

Review

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Source: *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Jul., 1909), pp. 537-539

Published by: [Modern Humanities Research Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3712927>

Accessed: 11-02-2016 17:24 UTC

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important part in the stage arrangements of these wandering actors, he allows little or no room¹.

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Goethe und die Seinen. Quellenmässige Darstellungen über Goethes Haus. Von LUDWIG GEIGER. Leipzig: R. Voigtländer. 1908. 8vo. 374 pp.

In the preface to this book the author explains what he wishes to be understood under the somewhat ambiguous term 'die Seinen': 'Es ist die Welt, die ihn nach Begründung seines Heines umgab, es sind die Bewohner seines Hauses, die Mitglieder des kleinen vertrauten Kreises, der täglich, ja stündlich um ihn war,' or, in other words, Goethe's 'Familie der freien Wahl.' A good deal has already been written on this subject, and monographs exist on most of the members of Goethe's household, but Professor Geiger claims for his book that it is the first in which the 42 volumes of letters, the 13 volumes of diary and the 10 volumes of conversations have been so freely used, and given such a prominent place in the foreground.

The work falls into several sections. The first of these is devoted to 'Die Gattin,' whose history is traced from the day she first met Goethe in the park at Weimar in 1788, till her death in 1816. This is by no means the first attempt to vindicate Christiane's character from the aspersions cast upon it by the indignant 'Weimarerinnen'; but by the juxtaposition of the various poems, letters and reports having reference to Goethe's life-companion, we get a clear and illuminating view of the 'dicke Ehehälfte,' as Charlotte von Schiller was wont to call her. Professor Geiger, in passing a final judgment, does not commit himself further than to describe their union as one 'dass unsere Teilnahme fordert und unsere Achtung,' but he closes the section with the words of Frau von Knebel, who, in a very impartial description of Christiane's character, declares 'dass Goethe nach seiner Eigentümlichkeit nie eine passendere Frau für sich hätte finden können.'

Section II is devoted to August, Ottilie and 'die Enkel.' A full account of August von Goethe's melancholy existence has not yet been written, and the 67 pages devoted to Goethe's son in this part of the book will be welcome to all who wish to become better acquainted with Goethe's family circle. The details of his early life and his official career, though in themselves of no intrinsic interest, shew how harmful

¹ It should be added that there are a rather large number of simple printer's errors in Diesch's publication, also a few of a somewhat more serious nature. Of this second class I note the following: p. 77, first line of the paragraph, for 'Spencers Nürnberger Bühne' read 'Spencers Regensburger Bühne'; p. 81, four lines from top, for 'V. B.' (Vorderbühne) read 'H. B.' (Hinterbühne). Most troublesome, however, is the error, p. 58, in the first line of the quotation from Duncker; for 'Au devant du Paris' read 'Au devant du Palais.' The reference to *Deutsche Rundschau* is here also wrongly given; for '48, S. 219 ff.' read '48, S. 260 ff.'

to his character and development generally was the unsystematic and disconnected method which his father followed with regard to his education and upbringing. And yet the fact that his life was not an even greater failure is probably due to the almost fanatical love of order which he certainly inherited from his father, and which the elder Goethe constantly encouraged and demanded, even to the detriment of other and more valuable faculties. As regards his character and his personal relations to his father, Professor Geiger's view differs somewhat both from that of Karl von Holtei, who represents his friend as gifted but without character, and from that held by another of August's contemporaries, whose account of Goethe's son is one of the few trustworthy documents on this subject that we possess. According to Jenny von Pappenheim, August Goethe was a man of good abilities and amiable disposition, whose one misfortune was to be the son of his father: 'die Nähe des Vaters floh er, weil die forschenden Blicke, die unausgesprochenen Anklagen ihn einschüchterten. So kam es, dass er, der sonst so Fröhliche, sich in den Räumen Goethe's am liebsten stumm und missmuthig in die Ecken drückte,' etc. (Lily Braun, *Im Schatten der Titanen*, p. 123 f.). Dr Geiger, on the other hand, lays considerable weight on the evidence we possess to shew that August was kept closely in touch with his father's intellectual life, that he became indispensable to his father's activity, and that even their collaboration on purely business and official matters bore a more intimate and personal character than has generally been assumed. It must be confessed, however, that in the documents he adduces, the impression one gains is not that of intense filial or parental affection, but rather of dry business transactions between two men in their official capacity. There can be no doubt as to Goethe's affection for his son, however disappointed he may have been in his subsequent development; but even Professor Geiger is forced to admit in the end that 'Der Fluch seines Lebens war...das niederdrückende Gefühl: Goethes Sohn zu sein.'

In his treatment of Otilie, Dr Geiger errs perhaps on the side of being too severe. He comments on the fact that, after August's death, the intimacy between father- and daughter-in-law, at first so great, seemed to diminish; and he attributes this to Otilie's 'grobe Vernachlässigung der Pflichten einer Hausfrau.' He laments that she should have understood so little how to brighten the declining years of the aged poet and should have forced on him the burden of duties which properly fell in her own province. But here again we have a more sympathetic picture from the hand of her friend Jenny von Pappenheim. From this we learn that Otilie, after August's death, daily devoted six hours of her time to her father-in-law; to quote her own words, as reported and later corroborated by her friend: 'oft kann ich nicht mehr und glaube ohnmächtig zu werden vor Schwäche, doch der Gedanke dass ich ihm nützlich, ihm nothwendig bin, dass ich seine alten Tage verschönern und in der Welt zu etwas gut sein kann, dieser Gedanke giebt mir die Kräfte wieder. Neulich haben wir den Plutarch zu lesen angefangen, und schliesslich las er mir aus dem zweiten Teil des Faust;

es war schön und gross, als ich aber nach 11 Uhr mein Zimmer betrat, fiel ich meiner Länge nach zu Boden' (*Im Schatten der Titanen*, p. 119). Of course it is impossible to deny that Ottilie was frivolous even to excess; but when, speaking of her life, Dr Geiger says: 'Es ist nicht das Leben einer Mutter, die sich der Pflichten gegen ihre Kinder bewusst ist, und noch weniger das einer Frau, die den gefeiertsten Namen Deutschlands trägt; man ist manchmal versucht, an eine Abenteurerin zu denken, die in der Welt herumzieht und jede ihrer Launen befriedigt,' and then produces some contemporary gossip to justify his hard words about her, we are inclined to think that he does gross injustice to Ottilie and that, overlooking the good points in her 'problematische Natur,' he unduly accentuates the less pleasing ones.

The account of the two sons and their somewhat misguided attitude towards their grandfather's inheritance is of great interest, and the description of the author's unsuccessful interview with these two jealous guardians of the family treasure is clearly characteristic of their behaviour towards even the most serious and conscientious of Goethe-students. We get a clear idea of the curious blight which seemed to lie over the lives of these two not ungifted men, whose melancholy existence is only illuminated by the generosity with which, at the close of their lives, they handed over the incomparable gift of all the family treasures and archives for the use of the German nation.

The Section devoted to 'Haus und Hausverwandte' is perhaps the part of the book which presents least interest to the general reader. Goethe's relations to his coachmen, his cooks, and other domestics are illustrated from notes of his Tagebücher and correspondence. His transactions with the actors and actresses at the Weimar theatre are discussed. Finally Goethe's friends, more particularly those of his later years, are presented to us. Schiller is intentionally left on one side; Meyer and Zelter are sympathetically characterized, and finally, as 'untergeordnete Hausgenossen,' Riemer and Eckermann. The Kanzler v. Müller, as usual with Goethe's biographers, comes off very badly: 'Kein Umgang, der eines Goethe würdig war.' Dr Geiger does not even do him the justice of quoting him absolutely correctly on p. 173, where a very slight inaccuracy causes the chancellor's words to produce a more displeasing impression than they do as they stand in the original (cf. *Unterhaltungen mit dem Kanzler von Müller*, ed. Cotta, p. 183). It is, moreover, scarcely fair to insist on the unworthy manner in which he acted with regard to Goethe's 'Nachlass,' and to omit to mention at the same time the many difficulties of the work he undertook, as well as the thanklessness of his task, owing to the attitude taken up by the rightful heirs.

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