

Johann Friedrich Heigelin, M. A. 1765-1845

Master of Arts Heigelin worked as pastor of Geradstetten only for a short time. He moved here in the Spring of 1811. However, already in November of that year he had to leave the pastoral service for health reasons. After living for ten years as a free lance writer in Stuttgart, he thought again of the beautiful Rems Valley, returning to live out his golden years here in our community. Now we wish to preserve the memory of his life and works as a writer, and author of one of the most commonly used foreign word dictionaries, as well as his affectionate travel writings.

His Life

Johann Friedrich Heigelin, also know as Heugelin, pastor and author, was born in Stuttgart. He came from a well-to-do family. His father was a goldsmith, his Uncle Christian a rich banker and diplomat. In Sigel's Pastoral History his vitae are set down in plain terms:

M Heigelin, Johann Friedrich

1764 born 16 Nov. in Stuttgart

1784 Master of Arts in Tuebingen

1800 -1810 Pastor in Herrenalb

1811 Pastor in Geradstetten

Left his post because of ill heath

1820 Receives the title, on application, "Professor of the German Language"

1845 died 9 Nov. In Geradstetten

married to Luise nee Stritter, divorced Nov. 1812

After the short time of only a few months in Geradstetten, he left the pastoral service. He moved to Stuttgart and worked there as a nominal professor. Ten years later he returned and married the young daughter of the "Crown" innkeeper, Sicher. He died an 81 year-old pensioner in Geradstetten.

In Stuttgart as a schoolboy he attended the gymnasium, and after that seminaries in Denkendorf and Maulbronn. Following these he studied philosophy and theology at the University of Tuebingen, leaving in 1787. Already there in his examination marks "...Scriptio non difficilis," a hint of his writing abilities is to be found. Two years later he took over a post in Graubuenden [a canton of Switzerland, including Chur] as Court Administrator. To this four-year stay we owe his charming description of the Swiss canton in his book, "Letter about Graubuenden," published by the House Cotta.

Following this he spent six years in Milan in a similar post. Here he also was active in writing, the House Veladini publishing his "Moral Paragraphs from Seneca." In 1798 he settled in Naples, taking a post as Consulate Secretary to his uncle, the Danish Counsel

General and banker, Christian Heigelin, the proprietor of a famous merchant house. Only one year later he was forced to flee Naples suddenly due to political circumstances. The Kingdom of Naples broke apart under the assault of revolutionaries supported by French troops.

After his return to his native country, he endeavored to obtain a post as a pastor. He worked next for half a year as an assistant pastor in Hegenlohe, and then was assigned the pastorate in Herrenalb. He spent ten years here in the Black Forest. In the Spring of 1811 he took over the pastor post in Geradstetten, but then retired for health reasons in November of that year. He moved back to his hometown of Stuttgart and devoted himself to literary studies. Here he made another public appearance with his work "*Dankgedicht auf den Voelkerfrieden*." [Thanksgiving Poem on the Freedom of Man] The occasion of this work was the battle of Leipzig, the victory of the allies over Napoleon.

The following years were devoted to work on his "*Allgemeinen Fremdwörterbuch*" [General Foreign Dictionary] whose first edition appeared from the House Osiander in Tuebingen. The success of this work induced him to apply for the title "Professor of the German Language," which he was awarded. We learn this from a newspaper notice in the "*Schwäebischen Chronik*" of 1820.

28 Oct. *Schwaben*

Be it known that on the 22nd of this month, resigned Pastor Heigelin of Geradstetten was awarded upon application the title Professor of the German Language.

At this time he also made the decision to return again to Geradstetten, and his successor Pastor Wittich tells us the grounds for this decision: *Out of special love for this region he returned and as a 57 year-old widower married on 22 Oct. 1821 the 28 year old daughter of the deceased town council member and Crown innkeeper Sicher, she his present and true nurse and companion in his old age.*

At last peace apparently descended on his hitherto unsettled life, and the care of his young wife worked wonders for his energy level. He lived here at Oberhauptstrasse 9, which he inherited from his father-in-law Georg Adam Sicher.

Now he could devote himself to a translation of Dante's Divine Comedy, which appeared in 1736 in Blaubeuren. At the same time he revised his Foreign Word Dictionary, which came out in a much-expanded second edition in 1838. This was his last literary work. In the same year he was still able to celebrate the 50th Jubilee of his writing career, as Pastor Wittich relates: *Literary Jubilee Celebration of Prof. Heigelin. In this year of 1838 Prof. Dr. Heigelin's 50th Jubilee Celebrations took place here, his first small works having been published in 1788.*

His last years were overshadowed by increasing physical problems. He died on 9 Nov, 1845 in Geradstetten at the age of 81, and is buried here.

His Works

Letter on Graubuenden

Heigelin was not even 30 years old and already busy in Milan, as this book appeared from the publisher Cotta of Stuttgart. In 21 letters to a fictional friend, Heigelin colored in his impressions of Graubuenden, gained from his four year stay there, probably in Chur. They are still enjoyable to read today, and one is astonished at his gift for portraying such a lively picture of the Swiss canton.

In the middle of the 18th Century a general interest was awakened on the hitherto little known area of the Alps. For this reason Heigelin's Letter on Graubuenden must have had no lack of readers. Each of the letters dealt with a single theme; he reported on country and people, customs and manners, coloring in and weaving together the many strands of political and church relations of the Graubuenden folk. The reader is introduced to the area's rich geologic and botanic specialties. And this is always written in a lively, vivid language, with never a boring page.

So one letter deals with the *ladinische* language [a local language of Latin origin spoken in Graubueden]. He sketches the various dialects and offers as an example two verses of a love song, inserted in an account of a wonderful hike through the Bergell from Moloja to Solio, which today is still an unforgettable experience. And like Heigelin, the present-day traveler is again spoiled by the Rosengarten of Salis-Palastes.

In the tenth letter Heigelin is concerned with the economy and defense of the Canton of Graubuenden. He humorously sketches the peculiar conditions of the military in those times. We learn that in the 18th Century there were still Swiss "Landskneche [mercenaries]."

His account of units of measure is also interesting. All all over the old world, confusion ruled concerning measures. It is amazing to hear of "light" and "heavy" hundredweights [50 kg. = 100 German pounds], or that a pound of meat weights more than a pound of fish. In the chaos of monetary units one see a similarity to our Wuettemberg *Kreuzen* and *Gulden*, which also must have amused Heigelin.

Thanksgiving Song on the Freedom of Man 1814

One must remember the historical conditions of those times to appreciate the origins of this song. The immediate occasion was undoubtedly the People's Victory [*Voelkerschlact*] at Leipzig in Nov. 1813. It brought freedom from Napoleon's rule, which especially had brought so much hardship to Wuerttemberg. The old empire had been destroyed, Kaiser Franz II abdicated his throne, Prussians and Austrians were defeated by the Corsican. German poets like Kleist, E. M. Arndt and Fichte fought against the Napoleonic dictator with pamphlets and song. Schlegel and W. von Humboldt exhorted the people to their patriotic duty. Poems like Arndt's "What is the German Fatherland?" and Max von Schenkendorf's "Freedom, this I believe" stirred the

German stock. So after the victory at Leipzig, a wave of pride in the Fatherland arose in the land.

In these times Heigelin published his "Thanksgiving Song for the Freedom of Man." When one compares the verses of the German "Freedom Poets" with those of Heigelin's, we see the differences immediately. Heigelin avoided all nationalistic feelings, his only motive a summons to all the delivered peoples, to thank God for their freedom. The Stuttgart music publisher Eichele gave the assignment of writing accompanying melody to two unknown composers, who produced a festive, chorale styled melody in F-major, as well as a lively piano setting in G with introduction and conclusions in the style of the times.

General Foreign Dictionary for Germans

Three editions: 1819, 1838, and 1853

Foreign dictionaries have existed for a long time. The first such book was published by Simon Roth in Augsburg in 1571. The never ending title of this book was "*German dictionary, that is a collection of difficult, unfamiliar German, Greek, Latin, Hebraic, Waelser, and French, also other foreign words, which have come into the German language, and often bring error and confusion...*"

In the following two centuries many foreign words, particularly French, forced their way into our language. To read documents and records of these times, one must have some Latin vocabulary to understand them correctly.

Since these times many writers and language scholars took pains to establish a carefully cultivated German language, as free as possible from foreign words. So Jakob Grimm published his "German Grammar," in 1819, and in the same year Heigelin brought out his Foreign Dictionary. In his foreword, he goes at length into the reasons that induced him to publish the book. It was above all for the German language, "*to free it from defacements and defilements, which arose, according to his thinking, because Germany was the battleground and arena for all the [warring] peoples of Europe. Thus the usages of their rulers were pressed upon us in many lines, so that interpreters and dictionaries were needed in order to understand ones countrymen. Law and business, drama, dance, and auditoriums, shacks and palaces still have Latin and French words in great number.*"

But Heigelin was not an over-enthusiastic language purist; he also saw that many in their enthusiasm "*wished to get rid of foreign words quickly, ...not seeing the forest for the trees, and throwing the baby out with the bath water.*"

He also appreciated the efforts of King Wilhelm I, who ordered his officials to use a pure, plainly understandable, written and spoken German. And so Heigelin kindly asked all those who took up his work, "to use foreign words with understanding, or still better, avoid them as far as possible."

Heigelin's foreword to his first edition closed, following the custom of the times, with a list of subscribers (those who paid in advance and signed off on the book.) This shows that Heigelin filled an urgent need with his book.

Booksellers from all towns where German was spoken were listed, as well as people from all classes and professions, from cabinet directors to simple bookbinders. Even a Marchese Visconti and high officials from the then Austrian Milan were listed there, no doubt his acquaintances from the Milan days.

Twenty years later the publisher Osiander in Tuebingen brought out a second edition of the dictionary. Heigelin had revised it in his Geradstetten times, expanding the book by more than 200 pages. In his last years he worked on a third "modernized" edition, which however did not appear until eight years after his death.