

L. Ranke to Georg Reimer, Publisher, Concerning the History of the Romanic and Germanic Peoples

Honored Sir, Herewith I send you the first book of my History with the desire that it may meet with your approval, at least to such an extent that you will not regret having agreed to publish this work. Perhaps, along with other defects, you will find it an objection that the connection between the different chapters is not sufficiently close and that, in fact, each begins with a new topic in a way that makes it uninteresting. This results from the fact that each develops a separate narrative which rests upon its own independent basis. In the succeeding volumes that are without introductions the effect will no longer be so disturbing. Now I do not know whether your apprehension as to the action of the censor will be increased or lessened when you have given this entire volume your attention. I imagine it will disappear. If it should not, a way of meeting the situation has occurred to me. Could not this book, if need be, be published by your firm in Leipzig, as I have noticed was done in the case of another book, or by Weidmann? For surely the censor at Leipzig will have no objection to this. Still I leave this entirely to your judgment since you will understand the matter better than I. As regards the quotations, I have followed, although at times with some reluctance, the plan adopted in the third chapter which is in your hands. **I have carefully refrained from any annotation in the strict sense; the use of quotations, however, seemed to me indispensable in the work of a beginner who has first to make his way and to secure the confidence of his readers. This involves a certain difficulty, however. Might it not be avoided in some way? My suggestion is that the lines of the text be numbered at the margin 10, 20, etc., or 5, 10, 15, 20, etc., as is done in the works of the older poets, and that then in an appendix by itself the quotations be entered in order with references to the pages and lines of the text to which they belong. For to number the quotations themselves and to bring them together at the back of the book, while the text on the preceding pages is broken up with reference figures, which in any case could not but be very numerous, as in the Cotta edition of Muller's History of the Swiss, seems to me to be still more objectionable than if they were placed immediately under the text. All this, too, of course, is left to your kind consideration.** In conclusion, I should have been glad to send you these sheets stitched together and in a better form. If you should find it necessary I should have to ask you to take the trouble of looking after this matter yourself, since a part of the manuscript is already in your possession. Moreover, I have been cherishing the hope that there might have come into your possession a catalog of Italian works, printed only recently but really old and as yet un- used, which through your kindness might in some manner be placed at my disposal. In the Germanic Archive for History, Geography, etc. various important documents are printed which have a bearing upon my subject. I cannot purchase all the annual sets very well, and have applied in vain to the publishers for the separate parts. Could I not secure the use of a copy for a short time, perhaps, through your assistance? Pardon me these requests if they should seem to you too presuming. With somewhat more assurance I expect to receive information in a short time as to the decision of the censor regarding which, of course, I am at present most deeply interested. This I request of you and subscribe myself anew with sincere confidence and high esteem.

Very truly yours, L. Ranke Frankfort on the Oder January 26, 1824

From Guy Stanton Ford, "A Ranke Letter," *JMH* 32 (1960): 142-4. "In 1912 the University of Illinois completed a building called Lincoln Hall. It was to be occupied primarily by the departments of history and political science. There were adequate offices and the history department found itself with a modern seminar room.... The department felt that its seminar room should have some special distinction.... Shortly thereafter, in looking through the catalog of a German bookdealer in Frankfurt, I saw the offering of an autographed letter signed by Ranke and addressed to the publishers of his first work of historical significance. I ordered it and when it came had it framed and hung in the seminar room. The department found itself in possession of a unique and hitherto unpublished Ranke document.... In the intervening years many of those who frequented the seminar room remember seeing the letter hanging there. But when the seminar room was abandoned to make room for a special Lincoln collection the letter disappeared and a diligent search since has not recovered it."