

**THE GHOST-SEER! IN
TWO VOLUMES.
VOLUME I**

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The Ghost-Seer! In Two Volumes. Volume I by Friedrich Schiller

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FRIEDRICH SCHILLER

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**THE
GHOST-SEER.**

THE
GHOST-SEER!

FROM THE GERMAN

OF

SCHILLER.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET;
AND BELL & BRADFUTE, EDINBURGH.

1849.

INTRODUCTION.

LIFE AND WRITINGS OF SCHILLER.

"FREDERICK SCHILLER was the son of an officer in the Bavarian army, who subsequently attained the rank of major, and served in the campaigns for the disputed succession. Frederick was born at Marbach, a little town in Wurtemberg, on the 10th day of November, 1759, and was finally bred to the surgical profession. His early education was not very favourable for the development of those great powers which he afterwards discovered, and which burst forth with sudden and impetuous vigour at the age of nineteen, as if indignant at the scholastic discipline and restraints which had been imposed upon them. Schiller pursued his studies at the public seminary of Ludwigsburg, and for several years he went through the regular examinations preparatory to the clerical profession. As he grew older, however, he performed his tasks with less docility and alacrity; he imbibed no very deep regard for the classics as they were there inculcated; while the scholastic forms and regulations proved still more irksome to him. Even at that early age, he began to discover the peculiar bias of his genius: he was fond of walking, reading, and studying alone; he sought Nature in her loneliest scenes; and would stand gazing on the heavens, or watching the progress of the storm. He continued at this seminary upwards of six years; the most irksome and unprofitable, according to his own admission, that he ever spent. He was compelled to drudge through all the preliminary forms and examinations, indiscriminately insisted upon in the Stutgard system, under the patronage and dictation of the

reigning Duke. In this wretched servitude he went through a course of legal study, which he was only permitted to relinquish in favour of that of medicine, to which he was little more adapted or attached. Instead of taking down notes of the lectures, he was secretly perusing Shakspeare; and procured small editions of Klopstock, Herder, Goethe, Garve, and Lessing, the father of the modern drama of Germany. Early inspired by a perusal of them, he produced an epic poem, like our own Pope, at the age of fourteen; which he as judiciously, however, destroyed.

“ In his second effort, he at once assumed a high rank as one of the popular dramatists of the country. This was his tragedy of ‘The Robbers,’ composed at the age of nineteen; and almost appallingly impressed with the most striking characteristics of a daring, enthusiastic, and impatient spirit. Wild and extravagant as it must be allowed to be, it was the production, so to say, of a future great writer—the luxurious promise of a glorious harvest—the struggle of a lofty mind at issue with its destiny, exhibiting the whole of its gigantic, but untutored strength. The reputation obtained by this, and two subsequent pieces—‘The Conspiracy of Fiesco,’ and ‘Intrigue and Love,’—soon brought Schiller advantageous offers from the theatre of Mannheim, one of the best conducted in Germany. During his engagement here, he projected a translation of Shakspeare’s plays, though the tragedy of Macbeth was the only one which he presented to his countrymen in a new dress; but he judiciously abandoned the undertaking, and entered upon the subject of Don Carlos, which he borrowed from the French of the Abbé St. Réal. At the same period he was engaged in a variety of minor works; one of which was a theatrical journal, in which several scenes of his ‘Don Carlos’ first made their appearance. Dramatic essays and poetical effusions, published in the same journal, likewise occupied much of his time. Though commenced in his twenty-fifth year, this tragedy was not completed until long afterwards; nor did it appear entire until 1794, when he was more than thirty-five years of age. Nearly at the same time he began his series of ‘Philosophical Letters,’ which, throughout, display singular ardour and boldness of

enquiry on a great diversity of topics. Schiller now became one of the most popular writers of his age, and he daily received gratifying proofs of it, both of a public and private kind. He himself relates one which he considered the most pleasing of all—a present of two beautiful miniature portraits from the fair originals, accompanied by a very elegant pocket-book, and letters filled with the most flattering compliments to his genius.

“ Upon closing his engagements at Manheim, Schiller took up his residence at Leipsic, where he became acquainted with a number of eminent contemporaries, among whom were Professor Huber, Zollikofer, Hiller, Oeser, and the celebrated actor Reinike. Soon after his arrival, finding himself somewhat disappointed in the extent of his literary views, he had serious intentions of adopting the medical profession, to which his final academic studies had been directed; but this idea was again abandoned, and he resumed his literary occupations with increased ardour and activity. Though ranking among the chief ornaments of his country as a poet and a dramatist, he still sighed for fresh fields of enterprise, for which he was every way qualified, and in which he ultimately gathered more brilliant and unfading laurels. At no period did he produce more important works, than during his residence at Dresden. It was there he first began to devote his nights, as well as a large portion of the day, to intellectual labour,—a habit which no constitution could long withstand. Besides the interruptions he was so frequently liable to in the day, he was fond of spending his mornings in the woods, or upon the banks of the Elbe; sometimes sailing upon its bosom; sometimes wandering, with a book, in its solitary vicinity. He spent a portion of the evening in society; and then came the baneful night, invariably set apart for the most difficult and abstracted pursuits. It was thus he most probably laid the foundation of his subsequent maladies, and his premature decease. About the year 1787, he visited Weimar, in order to cultivate a personal acquaintance with some of his most celebrated contemporaries. He was there introduced to Wieland, already advanced in years, and to Herder; and such was the warm reception he met with, that he declared

his intention of fixing his residence at Weimar, then conspicuous for the number of its distinguished writers. Goethe was next added to the list of his acquaintance; but not, during some period at least, to that of his friends. Men of totally opposite minds and character, in a literary view, their first meeting is described as having been somewhat singular; by no means cordial and pleasing. Schiller being much younger, and of a reserved temper, was rather surprised, than attracted, by the perfect ease and openness, the versatility and extent of information, which Goethe's conversation exhibited; and declared, after the interview, that he and Goethe were cast in different moulds, that they lived in different worlds, and that it was almost impossible for them ever to understand, or become ultimately acquainted with each other. 'Time, however,' he concluded, 'will try.' It is gratifying to add, that they subsequently grew sincerely attached to each other, assisted in the same undertakings, and for some period, resided with each other. On Schiller's removal to Jena, where he succeeded Eichhorn in the professorship of history, he entered into a matrimonial connection with a lady of the name of Lengefeld, to whom he had some time before been attached. In a letter to one of his friends, he thus alludes to the event, many months afterwards:—'How different does life now begin to appear, seated at the side of a beloved wife, instead of being forsaken and alone, as I have so long been!'

"During his professorship, Schiller entered upon his history of the Thirty Years' War, a work which appeared in 1791. This is universally admitted to be his chief historical performance, no less in Germany than in other countries. A just comparison, however, can scarcely be instituted, his previous work upon the Netherlands having unfortunately never been carried to a conclusion. In the year 1791, he suffered a very severe attack upon his lungs, from which he with difficulty recovered, after it had greatly shattered his constitution. Still, with returning strength, he resumed his labours with equal ardour, and was never heard to utter a complaint. It was on his recovery, that Schiller, for the first time, studied the new Kantian doc-

trine, though it does not appear how far he proceeded through the labyrinths of the transcendental terminology.

"A number of productions, amongst which ranks the most finished specimen of his dramatic labours, 'Wallenstein,' followed his partial restoration to health. But the ardour and impetuosity with which he composed, and which was become too habitual to him for restraint, more especially in his lyric pieces, and his tragedies, brought on a dangerous relapse. All human aid, and human hope, proved alike in vain; and on the 9th day of May, 1805, his disorder reached its crisis, and Schiller, only in his forty-sixth year, had but a few hours to live.

"Early that morning he grew delirious; but soon this was observed gradually to subside, and he appeared to be settling into a deep slumber. In this state, after continuing during several hours, he awoke about four o'clock in the afternoon, with entire composure, and a perfect consciousness of his situation. His manner was firm and tranquil: he took a tender farewell of his friends and family; and on being asked how he felt, he replied, 'Only calmer and calmer.' He once spoke with a happy and lively air; 'Many things are now becoming clearer and clearer to me!' Soon afterwards he relapsed into deep sleep, became more and more insensible, though still calm, and in that state he almost imperceptibly expired.

"Schiller wrote but few prose fictions, though these few are enough to display the great powers he possessed. The 'Geisterseher,' of which the following is a translation, is the most important and most striking of its kind.*

This singular romance was written in Dresden, in which town Schiller became enamoured of a beautiful lady, who has been designated by some of his biographers as "Fraulein A——." The intercourse which subsisted between the poet and his charmer appears not to have been of the most reputable kind; but it is certain that, for a time, she held exclusive possession of his heart, and that she even influenced his writings. She was the original of the Princess Eboli, in his play of Don Carlos; and it is probable that his passion for her might have suggested that important

* Roscoe's German Novelists, vol. III.