THE ESSAYS OF SAINTE-BEUVE, VOL. II: PORTRAITS OF MEN

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The Essays of Sainte-Beuve, Vol. II: Portraits of Men by William Sharp

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WILLIAM SHARP

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EDITED, WITH CRITICAL MEMOIR

BY

WILLIAM SHARP

VOL. II.

PORTRAITS OF MEN

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GOETHE.

GOETHE AND BETTINA.*

1850.

It may be remembered we have already seen Jean-Jacques Rousseau in correspondence with one of his admirers, whose partiality towards him ultimately developed into a warmer sentiment. After reading *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Madame de la Tour-Franqueville became extremely enthusiastic, believing herself to be a Julie d'Etange, and thereupon indited somewhat ardent love-letters to the great author, who, in his misanthropical way, treated her far from well. It is curious to note, in a similar case, how differently Goethe, the great poet of Germany, behaved to one of his admirers, who declared her love with such wild bursts of enthusiasm. But not more in this case than in the other must we expect to find a true, natural, and mutual affection—the love of two beings who exchange and mingle their most cherished feelings. The adoration in question is not real love—it is merely a kind of worship, which requires the god and the priestess. Only, Rousseau was an invalid—a fretful god, suffering from hypochondria, who had fewer good than bad days; Goethe, on the other hand, was a superior god, calm

* *Correspondence between Goethe and Bettina.* Translated from the German by St. Sebastien Albin.