

SOPHIA BAUERIN, Child's Calligraphy Sample Book: ANONYMOUS, *Drei junge Reisende* (Three Young Travellers); ANONYMOUS, *Der Menschenfreunde* (The Philanthropist); arithmetic table  
In German, decorated manuscript on paper  
Germany, dated 1792

8 folios on paper (4 bifolios in a single quire), complete, with watermark: 2 crossed keys with 2-line stems, within a wreath that may contain letters or words, unidentified in the Bernstein database, and countermark: a banderole with ICL in simple serif script, similar contemporary countermark reading 'ICL' (same size and lettering but with a slightly different frame) is found in Berlin, Singakademie zu Berlin, SA 3343, where it is paired with a watermark labeled 'Dresden', first folio serves as a front cover with title and date in red and green blackletter script, surrounded by a painted baroque frame with a floral wreath, ff. 2-6 ruled in pencil, text written on recto only in long line, in two calligraphic scripts (f. 2 in German Kanzleischrift with first line in blackletter, ff. 3-6 in kurrent with first lines in Kanzleischrift) in black ink with large decorative initials in green, blue, and red, variable number of lines (7-12) and justification (90-130 x 180-185 mm.), generous margins contain decorative borders of filigree lozenges and swirls, f. 7 holds only a table of sums in 4 columns (11 lines), booksellers's marks in pencil on f. 1v ('8 Kr') and f. 2 ('142 | 69 | 5'). No binding, the quire is tacketed through the center fold with silk thread of twisted yellow, pink, blue, and green, with the folded edge at the head of the text and opening edge at bottom (i.e. text is oriented 'landscape' instead of 'portrait'). Minor darkening of outer folios, painting on front wholly unscathed, some wear around edges, and occasional spotting throughout, but in overall very good condition for paper that has never enjoyed a protective binding. Dimensions 220 x 350 mm.

A charming piece of ephemera from early in the Romantic era, this sample book showcases the calligraphic penmanship of Sophia Bauerin at the age of 12½, dated 1792. It is remarkably rare to find a writing sample which announces itself as that of a young girl. Prefaced by an appealing decorated cover page, Sophia copied, in three different scripts, a short story and poem popular in contemporary children's readers. Her book beautifully reflects the practical and moral education of children in an era of social change.

## PROVENANCE

1. According to the book's first folio (and cover), it was copied as a 'probe schreib' (sample writing) by Sophia Bauerin at the age of 12½ to showcase her calligraphic penmanship. It appears that the filigree decoration surrounding the text was also completed by Sophia, but the floral Baroque-style frame on the cover is likely to have been completed by a talented amateur or professional; it is executed perhaps too precisely to have been done by Sophia herself. Despite her great skill for her age, her text and decoration do contain the occasional blob, smear, and unsteadiness.

The evidence of the countermark suggests the paper may have been made Dresden, and thus it is possible that Sophia made her book somewhere in the region of Dresden (providing the paper was purchased locally). The book may have been made at home under the guidance of a writing teacher, at a local girls's school run by nuns or a secular headmistress, or, less commonly, at a boarding school (Rutz, 2012, p. 291). Although initial investigation yielded no further information about Sophia's identity, further research may uncover more about this young scribe.

2. Private collection, Europe.

TEXT

f. 1, Title page, incipit, "Diese probe schreib Sophia Bauerin als sie alt war 12½ Jahr. 1792."

Giving the name and age of the scribe, as well as the year it was written, this title page, written in red and green blackletter script with interlacing hairlines, helpfully provides valuable information about this appealing calligraphy sample book.

ff. 2-5, *Drei junge Reisende*, incipit, "Drey Söhne reicher Aeltern hatten von ihrem Taschengelde eine Summe von 390. Reichsthaler erspart ... und die Segenswünsche der dankbaren Landleute und aller, die diese schöne That vernahmen, folgten ihnen nach";

This moralizing story copied by Sophia Bauerin into her sample book, in German *kurrent* script with the first line of the page in *Kanzleischrift*, is taken from a contemporary children's reader; precisely which one is unclear. It tells of three sons (the titular "Three Young Travellers") from a wealthy family who pool their pocket money to go on a mountaineering trip. Setting out, they come across a burning village not far from home. They help put out the flames, and in silent agreement approach the local pastor to give him their travel money to help the poor who have lost their homes in the fire. The moral of the story is one of social responsibility and philanthropy; even the young and adventurous give nobly to those in need.

This story, with minor variations, appears in a variety of children's readers in the late eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth century (see, for example, *Rühmende Erzählungen* 1782, *Neue Lesestücke*, 1796, Campe, 1815, Steudel, 1813, von Schmid, 1836; it likely appears in further publications). It was also used as an exercise text in German primers for the English educational market (Woodbury, 1854). Notably, the copied version spells the 'Drei' young men as 'Drey', which is also seen only in the 1782 volume. The figure of 390 Reichsthaler for the boys's trip money and donation given by Sophia is, as far as we know, unrecorded elsewhere (most editions give the amount as 300).

ff. 5-6v, *Der Menschenfreunde* or *Der grosnüthige Erretter*, incipit, "In einer Stadt, die durch des Feuers Flammen last ganz in Schutt und Asche fiel, begab sich jüngst dieß Trauerspiel ... Sie mögens ärmern Leuten geben, das, was ich that, war meine Pflicht";

Beginning immediately after the first text, *Der Menschenfreunde* (The Philanthropist), also published as *Der grosnüthige Erretter* (The magnanimous Savior), this text begins without a large initial or other indication. The poem, written continuously here in *kurrent* script with the first line of its second page in *Kanzleischrift*, is a German moral classic of unknown origin; it appears in various collections of moralizing texts for both children and adults alike (see, for example, Basedow, 1795, Hauber, 1828, Ernesti, 1829). It recounts how, in an anonymous city destroyed by a great fire, a small child was seen laying amongst flames. A noble prince (indeed, the *Landesvater*) called the city folk together and offered a thousand Thalers to rescue the child. A poor man ran into the fire, bringing the child to the prince. The prince offers the man any reward he wishes, and he replies that it was already worth it to have saved the child as he did not risk his life for a bag of gold; saving the child was his (moral) duty. He says that instead the reward should be given to the poor.

It is notable that both texts copied by Sophia into her sample book share themes of destructive fire, and of the protagonists giving away their money (whether gained through fate or courage) to succor the poor. Their combination may reflect Sophia's particular interests or, perhaps, lessons her teacher thought were especially pertinent to her behavior, personality, and station in life.

f. 7, table of sums; [f. 8rv, blank].

The table of sums at the end of the quire is likely a show of the young scribe's bookkeeping skills. Above it is the instruction "Bringe unter eine Summe", and its first column is headed "Reichsthaler". The headings of the three other columns are heavily abbreviated, and their meaning presently unknown. There are two mathematical symbols used (a small zigzag and two short parallel lines), which are unfamiliar today. The relationships between the numbers in each column, and the relationship of columns to one another is unclear: the table's sums do not result from simple addition.

Over the course of the eighteenth century, girls's education expanded to include more diverse topics, and deeper exploration of them. While girls of lower social standing might learn basic arithmetic in elementary schools, girls of wealthier (merchant or bourgeoisie) families gained tutelage in a variety of practical or domestic, as well as intellectual and artistic, subjects (Mayer, 2006). These expanded studies took place, albeit in different types of schools, for girls of all backgrounds in both Catholic and Protestant areas (Petschauer, 1989, esp. pp. 165-6, 174-5). At the least, and as demonstrated by this table, she had learned by the age of 12 a level of arithmetic suitable to running her future household.

This manuscript is a sample book: it contains texts copied by the scribe to show her proficiency in two calligraphic writing styles popular in late eighteenth-century Germany. Beginning in the sixteenth century, writing masters across Europe produced such sample books of their skills, sometimes supplementing printed writing manuals. Some, called 'copybooks', included space for students (whether under direct tutelage or self-taught with these guides) to replicate the masters's style by copying next to or below their samples.

Developing a calligraphic hand was a valued artistic and practical skill, for men and women alike, in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe. Produced to show the learning of a twelve-year-old girl, and presumably copied from a child's reader rather than a writing manual, this is not *quite* a copybook. We know of no comparable German examples from this date by a young child, although they might exist discretely in institutional and private collections. Sophia Bauerin's book resembles that made by one Jan Haverman, a (presumably) young man of Amersfoort in The Netherlands in 1733, held by the Cotsen Children's Library at Princeton University (see Immel, 2017). During this period Western Europe had a variety of national cursive hands. In learning to write, German students would learn the 'Latin' block letters and cursive, and then the so-called 'Deutsche Schrift,' including blackletter and *kurrent* (Herrmann, 2015), and, as seen in this book, sometimes *Kanzleischrift* (Chancery script) with its older, Gothic elements (Nesbitt, 1957, pp. 117-118).

In the post-Enlightenment era when this sample book was made, literature for European children became less centered on the fairy tales of the previous century in favor of collections of moralizing stories. The German Philanthropists had strong convictions about the power of moralizing stories to subliminally teach children how to live happy, moral, and useful lives (Ghesquiere, 2014, pp. 21-2). One leading German Philanthropist was Johann Bernard Basedow, who compiled a volume containing *Der Menschenfreunde* in 1795; Joachim Heinrich Campe, who included *Drei junge Resende* in some of his *Kleine Kinderbibliothek* editions, was another. We might propose that Sophia Bauerin's parents and/or teachers agreed with this pedagogical philosophy with regards to her moral education.

## LITERATURE

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

Berlin, Singakademie zu Berlin, SA 3343 in the Wasserzeichen Informationssystem Databank (Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg)

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