



# Goethe autographs at Harvard

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## Goethe Autographs at Harvard<sup>1</sup>

**T**HERE is probably no more rewarding and more permanent contribution to the ever-recurring celebrations of literary anniversaries, so dear particularly to Europeans, than the assembling and editing of unpublished original material by the celebrity in question. Publication of such material will often prove to be far more satisfactory than the sometimes dubious and repetitious generalities of journalistic praise or even of much advertised symposiums. It may, therefore, seem both desirable and appropriate that, as part of an observance of the Goethe bicentennial at Harvard University, some account should be given of Goethe autographs in the Harvard College Library. While performing a primary service by submitting the texts of certain of Goethe's original manuscripts, this presentation may in addition help its readers to comprehend more easily how universal was the genius of that man who in an amazing creativeness mastered both art and science.

Perhaps no other institution of higher learning in the United States has a better reason to take stock of its Goethe treasures at this time. By his famous gift of books to Harvard in 1819 Goethe established his only personal contact with an American college. Ever since, the Harvard College Library has maintained a special interest in Goetheana, and several times on previous occasions Goethe autographs at Harvard have been described from various points of view. To be sure, many of the items finding their way into the Harvard autograph collections were not acquired by systematic effort. Most of them were assembled originally by the fancy of some autograph collector who would have considered his collection incomplete, or at least seriously deficient, without a Goethe item. From such private hands they have eventually come into the collections of a great library, some of them on deposit, and it is there that they will continue to attract the attention of scholars devoted to Goethe research.

<sup>1</sup> A paper prepared on the occasion of the two hundredth anniversary of Goethe's birth, 28 August 1749. Indebted to several people for useful hints, I should like to express my special appreciation to Dr Arnold Weinberger of the Harvard College Library staff, who assisted the preparation of this paper in many ways.

'Letters are among the most important documents the individual can leave behind.' These words, from his essay on Winckelmann, are characteristic of the high esteem Goethe himself had for letters. Memoirs and letters, he thought, are particularly useful for orienting us in the past, since they bring the past back to life. They were for him biographical sources of prime importance. This appreciation of the value of correspondence Goethe shared with his times, but he never considered letters separate literary works, despite his use of them in *Werthers Leiden*. On the other hand, letters were a kind of a soliloquy to him, and it was through the medium of conversation or monologue that he liked to create his works.<sup>2</sup>

From an early date, Goethe, realizing his own historical importance, collected letters and carried on his correspondence with a view to its possible future publication. Thus he left a very large number of letters which (because they reveal a rich store of beauty and humanity) are almost as precious as his creative works. Goethe was an excellent letter writer, for he always strove to make all his letters a significant part of a continuous process of faithful self-revelation. Some of them are invaluable for the history of literature, since they offer an intrinsic commentary on the origin of his major works. Because of the enormous extent of his correspondence Goethe dictated many of his letters to more or less skilled secretaries over many years of his long life, a fact that accounts for many unfortunate clerical errors.

On 28 August 1780, his thirty-first birthday, Goethe wrote the following for his diary: 'Early in the morning, while walking about in the garden, I mused upon my still visible shortcomings — upon what I had failed to do or accomplish during the last year. Tried to gain an understanding of certain things as much as possible.' The reflections expressed in these words are typical of the man who throughout his life felt a deep longing for improvement of his moral character as well as a strong responsibility for the solution of baffling problems confronting him. In certain respects the Goethe letters we shall now transcribe testify to this high ethical attitude, and accordingly the lines just quoted may serve as a motto, although there is nothing to connect the letters with each other except the accident of the collectors' enthusiasm mentioned above.

We first transcribe and translate a completely autograph letter of Goethe to the philologist Friedrich Wilhelm Riemer, dated Teplitz,

<sup>2</sup> See *Goethe-Handbuch*, ed. Julius Zeitler (Stuttgart, 1916-18), I, 260 ff.

20 June 1813. The recipient, a member of the inner Goethe circle for many years, but far less generally known than Johann Peter Eckermann, would be entirely forgotten but for scholars, though he too published very important evidence of his connection with the master. Riemer had come to Weimar in 1803, when Goethe engaged him as a tutor for his son, August, then fourteen years old. He quickly gained the confidence of the poet, and remained very close to him for almost thirty years. He lived in Goethe's household until 1812, leaving only shortly before he married and became a professor at the Weimar Gymnasium. All through the years until Goethe's death Riemer assisted him by advising him on bibliographical, grammatical, or metrical questions, by copying his letters, poems, or other literary papers, by correcting manuscripts, and by proofreading, and he penetrated into the poet's creative works by discussing them with the master while they were in the formative stages.<sup>3</sup> This latter activity was particularly important for Goethe's autobiography, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, most parts of which were thoroughly debated by the two men, both before and after the manuscript was written, so that Riemer followed with a most sincere personal interest the growth of this work from its first beginning to its completion. How far the author went in giving his 'famulus' the right to correct and revise the text is shown by our letter, which originally accompanied the manuscript of the eleventh and twelfth books.

It is clear that Goethe would bestow such far-reaching confidence only upon a collaborator whom he considered both objective and fully familiar with his own point of view. It was through Riemer's eyes that Goethe liked to look over his works once more before he thought them finished.<sup>4</sup>

Our letter was prepared for publication by Riemer himself in 1845, the year of his death, and was actually published together with many others in 1846.<sup>5</sup> From this publication, not from the original, the latter being then 'unknown,' the letter was reprinted in the Weimar edition of Goethe's works (Abt. IV, Vol. 23). The original, now on deposit in the Harvard College Library, was purchased for the present collection from the French book-dealer Zadock Pratt in Paris in June 1927.

<sup>3</sup> On Riemer see also Karl Viëtor, *Goethe the Poet* (Cambridge, Mass., 1949), pp. 276 f.

<sup>4</sup> F. W. Riemer, *Mitteilungen über Goethe*, ed. Arthur Pollmer (Leipzig, 1921).

<sup>5</sup> *Briefe von und an Goethe*, ed. F. W. Riemer (Leipzig, 1846), pp. 194-197.

A comparison shows that the text printed by Riemer and in the Weimar edition omits a whole paragraph; furthermore, three words were badly misread.<sup>6</sup> These facts justify our new transcription of the letter from the original. The paragraph, without doubt intentionally left out by Riemer, is the one in which Goethe asked for special care on the part of the printers Frommann in Jena and expressed his dissatisfaction with the printing of the second volume of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. A very intimate friend of the Frommanns, as his published correspondence with them illustrates,<sup>7</sup> Riemer felt that these not very flattering remarks should be suppressed. This hitherto unknown omission, the misreading 'Schatz' for 'Scherz,' and the misreading 'ideale Schöpfungen' for 'ideele Schärfungen' (which makes a sentence entirely unintelligible, although strangely enough this was never noticed before) throw rather unfavorable light on Riemer's reliability as an editor. The accuracy of his other communications relating to Goethe may, therefore, deserve further investigation.

Riemer's quite detailed answer to Goethe's letter is known, and it is of especial interest, because it contains almost all his linguistic and stylistic principles.<sup>8</sup> He had perused the manuscript immediately after having received it, in order to get a total impression, and now he was looking forward to a first quiet evening on which he could 'tarry in those halls, apartments, and rooms'; the master's scruples in respect to too many uniform expressions are unfounded, for uniformity is unavoidable and necessary; they are part of the language as well as of the style of a writer; a 'work of long breath' must have them, as can be seen in Homer, Herodotus, or Xenophon; all that one can do about them is to check over one's store of expressions and avoid repetitions too close together. There are many more similar observations in Riemer's answer, which need not be enumerated here.

This was Goethe's letter:

Sie erhalten hierbey, mein lieber Riemer, das *elfte* u. *zwölfte* Buch, an dem letzteren fehlt der Schluss, der mit den beyden folgenden Büchern bald möglichst nachkommen soll. Ich bin auf allerley Weise retardirt worden; aber es est schon so viel gethan dass ich weiter keine Sorge habe.

<sup>6</sup> There are in addition perhaps an average number of deviations from the original in spelling and punctuation.

<sup>7</sup> F. W. Riemer, *Aus dem Goethehause; Briefe . . . an die Familie Frommann in Jena. (1803-1824)*, ed. Ferdinand Heitmüller (Stuttgart, 1892).

<sup>8</sup> Arthur Pollmer, *Friedrich Wilhelm Riemer und seine "Mittheilungen über Goethe"* (Leipzig, 1922), p. 42.

Eigentlich ist es ein allzu kühnes Unternehmen ein solches Volumen in bestimmter Zeit zu schreiben; doch bestimmte man sie nicht; so würde man gar nicht fertig. Wenn Sie die verschieden abwechselnden Gegenstände dieses Bandes ansehen u. bedenken was es für eine Aufgabe gewesen wäre jeden, nach seiner Art in Styl und Darstellung zu behandeln, so könnte einem das Grauen ankommen. Ja man würde gar nicht zu Ende gelangen u. vielleicht thät es dem Ganzen nicht einmal gut.

Genug hier ists soweit ich's bringen konnte. Einiges habe ich noch mit Bleystift notirt, denn das Manuscript steht gerade auf dem Punkt wo ich meine Sachen zu verderben anfangte.

Es sey also, mein werthester, Ihnen die völlige Gewalt übertragen nach grammatischen, syntaktischen u. rhetorischen Überzeugungen zu verfahren.

Ohnvorgreiflich einige Bemerkungen.

Die *Enthymeme* scheinen sich zu häufen.

*Phrasen* wiederhohlen sich, weil man doch in dem engen Kreise von ähnlichen Gesinnungen u. Beschäftigungen vorzüglich auch in einem subjectiven Wesen verweilt. Z.B. *Es zog mich an. Es hielt mich fest. Um so mehr. Um so weniger*

*Rediten*, Wiederholung[en] derselben Sache habe ich zu tilgen gesucht; doch kommt eine Sache öfters einigemal mit Fleis [*sic*] von verschiedenen Seiten vor.

*Wendungen* wiederhohlen sich. Besonders verdriessen mich die unglücklichen Auxiliaren aller Art. Vielleicht gelingt Ihnen hie und da die Umwandlung in die Participialconstruction, die ich scheue weil sie mir nicht gerathen will.

*Euphonische Zwischenwörter* Wie: *Gerade, eben*, können auch wohl hie und da gelöscht werden.

*Ausländische Worte* zu verdeutschen sey Ihnen ganz überlassen.

u. s. w.

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Zugleich bitte ich die Herrn Jenenses zu genauer Correctur u. Revision an zu halten, welches um so thu[n]licher seyn sollte als sie ein reinlich Msk [?] erhalten. Im zweyten Bande finde ich sehr traurige Druckfehler.

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Ich befinde mich sehr wohl und im Ganzen gefördert. Die Gegend habe ich schon durchgeologisirt u. werde es noch mehr thun unter dem Beystand der Dokoren [*sic*] *Reuss* zu *Bilin* u. *Stolz* zu *Aussig*. Die Mannigfaltigkeit der Produkte ist sehr gross.

---

Mich freut sehr dass meine kleinen Gedichte Ihren Beyfall haben, an dem mir sehr viel gelegen ist; denn Sie sehen diesen kurz gebundenen ästhetischen [*sic*] Organisation[en] auf den Grund, wenn andere sich allenfalls am Effect ergötzen.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> According to Goethe's letters of 17 April and of 22 May 1813 to his wife and to his son respectively, the poems sent to Riemer were: 'Der getreue Eckardt,' 'Die wandelnde Glocke,' and 'Der Todtentanz.'

Dagegen habe ich mich auch an dem *Obne sorgigen* [sic] Scherz<sup>10</sup> gar sehr erfreut. Es ist eine sehr glückliche Produktion u. dem Wortfreunde läuft nicht leicht ein so fetter Haase in die Küche.

Ich wünsche mir u. Ihnen Glück dass Sie Sich in das Unvermeidliche zu finden wissen.<sup>11</sup> Auch die Meinigen trüsten mich durch ihre Briefe. Sie nehmen das reale Ubel so leicht als möglich auf. Wie fürchterlich es sey dasselbe noch durch ideale Schärfungen zu verschlimmern sehe ich hier alle Tage.

Ubrigens weiss ich hier in der Nähe eben so wenig als Ihr entfernteren von der Zukunft; selbst von der nächsten auch nicht das mindeste. Jede Conjectur, jede Vermuthung wird gleich zu schanden. Nur der Partheygeist bildet sich seine Träume zu augenblicklichen Gewissheiten, u. es wird werden woran niemand denkt.

Tausend Lebcwohl!

Teplitz d. 20 Juni  
1813

Goethe

NB. Das dreyzehnte u. vierzehnte Buch ist fertig und wird sachte abgeschrieben, ich hoffe sie sollen in vier Wochen auch in ihren Händen seyn. Die zweyte Hälfte des fünfzehnten Buches steht auch schon auf dem Papiere. Sie sehen also dass wir dem Ziele nah sind.

My dear Rierner, herewith you receive the eleventh and twelfth books. The latter lacks the end, which will follow with the next two books as soon as possible. I have been delayed by all sorts of things, but so much has been done already that I don't worry any more.

As a matter of fact, it is much too bold an enterprise to write such a voluminous work within a fixed time; but if one did not set a deadline, one would not finish at all. When you look at the various alternating subjects in this volume and reflect upon what a task it would have been to treat each in its proper style and with its own manner of presentation, a feeling of horror might come over you. In fact, one would never finish, and perhaps it would not do the whole work any good.

Enough! Here it is as far as I could complete it. I have also added some notes in pencil, for the manuscript is reaching the point where I begin to spoil my work.

Therefore, my dear friend, I give you full authority to proceed according to your grammatical, syntactical, and rhetorical convictions.

A few unprejudicial observations.

<sup>10</sup> A short jocular poem by Rierner punning on the name of Ansorge.

<sup>11</sup> Referring to events of the war of liberation then being fought against Napoleon in Saxony and Silesia.





Enfin je ne saurois Vous diffimuler  
l'immense utilité dont est pour moi  
l'étude de Vos inappréciables travaux.  
Ce sont les guides les plus sûrs que  
je puisse consulter pour bien distinguer  
les fossiles remarquables que le roc  
de la Thuringe nous fournit de  
temps en temps.

Agitez Monsieur, l'assurance  
de mon parfait dévouement  
et de ma haute considération

Weimar  
le 28 Août  
1831.

Goethe

PLATE II

GOETHE TO CUVIER, 28 AUGUST 1831

(last page)

The *enthymemes* seem to accumulate.

*Expressions* are repeated because one remains within a narrow circle of similar attitudes and activities while dealing with subjective material. For instance: *This attracted me. This arrested me. The more so. The less so.*

I have tried to eliminate *redites*, repetitions of the same thing; yet rather frequently a thing appears intentionally under different aspects.

*Variant phrases* repeat themselves. It is the unfortunate auxiliaries of all kinds that vex me particularly. Perhaps you will here and there succeed in changing something to a participial construction, which I shun because I am not felicitous in it.

One might also here and there suppress *euphonic interjections* like *just, precisely.*

I leave it entirely up to you to translate into German any *foreign words.*

And so forth.

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At the same time I beg you to urge the gentlemen in Jena to provide accurate proofs and revisions; this should be the more feasible, since they will receive a neat manuscript. I find some very sad misprints in the second volume.

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I am very well, and in general I have made progress. I have already covered the country for my geological studies and I shall continue doing so with the assistance of Doctors *Reuss* at *Bilin* and *Stolz* at *Aussig*. There is a great variety of products.

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I am very glad that my little poems have met with your approval, which I value very much; for you penetrate to the essence of these concise and aesthetic compositions while others perhaps enjoy the effect.

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On the other hand, I also enjoyed the Ohnesorge banter enormously. This is a very happy production, and it does not often happen that such a fat rabbit runs into the kitchen of the amateur of words.

---

I congratulate you, as I congratulate myself, that you know how to cope with what is inevitable. My family too console me with their letters. They take the real evil as lightly as possible. How terrible it would be to make it still worse through imaginary aggravations I see here every day.

---

For the rest, I know here as little about the future from my proximity as you do from a greater distance; absolutely nothing even about the immediate future. Every conjecture, every guess is at once proved false. Only the partisan spirit transforms its dreams into instantaneous certainties, and what nobody thinks of is going to happen.

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A thousand times good-bye.

Teplitz the 20th June  
1813

Goethe

NB. The thirteenth and fourteenth books are ready, and are being slowly copied; I hope they will also be in your hands within four weeks. The second half of the fifteenth book is already on paper too. So you see that we are near the goal.

Our second letter, also completely autograph, was written in Weimar by Goethe to the renowned French zoologist and professor at the Jardin des Plantes in Paris, Georges Léopold Chrétien Frédéric Dagobert Baron de Cuvier.<sup>12</sup> The letter bears the date 28 August 1831 (i.e., the poet's last birthday), but it seems probable that it actually was penned a few days earlier. It is Goethe's answer to a letter of 2 August 1831 from Cuvier in which the latter, as 'Secrétaire Perpétuel de l'Académie,' had expressed the thanks of that body for a copy of Goethe's *Metamorphose der Pflanzen*. This copy, given by Goethe, with a dedication, to the French scholar Etienne de Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, Cuvier's famous opponent,<sup>13</sup> had been presented by Geoffroy to the Academy, together with a brief summary of its contents, as if it had been intended for the Academy and not for Geoffroy personally. Goethe had learned about this through a letter of the end of July from Geoffroy.

The poet was quite pleased with this newly established contact. Before he decided, however, what the wording of his reply to Cuvier was to be, he corresponded about it with his young friend Frédéric Soret, an able French-Swiss geologist who had been a tutor of the future Grand Duke Karl Alexander at Weimar since 1822.<sup>14</sup> First, he forwarded to Soret, who was staying in Jena at that time, Geoffroy's letter, which had arrived at Weimar on August 1. After Soret had returned this letter, Goethe sent him a first draft of his intended reply to Cuvier, asking him 'to direct some attention to it.' He did not wish a translation of the German draft, but suggested that Soret should make Goethe's thoughts fully his own and then proceed with his own expressions, employing the special stylistic gracefulness that he pos-

<sup>12</sup>For Goethe's correspondence with Cuvier and other scientists see Günther Schmid, *Goethe und die Naturwissenschaften. Eine Bibliographie*, ed. Emil Abderhalden (Halle/Saale, 1940).

<sup>13</sup>Goethe had already written a paper on the feud between Cuvier and Geoffroy (Weimar edition, Abt. II, Vol. 7, pp. 167-181).

<sup>14</sup>On Soret see Karl Viëtor, *op. cit.*, p. 278, and Frédéric Soret, *Zehn Jahre bei Goethe*, ed. H. H. Houben (Leipzig, 1929), introduction. The correspondence between Goethe and Soret regarding the letter to Cuvier is printed in full in the latter work.

sessed. From his first meeting with Goethe, Soret had known that the poet had mastered French well, although he had noted how difficult it was for Goethe to find the right expression for what he wanted to say. Sending back to Goethe what after all amounted to a rather close translation, Soret himself realized how unfortunate it was that the letter could not be sent to Paris in the German original. No wonder that Goethe was not at all satisfied, and continued to 'think over the matter.' After another comparison of Goethe's original version with his own proposed French wording, Soret saw that he had misunderstood the principal idea of the first paragraph and offered some new suggestions, but Goethe still was not satisfied. Omitting some of the details in favor of more general ideas, he completely rewrote the letter in French and mailed it to Soret for his final approval. After a very few further changes Goethe was able to make a fair copy as the result of their common effort.

The Weimar edition, for which the fair copy finally mailed to Cuvier was not available, printed Goethe's first German draft (Abt. IV, Vol. 49), but also added Soret's and Goethe's first French drafts as variants. The fair copy sent Cuvier, here transcribed in Goethe's spelling and translated into English for the first time, is also on deposit in the Harvard College Library; it was purchased for the present collection about twenty years ago from the Paris bookseller Henry Saffroy.

#### Monsieur

Dans le Cours d'une longue vie j'ai toujours appris, avec un sentiment de bonheur, que des études faites dans le seul but de me perfectionner moi même, avoient exercé une influence favorable sur des contemporains adonnés aux mêmes travaux.

C'est donc avec un vif sentiment de reconnaissance que, parvenu près du terme de ma carrière, je vois une société, depuis longtemps en possession d'apprécier les progrès de la science et de les estimer à leur juste valeur, recevoir favorablement l'hommage que je lui adresse, et accorder quelques attention[s] a mes recherches.

Je m'estime heureux en outre, en Vous priant Monsieur d'être mon Interprête auprès de Votre illustre corps et de lui adresser mes vifs remerciements, de pouvoir saisir une occasion aussi favorable pour rappeler en particulier tout ce que je dois a Vos bontés. Je ne saurois parcourir ma collection de fossiles, sans porter avec reconnaissance mes regards sur les exemplaires qui attestent Vos précieuses attentions pour moi.

Enfin je ne saurois Vous dissimuler l'immense utilité dont est pour moi l'étude de Vos inappréciables travaux. Ce sont les guides les plus surs que je puisse

consulter pour bien distinguer les fossiles remarquables que le sol de la Thuringe nous fournit de tems en tems

Agréez Monsieur, l'assurance de mon parfait devouement et de ma haute consideration

Weimar  
ce 28 Aout  
1831.

JWGoethe

Sir

In the course of a long life I have always learned with a feeling of happiness that studies made with the sole goal of improving myself have exercised a favorable influence on contemporaries devoted to the same task.

It is therefore with a lively feeling of gratitude that, having almost arrived at the end of my career, I see a society, which for a long time has been able to appreciate the progress of science and to judge it at its real value, accept favorably my tribute addressed to it and pay some attention to my investigations.

Moreover, I consider myself fortunate, while asking you, Sir, to be my interpreter before your illustrious body and to pass on to it my vivid thanks, that I can seize so favorable an opportunity to recall especially all that I owe to your kindness. I could not go over my collection of fossils without gratefully glancing at the specimens attesting your precious attentions for me.

Finally I can not conceal from you the enormous usefulness which I gain by the study of your invaluable publications. They are the most reliable guides I can consult in order to identify the remarkable fossils which the soil of Thuringia furnishes us from time to time.

Accept, Sir, the assurance of my perfect devotion and of my high regard

Weimar  
28 August  
1831.

JWGoethe

A number of other original Goethe letters preserved at Harvard are worthy of enumeration, in order to call attention to their present location, and also because most of them were not available to the editors of the Weimar edition for comparison. Several differ in interesting details from the printed versions, and in some cases it has been possible to add new data. These letters, chronologically arranged, are as follows:

1. To Michael Salom, 20 February 1782

Written by Philipp Friedrich Seidel, as secretary; signed: 'Goethe'; envelope addressed in French, perhaps by Goethe himself: 'A Monsieur / Monsieur Michel Salom / Medecin / a Padouc'

Printed by Wilhelm Arndt in *Die Grenzboten*, XXXIX (1880), 353-354, from the original then in the Hirzel Goethebibliothek at the University of Leipzig, without identification of secretary's hand, address given as: 'Herrn / Michael Salom / nach / Padua.'; reprinted from *Grenzboten* in Weimar ed., Abt. IV, Vol. 5, no. 1412

2. To Carl Christian von Herda, 10 July 1789

Autograph throughout

Printed in Weimar ed., Abt. IV, Vol. 30, no. 2766a, apparently from the autograph, with no indication of provenance

3. To Georg Carl Wilhelm Philipp von Donop, 8 February 1816

Written by Theodor Friedrich Kräuter, as secretary; signed: 'Ew Hochwohlgeb / ganz gehorsamster / Diener / JWvGoethe'; mourning border

Printed in Weimar ed., Abt. IV, Vol. 26, no. 7297, from a draft by Kräuter lacking the concluding words by Goethe and with 'Tagebuch' date of 11 February 1816

4. To Joseph Green Cogswell, 29 July 1819

Written by Kräuter; signed: 'Mit den aufrichtigsten Wünschen / treulich ergeben / JWvGoethe'

Printed by Leonard L. Mackall, 'Goethe's Letter to Joseph Green Cogswell Dated July 29, 1819,' in *Essays Offered to Herbert Putnam by His Colleagues and Friends*, ed. W. W. Bishop and Andrew Keogh (New Haven, Conn., 1929), pp. 320-321, from the present original; printed by Mackall in *Goethe-Jahrbuch*, XXV (1904), 12, from two drafts by the secretary Johann August Friedrich John; both drafts reprinted in Weimar ed., Abt. IV, Vol. 31, no. 234

5. To Friedrich Wilhelm Riemer, 6 December 1821

Autograph throughout

Printed in *Goethe-Jahrbuch*, VII (1886), 190, from the original then in the Engel-Dollfus autograph collection, Dornach bei Mulhausen im Sundau; reprinted from *Goethe-Jahrbuch* in Weimar ed., Abt. IV, Vol. 35, no. 161

6. To Johann Wolfgang Döbereiner, 31 January 1829

Written by John, as secretary; signed: 'In vorzüglicher Hochachtung / ergebenst / JWvGoethe'; mourning border

Printed in *Briefe des Grossherzogs Carl August und Göthes an Döbereiner*, ed. Oskar Schade (Weimar, 1856), p. 122, apparently from this

original; reprinted from *Briefe* in Weimar ed., Abt. IV, Vol. 45, no. 123, with notation that the manuscript is unknown and attribution to Goethe of concluding line only; reprinted in *Briefwechsel zwischen Goethe und Johann Wolfgang Döbereiner (1810-1830)*, ed. Julius Schiff (Weimar, 1914), p. 96

7. To Christian Ernst Friedrich Weller, 2 April 1829

Written by Johann Christian Schuchardt, as secretary; signed: 'ergebenst / JWvGoethe'

Printed in Weimar ed., Abt. IV, Vol. 45, no. 187, from a draft by Schuchardt lacking in the concluding word and signature.

Of these seven letters, certainly the most notable from the point of view of its present repository is that to Cogswell. Addressed to the man who two years later became Librarian of Harvard College, as well as Professor of Mineralogy and Geology in the University, and who is generally regarded as the first great American librarian, the letter deals in part with the gift, already mentioned, of a set of Goethe's works to Harvard. The story of this gift has been told and retold many times, usually in connection with a demonstration of the great man's knowledge of and his ideas about America, or in order to describe his contacts with Americans.<sup>15</sup> One of the most recent accounts can be found in Fritz Strich's *Goethe und die Weltliteratur* (Bern, 1946). Strich has devoted a special chapter to the 'socializing power of America' as one of the stimulating forces from foreign sources that affected Goethe's creative works. In this connection Strich tells again how, in return for a collection of minerals he had received from Cogswell, Goethe felt obliged to do something for the progress of arts and sciences in America by presenting a number of his own writings to a public library in New England.

It was Cogswell who suggested the Harvard College Library as beneficiary to Goethe, who until then evidently did not know much

<sup>15</sup> For a bibliographical record up to 1913 see Karl Goedeke, *Grundriss zur Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung*, 3rd ed. by Edmund Goetze, Vol. IV, Pts. II-IV (Dresden, 1910-13). The Goethe-Cogswell correspondence, carefully annotated, was published by Mackall in the *Goethe-Jahrbuch*, Vol. XXV (1904), with supplementary material in *Goethes Gespräche*, ed. Woldemar von Biedermann (Leipzig, 1909-11). The correspondence is partly quoted also in the very recently published Goethe anthologies *Goethe's World*, ed. Berthold Biermann (New York, 1949), and Ludwig Lewisohn, *Goethe, the Story of a Man* (New York, 1949), without any new material.

about Harvard.<sup>16</sup> In the present letter Goethe asks whether he should address 'the long promised consignment of my poetic and scientific works which I am presenting with much pleasure to your national institution [vaterländisches Institut], so that a memorial to me may be set up also across the sea.' Cogswell duly replied, from Dresden, on August 8, in fitting terms and with the necessary directions. Goethe then dispatched the books, on August 11, sending at the same time a letter to Harvard which unfortunately has been missing from the records of the Corporation for many years.<sup>17</sup> Mackall, however, with perhaps pardonable enthusiasm, regarded the present letter to Cogswell, at the time he presented it to Harvard, shortly before publishing it in the Putnam *Festschrift*, as 'apparently the best possible substitute.'<sup>18</sup>

In another portion of this same letter Goethe states that he is enclosing a diploma for 'Mr Parker Cleaveland in Boston.' This diploma was actually destined for Professor Parker Cleaveland of Bowdoin College, who had presented a work of his to the Mineralogical Society of Jena, of which Goethe was president. It is interesting to learn that this diploma was very recently rediscovered in the Bowdoin College Library.<sup>19</sup>

Among other letters in the group of seven listed, one may perhaps single out the earliest, to Michael Salom, who was a physician at Padua.<sup>20</sup> Salom had sent some samples of a translation of *Werthers Leiden* into Italian to Goethe in the autumn of 1781, and this letter is Goethe's answer to him. The translation was not completed until 1788, when it appeared in Venice together with an Italian translation

<sup>16</sup> Cogswell's answer to Goethe's offer was written in English; a German translation of it was recently included in the anthology *Eine Welt schreibt an Goethe*, ed. R. K. Goldschmidt-Jentner (Kampen-Sylt, 1937), pp. 295-296.

<sup>17</sup> The German text of the letter, as given for instance by Strich, *op. cit.*, p. 189, and in the Weimar edition, is not printed from the original but from a retranslation of the English translation preserved in the Corporation records.

<sup>18</sup> Unpublished letter to William Coolidge Lane of 13 June 1928, in the Harvard College Library. Untiring in his search for Goethe material, Mackall had been forced to print this Goethe letter only from varying scribal drafts preserved in the Weimar archives. Both in the letter to Lane and in the *Festschrift* account he fittingly celebrates the triumphal rediscovery of the original. For Mackall himself see William H. Mackall, *A Character Sketch of the Late Leonard Leopold Mackall* (Savannah, Ga., 1938).

<sup>19</sup> See T. A. Riley, 'Goethe and Bowdoin College,' *Bowdoin Alumnus*, XXXIII, 3 (May 1949).

<sup>20</sup> See Cecil Roth, *The History of the Jews in Italy* (Philadelphia, 1946), p. 432.



of Goethe's letter.<sup>21</sup> The present original, together with no. 3, to von Donop, came to Harvard with the James Freeman Clarke papers in February 1946. A second letter to Riemer, no. 5, and a part of the same collection as the Riemer letter transcribed above, refers to Goethe's *Campagne in Frankreich*, shortly before the manuscript was sent to the printers Frommann, and shows that Riemer helped the author with this work also. Of the remaining letters in the group, dealing with official or semi-official matters largely in the author's capacity as a public servant, no. 2 formed a part of the Amy Lowell bequest received in 1925, no. 6 was presented by Dr Harris Kennedy in January 1943, and no. 7 was acquired in March 1945 in the Fuller collection of autographs.

In addition to these letters, the autograph collections at Harvard include certain other original Goetheana specially deserving of mention. There is, for instance, a copy of Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea* (Stuttgart und Tübingen, J. G. Cotta, 1814) bearing the following inscription in Goethe's hand on the flyleaf opposite the title:

Des Herren  
Grafen Henkel  
Hochgeb

zu freundlicher  
Erinnerung  
an Wiesbaden

d. 3 Aug 1814      J W v Goethe

Goethe stayed in Wiesbaden for several weeks on his first journey to the Rhine and Main regions, arriving there on 29 July 1814, and Count Henkel was one of the many noblemen with whom he then associated. The little book in small octavo, nicely bound in French morocco, but a bit too closely cut, was also a part of the Amy Lowell bequest.

Further, there is a brief manuscript note, written by the secretary John, but signed by Goethe in a rather trembling hand, which bears the date 10 January 1832, only about ten weeks before the poet's death. The note, possibly directed to the Weimar Library, requests copies of newspapers giving reports of the excavations at Pompeii. It was presented to Harvard by Professor George Benson Weston in December 1947.

<sup>21</sup> A. de Gubernatis, 'Goethe in Italien,' *Deutsche Revue*, Jahrgang XXVIII (1903), I, 224 ff.

On deposit are two manuscript distichs mounted on a sheet of paper which bears a certification by Goethe that the handwriting is that of Herder: 'Herders Handschrift, bezeugt von Goethe Weimar März 1825.' The exact date of this certificate was the 19th of March, as can be ascertained from a Goethe letter so dated (to Friedrich von Müller) originally accompanying the certificate and published in the Weimar edition (Abt. II, Vol. 39).<sup>22</sup>

It is hoped that this brief account has served in some measure to show the significance of the Goethe autographs at Harvard. Placed on exhibition in conjunction with the many ceremonies throughout the Western world now paying tribute to Goethe, they can moreover bear impressive witness to the fact that the cultural heritage symbolized in the spirit of Goethe is indeed alive in America.

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<sup>22</sup> Certain Goethe items at Harvard of minor importance have not been mentioned in this paper; discussions of some of them by Mackall will be found in the *Goethe-Jahrbuch*, XXIV (1903), 19, and XXV (1904), 254.

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