

**LIFE OF GOTTHOLD  
EPHRAIM LESSING**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649633661

Life of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing by T. W. Rolleston

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**T. W. ROLLESTON**

**LIFE OF GOTTHOLD  
EPHRAIM LESSING**



L I F E  
OF  
GOTTHOLD EPHRAIM LESSING.

*Thomas*  
*William Hays*  
BY  
T. WILKINSON ROLLESTON

---

LONDON

WALTER SCOTT, 24, WARWICK LANE

1889

*(All rights reserved.)*

Exchange  
Library  
Univ. of Western  
Ontario

## NOTE.

---

ALL the sources from which the materials for this account of Lessing's life have been drawn cannot be conveniently enumerated here; but among those which have been of special use to me, I may mention the biographies of Heinrich Düntzer and Erich Schmidt, and the critical studies of Kuno Fischer and Victor Cherbulicz.

To the English biographies of Mr. James Sime and Miss Helen Zimmern my thanks are also due, if this work shall be judged, within its own narrower limits, to be not unworthy of these predecessors.

T. W. R.



# CONTENTS.



## CHAPTER I

	PAGE
German literature after the Thirty Years' War ; first clear signs of recuperation ; Gottsched ; the Swiss ; Wieland, Klopstock, Winckelmann, and Lessing ; Lessing's birth, January 22, 1729, and parentage ; school in Kamenz ; Heinitz and the drama ; preparation for St. Afra . . . . .	11

## CHAPTER II

St. Afra ; excellent features in its system ; its masters ; Lessing's early literary productions ; his character and gifts ; second Silesian war touches Meissen : Frederick the Great in Meissen ; disorganization of the school ; Lessing's desire to leave ; at last granted ; his farewell speech, June 30, 1746 . . . . .	19
--	----

## CHAPTER III.

Lessing in Leipzig as candidate in theology ; new problems ; has to make himself "galant," and does it ; professors in Leipzig ; Frau Neuber and the stage ; Lessing's enthusiasm for it ; his fellow-enthusiast ; purpose and intellect in their passion ; his introduction to authorship by Mylius ; repugnance for the "seraphic school" ; abandonment of theology ; "The Young Scholar" ; anger of his parents ; winter journey to Kamenz ; success of his first play . . . . .	27
---	----

## CHAPTER IV.

Lessing's appearance and behaviour, changes produced by "Paris-on-the-Pleiss" ; reconciliation with his family, and debts paid ; return to Leipzig ; student of medicine ; collapse of Leipzig theatre ; Lessing in difficulties again ; hope from Berlin ; goes to Wittenberg and has to stay there ; fresh dissensions with his parents ; his letters to them ; "The Old Maid" and Letter to Herr Maspurg ; <i>Theatrical Contributions</i> ; six plays by Lessing announced in Jena journals ; "The Hermit" ; connection with	
--	--



	PAGE
Voltaire, and proof of Lessing's growing reputation as a writer . . . . .	38
CHAPTER V.	
"The Freethinker"; "The Jews," Lessing's first stroke at tyrannical prejudices; "Henzi"; influence of Shakspeare and the English stage now perceptible; tragedy still withering under ascendancy of rhymed alexandrines; Lessing and the <i>Vossische Zeitung</i> ; his first critical campaign; determines to withdraw to Wittenberg; quarrel with Voltaire . . . . .	49
CHAPTER VI.	
Second residence in Wittenberg; life of quiet study there; the Epigram; "Magister"; Gottlob S. Nicolai; Lange's Horace; Nicolai's proposal to blackmail Lange; Lessing's answer; Prof. Jöcher: studies in the history of the Reformation; Vindication of Lemnius; return to Berlin, ripe for serious authorship . . . . .	55
CHAPTER VII.	
Second residence in Berlin; departure of Myllus; his death; Lessing's new friends; Mendelssohn; the "Proctophilosoph"; first volume of Lessing's "Writings"; his lyrical poetry, did it contain any promise of the new renaissance of poetry? fables and epigrams; Lessing's theories of these forms of composition; second (prose) volume of "Writings"; controversy with Lange; the <i>Theatrical Library</i> ; third volume of "Writings," the "Vindications"; fourth volume of "Writings"; translation; meets Gleim and Kleist; grows tired of Berlin; creative activity resumed; he gives Germany its first <i>tragédie bourgeoise</i> ; Goethe's remark on "Sara"; its first performance; "Pope a Metaphysician"; departure for Leipzig, October, 1755 . . . . .	60
CHAPTER VIII.	
Return to Leipzig; engagement with Winkler; visit to Kamenz; beginning of journey with Winkler; outbreak of the Seven Years' War; Leipzig again; friendship with Kleist; breach with Winkler; distress and embarrassment; the "Prussian Grenadier"; the "Prussian Officer"; "Emilia Galotti"; ancient heroic poetry of Germany; departure of Lessing and Kleist from Leipzig . . . . .	76
CHAPTER IX.	
Third residence in Berlin; collaboration with Ramler; "Doctor Faust"; Logau; Lessing's patriotism;	

CONTENTS.

9

origin of the *Litteraturbriefe*; second critical campaign; death of Kleist; study of Sophocles: "Philoctas"; Diderot and *le genre sérieux*; Lessing's indebtedness to him; advice to his brother Karl how to become a good dramatist; Berlin plundered; Lessing leaves Berlin, November, 1760; secretary to Taubertzen . . . . . 85

PAGE

CHAPTER X.

Lessing in Breslau; Faro; the Pastor in difficulties; Lessing's charities; collects a library; his religious development; study of Spinoza and the Fathers; peace of Hubertsberg; severe illness, "I begin to be a man"; "Minna v. Barnhelm"; the "Laocoon"; leaves Taubertzen's service; success of action against Winkler; what next? a "bird on the roof" . . . . . 95

CHAPTER XI.

Candidate for librarianship in Berlin; Frederick's rude rejection of him; publication of the "Laocoon"; Goethe's description of its effect; production of "Minna"; engagement at Hamburg; publishing enterprise with Bode; compelled to sell his library; the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*; failure of the Hamburg National Theatre; controversy with Klotz; "How the Ancients represented death"; prospects in Vienna; liberty of speech in Vienna and Berlin; Vienna prospects illusive, and Lessing in great straits; rescue at last; Wolfenbüttel; his residence at Hamburg a pleasant and profitable one; friendships he had made there; Eva König . . . . . 111

CHAPTER XII.

Wolfenbüttel, its library; the Hereditary Prince of Brunswick; literary circle in Brunswick; treasures of the Wolfenbüttel Library; Berengarius's answer to Lanfranc; Lessing and the Rationalists; death of the Pastor; betrothal to Eva König; new edition of Lessing's lyrics; his own judgment of them; his treatise on the Epigram; "Emilia Galotti"; its performance; the "Wolfenbüttel Contributions"; money difficulties; tempting proposals of the Prince, their non-fulfilment; Lessing's indignation, and journey to Vienna; Lessing in Vienna; hope of union with Eva; his reception from Court and populace; travelling companion to young Prince of Brunswick; journey to Italy in 1775; disappointment and anxiety; return to Brunswick; explanations with the Hereditary Prince, conducted in "broad German" on Lessing's part; final settlement

	PAGE
of his position ; preparation of the Reimarus Fragments for publication ; edition of Jerusalem's essays ; marriage with Eva . . . . .	132
CHAPTER XIII.	
Lessing's home-life ; Freemasonry, Lessing's connection with it, " Ernst and Falk " ; " The Education of the Human Race " ; religious parties of Lessing's day ; his effect on them ; death of Eva, January 10, 1778 . . . . .	151
CHAPTER XIV.	
The " Fragments " of Reimarus ; their significance ; Lessing's publication of them ; his <i>Gegensätze</i> ; replies to Reimarus and Lessing ; Goeze and anti-Goeze . . . . .	162
CHAPTER XV.	
The civil power aids Goeze ; Lessing defies it ; end of the controversy, its results, manner in which Lessing had waged it ; epoch-making works which it produced ; the " New Hypothesis " ; Lessing's religion ; visit to Hamburg ; preparation of " Nathan " . . . . .	171
CHAPTER XVI.	
Announcement of " Nathan " ; public interest in it ; " Nathan " published ; a <i>Tendenzstück</i> ; its tendency, whither ? a bad drama but a noble poem . . . . .	179
CHAPTER XVII.	
New projects, nothing more finished ; the philosopher and his dog ; death of the Duke ; Daveson ; bigoted animosity to Lessing, calumnies about him ; friends of the rising generation ; Jacobi ; Lessing's philosophic views ; Spinoza ; Leibnitz ; conversations with Jacobi ; what makes the true worth of a man ? . . . . .	190
CHAPTER XVIII.	
Visit to Gleim ; <i>ἔν καὶ πᾶν</i> ; Lessing is restless and ill ; visit to Hamburg ; threat of the Protestant Estates ; the Duke stands by Lessing ; signs of reaction, " the scoundrels ! " farewell to Mendelssohn ; increasing feebleness ; last illness ; death of Lessing, February 15, 1781 ; conclusion . . . . .	202
INDEX . . . . .	211