

ESSENTIAL CLASSICS OF LIBERAL STUDIES

JOHANN PETER  
ECKERMANN

Translated by JOHN OXENFORD



CONVERSATIONS  
WITH GOETHE



中央编译出版社  
Central Compilation & Translation Press

ESSENTIAL CLASSICS OF GERMAN LITERATURE

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ECKERMANN

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WITH GOETHE

 FARRAR  
STRAUS AND GIROUX

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I



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# INTRODUCTION

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THE AUTHOR gives an account of Himself and his Parents, and of the origin of his connection with Goethe at Winsen on the Luhe, a little town between Lüneburg and Hamburg, on the border of the marsh and heathlands, I was born, at the beginning of the nineties, in nothing better than a hut, as we may well call a small house which had only one room capable of being heated, and no stairs, and in which they mounted at once to the hayloft by a ladder, which reached to the house-door.

As the youngest born of a second marriage, I, properly speaking, did not know my parents till they had reached an advanced age; and, to a certain extent, I grew up with them alone. Two sons of my father's first marriage were still alive. One of them, after several voyages as a sailor, had been taken prisoner in foreign parts, and had not since been heard of; while the other, after being several times engaged in the whale and seal fisheries in Greenland, had returned to Hamburg, and there lived in moderate circumstances. Two sisters of my father's second marriage had grown up before me. When I had attained my twelfth year they had already left the parental hut, and were in service in our town and in Hamburg.

The principal means of supporting our little family was a cow, which not only supplied us with milk for our daily wants, but gave us every year a calf for fattening, and sometimes milk enough to sell for a few groschen. We had besides a piece of land, which supplied us with vegetables for the wants of the year. Corn for bread, and flour for the kitchen, we were, however, obliged to buy.

My mother was particularly expert at spinning wool; she also gave much satisfaction by the caps she made for the women of the village, and in both ways earned some money.

My father's business consisted of a small traffic, which varied according to the seasons, and obliged him to be often absent from home, and to travel on foot about the country. In summer he was seen with a light wooden box on his back, going in the heath-country from village to village, hawking ribbons, thread, and silk. At the same time he purchased here woollen stockings and *Beyderwand*<sup>1</sup> (a cloth woven out of the wool of the sheep on the heaths, and linen yarn), which he again disposed of in the *Vierlande* on the other side the Elbe, where he likewise went hawking. In the winter he carried on a trade in rough quills and



<sup>1</sup> Anglice, Linsey-woolsey. —Trans.

unbleached linen, which he bought up in the villages of the hut and marsh country, and took to Hamburg when a ship offered. But in all cases his gains must have been very small, as we always lived in some degree of poverty.

If now I am to speak of my employments in childhood, these varied according to the season. When spring commenced, and the waters of the Elbe had receded after their customary overflow, I went daily to collect the sedges which had been thrown upon the dykes and other places, and to heap them up as litter for our cow. But when the first green was springing over the broad meadows, I, with other boys, passed long days in watching the cows. In summer I was actively employed on our field, and brought dry wood from the thickets scarce a mile (German) off, to serve for firing throughout the year. In harvest time I passed weeks in the field as a gleaner, and when the autumn winds shook the trees I gathered acorns, which I sold by the peck to persons of opulence, to feed their geese. When I was old enough, I went with my father on his travels from hamlet to hamlet, and helped to carry his bundle. This time affords some of the fairest remembrances of my youth.

Under such influences, and busied in such employments, during which, at certain periods, I attended a school, and barely learned to read and write, I reached my fourteenth year; and every one will confess, that from this situation to an intimate connection with Goethe there was a great step, and one that seemed scarcely probable. I knew not that there were in the world such things as Poetry or the Fine Arts; and, fortunately, there was not within me even so much as a blind longing and striving after them.

It has been said that animals are instructed by their very organization; and so may it be said of man, that, by something which he does quite accidentally, he is often taught the higher powers which slumber within him. Something of the sort happened to me, which, though insignificant in itself, gave a new turn to my life, and is therefore stamped indelibly on my memory.

I sat one evening with both my parents at table by the light of a lamp. My father had just returned from Hamburg, and was talking about his business there. As he loved smoking, he had brought back with him a packet of tobacco, which lay before him on the table, and had for the crest a horse. This horse seemed to me a very good picture, and, as I had by me pen, ink, and a piece of paper, I was seized with an irresistible inclination to copy it. My father continued talking about Hamburg, and I, being quite unobserved, became wholly engaged in drawing the horse. When finished, it seemed to me a perfect likeness of the original, and I experienced a delight before unknown. I showed my parents what I had done, and they could not avoid praising me and expressing admiration. I passed the night in happy excitement, and almost sleepless; I thought constantly of the horse I had drawn, and longed impatiently for morning, that I might have it again before my eyes, and delight myself with beholding it.



From this time the once-excited propensity for visible imitation was never forgotten. And as I found no other help of any sort in our place, I deemed myself most happy when our neighbour, who was a potter, lent me some outlines, which served him as models for painting his plates and dishes.

These outlines I copied very carefully with pen and ink, and thus arose two books of drawings, which soon passed from hand to hand, and at last came under the eye of the upper Bailiff (Oberamtmann), Meyer, the first man of the place. He sent for me, made me a present, and praised me in the kindest manner. He asked me if I should like to become a painter, for if so, he would, when I was confirmed, send me to a proper master at Hamburg. I said that I should like it very much, and would talk of it with my parents. They, however, who belonged to the peasant class, and lived in a place where scarce any occupations were followed except tilling and grazing, thought of a painter only as one who paints doors and houses. They, therefore, advised me earnestly against it, saying it was not only a very dirty, but a very dangerous trade, at which one might break one's legs or neck, as was indeed often the case, especially in Hamburg, where the houses are seven stories high. As my own ideas of a painter were not more elevated, I abandoned my fancy for this trade, and put quite out of my head the offer of the good Bailiff.

However, the attention of higher persons having been once bestowed on me, I was kept in sight, and efforts were made to aid me in various ways. I was permitted to take private lessons with the few children of that rank; I learned French, and a little Latin and music: I was also provided with better clothing, and the worthy superintendent, Parisius, did not disdain to give me a seat at his own table.

Henceforth, I loved school very much. I sought to make this pleasant state of things last as long as possible, and my parents readily consented that I should not be confirmed before my sixteenth year.

But now arose the question, what was to be done with me? Could I have followed my wishes, I should have been sent to pursue learned studies at a gymnasium; but this was out of the question, as I was not only destitute of means, but felt myself imperiously called upon by my circumstances to get into some situation as soon as possible, where I could not only take care of myself, but in some measure help my poor old parents.

Such a situation presented itself immediately after my confirmation, for a judicial functionary (Justizbeamter) of the place offered to take me to do copying and other little services for him, and I joyfully consented. I had, during the last year and a half of my schooling, acquired not only a good hand, but practised a great deal in composition, so that I might consider myself very well qualified for such a post. I also carried on some of the minor parts of an advocate's business, frequently drawing up both judgment and petition, according to prescribed forms: this lasted two years, viz. till 1810, when the Hanoverian office, at Winsen on the Luhe, was broken up, and the place being taken into the department of



Lower Elbe, was incorporated with the French empire.

I then received an appointment in the office of direct taxes at Lüneburg, and when this was also broken up in the following year, I entered the office of the under prefect in Uelzen. Here I worked till near the end of the year 1812, when the prefect, Herr von Düring, patronized me, and made me secretary of the mayoralty at Bevensen. This post I held till the spring of 1813, when the approach of the Cossacks gave us hopes of being freed from the French yoke.

I now took my leave and returned home, with no other intention than that of joining the ranks of those patriotic warriors who began secretly to form themselves in various places.

This plan I carried out. Towards the end of the summer I joined as a volunteer, with rifle and holster, the Kielmannsegge Jäger corps, and in Captain Knop's company made the campaign of the winter of 1813-14, through Mecklenburg, Holstein, and before Hamburg, against Marshal Davoust. Afterwards we crossed the Rhine against General Maison, and in the summer marched about a great deal in the fertile provinces of Flanders and Brabant.

Here, at the sight of the great pictures of the Netherlands, a new world opened to me; I passed whole days in churches and museums. These were, in fact, the first pictures I ever saw in my life. I understood now what was meant by being a painter. I saw the honoured happy progress of the scholars, and I could have wept that I was not permitted to pursue a similar path. However, I took my resolution at once. I made the acquaintance of a young artist at Tournay; I obtained black crayons and a sheet of drawing-paper of the largest size, and sat down at once before a picture to copy it. My enthusiasm somewhat supplied my deficiencies in practice and instruction, and thus I succeeded in the outlines of the figures. I had also begun to shade the whole from the left side, when marching orders broke up my happy employment. I hastened to indicate the gradations of light and shade in the still unfinished parts with single letters, hoping that thus I might yet complete my work in some tranquil hour. I then rolled up my picture, and put it in a case, which I carried at my back with my gun, all the long march from Tournay to Hameln.

Here, in the autumn of 1814, the Jäger corps was disbanded. I went home; my father was dead; my mother was still alive, and resided with my elder sister, who had married, and had taken possession of the paternal house. I began now to continue my drawing. I completed first the picture I had brought from Brabant; and then, as I had no proper models, I stuck to some little engravings of Ramberg's, of which I made enlarged copies in black chalk. But here I felt the want of proper knowledge and preparation. I had no idea of the anatomy either of men or animals; I knew as little how to treat properly the various kinds of trees and grounds; and it cost me unspeakable toil to make anything look decently well by my own mode of proceeding.

Thus I soon saw that, if I wished to become an artist, I must set to work in a way somewhat different, and that more of this groping about



in my own way would only be lost labour. Now my plan was to find a suitable master, and begin from the very beginning.

The master whom I had in my eye was no other than Ramberg, of Hanover, and it seemed to me the more possible to stop in that city, as a beloved friend of my earlier days lived there in easy circumstances. On his friendship I could rely for my support, and he was constantly inviting me.

Without further delay, therefore, I tied up my bundle, and took, in the midst of the winter of 1815, a walk of almost forty leagues, quite alone, over the heath and through the deep snow. I arrived at Hanover in a few days, without accident.

I went immediately to Ramberg, and told him my wishes. After looking at what I laid before him, he seemed not to doubt my talent, yet he remarked that I must have bread first; that the mastery of the technical part of art demanded much time, and that the prospect of earning a subsistence by art lay at a great distance. Meanwhile, he showed himself willing to help me as much as he could; he looked up immediately, from the mass of his drawings, some suitable sheets with parts of the human body, and gave them to me to copy.

So I lived with my friend, and drew after Ramberg. I made good progress, for the drawings which he gave me were more and more advanced. I drew the whole anatomy of the human frame, and was never weary of repeating difficult hands and feet. So passed some happy months. When we came to May, however, my health began to give way; and on the approach of June my hands trembled so much that I could no longer hold a pencil.

We consulted a skilful physician, and he found my situation dangerous. He said that in consequence of the campaign, perspiration was checked, that my internals were attacked by a consuming heat, and that, if I continued a fortnight in this condition, I should inevitably be a corpse. He prescribed warm baths, and similar remedies to restore the action of the skin; cheering signs of improvement very soon appeared, but the continuation of my artistic studies was not to be thought of.

My friend had hitherto paid me the kindest care and attention; there was not the least thought or hint that I was, or could afterwards become, a burden to him. I, however, thought of it, and as the uneasiness which I had long harboured on this head had probably hastened the breaking out of my dormant illness, so did it now come forward in all its force, as I saw heavy expenses before me on account of my recovery.

At such a time of external and internal embarrassment, the prospect opened to me of an appointment, with a commission, which had for its object the clothing of the Hanoverian army, and hence it was not surprising that, renouncing the artistical path, I yielded to the pressure of circumstances, solicited the appointment, and was delighted to obtain it.

My recovery was soon complete, and a state of health and cheerfulness returned which I had not enjoyed for a long time. I found myself able, in some measure, to requite the kindness my friend had generously shown



me. The novelty of the services into which I was now to be initiated gave occupation to my mind. My superiors seemed to me men of the noblest views, and with my colleagues, some of whom had made the campaign in the same corps with me, I was soon on a footing of cordial intimacy.

Being now fairly settled, I began with some freedom to look about the city, which contained much that was worth observation, and, in leisure hours, I was never weary of rambling, over and over again, about its beautiful environs. With a pupil of Ramberg's, a promising young artist, I formed a close intimacy, and he was my constant companion in my rambles. And since I was forced to give up the practice of Art on account of my health and other circumstances, it was a great solace that I could, at least, daily converse about it with him. I took interest in his compositions, which he showed me in sketches, and about which we conversed. He introduced me to many instructive works; I read Winckelmann and Mengs; but, never having had before me the objects which they discuss, I could only imbibe generalities from their works, and received, indeed, but little benefit.

My friend, who had been born and brought up in the city, was in advance of me in every kind of mental culture, and had, what I entirely wanted, considerable acquaintance with the belles lettres. At that time Theodore Körner was the venerated hero of the day. My friend brought me the "Lyre and Sword," which did not fail to make a deep impression on me, as well as others, and to excite my admiration.

Much has been said of the artistical effect of poems, and many have ranked it very high; but it seems to me that the subject-matter is, after all, the chief point. Unconsciously, I made this experience in reading the "Lyre and Sword." For that I, like Körner, had fostered in my bosom an abhorrence of those who had been our oppressors for so many years; that I, like him, had fought for our freedom, and, like him, had been familiar with all those circumstances of tedious marches, nightly bivouacs, outpost service, and skirmishes, and amid them all had been filled with thoughts and feelings similar to his: this it was which gave to these poems so deep and powerful an echo in my heart.

Since nothing of import could have an effect upon me without moving me deeply and rendering me productive, so it was with these poems of Theodore Körner. I bethought me that I too had, in childhood and the years immediately following, written little poems from time to time, without caring any more about them, because at the time I attached no great value to things so easily produced, and because a certain mental ripeness is required for appreciation of poetical talent. This talent now in Körner appeared to me as something enviable and noble, and I felt a great desire to try if I could succeed, by following him in some degree.

The return of our patriotic warriors from France afforded me a good opportunity, and, as I had fresh in my memory all the unspeakable hardships which the soldier must undergo in the field, while often no inconvenience is endured by the citizen in his comfortable home, I thought it would be good to set forth this contrast in a poem, and,



by working on the feelings, to prepare for the returning troops a more cordial reception.

I had several hundred copies of this poem printed at my own expense, and distributed through the town. The effect produced was favourable beyond my expectations. It procured me a throng of very pleasant acquaintances; people sympathized with the views and feelings I had uttered, encouraged me to make similar attempts, and were generally of opinion that I had given proof of a talent which deserved further cultivation. The poem was copied into periodicals, printed, and sold separately in various places; I even had the pleasure of seeing it set to music by a very favourite composer, though, in fact, it was ill adapted for singing, on account of its length and rhetorical style.

Not a week passed now in which I was not happy enough to produce some new poem. I was now in my four-and-twentieth year: within me, a world of feelings, impulses, and good-will, was in full action; but I was entirely deficient in information and mental culture. The study of our great poets was recommended to me, especially of Schiller and Klopstock. I procured their works—I read, I admired them, without receiving much assistance from them; the path of these geniuses, though I was not aware of it at the time, being too far from the natural tendency of my own mind.

At this time, I first heard the name of Goethe, and obtained a volume of his poems. I read his songs again and again, and enjoyed a happiness which no words can express. I seemed as if I had not till now begun to wake, and attain real consciousness; it appeared to me that my own inmost soul, till then unknown even to myself, was reflected in these songs. Nowhere did I meet any learned or foreign matter beyond the reach of my own uncultivated thoughts and feelings; nowhere any names of outlandish and obsolete divinities, which to me said nothing; but, on the contrary, I found the human heart, with its desires, joys, and sorrows—I found a German nature, clear as the bright actual day—pure reality in the light of a mild glorification.

I lived whole weeks and months absorbed in these songs. Then I succeeded in obtaining "Wilhelm Meister," then "Goethe's Life," then his dramas. "Faust," from whose abysses of human nature and perdition I at first, shuddering, drew back, but whose profound enigmatical character ever attracted me again. I read always in holidays. My admiration and love increased daily; for a long time I completely lived in these works, and thought and talked of nothing but Goethe.

The advantage which we derive from studying the works of a great author may be of different kinds; but the chief benefit probably consists in this, that we become more clearly conscious, not only of our own internal nature, but also of the varied world without us. Such an effect was produced on me by the works of Goethe. I was also impelled by them to a better observation and apprehension of sensible objects and characters; I came gradually to understand the unity or internal harmony of an individual with itself, and thus the enigma of the great variety in



phenomena, both of nature and art, was solved to me more and more.

After I had in some measure grounded myself in Goethe's writings, and had also made many practical attempts in poetry, I turned to some of the best writers of other countries and earlier times, and read in the best translations, not only the principal pieces of Shakspeare, but also Sophocles and Homer.

Here, however, I soon perceived that in these sublime works I could only appreciate the generally Human (*das Allgemeinmenschliche*), and that the understanding of the details, both of language and history, presupposed an amount of knowledge and an education that is commonly acquired only in schools and universities.

Moreover, it was shown to me, from many sides, that I was toiling in vain by thus following my own way, and that, without what is called a classical education, a poet can never succeed either in writing his own language with elegance and expression, or, indeed, performing anything excellent even as to its import. When, too, I read many biographies of distinguished men to see what educational path they had adopted to attain to anything good, and perceived how they all went through the routine of schools and colleges, I resolved, in spite of my advanced age and the many obstacles which surrounded me, to do the same.

I forthwith applied to an eminent philologist, who had been appointed teacher in the gymnasium at Hanover, and took private instruction, not only in Latin, but also in Greek, on which studies I spent all the time which the hours (at least six a day) claimed from me by my office would afford me.

Thus I passed a year. I made good progress, but with my excessive ardour it seemed to me that I went on too slowly, and must devise some other plan. I thought that if I could pass four or five hours daily in the gymnasium, and thus live altogether in a learned atmosphere, I should progress in quite another fashion, and attain my end infinitely sooner.

In this opinion I was confirmed by the advice of competent persons; I therefore resolved to carry out my scheme, and easily obtained the consent of my superiors; for the hours of the gymnasium chiefly fell in a part of the day when I was disengaged.

I therefore applied for admission; and, accompanied by my teacher, went on a Sunday forenoon to the worthy director to go through the requisite probation. He examined me with all possible kindness; but as I was not prepared for the traditional school questions, and with all my industry lacked the proper routine, I did not stand so well as I really ought to have done. However, on the assurance of my teacher that I knew more than appeared from my examination, and, in consideration of my uncommon ardour, the director placed me in the second class.

I need hardly say that a man of nearly twenty-five, and one already employed in the king's service, made but an odd figure among scholars who were, for the most part, mere boys, and that my situation was at first rather strange and unpleasant; but my great thirst for knowledge enabled me to overlook and endure everything. And, on the whole, I



had no cause for complaint. The tutors esteemed me; the elder and better scholars of the class treated me in the most friendly manner, and even the most mischievous had forbearance enough not to play their tricks on me.

I was thus, on the whole, very happy in the attainment of my object, and proceeded with great zeal in this new path. I woke at five in the morning, and soon set about preparing my lessons. About eight I went to the school, and stayed till ten. Thence I hastened to my office, where my attendance was required till one. I then flew home, swallowed a little dinner, and was again at school soon after one. The hours then lasted till four, after which I was occupied in my office till seven, and devoted the remainder of the evening to preparation and private instruction.

Thus I lived some months; but my strength was unequal to such exertion, and the ancient saying, "No man can serve two masters," was confirmed. Want of free air and exercise, and of time and quiet for eating, drinking, and sleep, gradually reduced me to an unhealthy state; I found myself paralyzed both in body and mind, and saw that I must, as a matter of necessity, give up either the school or my office. As my subsistence depended on the latter, I had only the former alternative, and again left the school in the beginning of the spring of 1817. As I saw it was my destiny to make many trials, I did not repent that I had also made trial of a learned school.

Indeed, I had advanced a good step; and as I still had the University in view, there was no course left me but to go on with my private instruction, which I did with the greatest ardour.

After getting rid of the burden of the winter, I the more cheerfully enjoyed the spring and summer. I was much in the open country, which this year spoke with peculiar sympathy to my heart, and many poems were produced; Goethe's juvenile songs were floating as a high example before my eyes.

On the commencement of winter, I began seriously to think how it would be possible to enter the University, at least within a year. I was so far advanced in Latin as to write metrical translations of such parts as especially struck me in Horace's *Odes*, Virgil's *Eclogues*, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and could read with some facility Cicero's *Orations* and Cæsar's commentaries. With this I could by no means look upon myself as suitably prepared for academical studies, but I thought that I might advance considerably within a year, and then make good all deficiencies in the University myself.

Among the higher persons in the city, I had gained many patrons; they promised me their aid, on condition, however, I would choose what is called a Bread study.<sup>1</sup> But as this did not belong to the tendency of my nature, and as I lived in the firm conviction that man must only cultivate



1 That is a course of study for the express purpose of gaining a subsistence, as distinguished from that study which seeks learning for its own sake.—Trans.

that to which he is directed by a constant internal impulse, I adhered to my own plans, and my friends refused their assistance, granting nothing beyond a free board.

I had now only to carry out my scheme with my own resources, and to set about a literary production of some importance.

Müllner's "Schuld" (*Crime*) and Grillparzer's "Ahnfrau" (the *Ancestress*)<sup>1</sup> were then the order of the day, and attracted much attention. To my natural feeling these artificial works were repugnant, and still less could I reconcile myself to the ideas of destiny which they contained, and which I thought would have a demoralizing effect on the public; I therefore resolved to appear against them, and to show that destiny depends on character. However, I intended to fight not by words, but in act. A piece was to be produced which should utter the truth, that man in the present sows seeds for the future, which bring forth good or evil fruit according to his sowing. Being unacquainted with the history of the world, I had to invent the character and the course of the action. I carried it in my head for a full year, and imagined the single scenes and acts down to the minutest details, till at last I wrote it, in the winter of 1820, in the morning hours of a few weeks. I was supremely happy in doing this, for the whole flowed forth easily and naturally. But, in opposition to the above-named poets, I had my eye too steadily fixed on real life, and never thought of the theatre. Thus it was more a quiet delineation of situations than a rapidly progressive action, and only poetical and rhythmical where characters and situations required it. Subordinate persons had too much room, and the whole piece too much breadth.

I showed it to my most intimate friends and acquaintance, but it was not received as I wished: they objected that some scenes belonged to comedy, and, further, that I had read too little. As I had expected a better reception, I was at first quietly offended, but I gradually came to the conviction that my friends were not so very wrong, and that my piece, even if the characters were correctly drawn, and the whole was well designed, and produced with some degree of care and facility, was of far too small merit to be fit for public representation, with respect to the views of life which it developed.

When I consider my origin, and the little I had studied, this was not to be wondered at. I determined to remodel the piece, and arrange it for the theatre; but first to progress in my studies, that I might be capable to give everything a higher character. My anxiety to go to the University, where I hoped to attain all I wanted, and through which I expected to improve my position in life, became a positive passion. I resolved to publish my poems, as a chance of obtaining my wishes. As I had not that established reputation which would lead me to expect a handsome sum from a publisher, I chose the way of subscription as more suitable to my position.

1 Two plays.—Trans.



This was conducted by my friends, and had the happiest result. I again went before my superiors with my views as to Göttingen, and asked for my dismissal. As they were convinced that I was really in earnest, and would not give way, they favoured my designs. On the representation of my chief, Colonel von Berger, the war-office (Kriegs-Canzlei) granted me my dismissal, and also a hundred and fifty dollars yearly for two years, to aid me in the prosecution of my studies.

I was now happy in the realization of the schemes I had cherished for years. I had the poems printed and sent off as quickly as possible, and derived from them, after deducting all expenses, a clear profit of one hundred and fifty dollars.

In May, 1821, I went to Göttingen, leaving one behind me I dearly loved.

My first attempt to reach the University had failed, because I obstinately refused any "Bread study," as it is called. Now, however, grown wiser by experience, and only too well aware of the unspeakable struggles which then awaited me, both on the side of my nearest acquaintance and on that of higher persons of influence, I was prudent enough to submit to the views of a too-potent world, and to declare that I would choose a "Bread study," and devote myself to jurisprudence.

My powerful patrons, and all who set their heart on my worldly advancement, while they had no notion of the urgency of my wants, found my plan very rational. All opposition was now at an end. I found everywhere kind advances, and a ready furtherance of my views. To confirm me in such good intentions, they did not fail to allege that the juridical studies were by no means of such a kind as to preclude higher mental advantages. They said that I should thus gain an insight into civil and social relations, such as I could attain in no other way; that this study was by no means so extensive as to hinder my pursuing many so-called higher studies; and they told me of various celebrated persons, who had studied all the departments of law, and also attained the highest proficiency in other ways.

However, both my friends and myself overlooked the fact that such men not only came to the University well stored with school-learning, but had, besides, a much longer time to expend on their studies than the imperious necessity of my circumstances would permit to me.

Suffice it to say, that, as I deceived others, I gradually deceived myself also, and really fancied that I might seriously study law, and, at the same time, attain my own peculiar ends.

Under this delusion, of seeking that which I had no wish to possess and apply, I began with jurisprudence as soon as I reached the University. I found the science by no means of a repulsive kind, but rather such that, if my head had not been already too full of other plans and wishes, I could willingly have given myself up to it. But I was like a maiden, who finds abundant reasons for objecting to a proposed marriage, merely because she unfortunately has a secret love in her heart.



At the lectures on the Institutes and Pandects, I was often absorbed in inventing dramatic scenes and acts. I zealously tried to fix my mind on the matter delivered by the lecturer, but it always wandered. I really thought of nothing but poetry and heart, and the higher human culture to attain which I had for years passionately endeavoured to reach the University.

Heeren was the person who most assisted me in my immediate objects during this first year at the University. His ethnography and history laid the best foundation for further studies of the same kind, while the clearness and closeness of his style was of important advantage to me in other respects. I attended every lecture with delight, and never left one without being penetrated with the highest veneration and affection for that eminent man.

I judiciously began my second academic year by setting aside entirely the study of jurisprudence, which was, indeed, much too important to be made subordinate to others, and which was too great a hindrance with regard to my principal object. I devoted myself to philology, and was now as much indebted to Dissen as I had been the first year to Heeren. For not only because his lectures gave my studies the food most needed and desired, did I find myself daily enlightened and advanced, and receive safe directions for my future works, but I had also the happiness of becoming personally acquainted with this excellent man, and of receiving from him guidance and encouragement in my studies.

My daily intercourse with the best minds among the students, and the conversations on the noblest subjects during our walks and often till late at night, were to me invaluable, and exercised a most favourable influence on the development of my faculties.

In the mean while, the end of my pecuniary means drew near. On the other hand, during the past year and a half, I had accumulated daily new treasures of knowledge; and to heap more together, without any practical application, would not have suited my natural disposition and my course of life. Hence, my passionate desire now was, by some literary undertaking, to make myself once more free, and sharpen my appetite for further study.

I intended to complete my dramatic work, which still interested me, as far as the subject was concerned, but which was to be elevated both in form and import, and also to bring forward some ideas relating to the principles of poetry, which had developed themselves in opposition to the views then prevalent. These two labours were to be undertaken in succession.

I, therefore, left the University in the autumn of 1822, and took lodgings in the country near Hanover. I first wrote my theoretical essays,

