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Founded by Edward C. Hegeler

THE HOROSCOPE OF GOETHE.
(See pages 321-326.)

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GOETHE IN THE CAMPAIGNA AT ROME.

(After a painting by Tischbein.)

Frontispiece to The Open Court.
THE LIFE OF GOETHE.*

BY THE EDITOR.

SINCE it is not our intention to add a new biography of Goethe to those which have heretofore appeared, we will here simply recapitulate for our readers in a few words the chief events of Goethe's life, and point out the personages who at one time or another played a part in it.

Goethe was the first and only son of Johann Caspar Goethe, a Frankfort magistrate with the title Counselor, and of his wife, Catharine Elizabeth, née Textor. The child was named Johann Wolfgang, after his maternal grandfather Textor.

In his autobiography "Truth and Fiction," the poet speaks of his horoscope which he describes thus:

"On August 28, 1749, at midday as the clock was striking twelve, I came into the world at Frankfort on the Main. The position of the heavenly bodies was propitious: the sun stood in the sign of the Virgin and culminated for the day; Jupiter and Venus looked on the sun with a friendly eye and Mercury not adversely, while Saturn and Mars remained indifferent; the moon alone, just full, exerted the power of its reflection all the more as it had then reached its planetary hour. It was opposed, therefore, to my birth which could not be accomplished until this hour was passed."

* This sketch of Goethe's life does not pretend to novelty or completeness. Rather, on the contrary, it is based on well-established and verifiable sources and, while omitting indifferent details, contains all that is essential, at the same time including most of those portraits and illustrations which have become classical in connection with Goethe. Thus it may serve the busy reader as a synopsis for his information which may be quickly read and will prove useful for reference. The present article may be compared with prior articles on Goethe and his works.

1 The passages here quoted from Goethe's autobiography are mostly after the translation of John Oxenford, with occasional minor alterations.
Ralph Shirley, the editor of *The Occult Review* and an astrologer by conviction, has investigated Goethe’s horoscope and points out that the poet’s description is not quite accurate. We reproduce Goethe’s nativity as he publishes it, the planetary positions being supplied by A. G. Pearce, and will quote Mr. Shirley’s comments on the same as follows:

“Goethe was born under the sign of the Scorpion—the night house of the planet Mars—as it is astrologically designated, and his dominant influences were Saturn and the Sun. The Sun is *hyleg* or life-giver in this horoscope owing to its meridional position, and would have warranted the prediction of a long life in spite of certain constitutional drawbacks.

“The mythological Saturn has the reputation of devouring his children at birth, and the fact that Goethe was born into the world “as dead” is more probably attributable to the closely ascending
position of the malefic planet than to the poet's rather fanciful suggestion of the effect of the (proximate) full Moon.

"Fortunately for him Goethe was not left entirely to the tender mercies of the planet Saturn, the Sun, Mercury and Venus all being notably elevated in his horoscope, the Sun (as he in this case correctly describes it) exactly culminating in the sign of the Virgin, and indicating thereby success and the "favor of princes." Venus occupied the mid-heaven in close opposition to Jupiter, a position which it hardly requires an astrologer to interpret, in the light of the
native’s life. Mercury was posited in the ninth house, the house of religion, philosophy and science—the mental trend, as one may say—in the ambitious sign Leo and was more or less loosely opposed by the malefic Uranus which holds rule in the third house, denoting

“brethren” and “near neighbors.” Mars, in its exaltation, Lord of the Ascendant and in trine with the Sun, occupies the second house, and in spite of its good aspects denies the accumulation of wealth.

*The native is an astrological expression for the individual whose horoscope is under discussion. Saturn culminated in conjunction with Venus at Lord Byron’s birth. It was in conjunction with Jupiter at the birth of Lord Beaconsfield and also of Lord Rosebery.*
"I do not think any astrologer worthy of the name could have looked twice at Goethe's horoscope without forecasting a high position and notable name. There are practically six planets angular\(^3\) (if we include Mercury, which has quite recently culminated). Jupiter occupies its own house (Pisces) and the Moon, Mars and Uranus are in exaltation. The sign rising, though a dangerous one, favors the attainment of fame and notoriety. The closely ascending position of Saturn recalls the observation of the eminent Frenchman

\[\text{THE GOETHE HOMESTEAD IN ARTERN ON THE UNSTRUT.}\]

on first seeing Goethe, "C'est un homme qui a eu beaucoup de chagrins." It also accounts for his periods of intense depression, his philosophic outlook and the aloofness of his intellectual temperament, and, in spite of his love of life (indicated by Venus culminating and Scorpio rising), the intense seriousness which characterized him.

"Saturn is \textit{par excellence} the philosopher's planet. Mentally it typifies deep thought and the serious point of view. Corresponding

\(^3\) To have many planets angular is considered one of the strongest testimonies of a notable name. The Sun and Moon are reckoned as "planets" astrologically.
to the Greek χρόνος (Time) it rules all such things as last and endure."

Goethe's father, born July 31, 1710, was the son of a tailor of Mansfeld who had settled in Frankfort. He in his turn was the son of a horseshoer, hailing from Artern on the Unstrut.

A picture is preserved of the home of Goethe's grandfather in Artern on the Unstrut. It shows a very simple building, but solidly constructed. The smithy appears to have been on the ground floor, and the living rooms above it on the second floor under the roof.

Goethe's mother, the daughter of Schultheiss (i. e., judge)
THE GOETHE HOUSE AT FRANKFORT AS IT LOOKED IN GOETHE'S CHILDHOOD.

Drawn by E. Büchner.
Johann Wolfgang Textor, was born in December, 1731. She was married to the Counselor Goethe on August 20, 1748.

Goethe had only one sister, Cornelia, who was born two years after him in December 1750. For details in regard to her personality and the relations between the brother and sister, see "Goethe's Relations to Women," *Open Court*, Jan. 1912, pp. 17-22.

During the Seven Years' War (1756 to 1763) young Wolfgang was an ardent admirer of Frederick the Great. French troops fighting against Prussia occupied Frankfort for some time, and the boy learned much through contact with the French, especially through Count Thorane, who was quartered in his parents' home.

We call this French officer "Thorane" although his real name was François de Théas, Comte de Thoranc. In his signatures the c was commonly misread for c, and even the regulations published over his own name bear the wrong spelling "Thorane." The mistake has been perpetuated in Goethe's work "Truth and Fiction," and through Goethe it became the established spelling so that the correct name scarcely identifies the man. Incidentally we will men-
tion that Thorane did not die in the West Indies as Goethe states, but returned to France and died there in 1794.

At the time of the French occupation young Goethe frequently visited the French theater in Frankfort and made the acquaintance of a French boy of his own age, the son of an actress.

The jolliest comrade of Goethe in Frankfort was a certain Johann Adam Horn. Goethe mentions his merry temperament in "Truth and Fiction" and characterizes him in these words:

"To begin with, the name of our friend Horn gave occasion for all sorts of jokes, and on account of his small figure he was always called Hörnchen, 'Little Horn.' He was, in fact, the smallest in the company. Of a stout but pleasing form, with a pug-nose and

mouth somewhat pouting, a swarthy complexion set off by little sparkling eyes, he always seemed to invite laughter. His little compact skull was thickly covered with curly black hair; his beard was prematurely blue; and he would have liked to let it grow, that, as a comic mask, he might always keep the company laughing. For the rest, he was neat and nimble, but insisted that he had bandy legs, which everybody granted, since he was bent on having it so, but about which many a joke arose; for, since he was in request as a very good dancer, he reckoned it among the peculiarities of the fair sex, that they always liked to see bandy legs on the floor. His cheerfulness was indestructible, and his presence at every meeting indispensable. We two kept more together because he was to follow me to the university; and he well deserves that I should mention
him with all honor, as he clung to me for many years with infinite love, faithfulness, and patience."

Goethe wrote some poetry in this first period of his life, but most of it he did not deem worthy of preservation; and what we, have, the "Poetical Thoughts on the Descent of Jesus Christ into Hell" (1765), is not very promising.

In the autumn of 1765 Goethe traveled to Leipsic where on October 19 he was enrolled at the university. His father wanted

him to study law in order to enable him to hold a position like himself in the municipality of the free city of Frankfort, but the young poet preferred the study of belles lettres, and went to Leipsic with the intention of mapping out his course according to his own inclinations. The professors to whom he made known his purpose with all self-assurance discouraged him in his zeal for a poetic career, and the result was a compromise by which he was to hear
lectures on philosophy and history of law and yet was free to attend Gellert's course in history of literature.

We cannot describe the significance and character of Gellert better than in the words of Goethe who says:

"The reverence and love with which Gellert was regarded by all young people was extraordinary. I called on him and was kindly received. Not tall of stature, delicate without being lank,—with gentle and rather pensive eyes, a very fine forehead, a nose aquiline but not too much so, an aristocratic mouth, a face of an agreeable oval—all made his presence pleasing and desirable. It cost some trouble to reach him. His two famuli appeared like priests who

![C. F. Gellert](image1)

![J. C. Gottsched](image2)

guard a sanctuary to which access is not permitted everybody nor at every time. Such a precaution was very necessary, for he would have sacrificed his whole time had he been willing to receive and satisfy all those who wished to become intimate with him.

"Gellert, in accordance with his pious feelings, had composed a system of ethics, which from time to time he publicly read, thus acquitting himself in an honorable manner of his duty to mankind. Gellert's writings had for a long time been the foundation of German moral culture, and every one anxiously wished to see that work printed; but as this was not to be done till after the good man's death, people thought themselves very fortunate to hear him deliver it himself in his lifetime. At such times the philosophical lecture
From Haid's mezzotint after the painting by Anton Graff.
room was crowded; and the beautiful soul, the pure will, and the interest of the noble man in our welfare, his exhortations, warnings and entreaties, uttered in a somewhat hollow and mournful tone, made indeed an impression for the moment. But this did not last long, the less so as there were many scoffers who contrived to make us suspicious of this tender, and, as they thought, enervating, manner. I remember a Frenchman traveling through the town, who asked what were the maxims and opinions of the man who attracted such an immense concourse. When we had given him the necessary information, he shook his head and said smiling, 'Laissez le faire, il nous forme des dupes.'

"And in the same way good society which does not easily brook anything worthy, knew how to find occasion to spoil the moral influence which Gellert might have upon us....and so pulled about the good reputation of the excellent Gellert that, in order not to be mistaken about him, we became indifferent towards him and visited him no more; yet we always saluted him in our best manner when he came riding along on his gentle white horse. This horse the Elector of Saxony had sent him, to oblige him to take the exercise so necessary for his health,—a distinction for which he was not easily to be forgiven."
A translation of six hymns of Gellert, following mainly the translation of H. Stevens, was published in *The Monist* for January 1912.

Among the circle of Goethe's friends Behrisch was a dear companion to whom he dedicated some odes, while Johann Georg Schlosser, a man of distinction, afterwards became his brother-in-law. Some of the professors and their families were very kind to the young student, and Madame Böhme in particular, the wife of the professor of history and public law, did much to mold his taste, especially with regard to contemporary poetry of which she was a merciless critic. Finally he became so unsettled that, as he says in "Truth and Fiction,"

"I was afraid to write down a rhyme, however spontaneously it presented itself, or to read a poem, for I was fearful that it might please me at the time, and that perhaps immediately afterwards, like so much else, I should be forced to pronounce it bad."

He goes on to say:

"This uncertainty of taste and judgment disquieted me more
and more every day, so that at last I fell into despair. I had brought with me those of my youthful labors which I thought the best, partly because I hoped to get some credit by them, partly that I might be able to test my progress with greater certainty. However, after some time and many struggles, I conceived so great a contempt for my labors, begun and ended, that one day I burnt up poetry and prose, plans, sketches, and projects, all together on the kitchen hearth, and threw our good old landlady into no small fright and anxiety by the smoke which filled the whole house."

The Director of the Academy of Arts, Adam Friedrich Oeser,
DISCUSSING RELIGIOUS QUESTIONS WITH THE DRESDEN SHOEMAKER.
had a strong influence on Goethe's artistic taste. We must regard it as a distinction for the young Goethe that he had admission to the family circle of Professor Oeser and became acquainted with the Frau Professor and their daughters. It was to Fräulein Friederike Elisabeth Oeser that Goethe inscribed the collection of songs which he wrote while in Leipsic.

In this period of his life Goethe wrote "The Whim of the Lover" (Die Laune des Verliebten) and "The Fellow Culprits" (Die Mit-

![STRASSBURG.](image)

Birds-eye view from an old hymn-book.

schuldigen), neither of which is worth reading, and in Goethe's own interest this would have better been burned with the rest of his youthful effusions; but his little love ditties (Leipziger Liederbuch, 1769) which date from this period indicate that something better was to be expected of him in the future.

We must not forget to mention Goethe's excursion to Dresden which he undertook in order to acquaint himself with the art treasures of the Saxon capital. It is characteristic of Goethe that he al-
ways took an interest in original personalities, whether of a high or lowly position in life. A fellow lodger who was a student of theology at Leipsic, had a friend in Dresden, a poor cobbler whose letters exhibited a peculiar religious disposition and good common sense based upon a serene conception of life. To use Goethe's own words he was "a practical philosopher and unconscious sage." Having arrived in Dresden Goethe visited the pious cobbler and his wife, and at once made friends with both of them by entering into their views of life. He stayed with them during his sojourn in Dresden and describes vividly the conversation with his religious friends.
The end of Goethe's stay in Leipsic was darkened by a serious illness which began with a violent hemorrhage of the lungs. As soon as he was able to make the journey he left the university, August 28, 1768, for his home in Frankfort.

When he had entirely recovered from his illness, his father decided to send him to the University of Strassburg.

At the end of the eighteenth century Strassburg was considerably smaller than now, while its fortifications were much more extensive. They have fallen since the German occupation in 1871. Though the city belonged to France, the life of the inhabitants was
German in a marked degree. Only the government was French, and so French was the official language used in documents.

Goethe became a student at the Strassburg University on his birthday, August 28, 1770. Here he became acquainted with a number of interesting men. First among them we mention Herder, a few years his senior, who awakened in him a deep interest in the problems of life, notably the origin of language. Through Goethe’s influence Herder was later on called to Weimar in the capacity of Superintendent General of the church of the duchy. Another friend of Goethe’s during his stay at Strassburg was Lerse, a brave and honest young man, whose name is immortalized in Goethe’s first drama as one of the characters of the play. Still others are the actuary Salzmann, the poet Lenz and Jung-Stilling, a self-educated author of remarkable talent and a pious Christian.

Johann Heinrich Jung (1740-1817) was originally a charcoal burner, then a tailor, then a village schoolmaster and finally under great tribulation attained his aim to study medicine. Counting himself among the members of the pious sect called Die Stillen
im Lande, "the Quiet-in-the-Land," he adopted the surname "Stilling." In spite of their marked diversity in character Goethe showed a great interest and even admiration for Jung-Stilling's naive piety and simple-minded faith.

The Strassburg Cathedral made a deep impression on Goethe and induced him to compare architecture with other arts, especially music. His acquaintance with, and love of, the Gothic style taught him that beauty is not limited to one expression and that besides the art of ancient Greece there are other possibilities of developing classical beauty.

It was during the year of Goethe's student-life at Strassburg
that his romance with Friederike Brion of Senenheim took place. So dearly did he cherish the memory of this idyllic courtship that the reader of his autobiography, written when the poet was over sixty years of age, still feels the throb of his heart in the description.

On August 6, 1771, Goethe underwent the ordeal of his rigorosum, an examination for the degree of Doctor of Laws; but history is silent on the result. Whether he passed or not is not known. One thing only is certain: the incident plays no part in his after life. He is neither congratulated by his friends or relatives on his graduation, nor does he ever claim, let alone use, the title, nor has he ever been addressed as Doctor. The university records which could decide the problem are no longer in existence. All this makes it not impossible, nay even probable, that he actually failed.

It is not uncommon that great men are not made for examinations, they show off to better advantage in life; and on the other hand professors are frequently mistaken in their opinion of a young man.

Besides some pretty poems inspired by Friederike Brion, Goethe wrote his Röslein auf der Haiden in Strassburg, and first conceived the plan of Faust.

Having returned to Frankfort August 1771, Goethe finished the first draft of Götz von Berlichingen within six weeks, and had it published in the fall of 1772; it at once established its author's fame.

Still in the year 1771, on a trip to Darmstadt, Goethe became acquainted with a circle of friends among whom we note Caroline Flachsland, a lady of good education who was engaged to be married to Herder. There he met also Johann Heinrich Merck (1741-1791) a questor in the war department who was easily the keenest critic of the age, and had been drawn to the capital of Hesse-Darmstadt by the cultured Landgravin Catharine. Merck was attracted to Goethe and became one of his most intimate friends. He never hesitated to criticize him severely whenever he was dissatisfied with the poet, and Goethe was wise enough to heed his advice, nor did he take offence when Merck would say on some occasion: "You must not write such stuff again!" Merck's character contributed some of the satirical features with which Goethe endowed his Mephistopheles. His life came to a tragic end on June 27, 1791, when he committed suicide.

Goethe loved to walk great distances, and on a tramp from
Frankfort to Darmstadt in 1771 he composed the poem *Wanderers Sturmlied*.

In the spring (May 1772) Goethe went to Wetzlar, a small town where an imperial court of justice had been established. It was customary in those days for young Frankfort lawyers to attend these courts before they were admitted to the bar in their own city.

Leaving Wetzlar September 11, 1772, Goethe returned to

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Frankfort and settled there as an attorney at law. Soon afterwards he heard of the death of Jerusalem, one of his Leipsic student friends. Carl Wilhelm Jerusalem was born March 21, 1747, at Wolfenbüttel, and in 1771 had been made secretary of the sub-delegation of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. He suffered from melancholia and, having begun to doubt the historicity of the New Testament, had lost his comfort in the Christian religion. But the climax of his despair was reached because of his affection for Frau Herdt,
CARL WILHELM JERUSALEM AS A CHILD.

the wife of his friend, the Ambassador of the Palatine Electorate. He borrowed a pair of pistols from Kestner under pretense of making a journey and shot himself in the night of October 30, 1772. Lessing acknowledged with unstinted praise the extraordinary reasoning power and deep sentiment of Jerusalem and raised the best memorial to him by publishing his "Philosophical Essays."

Jerusalem's death, together with his own interest in Charlotte Buff, suggested to Goethe the plan of his novel, "The Sorrows of Young Werther," which he wrote in 1774 within four weeks and had it published at once. It created a sensation throughout Germany, and though it was severely criticized it permanently established his fame as an author.

Though we recognize the unusual ability which Goethe showed in this book, we will grant that its influence on the younger genera-

![View of Wetzlar from the South](image)

"By the conceited man—by him
I'm dangerous proclaimed;
The wight uncouth, who cannot swim,
By him the water's blamed.
That Berlin pack—priest-ridden lot—
Their ban I am not heeding;
And he who understands me not
Ought to improve in reading."—Tr. by P. C.
WERther'S Lotta.

'By Kaulbach.
While the "Sorrows of Young Werther" may be regarded as liable to criticism, we ought to mention that the book received quite unmerited condemnation at the hands of Christoph Friedrich Nicolai, a publisher and author who at that time possessed considerable influence in Germany. Nicolai, born March 18, 1733, at Berlin, was a leading representative of the eighteenth-century rationalism, but he was narrow in his views and his prosaic nature had no sense for religious mysticism or any poetical enthusiasm. He did not even understand the psychical aspect of Werther's sentimentalism and condemned his melancholy as simply due to costiveness. In contrast to the "Sorrows of Young Werther," Nicolai published a parody, "The
CHRISTOPH FRIEDRICH NICOLAI,
Haid’s engraving after a drawing of Chodowiecki.
Joys of Young Werther,” for which Chodowiecki engraved a title vignette. Goethe expresses himself about this satire in his “Truth and Fiction” as follows: “‘The Joys of Young Werther,’ by which Nicolai distinguishes himself, gave us an opportunity for several jokes. This man, otherwise good, meritorious and learned, had begun to keep down and put aside everything that did not suit his conception, which being mentally very limited he regarded as genuine and the only one. Against me also he had to try his hand, and his brochure soon came into our hands. The very delicate vignette of Chadowiecki gave me great pleasure, for I esteem this artist beyond measure. The production itself, however, was cut out of coarse cloth, which the common sense of his surroundings took great pains to manufacture most crudely.” Goethe answered Nicolai’s criticism in the same tone by a humorous quatrain entitled “At Werther’s Grave,” in which a visitor to the cemetery where the ashes of the unhappy lover repose declares that he would still be alive if he had enjoyed a good digestion.

[to be concluded.]