



# **Beethoven's Letters (1790-1826) from the Collection of Dr. Ludwig Nohl, Volumes I-II, Complete**

*Ludwig Von Beethoven*

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ALSO HIS LETTERS TO THE ARCHDUKE RUDOLPH, CARDINAL-ARCHBISHOP OF OLMÜTZ, K.W., FROM THE COLLECTION OF DR. LUDWIG RITTER VON KÖCHEL.

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Excerpt from Preface.

...And now, what is this spirit which, for an intelligent mind, binds together these scattered fragments into a whole, and what is its actual power? I cannot tell; but I feel to this day just as I felt to the innermost depths of my heart in the days of my youth when I first heard a symphony of Beethoven's, — that a spirit breathes from it bearing us aloft with giant power out of the oppressive atmosphere of sense, stirring to its inmost recesses the heart of man, bringing him to the full consciousness of his loftier being, and of the undying within him. And even more distinctly than when a new world was thus disclosed to his youthful feelings is the man fully conscious that not only was this a new world to him, but a new world of feeling in itself, revealing to the spirit phases of its own, which, till Beethoven appeared, had never before been fathomed. Call it by what name you will, when one of the great works of the sublime master is heard, whether indicative of proud self-consciousness, freedom, spring, love, storm, or battle, it grasps the soul with singular force, and enlarges the laboring breast. Whether a man understands music or not, every one who has a heart beating within his breast will feel with enchantment that here is concentrated the utmost promised to us by the most imaginative of our poets, in bright visions of happiness and freedom. Even the only great hero of action, who in those memorable days is worthy to stand beside the great master of harmony, having diffused among mankind new and priceless earthly treasures, sinks in the scale when we compare these with the celestial treasures of a purified and deeper feeling, and a more free, enlarged, and sublime view of the world, struggling gradually and distinctly upwards out of the mere frivolity of an art devoid of words to express itself, and impressing its stamp on the spirit of the age. They convey, too, the knowledge of this brightest victory of genuine German intellect to those for whom the sweet Muse of Music is as a book with seven seals, and reveal, likewise, a more profound sense of Beethoven's being to many who already, through the sweet tones they have imbibed, enjoy some dawning conviction of the master's grandeur, and who now more and more eagerly lend a listening ear to the intellectual clearly worded strains so skilfully interwoven, thus soon to arrive at the full and blissful comprehension of those grand outpourings of the spirit, and finally to add another bright delight to the enjoyment of those who already know and love Beethoven. All these may be regarded as the objects I had in view when I undertook to edit his Letters, which have also bestowed on myself the best recompense of my labors, in the humble conviction that by this means I may have vividly reawakened in the remembrance of many the mighty mission which our age is called on to perform for the development of our race, even in the realm of harmony, — more especially in our Father-land.

LUDWIG NOHL.

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