had overflowed, all the brooks were swollen, and from Wahlheim down, my dear valley was flooded! At night, after eleven, I ran out. A fearful sight, to see from the rock the churning floods whirling in the moonlight, over fields and meadows and hedges and everything, and the wide valley, up and down, one storming sea in the howling of the wind! And when the moon came out again and rested above the black cloud, and before me the flood rolled and resounded in a fearfully glorious reflection: then a shudder came over me, and then again a longing! Ah, I stood with open arms facing the abyss and breathed down! Down! And lost myself in the rapture of hurling my torments, my sufferings down there! Of roaring away like the waves! Oh!—And you could not lift your foot from the ground and put an end to all torments!—My clock has not yet run down, I feel it! O Wilhelm! How gladly I would have given up being human to tear the clouds apart with that storm wind, to seize the floods! Ha! And will this rapture not perhaps be granted one day to the prisoner?

—And as I looked down sadly at a little spot where I had rested with Lotte under a willow on a hot walk—that was flooded too, and I could hardly make out the willow! Wilhelm! And her meadows, I thought, the country around her hunting lodge! How ravaged our arbor must be now by the raging torrent! I thought. And the sunbeam of the past glanced in, as a dream of herds, meadows, and offices of honor comes to a prisoner. I stood!—I do not scold myself, for I have the courage to die.—I would have—now I sit here like an old woman who gleans her wood from fences and begs her bread at doors, to prolong and ease her dying, joyless existence one moment more.

December 14

What is this, my dear friend? I am frightened of myself! Is my love for her not the holiest, purest, most brotherly love? Have I ever felt a guilty wish in my soul?—I will not protest—and now, dreams! Oh, how truly those people felt who attributed such contradictory effects to alien powers! Last night! I tremble to say it: I held her in my arms, pressed close to my breast, and covered her mouth, whispering love, with endless kisses; my eyes swam in the intoxication of hers! God! Am I guilty that even now I feel a bliss in calling back these glowing joys with all my heart? Lotte! Lotte!—And it is all over with me! My senses are getting confused; for a week now I have had no power of reflection left; my eyes are full of tears. I am well nowhere, and well everywhere. I wish for nothing, ask for nothing. It would be better for me to go.

The resolve to leave the world had during this time, under these circumstances, gained ever more strength in Werther's soul. Since his return to Lotte it had always been his last prospect and hope; but he had told himself that it should be no overhasty, no rash deed; he wanted to take this step with the firmest conviction, with the calmest possible resolution.

His doubts, his struggle with himself, show through in a little note that is probably the beginning of a letter to Wilhelm and was found undated among his papers:

Her presence, her fate, her sympathy with mine still press the last tears from my scorched brain. To lift the curtain and step behind it! That is all! And why the hesitating and shrinking? Because we do not know what it looks like back there? And because there is no coming back? And because it is the nature of our mind to imagine confusion and darkness where we know nothing definite.

At last he grew ever more familiar and friendly with the sad thought, and his intention firm and irrevocable, as the following ambiguous letter, which he wrote to his friend, bears witness.

December 20

I thank your love, Wilhelm, for catching up the word as you did. Yes, you are right: it would be better for me to go. The suggestion you make that I come back to you all does not quite please me; at least I would still like to make a detour, especially since we can hope for lasting frost and good roads. I am also very glad that you want to come and fetch me; only wait another two weeks, and expect another letter from me with further details. Nothing must be picked before it is ripe. And two weeks more or less make a great difference. Tell my mother that she should pray for her son, and that I ask her forgiveness for all the trouble I have caused her. That was my fate, to grieve those to whom I owed joy. Farewell, my dearest friend! All the blessings of heaven upon you! Farewell!

What went on in Lotte's soul during this time, what her feelings were toward her husband, toward her unhappy friend, we hardly dare to put into words, although, from what we know of her character, we can well form a silent idea of it, and a fine woman's soul can think itself into hers and feel with her.

This much is certain: she was firmly resolved within herself to do everything to send Werther away, and if she hesitated, it was out of a heartfelt, friendly forbearance, because she knew how much it would cost him, even that it would be almost impossible for him. But during this time she was pressed harder to act in earnest; her husband kept entirely silent about this relationship, as she too had always kept silent about it, and so she was all the more anxious to prove to him by her deeds that her feelings were worthy of his.

On the same day on which Werther had written the letter to his friend inserted last, it was the Sunday before Christmas, he came to Lotte in the evening and found her alone. She was busy putting in order some toys she had made ready as Christmas presents for her little brothers and sisters. He spoke of the pleasure the little ones would have, and of the times when the unexpected opening of the door and the sight of a decorated tree with wax candles, sweets, and apples put you into a paradise of delight.—"You too," said Lotte, hiding her embarrassment under a sweet smile, "you too shall get a present, if you are very good; a little wax taper and something else."—"And what do you call being good?" he cried. "How am I to be? How can I be? Dearest Lotte!"—"Thursday evening," she said, "is Christmas Eve; the children are coming, and my father too; everyone gets his present; you come too—but not before."—Werther was taken aback.—"I beg you," she went on, "that is how it is; I beg you, for the sake of my peace of mind; it can't, it can't go on like this."—He turned his eyes away from her and walked up and down the room, muttering "it can't go on like this!" between his teeth.—Lotte, who felt the terrible state into which these words had thrown him, tried to divert his thoughts with all sorts of questions, but in vain.—"No, Lotte," he cried, "I will never see you again!"—"Why?" she replied. "Werther, you can, you must see us again; only control yourself. Oh, why did you have to be

born with this violence, this passion that clings so unconquerably to everything you once take hold of! I beg you," she went on, taking him by the hand, "control yourself! Your mind, your learning, your talents, what a wealth of pleasures they offer you! Be a man; turn this sad attachment away from a creature who can do nothing but pity you."—He ground his teeth and looked at her darkly.—She held his hand. "Only one moment of calm reflection, Werther!" she said. "Don't you feel that you are deceiving yourself, deliberately destroying yourself? Why me, Werther? Just me, who belong to another? Just that? I am afraid, I am afraid it is only the impossibility of possessing me that makes this wish so attractive to you."—He drew his hand out of hers, looking at her with a fixed, resentful look. "Wise!" he cried, "very wise! Was it perhaps Albert who made that remark? Politic! Very politic!"—"Anyone could make it," she replied, "and is there really no girl in the whole wide world who could fulfill the wishes of your heart? Bring yourself to it, look for her, and I swear to you, you will find her; for a long time now I have been anxious, for you and for us, about the confinement in which you have shut yourself up all this while. Master yourself; a journey will, must distract you! Seek, find a worthy object for your love, and come back, and let us enjoy together the bliss of a true friendship." "That," he said with a cold laugh, "could be printed and recommended to all tutors. Dear Lotte! Leave me a little peace a while longer; everything will come right!"—"Only this, Werther: that you do not come before Christmas Eve!"—He was about to answer, and Albert came into the room. They wished each other a frosty good evening and walked up and down the room side by side in embarrassment. Werther began some trivial conversation, which soon ran out; so did Albert, who then asked his wife about certain errands and, when he heard they had not yet been done, said a few words to her that struck Werther as cold, even harsh. He wanted to go; he could not, and lingered until eight, his ill

humor and resentment growing all the while, until the table was laid and he took his hat and stick. Albert asked him to stay, but he, thinking he heard only an empty compliment, thanked him coldly and went away.

He came home, took the candle out of the hand of his servant, who wanted to light his way, and went alone to his room, wept aloud, talked to himself in agitation, paced violently up and down the room, and at last threw himself on the bed in his clothes, where his servant found him when, toward eleven, he ventured to go in and ask whether he should take off his master's boots; he allowed this and forbade the servant to come into the room the next morning until he called him.

On Monday morning, the twenty-first of December, he wrote the following letter to Lotte, which was found sealed on his writing desk after his death and brought to her, and which I will insert here in sections, as the circumstances make it clear he wrote it.

"It is decided, Lotte, I am going to die, and I'm writing this to you without any romantic exaggeration, calmly, on the morning of the day on which I will see you for the last time. When you read this, my dearest, the cool grave will already cover the stiffened remains of the restless, unhappy man who knows no greater sweetness for the last moments of his life than to talk with you. I've had a terrible night and, ah, a merciful night. It is the night that has strengthened and settled my resolve: I am going to die! When I tore myself away from you yesterday, in the fearful turmoil of my senses, when all of it came crowding in on my heart and my hopeless, joyless existence beside you seized me with its horrible cold—I barely reached my room; I threw myself on my knees, beside myself, and O God! you granted me the last comfort of the bitterest tears! A thousand plans, a thousand prospects raged through my soul, and at last it stood there, firm, whole, the last, the only thought: I am going to die!—I lay down, and in the morn-

ing, in the calm of waking, it still stands firm, still strong in my heart: I am going to die!—It isn't despair; it is the certainty that I have carried it to the end, and that I am sacrificing myself for you. Yes, Lotte! Why should I keep it from you? One of us three must go, and I want it to be me! O my dearest! In this torn heart it has crept about raging, often—to murder your husband!—you!—myself! —So be it, then!—When you climb the mountain on a fine summer evening, remember me then, how I so often came up the valley, and then look across toward the churchyard, toward my grave, and see how the wind rocks the tall grass to and fro in the light of the setting sun.—I was calm when I began; now, now I'm weeping like a child, as all this comes alive around me.—"

Toward ten o'clock Werther called his servant, and while dressing he told him that he would be going away in a few days, so he should brush out the clothes and get everything ready for packing; he also ordered him to ask everywhere for the accounts, to fetch some books that had been lent out, and to pay some poor people, to whom he was accustomed to give something every week, their allowance two months in advance.

He had his dinner brought to his room, and after dinner he rode out to the magistrate, whom he did not find at home. He walked up and down the garden, lost in thought, and seemed to want to heap upon himself, at the last, all the melancholy of memory.

The little ones did not leave him in peace for long; they ran after him, jumped up on him, and told him that when tomorrow, and tomorrow again, and one more day had come, they would fetch their Christmas presents from Lotte's, and they told him of the wonders their little imaginations promised them. —"Tomorrow!" he cried, "and tomorrow again! And one more day!"—and he kissed them all warmly and was about to leave them when the littlest one wanted to whisper something more in his

ear. He let him into the secret that the big brothers had written beautiful New Year's wishes, so big! And one for Papa, one for Albert and Lotte, and one for Mr. Werther too; they were going to present them early on New Year's morning. That overcame him; he gave each of them something, mounted his horse, sent his regards to the old man, and rode away with tears in his eyes.

Toward five he came home and told the maid to see to the fire and keep it going until late at night. He told the servant to pack books and linen at the bottom of the trunk and to sew the clothes into their covers. Then, probably, he wrote the following section of his last letter to Lotte.

"You are not expecting me! You think I'll obey and not see you again until Christmas Eve. O Lotte! Today or never again. On Christmas Eve you will hold this paper in your hand, trembling, and wet it with your dear tears. I will, I must! Oh, how good it feels to have made up my mind."

Lotte, meanwhile, had fallen into a strange state. After her last conversation with Werther she had felt how hard it would be for her to part from him, and what he would suffer if he had to go away from her.

It had been said, as if in passing, in Albert's presence, that Werther would not come again before Christmas Eve, and Albert had ridden to see an official in the neighborhood with whom he had business to settle, and where he had to stay overnight.

She was sitting alone now; none of her brothers and sisters was with her; she gave herself up to her thoughts, which roamed quietly over her situation. She saw herself now bound forever to the man whose love and faithfulness she knew, to whom she was devoted with all her heart, whose calm, whose reliability seemed truly destined by heaven for a good woman to found the happiness of her life on; she felt what he would always be to her and to her children. On the other hand, Werther had become so dear to her;

from the very first moment of their acquaintance the harmony of their minds had shown itself so beautifully; the long companionship with him, so many situations lived through together, had made an indelible impression on her heart. Everything she felt and thought that was of interest she was used to sharing with him, and his going away threatened to tear a void in her whole being that could never be filled again. Oh, if she could have changed him into a brother at that moment, how happy she would have been! If she had been allowed to marry him to one of her friends, she could have hoped to restore his relationship with Albert completely as well!

She had gone through her friends one by one in her mind and found something to object to in every one of them; she found none she would have been willing to give him to.

Over all these reflections she felt deeply for the first time, without making it clear to herself, that her heartfelt, secret desire was to keep him for herself, and at the same time she told herself that she could not keep him, must not keep him; her pure, lovely mind, usually so light and so quick to help itself, felt the weight of a melancholy to which the prospect of happiness is closed. Her heart was oppressed, and a dark cloud lay over her eyes.

So it had come to half past six when she heard Werther coming up the stairs and soon recognized his step, his voice asking for her. How her heart beat, and we may almost say for the first time, at his arrival. She would gladly have had him told she was not at home, and when he came in, she cried out to him with a kind of passionate confusion, “You have not kept your word.”—“I promised nothing,” was his answer.—“Then at least you should have granted my request,” she replied. “I asked it for the sake of our peace, both of us.”

She did not really know what she was saying, any more than what she was doing, when she sent for some of her friends so as

not to be alone with Werther. He put down some books he had brought and asked about others, and she wished now that her friends would come, now that they would stay away. The maid came back with the message that both sent their excuses.

She thought of having the maid sit with her work in the next room; then she changed her mind again. Werther walked up and down the room; she went to the clavier and began a minuet; it would not flow. She collected herself and sat down calmly beside Werther, who had taken his usual place on the sofa.

"Haven't you anything to read?" she said.—He had nothing.—"In there, in my drawer," she began, "is your translation of some of Ossian's songs; I haven't read it yet, for I kept hoping to hear it from you; but since then there has never been the chance, it has never come about."—He smiled and fetched the songs; a shudder came over him as he took them in his hands, and his eyes filled with tears as he looked into them. He sat down and read.

"Star of the darkening night, fair you sparkle in the west, you lift your radiant head from your cloud, you walk in stately fashion along your hill. What are you looking at on the heath? The stormy winds have fallen; from far off comes the murmur of the torrent; roaring waves play far off at the rock; the hum of the evening flies swarms over the field. What are you looking at, fair light? But you smile and go; joyfully the waves surround you and bathe your lovely hair. Farewell, quiet beam. Appear, you glorious light of Ossian's soul!

"And it appears in its strength. I see my departed friends; they gather on Lora, as in the days that are gone.—Fingal comes like a moist pillar of mist; around him are his heroes, and, see! the bards of song: gray Ullin! stately Ryno! Alpin, lovely singer! And you, softly lamenting Minona!—How changed you are, my friends, since the festal days on Selma, when we vied for the honor of song, as

spring breezes along the hill bend by turns the faintly whispering grass.

"Then Minona came forward in her beauty, with downcast look and tearful eye; heavy flowed her hair in the restless wind that blew down from the hill.—Gloom came into the souls of the heroes when she raised her lovely voice; for often they had seen the grave of Salgar, often the dark dwelling of white Colma. Colma, forsaken on the hill, with her harmonious voice; Salgar promised to come; but all around the night closed in. Hear Colma's voice as she sat alone on the hill.

"Colma. It is night!—I am alone, lost on the stormy hill. The wind roars in the mountains. The torrent howls down the rock. No hut shelters me from the rain, forsaken on the stormy hill. Step out, O moon, from your clouds; appear, stars of the night! Let some beam lead me to the place where my love rests from the toil of the hunt, his bow unstrung beside him, his dogs panting around him! But here I must sit alone on the rock of the overgrown stream. The stream and the storm roar; I do not hear the voice of my beloved.

"Why does my Salgar delay? Has he forgotten his word?—There is the rock and the tree, and here the rushing stream! At nightfall you promised to be here; ah! where has my Salgar strayed? With you I would have fled, left father and brother, the proud ones! Long have our races been enemies, but we are not enemies, O Salgar!

"Be silent a while, O wind! Be still a little while, O stream, that my voice may ring through the valley, that my wanderer may hear me. Salgar! It is I who call! Here is the tree and the rock! Salgar! My love! Here I am; why do you delay to come?

"See, the moon appears, the flood gleams in the valley, the rocks stand gray up the hill; but I do not see him on the height; his

dogs before him do not announce his coming. Here I must sit alone.

"But who are they that lie down there on the heath?—My beloved? My brother?—Speak, O my friends! They do not answer. How anguished is my soul!—Ah, they are dead! Their swords red from the fight! O my brother, my brother, why have you slain my Salgar? O my Salgar, why have you slain my brother? You were both so dear to me! Oh, you were fair on the hill among thousands! He was terrible in battle. Answer me! Hear my voice, my beloved ones! But ah, they are mute, mute forever! Cold as the earth is their breast!

"O from the rock of the hill, from the summit of the storming mountain, speak, spirits of the dead! Speak! I will not be afraid!—Where have you gone to rest? In what vault of the mountains shall I find you?—No faint voice do I hear in the wind, no wafted answer in the storm of the hill. I sit in my grief; I wait for the morning in my tears. Dig the grave, you friends of the dead, but do not close it until I come. My life is vanishing like a dream; how should I stay behind! Here I will rest with my friends, by the stream of the sounding rock—when night comes on the hill, and wind comes over the heath, my spirit shall stand in the wind and mourn the death of my friends. The hunter hears me from his shelter of boughs, fears my voice and loves it; for sweet shall my voice be for my friends; they were both so dear to me!

"That was your song, O Minona, Torman's softly blushing daughter. Our tears flowed for Colma, and our soul grew dark.

"Ullin came forward with the harp and gave us Alpin's song—Alpin's voice was kind, Ryno's soul a beam of fire. But already they rested in the narrow house, and their voice had died away in Selma. Once Ullin came back from the hunt, before the heroes had yet fallen. He heard their contest of song on the hill. Their song was gentle, but sad. They lamented the fall of Morar, first of the

heroes. His soul was like Fingal's soul, his sword like the sword of Oskar—but he fell, and his father lamented, and his sister's eyes were full of tears, Minona's eyes were full of tears, the sister of glorious Morar. She drew back before Ullin's song, like the moon in the west that foresees the storm rain and hides her lovely head in a cloud.—I struck the harp with Ullin for the song of lament.

"Ryno

"Past are the wind and the rain; the noon is so bright; the clouds divide. Fleeting, the inconstant sun lights up the hill. Reddish flows the mountain stream down the valley. Sweet is your murmur, stream; but sweeter the voice I hear. It is Alpin's voice; he laments the dead. His head is bowed with age, and red his tearful eye. Alpin, excellent singer, why alone on the silent hill? Why do you lament like a gust of wind in the forest, like a wave on the distant shore?

"Alpin

"My tears, Ryno, are for the dead, my voice for the dwellers in the grave. Slender you are on the hill, fair among the sons of the heath. But you will fall like Morar, and on your grave the mourner will sit. The hills will forget you; your bow will lie unstrung in the hall.

"You were swift, O Morar, as a roe on the hill, terrible as the night fires in the sky. Your wrath was a storm, your sword in battle like sheet lightning over the heath. Your voice was like the forest torrent after rain, like thunder on distant hills. Many fell by your arm; the flame of your wrath consumed them. But when you came back from the war, how peaceful was your brow! Your face was like the sun after the storm, like the moon in the silent night, your breast calm as the lake when the roaring of the wind has died down.

"Narrow now is your dwelling, dark your place! With three steps I measure your grave, O you who were once so great! Four

stones with mossy heads are your only memorial; a leafless tree, long grass whispering in the wind, shows the hunter's eye the grave of mighty Morar. No mother have you to weep for you, no girl with tears of love. Dead is she who bore you, fallen the daughter of Morglan.

"Who is that on his staff? Who is it whose head is white with age, whose eyes are red with tears? It is your father, O Morar, the father of no son but you. He heard of your renown in battle; he heard of scattered foes; he heard of Morar's glory! Ah! Nothing of his wound? Weep, father of Morar, weep! But your son does not hear you. Deep is the sleep of the dead, low their pillow of dust. Never will he heed the voice, never wake at your call. Oh, when will it be morning in the grave, to bid the sleeper: Awake!

"Farewell, noblest of men, you conqueror in the field! But never will the field see you again, never will the dark wood shine with the gleam of your steel. You left no son, but song shall keep your name; times to come shall hear of you, hear of fallen Morar.

"Loud was the grief of the heroes, loudest Armin's bursting sigh. It reminded him of the death of his son; he fell in the days of his youth. Carmor sat near the hero, the chief of echoing Galmal. 'Why does Armin's sigh sob so?' he said. 'What is there here to weep for? Does not a song ring out, a lay, to melt the soul and to delight it? They are like a soft mist that rises from the lake and drifts over the valley, and the moisture fills the blooming flowers; but the sun comes back in its strength, and the mist is gone. Why are you so full of grief, Armin, ruler of sea-girt Gorma?'

"'Full of grief! That I am, and not slight the cause of my woe.—Carmor, you lost no son, lost no blooming daughter; Colgar the brave lives, and Annira, fairest of maidens. The branches of your house flourish, O Carmor; but Armin is the last of his line. Dark is your bed, O Daura! Heavy is your sleep in the grave—when will you wake with your songs, with your melodious voice? Rise, you winds

of autumn! Rise, storm over the dark heath! Forest torrents, roar! Howl, streams, in the tops of the oaks! Walk through the broken clouds, O moon, show your pale face by turns! Remind me of the terrible night when my children perished, when Arindal the mighty fell, when Daura the lovely passed away.

"'Daura, my daughter, you were fair, fair as the moon on the hills of Fura, white as the fallen snow, sweet as the breathing air! Arindal, your bow was strong, your spear swift on the field, your look like mist on the wave, your shield a cloud of fire in the storm!

"'Armar, renowned in war, came and sought Daura's love; she did not resist long. Fair were the hopes of her friends.

"'Erath, the son of Odgal, bore a grudge, for his brother lay slain by Armar. He came disguised as a boatman. Fair was his skiff on the wave, white his locks with age, calm his grave face. "Fairest of maidens," he said, "lovely daughter of Armin, there by the rock, not far out in the sea, where the red fruit gleams from the tree, there Armar waits for Daura: I have come to carry his love over the rolling sea."

"'She followed him and called for Armar; nothing answered but the voice of the rock. "Armar! My love! My love! Why do you frighten me so? Hear, son of Arnarth! Hear! It is Daura calling you!"

"'Erath the traitor fled laughing to the land. She raised her voice, called for her father and her brother: "Arindal! Armin! Is there no one to save his Daura?"

"'Her voice came over the sea. Arindal, my son, came down from the hill, rough in the spoils of the hunt; his arrows rattled at his side, he carried his bow in his hand, five black-gray hounds were around him. He saw bold Erath on the shore, seized him and bound him to the oak; fast he bound the cords around his hips; the captive filled the winds with groaning.

"'Arindal sets out on the waves in his boat to bring Daura back. Armar came in his wrath, let fly the gray-feathered arrow; it sang,

it sank into your heart, O Arindal, my son! Instead of Erath the traitor, you perished; the boat reached the rock, he sank down against it and died. At your feet flowed your brother's blood; what was your grief, O Daura! The waves shatter the boat. Armar hurls himself into the sea, to save his Daura or to die. Swiftly a gust stormed from the hill into the waves; he sank and did not rise again.

"'Alone on the sea-washed rock I heard the laments of my daughter. Many and loud were her cries, yet her father could not save her. All night I stood on the shore; I saw her in the faint beam of the moon; all night I heard her cries; loud was the wind, and the rain beat sharply against the side of the mountain. Her voice grew faint before the morning came; she died away like the evening air among the grass of the rocks. Laden with grief she died and left Armin alone! Gone is my strength in war, fallen my pride among maidens.

"'When the storms of the mountain come, when the north wind lifts the waves high, I sit on the sounding shore and look toward the terrible rock. Often, as the moon sinks, I see the spirits of my children; half in twilight they walk together in sad concord.'"

A flood of tears that broke from Lotte's eyes and gave air to her oppressed heart stopped Werther's song. He threw down the paper, seized her hand, and wept the bitterest tears. Lotte leaned on her other hand and hid her eyes in her handkerchief. The agitation of both was fearful. They felt their own misery in the fate of those noble ones, felt it together, and their tears mingled. Werther's lips and eyes burned on Lotte's arm; a shudder came over her; she wanted to draw away, and grief and sympathy lay on her, numbing, like lead. She drew breath to recover herself and, sobbing, begged him to go on, begged with the whole voice of heaven! Werther trembled; his heart was ready to burst; he picked up the sheet and read, half broken:

“Why do you wake me, breath of spring? You woo me and say: I bedew you with drops of heaven! But the time of my withering is near, near the storm that will strip down my leaves! Tomorrow the wanderer will come, will come who saw me in my beauty; his eye will search the field all around for me and will not find me.—”

The full force of these words fell upon the unhappy man.

He threw himself down before Lotte in utter despair, seized her hands, pressed them to his eyes, against his forehead, and a presentiment of his terrible intention seemed to fly through her soul. Her senses grew confused; she pressed his hands, pressed them against her breast, bent toward him with a sorrowful movement, and their glowing cheeks touched. The world vanished for them. He threw his arms around her, pressed her to his breast, and covered her trembling, stammering lips with furious kisses. —“Werther!” she cried in a stifled voice, turning away, “Werther!” and with a feeble hand pushed his breast away from hers; “Werther!” she cried in the composed tone of the noblest feeling.—He did not resist; he let her go from his arms and threw himself down before her, out of his senses.—She tore herself free and, in anxious confusion, trembling between love and anger, said, “This is the last time! Werther! You will not see me again.” And with a look full of love at the wretched man she hurried into the next room and locked the door behind her.—Werther stretched out his arms after her and did not dare to hold her back. He lay on the floor, his head on the sofa, and stayed in that position for over half an hour, until a noise called him back to himself. It was the maid, who wanted to lay the table. He walked up and down the room, and when he saw himself alone again, he went to the door of the little room and called in a low voice, “Lotte! Lotte! Only one word more! One farewell!”—She said nothing.—He waited and begged and waited; then he tore himself away and cried, “Farewell, Lotte! Farewell forever!”

He came to the town gate. The watchmen, who were used to him by now, let him out without a word. Sleet was driving, and it was not until toward eleven that he knocked again. When Werther came home, his servant noticed that his master's hat was missing. He did not dare to say anything and undressed him; everything was wet. The hat was later found on a rock that looks down from the slope of the hill into the valley, and it is incomprehensible how he climbed it on a dark, wet night without falling.

He went to bed and slept long. The servant found him writing when, the next morning, at his call, he brought him his coffee. He wrote the following in the letter to Lotte:

"For the last time, then, for the last time I open these eyes. They shall not, ah, see the sun again; a dull, misty day keeps it covered. Then mourn, nature! Your son, your friend, your lover is nearing his end. Lotte, it is a feeling like no other, and yet it comes closest to a twilight dream, to say to yourself: this is the last morning. The last! Lotte, I have no sense for the word: the last! Am I not standing here in all my strength, and tomorrow I will lie stretched out and limp on the ground. To die! What does that mean? You see, we are dreaming when we talk of death. I have seen many people die; but humanity is so confined that it has no sense for the beginning and the end of its existence. Still mine now, yours! Yours, O my love! And one moment—separated, parted—perhaps forever?—No, Lotte, no—how can I pass away? How can you pass away? We are, after all!—Pass away!—What does that mean? That is just another word, an empty sound, with no feeling in it for my heart.—Dead, Lotte! Buried in the cold earth, so narrow! So dark!—I had a friend who was everything to my helpless youth; she died, and I followed her body and stood at the grave as they let down the coffin and the ropes whirred out from under it and shot back up again, then the first shovelful thudded down, and the fearful chest gave back a dull sound, and duller and duller, and at last it

was covered!—I threw myself down beside the grave—seized, shaken, frightened, torn in my innermost being, but I did not know what was happening to me—what will happen to me—To die! Grave! I don't understand the words!

"Oh, forgive me! Forgive me! Yesterday! It should have been the last moment of my life. O you angel! For the first time, for the first time wholly without doubt, the rapturous feeling glowed through my inmost being: she loves me! She loves me! The holy fire that streamed from your lips still burns on mine; a new, warm rapture is in my heart. Forgive me! Forgive me!

"Ah, I knew that you loved me; I knew it from the first soulful looks, from the first pressure of your hand; and yet, when I was away again, when I saw Albert at your side, I lost heart again in feverish doubts.

"Do you remember the flowers you sent me when, at that wretched party, you couldn't say a word to me or give me your hand? Oh, I knelt before them half the night, and they sealed your love to me. But ah! these impressions passed, as the feeling of his God's grace gradually fades again from the soul of the believer, to whom it was given in all the fullness of heaven in holy, visible signs.

"All that is transient, but no eternity shall put out the glowing life I tasted yesterday on your lips, which I feel in me! She loves me! This arm has held her, these lips have trembled on her lips, this mouth has stammered against hers. She is mine! You are mine! Yes, Lotte, forever.

"And what does it matter that Albert is your husband? Husband! Would that be, then, for this world—and for this world a sin, that I love you, that I would like to tear you out of his arms into mine? Sin? Good, and I am punishing myself for it; I have tasted it in all its heavenly rapture, this sin, and sucked the balm of life and strength into my heart. From this moment you are mine! Mine, O

Lotte! I am going ahead! Going to my Father, to your Father. To him I will make my complaint, and he will comfort me until you come, and I will fly to meet you and hold you and stay with you before the face of the Infinite in eternal embraces.

"I am not dreaming, I am not deluded! Near the grave it grows lighter for me. We shall be! We shall see each other again! See your mother! I will see her, will find her, ah, and pour out my whole heart before her! Your mother, your very image."

Toward eleven Werther asked his servant whether Albert had come back. The servant said yes, he had seen his horse being led over. Thereupon his master gives him an open note with this content: "Would you be so kind as to lend me your pistols for a journey I am planning? Farewell, and every good wish!"

The dear woman had slept little the night before; what she had feared was decided, decided in a way she could neither have foreseen nor feared. Her blood, which usually flowed so pure and light, was in a feverish turmoil; a thousand different feelings tore at her lovely heart. Was it the fire of Werther's embraces that she felt in her breast? Was it indignation at his boldness? Was it a resentful comparison of her present state with those days of wholly unself-conscious, free innocence and carefree trust in herself? How was she to meet her husband, how confess to him a scene that she had every right to confess, and that she yet did not dare to confess to herself? They had kept silent toward each other for so long, and was she to be the first to break the silence and, at just the wrong time, make so unexpected a disclosure to her husband? She feared already that the mere news of Werther's visit would make an unpleasant impression on him, and now, on top of it, this unexpected catastrophe! Could she really hope that her husband would see her in quite the right light, receive it quite without prejudice? And could she wish him to read in her soul? And yet again, could she dissemble before the man before whom she had always stood

open and free like a crystal-clear glass, and from whom she had never hidden any of her feelings, nor ever could? One thing and the other troubled her and put her at a loss; and her thoughts kept returning to Werther, who was lost to her, whom she could not let go, whom she—alas!—had to leave to himself, and to whom, once he had lost her, nothing was left.

How heavily it weighed on her now, the deadlock that had set in between them, though at that moment she could not make it clear to herself! Such sensible, such good people had begun to keep silent with each other because of certain secret differences; each brooded over his own right and the other's wrong, and things grew so tangled and so embittered that it became impossible to untie the knot at the very critical moment on which everything depended. If a happy intimacy had brought them closer again earlier, if love and forbearance had come alive between them in turn and opened their hearts, perhaps our friend might still have been saved.

Another strange circumstance came into it. Werther, as we know from his letters, had never made a secret of his longing to leave this world. Albert had often argued with him about it, and there had sometimes been talk of it between Lotte and her husband too. Albert, who felt a decided repugnance for the deed, had also very often let it be known, with a kind of touchiness that was otherwise quite foreign to his character, that he found good reason to doubt very much the seriousness of such an intention; he had even allowed himself a few jokes about it and shared his disbelief with Lotte. This did reassure her on the one hand, when her thoughts brought the sad picture before her; but on the other hand she felt prevented by it from sharing with her husband the fears that tormented her at that moment.

Albert came back, and Lotte went to meet him with an embarrassed haste; he was not in good spirits; his business was not

done; he had found the neighboring magistrate an inflexible, small-minded man. The bad road, too, had put him out of temper.

He asked whether anything had happened, and she answered too quickly that Werther had been there the evening before. He asked whether any letters had come, and was told that a letter and some packets were lying in his room. He went over, and Lotte stayed alone. The presence of the man she loved and honored had made a new impression on her heart. The memory of his generosity, his love and kindness had calmed her mind; she felt a secret pull to follow him; she took her work and went to his room, as she often used to do. She found him busy opening the packets and reading. Some seemed to contain nothing very pleasant. She asked him a few questions, which he answered briefly, and he went to stand at his desk to write.

They had spent an hour side by side in this way, and it grew darker and darker in Lotte's mind. She felt how hard it would be for her to reveal to her husband, even if he were in the best of humors, what lay on her heart; she fell into a sadness that grew all the more anxious as she tried to hide it and swallow her tears.

The appearance of Werther's boy threw her into the greatest embarrassment; he handed Albert the note, and Albert turned calmly to his wife and said, "Give him the pistols."—"I wish him a good journey," he said to the boy.—That fell on her like a thunderclap; she staggered as she rose; she did not know what was happening to her. Slowly she went to the wall; trembling, she took down the weapons, wiped off the dust, and hesitated, and would have lingered a long time yet if Albert had not urged her with a questioning look. She gave the unhappy instrument to the boy without being able to bring out a word, and when he was out of the house, she gathered up her work and went to her room in a state of the most unspeakable uncertainty. Her heart foretold every terror. At one moment she was on the point of throwing

herself at her husband's feet and revealing everything to him, the story of the evening before, her guilt and her presentiments. Then again she could see no good coming of such a step; least of all could she hope to persuade her husband to go to Werther. The table was laid, and a good friend, who had come only to ask something and meant to leave at once—and stayed, made the conversation at table bearable; they forced themselves, they talked, they told stories, they forgot themselves.

The boy came with the pistols to Werther, who took them from him in rapture when he heard that Lotte had given them to him. He had bread and wine brought, told the boy to go and eat, and sat down to write.

"They have passed through your hands; you wiped the dust from them; I kiss them a thousand times; you have touched them! And you, spirit of heaven, favor my resolve, and you, Lotte, hand me the instrument, you from whose hands I wished to receive death, and ah! now do receive it. Oh, I questioned my boy closely. You trembled when you handed them to him; you said no farewell! —Woe! Woe! No farewell!—Can you have closed your heart to me, because of the moment that bound me to you forever? Lotte, a thousand years cannot wipe out that impression! And I feel it: you can't hate the man who burns for you like this."

After dinner he told the boy to finish packing everything, tore up many papers, went out, and settled a few small debts. He came home again, went out again beyond the gate, in spite of the rain, into the count's garden, roamed further about the countryside, came back as night fell, and wrote.

"Wilhelm, I have seen field and forest and sky for the last time. Farewell to you too! Dear mother, forgive me! Comfort her, Wilhelm! God bless you both! My affairs are all in order. Farewell! We shall see each other again, and more joyfully."

“I have repaid you badly, Albert, and you forgive me. I have disturbed the peace of your house; I have brought mistrust between you. Farewell! I mean to end it. Oh, that my death might make you both happy! Albert! Albert! Make that angel happy! And so may God’s blessing dwell upon you!”

That evening he rummaged a good deal more in his papers, tore up much of it and threw it in the stove, and sealed some packets addressed to Wilhelm. They contained short essays, fragmentary thoughts, several of which I have seen; and after he had had more wood put on the fire at ten o’clock and a bottle of wine brought to him, he sent his servant to bed; the man’s room, like the bedrooms of the household, was far at the back, and he lay down in his clothes so as to be at hand early, for his master had said the post horses would be at the door before six.

After eleven

“Everything is so still around me, and my soul so calm. I thank you, God, for giving these last moments this warmth, this strength.

“I step to the window, my dearest, and see, and still see, through the storming clouds flying past, single stars of the eternal sky! No, you will not fall! The Eternal One carries you at his heart, and me. I see the stars in the shaft of the Wagon, the dearest of all the constellations. When I left you at night, as I came out of your gate, it stood across from me. With what intoxication I have often looked at it, often, with hands raised, made it a sign, a holy landmark of my present bliss! And still—O Lotte, what does not remind me of you! Do you not surround me! And have I not, like a child, never satisfied, snatched up all sorts of little things that you, holy one, had touched!

“Dear silhouette! I bequeath it back to you, Lotte, and beg you to honor it. A thousand, thousand kisses I have pressed on it, waved a thousand greetings to it when I went out or came home. I have asked your father in a little note to protect my body. In the

churchyard there are two linden trees, at the back in the corner toward the field; there I wish to rest. He can, he will do that for his friend. Ask him too. I will not expect pious Christians to lay their bodies beside a poor unhappy man. Ah, I wish you would bury me by the wayside, or in the lonely valley, so that priest and Levite might bless themselves as they passed by the marked stone, and the Samaritan shed a tear.

"Here, Lotte! I do not shudder to take the cold, terrible cup from which I am to drink the frenzy of death! You handed it to me, and I do not falter. All! All! So all the wishes and hopes of my life are fulfilled! To knock so cold, so stiff, at the brazen gate of death.

"That I might have been granted the happiness of dying for you! Lotte, of giving myself up for you! I would die bravely, I would die gladly, if I could restore to you the peace, the rapture of your life. But ah! that was given only to a few noble souls, to shed their blood for their own and by their death to kindle a new, hundredfold life for their friends.

"In these clothes, Lotte, I want to be buried; you have touched them, made them holy; I have asked your father for this too. My soul hovers over the coffin. My pockets are not to be searched. This pale pink ribbon that you wore at your breast when I first found you among your children—oh, kiss them a thousand times and tell them the fate of their unhappy friend. The dear ones! They swarm around me. Ah, how I clung to you! From the first moment I could not let you go!—This ribbon is to be buried with me. You gave it to me on my birthday! How I devoured all that!—Ah, I did not think the road would lead me here!—Be calm! I beg you, be calm!

"—They are loaded—it is striking twelve! So be it, then!—Lotte! Lotte, farewell! Farewell!"

A neighbor saw the flash of the powder and heard the shot; but since everything stayed quiet, he paid no further attention.

In the morning at six the servant comes in with the light. He finds his master on the floor, the pistol, and blood. He calls, he takes hold of him; no answer; there is only a rattle in his throat now. He runs for the doctors, for Albert. Lotte hears the bell pulled; a trembling seizes all her limbs. She wakes her husband; they get up; the servant, howling and stammering, brings the news; Lotte sinks down fainting before Albert.

When the doctor came to the unhappy man, he found him on the floor past saving; the pulse was beating, the limbs were all paralyzed. He had shot himself through the head above the right eye; the brain had been driven out. They opened a vein in his arm, though it was of no use; the blood ran; he was still drawing breath.

From the blood on the arm of the chair one could conclude that he had done the deed sitting at his writing desk, then had sunk down and rolled convulsively around the chair. He lay on his back toward the window, drained of strength, fully dressed, in his boots, in the blue tailcoat with the yellow waistcoat.

The house, the neighborhood, the town were in an uproar. Albert came in. They had laid Werther on the bed, his forehead bandaged, his face already like a dead man's; he did not move a limb. His lungs were still rattling fearfully, now weakly, now more strongly; they were waiting for his end.

Of the wine he had drunk only one glass. *Emilia Galotti* lay open on the desk.

Of Albert's dismay, of Lotte's grief, let me say nothing.

The old magistrate came galloping in at the news and kissed the dying man amid the hottest tears. His eldest sons soon followed him on foot; they fell down beside the bed in the most unrestrained grief and kissed his hands and his mouth, and the eldest, whom he had always loved best, hung on his lips until he was gone and the boy had to be torn away by force. At twelve noon he died. The magistrate's presence and the arrangements he made pre-

vented any commotion. At night, toward eleven, he had him buried in the place he had chosen for himself. The old man followed the body, and the sons; Albert could not. They feared for Lotte's life. Craftsmen carried him. No clergyman went with him.

Colophon

The Sorrows of Young Werther

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