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Something similar applies if we seek to survey a human life and to appreciate it correctly. We ought not to be guided by chance events, the gifts of fortune, the changing external eventualities which arise from conflicting external circumstances, when, like mountain peaks, they leap first to the eye. It is precisely those little events and inner occurrences we believe we have to neglect which in their totality reveal the individual character most clearly, they grow organically out of the nature of the man, while the former appear only in inorganic connection with him.

As a plant I was born close to the churchyard, as a man in a parsonage.

And does this explain this schoolmasterly tone? Possibly, but I am not apologising for it on that account. But what better can an introduction to a life do than teach if the life itself does not teach? And these following brief biographical notes can neither teach nor entertain; they are polished stones; in reality these stones are nicely clothed in moss and earth.

Along the highway that runs from Weissenfels through Lützen to Leipzig there lies the village of Röcken. It is enclosed all around with plantations of willows and single-standing poplars and elm trees, so that from a distance only the projecting chimneys and the ancient church tower can be seen peeping through the green treetops. Within the village there extend several largish ponds separated from one another only by narrow strips of land; bright verdure and gnarled willows all around. Somewhat higher up there lies the parsonage and the church, the former surrounded by gardens and plantations of trees. Close by is the edge of the cemetery, full of sunken gravestones and crosses. The parsonage itself is shaded by three finely formed, wide-branched acacias.

Here I was born on 15th October 1844, and received, as was appropriate to my birthday, the names Friedrich Wilhelm. The earliest event which happened to me as I awakened to consciousness was the illness of my father. It was a softening of the brain. His increasing suffering, his growing blindness, his wasted figure, my mother's tears, the physician's anxious demeanour, finally the incautious remarks of the people of the village, led me to fear that misfortune threatened. And this misfortune in fact appeared. My father died. I was not yet four years old.

A few months later I lost my only brother, a lively and gifted child who, suddenly attacked by cramps, was in a very short time dead.

Thus we had to leave our home; on the evening of the last day I was still playing with several other children, and then had to bid farewell to them, as I did to all the places I loved. I could not sleep; I tossed and turned on my bed, and towards midnight I got up. Several laden carts were standing in the yard, which was illumined by the feeble light of a lantern. As soon as morning dawned the horses were harnessed; through the morning mist we drove off to Naumburg, the goal of our journey. Here, at first intimidated, afterwards somewhat livelier, but always with the dignity of a thorough little philistine, I began to become acquainted with life and with books. Here I also learned to love nature in its fair mountains and its river valleys, halls and castles, and mankind in my friends and relations.

The time for me to attend the Gymnasium arrived, and with it new interests and endeavours. In particular my inclination for music began to show itself at this time, despite the fact that the earliest instruction I received in it was wholly calculated to destroy it at its roots. For my first teacher was a precentor infected with all the amiable failings of a precentor, and in addition those of a *precentor emeritus*.

With becoming tardiness and regularity I finally attained the fourth form. It was certainly time for one to emerge from the home circle and finally to break free from the endlessly impractical courses one was accustomed to follow. I contained the wisdom of several lexicons, every possible inclination awoke in me, I wrote poems and tragedies, blood-curdling and unbelievably boring, tormented myself with the composition of complete orchestral scores, and had grown so obsessed with the idea of appropriating universal knowledge and universal capability that I was in danger of becoming a real muddle-head and fantasist.

It was thus beneficial in many ways as a boarder at Landesschule Pforta to devote oneself for six years to a greater concentration of one's forces and to directing them to firm goals.

I do not yet have these six years behind me; but I can nonetheless already regard the products of this time as completed, for I feel their effects in everything I now undertake.

Thus I can look back with gratitude upon almost everything, whether it be joy or sorrow, that has happened to me, and events have up to now led me along like a child.

Perhaps it is time to seize the reins of events oneself and step out into life.

And thus man outgrows everything that once embraced him; he has no need to burst the fetters, for, if a god should command it, they fall away of themselves; and where is the ring that finally encloses him? Is it the world? Is it God? –

F. W. Nietzsche,

written on 18th September 1863